

# Jasper, Indiana Downtown + Riverfront Master Plan

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## A MESSAGE FROM MAYOR TERRY SEITZ

"I've been waiting for this for 35 years!", exclaimed the owner of a downtown Jasper business, referring to the decision of the City of Jasper to formally include our downtown and riverfront areas in a strategic planning effort. And thus began an attitude shift towards these essential community assets and the creation of a Master Plan for them.

During this endeavor, we have employed what I call the Three "V" Process...

- Is it VALUABLE?
- Is it VIABLE?
- Is there a VISION?

The fact is downtown Jasper and the area along the Patoka River are extremely VALUABLE to all of us who live here and equally to those who visit here. Through continued investment from the business sector, along with public contributions, we are in the midst of creating one regional destination district that encompasses both areas.

One can attest to the VIABILITY of our city center by observing its vibrancy. The occupied storefronts, the wide variety of merchants and merchandise as well as the social aspects of the downtown and riverfront offer proof of the worthiness of this effort.

As to the VISION, we simply believe good is not enough. We want to take Jasper to great. That requires more private investment, new collaborative projects, improved connectivity and increased activity. Therefore, we present this plan as the foundation for future success. I believe Jasper is the gem of Indiana and downtown Jasper is the setting!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry Seitz". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Terry Seitz  
Mayor of Jasper



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## INTRODUCTION

This Master Plan document builds from the significant work that has already been undertaken to improve and enhance the Downtown and Riverfront areas of Jasper, Indiana. It sets forth strategies for redevelopment and urban design, and reinforces - even celebrates - Jasper's unique character and inherent strengths. Armed with a Comprehensive Plan (2010), this effort establishes a vision for the future of the downtown area and identifies strategies and implementation steps to help the city achieve the vision. This document should be viewed as a roadmap for improving the downtown core and riverfront, with particular emphasis on alleviating the barriers that separate these two areas of the community. It proposes viable strategies to better connect them.

The Jasper Master Plan was developed in close partnership with the Office of Community Development and Planning, and was directed under the leadership of Mayor Terry Seitz. The city has a strong tradition of community engagement, and the outreach effort for the plan included over 75 meetings with individual stakeholders and groups beginning in January 2013. Two large community forums in April and August provided input from the community at large on their vision for the future of the city.

Community goals that came out of the public meetings include:

1. Critical Mass: Bring more vitality to downtown with more activities and special events.
2. Development: Repurpose the physical assets that the city already has.
3. Connectivity: Physically and programmatically connect the city's nodes of activity and don't allow them to compete with one another. Establish a city-wide system of connectivity.
4. Engagement: Capture the public's imagination and rally people behind a "vision" for the downtown. Establish a community conversation around education, arts, the riverfront and downtown.
5. Small businesses: Increase the diversity of businesses in the downtown core and engage the emerging young business leaders and entrepreneurs who are the next generation.
6. Art: Capitalize on cultural tourism and invest in a robust public art program that brings people downtown and enlivens the streetscape.



Above: The Master Plan builds from the Comprehensive Plan, and the process provided multiple opportunities for public input.

This document is divided into FIVE SECTIONS. **SECTION 1** centers on Courthouse Square, and makes recommendations that can improve the use of the square and enhance pedestrian activity. If the Courthouse Square is one anchor to the downtown, then the Patoka Riverfront is the other. A great deal of investment has already taken place around the river, and **SECTION 2** identifies strategies to better link the projects together, including an extension of the increasingly popular Jasper Riverwalk.

**SECTION 3** looks at programming and reuse strategies for the former industrial properties. Jasper has over 500,000 square feet of vacant, former industrial space located in the downtown. These older buildings are geographically well-positioned between the Courthouse Square and the Riverfront. While the rehabilitation of much of this space will take a generation or more to be completed, certain opportunities are presenting themselves in the near term, and their re-activation will be catalysts in this next phase of Jasper's evolution. To be attractive candidates for reuse, one must look beyond traditional market analyses and seek out a mix of place-specific uses - both traditional and non-traditional - that create vitality and can reposition



the properties. Over time, these initial uses will build value that leads to new interest in the downtown core.

As Jasper residents rediscover their riverfront and benefit from a greater range of uses around the Courthouse Square, connections for all modes of transportation need to be addressed. **SECTION 4** identifies ways to improve pedestrian, automobile and bicycle movement that will enable a more efficient, safe and beautiful circulation network to emerge, in a manner designed to better connect the downtown and riverfront areas.

While Jasper has long been known as a community with a rich tradition of embracing the arts through the public support of a variety of creative arts programming, visible evidence of this community characteristic in the public realm is unfortunately negligible. **SECTION 5** outlines a variety of methods to celebrate this aspect of the community in ways that highlight the community's heritage and provide opportunities for new and stimulating public art programming in the city. An Action Plan at the end of the document provides a bridge to implementation.





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## COURTHOUSE SQUARE

Strengthening the Character of the City's Icon





## COURTHOUSE SQUARE

### Strengthening the Character of the City's Icon

#### THE VISION

In the near future, Jasper's Courthouse Square will be a vibrant and mixed-use destination for Dubois County and beyond. Ground level businesses that line the square will spill out onto picturesque, shaded sidewalks and art-infused seating areas. Activity nodes at the four corners of the Square create memorable experiences, with a greater diversity of places to eat and entertain. The upper levels of the historic buildings that line the square will be renovated into residential lofts that attract people of all ages.

Young professionals returning to Jasper - as well as those moving in to the city with major employers seeking a high quality of life - will be surprised by the transformation. Even empty-nesters, who are striving to downsize their lifestyle, will find the Square an alluring alternative to suburban or rural living.





Above: Jasper's Courthouse anchors the Square in the center of downtown.

## CONTEXT

Since Jasper's origins, its Courthouse Square has been the focus of the downtown. Elevated slightly on high ground, the Courthouse is a signature work of architecture that is surrounded by an impressive ensemble of historic buildings. It has, fortunately, retained much of its original character and can be considered a quintessential example of a Town Square. The city grid that extends out from the courthouse renders the building an easily identifiable landmark and orientation device. While there are other downtowns that have traditional town squares, few are as intact as Jasper's. The city is fortunate to have such a strong center and "postcard image" from which to build.

The square itself is filled with many locally-owned businesses on the lower floors, some which have been under the same ownership for generations. The buildings form an attractive backdrop to the Courthouse, but the passage of time has lent a varied character to the condition of their elevations. Notably, the Astra Theater on the



southwest corner of the square - which was once a major entertainment destination in the region - has been vacant for a decade. In order for Jasper to keep and attract the next generation, the square must do more than survive - it needs to evolve.

The community is, to its credit, committed to retaining the character of the Square and supporting local businesses and shops, which further reinforce its identity. There are a number of ways that the public can buttress such efforts. These include the establishment of a façade improvement program for properties within the Square and downtown and the establishment of a Courthouse Square Historic District. Such a designation can provide tax credits for the restoration and rehabilitation of historic properties. It can also institute a set of design guidelines for the district. The regulations should have built-in flexibility relating to outdoor dining, signage and other ways that help to activate such important civic areas.

The current configuration of Courthouse Square renders it more a place to pass through than to stay. The wide streets that surround the courthouse



Above: Jasper is fortunate to have a legacy of historical architecture downtown. Façade improvement programs and a designation as an Historic District will enable local business owners to reinvest in their properties and stimulate economic development activity.



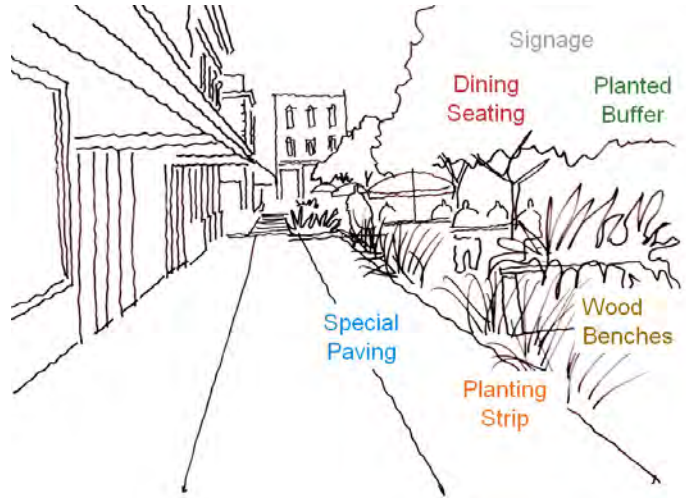
Above: The character of the Courthouse Square can be improved by investments in the sidewalks and new tree planting, organizing outdoor seating areas and uniting elements such as lights and planters into a cohesive whole.

isolate it from the businesses that define it. The sidewalks themselves, although wide, have few appealing characteristics that make one want to mingle; there are limited places to sit. By and large, the diagonal parking that lines the square is used for single purpose trips, where people park, visit a shop once and then depart. In general, the pedestrian character of the square is undermined by the flow of traffic that navigates around its edges.

Urban places such as these are most widely frequented when there is a good mix and balance of pedestrian activity and vehicular activity. Without a significant amount of pedestrian activity on a normal day, the Square's use as a place for through traffic and parking tends to dominate. While the area is certainly a draw for large events like Strassenfest, the Square is not a center of activity for most of the year.

Jasper is fortunate to have such a "gem" as Courthouse Square. The fact that it remains intact demonstrates the importance that Jasper's citizens place upon it as a symbol of the history, character and pride of their community. While its vibrancy has suffered over the years, in part due to the accommodation of vehicular traffic at the expense of the pedestrian, there is no reason its vitality cannot be regained - and enhanced - through a number of carefully executed design and traffic improvements. Without these interventions, the Square will continue to struggle.

Jasper's citizens have a special affinity for the Square, and actions that provide additional opportunities for them to congregate, relax, shop, eat and drink, and converse with each other within the Square, must be given a high priority.



Above: New investment in the landscape, paving materials, seating, planting beds and public art will greatly enhance the character of the Courthouse Square.



## STRATEGIES

In order to make Courthouse Square a more vibrant and mixed-use destination, the following strategies are recommended:

- Reduce the amount of impervious pavement around the square by diminishing (slightly) the width of the street on all four sides in order to provide additional sidewalk right-of-way.
- Establish a continuous vegetative zone around the square. The well-landscaped buffer will reduce storm-water runoff and create a handicapped accessible liner between the cars and sidewalk.
- Create “activity nodes” at the four corners of the square that are comfortable and creatively designed. These higher intensity zones and conversation nooks can provide opportunities to relax and gather, eat, listen to music and watch the activity occurring in and around the Square.
- Provide additional seating, street trees and pedestrian-scaled lighting throughout the Square.
- Emphasize greater programming opportunities within the square itself by capitalizing on Jasper’s arts and cultural community. These can include art installations, live music, food tastings, product demonstrations, ethnic festivals, etc.

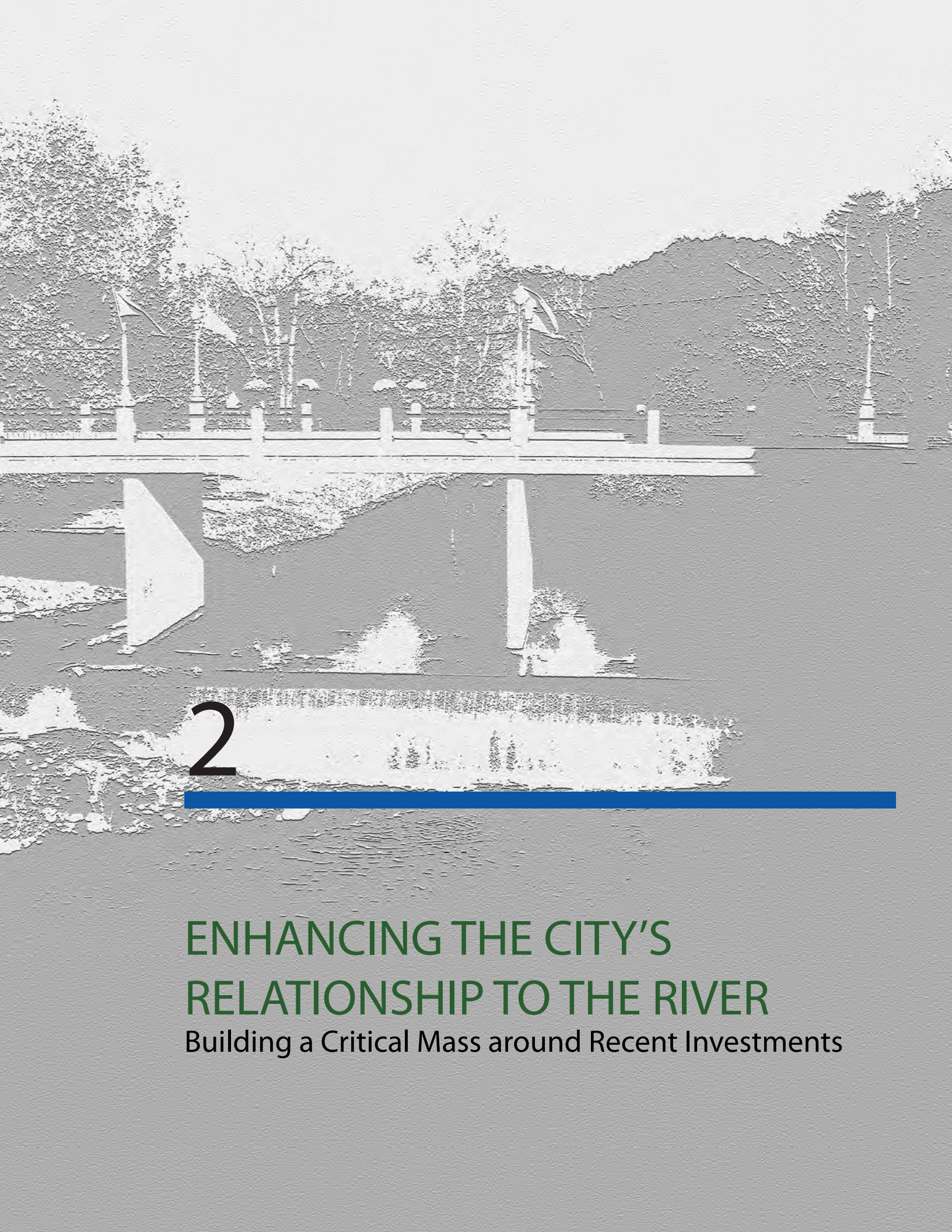


## ACTION ITEMS

1. Develop Courthouse Square schematic design for streetscape enhancements. The scope of work should reduce the vehicular right-of-way, create landscape strategies to buffer parking and create activity nodes in the four corners of the Square.
2. Develop a public art program for the Square (see Section 5: Integrating Art in the Public Realm).
3. Make available funds for a “Façade Improvement Program” in downtown that encourages and enables building owners to reinvest in their properties.
4. Delineate and designate the downtown as an Historic District.
5. Revise current public statutes and regulations to encourage outdoor seating, dining, and unique signage for the businesses.







# 2

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## ENHANCING THE CITY'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE RIVER

Building a Critical Mass around Recent Investments



## ENHANCING THE CITY'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE RIVER

### Building a Critical Mass around Recent Investments

#### THE VISION

Increasingly, the public views the Patoka River not only as a place of relaxation and recreation but also as a destination unto itself. A new annual event in April entitled "Riverfest" compliments the August "Strassenfest", and creates new venues for arts and entertainment oriented towards the river. Increased public access to the water is now possible with a Mill Street promenade, connecting the German American Boulevard to the new "Patoka Steps" at the river, where gentle terraces provide public seating areas overlooking the water. This landscape enhancement, adjacent to new food and entertainment venues in the adaptively reused industrial properties, helps to mitigate erosion along the banks. The Riverwalk has been expanded, and residents and visitors can now walk, jog and pedal along both banks of the river with the construction of a second pedestrian bridge over the Patoka.



## CONTEXT

The last decade has seen more than \$1.5 million in public and private investment along the Patoka River. The construction of Dave Buehler Plaza, the reconstitution of the Jasper City Mill and pedestrian enhancements to the Third Street Bridge have imparted a sense of entry into the downtown from the south. The Jasper Train Depot - where popular train rides depart for points north - and Schaeffer Barn generate activity and accentuate Jasper's rich cultural heritage. The Riverwalk has captured the public's imagination and created a new ribbon of activity on the edge of downtown. The pedestrian bridge that spans the Patoka links the north and south sides of the river, and the Riverwalk has emerged as a cherished community asset, exceeding people's expectations.

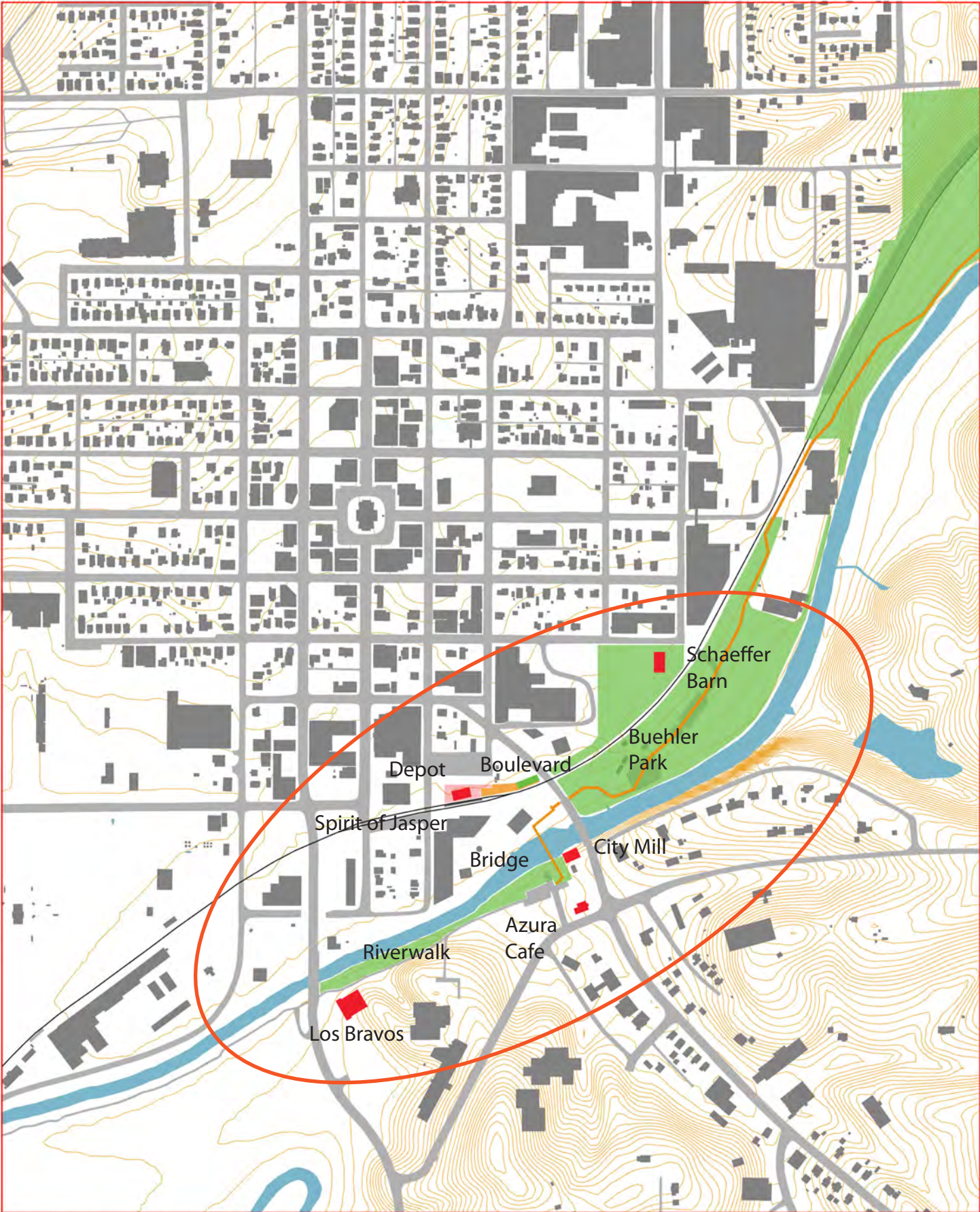
The fact that these investments are near to one another is not an accident. Their close proximity is essential. A critical mass of activity generators, spearheaded by the Redevelop Old Jasper Action Coalition (ROJAC), has been emerging around the Patoka. The recently completed German American Boulevard is evidence of the interest in the area, and an example of the private largesse present in the community. The ROJAC improvements have succeeded in bringing activity to the riverfront. If one anchor to the downtown is the Courthouse Square, then the other anchor is the Riverfront, where momentum is building.



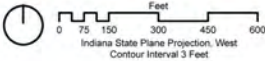
Above: The Riverfront has witnessed a significant amount of investment over the last decade.

Right: Recent projects highlighted show a concentration of activity in Jasper's southeast quadrant.





# Jasper Master Plan



Sources: US Geological Survey 2013  
 Contours: US Geological Survey 2013  
 Road Edges and Buildings: City of Jasper

And yet, the riverfront remains a work in progress. Large swaths of undeveloped land and gravel parking lots surround the riverfront. While the above mentioned projects are, in fact, near one another, pedestrian connections between and among them are compromised. This has the effect of diluting their overall impact. More than half a dozen vacant, former industrial buildings line the edge of the river, which exacerbates the sense of distance between the assets. Overgrowth along the riverbanks leaves one with the impression that the area is poorly maintained and unsafe. Sidewalks on the Third Street Bridge stop abruptly.

The Jasper Cabinet property occupies a prominent location in the heart of the Riverfront, but currently there is no public access to it along its southern façade, and no access along its river frontage. The building's relationship to the adjacent riverfront improvements is uncertain both physically and programmatically. Better access to this building is necessary to activate it and other areas along the river.

Therefore, this Master Plan recommends the creation of a new road – River Road – that would provide “an address” to the area just south of the railroad tracks. This infrastructure improvement extends East 2nd Street to 3rd Street. This short expanse would provide both access to the Jasper Cabinet buildings as well as provide additional circulation access in the area. It would also create a new front door for a future Public Market Hall (which the community has identified as a potential draw for downtown). While the existence of the rail tracks is somewhat of a barrier for the new road, design criteria exist for such roads and initial analysis suggests that this area would meet necessary criteria.

As the riverfront's transformation continues to move forward, there are numerous opportunities to build off the recent public and private investments. In this regard, Jasper is not unlike other towns and cities that are looking to their rivers less as places of industry, and more as locations of leisure and recreation. With an eye of turning the Riverwalk route into a continuous loop, the area behind the Jasper Cabinet building should be allocated for public space, and the Riverwalk should be extended on the north side of the Patoka. Currently, the Riverwalk west of the 3rd Street Bridge is on the south side of the river, and there are limited opportunities to get down to the river's edge on the north.





Above: A new River Road will provide “addresses” for the Jasper Cabinet building and leverage recent investments like the German American Boulevard, the Spirit of Jasper and the Jasper Train Depot. The community has expressed interest in a Market Hall which could be located near the river and accessed by River Road.



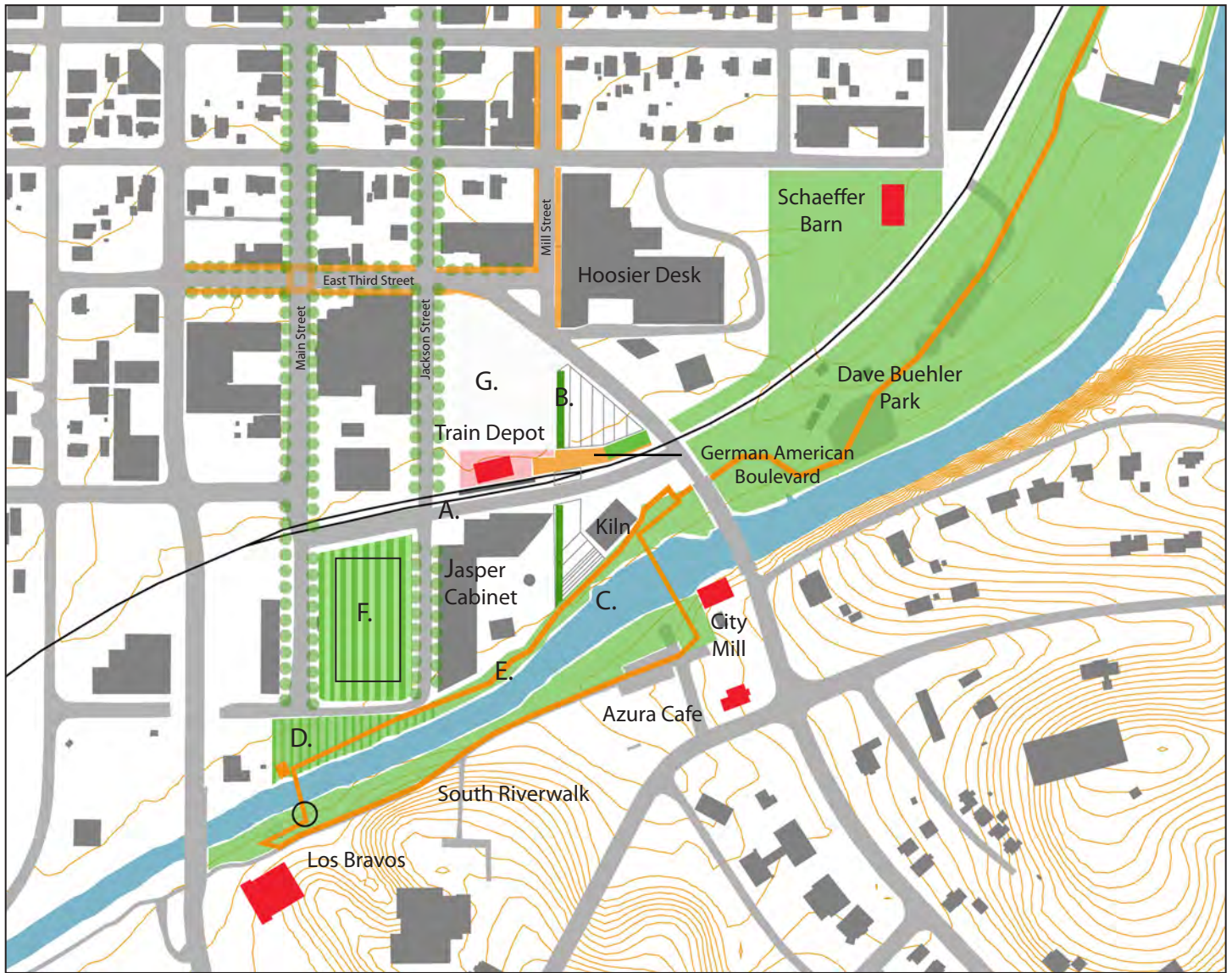
A new pedestrian bridge that spans across the river as a compliment to the existing pedestrian bridge would create a loop. The cable-stay bridge will be a new icon for the downtown, providing not only access to the river but also becoming a visual focal point as a southern terminus of Main Street.

Increasing the public's access to the river and guarding against fluctuations in water level need not be mutually exclusive endeavors. Infrastructure investments near the Patoka River must accommodate floodplain and floodway conditions and restrictions. Any projects along the river must accomplish the dual goals of increasing accessibility while decreasing erosion. Bank stabilization efforts that are developed in tandem with the north Riverwalk will enhance the city's relationship to the water.



Above: The Riverwalk has been highly successful, and should be expanded to provide more opportunities to get down to the water's edge.

A public promenade that extends south from a revitalized Mill Street directly to the river will greatly enhance the public's ability to get down to the river. The pedestrian way serves as an extension of the recently completed German American Boulevard and provides a public setting for activities that emerge within the Jasper Cabinet Building and the associated Kiln buildings. The terrace – initially dubbed the “Patoka Steps” - brings together the essential elements of placemaking: infrastructure in the form of the pedestrian bridge, connectivity in the form of an extension of the Riverwalk and programming made possible by close proximity to activities in the lower floors of adjacent buildings that populate the space at all times of the day.

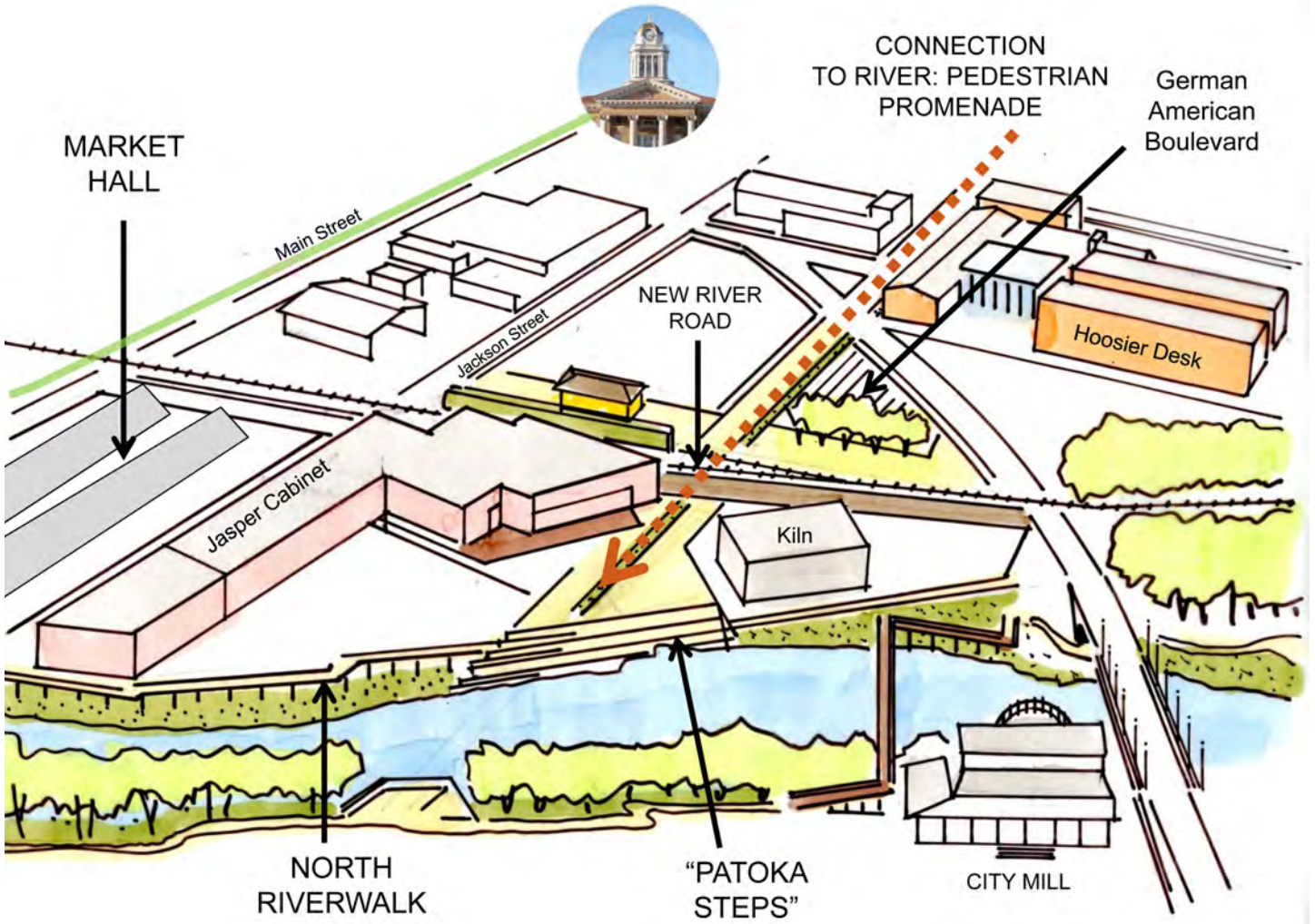


Above: A number of infrastructure improvements will create better access to the Riverfront and provide new addresses for the buildings that front this area of downtown.

### KEY: North Riverwalk Area Plan

- A. RIVER ROAD
- B. MILL STREET PROMENADE
- C. PATOKA STEPS
- D. NEW MAIN STREET PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
- E. NORTH RIVERWALK
- F. POTENTIAL MARKET HALL SITE
- G. FUTURE CIVIC SITE





Above: There are few opportunities for the public to access the river. The Patoka Steps will build off of recent investments such as the pedestrian bridge, the riverwalk and the Old City Mill, helping them together and entice redevelopment of the former industrial properties. This image depicts a North Riverwalk Area Plan.



## STRATEGIES

In order to make the Riverfront a more active destination, the following strategies are recommended:

- Create a new River Road that extends East 2nd Street in both directions. The new right-of-way - designed to equally accommodate pedestrians and cars – should parallel the train tracks and create a new “address” for existing buildings and future development.
- Dedicate a public right-of-way along the north side of the river, located to the south of Jasper Cabinet, which expands the existing Riverwalk trail.
- Construct a second pedestrian bridge at the end of Main Street that spans the river and connects the north and south sides of the Patoka.
- Use the construction of the north Riverwalk to assist with bank stabilization and as a means to link the former industrial area to Dave Buehler Plaza.
- Establish a bridge-to-bridge zone for new programming opportunities along the River. A well programmed “Riverfest” will enable new venues for arts and entertainment in the downtown core to emerge.
- Extend Mill Street south to the river as a public, pedestrian promenade that connects the German American Boulevard to the river.

## ACTION ITEMS

1. Initiate a “North Riverwalk Area Plan.” The plan should include the preliminary design for the Riverwalk, Patoka Steps and engineering concepts for a new pedestrian bridge at the terminus of Main Street. The effort must take into account the hydrological study underway and efforts to dredge the sediment build up in the middle of the river.
2. Initiate a River Road (East 2nd Street) engineering study to identify the right-of-way for the new alignment and the north-south Mill Street pedestrian promenade linking the Hoosier Desk building to the river.
3. Explore public-private partnership opportunities for bringing a Public Market Hall/Market Place to a nearby riverfront property.

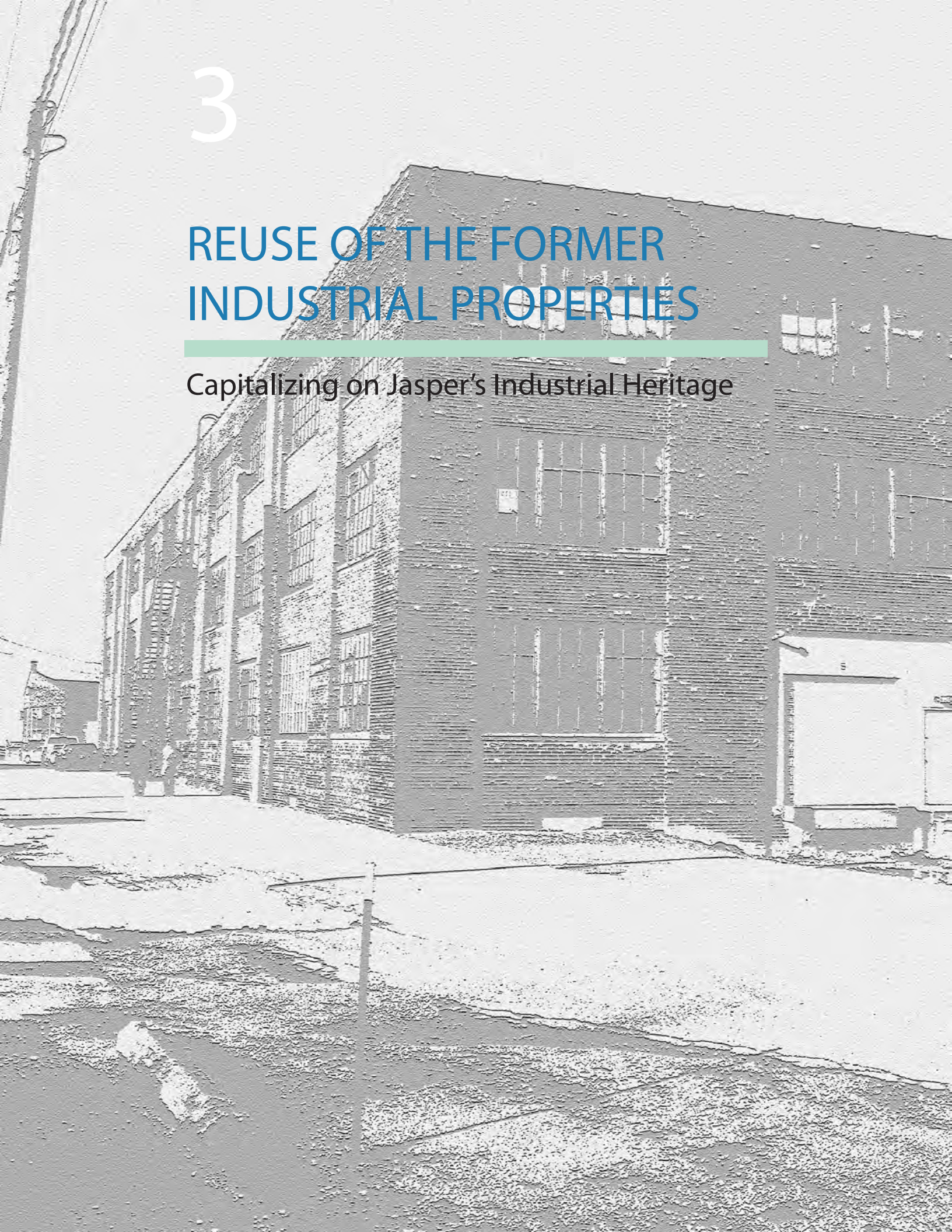


# 3

## REUSE OF THE FORMER INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES

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Capitalizing on Jasper's Industrial Heritage



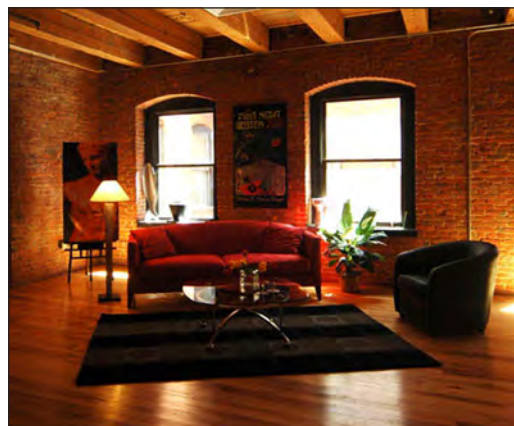


## REUSE OF THE FORMER INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES

### Capitalizing on Jasper's Industrial Heritage

#### THE VISION

After more than a generation of neglect, the former industrial buildings along the Patoka River are teeming with life. Loft-style apartments and condominiums provide a wider range of housing options for those seeking to live downtown. A new hotel, arts and cultural facilities, office space, tourism venues and dining and entertainment scenes are populating the large wood and steel frame structures. The Jasper Cabinet Building, Hoosier Desk and Veneer Mill all contain a vibrant mix of uses that complement one another. Investment in the reuse of these existing buildings - as opposed to tearing them down - has generated an economic impact well beyond the historic buildings themselves. The buildings and the legacy they represent are now widely understood to be the building blocks for economic development. Encouraging the adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized buildings and sites has proved to be a shrewd, and timely, business decision.



## CONTEXT

The most effective means of preventing suburban sprawl is through more intensive use of buildings and sites already downtown. Jasper's former industrial buildings are connected to water and sewer infrastructure, adjacent to the river and connected to streets that minimize transportation-related energy consumption. Building on or near existing infrastructure allows local governments to avoid investment in costly infrastructure extensions on the periphery, which themselves can fuel more sprawl. A commitment to investing in adaptive reuse is also a commitment to the downtown, particularly the older residential neighborhoods. By focusing attention and policies to the areas surrounding the former industrial buildings, Jasper is directing resources to the areas that need them most.

Initial market analysis has identified that there is a strong interest in living in these buildings. Urban loft style residential units - especially if they are a part of adaptive reuse projects - are particularly in demand as there is a lack of this type of housing option in Dubois County. However, one must be careful not to overbuild

new residential units and flood the market. New residential development in the former industrial buildings needs to take place in phases. Local corporate support will be important to build developer confidence and can potentially assist with offering blocks of units for short-term hires or internships.



Above: Jasper's 2010 Comprehensive Plan promoted the reuse of vacant and underutilized buildings and sites that could be mixed-use destinations for downtown.

In addition to housing demand, there is also a need for additional hotel rooms downtown. Jasper has a record of high occupancy in their hotels. The concentration of large employers, coupled with the successful tourism and sports industry, have created a climate where one can often not find a hotel room in the city. The hotel should offer a differentiated product type than what is offered elsewhere in Jasper.

Older industrial buildings lay out well for hotel conversions and can provide flexibility and creative design in room layout and circulation. Together with a residential program, a new hotel will bring people into the downtown after work and enliven the streetscape at all times of the day.

Right: Former industrial buildings are ideal candidates for historic preservation. They are located in the core of the downtown, have flexible floor plans and are authentic connections to Jasper's past.



There are a number of challenges associated with rehabilitating former industrial or manufacturing buildings:

1. Flood elevation restrictions may limit the use of the lower levels.
2. Environmental remediation and/or unknowns associated with the properties may require remediation prior to site occupation.
3. Structural issues may need to be addressed, or portions of the complexes will need to be removed in order for progress or access to be made.
4. Large spaces can seldom be absorbed all at once or by a single tenant.
5. A lack of experienced, urban-type developers who are familiar with the complexities associated with their rehabilitation.

Despite these obstacles, opportunities for adaptive reuse outweigh the challenges:

1. Most of the buildings were built to store or manufacture goods and are, therefore, structurally sound and have a heavy load capacity.
2. The open layout of their floor plans provide them with an impressive character that is not easily replicated with new construction.



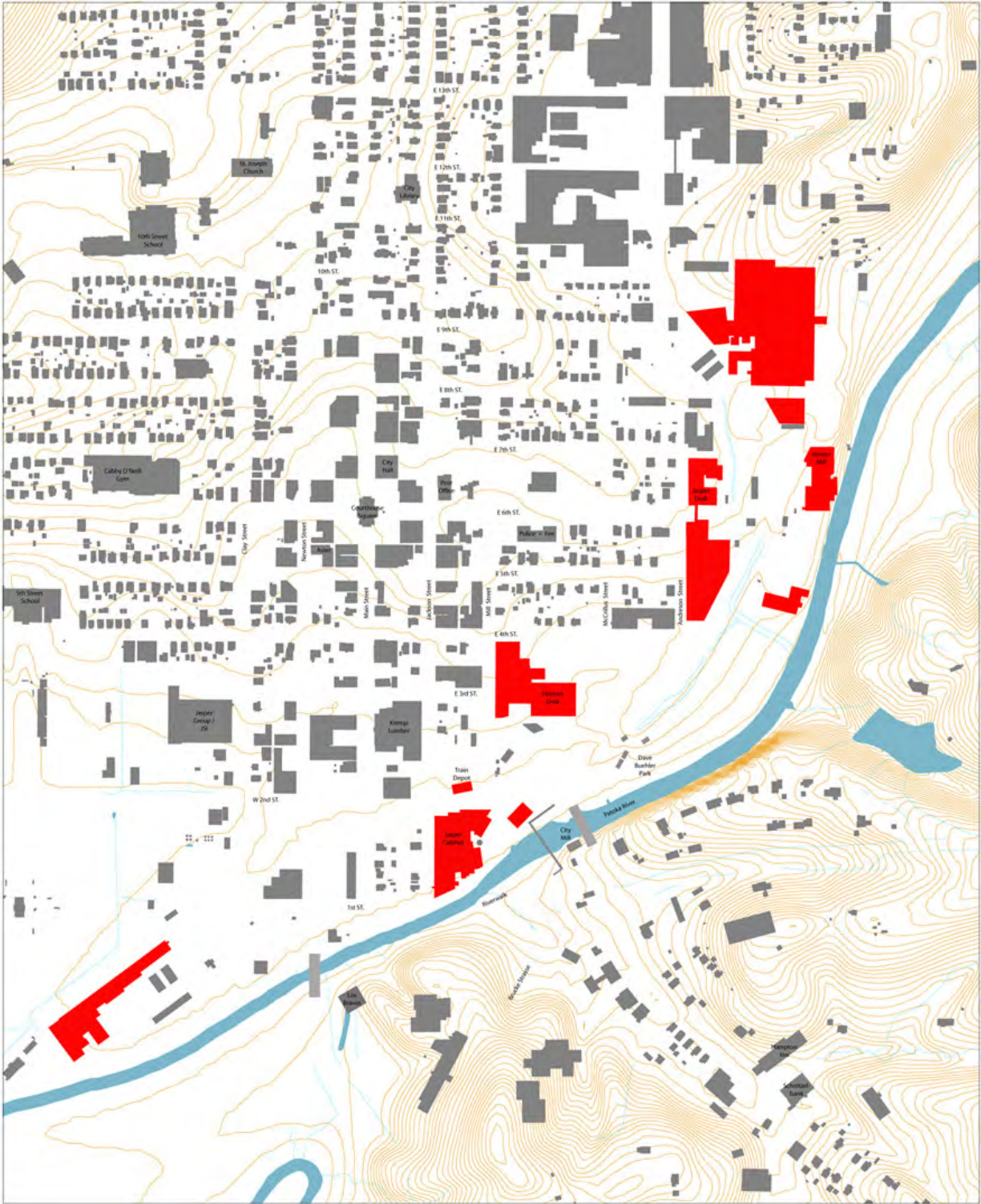
3. The open floor plans can accommodate a mix of uses and tenants, many of which benefit from close association with one another (e.g. café next to an art museum and loft apartments).
4. Their reuse signifies an authenticity of place and a direct connection to Jasper's history.
5. There is an availability of tax credits at the federal and state level to assist with financing.

As a compliment to residential and hotel uses, some niche specialty commercial uses are also viable. Small coffee shops, a gym or spa, and a healthy food grocer can work very well in combination with residential uses. In many instances, it is easier to attract an existing business in one of these specialty markets, as opposed to seeking a new business owner to take a risk on an untried venture.

Downtown and the riverfront can also support additional food and beverage venues. Without drawing activity away from Courthouse Square, there is a need for more things to do downtown after 5:00 p.m. with associated entertainment and night-life. In addition, art-related uses - such as galleries, classes, dance studios and workshop spaces - can be easily provided in the former industrial buildings and can create a steady source of activity. The downtown should be a place to live, work, play and eat.

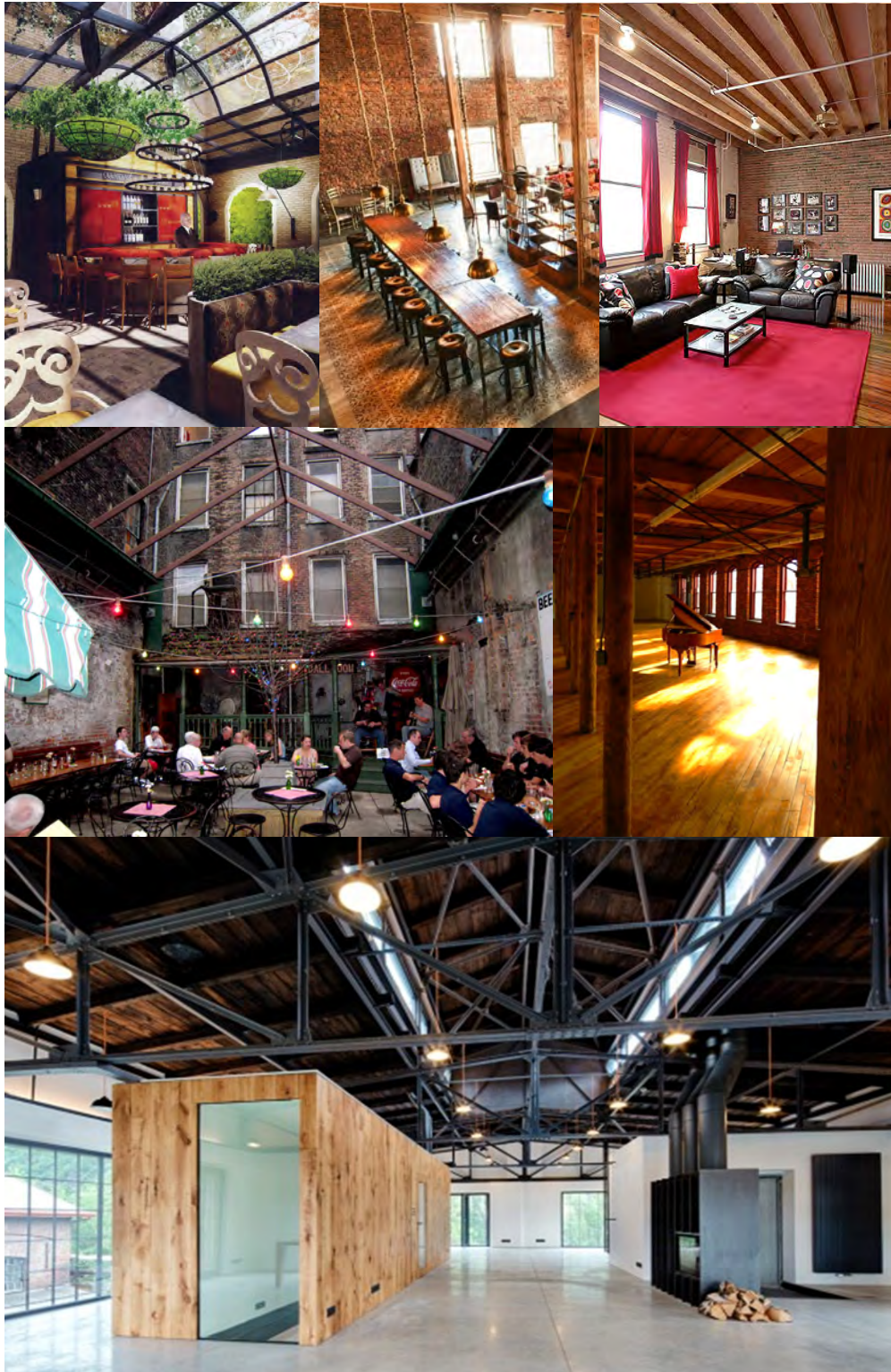
Viable reuses then for buildings such as Hoosier Desk, Jasper Cabinet and the Veneer Mill include:

- Residential Lofts
- Moderate sized boutique or full service hotel facility
- Restaurant / Bar/ Café
- Niche commercial/retail
- Museum / Exhibits
- Galleries and Arts-Related Activity
- Special Events Space
- Civic / Educational Uses
- Coffee Shop / Gym / Studios
- Media uses



Above: Jasper has over 500,000 square feet of vacant, former industrial space located downtown and adjacent to the Patoka River.





Above: The large floor plates of the former industrial buildings lend themselves well to a wide range of reuse options: arts, culture and entertainment venues, housing and hotel space, retail and commercial.

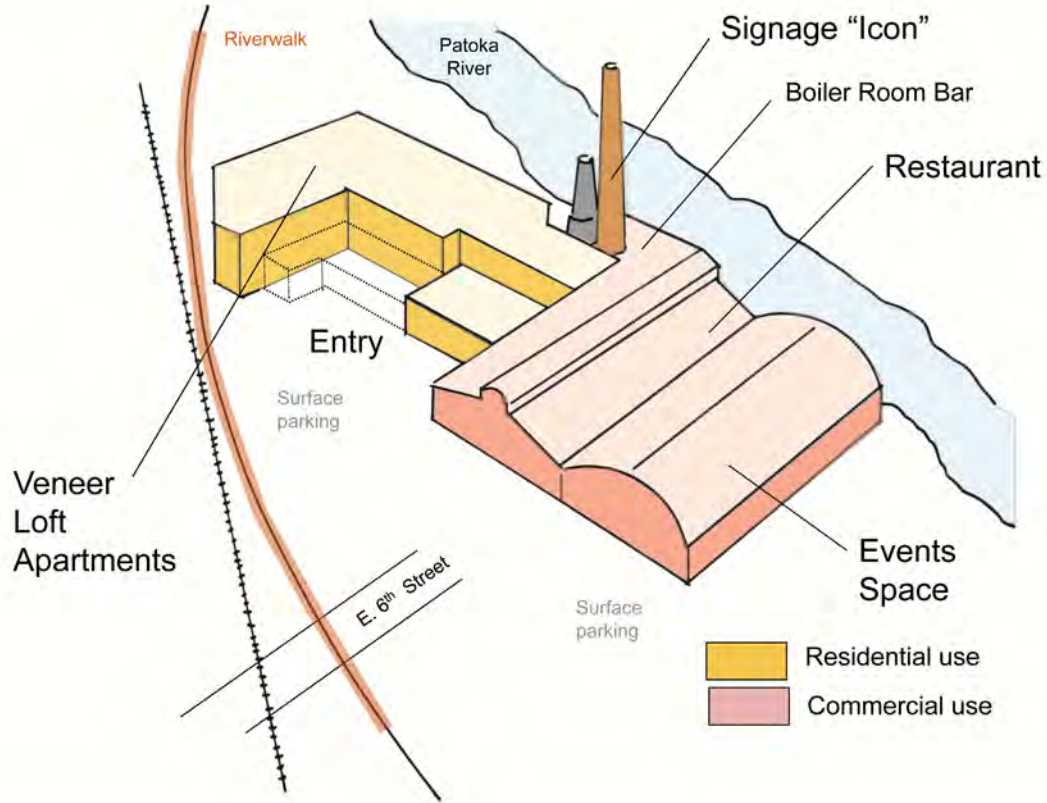
As part of the Downtown and Riverfront Master Plan, a preliminary assessment was conducted on three major former industrial complexes within and adjacent to the study area: the Veneer Mill at the end of Sixth Street, the former Hoosier Desk facility at Third and Mill Streets, and the former Jasper Cabinet complex on the north bank of the Patoka River. These complexes were selected as a result of their key locations, physical characteristics, and potential to accommodate many of the uses described above. These preliminary assessments were undertaken with the permission and cooperation of the existing property owners.

The results of these preliminary assessments were highly positive, in a number of different ways:

- Each of the complexes appeared to be structurally sound, although some selected demolition would likely be required at each site.
- Each was historically significant and likely eligible for National Register status, thus making them eligible for historic rehabilitation tax credits.
- Each property appear to be good candidates to accommodate some of the identified market uses, creating a situation where their redevelopment would complement rather than compete with one another.
- Although some of these former industrial properties are quite large, they nevertheless appear to be able to be developed in phases, if market and financial conditions warrant.
- Recent actions initiated by the City of Jasper and approved by the State of Indiana have made the development restrictions faced by those properties within flood plain elevations somewhat less restrictive, although still challenging.
- There is a confluence of the desire to highlight and celebrate the industrial heritage of Jasper with interest in new uses for these properties in which much of this heritage was created.

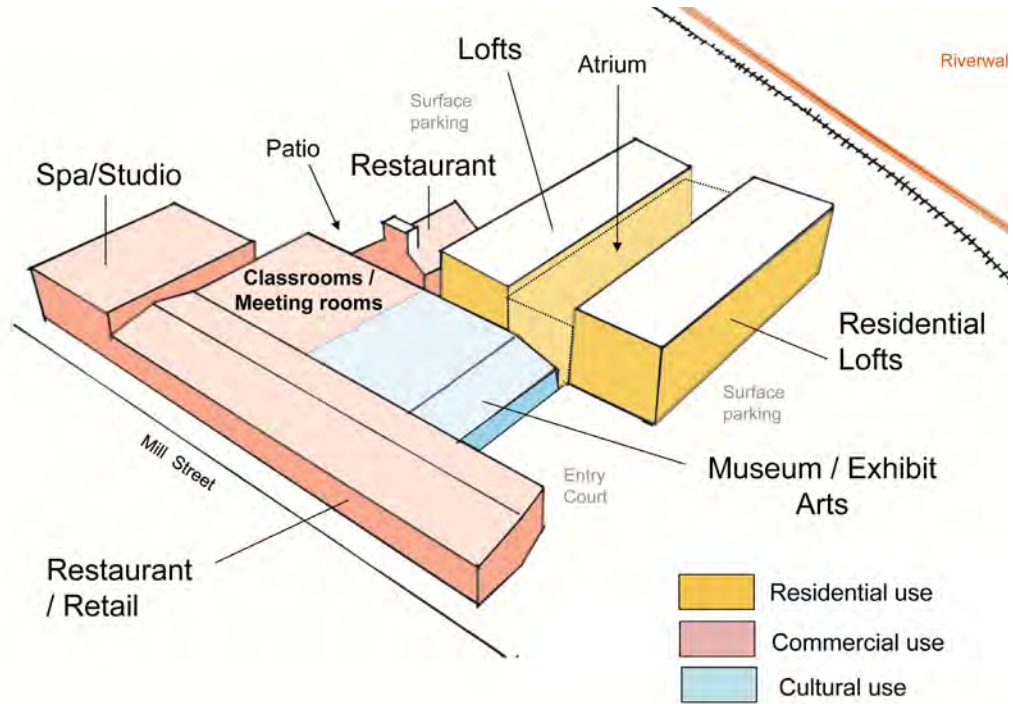


# VENEER MILL



Above: The Veneer Mill is 58,000 square feet on two floors. The conceptual plan suggests this property primarily be redeveloped as a mix of restaurant space and residential units. The upper floor layout appears to be particularly adaptable for apartments.

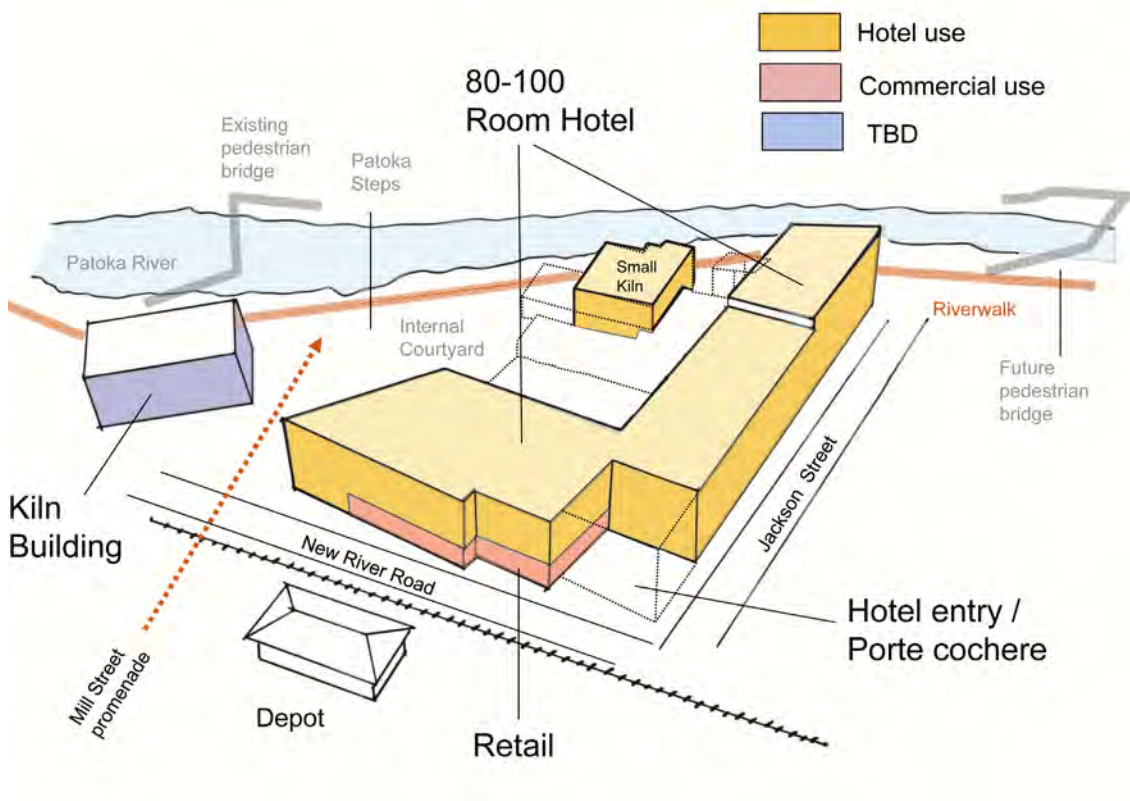
# HOOSIER DESK



The Hoosier Desk property contains approximately 130,000 square feet of usable space. Its configuration and location suggests a redevelopment plan composed of a mix of retail, restaurant, and arts and cultural spaces on its first floor, with residential units on its upper floors. Ample parking can be provided on-site.



# JASPER CABINET

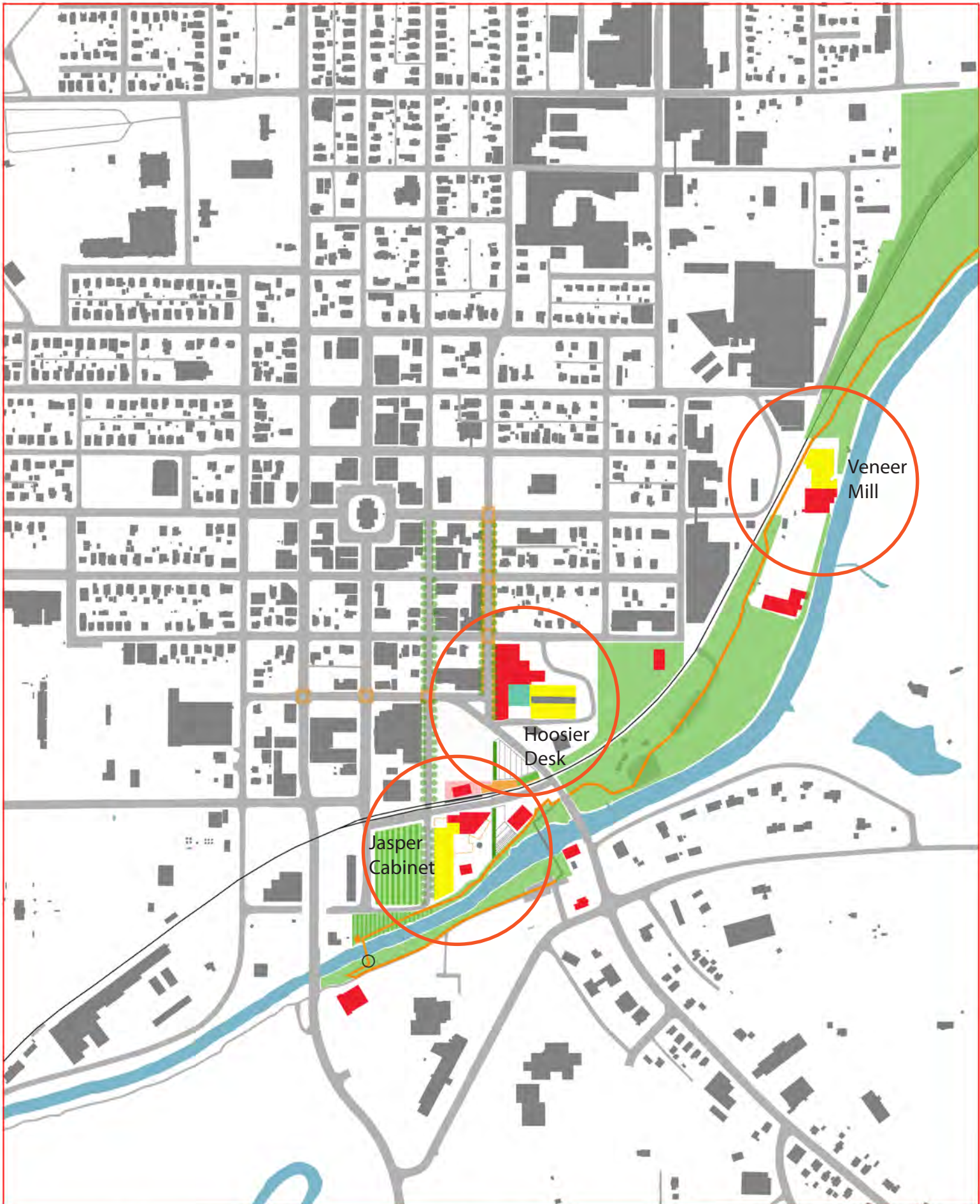


The Jasper Cabinet property occupies a key location on the north bank of the Patoka River. With some selective demolition, and the development of the extension of Second Street providing access to its front door, the property's redevelopment would be desirable as a mid-sized specialty hotel. The property's redevelopment, design, and site plan can be well integrated with the proposed north bank Riverwalk.



Above: The Veneer Mill, Jasper Cabinet and Hoosier Desk. Adjacent  
Right: Investing in the former industrial buildings builds off of the recent investments.





# Jasper Master Plan



Sources:  
 Contours: US Geological Survey 2013  
 Road Edges and Buildings: City of Jasper

## STRATEGIES

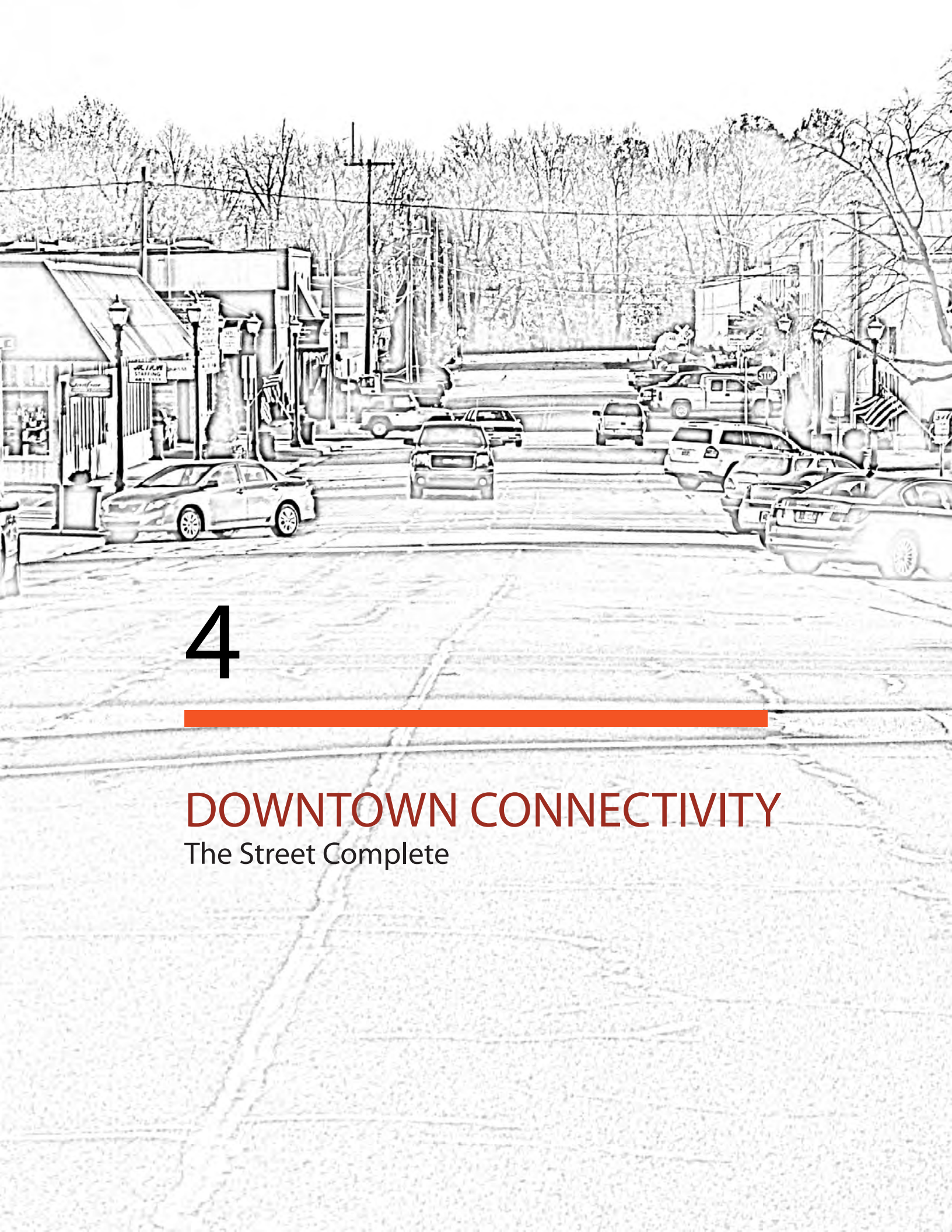
In order to enhance connections between Courthouse Square and the Riverfront, the following strategies are recommended:

- Initiate the redevelopment of one or more of the former industrial properties by tapping into state and federal historic tax credits and seeking tenants for renovated spaces. Public support for such efforts should include necessary site, utility and infrastructure improvement, streetscape improvements, expedited plan and zoning review and façade improvement funds.
- Capitalize on the zoning ordinance update to allow for mixed-use that increases flexibility and innovation for site redevelopment.

## ACTION ITEMS

1. Create incentives for the owners of the former industrial properties to participate in the property conversions: Façade Improvement program; streetscape prioritization; historic property tax abatement programs.
2. Seek opportunities for public and quasi-public uses to locate in portions of such high priority redevelopment projects. These can include City and County Offices, Tourism and Visitor Center, Dubois County Museum (satellite operation); Arts Council classrooms and/or studios.
3. Pursue corporate support and participation in leasing or guarantee of units, room nights, conference and/or other support space.





# 4

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## DOWNTOWN CONNECTIVITY

The Street Complete

## DOWNTOWN CONNECTIVITY

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### The Street Complete

#### THE VISION

Navigation in and around the City has never been easier. Traffic flow into Jasper has been improved with new signage and wayfinding. Many of the one-way corridors have been converted into two-way streets, slowing traffic and enabling pedestrian movement around the downtown. The street standards have been upgraded to incorporate sustainable design features such as raingardens, bike lanes and new street tree planting with buffer strips. The city's primary address – Main Street – has been totally transformed from a wide, asphalt paved expanse to a model of a “complete street”, where all modes of travel are embraced. A planted median strip south of the courthouse leading to the river has been completed as a pilot project for other streets downtown. The redesign filters rainwater, shortens the distance of the travel across the street and adds a bike lane. Walking between the Courthouse Square and the Patoka River is enjoyable, and under a continuous canopy of shade. Main Street has been significantly upgraded into a pedestrian environment that provides glimpses of Jasper's uniqueness and progressivism.





## CONTEXT

Downtown Jasper presents a mix of signals to both pedestrians and drivers, in many ways contradictory to each other. The symmetry and beauty of the Square presents an image that reflects many attributes of the best of urban places: place-specific architecture, local businesses and a relaxed pace. However, the transportation system's one-way streets and turning restrictions make it difficult to get around. This causes confusion for those unfamiliar with the city grid and enhances travel speeds for those who are. Traffic needs to be better distributed. More options for driving mean less traffic congestion as drivers can select alternate routes. Slower traffic also translates to fewer conflicts and accidents between people and cars.

Upon leaving the Square, downtown's structure loses its focus. Some streets are one-way while others are two-way. Many are very wide with little traffic and few pedestrians. Some contain angle parking, some parallel parking, and some have no parking at all. Many streets have their utility lines spanning overhead, and while some have well maintained sidewalks, others are battered. There is a general need for new street standards.



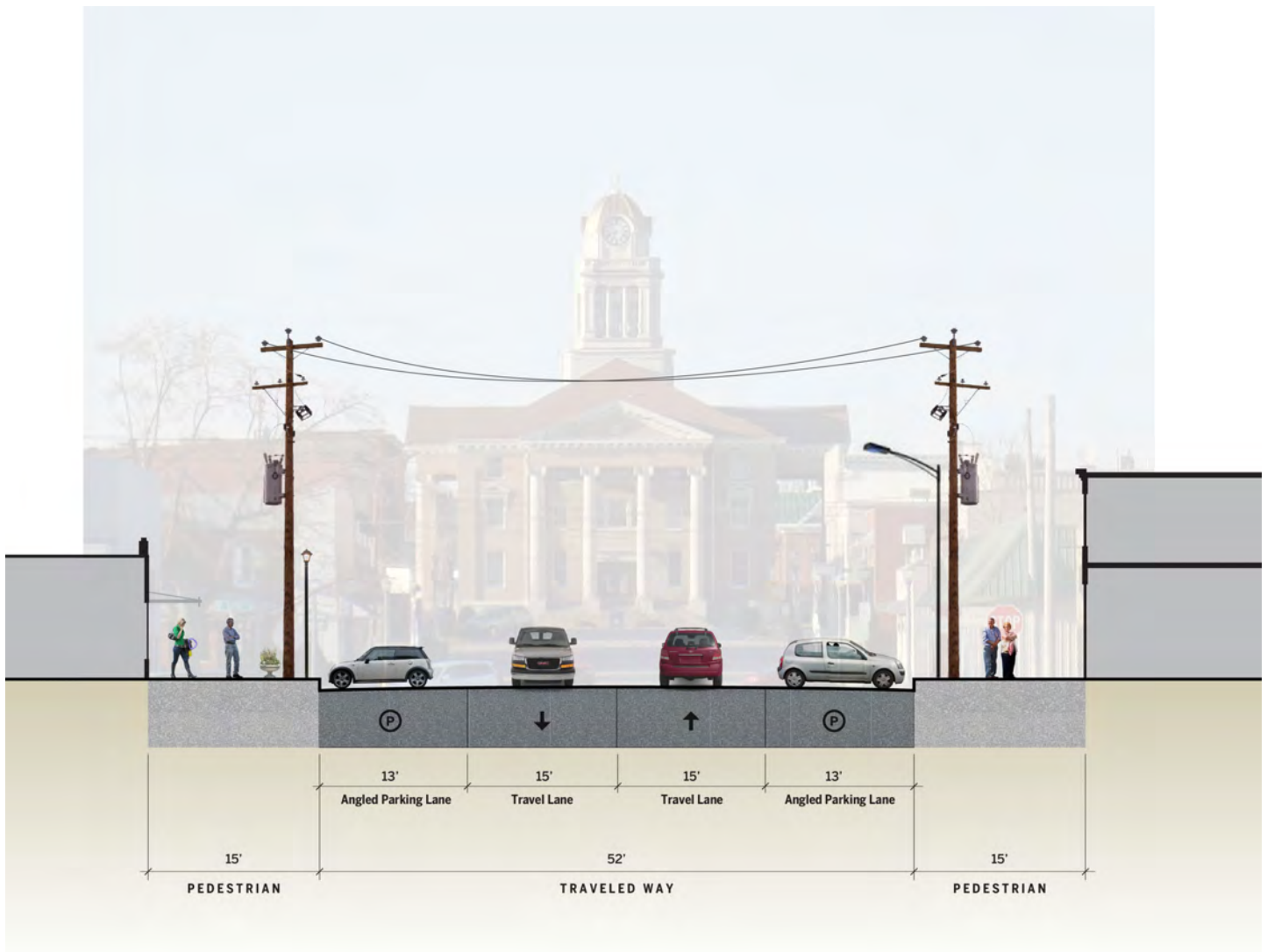
Above: The character of Main Street can be vastly improved.

The street system and pedestrian amenities wither as one nears the riverfront. Industrial uses occupy some space in the public right-of-way, and a number of streets terminate at the rail line. South of the 3rd Street Bridge, the sidewalk disappears, making it difficult for visitors to access the impressive collection of riverfront improvements on foot, or walk south to the Hampton Inn or popular Schnitzelbank Restaurant. All of these infrastructure shortcomings can be mitigated or improved.

It is normal for communities to see a number of seemingly small scale erosions in the circulation system. These incremental changes can, over time, result in challenges that in aggregate become more significant. Communities that develop a well thought out approach to their street and circulation systems are better off because they balance the demands of vehicles and pedestrians. Fewer conflicts emerge between local traffic and through traffic. Moreover, cities that value connections between adjacent districts are likely - over time - to be able to correct these imbalances, and at the same time provide an urban environment that people treasure.

Such transformations often begin with a focus on the community's primary street, or the street that has the most potential to make stronger connections possible. In Jasper, Main Street is the community's front door. The city deserves an address that is impressionable, efficient and beautiful. Main Street should have a consistent look and feel all the way from the Courthouse Square to the river.

Main Street needs to be redesigned to include a center median. Regrading the street to drain in the center will have a number of immediate effects. First, it will diminish the amount of impervious pavement in the right-of-way. The median will take advantage of the street's slope and help to filter stormwater from adjoining



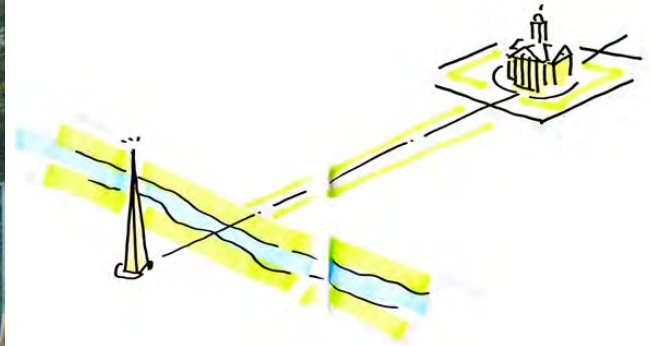
Above: wide travel lanes and overhead utility wires undermine the quality of Main Street, the city's primary address.



properties, thereby reducing the burden on the city's below ground infrastructure. Space for the center median is acquired by removing the angled parking that is currently on the periphery of the street and replacing it with a parallel parking layout. While the overall number of spaces will be reduced, the redesigned street will offer a more pleasant walking experience. People who frequent Main Street stores are more apt to park and walk under this design. With a bike lane incorporated into Main Street, the city also sends a signal that new roads need to accommodate more than just cars.



Above: Complete streets balance the needs of cars with all modes of travel. A center median, combined with new street trees, lighting, pavements and a bike lane will enhance movement and entice development.



Above: Main Street connects the Courthouse Square to the river, but the view to the Patoka is blocked. A new anchor to Main Street - in the form of an iconic, tension cable pedestrian bridge - will link the two together, and expand the Riverwalk to both sides.

“Complete Streets” enable safe access for people of all ages and abilities. They make it easier to cross the street, walk around downtown and ride a bike by balancing safety with convenience. Improving Main Street will ultimately make Jasper a better community in which to live, and its redesign will set the standard for future public infrastructure investments.

While it is suggested that Main Street be the initial redesigned street emanating from the Square, it is strongly suggested that it be integrated in its design with an overall downtown streetscape program. After Main Street, the second phase can focus on Jackson and Mill Streets, transforming these corridors back into two-way streets with a Jasper-themed streetscape and pedestrian improvement program incorporated into the redesign.



## STRATEGIES

In order to enhance connectivity in downtown Jasper, the following strategies are recommended:

1. Redesign Main Street to serve as the primary connection between Court-house Square and the Riverfront. The development of an attractive and creative streetscape improvement program that seamlessly and comfortably connects the Square and the Riverfront is one of the most important concepts. Main Street is the primary street in this system of connectivity. A major improvement program that incorporates a planted, center median strip, combined with the creation of a southern icon at the Riverfront, will transform Main Street and provide the ceremonial and vehicular/pedestrian connection that is currently missing. The right-of-way for the street will remain the same, but the amount of pervious pavement will be greatly increased. Include new lighting, street trees, seating and a bike lane. Encourage signage and public art programmatic elements that reinforce and celebrate the unique character and history of Jasper as additional ways to provide a seamless connection between these areas.
2. Initiate the process of converting one-way streets in the downtown area back to two-way streets. The existence of one-way streets are a vestige of past transportation policies designed to move traffic out of downtown as rapidly as possible, which is often highly detrimental to local businesses and antithetical to a pleasant and vibrant pedestrian environment. Local traffic volumes and flows do not justify the continued existence of one-way streets.
3. Embrace public policy initiatives that place pedestrian and bicycle use on par with vehicular travel. Pedestrians and cyclists need to be accommodated on the streets connecting the Square and the Riverfront, not just along the Riverwalk and the trail system. Seek state and federal funding for “complete streets” implementation.
4. Encourage development anchors and activity generators between the Square and the Riverfront. While street and pedestrian improvements will facilitate movement between the two major areas of downtown, developing new anchors in the spaces between these areas is critical in generating interest and activity along the connection.



Above: Main Street's alignment to the river can be enhanced with a Complete Street approach. A new pedestrian bridge at the southern terminus of the view bookends Main Street with two iconic elements: the bridge and the Courthouse.



## ACTION ITEMS

1. Develop downtown streetscape improvement design plans. Begin with South Main Street schematic plans and design palette from Courthouse Square to the Patoka River.
2. Advance the planning for converting one-way to two-way streets that begins with Mill and Jackson Streets (phase 1) and 4th and 5th Street (phase 2), as well as the re-assessment of the Newton Street left turn prohibitions into the Square.
3. Initiate a downtown parking study which can test the viability of a modest sized parking ramp adjacent to the Post Office on East Sixth Street to provide additional downtown parking for customers and daily downtown employees.
4. Support the redevelopment of Hoosier Desk as well as the retenanting of ground floor retail space on Main Street and other north/south streets between the Square and the Riverfront.
5. Extend sidewalks south along Third Street from the Jasper City Mill to Schnitzelbank Restaurant.





5

## INTEGRATING ART IN THE PUBLIC REALM

Advancing Jasper as a place of History,  
Tradition and Innovation



## INTEGRATING ART IN THE PUBLIC REALM

### Building on Jasper as a place of History, Tradition and Innovation

#### THE VISION

Jasper residents have many more opportunities to experience art and culture in the city. New galleries, art and dance classes, and small performance spaces have opened up in some of the former industrial buildings, and provide many more opportunities for local, regional and national artists to display their creative work. Innovative street furniture fabricated by local industries line Main Street, the Courthouse Square and the Riverfront, highlighting the rich furniture heritage of Jasper and creating interesting places to gather. Visitors to Jasper are amazed to see art infused into the public realm at many scales and in ways which are whimsical, unexpected and fun. The new pedestrian bridge that spans the Patoka River and anchors Main Street to the south is itself an elegant, sculptural work of civil engineering.



## CONTEXT



Above: The annual Strassenfest is a successful example of an event that celebrates Jasper's cultural heritage.

The City of Jasper is – with good reason – proud of a decades-long tradition of supporting the arts and culture. That tradition remains healthy today with the City's publicly supported Arts Council, the first of its kind in the State. The breadth and quality of the arts programming in a community the size of Jasper is impressive, and the arts is firmly embedded in the culture and character of the community.

In addition to its rich tradition of the arts, Jasper citizens are equally proud of their heritage in the wood furniture industry, which takes a back seat to no other community. Wood manufacturers initially located to southern Indiana due to the abundance of hardwood in the region and access to a skilled workforce. Jasper quickly became known as the center of the industry. Although wood manufacturing has evolved over time, Jasper continues to be the corporate home of a number of nationally and internationally known companies within this industry. Many of these still locally-based industries have developed global reputations that transcend



their initial product lines. Kimball International, for example, has evolved from a company that established an early reputation for finely-crafted wood furniture into an international electronics company. Regardless of the products being made, Jasper's reputation for a hard work ethic and meticulous workmanship continues to this day.

These two inherent components of Jasper, the arts and the wood furniture industry, remain, along with its German heritage, alive and vibrant. Yet unfortunately, these characteristics are rarely visible outside the walls of the Arts Center or the industrial headquarters. Visitors and potential residents may have heard of Jasper's strength and heritage in these areas, but visible evidence throughout the community is lacking.



Above: Jasper has a rich tradition of manufacturing innovation in wood and other industries which can be better integrated into a public art program.

Communities across the country are eager to showcase and celebrate aspects of their authenticity and uniqueness. Many struggle to do so, but Jasper is fortunate that it embodies aspects of its past and its future that are both authentic and unique to the city. Its downtown and Riverfront area – the heart of the community – should showcase these elements of the community's heritage in which they take great pride. This can be accomplished in a number of ways: art galleries and arts classes in renovated spaces within former wood manufacturing facilities; and an exhibit of the wood industry (its past, present and future) in space built expressly for that industry.

A public art program can be a captivating way to celebrate these assets while at the same time demonstrating the community's current creativity and innovation. Capitalizing on the history of the wood industry is something that is genuine to Jasper and authentic to this place. Developing a public art program that involves the wood industry combines both of these community assets in a manner that can capture an integral part of Jasper and be fun and creative at the same time.

Public art programs often are thought of as sculptures or other three-dimensional art pieces “plopped down” in a number of locations, to be admired as pieces of art; or – a themed set of decorated objects signifying some relationship to the community. Images come to mind of the cows in Chicago, the pigs in Cincinnati, the horses in Louisville or Buffalo’s buffalo. While these initiatives do create excitement and interest, at least initially, public art more and more is integrated into the normal pedestrian experience of a community and often woven into the fabric of downtown.

By taking everyday items such as shade structures, benches and bike racks and making them objects of art, a community buzz is created. The ability to showcase Jasper’s wood heritage through a series of coordinated, public art installations and



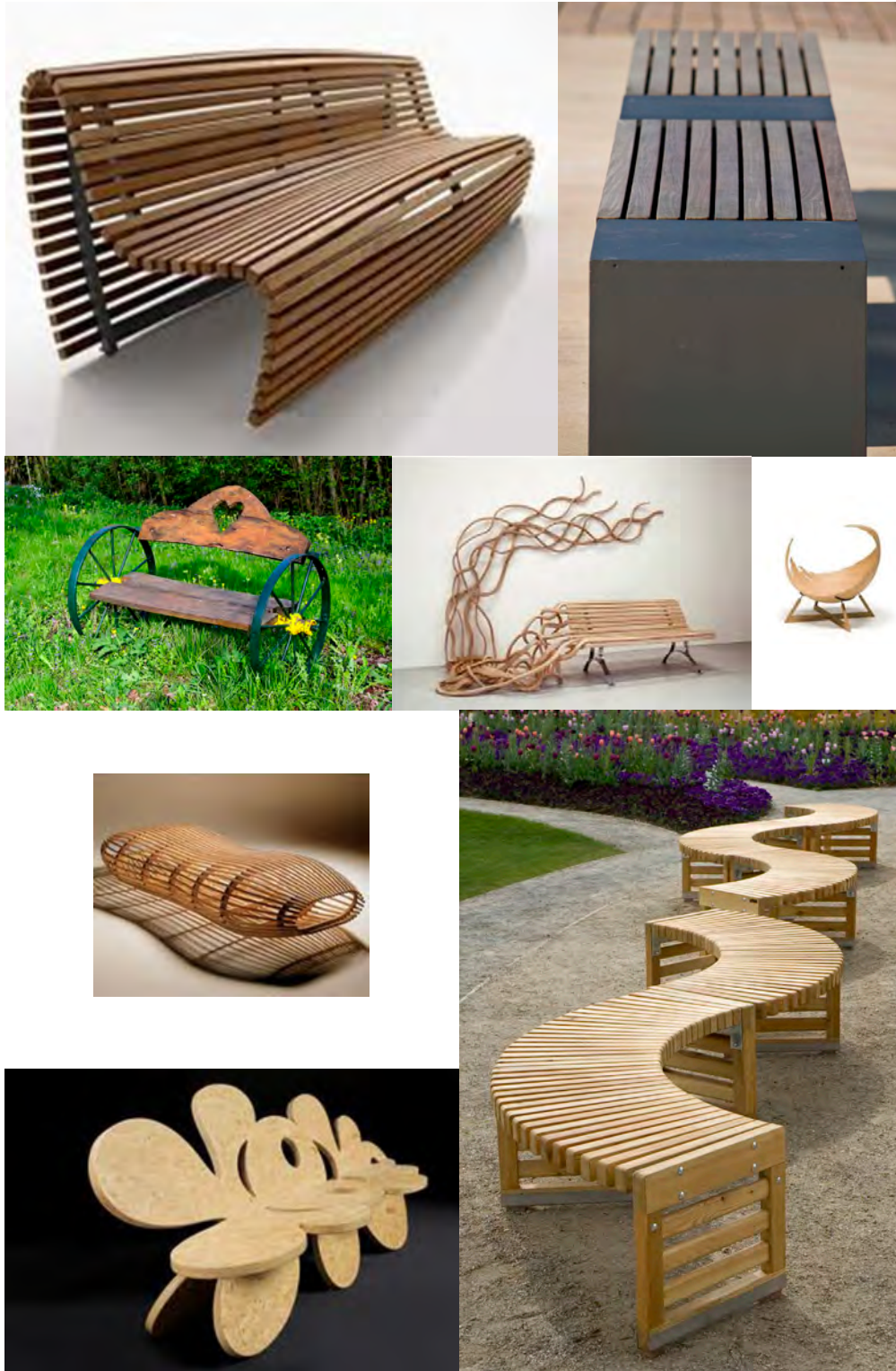
Above: Public seating brings people together. “Street Seats: Reimagining the Public Bench” by the Boston Design Museum created an outdoor design competition to rethink the humble public bench.

initiatives - highlighting everyday items like chairs and desks in a variety of artistic, surprising ways - can bring a richness to the pedestrian experience and a reinforcement of the major brands of Jasper at the same time.

Other elements of the downtown and riverfront initiative can also be infused with artistic and creative aspects. The proposed new pedestrian bridge over the Patoka can be truly pedestrian in scale and design, or it can be designed in a manner that provides a beautiful and creative new icon. The bridge location will be on axis with the historic icon of the Courthouse - a perfect alignment between the richness of Jasper’s past and its aspirations for the future.

Jasper’s art program should be interactive and inclusive, engaging people of all ages and backgrounds. While the art should be reflective of Jasper’s history, tradition, and symbols of excellence, it should also be fun and whimsical. Local artist involvement will be necessary to instill a sense of ownership for the initiative, and the art should include functional elements whenever and wherever possible. Even landscaping elements can be designed in creative and artistic manner.





Above: Integrating art into the public realm can take many forms. Even Jasper's benches can be opportunities for creative interpretation, and showcase the city's wood manufacturing expertise.



Above: With creative lighting and paving treatments, the mundane alleyways that lead into the Courthouse Square can be transformed into art destinations.



## STRATEGIES

In order highlight Jasper’s art culture, the following strategies are recommended:

1. Initiate a street furniture program that includes chairs, benches and desks that celebrates Jasper’s wood manufacturing heritage. The initiative could include interdisciplinary teams that are comprised of students from area colleges or universities working together with mentors from area firms.
2. Create an opportunity for numerous pieces of sculpture and public art throughout the downtown and riverfront area as well as the approaches to the community. These can range from specific elements such as a Sun Dial and/or interactive fountain downtown, to more abstract elements that combine Jasper’s support of the arts with its innovative design and technology focus.
3. Design “conversation nooks” at the four corners of the Courthouse Square to incorporate these public art elements as integral to the public realm. Partner with local businesses for maintenance support.
4. Work with the Arts Council and others to encourage frequent temporary public art installations as well as pop-up initiatives.



Above: Example of a large Sun Dial, which also serves as public art.



## ACTION ITEMS

1. Establish a permanent Jasper Public Art Commission that brings together the Arts Commission, Friends of the Arts, and local artists to advance the above mentioned strategies.
2. Create a wood Sculpture Walk Competition (for downtown, the riverfront and approaches into city) that highlights sustainable wood technology and new methods of fabrication.
3. Encourage and support temporary, “pop-up” installations throughout downtown, as a means to constantly bring people back and provide a wide sense of ownership of these spaces.
4. Design and engineer a new pedestrian bridge design over the Patoka River as an iconic symbol of the spirit of Jasper.
5. Initiate a street furniture design program that includes chairs, benches and desks that celebrates Jasper’s wood product tradition. The program could include interdisciplinary teams that are comprised of students from area colleges or universities with team mentors chosen from area firms.
6. Establish conversation “nooks” at the four corners of the Courthouse Square.
7. Create Bike Rack Public Art that combines the provision of bike racks throughout the downtown and riverfront areas with opportunities for local artists to make each one distinctive and reflective of the community.

# JASPER MASTER PLAN: ACTION PLAN

December 2013

The Action Plan is based on strategies recommended in each section of the report. The chart below breaks down each strategy into specific action steps and assigns responsibilities of lead and/or engaged entities, some of which exist and some that are recommended. The chart also estimates likely time frames and level of priority. All in all, the Action Plan requires the coordinated effort of many entities, but the outcomes will be far more effective through this shared approach.

The time frame reflects the relative importance of the effort but also ease of implementation. Some projects may not be fully implemented for many years, but because they are a high priority, some actions should begin immediately. The categories area as follows:

- Short-term: one month to one year (high priority – begin critical path actions right away)
- Medium-term: one year to two years (high priority – begin critical path actions right away)
- Long-term: two years to four years (high priority – begin critical path actions right away)

## I. COURTHOUSE SQUARE: Enhancing the Character of the City’s Icon

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Relevant agencies</i>	<i>Time Frame/ Priority</i>
<b>a. Reduce the amount of street pavement around the Courthouse</b>	Develop a schematic Design for Courthouse Square with vegetative zone with new plantings	City Public Works	Short-term / High
	Create Activity Nodes	City Art Commission Chamber of Commerce/ Greater Downtown Business Association	Medium-term/ High
	Emphasize greater programming opportunities	City Dubois County Community Foundation	Medium-term / High
<b>b. Make Funds available for Façade Improvement Program</b>	Create inventory for potential pilot project(s), market and advertise effort	City	Short-term/ High
<b>c. Designate downtown as an Historic District</b>	Update / create new map of District <i>(Note: applications accepted in August with grants available the following January.)</i>	City Indiana Dept. Natural Resources, (Historic Preservation/Archeology)	Medium-term/ High



**II. ENHANCING THE CITY’S RELATIONSHIP TO THE PATOKA RIVER:**  
**Building a Critical Mass around Recent Investments**

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Relevant Agencies</i>	<i>Time Frame/ Priority</i>
<b>a. Create a new River Road</b>	Initiate an engineering study to identify the east-west right-of-way for the new River Road alignment	City – Public Works	Short-term/High
<b>b. Dedicate a public right-of-way on the northside of the river and identify opportunities for new pedestrian bridge</b>	Initiate a North Riverwalk Focus Area Plan that links into the hydrology study underway.	City + consultant team Redevelopment Commission	Medium-term/High
<b>c. Explore public-private partnerships for Market Hall / Farmers Market</b>	Create focus group to solicit ideas and partnership opportunities	City ROJAC	Long-term
<b>d. Extend Mill Street south as a pedestrian promenade that connects the German American Boulevard to the River</b>	Establish a platform for local businesses and organizations to promote multicultural food-centered activities	City ROJAC	Medium-term

**III. CREATING A CRITICAL MASS: REUSE OF THE FORMER INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES**  
**Building on Jasper’s Industrial Heritage**

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Relevant Agencies</i>	<i>Time Frame/ Priority</i>
<b>a. Initiate redevelopment of buildings by tapping into state and federal tax credits and seeking tenants</b>	Investigate tax credit options	City / Building owners	Short-term/High priority
	Pursue corporate support for participation in leasing and guarantee of rooms.	City Major Jasper employers (MasterBrand, Kimball, etc.)	Short-term/High

<b>b. Pursue civic, arts, and visitor attraction uses in rehab space where appropriate</b>	Assess existing space and programmatic needs and potential new opportunities	City Arts Council Dubois County Visitor Bureau	Medium-Term/High
<b>c. Capitalize on zoning ordinance update to allow for mixed-use</b>	Update zoning to allow for greater mixed-use opportunities	City Planning Zoning Consultants	Medium-term/High

#### **IV. DOWNTOWN CONNECTIVITY: The Street Complete**

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Relevant Agencies</i>	<i>Time Frame/ Priority</i>
<b>a. Initiate Parking Study</b>	Study viability for parking structure	City Public Works	Short-term/High
<b>b. Seek funding for state and federal "Complete Streets" initiative</b>	Research funding opportunities	City State DOT	Short-term/High
<b>c. Initiate a policy of two-way street conversion</b>	Advance planning for converting one-way to two-way streets beginning with Mill and Jackson Streets	City Engineering	Medium-term
<b>d. Redesign Main Street to address complete streets concepts</b>	Create schematic design package for the redesign of the street including appropriate lighting, planting and surface materials. Establish new on street parking plan.	City / Public Works	Medium-term

## V. INTEGRATING ART IN THE PUBLIC REALM:

### Building on Jasper's Heritage as a place of History, Tradition and Innovation

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>	<i>Time Frame/ Priority</i>
<b>a. Initiate a Street Furniture Program</b>	Convene Focus Group to brainstorm concepts and establish timeline	City	Short-term/High
	Create a wood Sculpture Walk Competition	Chamber of Commerce Major Employers Universities Arts Commission	Medium-term/High
<b>b. Establish a permanent Public Art Commission</b>	Bring together allied disciplines	Arts Council Friends of the Arts Local artists	Short-term/High
<b>c. Encourage and support temporary "pop-up" installations</b>	Bring together allied disciplines	Arts Commission	Long-term/High

End of schedule.