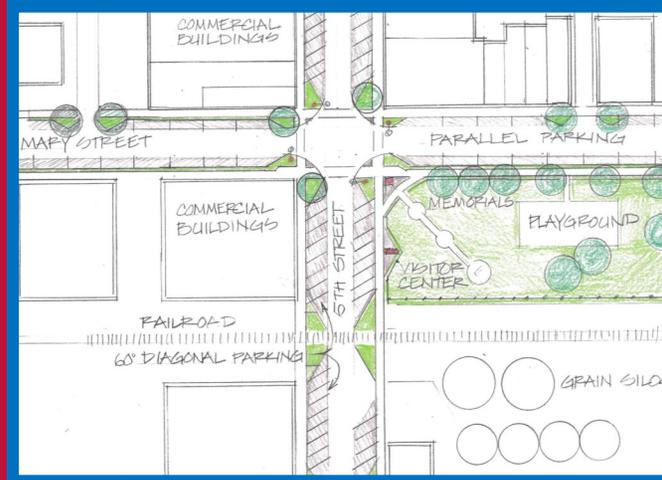


# Illioopolis, Illinois



**Concept Plans for Downtown Enhancement  
and Other Community Improvements**

# **Small Town Roadway Character Pilot Project**

**November 2017**

This report is the result of the *Small Town Roadway Character Pilot Project*, an initiative of the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) to assist small towns in Sangamon County in formulating ways to enhance their image and community recognition.

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Regional Planning Commission**

200 South 9th St., Room #212, Springfield, IL 62701

prepared by

**MassieMassie+Associates**

Landscape Architecture and Land Planning  
1210 South 5<sup>th</sup> St. Springfield, Illinois 62703  
217-544-3210 [Massie-Massie-Associates.com](http://Massie-Massie-Associates.com)

## ***Small Town Roadway Character Pilot Project***

### **Introduction to the Project**

This report is the result of the *Small Town Roadway Character Pilot Project*, an initiative of the Springfield and Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) to assist small towns in Sangamon County in formulating ways to enhance their image and community recognition. Because of size, small towns often have difficulty in establishing identities and attractive characteristics that can promote community pride and encourage visitors to tour local points of interest, attend community events and patronize businesses. Visitors' involvement with communities can potentially lead to interest in making small towns their homes and places of employment as well.

### **Small Towns in Sangamon County**

Scattered throughout Sangamon County are some two dozen towns with populations of 5,000 or fewer, most with origins in the early to mid-1800s. Settlers of the Sangamo Country, as it was known, found home sites near waterways where woodlands met open prairies. Rivers provided water and a means of transportation and the forest trees were used for building, cooking and heating in the winter. Some early homesteads attracted others and grew into towns as a result of favorable natural conditions or successful commercial ventures.

Beginning in the 1860s, railroad development greatly benefitted the towns that were fortunate to be located along the lines. Railroads provided convenient shipping of local products to outside markets and imported goods for townspeople to purchase. As time went by, additional towns were established along rail lines, however, communities that had been bypassed tended to decline or disappear.

The twentieth century development of high-speed highways and the interstate system took a toll on small towns. Highways bypassed communities leaving them without through-traffic and seemingly with little to attract motorists to exit the highways and explore their communities. Today, many small communities struggle to maintain their viability and prospects for the future.

This project is an effort to assist small towns in Sangamon County to overcome difficulties faced by contemporary conditions and to promote pride and optimism for their future.

### **Four Pilot Study Towns**

Four Sangamon County small towns are involved in the study. Three towns - Auburn, Riverton and Dawson – are interested in improving their community entrances to entice visitors to explore their communities. The fourth town, Illiopolis, wants to improve their downtown area to create a more attractive environment for current and new businesses.

The study involves developing improvement plans to address the needs that each town identified. In addition, the plans are meant to be models, or templates, that can be adapted for other towns in Sangamon County.

A further objective of this study was to develop enhancement plans that could visually unify towns to create a recognizable image of "A Sangamon County Small Town." To accomplish this goal, several types of community improvements were devised: Downtown Improvements, Entrance "Community Pride" Signs, Highway and Street Sign Enhancements, Wayfinding Signs, Community Welcome Stations, Tree and Flower Planting Programs and Silo Embellishments. Towns may adopt one or more of these enhancement concepts and phasing in the improvements over a period of time that suits each community.



# Village of Illiopolis, IL

An initial meeting was held in Springfield at the SSCRPC office on July 19, 2017, with representatives of three of the four pilot towns to kick-off the project. Judson DeVore represented Illiopolis at the meeting. The overall parameters of the study, its purpose and anticipated results were reviewed as described in the introduction to this report. Discussion then turned to the village's objectives and what they envision as possible community improvements.

Illiopolis selected the category of *Main Street Character Area* as their primary interest. The community hopes to improve the overall function and appearance of their downtown area, making it a more attractive location for businesses, existing and future, and a more appealing environment to local patrons and visitors.

Within the four-block downtown area are partial blocks of contiguous historic buildings, most of them one and two-story brick commercial structures. Other stand-alone structures built originally for dealerships, dry good outlets, and similar functions remain from

the 1940s when the U.S. Sangamon Ordinance Plant west of town attracted thousands of employees. Today, a few buildings are occupied by commercial ventures – shops, offices, a bank – and others are used by village services and institutions -- the Illiopolis Township Hall, Village Library, US Post Office and Masonic Hall. Many structures have been altered from their original appearance using materials and colors that diminish the aesthetic quality of the downtown.

A feature of the downtown is the linear Downtown Park that runs alongside Mary Street, enveloping the railroad tracks through town. A row of commercial buildings faces the park across Mary Street, providing the opportunity to integrate the two areas more fully for aesthetics and usability.

A public meeting was held on September 13 to review and discuss preliminary concepts for downtown improvement. Ideas for signage and other unifying improvements were also presented and met with interest.



# Village of Illiopolis, IL

## Map of Community Features



North

Not to Scale



*Illiopolis Village Hall, 302 5th Street*



*Downtown Park Features*



*Buildings on Mary Street facing the Park*



*Large structure, west Mary Street*



*Grain bins and office corner of 5th and Mary*

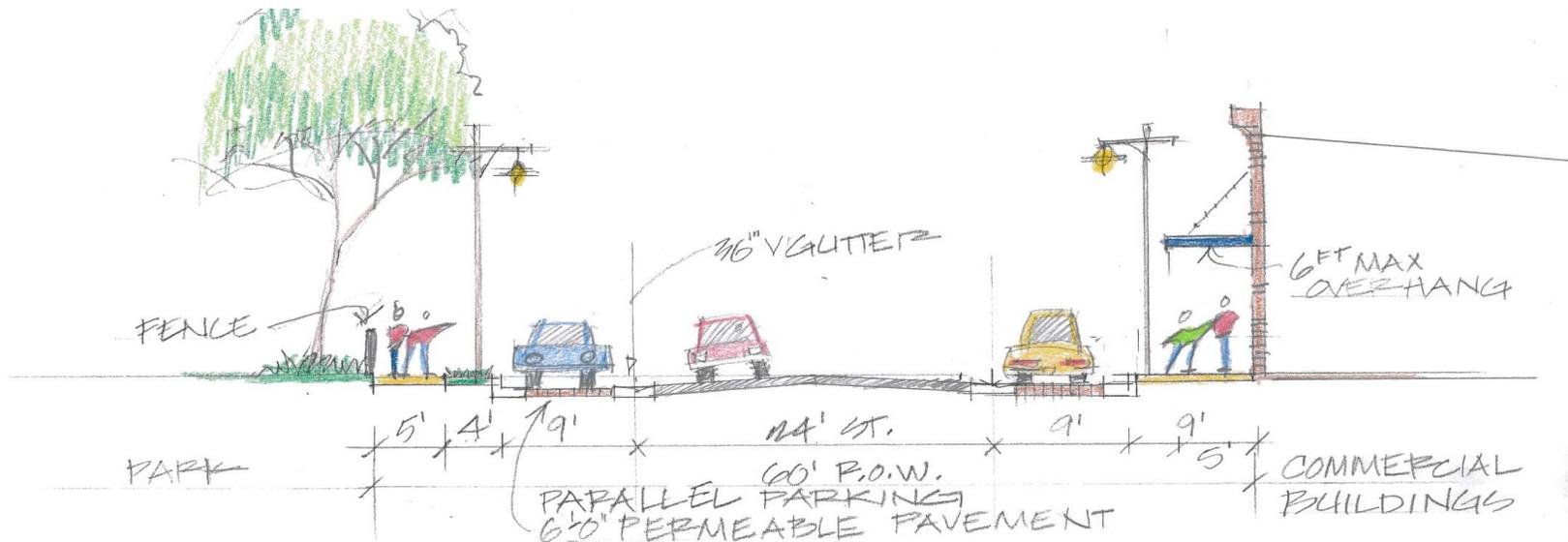


*Early Industrial Building, west Mary Street*

# Downtown Enhancements

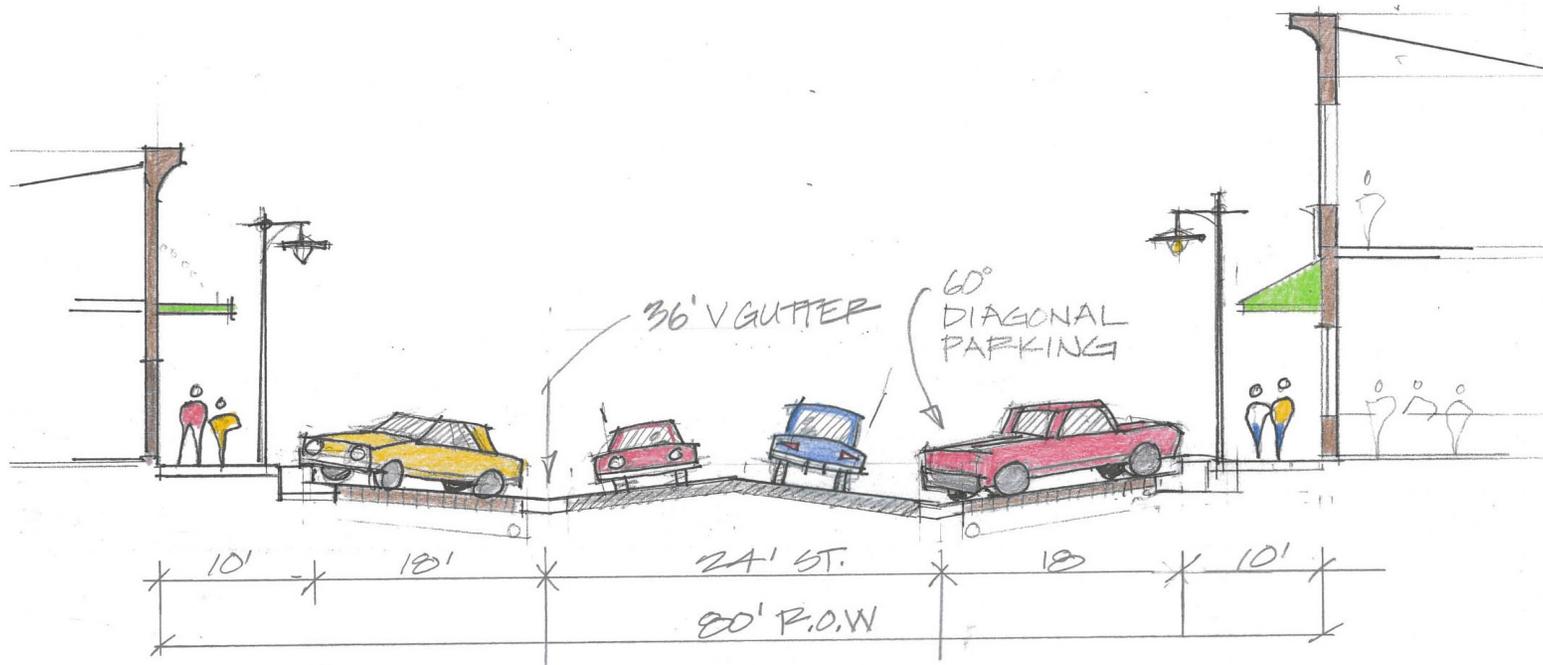
The following improvements are recommended for Downtown Illiopolis. Improvements can be made independently or together or can be phased over a period of time that suits the community.

- Maintain good street surfaces throughout the downtown area. The existing oil and chip surface should be kept smooth and free of loose chips that could be a safety hazard. At a future time, consider replacing the oil and chip surfaces with a more durable hot mix asphalt, concrete or brick pavers. Brick pavers could contribute much to the historic character of the downtown.
- Define and differentiate the driving lanes from the parking lanes and control surface drainage. Install shallow, V-gutters between the driving and parking lanes. Crown the street and slope the parking lanes toward the new gutter to collect and control storm water run-off.
- Retain the existing parking layouts, parallel and diagonal, along the streets. Resurface the parking lanes with poured concrete or brick pavers. Brick pavers would contribute to the historic character of the area. A permeable clay brick paver system could be installed to reduce the run-off and add storm water storage within the downtown. All parking locations should be striped.
- Install new concrete sidewalks throughout the downtown, incorporating curbs as needed to elevate the sidewalks to near-floor elevations of the existing buildings. Sidewalks should be at least six feet wide, have a nicely tooled scoring pattern such as “planks” suggested during the meetings and a broom finish. Ramps and grade modifications may be needed for ADA accessibility.

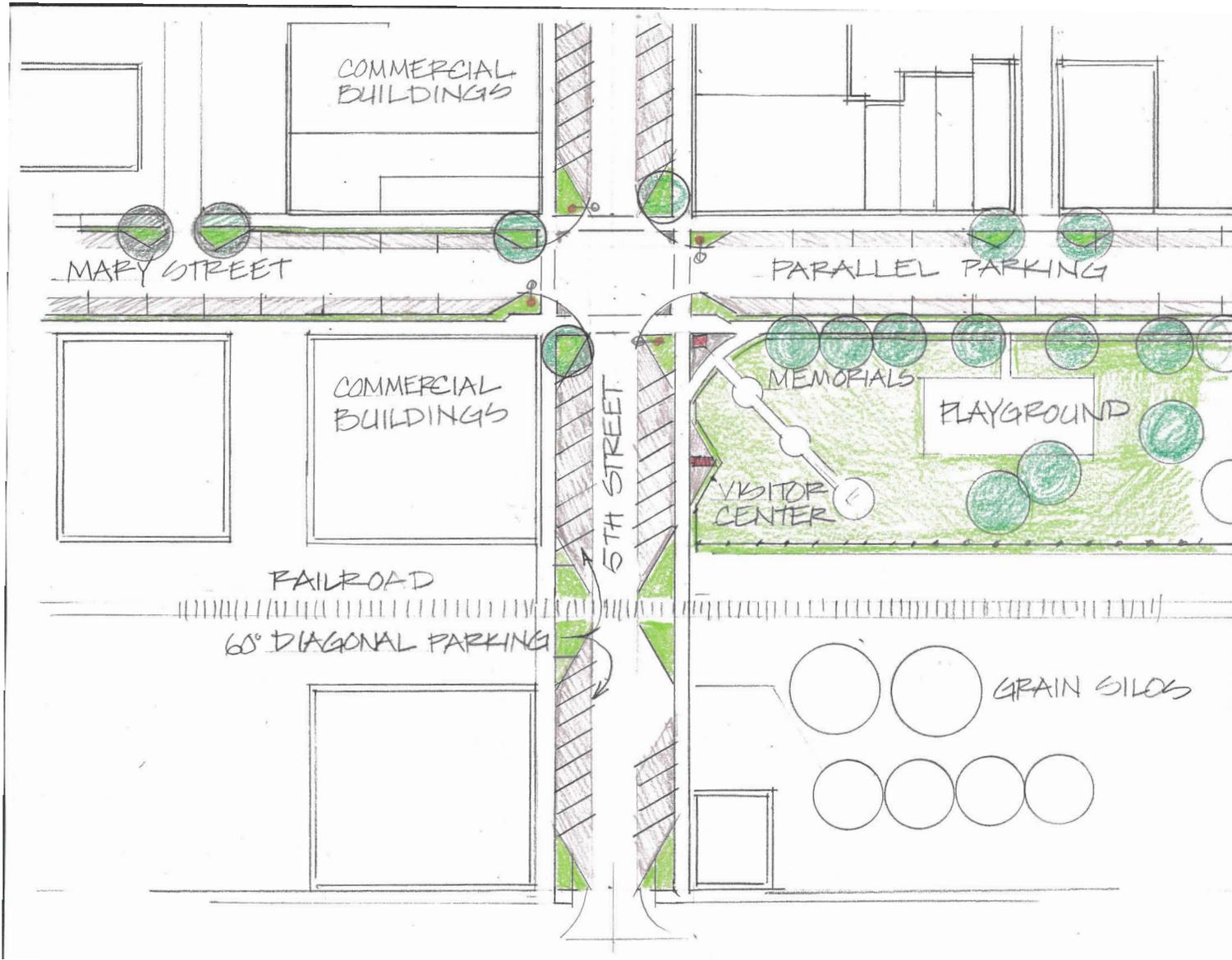


**Cross-section: Mary Street looking West**

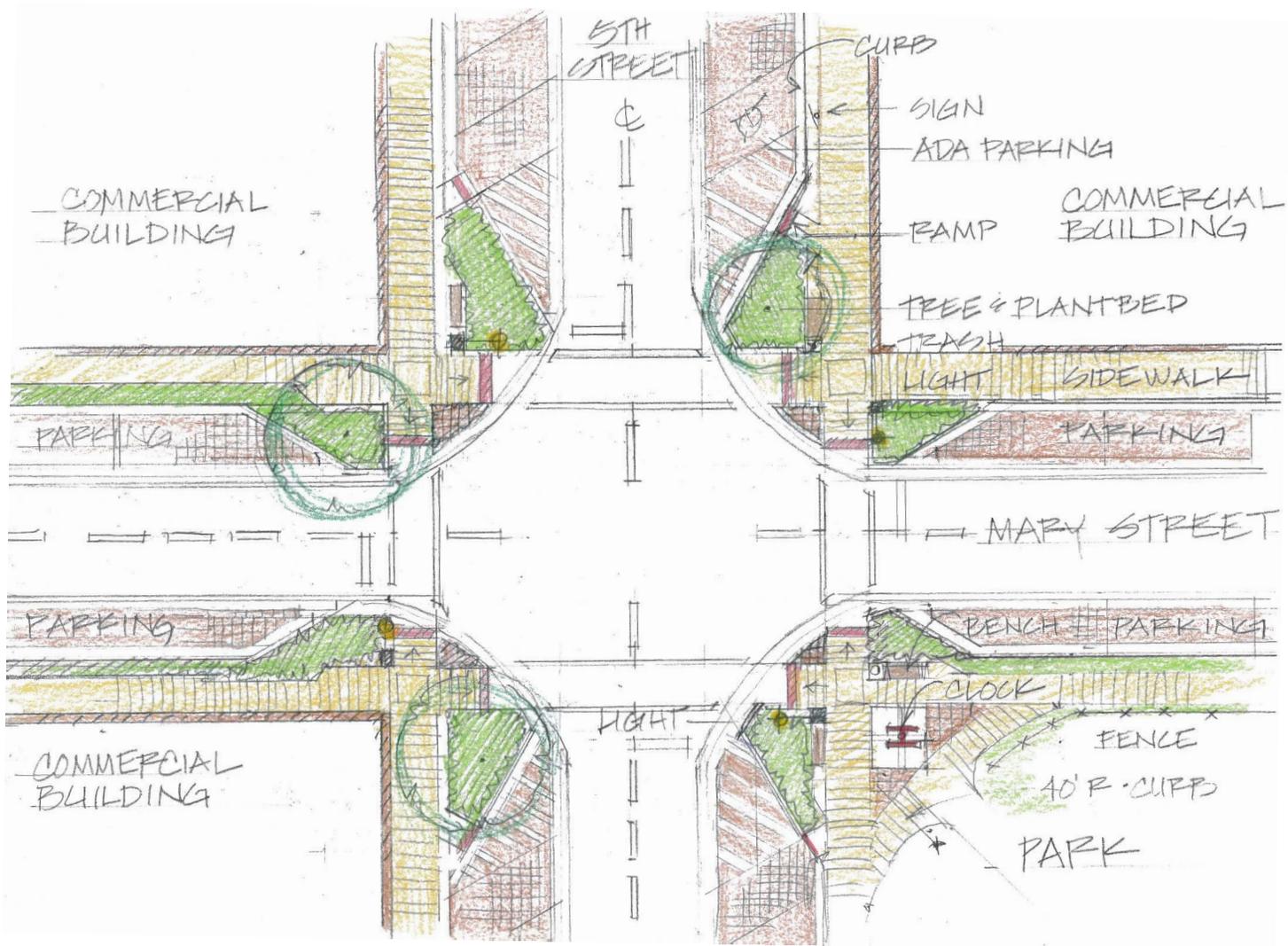
- Sandwich signs, flower pots, benches or merchandise can be placed along sidewalks outside buildings provided a 3-foot wide clear path remains for mobility. A minimum 5-foot square turning area must be provided at doorways.
- Create borders between the sidewalks and the parking lanes for amenities such as light posts, flagpoles, planters, traffic signs and street trees. The border should be 2-4 feet wide and surfaced with concrete or turf to define the sidewalk and help separate pedestrians from the motorists beyond.
- Bury existing overhead electric service lines and remove wood poles.
- Install new street lights and possibly lower-profile pedestrian lights with an historic character suited to buildings in the downtown but not overly ornate.
- Initiate a façade improvement program to paint and rehabilitate the structures, particularly those facing the downtown streets. Recreate the historic integrity of the buildings by selecting appropriate paint colors, awnings, window and door styles and sign lettering and placement.
- Place art, artifacts, trees, fences, trellises, or other items to add interest to blank walls and create a façade along empty lots.
- Create a Community Welcome Station in the park near the intersection of Fifth and Mary streets by enlarging the Memorial Plaza and adding an informational sign telling the history of the community, current events and future plans.
- Install sections of low fence or low hedge along the park's perimeter to provide a sense of separation and safety from the traffic on the adjacent streets and railroad tracks.



**Cross-section: 5th Street looking North**



**Downtown Illiopolis: Concept Enhancement Plan**



**Concept Plan Detail: Intersection of Mary and 5th streets**

## ENTRANCE “COMMUNITY PRIDE” SIGNS

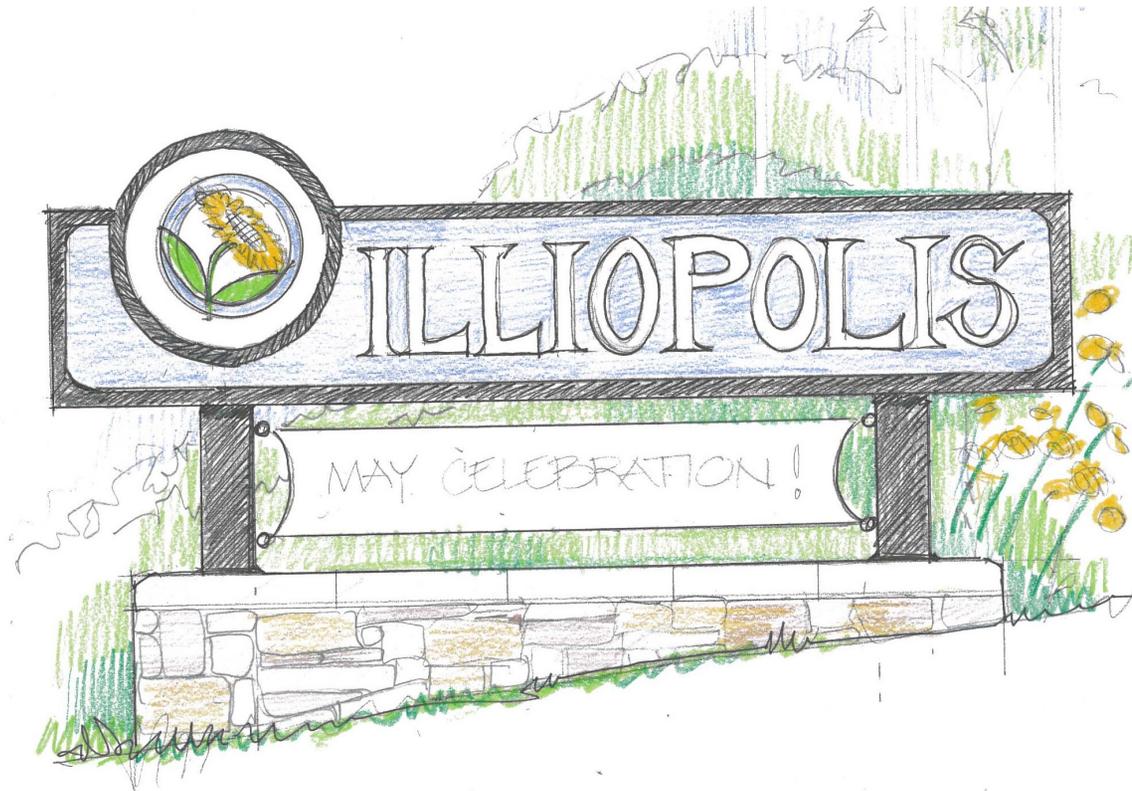
*Distinctive signs at community entrances identify a town and also make a strong visual statement about the character of the community. Other signs within the community, can reinforce the identity and character and provide information useful to both village residents and the public.*

An entrance sign currently exists near the intersection of Old Route 36 and Matilda Street, the west entrance to Illiopolis. This sign would be preserved and the grounds around it would be enhanced in a similar way as recommended for a new sign at the east entrance.

A new sign would be located at the west bound curve of

Matilda Street. The name Illiopolis would be in bold and distinctive lettering along with the community-selected symbol and community web site. The space under the sign board would accommodate a banner to promote community features or upcoming events. Banners can be readily removed or replaced as desired.

During evening hours, both the existing and new signs would be lighted with power provided from electrical service or solar panels. The grounds around the signs would be improved with turf, flowers, trees and perhaps flags or other elements suited to the particular locations.



# HIGHWAY CITY SIGNS and STREET NAME SIGNS

## HIGHWAY CITY SIGNS

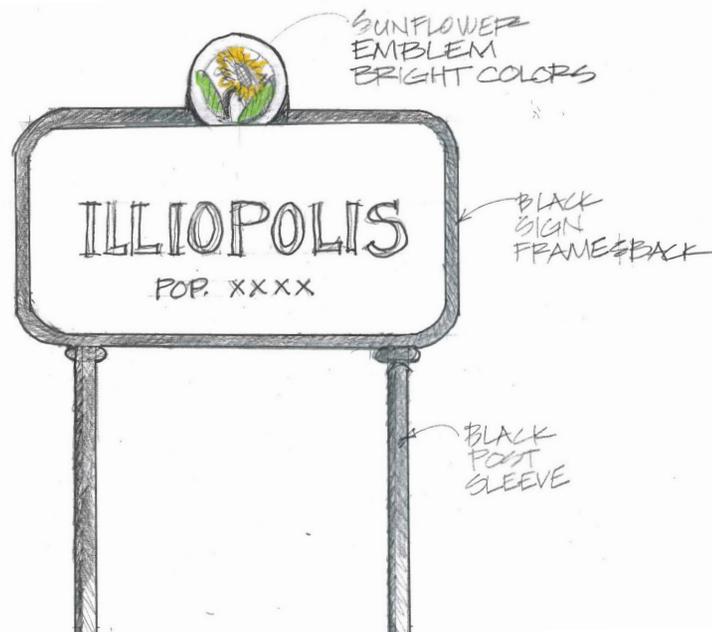
Enhancing the village signs along the highways will also contribute to the image of Illiopolis and help to unify it with other towns in Sangamon County. Standard highway name signs are now located on the west and east sides of town along old Route 36. Another name sign is south of town near the I-72 intersection.

Although highway signs must comply with regulations of the IL Department of Transportation, they can be embellished to become part of an overall community recognition program. Sign panels can be backed and attractively framed to improve their visibility and appearance. The posts can be covered with a sleeve to provide more refine-

ment. To further identify the community, an emblem of Illiopolis symbol can be applied to the sign.

## STREET NAME SIGNS

Street name signs can be enhanced in much the same way as the highway name signs. Frames can be installed around sign panels, posts can be painted, sleeved or replaced with decorative posts and community emblems can be added. Enhancements could begin with the signs along the most-traveled streets: Old Route 36, Matilda Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Street signs within the village could be addressed in the future, perhaps as a phased improvement program.



# DIRECTIONAL WAYFINDING SIGNS

To aid residents and visitors in navigating around town and finding points of interest, easy to spot and read directional street signs are effective. Signs should visually stand-out from traffic and commercial signs typically found in communities. Signs should direct motorists along reasonably direct routes while taking advantage of scenic streets or landmark locations where feasible. Destinations should be

“ganged” on sign panels where possible to minimize the number of signs required.

Optimum location for ganged directional signs are along Matilda Street, on both the east and west sides, and at the 5<sup>th</sup> Street intersection that leads downtown. The sign plaques could include School, Downtown, The Silos and perhaps other points of interest. As routes diverge, single-destination signs would be provided to point the way.



# COMMUNITY WELCOME STATION

Illiopolis could designate a location where residents and visitors can obtain information about the community and have access to public facilities. City maps or brochures might be available or QR codes or other technology provided to access information through mobile devices. Routes for driving, bicycling or walking could be offered.

A good location for a Community Welcome Station is at the west end of the downtown park. Here a kiosk could be constructed for

display of community history, current events and future plans. Visitors could walk to downtown businesses and access village services. The park facilities could be expanded and enjoyed by everyone including visitors, residents and business operators. The grounds and facilities at a welcome center should be kept clean and well maintained to best represent the character of the community.



# TREE AND FLOWER PLANTING PROGRAM

A tree and flower planting program could be initiated in Illiopolis. SUNFLOWERS were suggested as the community flower during the public meeting and could be used as images on signs throughout town. Tree planting could be contracted out or managed within the community. Trees and pots of flowers might be purchased in quantity and sold or given to city residents and businesses. Assistance with properly locating and planting the trees would be beneficial. Civic or-

ganizations, scout troops or other volunteers might be tapped for service.

Tree species listed below are generally suited to the central Illinois environment. In selecting a tree for an exact location, site conditions should be considered including soils, moisture, sun and shade and exposure to salt spray or chemical use. The visual qualities of each species including size, texture, flowering, etc. are equally as important in making plant selections.

## Shade Trees for Streets and Parking Lots

*Acer miyabei*—Miyabe Maple  
*Acer saccharum* - Sugar Maple  
*Acer rubrum* – Red Maple  
*Acer x fremanii* – Freeman Maple  
*Betula nigra* ‘heritage’- Heritage Birch  
*Taxodium distichum* - Bald Cypress  
*Carpinus betulus* – European Hornbeam  
*Celtis occidentalis* – American Hackberry  
*Ginkgo biloba* – Ginko  
*Gleditsia triacanthos inermis* – Thornless Honeylocust  
*Nyssa sylvatica* - Black Tupelo  
*Tilia Americana*—American Linden  
(Redmond or Sentry)  
*Tilia tomentosa* - Silver Linden  
*Ulmus* “prospector” – Prospector Elm

## Ornamental Trees for Parks and Boulevards

### Deciduous

*Amelanchier* species – Serviceberry  
*Cercis canadensis* – Eastern Redbud  
*Cornus florida* - Flowering Dogwood  
Crabapple cultivars  
*Cornus kousa* – Kousa Dogwood  
*Magnolia* species  
*Ostrya virginiana* – Ironwood  
*Syringa reticulata* subsp. *reticulata* – Japanese Tree Lilac

### Evergreen

*Juniperus virginiana*—Eastern Red Cedar  
*Picea abies* - Norway Spruce  
*Pinus strobus* - Eastern White Pine  
*Pinus thunbergii* – Japanese Black Pine

# SILO EMBELLISHMENTS

Distinctive structures in the community could be highlighted. Night lighting of downtown buildings, churches and other interesting features would add ambiance during evening hours.

The grain silos in downtown Illiopolis offer a unique opportunity. These classic mid-west structures are conspicuous features in many small towns in Sangamon County. The silos' massive cylindrical forms could be highlighted by night lighting and painting with artistry of any imagined subject or style.

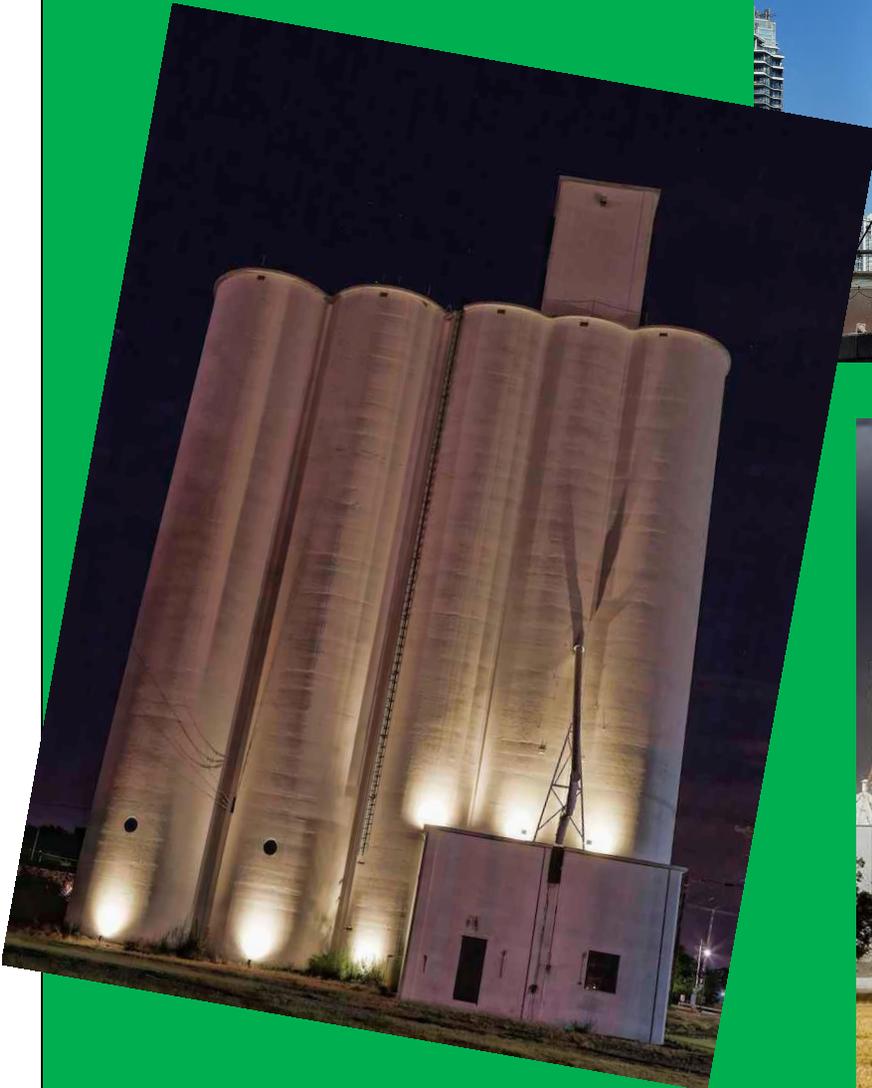


If towns embellish their silos, each in their own way, a cohesion among communities would be created that could attract visitors for the specific purpose of viewing the unique "Sangamon Silos." A Silo Tour route could be developed or an inter-community Silo Festival established.

Each town could also improve the grounds surrounding their silos, perhaps creating small parks or attractive landscapes. Silos might also be adapted for other uses, either permanent or temporary.



*Silo Painting Art*



Small Town Roadway Character Project

# Village of Illiopolis, IL

**BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS**

The following information is provided to aid in budgeting for future projects, although many factors will affect the actual cost of the work.

First, the improvements outlined in this report are broad-brush, Concept Plans. The scope of this study did not include investigation of critical aspects such as: determining location and condition of underground utilities, surveying for topography and drainage, re-

search of property ownership, assessing the integrity of structures and other matters that could substantially affect the construction work and cost.

The scope of a construction project will greatly affect costs as well, as there is economy in greater quantities. The following information therefor is provided as a range of unit costs.

Some of the items that may affect cost, but require more investigation are also listed.

Downtown Enhancement

Grade street, install 3' V gutter on both sides of the street	\$60-80/l.ft.
Concrete parking lanes - 6", 200 sq.ft.	\$2,000/ea.
New Concrete Sidewalks—10' wide Colored/stamped with borders	\$400/l.ft.
Street Lights	\$10,000/ea.
Pedestrian Lights	\$6,000/ea.
Flag Poles	\$3,000/ea.
Planters	\$750-\$1,000/ea.
Street Trees	\$800/ea.
Low fence or hedges	\$20—200/l.ft.

Additional Cost Considerations

Bury electric lines, Replace/reroute sewers or other utilities	
Acquisition of property or easements	
Reinforce soils, off-site drainage improvements	
Façade and building improvements	

Entrance "Community Pride" Signs

Masonry sign on spread concrete footing with night lighting	\$30,000-\$50,000/ea.
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Highway City Signs and Street Name Signs

Embellishment with backing, frame	\$750/ea.
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Directional Wayfinding Signs

Large custom frame with sign panels	\$1,500—2,500
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Community Welcome Station

Expand Memorial Plaza	\$ 5,000—8,000
Kiosk panel sign	\$30,000

Tree Planting Program

Large shade trees, installed	\$600/ea.
Medium-size ornamental, installed	\$400/ea.

Silo Embellishments

Lighting, painting, artist's fees	
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