



# UPTOWN IMPROVEMENT PLAN

R A C I N E , W I S C O N S I N



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# UPTOWN IMPROVEMENT PLAN

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# UPTOWN IMPROVEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Uptown Improvement Plan has been developed as a practical short-term guide and a grand, but achievable long-term vision.

Uptown is a key part of Racine's urban fabric and its history. Historically referred to as "Columbia Corners" and "The Junction", Uptown was home to a variety of commercial, office, and residential uses. The District's heyday lasted well into the mid 1960s. Today, a few businesses remain as part of a mix of retail and service businesses. However, the district is largely perceived as a high crime area with limited viability.

**The Plan's Purpose** is to create a sustainable business district. To achieve this, the plan provides recommendations to better position Uptown to meet the benchmarks of a sustainable business district. These benchmarks include:

- Positive image and identity
- Mix of uses
- Destination anchor businesses
- "Walkable", "shopable", and pedestrian friendly-environment.
- Architectural character.
- Convenient access and parking.
- Connections and linkages to larger community.
- Strong neighborhood surrounding the district.
- Committed property and business owners.
- Strong business association.
- Redevelopment potential.

**Short-Term Efforts** focus on stabilizing the business district and retaining existing businesses. Key recommendations for the short term include the following:

1. Position the business association for greater success through organization, strategic partnerships, funding, and technical resources. Focus on business retention efforts.
2. Take initial steps to improve "curb appeal". Focus first on low cost improvements include painting, signage improvements, site clean up and efforts to fill vacant storefronts with items that show activity. Design guidelines have been created as part of this plan as a tool to assist property owners.
3. Re-establish events to bring people back to Uptown. Potential events could include an art fair, historic walking tour, theater tour, concert, or other events to have people rediscover the Uptown Area.

4. Create the "Columbia Corners" Historic District (building on the area's historic name). Such a district will provide a new identity and link property owners with funding opportunities to make rehabilitation improvements to storefronts and facades.
5. Improve the visual character of streets connecting Uptown, Downtown, and the Lake. Consider street trees, hanging baskets, planters, banners, and other elements along Washington and 14th Street.
6. Create an overlay design district along Washington Avenue between Taylor Avenue and 8th Street to encourage quality and compatible design.
7. Enhance safety through the Uptown district with landscaping, enhanced crosswalks, public art, and building restoration.
8. Create entry signs and directional signs to improve identity and circulation within Uptown.

**Long-Term Efforts** provide a framework to revitalize the district as it transitions with new businesses and opportunities.

1. Re-establish a focal point with improved, landscaped pedestrian space at the Junction intersection to announce arrival into this special place that represents the heart of the district.
2. As the theater redevelops and new anchor businesses are attracted, consider better street connections to the grid system.
3. Reorganize public parking areas to increase capacity, circulation, green space, and visual character.
4. Reorganize private parking areas and promote agreements between property owners to increase capacity, functionality, and design character of parking lots.

A detailed implementation strategy has been created to link plan recommendations with the people and funding sources needed to support these critical efforts. At the heart of this strategy is organizing a business organization, with a dedicated professional staff person to coordinate the work that will occur in the first years of implementation.

## I. WHY IS UPTOWN IMPORTANT?

Uptown is a key part of Racine’s urban fabric and its history. Historically referred to as “Columbia Corners” and “The Junction”, Uptown was home to a variety of commercial, office, and residential uses. The District’s heyday lasted well into the mid 1960s. Today, a few businesses remain as part of a mix of retail and service businesses. However, the district is largely perceived as a high crime area with limited viability.

Why should the community take interest in Uptown:

- Uptown remains home to regional and community anchor businesses committed to the district.
- Uptown marks an important gateway to the community, Downtown, and world-class employers. Its appearance speaks to the overall vitality of the community.
- A revitalized Uptown is part of the strategy to stabilize the neighborhoods of Racine’s south side.
- Uptown contains a rich collection of historically significant buildings dating from 1880-1930 that when restored, will bring a new sense of identity and vitality to the community.



**FIGURE 1:** HISTORIC PHOTOS (COURTESY OF RACINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY)

## II. ABOUT THE PLAN

The Uptown Improvement Plan is the result of a collaborative effort between the Uptown Improvement Organization, the City of Racine, and Sustainable Racine. Plan creation was facilitated by Schreiber / Anderson Associates, an urban planning and design firm. Assisting on the project were the Kubala Washatko Architects and the Best Real Estate Group.

The purpose of the plan is to provide a “blueprint” for creating a sustainable business district in Uptown. To achieve this end, the Plan contains recommendations for the short and long term. In the short term, recommendations provide strategies to stabilize the business district and include items that could be accomplished within the first five years. Long term recommendations discuss future opportunities to build upon the unique area amenities and to facilitate district transformation. Thus the plan is both a practical short-term guide and a grand, but achievable long-term vision.

*Chapter 1: Setting the Stage for Improvement* provides an introduction to the plan and describes the process and vision used to create the plan.

*Chapter 2: Existing Conditions* is a summary of the existing conditions and includes a discussion of the neighborhood and physical relationships that should be strengthened.

*Chapter 3: Market Analysis* is the Uptown market analysis and provides recommendations to stabilize the business district and improve the business mix in Uptown.

*Chapter 4: Plan Recommendations* contains short and long term improvement recommendations.

*Chapter 5: Plan Implementation* is a recommended action plan for Uptown. It describes what can happen in the first five minutes, five weeks, five months, and five years.



The Appendix to the Plan contains several useful companion documents. Appendix A includes the recommended design guidelines for the Uptown District. Appendix B is a summary of the public process.

### III. STUDY AREA

The study area is divided into a general area and a key focus area. The general planning area was defined by the City of Racine and includes the properties fronting on Washington Avenue, between Taylor Avenue and Eighth Street. The focus of the study is the Uptown business district, located at the "Junction Intersection". The focus area includes the area between 16th Street and Washington Avenue, between Memorial Drive and 13th Street.

FIGURE 2: STUDY AREA



## IV. PUBLIC PROCESS

Public Process was a cornerstone of this planning project. Business owners, property owners, and concerned citizens played a key role in defining the Uptown vision and providing valuable input regarding plan recommendations. The public process included the following forums and events:

### **Uptown Improvement Organization Steering Committee**

A steering committee consisting of members of the Uptown Improvement Organization led the process and provided input and direction on all phases of plan development. Members of the steering committee took a key role in organizing public meetings and assisting in the property inventory.

### **Community Visioning Meeting, September 30, 2003**

The Uptown Improvement Organization hosted a public visioning meeting to gather public input and set public priorities for the project. Approximately 30 people attended the forum, including business owners, property owners, alderpersons, and concerned citizens. Attendees were given an overview of the process and participated in two exercises. The first exercise had attendees list likes and dislikes about Uptown. The second exercise had residents write down and prioritize their visions and ideas for future transportation, character, parking, and business mix for Uptown. These responses were used to create the Uptown vision statement and provided the framework from which the plan recommendations were developed.

### **Business Survey, Fall 2003**

A survey was mailed out to all businesses in the Uptown area. A total of 140 surveys were sent out and approximately 40 were returned for a response rate of 29%. The survey provided information used in the market analysis and was reviewed to prioritize issues affecting Uptown.

### **Stakeholder Interviews, September 30, 2003**

The consultant team performed interviews with area business owners, church leaders, city officials, non-profit representatives, police officers, and others to help identify important issues facing Uptown. The list of interview candidates was provided by the Uptown Improvement Organization.

### **Community Planning Meeting 2, December 9, 2003**

A second community planning meeting was held to review the opportunities identified by the consultant team. The opportunities represent the broad categories of what Uptown should set out to accomplish in the short and long term. This meeting provided an opportunity to obtain feedback on the direction of these opportunities and to lay the groundwork for the development of detailed recommendations.

### **Façade Design Workshop**

Property and business owners in the Uptown area were invited to participate in one-on-one work sessions with the project architect. The purpose of these meetings was to identify both low cost and significant restoration and rehabilitation opportunities for specific properties. The meeting also provided an opportunity to go over the draft design guidelines prepared as part of the planning process.

### **Community Forum 3, March 23, 2003**

A third community forum was held to obtain public input on the draft plan recommendations. The recommendations presented were based on the vision established from Community Meeting 1 and from the public review of opportunities from Community Meeting 2. Respondents were able to rank the recommendations in terms of low priority, high priority, or non-priority. These were used to refine the recommendations and to develop the plan's implementation strategy.

A complete summary of all public process comments are included as an appendix. The following is a summary of public priorities:

- Make buildings and storefronts more attractive
- Make Uptown Safe
- Slow traffic down at the Junction intersection
- Add green space and landscaping to Uptown
- Attract new businesses to Uptown.

## Benchmarks for a Sustainable Business District:

1. District has positive image and identity.
2. District supports a mix of uses.
3. District has anchor businesses.
4. District is walkable, shoppable, and pedestrian friendly.
5. District has architectural character.
6. District has convenient access and parking.
7. District has redevelopment and infill potential.
8. District has good connections and linkages.
9. Strong neighborhood surrounds district.
10. District has committed property and business owners.
11. District has a strong business association.

## V. A VISION FOR UPTOWN

*Uptown Racine will be a healthy, vibrant, safe, attractive, and sustainable business district.*

*The district will play a key role in the revitalization efforts of Racine's Southside as a market for revitalization is created. An environment will be fostered that encourages increased investment from private and public partners that see the value and importance of this place.*

*A new Uptown identity will emerge that is built around a shared vision and a community-wide commitment to support the district. The negative perceptions that once plagued Uptown will be erased as improvements to the neighborhood fabric and visual character are made. Included in that are stronger connections to area amenities including Lake Michigan, the Root River, Washington Park, and nearby employment centers.*

*The design of the public and private spaces will respect the area's restored historic character while allowing for appropriate displays of individual and business expression. Uptown will continue to strengthen its role as the heart of the community by serving both the day-to-day needs of the neighborhood and destination retail and entertainment uses unique to Uptown. The vision will be achieved through the combined, committed efforts of business owners, lenders, non-profits, Southside neighbors, and the City of Racine.*

### A. Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives were based on public input and input from the steering committee. The vision, goals, and objectives provide the framework from which the Uptown Improvement Plan is developed.

#### 1. Short-term efforts should position Uptown for neighborhood stabilization.

*Objectives:*

- Retain existing anchor businesses.
- Create an attractive environment for entrepreneurial people who will consider Uptown Racine as a location for their business or their residence.
- Create a market for infill and redevelopment.
- Create a core of change that has enough impact to be noticed in the market.
- Create an organizational structure to support Uptown stabilization and future revitalization.

#### 2. Long-term efforts will lead to improvements that will create a vibrant and healthy business district that serves the day-to-day needs of the neighborhood and provides the greater Racine area with a unique retail and entertainment destination.

*Objectives:*

- Restore the historic character of Uptown.
- Enhance physical and visual connections to immediate and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Improve the traffic circulation to better serve and access Uptown.
- Work proactively to provide an adequate supply of parking to meet increased demands in Uptown.



Vision for Uptown's Storefronts



Uptown Storefronts at the Junction Intersection Today



Vision for the Junction Intersection



The Junction Intersection Today



Vision for Washington Avenue and Memorial Drive Intersection



Intersection of Washington Avenue and Memorial Drive Today

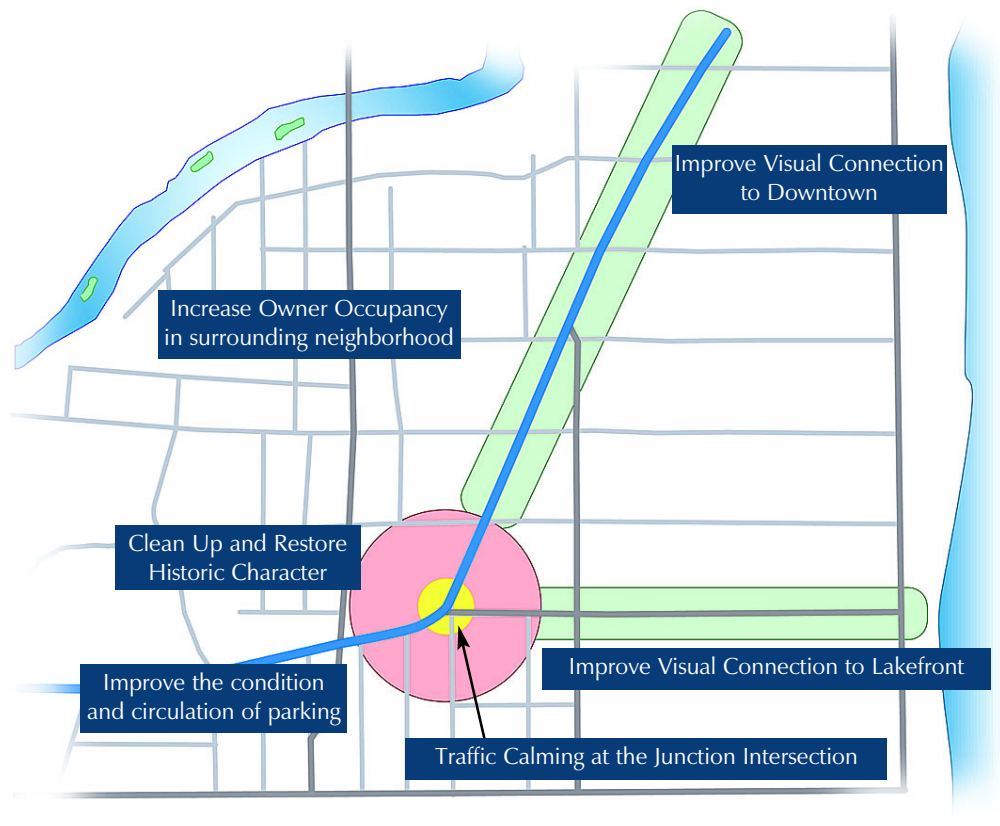


## VI. SUMMARY OF UPTOWN OPPORTUNITIES

A key component of the Uptown plan is identifying the opportunities associated with this district. There are several short and long term opportunities to build upon.

- Begin with grass root clean up efforts.
- Restore the historic character of Uptown's building stock.
- Improve the visual character of between Uptown and Downtown and between Uptown and the Lakefront.
- Add plantings and landscaping in the core Junction area and parking lots.
- Increase owner occupancy in Uptown and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Provide incentives to attract "Urban Pioneers" to invest in Uptown.
- Improve connections to surrounding neighborhood and businesses.

**FIGURE 3:** VISION AND OPPORTUNITY DIAGRAM

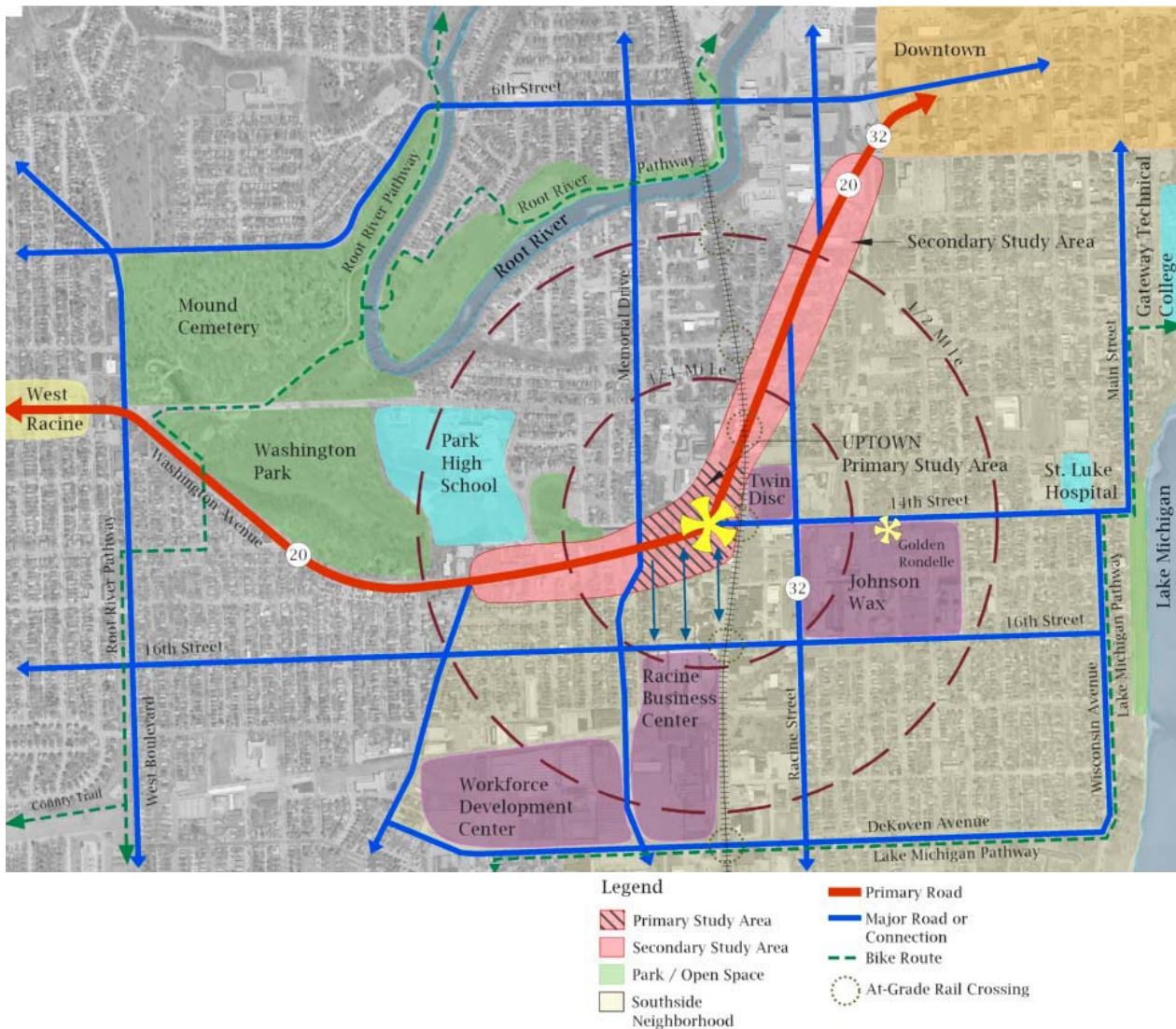




I. THE BIG PICTURE: UPTOWN’S RELATIONSHIP TO THE REGION

The “Big Picture” Analysis is a summary of the physical relationships between Uptown and its surrounding environment. The strengthening of these strategic relationships is important for the district. Currently, Uptown functions both as a neighborhood service district and a regional destination. The “Big Picture” Analysis Map shows quarter-mile and half-mile rings around the primary study area. Areas within the one-quarter mile mark are considered to be within a five-minute walk of the center of the Uptown District.

FIGURE 4: BIG PICTURE ANALYSIS



The following relationships are important to consider:

- **Uptown is positioned adjacent to regional employment centers**

Uptown is located within a quarter mile of several regional employers. These employment centers, which bring people into Uptown on a daily basis, include Johnson Wax, Racine Business Center, and Twin Disc. A half-mile from the Junction, St. Luke's Hospital is closer to Uptown than to Downtown.

- **Uptown is situated among mixed residential areas**

Uptown is in close proximity to neighborhoods of mixed incomes, ethnicity, and housing types. The areas immediately surrounding Uptown currently evidence low incomes and ownership. Areas with higher incomes and owner occupancy exist to the east, near the lakefront, and west of Taylor Avenue. However, Uptown is physically and visually separated from the comparatively wealthier neighborhoods. It should be noted that Uptown has historically served some of these neighborhoods and that Uptown could be the closest neighborhood business district for many of these residential areas. Although housing surrounding the study area is in various states of repair, it should be noted that much of the older housing is well designed and is an asset. Efforts to increase owner-occupied housing have begun in this area. Aside from city-sponsored initiatives, the private sector has had some success in building new homes and rehabilitating older homes for new owner occupants in parts of Racine's central city.

- **Uptown is uniquely situated between parks and natural features**

One half-mile to the east is of the Junction intersection is Washington Park. The park is home to several amenities including a golf course and the Root River Parkway Bike Path. The path crosses the Root River on a bridge north of 13th Street. Just over a half mile to the east is parkland along the shores of Lake Michigan. 14th Street is a primary connection between these areas. Topography is also a natural barrier, especially along the north side of the study area. Lots along Washington Avenue back up to a natural drop off. Pedestrian connections are made via stairways at Memorial Drive and at the public parking area at 13th Street.

- **Uptown is located along a highly traveled thoroughfare**

Over 15,000 autos pass through Uptown along Washington Avenue (STH 20) each day. Uptown lies along the primary entranceway into the Racine and is convenient for regional urban traffic from both Milwaukee and Chicago via I-94. The speed of the street is currently a deterrent to neighborhood connections as pedestrians crossings are difficult.

## **II. EXISTING ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER**

The Uptown Improvement District is comprised of predominately 1880s to 1930s commercial buildings averaging two stories in height. Historically, the Uptown neighborhood was a center for a wide range of commercial establishments that supported the greater community. Businesses included a grocery, a pool hall, bank, restaurants, clothing stores, bicycle repair, and a drug store to name a few.

### **A. "The Junction"**

For the purposes of the Plan, the Junction is defined as Washington Avenue between South Memorial Drive and 13th Street. The Junction contains the highest concentration of largely intact historic structures. The intersection of Washington, Junction, and 14th Street contains a concentration of buildings more high style in design. These buildings date from ca. 1880 to 1920. Moving away from this center the buildings are predominately, but not exclusively, vernacular commercial buildings with simplified details. Most of these buildings date from ca. 1910-25. Building stock in this area is comprised of Queen Anne, Italianate, Classical Revival, Tudor Revival, and Vernacular styles. Two storefronts have been updated in the Art Moderne style; these changes are now historic in nature.

Buildings in the Junction have all had significant modifications to the first floor storefronts. Few major alterations have occurred on the exterior of the upper floors. As a result, much of the historic character and detail is intact. Intact features include but are not limited to the following:

- Brackets
- Cream city brick
- Decorative brick or stone accents
- Dentils
- Ornate cornices
- Oriel/bay windows
- Pilasters
- Terra cotta accents
- Transoms (prism glass)

All of the extant buildings within the Junction contribute to the integrity of building stock. This provides Uptown with the unique opportunity to create a historic district out of the area concentrated around the Junction. The Junction is a prime candidate for historic designation as it tells the story of commercial development over the span of the 1880s to 1920s with no modern building interruptions.

## **B. Remaining District Character**

Radiating out from the Junction the building stock becomes less tangible and more generic in appearance.

- Setback continuity has been lost.
- Varied architectural styles and periods are represented.
- Historic homes have been converted into business uses and the majority of their features have been removed.
- Windows have been blocked in or covered over.
- Sturdy one and two story brick commercial buildings still line the streets on several blocks.
- Building types that do not fit within the precedents of the community are two modern fast food restaurants, a pre-engineered metal building, and a ranch style home (now office).

The above points illustrate a loss of neighborhood character. Future zoning should reinforce the existing character of the neighborhood. Several potential sites for new construction on vacant lots are located throughout the area. It is important that these sites contribute to the character of the neighborhood and serve modern uses without detracting from the existing historical context.

## **C. Vistas and Focal Points**

Key features that have defined the site lines and vistas of the Junction throughout its history still remain. These features include the following:

- Heading north or south on Washington Avenue the crossroads of Washington, Junction, and 14th historically had a key feature at the center of the intersection. Features had included a horse feeding hitch and a large decorative traffic light.
- Heading southwest on Washington Avenue the key vista is the line of 1910-20 commercial buildings on the east side of Washington Avenue. This view is even depicted in a postcard ca. 1930.
- Heading northeast on Washington Avenue the key vista concludes at the Queen Anne styled commercial building at 1347 Washington Avenue, this building is currently painted white.
- Heading west on Ann Street the defining vista terminates at the Majestic Theatre.

Obstacles that obscure or minimize the impact of these key vistas include the following:

- Speed at which traffic moves through the area.
- Tall street lighting that does not enforce the pedestrian scale.
- Lack of landscape features such as trees, shrubs, and other plantings.
- Condition of the building storefronts.
- Building color (ranging from lacking-to-excessive in use)



### III. STREET CHARACTER

#### A. Cleanliness and Repair

Streetscape improvements were included in the reconstruction of Washington Avenue in 2001. Notable improvements were made in the core Uptown Area. Amenities include historic-themed roadway lighting and a stamped concrete terrace area. West of the Uptown Core area, the streetscape generally has a clean appearance as the core area is approached. However, the stretch of Washington Avenue between Uptown and Downtown is not an attractive connection. This stretch is marked with litter, an overall lack of amenities, proliferation of unattractive parking areas, and poor condition of many buildings. This provides a negative perception, especially from those traveling through via automobile.

#### B. Streetscape Amenities

The Uptown Improvement Organization has added banners, benches, and decorative trash receptacles. However, The streetscape in the Junctions remains a “hard” streetscape. There is a noticeable lack of landscape, plantings, baskets, and green space to soften the core streetscape. The approaches to the Uptown core area are lacking in any streetscape amenities. This is not only noticeable on the stretch between Uptown and Downtown, but also on 14th Street, Ann St, and Owen Avenue. These connections are key parts of the Uptown circulation network but are lacking in visual treatments that link them as so. The public parking lots located behind the Uptown core lack streetscape amenities including banners, pedestrian aimed lighting and other factors that could visually unify these vital parking areas to Washington Avenue.

### IV. IMAGE AND IDENTITY

Negative perceptions are common regarding Uptown. In interviews and surveys, common responses included “Uptown is what it is”, “it won’t be anything different”, or “it hasn’t been viable for 30 years”. Among those voicing these concerns are some area property and business owners.

- **Uptown currently lacks “Curb Appeal.”**

Public and private property do not convey the image of a lively and healthy business district. The initial impression is that Uptown is largely a “dead area”. This perception is fueled by factors including cluttered, covered storefronts, vacant or messy storefront displays, boarded up windows, and a lack of cleanliness in parts of the district. Also problematic are those buildings that cover up their storefronts and turn their “backs” to Washington Avenue to face parking areas. In this situation, the overall curb appeal of many of the historic buildings is lost. Considering that rear entrances are important to some businesses, guidelines should be followed that give the Washington Avenue facades a sense of vitality and liveliness.

- **Uptown is currently not a welcoming environment for pedestrians.**

At the first public forum, there was an overwhelming sense that there should be more “foot” traffic in Uptown. In its current arrangement, walking between businesses is generally discouraged by the design of the area. Typically, those coming to Uptown from outside the area park in a rear-parking lot, enter the rear-or side door of the business, and leave without walking on street or past another business. This is most evident on the south side of Washington Avenue.

- **Uptown is currently perceived as a high crime area.**

Crime and a lack of safety are part of the current Uptown identity. The perception of crime is just as damaging as crime itself. Certain instances of crime have been documented, however, business owners generally disagree over the pivotal question, “How safe is Uptown?” Some feel the area is fairly safe while others disagree. At points, Uptown benefited from a visible police presence provided by an assigned officer. Crime and perceptions of crime, however, are not solved by the policing alone. It takes a neighborhood-wide commitment. The “dead” appearance of Uptown contributes to the sense that the area is high crime.

- **Uptown currently has unattractive approaches and poor visual connections to Downtown.**

The image problem goes beyond what happens directly along the four blocks adjacent to the Junction. The appearance of the approaches to the district also play an important role in shaping perception. The connection between Uptown and Downtown does not provide an attractive link between these districts. Additionally, approaches to the parking areas along Ann, Owen, and Junction Avenues have poor public and private property conditions that convey a negative image on Uptown

## V. TRANSPORTATION

### A. Street Network

The Uptown Area is primarily served by two state highways (STH 20 and STH 32) as well as several local streets. North of the primary study area, Washington Avenue bisects the established grid network creating a series of three way intersections (Marquette Street, Racine Street, Junction Avenue).

**Washington Avenue**, or STH 20 (and STH 32 north of Racine Street) is the primary connection from I-94 to Downtown Racine. Average daily traffic data from the Wisconsin DOT District 2 indicates that Washington Avenue has an ADT (Average Daily Traffic) count of over 15,000 vehicles near the core of Uptown. In the study area, Washington Avenue has two lanes of traffic in both directions. Designated left turn lanes are found northbound at the intersection with Marquette Street and southbound at the intersection with Racine Street. On street parking is allowed on Washington Avenue in portions of the primary study area. The street was reconstructed in 2001 with new access restrictions at the intersection with 14th Street and Junction Avenue. Several comments have been made listing traffic speed through the Junction as an on-going concern.

**16th Street** is a major thoroughfare running east-west. Between Taylor Avenue and Junction Avenue, Sixteenth Street carries a volume of traffic of traffic similar to that of Washington (15,000+ ADT). Sixteenth Street provides direct access to the core Uptown area via Ann Street and Junction Avenue. It also provides access to the Racine Business Center and Johnson Wax campus.

**14th Street** connects Main Street to the Uptown area at its termination at Washington Avenue. Just east of Uptown, the DOT estimates a 2002 ADT of 5,800 vehicles. East of Grand Avenue, ADT increases to over 10,000 vehicles. Aside from being an alternate route to Downtown, this street serves Twin Disc, SC Johnson’s Golden Rondelle Theatre, St. Luke’s Hospital, and Uptown.

**Racine Street** (or STH 32 south of Washington Avenue) is a north-south primary route linking Downtown and points North to Johnson Wax and other area businesses. Additionally, this route serves as a key connection to the City of Kenosha. 2002 ADT on Racine Street is estimated to be over 8,000 vehicles near the intersection with Washington. DOT figures show that volume increases to over 10,000 vehicles closer to the Johnson Wax Campus. Redesign of Racine Street’s streetscape is currently underway and City engineering staff is looking at possible improvements for the three-way intersection at 11th Street, Washington Avenue, and Racine Street.

**Memorial Drive** is a critical component of the community's street network as it is one of the few streets that links the north and south sides of Racine. Memorial Drive passes underneath Washington Avenue via an underpass in the study area. This bridge marks the western edge of the primary study area. Memorial Drive has an ADT of over 10,000 south of Washington increasing to 16,000 near 6th Street. However, no direct access to Washington Avenue is available for northbound traffic. Thus, the intersection of 16th Street and Memorial Drive is currently the entrance point to Uptown.

**Marquette Street** is an important North-South connecting street linking the south side with Douglas Avenue on the North. The street can serve as a "bypass" of downtown for those traveling North on Washington Avenue.

**Owen Street** is a one-way southbound street linking the Primary Uptown Study area to Sixteenth Street. The street directly serves the rear parking lots south of Washington Avenue.

**Ann Street** is a two-way local street connecting Washington Avenue (and the Uptown area) to 16th St.

**Junction Avenue** is a two-way local street connecting Washington Avenue and 14th Street to 16th Street. Re-engineering of the 14th street intersection has limited northbound traffic to only a right turn on 14th Street.

## **B. Bus and Transit**

Bus service is provided by Racine's Belle Urban System (BUS). The core of the Uptown area is served by lines 4, 9, and 20. Currently Uptown bus stops have minimal signage and no associated amenities such as benches or shelters.

## **C. Rail System**

The Union Pacific rail line passes directly through the study area. At grade rail crossings exist at 16th Street, 14th Street and on Washington Avenue north of 13th Street. Historically, rail between Chicago and Milwaukee was accessed at the "Junction". A feasibility study of extending commuter rail between Chicago and Milwaukee via Racine is being performed. If commuter rail were approved, the Racine stop has been determined to be at State Street. An existing depot facility is there and the site would be linked to a city-wide transit center at the same location. Currently, it is unlikely that there would be an Uptown stop.

## **D. Pedestrian Circulation**

Pedestrian circulation is difficult in the Uptown area. The sidewalks in the core area were recently reconstructed and were in sound condition. However, they were generally narrower than what is preferred for a high-traffic pedestrian area. In typical sections, Uptown has an eight foot pedestrian zone. This includes a three (3) foot stamped concrete terrace and a five (5) foot sidewalk area. It is generally recommended that urban business districts have at least a 10 foot wide sidewalk area, however, Uptown is limited in its ability to widen sidewalks considering its location on a prominent state highway serving regional traffic. Uptown's sidewalks are wider in select areas at the Junction intersection.

In locations where there are no parked cars, sidewalks lack a sense of separation between the fast moving vehicular lanes and the sidewalk. In areas where a wider sidewalk exists, as in the north side of the Junction bend, there is still limited separation from the sidewalk and fast moving traffic.

The crossing of Washington Avenue is difficult considering the high volume of fast moving vehicle traffic moving through the Junction. The most problematic area is the three-way intersection of Washington, Junction, and 14th Streets. Currently, newly added medians in the road serve as stopping points or pedestrian "refuge" islands, however, crossing at this point remains an difficult task. The signalized intersection at Ann Street provides the best location for pedestrian crossing.

Pedestrian circulation is also challenged along the side streets of Junction, Ann, and Owen. Much of the Uptown Core is served by private and municipal parking lots behind buildings. Although sidewalks are present, there are limited visual treatments that tie these rear parking lots to the streets. This issue is compounded as most of the buildings on the south side of Washington open to the parking lot and thus, there is little pedestrian activity on the street itself.

Outside of the primary study area, pedestrian circulation is most hampered at three way intersections. Specifically, the intersections of Washington Avenue-Marquette Street and Washington Avenue-Racine Street provide difficult and awkward connections for pedestrians. Crosswalks throughout the district have limited visibility.

### E. Bicycle Connections

The City of Racine is currently developing an overall city bike network. Recent additions on going or underway include the Lake Michigan Path and the Root River Trail. As these systems are located in close proximity to Uptown, it is prudent to explore linkages that could directly connect Uptown to the bike network.

## VI. PARKING

### A. Parking Inventory

Uptown’s parking supply consists of municipal off-street parking, municipal on-street parking, and private off-street parking. There are an estimated total of 481 parking spots serving the primary study area. A study performed by the City of Racine estimates that the Uptown parking lots are only 12% utilized.

FIGURE 5: JUNCTION PARKING INVENTORY





**TABLE 1: MUNICIPAL OFF-STREET PARKING**

Location	Number of Spaces	Restrictions
13th & Washington lot (SW corner)	28	10 hours, metered
1422 Ann	29 + 1 reserved	10 hours, metered
1423 Ann	106 + 5 reserved	10 hours, metered
Tradewinds lot	39	10 hours, unmetered

**TABLE 2: WASHINGTON AVENUE; MUNICIPAL ON-STREET PARKING**

Location	Number of Spaces	Restrictions
Memorial to Packard	6	2 hours, metered
Owen to Ann	10	2 hours, metered
Ann to 14th	6	2 hours, metered
14th to 13th	22	2 hours, metered

**TABLE 3: SIDE STREETS; MUNICIPAL ON-STREET PARKING**

Location	Number of Spaces	Restrictions
Owen	6	2 hours, metered
Junction	10	2 hours, metered
14th	2	2 hours, metered

Private parking in the core commercial district represents only a portion of the overall supply, while outside the core commercial district it accounts for nearly all of the available parking.

Private off-street parking within the study area is estimated to be 203 spaces. These lots are located within the focus area (outlined in blue), and indicated in yellow in Figure 4. This is a general count based on aerial views of the focus area and should not be considered an exact count of the existing private parking supply.

Additional private parking lots located outside of the immediate commercial core contribute another 233 spaces. These are also indicated in yellow, but are peripheral to the commercial core. The degree to which the lots were organized and striped impacted the accuracy of the parking count.

The condition and appearance of private lots varies considerably. Some lots are well maintained, with striped asphalt surface and landscaping, while others are poorly organized, with gravel, grass or dirt surfaces. Few of the lots located along the street are well-screened with landscaping or low level decorative fencing etc.

## **B. Parking Adequacy**

Parking adequacy is generally determined by comparing parking supply with parking demand for a given area. Due to the physical barriers within the focus area, **three parking zones** have been created to assess the adequacy of parking. Based on current levels of activity, there is generally a surplus of parking in all parking zones. Condition, visibility, landscaping, and overall circulation patterns are more problematic. The demand for parking will increase as redevelopment takes hold. Projections for future parking needs are discussed in the following section.

### C. Potential Future Parking Needs

Although, parking is generally adequate for today’s needs, there will potentially be a need for an increased parking supply as activity increases in Uptown.

Three parking requirements were considered:

**TABLE 4: PARKING STANDARD SUMMARY**

Parking Standard Source	Parking Requirement per 1000 SF
City of Racine Zoning Code	5 spaces*
General Retail Standard	3 spaces
Mixed Use District (Smart Code)	1.2 spaces

This is an assessment of the parking required to meet future demand in the Junction area. Three parking zones were identified and are shown in Figure 5. In each zone the three parking requirements listed in Table 3.4 were applied to the estimated total square footage. The assessment assumed fully utilized first and second floors. In this situation the following was found:

**TABLE 5: PARKING ADEQUACY IN ZONE 1**

Zone 1:		
Total Existing Stalls <sup>1</sup>	45	
Gross Ground Floor Area (SF)	45,570	
Gross Ground Floor + Second Floor Area (SF)	91,140	
Total Stalls Required to meet demand for parking at 5 stalls/1000 SF*	455	<i>410 stall deficit</i>
Total Stalls Required to meet demand for parking at 3 stalls/1000 SF*	273	<i>228 stall deficit</i>
Total Stalls Required to meet demand for parking at 1.2 stalls/1000SF*	109	<i>70 stall deficit</i>

1. According to estimates of private lots and City counts of public lots and on-street parking

\*These parking factors are applied to Gross Ground + Second Floor space, which assumes all buildings are 2 stories and are fully utilized as retail, commercial or residential.

**TABLE 6: PARKING ADEQUACY IN ZONE 2**

Zone 2		
Total Existing Stalls <sup>1</sup>	86	
Gross Ground Floor Area (SF)	36,597	
Gross Ground Floor + Second Floor Area (SF)	73,197	
Total Stalls Required to meet demand for parking at 5 stalls/1000 SF*	365	<i>243 stall deficit</i>
Total Stalls Required to meet demand for parking at 3 stalls/1000 SF*	219	<i>60 stall deficit</i>
Total Stalls Required to meet demand for parking at 1.2 stalls/1000SF*	87	<i>1 stall deficit</i>

1. According to estimates of private lots and City counts of public lots and on-street parking

\*These parking factors are applied to Gross Ground + Second Floor space, which assumes all buildings are 2 stories and are fully utilized as retail, commercial or residential.

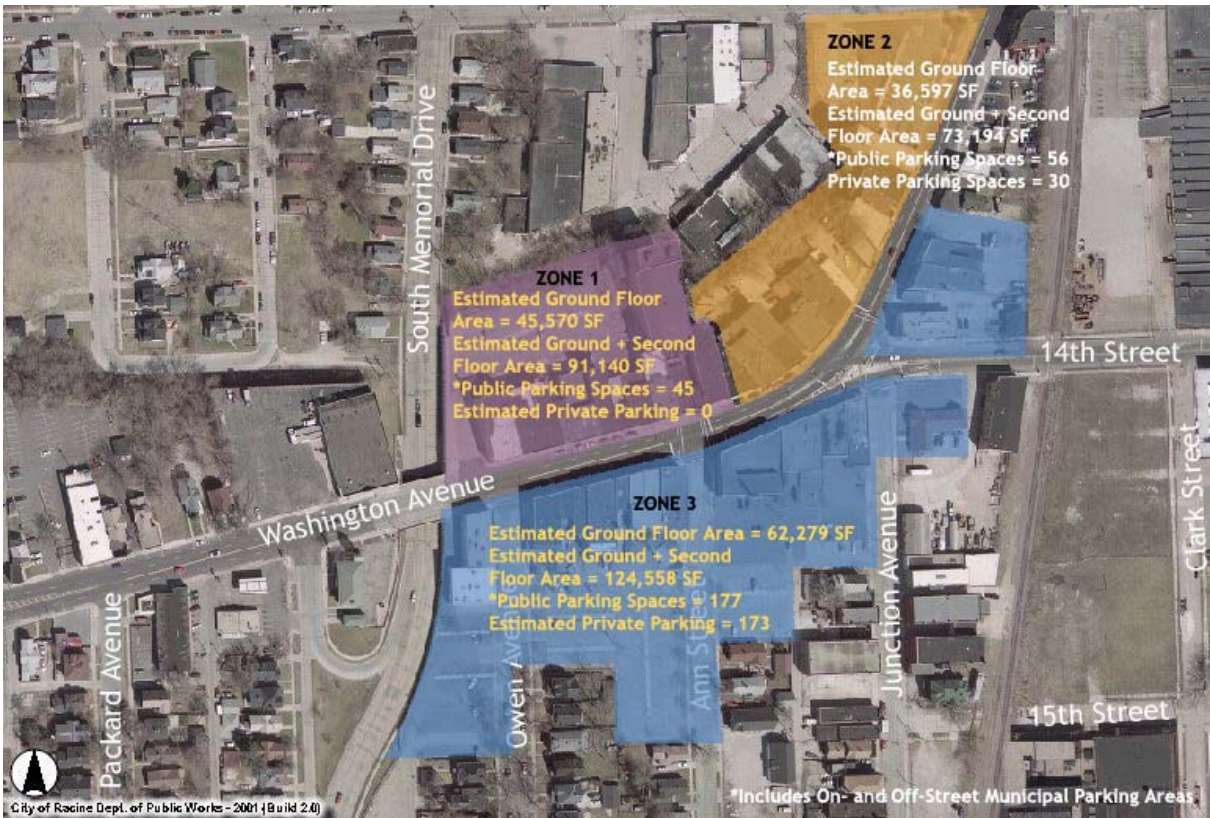
**TABLE 7: PARKING ADEQUACY IN ZONE 3**

Zone 3		
Total Existing Stalls <sup>1</sup>	350	
Gross Ground Floor Area (SF)	62,279	
Gross Ground Floor + Second Floor Area (SF)	124,558	
Total Stalls Required to meet demand for parking at 5 stalls/1000 SF*	625	<i>275 stall deficit</i>
Total Stalls Required to meet demand for parking at 3 stalls/1000 SF*	375	<i>25 stall deficit</i>
Total Stalls Required to meet demand for parking at 1.2 stalls/1000SF*	150	<i>200 stall surplus</i>

1. According to estimates of private lots and City counts of public lots and on-street parking  
 \*These parking factors are applied to Gross Ground + Second Floor space, which assumes all buildings are 2 stories and are fully utilized as retail, commercial or residential.

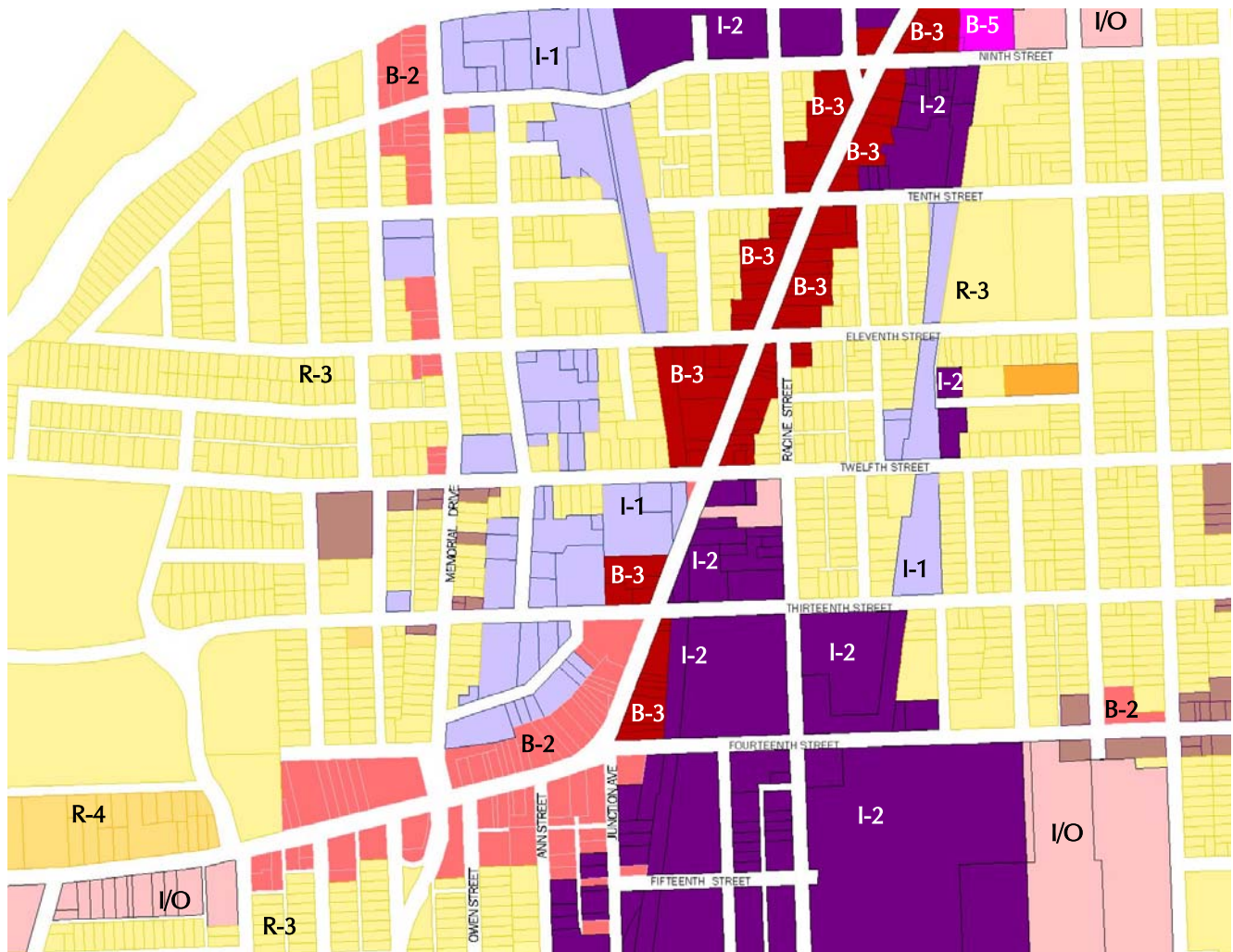
Figure 6 summarizes these findings.

**FIGURE 6: JUNCTION PARKING ZONES**



## VII. ZONING

FIGURE 7: UPTOWN ZONING DISTRICTS



### A. Zoning Districts in the Junction Focus Area

There are two (2) residential and six (6) non-residential zoning districts in the Uptown Area. The primary area or “Junction” is a mix of the B-2 Community Shopping District and the B-3 General Commercial District.

#### **B-2 Community Shopping District**

A majority of the primary study area is covered by the B-2 Community Shopping District. The stated intent of this district is to “accommodate the needs of a much larger consumer population than is served by the neighborhood convenience district, thus a wider range of uses and structure sizes is permitted for both daily and occasional shopping”. The permitted and conditional uses allowed in the B-2 district are outlined in the ordinance. Four conditions are established and paraphrased here that apply to all permitted and conditional uses in this district:



1. Businesses shall be retail and service establishments dealing directly with customers. All goods produced on the premises shall be sold at retail on the premises.
2. Businesses shall be conducted within completely enclosed buildings.
3. Establishments of the drive-in/drive through services are allowed by conditional use permit.
4. Parking of trucks on lands adjacent to residential property shall be screened by a wall, fence, or dense hedge.

Mixed-use buildings are permitted as a conditional use. The ordinance states that there must be 2,400 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit.

**B-3 General Commercial District**

A small portion of the primary planning area is zoned B-3 General Shopping District. The stated purpose of the district is to accommodate those commercial activities which may be incompatible with the predominantly retail uses permitted in other business districts; and whose service area is not confined to any one neighborhood or community. Allowed uses in this district are subject to the following paraphrased from the zoning ordinance:

1. Dwelling and rooming units are not permitted.
2. Business, servicing, or processing shall be conducted within completely enclosed buildings, however, drive-in/drive through services are allowed.
3. Parking of trucks on lands adjacent to residential property shall be screened by a wall, fence, or dense hedge.

In terms of lot dimension, the B-3 District does not dictate a minimum lot size. However, a front and side yard setback of 25 feet is required. This differs from the B-2 district in which no setback is dictated. A large setback has the possibility of losing the continuity established in the B-2 district.

**B. Zoning Districts in the General Study Area**

The secondary study area, extending from Taylor to 8th Street, is governed by six (6) zoning districts. These include the B-3 (described above), the B-5 Central Service District, O-I Office Institutional District, I-1 Restricted Industrial, I-2 General Industrial

**B-5 Central Service District**

Currently one parcel on the northern edge of the study area is zoned B-5. Ordinance states that the purpose of the B5 is to furnish areas served by the B4 central business district with a wide variety of services that may be incompatible with the uses permitted in the B4 (Central Business District) The B5 district also serves as potential expansion areas of the B4 District. Permitted uses include sales/storage of building materials, bus stations, convention halls, dwelling units, printing, publishing, and warehousing to service the Downtown. Businesses in the B-5 maintain that all business servicing and processing must be conducted within completely enclosed buildings. Dwelling units require 450 square feet of lot per unit. No other lot or yard requirements are listed. A floor-area ratio of 8.0 is allowed in this district.

**O-I Office/Institutional District**

The O-I District is found along Washington Avenue, between Valley Drive and Taylor Avenue. The stated purpose of this district is to accommodate office buildings, civic and governmental structures, and educational and institutional buildings in a mutually compatible environment. Apartments are allowed as a conditional use. For permitted uses, a minimum lot size of 4,800 square feet is required. Larger lot sizes are specified for specific conditional uses. Yards have a prescribed front yard setback of 25 feet and a rear yard setback of 30 feet. The district has a floor-area ratio of 2.5 with allowances for increases provided. 1,000 square feet of lot area is necessary per dwelling unit.

### **I-1 Restricted Industrial District**

The I-1 Restricted Industrial District is located in the secondary study area between 12th and 14th Streets on the north/west side of Washington Avenue. The intent of this district is to provide an environment suitable for industrial activities that do not create appreciable nuisances or hazards, or that require a pleasant, hazard-free and nuisance free environment. The following conditions apply:

1. Dwelling units not allowed unless authorized within a planned development.
2. All businesses, servicing or processing shall be within enclosed buildings.
3. Storage should be indoors or screened.
4. Retail uses are generally not allowed with the exception of select uses including bakeries, banking, dry cleaning, and other uses accessory, and incidental to permitted and conditional uses.

There are no lot size requirements. Side or rear lot buffers of at least 25 feet are required when the district coincides with an adjacent residence or business district. When across the street or sharing a block face with a residential district, a minimum yard setback of up to 25 feet may be required by the Plan Commission.

### **I-2 Restricted Industrial District**

Much of the area south and east of the Junction is zoned I-2, including many properties along Junction Avenue. This designation is included on the nearby Twin Disc, Johnson Wax, and Racine Business Center properties. However, only a small number of parcels fronting on Washington Avenue have this designation. The purpose of this district is to accommodate those industrial activities that may produce moderate nuisances or hazards in areas that are relatively remote from residential and commercial development.

The following conditions have been established for this district:

1. Dwelling units are generally not allowed, however, they may be permitted as part of a planned development.
2. Business, servicing, or processing conducted within 300 feet of a residence or commercial district shall be completely within enclosed buildings.
3. Storage within 300 feet of a residence must be screened or enclosed.
4. Retail uses are generally not allowed with the exception of select uses including bakeries, banking, dry cleaning, and other uses accessory, and incidental to permitted and conditional uses.

No lot or yard requirements are defined for the district with the exception of transitional districts as defined for the I-1 district. The maximum floor area ratio for the district is 4.0

### **R-3 Residential District**

Much of the residential area surrounding the study area is zoned R-3 residential. The purpose of this district is to provide areas which are to be occupied substantially by single-family and two-family dwellings and attached dwellings. Permitted uses include single family, two-family, multiple family, and community living arrangements.

### **R-4 Residential District**

The north side of Washington Avenue between Taylor Avenue and Valley Drive is zoned R-4. The intent of this district is to protect and enhance the character and value of residential areas primarily occupied by varied dwelling types of moderate density (20 dwelling units per net acre), and to accommodate areas planned for new residential development of moderate density. Uses include those in the R-3 plus nursing homes, religious institutions, day care, and other conditional uses.

**TABLE 8: CHARACTERISTICS OF NON-RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS**

Zoning District	Maximum Floor Area Ratio	Required Setbacks	Location
B-2 Community Shopping District	4.0	None for Non-Residential	Primary, Secondary Study Area
B-3 General Commercial District	2.5	25 feet	Primary, Secondary Study Area
B-5 Central Service District	8.0	None for Non-Residential	Secondary Study Area
O-1 Office/Institutional District	2.5	25 feet	Secondary Study Area
I-1 Restricted Industrial District	1.5	Transitional setbacks of 25 feet required when adjacent to residential or business	Secondary Study Area
I-2 General Industrial District	4.0	Transitional setbacks of 25 feet required when adjacent to residential or business	Secondary Study Area

**VIII. SUMMARY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS:  
UPTOWN AND THE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS DISTRICT BENCHMARKS**

The existing conditions report has been assembled and reviewed to determine what improvements need to be made to make Uptown a sustainable business district. These benchmarks include

- Positive image and identity
- Mix of uses
- Destination anchor businesses
- “Walkable”, “shopable”, and pedestrian friendly-environment.
- Architectural character.
- Convenient access and parking.
- Connections and linkages to larger community.
- Strong neighborhood surrounding the district.
- Committed property and business owners.
- Strong business association.
- Redevelopment potential.

How does Uptown rank in terms of the criteria for being a healthy and sustainable business district?

**TABLE 9: UPTOWN RANKINGS**

<i>Criteria for achieving a sustainable business district</i>	<i>Uptown's Current Ranking</i>		
	Poor	Fair	Good
<p><b>1. District has positive Image and Identity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Crime/Perception of Crime.</li> <li>-Deteriorated physical conditions implies lack of investment.</li> </ul>	●		
<p><b>2. District supports a mix of uses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of business variety.</li> <li>-Lack of uses to serve day-to-day neighborhood needs.</li> </ul>	●		
<p><b>3. District has anchor businesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Retention of anchor businesses is critical for district stabilization.</li> </ul>		●	
<p><b>4. District is walkable, shoppable, and pedestrian friendly</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-New streetscape amenities are a positive addition but more work is needed.</li> <li>-Limited separation between traffic lanes and sidewalks.</li> <li>-Storefronts present negative image.</li> <li>-Poor connections between parking areas and sidewalks.</li> <li>-Lack of landscaping and open spaces.</li> </ul>	●		
<p><b>5. District has architectural character</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Many buildings have strong historic character on the upper stories but the ground floors and storefronts have been inappropriately altered.</li> </ul>		●	
<p><b>6. District has convenient Access and Parking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Probable parking shortages on north side of Washington.</li> <li>-Parking more adequate on south side of Washington.</li> <li>-Poor parking signage/ No wayfinding system.</li> <li>-Difficult access: 3 way intersections, one-way streets, and limited connections from north-bound Memorial Drive.</li> <li>-Access favors through traffic but limits local connections.</li> </ul>		●	

<i>Criteria for achieving a sustainable business district, continued</i>	Poor	Fair	Good
<p><b>7. District has redevelopment and infill potential</b></p> <p>-Several short-term and long-term possibilities are available if investment interest can be captured.</p>			●
<p><b>8. District has good connections and linkages</b></p> <p>-District is close to community destinations and features. -However, district cut off from surrounding areas by topography, street. network, and unsightly visual barriers.</p>		●	
<p><b>9. Strong neighborhood surrounds district</b></p> <p>-Rehabilitation needed for historic housing stock. -Limited home ownership surrounding district. -Limited incomes and spending dollars in immediate area. -Strong employment centers surround district.</p>		●	
<p><b>10. District has committed Property and Business Owners</b></p> <p>-Revitalization process needs involvement from a majority of property owners and businesses. -Process and Business District needs more committed partners.</p>		●	
<p><b>11. District has a strong business association</b></p> <p>-There are a small number of active partners, however there is a need for additional committed players as well as other technical resources that are not present at this time.</p>	●		

The market analysis provides a snapshot of the current market conditions and recommendations for positioning the district for stabilization. The analysis helps to provide direction to the detailed master plan recommendations in Chapter 4.

The decline of the Uptown Racine from a vital business district to its current condition has taken decades. Its revitalization will also take time, but with a good plan of action, solid leadership and the willingness of the neighborhood to build on the assets they do have, this work can be accomplished.

Considering Uptown Racine from the standpoint of how it is currently positioned in the marketplace, the overarching recommendation is that before an active business recruitment effort begins, some very basic steps are needed to begin rebuilding the Uptown image, and solidify this neighborhood into a cohesive, vital area. Ultimately, the goal is to create an attractive environment for pioneering, entrepreneurial people who will consider Uptown Racine as a location for their business or their residence.

## I. MARKET INDICATORS

There are several positive and negative market indicators that should be considered for Uptown.

### *Positive Indicators*

1. Good traffic counts.
2. Some pedestrian traffic.
3. Primary district is compact.
4. Building stock has potential.
5. Hand-full of solid businesses.
6. Employment Base.
7. Redevelopment Opportunities.

### *Negative Indicators*

1. No recent history as a shopping area. (30+ Years).
2. Lack of "life", looks "dead".
3. Limited visible pride of ownership.
4. Property deterioration.
5. Safety concerns.
6. Business entrances not on the street.
7. Lack of positive identity.
8. Poor community perception of the neighborhood.
9. Dirty sidewalks, litter.
10. Neighborhood demographics (poorer than surrounding areas).

## II. TRADE AREA AND DEMOGRAPHICS

An important component to understanding the draw of a particular business district lies within its demographic make-up. Neighborhood districts such as Uptown Racine rely on two distinct market segments: 1) the immediate neighborhood and 2) the very specific larger markets that support their viable destination businesses. Ultimately, the goal is to have a business district provide shopping options for the immediate market area, and offer opportunities for those customers who are patronizing existing destination businesses. For example, some customers who frequent Schmidt Music may be from the immediate neighborhood, but it's more likely that the majority of their customers are from elsewhere in Racine County. Are these customers drawn to any other businesses in the neighborhood district, or are they likely to just get back in their car to find other options? What does the demographic make-up of the immediate neighborhood area look like, how does that compare to the larger market area, and what does that mean for recruiting businesses to the area?

The immediate market area is typically the driver of what businesses settle in the adjoining neighborhood business district. The basic information about the Uptown Neighborhood, centered on a 1/2 mile radius from the Junction Intersection is listed below. These demographic categories are based on 2000 census numbers.

### A. Uptown Neighborhood

- Population in this area has declined from 1990 to 2000 by 8.84%.
- Decline in population is expected to continue through 2008.
- Approximately 60% of the housing units are renter occupied, and 40% are owner occupied.
- Average household income is \$34,775, and per capita income is \$12,037.
- Approximately 28% of the population is classified as "white".
- Age 25+ with less than a high school degree is 44%.
- The average age is 30.
- Average household size is 2.92 persons.
- Median all owner-occupied housing value is \$48,346.

### B. West Racine Neighborhood

The following is a summary of the same statistics, for the West Racine Neighborhood:

- Population in this area has declined from 1990 to 2000 by 3.68%.
- A slight decline in population is expected to continue through 2008.
- Approximately 32% of the housing units are renter occupied, and 68% are owner occupied.
- Average household income is \$48,170, and per capita income is \$19,064.
- Approximately 88% of the population is classified as "white".
- Age 25+ with less than a high school degree is 11%.
- The average age is 34.
- Average household size is 2.47 persons.
- Median all owner-occupied housing value is \$87,906.

## C. Racine Metropolitan Statistical Area

Finally, these are the statistics for the entire Racine Metropolitan Statistical Area (City and surrounding communities) in the same categories.

- Population has increased from 1990 to 2000 by 7.88%.
- Increase in population is expected through 2008.
- Approximately 30% of the housing units are renter occupied, and 70% are owner occupied.
- Average household income is \$57,304, and per capita income is \$21,772.
- Approximately 83% of the population is classified as “white”.
- Age 25+ with less than a high school degree is 17%
- The average age is 36.
- Average household size is 2.59 persons.
- Median all owner-occupied housing value is \$111,126.

The Uptown Racine area reflects a neighborhood that has been declining in population, incomes and home ownership. The over 25 population with less than a high school degree is more than double that of the Racine MSA. The household incomes are lower, yet it has a slightly higher household size, and much lower housing values. These indicators clarify the importance of a very organized effort to approach revitalization of this neighborhood on all fronts.

## III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING MARKET CHANGE

These initial efforts can start to produce a shift in how the neighborhood thinks of itself, and how the market thinks of Uptown. There must be a demonstration of commitment from the neighborhood, and those public sectors that support neighborhood revitalization, to kick-start Uptown from a neutral or declining perception, to that of positive change. When this positive change starts to manifest itself on the street, then Uptown can begin a proactive approach to recruiting the business mix that meets their planning goals.

### 1. Concentrate revitalization efforts and create a noticeable change.

Start primary revitalization efforts for the Uptown neighborhood at the Junction, creating a core of change that has enough impact to be noticed in the market. Begin stabilization of the Junction area, and then continue west and north. This district needs a concentrated area of redevelopment/revitalization that creates enough impact to garner interest from the business community, the neighborhood and the market.

This revitalization could include a new in-fill development project, one or two storefront upgrades, additional streetscape amenities, etc. Dispersing initial revitalization efforts over the entire district at an early stage, may not make a noticeable change to excite further action.



## **2. Start with simple tasks, including district clean up.**

Create a plan of action that would take initial steps towards a general neighborhood clean up, both commercial and residential. This should start at the ground level with litter and trash removal, weeds, pressure washing the sidewalks, etc. This can not be a one-time effort, but a multi-focused plan to establish a sense of pride, and to “raise the bar” in neighborhood expectations.

It is important to choose actions that are doable, affordable and don't require massive planning or organization. Start with a “Spring” clean-up plan, coordinated on a block by block effort, utilizing business owners, scouting groups, school organizations. It could also include the planting of flower pots at key locations on the street. Look for donations of time, money, food, equipment.

Consider simple, initial efforts that would improve the condition of the business district real estate. This does not have to be major storefront renovation, but could include paint, minor repairs, washing storefront windows. Also, fill vacant storefront windows with something...let high school classes design interesting window displays for a class, decorate them during holidays, display information on the revitalization process. Eliminate the boarded up storefront look, and create a message of vitality by making Uptown look alive.

## **3. Address safety and security.**

Rally all layers of the neighborhood to “take back their streets” and address safety and crime issues. Whether reality or perception, Uptown must address safety concerns, and give the overall market a sense that this neighborhood district is as safe as others in Racine. This issue should not be left up to the beat cop. It is the responsibility of the City, the surrounding neighborhoods and Uptown residents, business owners and landlords to address this situation.

Work to create a “safety zone”, focusing on risks and vulnerabilities, rather than “threats”, which are theoretically infinite. Distinguish between safety and security, and develop strategies to reinforce both. The potential benefits are real: lower loses, more protection from liability, better community relations and possibly lower insurance costs. The most valuable benefit, though, is safer, more secure and happier consumers, who will stay longer, spend more and tell friends and family about their positive experience in Uptown.

## **4. Increase owner occupancy.**

Acknowledge that the primary anchor businesses in this district are all property owners, and that no substantial tenants have moved into the neighborhood in many years. Owner/occupant investment in this neighborhood is critical to its ability to stabilize and grow, which could include having your business at the street level and your residence upstairs. Look at programs that may support the purchase of commercial property in this district with low down-payment and/or low interest loans, façade grants, any vehicle possible that may stimulate investment.

Live/work opportunities are also very appealing to entrepreneurial types, exactly the kind of match that would be ideal for Uptown Racine. In 2001, the editor-in-chief of Builder magazine estimated that “there are approximately 20 million people in the United States who operate home based businesses”. Live/work housing promotes other pedestrian-oriented development, and appeals to younger American consumers who are making moves back into the city. Projects such as the Gorman Artists Lofts, bring a wonderful new demographic into the area, who may want to rent gallery space, or own a retail building in the Uptown area while living in the neighborhood.

## **5. Support home ownership options and the health of surrounding neighborhood.**

In tandem with recommendation 4, look at options that would support and residential home ownership, and grow housing options. Retail business follows rooftops. Therefore, the more stabilized the surrounding residential neighborhoods, the better the support for the business district. There has been a new lure of city life, particularly with younger professionals who want the “24/7” urban lifestyle. As Uptown continues to stabilize, there will be new opportunities to consider higher density housing in the neighborhood, that could be rental properties or condos.

Families with children may be the most difficult to attract to more urban neighborhoods, however with good planning and innovative design, even this group could realize the tremendous convenience of living in a more urban setting. New family housing might include zero lot-line townhomes or cottages that share a common park area or green space.

Potentially there is an opportunity for an independent, senior housing project that offers a continuum of care that keeps current residents in the neighborhood instead of losing them to other locations. Affordable and new housing options that meet the needs of many market categories will fortify this neighborhood and support current and future retail and service businesses.

## **6. Business retention is a priority.**

Maintaining current anchor businesses in the district is a must. Those long time anchor businesses such as Corner House Restaurant, Schmidt Music, Savin Vision Center are a critical component in stabilizing this neighborhood, and providing a foundation for it to grow. There are many market forces that could force out, or pull away businesses from this neighborhood right now. An initial business retention effort should be undertaken that would provide support and resources for these businesses to stay healthy during this critical period.

Business retention efforts should be part of the Uptown’s initial organizational goals. This support can stabilize or even save a business by offering resources (technical assistance, workshops, training, speakers, connections, referrals, etc) regarding store merchandising, inventory control and buying, internet opportunities, financial planning, promotion/marketing/advertising, customer service, employee hiring/retention and succession planning. Additionally, programs that offer façade design and financing assistance, joint marketing plans, promotions or events that increase pedestrian traffic, ongoing newsletters, updated consumer surveys demographics and marketing materials can all be of assistance to existing businesses.

## **7. Consider a new identity plan for the district.**

Too many people we met with felt that the district “is what it is”, “it won’t be anything different”, “it hasn’t been viable for 30 years”. There must be a dramatic effort made to re-invent this district into something that feels up to date and alive. This might be a new name, a historical take on the neighborhood, a “funky / edgy” look and feeling, or other identity that gets translated into the soul and the physical reality of the district.

## **8. Engage the property owners in the improvement plan.**

Educate and assist property owners in understanding the potential for the district. This would include property condition issues, building inspection support, property rehabilitation, tenant recruitment / tenant mix, and how a coordinated effort between property owners will relate into increased property values and higher rents.

Without the buy-in from the property owners and the existing businesses, it will be very difficult to gain the momentum necessary to create real change. The most important ongoing work that the Uptown organization can do is to consistently and constantly engage all stakeholders in the process, keep personal agendas out of the way and stay committed to the revitalization plan.

The Uptown Improvement Organization will take a position on any establishment involving the sale of alcohol based on a review of the principles, a review of their business plan, and potential impact on the neighborhood.

## **9. Develop a targeted, realistic strategy for business recruitment.**

Initial business recruitment will likely be service businesses that would support the more immediate neighborhood. These might include salon services, video stores, fast food or other restaurant. This effort must be done in tandem with physical improvements and changes to the underlying safety concerns. See the attached Business Recruitment outline.

As improvements are made to the streetscape, and the Uptown neighborhood begins to re-fortify itself, it would then be prudent to look at a more specific niche(s) or specialty businesses that could help re-identify the street within the community.

Beginning back in the 1950's with the advent of shopping centers, urban business districts have struggled to keep mainline products in their storefronts. Independent clothing stores, shoe stores, department stores, hardware stores, etc. have taken a direct hit from national retailers, who typically provide a broader selection of goods at lower prices (also in more convenient locations with plenty of parking). Many of these independent operators have either closed their doors, or have moved to new locations hoping to fortify their competitive edge, leaving older shopping districts that have been struggling for an identity. This is why many of these shopping districts have found success in shifting to more specialty shops that have a focused merchandise concept or niche.

Successful communities may have two or three successful consumer niches that have the ability to draw customers from distant communities. Successful niches can often attract other businesses to the trade area, interested in capitalizing on the same consumer segments. Examples of consumer based niches might include:

- Arts and Crafts: This would include artisan and handmade craft shops that are unique, specialized and have a price point that is appropriate to the market.
- Antiques: Not unusual to be blended with the Arts and Crafts, there needs to be a certain density to the number of antique stores to really create a separate consumer niche.
- Ethnic Groups: This might include a community that has a certain ethnic focus, such as West Racine's historic focus on its Danish ties. Shops, architecture and marketing themes may center on this specific ethnicity. It could also include a museum component, such as the Norwegian Heritage Museum in Decorah, Iowa.
- Entertainment: Can be mixed with other niche groups, and might include a variety of food venues, theatres, etc.

Niche/specialty retail tends to be locally owned and operated businesses that typically do not have the benefit of large marketing budgets, or national buying power. Therefore, these businesses in particular need the benefit of a well-developed plan for their physical placement within your district, along with a business mix and marketing plan that ties these small independent shops together. While business districts can benefit from placement strategies, business mix and marketing plans, these ideas are often difficult to implement. They will take a concentrated effort, organization and a buy-in from the property owners and existing businesses, to help maximize the overall business activity and vibrancy of the entire business district.

With long-term planning and an investment of time and dollars, Uptown does have the potential to become a great resource to the neighborhood and the community. The vitality, look and “shopability” of Uptown will provide the opportunity to fertile soil for the growth of current businesses and the planting of new businesses. Providing opportunity for specialty or “niche” retail to grow in Uptown offers more reasons for people to visit, and the greater likelihood that their trips will be multi-purpose.

Therefore, when the street is in a more stable position, and a solid organization is in place, it would be important to consider niche/specialty categories that could make a home in Uptown. Establishing an identity or theme for the business district will be a major factor in driving an appropriate business mix plan for the area. It might be interesting to consider a slightly “off beat” tenant mix. These tenant types might include:

- All natural food market
- Recycled clothing
- “Green” home and personal products
- Cooperative art gallery
- Alternative health providers
- Wellness / holistic pharmacy
- Alternative theatre

This could also help lead the direction of the district to something more arts and entertainment oriented. Consider looking at the Williamson Street neighborhood in Madison that has many similar components to Uptown with its commercial and residential mix, age of the district and diverse nearby neighborhoods. However, it is important to note that this transition to more a niche/specialty mix could take 5 to 10 years to take hold. The very immediate goal is neighborhood stabilization, transition will build as Uptown can get the neighborhood to invest in itself.

## 10. Build a solid organization of implementation partners.

Underlying all of these efforts is the most important component, a solid organization of public and private partners that are committed to the neighborhood and the importance of an implementation plan. Implementing change to the physical, economic and social fabric of this neighborhood is a long-term project. Once it starts, the work really never ends. There will always be improvements, development opportunities, issues and support that the neighborhood will require.

Getting people involved in the process is key to the success of any organization. Resistance to get involved by residents, business owners and property owners can be the most common obstacle to getting started. It takes a combination of education, promotion, publication relations, confidence, friendly persuasion, and sometimes pushing forward despite the opposition.

This organization must represent all aspects of the neighborhood, with each person recognizing the critical work that must happen to save this “place”, and to change it into a healthy neighborhood where people WANT to be, not where they HAVE to be. There are many organizational models that have been utilized for this work, but the most critical factor in having any organization be successful is based on skilled leadership. It is this leadership that will build the energy and focus to motivate the neighborhood, recruit volunteers, and sell the revitalization program to the community at large.

Whether this organization is led by volunteers, or a paid staff person, there are many tasks, both short-term and long-term that need to be done. Therefore, many participants or volunteers will need to be involved in the process, and they must buy into the value of this work, and be excited about the possibilities. Anthony A. Williams, the mayor of Washington, D.C. feels that “short-term initiatives are a down-payment on building trust, confidence, and a little momentum”.

There are many tasks that fortify and support Uptown that are as simple as arranging for flower pots, or coordinating community service programs for students, such as litter control. These short term goals will help build enthusiasm and create willingness to commit to that work. Some successes will come more easily and more quickly than others, but even when successes are far apart, everyone must keep their eye on the long-term benefits.

The Uptown Improvement Plan provides a comprehensive strategy to create a long-term, sustainable business district for Uptown Racine. The issues leading to the district's decline are varied and complex. Isolated, uncoordinated improvements will likely have limited success in creating long-term sustainability. Stabilization and revitalization efforts must be grounded in a sensible, comprehensive, and market feasible approach. However, the plan must also be forward thinking and consider long-term possibilities that enhance Uptown's unique position and identity. What is proposed is a comprehensive program to position Uptown for sustainability and success.

## I. A FRAMEWORK FOR SHORT AND LONG TERM IMPROVEMENTS

These recommendations have been created after careful consideration of input from area business owners, city staff, interested citizens, and analysis performed by planners, architects, urban designers, engineers, and real estate analysts. At the heart of these recommendations is the view that the Junction intersection and surrounding blocks is more than a series of mere intersections. Rather, the Junction is a unique, irreplaceable part of Racine's identity. The following recommendations have been created to enhance this identity as well as to help create a balance between the needs of a travel corridor with the interests of a sustainable business district.

Recommendations are divided into the following areas:

1. Image and Identity
2. Parking and Transportation
3. Redevelopment

### A. Short Term and Long Term Recommendations

The improvement plan contains both short-term and long term recommendations for the Uptown study area. It is critical that recommendations are prioritized. The short term recommendations detail what can be done in a relatively short time frame and will have a visible impact from a market standpoint. These recommendations contain actions that could be performed in the first five hours, five days, five months, or five years. Long term recommendations should be viewed as a series of more conceptual guidelines to address opportunities that may be appropriate as change is established.

A master plan map (Figure 8) is found on the following page. The recommendations are summarized on that map and described on subsequent pages. All recommendations are keyed to a corresponding map number.





- Image & Identity Recommendations**
- I-1 Initial District Clean Up
  - I-2 Promote Uptown Events
  - I-3 Create Historic District
  - I-4, I-5 Implement Design Overlay Districts
  - I-6 Wayfinding
  - I-7 Entrance Signage
  - I-8, I-9 Streetscape Improvements
  - I-9 Add New Focal Point & Consider Expanded/Improved Pedestrian Area

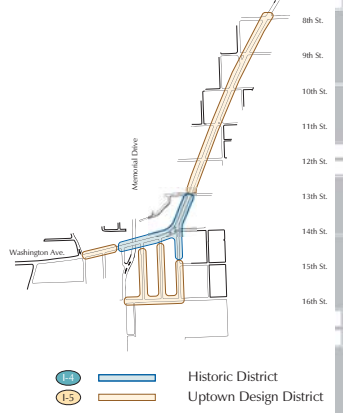



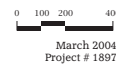
- Parking & Transportation Recommendations**
- P-1 Reorganize & Landscape Public Parking Areas
  - P-2 Improve & Share Private Parking Areas
  - T-1 Improved, Highly Visible Crosswalks
  - T-2 Create Well Designed Bus/Trolley Stops
  - T-3 Explore Opportunities to Better Connect Uptown to the Street Network

- Rehabilitation & Redevelopment Recommendations**
- R-1 Historic Rehabilitation
  - R-2 Neighborhood Stabilization
  - R-3 Redevelopment Opportunities

- Short Term Improvements
- Long Term Improvements


**PROPOSED DESIGN OVERLAY DISTRICTS**



March 2004  
 Project # 1897

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 • The Kubala Washatko Architects, Inc.


  
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## II. IMAGE AND IDENTITY: OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need to transform the negative image of Uptown. Currently many have noted that Uptown “is what it is”, “it won’t be anything different”, “it hasn’t been viable for 30 years”. There must be a dramatic effort made to improve this condition. Image and Identity recommendations are coded “I”.

The future identity in Uptown should reflect its strong urban connections, proximity to employment centers, historic architecture, local independent business sector, available parking, park linkages, and other irreplaceable assets. Such an identity must be created over time and promoted through joint advertising, signage, unified streetscape, and other elements to promote the new spirit of Uptown. This identity should be translated into the physical reality of the district. On going efforts, including the new banner program, should be incorporated into a larger effort.

### Image and Identity Opportunities:

- a. Take initial steps to create a positive Uptown Identity
- b. Improve the architectural character of Uptown.
- c. Add enhancements to public streets to make a safe, attractive environment.

### A. Initial Steps to Create a Positive Uptown Identity

#### I-1 Organize and promote initial building and site clean up. (Short Term)

There are several initial efforts that could begin immediately that would improve the condition of the business district real estate. The following points are examples of key, inexpensive, first steps to improve upon and enhance Uptown’s appearance.

- Improve perception by merely speaking about the area in a positive manner.
- Paint over historically inappropriate colors on storefronts.
- Improve quality of business signage and signboards on sidewalk.
- Improve cleanliness of storefront and sidewalk appearance. Remove handwritten and haphazard signage from windows. Keep signage simple and readable.
- Uncover boarded up windows.
- Fill vacant storefront windows with something to make the street look more alive. Vacant and boarded-up storefronts do not give that message. Find creative ways to fill store fronts including letting high school classes design interesting window displays for a class, decorate them during holidays, or include displays of information on the revitalization process.

#### I-2 Promote and create Uptown Events. (Short Term)

Such events could include:

- Establish and continue to hold an Uptown annual picnic, block party, or art fair as an opportunity to reintroduce people to Uptown.
- Explore the possibility of creating a historic walking tour for Uptown. Such a tour would involve the creation of a map that could serve as both a promotional piece for Uptown businesses and as a means to get people to walk the street and take notice of Uptown’s unique features.
- Explore options to allow for the display of public art in Uptown.

## **B. Improve the Architectural Character of Uptown**

### **I-3 Create the “Columbia Corners” Historic District (Short Term)**

Part of improving the overall identity is providing incentives to promote Uptown’s most distinguishing features, its historic building stock. To achieve this, a portion of the Uptown area should be designated the “Columbia Corners Historic District”, drawing upon the historic neighborhood identity. The area comprised of buildings dating from 1880 through 1935. The rich collection of extant buildings in this core area tells the story of commercial development over a large span of time. Creation of the district would have many benefits including:

- Provides property owners with access to additional sources of restoration funding such as tax credits, grants, and other incentives.
- Provides marketable identity out of existing resources.
- Attracts visitors into neighborhood.
- Provides recognition and much needed encouragement to the Uptown community to make improvements.
- Provides assurances to the quality of building improvements through architectural design guidelines.

Certain steps and standards do apply to achieve financial assistance including:

- Restoration/Rehabilitation work must adhere to the Secretary of the Interior Standards if financial incentives are used.
- Restoration/Rehabilitation plans must be approved to qualify for incentives. Pre-designation work can qualify for incentives.
- Property owners should agree on designation, although this is not absolutely necessary.

### **I-4 Use Design Guidelines to promote sensitive building improvements and compatible new construction. (Short Term)**

Detailed design guidelines have been created for Uptown and are included as Appendix 1. The guidelines provide recommendations on restoring the historic character of building facades and to promote development that is compatible with historic buildings.

### **I-5 Implement “Uptown Design Guidelines” as an official design overlay district (Short Term).**

In conjunction with I-4, The City of Racine should implement a design overlay zoning district to enforce the detailed design guidelines. The target area would be properties fronting along Washington Avenue, between Taylor Avenue and Eighth Street. This overlay district supplements the zoning code with standards guiding the form, placement, and appearance of buildings.

Adoption of the design overlay district will be enforceable for new non-residential construction and building improvements above a set dollar amount. The intent is to encourage high quality and complementary design. Outside of the historic district, the intent is not to create a uniform “style” or character for the street, but rather to promote new construction and additions that complement the historic character, image, and scale of buildings in both Uptown and Downtown.

## **C. Add enhancements to public streets to make a safe, attractive environment.**

### **I-6 Create an expanded wayfinding and parking signage program (Short Term).**

The creation of an Uptown wayfinding program is one way to improve access, image, and circulation through the district. The City of Racine has already adopted several wayfinding programs, including a wayfinding system along Washington Avenue. Current wayfinding provides direction to neighborhoods and districts such as Uptown, West Racine, and Downtown.

It is recommended that a select number of uniquely designed, strategically placed wayfinding signs be added to Uptown. Generally wayfinding in Uptown would provide direction to parking and larger destinations near Uptown. Highlighting the nearby attractions will also help to emphasize Uptown's close proximity to nearby destinations. To avoid visual clutter, it is recommended that only three to four destinations be added per sign.

Possible destinations to note could include:

- Golden Rondelle
- Root River Trail
- Park High School
- Racine Business Center
- Downtown
- Lakefront
- St. Luke's Hospital.

Additionally there are opportunities to provide new parking signs with the wayfinding program. Parking areas are currently signed, and two types of identification signs currently exist. The less effective signs have green letters on gray background and are typically hard to read, especially to traffic moving through the Junction at over 30 mph. It is recommended that as new wayfinding is added, coordinated parking signs be added. It is recommended that signs use the other design, featuring a black background, as they are generally more readable.

### **I-7 Add entrance signs and features to Uptown Entrance Zones (Short Term)**

The key entrance points to Uptown should be marked with specialty entrance signage. These entrance zones include:

- 13th Street and Washington Avenue,
- Memorial Drive and Washington Avenue,
- 14th Street near at the rail line.

A future entrance zone could be established at Valley Drive if redevelopment between Valley Drive become key Uptown anchors. All gateway signage should include landscaping and plantings to enhance the character of the entrance zones.

## I-8 Add coordinated streetscape improvements (Short and Long Term)

The following recommendations identify general streetscape improvements for the Uptown area. Improvements vary depending on the location, with more intensive improvements targeted for the core junction area. A “family” of streetscape amenities will establish an overall image and identity for area and south side.

The following streetscape zones are recommended:

**FIGURE 9: UPTOWN STREETScape ZONES**



### **Type I: Junction Zone (Short and Long Term)**

Washington Avenue: Memorial Drive to 13th Street

The Uptown Improvement Organization has recently complemented the streetscape with new benches, banners, and refuse containers. The following short and long term improvements should be considered for this streetscape zone.

Short Term Streetscape Enhancements:

- Completion of Detailed Design Plan, addressing the complex engineering and challenging site conditions in Uptown.
- Inclusion of a comprehensive package of street trees, planters, and hanging baskets as specified in the design plan.
- Provide plantings at median islands and expand in areas currently striped but not part of the raised island.
- Holiday/Seasonal lighting displays that can be accommodated because of the duplex receptacles on roadway lights.

Note: The addition of street trees should be considered as part of this program. Certain locations may lend themselves for tree plantings, including the wide terrace area across from 14th street in which no on-street parking is present to shelter pedestrians from fast moving traffic. To accommodate street trees, existing pavers would have to be saw-cut and removed. Retro-fit tree grates are available that would fit within the three foot terrace.

In the long term, as lighting and utilities are upgraded or redesigned, the addition of pedestrian scaled lights should be considered.

### **Type II: Uptown-Downtown Zone (Short Term)**

Washington Avenue: 13th Street to 8th Street

A key improvement is strengthening the visual connection between Uptown and Downtown along Washington Avenue. This includes improvements to both public and private property. Public streetscape improvements should include the addition of banners and plantings between 8th and 13th streets. Plantings would likely include specialty planters or hanging baskets.

### **Type III: Junction Avenue, Owen and Ann Streets (Short Term)**

Junction Avenue and Ann Street represent the key entrance to Uptown's parking areas. Traffic from Memorial Drive will continue to be moved towards Uptown on these streets via 16th Street. The visual character of this stretch defines, at least in part, how the district is perceived. Future street design should also consider the addition of street trees, where feasible. Entry banners and wayfinding signage should be considered for this streetscape zone. Future efforts could include widened sidewalk areas with amenities to better link the parking lots to Washington Avenue.

### **Type IV: Parking Areas (Short Term)**

As parking areas are reconfigured or redesigned, the Uptown Identity and streetscape should be carried into these spaces. Add banners, pedestrian lighting, plantings, and screenings to rear parking areas to carry the Uptown identity and design into the critical parking areas. Additional lighting is also key to promote safety, especially for patrons parking in the evening. Additionally, the design guidelines established for the screening of dumpsters should be followed in parking areas.



**Type IV: Junction to Main Street**

Streetscape improvements along 14th Street present an opportunity to provide better physical and visual connections between the Washington Park area and Lake Michigan. New streetscape should include plantings and other “green” features and improved pedestrian and bike access along 14th Street. This will also provide an attractive connection between the more stable lakefront neighborhoods and Uptown. Additionally this will strengthen visual connections between the Junction and nearby employment centers and provide a long-term “green” connection from West Racine to the Lake, centered in Uptown. There are opportunities in the wide terrace and cleared lands near Johnson Wax to pursue these enhancements.

**FIGURE 10: STREETScape AMENITIES**



**I-9. Improve the Junction intersection as a focal point and create an “Uptown Plaza” area (Long Term)**

The Junction intersection is an important place that defines the Uptown experience. Historic photos show a variety of different focal points at this intersection, including a public fountain. A new focal feature, for example a clock tower, could be considered for those areas in which there is enlarged right of way.

A conceptual recommendation for long term consideration is a redesign of the Junction intersection that adds for improved pedestrian or plaza space.



### **III. PARKING & TRANSPORTATION: OPPORTUNITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS**

Parking and transportation are critical to the function and success of any business district. In an urban environment such as Uptown, a visible, attractive, safe, and convenient parking supply should complement a car, bike, and pedestrian accessibility. Currently, a lack of parking spaces is not considered problematic. Opportunities to correct poor parking visibility, circulation, and lot conditions, however, should be taken. Specific recommendations are coded “P” and “T”.

Recent improvements have been made to Uptown including the reconfiguration of the Junction intersection. These improvements were installed to minimized auto, rail and pedestrian conflicts. However, concerns remain over the speed at which traffic moves through the Junction and the difficult environment for pedestrians in the area.

Understanding that there will be no comprehensive redesign of the Junction intersection in the next 20 years, short term recommendations are aimed at striking a cost-effective balance between the promoting of traffic flow and the needs of business owners along the street. Long term recommendations to better connect Uptown to the surrounding street network are conceptual and meant to serve as a guide to improve overall circulation over the next twenty years, as circulation patterns and needs change.

#### **Parking and Transportation Opportunities**

- a. Improve the existing parking supply to be more functional, visible, and attractive
- b. Improve access and connections for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

#### **A. Improve the existing parking supply**

**P-1 Reorganize public parking lots to increase parking spaces and improve circulation. (Short & Long Term)**

Based on a review of existing conditions, it is possible to increase the supply of parking by re-striping or reorganizing existing public and private parking lots to more efficiently utilize available space. This can be done to promote better parking circulation, landscaping, lighting while providing additional capacity. Two conceptual parking layouts have been created showing how capacity can be increased in the “Tradewinds” and “Ann Street” Lot. It is also recommended that reorganization efforts include provisions for attractive rear entrances that link the parking areas to the street. This is not to diminish the importance of attractive front entrances, but rather, another way to promote alternative access to the critical parking areas.

### Ann Street Parking Lot

The conceptual parking sketch for the “Ann Street” lot on the south side of Washington Avenue improves the overall circulation and adds an additional 14 stalls within the existing right-of-way. Additionally, the reorganization provides opportunity for landscaping, lighting and beautification. Five foot islands between parking rows are recommended. These islands allow for better pedestrian circulation and could accommodate overhangs of two feet, if needed. The efficient use of this space is critical as this is the key parking lot serving Uptown.

As the need for additional parking grows, the master plan shows the adjacent properties that could accommodate additional parking stalls. This is a long term recommendation to be considered only as future parking is needed.

FIGURE 11: ANN STREET PARKING LOT





### Tradewinds Parking Lot

The conceptual parking diagram for the Tradewinds Parking Lot shows over 20 new spaces, with new, highly visible parking on the side of the building. Total parking could be over 80 stalls, depending on the parking and loading needs of businesses.

These conceptual drawings illustrate concepts to better organize parking areas. They are based on existing data supplied by the City of Racine. It is recommended that these concepts are considered as these sites are formally designed.

FIGURE 12: TRADEWINDS PARKING LOT



### P-2 Promote Shared Parking Agreements between private property owners. (Long Term)

Shared parking is an appropriate strategy for a moderate-high density mixed-use district such as Uptown because there is the potential that people will park in one place and walk to various stores and businesses. This pedestrian activity and convenient access to various commercial establishments improves and maintains the viability of all of Uptown's businesses. Additionally, a fully developed mixed use district will provide different time demands for parking. For example, those parking for Easterday during the day would not be taking up parking spots for evening dining at the Corner House. The City should continue to use flexibility when determining parking standards when parking can be gained through a combination of shared, on-street, and public parking.

One challenge that needs to be explored is that of future shared parking areas for private property. The business association should take an active role in promoting master lease agreements (formal agreements between property owners) to allow for shared parking of private parking lots. There are opportunities, especially between 13th and 14th Street to reorganize and share parking spaces to promote an overall increase in the parking supply.

## **B. Improve access and connections**

### **T-1 Create highly visible crosswalks. (Short Term)**

Pedestrian safety has been raised as a concern by the steering committee members and business owners. There is a strong perception that traffic is now moving faster through the Junction. Most patrons of Uptown will be walking at some point, even if their initial trip was generated by car. For example, a majority of the existing and future parking supply is located on the south side of Washington Avenue. Higher traffic speeds, in excess of posted limits, limit comfortable pedestrian accommodations that are needed in an urban shopping district. This is especially true in areas where there is no on-street parking.

At a minimum, the crosswalks should be re-striped to increase their visibility. In addition, specialty pavement types should be considered for key intersections at Owen, Ann and Junction Avenues. Certain inlaid crosswalk materials are designed to hold up in high traffic areas and should be considered. Highly visible crosswalks will also provide visual cues for drivers to slow down in the Junction area and improve the aesthetic quality of the street.

### **T-2 Provide bus-trolley access service and well designed stops. (Long Term)**

Pursue opportunities to link the Downtown bus-trolley service to Uptown. Such an opportunity should be pursued in conjunction with the development of attractive transit stops that mark clear arrival points in Uptown.

### **T-3 Consider long term opportunities to better connect Uptown to the existing street grid network.**

As conditions improve in Uptown, the business association should work with existing property owners and the City to determine ways to better connect Uptown the street network. A healthy urban business district makes use of multiple connections to the street network. Currently Uptown is cut-off from this grid in many ways. There are several long term improvements to consider over the next twenty years, as conditions warrant:

- **Consider northbound connection from Memorial Drive (Long Term)**

Aside from improving access, this would create a related opportunity to create a new gateway feature announcing arrival into Uptown. Upon preliminary review, design would likely need to include a signalized intersection and dedicated left turn lane. Such a street could be created within existing rights-of-way. This is recognized as an expensive improvement. A careful review of this project should be performed in conjunction with large scale redevelopment or specific redevelopment plan for the properties on Washington Avenue from Valley Drive to Memorial Drive. Such an improvement may be part of the overall infrastructure costs to accommodate future development. These sites, or portions of these sites, could be combined as a sizable redevelopment project for the south side. Likely, these areas would have their own parking and thus routing traffic down 16th Street may not be the most effective long term route. Depending on the redevelopment's future traffic generation, this is an option that should be considered as an opportunity to improve traffic flow, access, and overall design aesthetics of the south side.

- **Extend 15th Street over rail. (Long Term)**

Another option to improve the overall circulation is to create a connection at 15th Street over the rail line. The City has previously sought to make this connection but costs and area property owners limited that pursuit. Such an option should be considered a long-term possibility, if it makes sense to accommodate planned redevelopment along Junction Avenue.



## IV. REHABILITATION AND REDEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Rehabilitation and Redevelopment efforts are key in both the short term and long term in Uptown. The desired long-term business mix includes a mix of entertainment uses, galleries, and other services that support the “Main Street” of Racine’s South Side. In the short term, the likely business mix will likely include more neighborhood supporting businesses. These might include salon services, video stores, and fast food / restaurants. This effort must be done in tandem with physical improvements and changes to the underlying safety concerns.

### Redevelopment Opportunities

- a. Provide redevelopment opportunities that restore and complement Uptown’s historic character.
- b. Attract “urban pioneers” to invest in Uptown
- c. Increase owner occupancy in Uptown and surrounding neighborhood.

### R-1 Renovate and restore historic buildings throughout the Uptown Business District.

The restoration of historic storefronts is a redevelopment project that will occur in both the short and the long term. The numerous city, state, and federal programs for appropriate rehabilitations are outlined in the Appendix and should be used to secure grants, loans, and tax credits to help fund these efforts.

### R-2 Promote and support neighborhood rehabilitation efforts in the neighborhoods surrounding Uptown. (Short and Long Term)

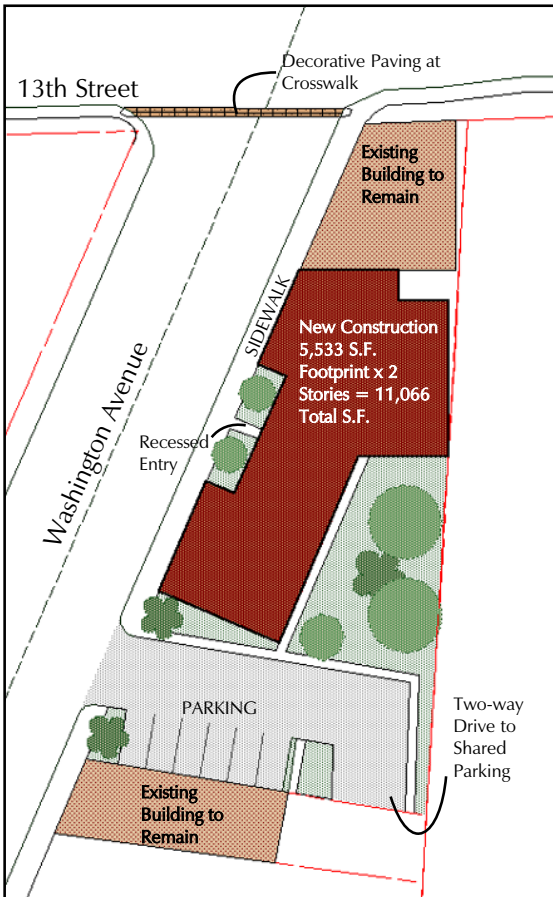
The scope of this plan was to focus on the Uptown Area. However, the stabilization of the area surrounding Uptown is a critical component to strengthening the Uptown Business District. Detailed actions are included in the *Southside Neighborhood Plan* and should continue to be implemented. Increased home ownership is a benefit to strengthening this neighborhood that has so many locational amenities.

### R-3 Short and long-term redevelopment opportunities.

There are several short-term and long-term redevelopment opportunities in Uptown. Initial business recruitment will likely include service businesses that would support the more immediate neighborhood. These might include salon services, video stores, and fast food / restaurants. This effort must be done in tandem with physical improvements and changes to the underlying safety concerns. As improvements are made to the business district, it might be interesting to consider a slightly “off beat” tenant mix. This might include all natural food market, acupuncturist, cooperative art gallery, recycled clothing, or alternative theatre. This could help lead the direction of the district to something more arts and entertainment oriented. However, this transition could take 5 to 10 years to take hold. The very immediate goal is neighborhood stabilization; transition will build as the neighborhood to invests in itself.

There are several infill development sites that could help fill in “holes” in the existing blockface. These sites should be developed or redeveloped under the direction of the design guidelines. This will allow for both individual expression and complementary designs to existing structures. In the Junction area, suggested uses for these areas would be mixed use, retail, office, live-work studio space. These areas are noted on the Master Plan.

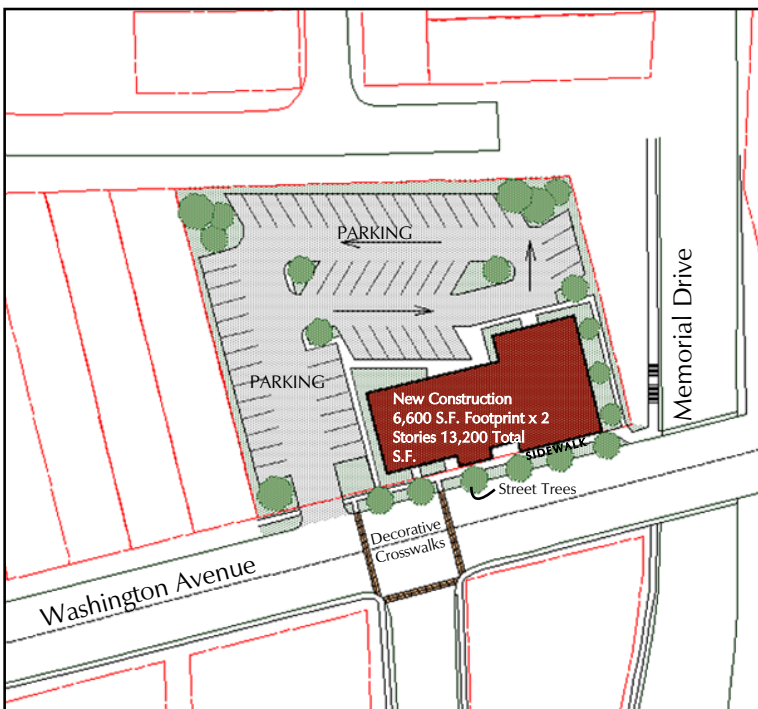
**FIGURE 13: CONCEPT PLAN FOR UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES NEAR 13TH STREET(3.)**



**A. Key Potential Redevelopment Sites**

1. *East side of Junction Avenue between 16th Street up to the businesses on 14th Street:* Open space on Junction Avenue provides opportunities for gathering spaces, shared parking, and other events. Sites could be part of a larger-scale long term commercial, business incubator, or mixed use redevelopment.
2. *Vacant/Underutilized parcel between 14th and 15th Streets, west of the rail line:* This parcel is a key site for future employment-based development, for either expansion of the Twin Disc facility or related use. It is recommended that future design of this site adds positive green spaces, compatible urban design, and site design that promotes the use of STH 32 (Racine Street) as the primary truck route.
3. There are redevelopment opportunities between 13th and 14th Street to fill in "holes" in the blockface and to add structures that are complementary to adjacent Uptown buildings. Figure 13 illustrates how new construction can maintain a setback continuity, provide landscaping for the street, and link to an organized, shared parking supply.
4. *City-owned parking lot site at the corner of 13th and Washington:* This is a key location for additional retail, or mixed-use development with a combination of retail, office, or live-work studio space. There are unique opportunities, with the topography of this site, to encourage sheltered parking on this site.

**FIGURE 14: CONCEPT PLAN FOR THE COMMERCIAL AREA BETWEEN VALLEY DRIVE AND NORTH MEMORIAL DRIVE. (6.)**



5. Residential, industrial, and commercial areas north of the primary study area (below the bluff) that are underutilized. Efforts to improve home ownership in these areas should continue, as outlined in the *Southside Neighborhood Plan*.
6. The theatre site remains a critical piece to serve as a community draw. It is recommended that the city and business association work with the property owner to fund a detailed study to determine the feasibility and associated costs with different rehabilitation scenarios.
7. *Commercial area on north side of Washington Avenue between Valley Drive and North Memorial:* Sites may either be for sale or previously identified as planned redevelopment sites. This is a key site to attract a large retail, office, or mixed use building to bring a sizable anchor to the Uptown Area.

# 5

## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION: A STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Implementation is the logical step following the adoption of the plan. Implementation requires several key components to be successful. Implementation must be done with commitment – that is, the community must undertake plan implementation with the full understanding of its complexity, the time required, and the relationship and sequence of the Plan’s various elements. Implementation must be funded; the community must allocate adequate resources for staff, professional assistance, project funding, and financial leverage.

Implementation requires partnerships; public and private sector individuals and organizations must come together as an implementation team. Finally, implementation must be dynamic; unanticipated redevelopment opportunities will present themselves through the process of planned implementation, so the implementation team must be able to assess and reprioritize on a continuous basis to take advantage of emerging opportunities.

The implementation strategy focuses on an achievable 5-year program. Much of this section is devoted to strategies for short-term organization, business retention, and perception changing. A portion of this effort is providing incentives and direction for private property cleanup. Targeted physical improvements are also discussed.

- Implementation organization
- Business Retention and Recruitment
- Strategies for working with Developers
- Attracting Urban Pioneers
- Project Priorities: Uptown’s Benchmarks of Progress.
- Implementation timeline that identifies project sequencing
- Funding opportunities

## I. IMPLEMENTATION ORGANIZATION

It is recommended that an expanded public-private partnership manage and guide the implementation of the Uptown Improvement Plan for the first three years. The key players included a hired staff person and an interim expanded business association (The Uptown Partners) to better involve all the players needed for success.

### A. The Uptown Partners

An interim group, referred to here as the “Uptown Partners”, should be established to lead the initial implementation action steps in the first three years. The partners group should include between 8 and 10 members, each representing a different public or private stakeholder group. The Uptown partners would have representatives from:

- Business and property owners
- Alderperson
- City Staff Liaison
- Sustainable Racine
- Business Community Representatives
- Racine County Economic Development Corporation.
- Neighborhood Representative

This group will coordinate the public and private activities with the support of a staff team. A paid staff person (Uptown Manager) will administrate, manage and coordinate the work program identified by the Uptown Partners. The mission of this group is to set the implementation process in motion, develop business and property owner support for a potential Business Improvement District and develop a fully functioning Business Association. After three years, the partners group could remain involved as an advisory group to the Business Association. The Uptown Partners would be supported by the following:

#### *Business Association*

The Uptown Improvement Organization has had numerous successes, including the leading of this planning process and streetscape enhancements. The business and property owners will continue to play an important role in encouraging district promotion, business outreach, plantings and plantings maintenance, and similar items. Many of the recommendations in this plan go beyond what a business association alone could accomplish, and for that reason, the expanded “partner” organization is recommended. The mission of this group is to recruit new members who will be actively involved in sub-committees.

#### *Paid Staff Person*

A technical staff person or Uptown Manager is needed to oversee and coordinate public and private implementation efforts. This may be a full, part-time or shared position.

#### *Sub Committees*

Sub committees would meet on an add-needed basis and provide support services for specific tasks as organized by staff. Specific sub committees include organization and administration, business retention and recruitment, image and identity, outreach and public relations, public works and community safety.

#### *Staff Support Team*

City planning and engineering staff will continue to play a vital role in providing expertise, review, and technical support. Additional services, including building inspection, and other programs should be considered to support Uptown property owners.

#### *Consultant Support*

There will be opportunities to bring in consultants to provide specific implementation-related services. Potential services include architectural design and review services, future design, business planning, and similar services.

# Uptown Racine Implementation Organization

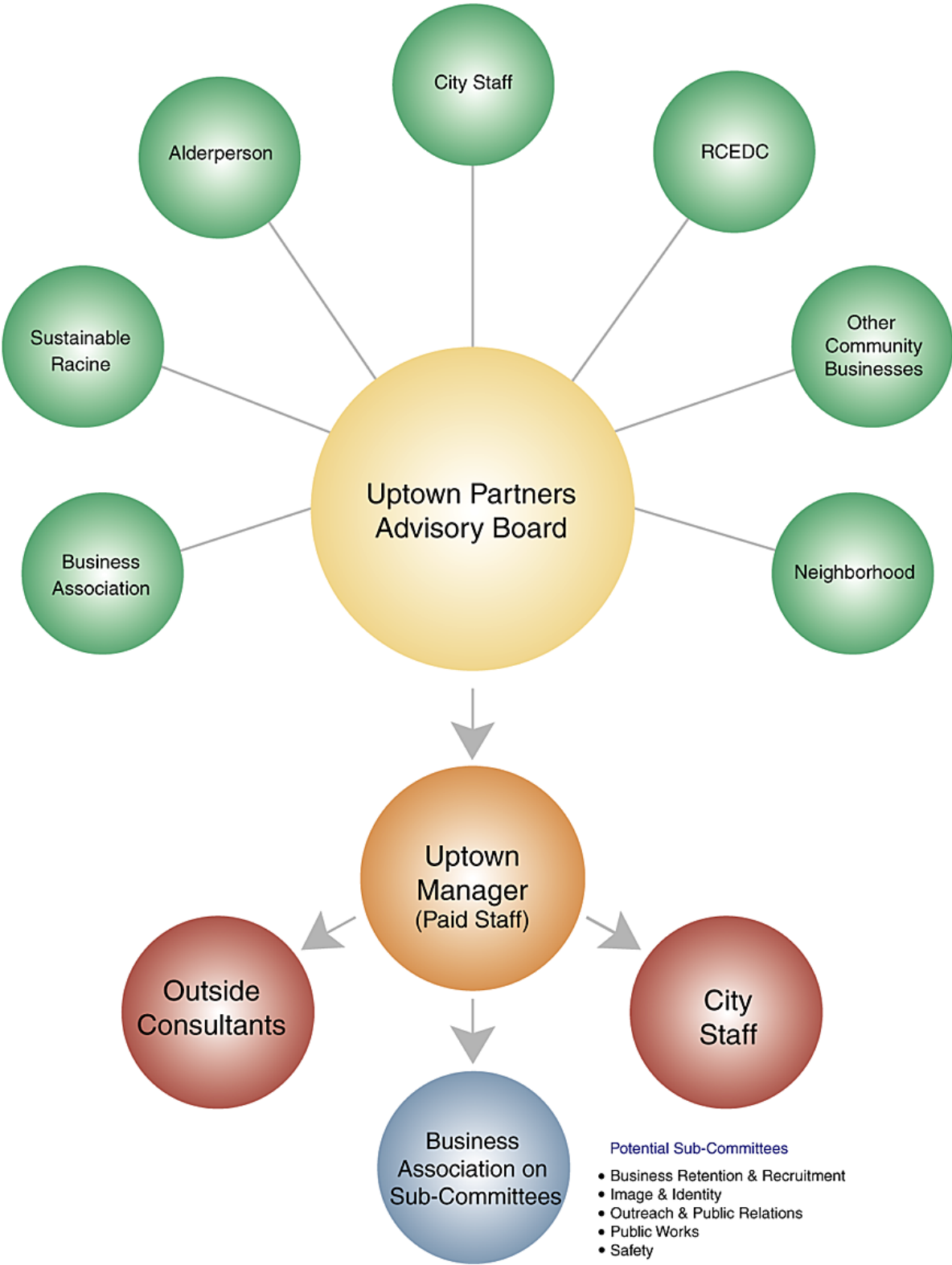


FIGURE 15: IMPLEMENTATION ORGANIZATION DIAGRAM



## **B. Funding the Uptown Partners**

The Uptown Partners should establish a pledge program that targets area businesses, property owners, residents and other neighborhood stakeholders to fund the three year operation of the Uptown Partners. This may include funds for a staff person. These pledges should fund a revitalization fund to serve as a depository for fundraising that will support the Uptown Partners' specific projects. A fundraising foundation established as a non-profit 501(c)(3) should be considered. The city would be asked to contribute to the fund. This could be a priority for 2004-2005.

## **II. BUSINESS RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT**

One of the most important components of creating a sustainable business district is to have healthy merchants. A common-sense approach to business retention and recruitment is needed to guide the process. In the first stages, efforts should focus first on retaining existing anchor businesses. A business retention and recruitment subcommittee should be formed to oversee the process and work to identify what resources may be needed to support existing businesses, on an on-going basis.

### **Year 1 — Priorities for Business Retention and Recruitment**

- Establish a business retention and recruitment committee.
- Identify needed resources, including staff person. Work with a technical staff to oversee, coordinate, and perform certain tasks.
- Identify and interview existing businesses to determine what assistance would best benefit them, i.e. marketing, inventory control/buying, financial planning, customer service, employee retention, neighborhood safety issues, parking, or succession planning.
- Identify available resources and anticipated needs, i.e. professional services, money, printing, postage, working/meeting space, equipment, etc.
- Conduct monthly retention/recruitment meetings.
- Target primary focus area of retention/recruitment and begin process of gathering data on businesses and real estate.

These efforts can stabilize or even save a business by offering resources (technical assistance, workshops, training, speakers, connections, referrals, etc) regarding store merchandising, inventory control and buying, internet opportunities, financial planning, promotion/marketing/advertising, customer service, employee hiring/retention and succession planning. Additionally, programs that offer façade design and financing assistance, joint marketing plans, promotions or events that increase pedestrian traffic, ongoing newsletters, updated consumer surveys demographics and marketing materials can all be of assistance to existing businesses.

### **Year 2 — Priorities for Business Recruitment and Retention**

- Continue monthly retention/recruitment meetings.
- Complete the initial data gathering on businesses and real estate.
- Conduct focus meetings with property owners to garner their interest and involvement in business recruitment, and strategize ways to work together on filling vacancy with desired and qualified candidates.
- Support work on physical improvements and upgrades in the business district.
- Begin recruitment planning. This includes having current data on all aspects of the business district, and an initial plan of targeted business mix.
- Monitor current health of the business district. This includes business starts, failures, closings, any other issues that may have impacted the district positively or negatively.
- Evaluate competitive markets within Racine, and determine what work still needs to be done before beginning an initial recruitment effort.



## **A. Business Recruitment Strategy**

After stabilization efforts take hold, the next challenge is bringing new businesses to Uptown. An organized effort to retain and recruit new businesses will better Uptown's chances to get the right mix and quality of businesses desired. Property owners and developers will become partners in the process when they feel supported in looking for the right tenants for their buildings, and businesses considering Racine or the Uptown area will realize the benefit of working with an organization that is prepared to assist them.

Knowledge is strength when trying to find the right businesses for Uptown. There should be an awareness of the successful merchants, the not-so-successful merchants, demographics, real estate, zoning or signage constraints, and planned public improvements that will give Uptown a competitive edge in the recruitment process. A goal will be to identify those market areas or niches that could be expanded upon or filled by new businesses.

The process of business recruitment requires a plan of action that is organized, and supported by interested and involved stakeholders, who also have the resources to do the required work. The following is a series of steps that a business recruitment effort can use to move forward:

### **1. Organization of the Business Recruitment Committee**

This initial group is extremely important for establishing the enthusiasm, momentum, professionalism and organization that will be needed. The committee should represent a diverse group within the community, i.e. accountants, attorneys, property owners, retailers, and Realtors. These need to be people who can represent the "big picture" of the community and can leave their personal agendas at the door. They need to be problem solvers, and action oriented. This process needs leadership to stay on track and organized. It needs persons who can be prepared for the work and professional in their delivery. All forms of support, financial and technical, should be considered.

### **2. Draft a Work Plan**

The first step for this group is to start with an initial work plan. All initial steps should be listed and prioritized. These steps might include the following: a) gather current data and demographics about the community; b) inventory the real estate in the target area, particularly the vacant or underutilized buildings; meet with the property owners of these vacant or underutilized buildings to garner their support in the process; c) create a simple sales package; d) develop your prospect list, etc. Realistic timeframes need to be assigned to every step. The right committee member(s) need to be assigned to every step (match skills to tasks). Most importantly, involve the community in the work and indicate that their assistance, ideas and contacts will be valuable to the process. This work plan is not static, it should be reviewed, updated and modified as needed.

### **3. Lay the Groundwork**

The “business” of business recruitment is being able to SELL Uptown the right way, to the right parties. To sell anything, one must know as much about your product as possible. Much data has been gathered for the Improvement Plan. Revisit this as necessary and gather additional pieces as needed. Useful data includes demographics, trade area definitions, financial incentives that may be available, tourist information, parking data, planned improvements, zoning and building code conditions or restrictions, traffic counts and pedestrian counts.

As mentioned above, it is important to inventory the real estate and secure the cooperation of the building owners and the real estate brokers if the property is listed for sale or lease. This requires a look at the present businesses and why they are working, who are the “anchor” tenants, the previous failures or relocations, a current shopper profile and an estimate of potential retail demand. All of this data should be analyzed to identify any trends or niches that seem apparent, and used to support the community profile and image.

Finally, this information will be the basis for developing a simple sales package that is interesting, informative and current. The package should summarize the major assets and cultivate a positive image of the community in the prospects mind. The cost of packages can vary considerably, so options and budget should be considered. A well designed pocket folder can be very cost effective, and hold a variety of data and community information that can be easily modified or changed. Again, staff resources outside of the committee can be used to create these pieces.

### **4. Design an Ideal Tenant Mix**

This is perhaps the most subjective section of work. It requires evaluating the information gathered on the community, a look at available real estate opportunities, and the likely business types that could succeed in Uptown. The market assessment outlines preliminary recommendations.

Ideal businesses fill a market demand, blend with and enhance existing businesses, utilize the available vacant space wisely, create a synergy and offer a uniqueness of business type, merchandise or style. Fortify the existing niches by targeting businesses that will give shoppers a deeper range of products or experiences. It can be useful to “lease” vacancies on paper first. Create a lease plan of the target area and insert all current businesses and note the anchor tenants. Identify the vacancies and acknowledge their size and relationships to other businesses. Test ideas in the vacant spaces and see if the idea has merit.

For example, a potential opportunity for a specialty food/kitchen shop has been identified. This business needs to be researched to understand their typical space needs. Does that match a current vacancy? This type of business needs to be with like minded specialty shops, not between a hardware store and a plumbing shop, even if that’s where your vacancy is located. By going through this process, one can put the best foot forward to introduce a specific space opportunity to a potential tenant.

### **5. Identifying Prospective Tenants**

Once appropriate target business types are identified, the question remains...how does one find them? The following ideas should be considered: 1) purchase direct mail lists for just about any category or product line, 2) utilize telephone directories and city directories (many of these are now online), 3) collect retail merchant lists from other communities, 4) look for frequent advertisers in local and regional newspapers, 5) identify if a trade association for this retail or business category and advertise in their trade publications, 6) utilize national retail tenant directories, 7) visit other communities.

Additionally, don’t forget to look in your own “backyard” and identify businesses that are currently operating out of homes, expansions of existing businesses, struggling businesses that might benefit a more appropriate niche strategy, or current store managers that want to start their own business. Again, one

must inform the rest of the community. Make it know what kind of business Uptown is looking for. These connections often pay off. It is important to be open, creative and be selective. Business recruitment requires determination and time when seeking out the right businesses for the community.

## **6. Making Contact with Prospective Tenants**

The first contact one has with a prospective tenant is important. Consider sending a well-written letter that will garner their attention. It should be personalized, not a form letter, and impress them with specific knowledge of their business. Express why Uptown would be a perfect match for their business. Enclose just enough data to tantalize them, but not to overwhelm them. Designate someone to perform follow-up phone calls to the prospective tenants to confirm receipt of the letter and see if there is interest in a meeting. A smooth, direct sales pitch should be developed to explain the benefits of this opportunity. It is important to note available incentives and how Racine and Uptown is prepared and ready to assist a new business. Be patient with the contacts. Provide them with any other information they might need, but don't speculate or guess about information given to them. If they are not interested, work that rejection into a referral.

## **7. Getting a Prospect to Say Yes**

Even if a potential business is interested, there is much work to complete the deal. The most important part is to make it so simple to work with Uptown, so that the "yes" will just happen. Every step of the way, one must be prepared to handle objections, concerns, and any obstacles that might come up. If the potential business is concerned about financing their inventory or improvements, take them to see the local banker. If the potential business wants outside dining but the zoning doesn't allow for it, work through the process with the municipality. If they object to some of the lease terms, assist in negotiating with the landlord. It is important to provide a single contact person for every prospective business to work with. This contact person is responsible for keeping negotiations moving and follow-up on all remaining details.

## **8. Retaining the Businesses You Recruit**

The work is not complete once you have successfully found a new business for your community. It is important to generate a welcome for this business and make sure that they are settled in and operating according to their plans. Keep up contact with new businesses in both good times and bad. Involve the new business in the business association and other organizations, and, involve them in your future business recruitment efforts. They can speak from experience how the process worked and what changes could be made to the action plan.

## **9. Develop a Sales System**

During the business recruitment process, there needs to be a critique the work plan. It should be updated based on experience. The committee will want to create a repeatable sales process that will work again. Keep all contact files and sales materials updated. Reevaluate the recruitment criteria for the next opportunity and modify it as necessary. It is important not to forget to get what ever help you need from including consultants, Realtors, leasing agents, developers, bankers, Wisconsin Department of Commerce, UW Extension, merchandising analysts, national demographic firms, or other resources.

## **10. Maximize Uptown's Success**

Once there has been success in recruiting a new business, all efforts and contributions should be recognized. Celebrate a grand opening with the new business, run a special ad announcing the new business in the Journal Times, have a feature article run about the business recruitment work and your success, speak at the community meetings such as Rotary about your accomplishments. After the "dust has settled" make sure to get testimonials from the new business, their landlord, from elected officials, other businesses, etc. that can be used in the next round of recruitment.

### III. STRATEGIES FOR REINVESTMENT

Promoting development interest in Uptown is an involved, complex task. The short term recommendations are aimed at stabilizing the district and will lead to transforming Uptown into a competitive area to attract private investor interest. We recommend a two step process. Initially, reinvestment in Uptown may come from a group often referred to as “urban pioneers.”

The term “urban pioneer” refers to entrepreneurs that recognize the potential of Uptown’s historic stock and location, but may lack the resources to purchase or rehabilitate property. Financial assistance programs to underwrite the purchase costs need to be considered. Different opportunities exist and include: targeted funding through Racine’s Redevelopment Authority or funding through local lender commitment programs. Working with local banks to establish such a program should be pursued. Additional façade and grant programs outlined in the funding section are also available to defray costs and encourage investments among this target group.

As the district stabilizes and improvements are in place, the area will become more attractive to traditional developers and investors. In this phase, it will be important to be proactive and recruit high-quality developers who are committed to developing properties that are consistent with the master plan and will contribute to the long-term economic vitality and historic character of Uptown. The following strategies are recommended to ensure quality design:

- Leadership within the community, both public and private, is supportive of the master plan and its goals.
- All incentives that are available for the project are defined, and there is an understanding of how, and who can use them.
- Creative funding solutions are in place to attract Urban Pioneers.
- There is an overall plan in place that acknowledges not only the specific project or area, but how that ties into the larger community
- Design guidelines are in place.
- Appropriate zoning is in place.
- Utilize land acquisition when sites critical to the overall redevelopment plan can be secured for future development.
- Community management and key decision makers are “on the same page”, so the development process doesn’t get bogged down in an inability to come to consensus.
- A list of preferred developers is organized, reflecting the specific project and the developer’s capabilities.
- The development process within the community is clear and directed, perhaps with one point of contact.
- The community has control of the property.
- A developer “hit list” is organized, reflecting the specific project and the developer’s capabilities.
- A concise RFP is developed, with clear directives and a method for weighing responses.
- Each RFP response is evaluated for how it supports the master plan aesthetically, financially and fulfills a market niche.
- Each RFP response is evaluated for how it supports the master plan aesthetically, financially and fulfills a market niche.

# UPTOWN'S BENCHMARKS OF PROGRESS

The following is a list of benchmarks of what can be done in the first “five days,” “five weeks,” “five months” or “five years.” These timeframes are used as a metaphor to illustrate that implementation starts immediately and is ongoing. Tasks are broken down by potential subcommittees.

- First Five Days - Initiatives that can begin immediately.
- First Five Weeks - Short-term initiatives to start more complex projects.
- First Five Months - Efforts that position Uptown for success.
- First Five Years - Initiatives that result in highly visible outcomes.

## ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

### First Five Days

- Adopt Uptown Improvement Plan
- Post and display Uptown “Benchmarks of Success” in prominent locations.

### First Five Weeks

- Create interim Uptown Partners group.
- Set goals and work plan (annual event)

### First Five Months

- Fundraising for operation and events
- Hire technical staff person
- Review and apply for available grants (annual event)
- Review and confirm work plan, on an annual basis.

### First Five Years

- Transition back to business association or BID district.

## BUSINESS RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

### First Five Weeks

- Establish a business retention and recruitment committee

### First Five Months

- Conduct interviews with existing businesses to determine additional needs
- Establish and update a detailed business and property data base.

### First Five Years

- Develop a business recruitment action plan
- Develop an “urban pioneer” real estate program.

## OUTREACH AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

### First Five Days

- Form outreach and public relations committee
- Identify a vacant storefront and fill it with a display devoted to the Plan.
- Create press releases after positive events

### First Five Weeks

- Re-establish a quarterly newsletter

### First Five Months + Five Years

- Create marketing package for developers

## IMAGE AND IDENTITY

### First Five Days

- Establish image and identity community.
- Establish quarterly “Uptown Clean-Up Days” to “Clean and Green” the area.
- Continue to schedule and promote the “Uptown Block Party”

### First Five Weeks

- Hold informational meeting on design district.
- Adopt design overlay zoning district for project area.
- Contact state Historic Society on Historic District
- Develop streetscape (baskets, trees, planters) plan for Junction

### First Five Months

- Plan for an event in the Theater
- Install baskets, plantings or trees as planned.

### First Five Years

- Hold informational meetings on Historic District
- Prepare application for Historic District
- Adopt Historic District
- Develop streetscape Plan for “Midtown” with banners, baskets and other items
- Install Entrance signage (14th and Washington & Memorial and Washington)
- Create a historic walking tour and interpretive signage.
- Plan for a new junction focal point feature.
- Provide design assistance to property owners.
- Perform a “Demonstration Project” a joint public-private venture to restore a building façade and signage.
- Fund a theatre improvement cost/feasibility study.

## PUBLIC WORKS

### First Five Months

- Improve the visibility of crosswalks
- Establish public works steering committee

### First Five Years

- Reorganize and landscape Ann Street Parking Lot
- Reorganize and landscape Tradewinds Lot.

## SAFETY

### First Five Months

- Provide resources for additional presence of beat cop
- Set up a neighborhood-business district watch program

### First Five Years

- Implement “Crime Prevention through Environmental Design Standards” CPTED. Program promotes ways to get more “eyes” on the street.
- Support additional home ownership programs in the surrounding neighborhood.





## IV. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The following is a list potential and likely funding sources available to fund the Planned Uptown Improvements. Please note this is not an exhaustive list. Funding opportunities change and should be monitored and updated.

### A. Local Funding Sources

There are a number of funding opportunities that can be targeted for specific infrastructure, redevelopment and business district revitalization projects recommended in the Uptown Improvement Plan. More detailed information is available in an appendix document.

#### *General Obligation Bonds*

A GO bond is used to finance select public improvements and is repayable from taxes and guaranteed only by the credit and taxing power of the City. Priority physical improvements and demonstration projects could be placed on the City's capital improvement program and potentially funded through this source.

#### *Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)*

CDBG funds are distributed through the city of Racine for a variety of projects. Although fund allocation will vary by year, there may be an estimated \$40,000-50,000 to fund select capital projects, staff resources, or as a source to leverage other funding.

#### *"Sewer Funds"*

Funds are available through sharing agreements with the Towns of Caledonia and Mount Pleasant sewer agreements. Funds are allocated to projects that result in economic development outcomes including increased tax base, job creation. The façade grant program is funded through this program.

#### *Racine Commercial Façade Grant Program*

The façade grant is limited to no more than 50% of the total cost of eligible improvements, not to exceed \$7,500. Projects totaling less than \$1,000 are not eligible for the façade grant. Restrictions are in place and work must conform to established design guidelines or otherwise approved by department staff.

#### *Mixed Use Rehabilitation Loans*

This program provides funds for the rehabilitation of residential units contained in mixed-use structures. Loan funds may be used for only the interior rehabilitation work of the residential portion of the building. Loan amount up to \$8,000 per dwelling unit, with a maximum of two units assisted in any one structure. The loan rate is 5% with a term of up to 20 years. All loans are secured with a mortgage on the property.

#### *Free Exterior Paint Program*

This program provides free exterior house paint to low and moderate-income homeowners and landlords who own property that is rented to low and moderate-income tenants. In the spring of each year the City solicits applicants for participation in the program. Participants must complete the painting by November of the same year. Commercial/mixed-use buildings containing residential units are NOT eligible for this program. However, the improved appearance of residential properties in the area supports commercial revitalization.

### *Private Donation Program*

Private donation programs allow the private sector to participate in funding some of the improvements through the purchasing of specialty streetscape amenities in addition to larger features. The corporate community should be approached to fund large gift items.

### *Lender Commitment Program*

As a mechanism for to fund improvements, many communities have created low interest loan pools through the cooperation of local banks to fund façade and building improvements. Typically, approval of funds is tied to compliance with established design guidelines.

### *Special Assessments*

Some communities have assessed adjoining property owners for streetscape improvements that exceed the normal cost of public improvement standards. Streetscape improvements can generate a direct benefit to adjoining properties in terms of property value increase and business opportunity.

### *Business Improvement District (BID)*

Since 1984, Wisconsin communities have had the power to establish one or more business improvement districts within their communities, which allows business properties within a geographic area to contribute through an annual assessment to programs aimed at promotion, management and maintenance and development of the district. BIDs are restricted to commercial and industrial properties that are subject to real estate tax. BID levies are generally based on a proportion of the individual property's assessed value, but may also be based on parcel size or frontage footage. Typical BID expenditures include promotional efforts, assistance for business start-ups, job training programs, advertising, marketing, streetscape development and staff salaries.

### *Sustainable Neighborhood Partnership*

The SNP is funded by donations from All Saints Healthcare System and the American Heart Association, in addition to individual contributions from area businesses and residents. The Sustainable Racine Advisory Board has designated these funds to be used solely for the enhancement of neighborhoods in the Greater Racine Area. Specifically, Sustainable Racine seeks project ideas that will do the following: Enhance the neighborhood, create a sense of place within the area, encourage civic engagement with the community, and build a solid foundation for neighborhood associations or coalitions. To date, over \$190,000 has been allocated by Sustainable Racine's SNP to support initiatives identified by neighborhood residents.

## **B. State and Federal Programs**

### *20% Rehabilitation Tax Credit*

This 20% tax credit equals 20% of the amount spent in the "certified rehabilitation" of a "certified historic structure" as determined by the Secretary of the Interior. An additional 5% Wisconsin investment tax credit is available for those who qualify for the 20% Rehabilitation Tax credit. You must apply and receive project approval before beginning the physical work on the project. Contact: the State Historical Society of Wisconsin for further details. This 20% tax credit is available for any property rehabilitated for: commercial, industrial, agricultural, rental residential purposes or a certified historic structure that has been moved. This 20% credit is not available for properties rehabilitated for exclusive use as the owner's residence.

### *10% Rehabilitation Tax Credit*

This 10% tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of non-historic, non-residential buildings built prior to 1936. The tax credit equals 10% of the amount spent to rehabilitate the building. This 10% credit is available for properties rehabilitated for commercial, industrial agricultural rental residential purposes, or hotels. This 10% tax credit is NOT available for properties rehabilitated for:

1. Exclusive use as the owner's residence,
2. Buildings that have been moved.
3. Buildings listed on the National Register are ineligible for the 10% tax credit.
4. Buildings located in a National Register district or a certified state or local historic district are presumed to be historic and are therefore not eligible for the 10% tax credit.
5. Rehabilitation must be substantial, exceeding either \$5,000 or the adjusted basis of the property, whichever is greater.
6. The property must be depreciable or undervalued.
7. Projects utilizing the 10% tax credit must meet a specific physical test for retention of exterior walls and interior structural framework. This test requires that:
  8. At least 50% of the building's walls existing at the time the rehabilitation began must remain in place as external walls at the work's conclusion.
  9. At least 75% of the building's existing exterior walls must remain in place as either exterior or interior walls.
  10. At least 75% of the building's internal structural framework must remain in place.

### *Wisconsin Supplemental Historic Preservation Credit*

This program returns an additional 5% of the cost of rehabilitation to owners as a discount on their Wisconsin state income taxes. Owners that qualify for the Federal Historic Preservation Credit automatically qualify for the Wisconsin supplement if they get National Park Service (NPS) approval before they begin any work.

### *Community Based Economic Development Program (CBED)*

This program is designed to promote local business development in economically distressed areas. The program awards grants to community-based organizations for development and business assistance projects and to municipalities for economic development planning. The program helps community-based organizations plan, build, and create business and technology based incubators, and can also capitalize an incubator tenant and revolving loan program.

### *Local Transportation Enhancements (TE) Program*

This program is designed to fund projects that enhance multi-modal activities in order to improve the transportation system. Projects can include the preservation of abandoned railway corridors, rehabilitation/operation of historic transportation buildings, acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites, landscaping and other scenic beautification, and control or removal of outdoor advertising. Projects must relate to surface transportation. This program can provide 80% funding.

### *WHEDA*

WHEDA is a quasi governmental organization that finances housing development through the sale of bonds. WHEDA offers below market, fixed rate financing to low-to-moderate income first time home buyers, provides financing of up to \$10,000 for down payment and closing costs, annually makes grant funds available for affordable housing for special needs populations, provides long-term below market rate financing for the construction, acquisition and rehabilitation of affordable rental housing, and works to create affordable assisted living options for low-income seniors.

WHEDA also manages several federal housing programs including the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program, which encourages affordable housing development by providing private investors with income tax credits when they invest in affordable housing.

#### *HUD Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program*

Section 108, the loan guarantee provision of the Community Development Block Grant program, allows local governments to transform a small portion of their CDBG funds into federally guaranteed loans large enough to pursue physical and economic revitalization projects that can renew entire neighborhoods. Such public investment is often needed to inspire private economic activity, providing the initial resources or simply the confidence that private firms and individuals may need to invest in distressed areas. Section 108 provides communities with a source of financing for economic development, housing rehabilitation, public facilities and large scale physical development projects.

Loan commitments are often paired with Economic Development Initiative (EDI) or Brownfield Economic Development Initiative (BEDI) grants, which can be used to pay predevelopment costs of a Section 108-funded project. They can also be used as a loan loss reserve (in lieu of CDBG funds), to write-down interest rates, or to establish a debt service reserve.

#### *The Economic Development Initiative (EDI)*

The Economic Development Initiative (EDI) is intended to complement and enhance the Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program. The purpose of EDI grant funds is to further minimize the potential loss of future Community Development Block Grant allocations by:

- Strengthening the economic feasibility of the projects financed with Section 108 funds (and thereby increasing the probability that the project will generate enough cash to repay the guaranteed loan);
- Directly enhancing the security of the guaranteed loan; or
- Through a combination of these or other risk mitigation techniques

States and CDBG entitlement and non-entitlement communities are eligible for the EDI and can either apply for the competitive EDI or the special purpose EDI. The latter would require support from a congressional representative. EDI benefits the businesses supported through Section 108 loans and the principally low and moderate income persons hired by those businesses.

EDI grant funds can only be used in projects also assisted by the Section 108 Loan Program. Such projects may involve activities as property acquisition, rehabilitation of publicly owned property, housing rehabilitation, economic development activities, acquisition, construction, reconstruction, or installation of public facilities, and for public works and other site improvements.

#### C. Other Historic Preservation Funding

##### *Historic Preservation Fund Grants*

The U.S. Congress appropriates approximately \$50 million each year to the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF). The HPF provides matching grants to encourage private and non-federal investment in historic preservation efforts nationwide. The HPF also assists state, local, and Indian tribes with expanding historic preservation activities.

### *The Jeffris Family Foundation*

The Jeffris Family Foundation funds the planning stages of preservation projects located in Wisconsin.

#### Restrictions

- The program has an annual application deadline of October 1.
- Grants must be matched on a 1:1 basis.
- Funds may not be used for “bricks and mortar” costs or actual construction.
- Funds may not be used for National Register Nominations.

#### Who can apply for a Jeffris Family Foundation Grant?

- Wisconsin Public Agencies
- Non-Profit Organizations

The funds must be used for a property or district listed on the National Register.

### *The National Trust’s Financial Assistance Programs*

- Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors
- Johanna Favrot Fund
- National Preservation Loan Fund
- Preservation Services Fund