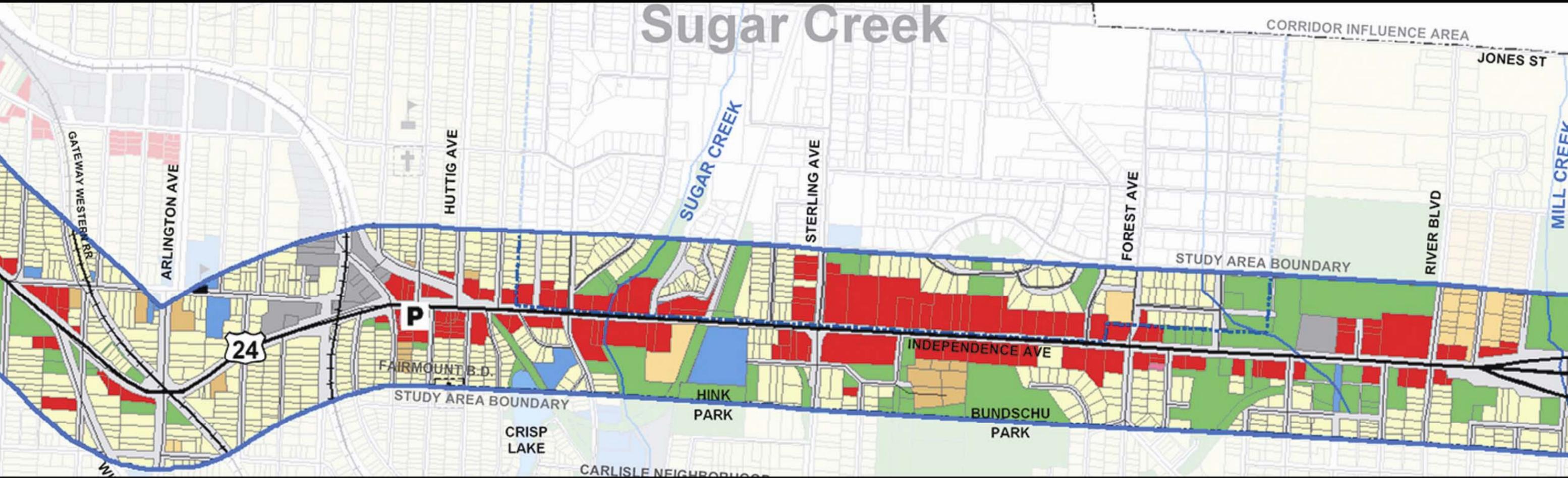


# The Building Blocks



# CHAPTER 4

## Chapter 4. The Building Blocks

### I. Introduction

Early in the process, a number of opportunity areas were identified by the community. Opportunity areas are locations where improvements can best increase access to jobs, housing and services. Inventorying and capitalizing on these opportunity areas will increase economic activity and revitalization in the area that benefits existing residents and businesses. These areas are building blocks that can improve the visual quality of buildings, streets, and neighborhoods to positively affect the quality of life in both the opportunity area and in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Opportunity areas include:

- Underutilized land, especially commercial areas
- Areas already undergoing positive change, which is expected to continue
- Areas along corridors with frequent bus service that can accommodate development, especially areas with potential as pedestrian shopping districts
- Areas with special opportunities, such as where major public or private investments are planned
- Large parcels of vacant land
- Residential areas near existing commercial areas
- “Gateways” into the community
- Areas where additional density would be compatible
- Previously targeted redevelopment areas by groups such as the Northwest and Sugar Creek Community Development Corporations

As described in Map 4-1, many of these opportunities can be initially identified by looking at redevelopment areas, underutilized areas and vacant lands.



### II. Corridor Opportunities

Based on Map 4-1, a series of meetings were held with the Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Group to identify opportunity areas. The results are described below and illustrated on Map 4-2 found on page 4-3.

#### 1 Kansas City/Independence Development Node

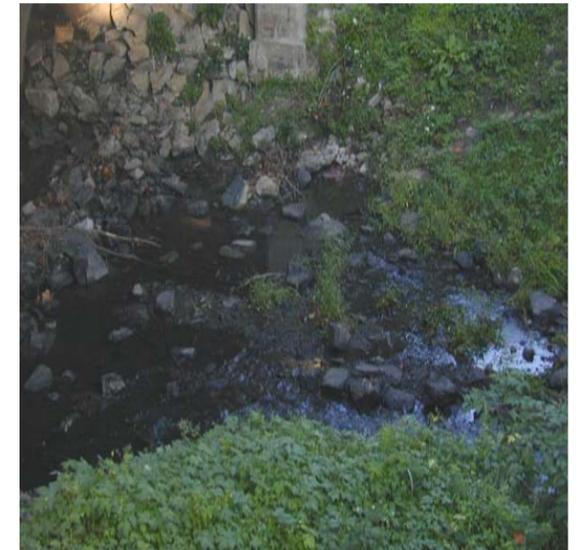
A new commercial or industrial development could occur on the large vacant parcel located on the western edge of the corridor. The area would be visible and accessible from I-435.

#### 2 St. Clair Neighborhood

The neighborhood could be improved with drainage improvements, a new park and infill residential development.

#### 3 Mount Washington Gateway

Areas surrounding Mt. Washington Cemetery have the potential to create a gateway into the area. The gateway could create a sense of arrival and set the tone for redevelopment efforts throughout the balance of the Corridor. The primary asset of the Corridor’s western gateway is its natural setting. The area surrounding Rock Creek and the Mt. Washington Cemetery offers an excellent opportunity to create a natural gateway feature through development of public recreation facilities and open space. Potential public improvements could include a parking lot and food commercial areas, transit station, playscape, and a trailhead. A trailhead in this location could connect to a larger trail system as identified by MARC and *The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan*. New commercial development could overlook Rock Creek.

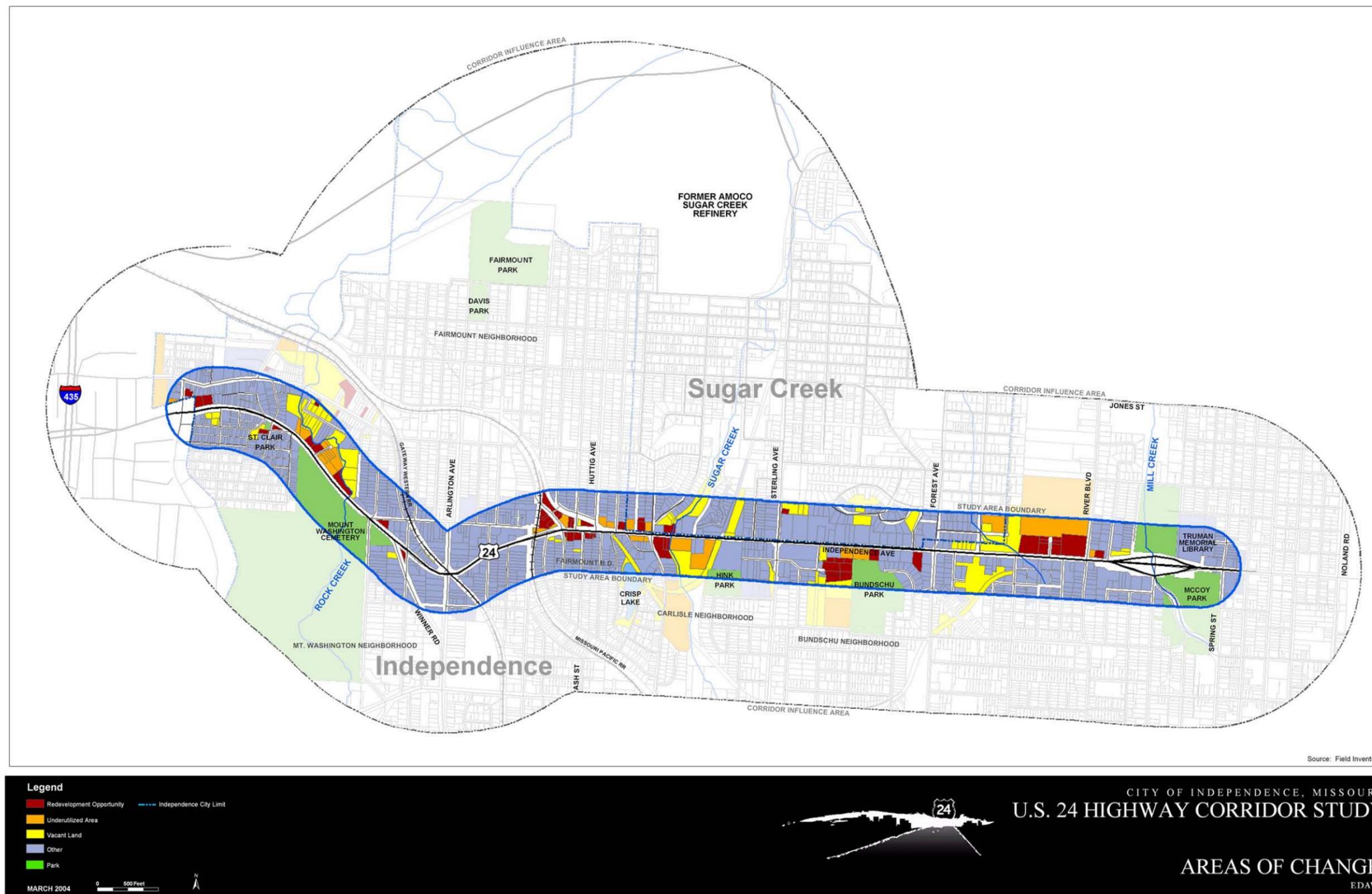


**4 Winner Road / U.S. 24 Highway Intersection**

A new minor gateway could occur at the intersection of Winner Road and U.S. 24 Highway. The site's landscape and signage could be improved and themed in relation to other similar areas. A new bike path could be developed along Winner Road. Winner Road also has the potential to be improved as a scenic automobile route, as discussed in Chapter 6, to encourage private investment. Van Horn High School on this road will be an important component in revitalizing the area. In-school educational programs could center on community activism, stream monitoring, or interpretation of the area's historical and natural features.

**5 Englewood Business District**

A successful model for revitalizing the Fairmount areas is the Englewood Business District. In addition to using this area as a model, a pedestrian/bike connection between Englewood, Fairmount and this area would reinforce the historic and economic connection between these locations.



Source: Field Inventory

Figure 4-1

**6 Fairmount Business District Area**

Given its unique architecture and history, the Fairmount Business District affords the opportunity to support new development such as a mixed-use urban center. The Fairmount Business District and Crisp Lake (see opportunities 7 and 8) could be incorporated into one area, creating the opportunity to support a mix of retail, restaurants, senior housing, apartments, attached townhouses or row houses, and public space. Expanding the current inventory of commercial space and housing units is essential in creating a vibrant and successful urban center.

The potential exists for the Fairmount Business District to provide goods and services to the local neighborhoods as well as serve as a regional shopping and entertainment destination. Examples of neighborhood-based businesses include restaurants, beauty salons, furniture and home furnishings, dry cleaners, apparel and accessories, book store, bike shop, physicians, lawyers, accountants, insurance, and financial services.

The Fairmount Business District could also serve as a “cluster” for artists and antique dealers, both of which are drawn to inexpensive and unique urban spaces. In addition to housing artists and antique dealers in the existing commercial space along U.S. 24 Highway, the single-family homes adjacent to the Fairmount Business District could be converted into live-work space in the long-term. The low housing values could be an incentive to attracting artisans. A unique cultural “district” could be created within the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

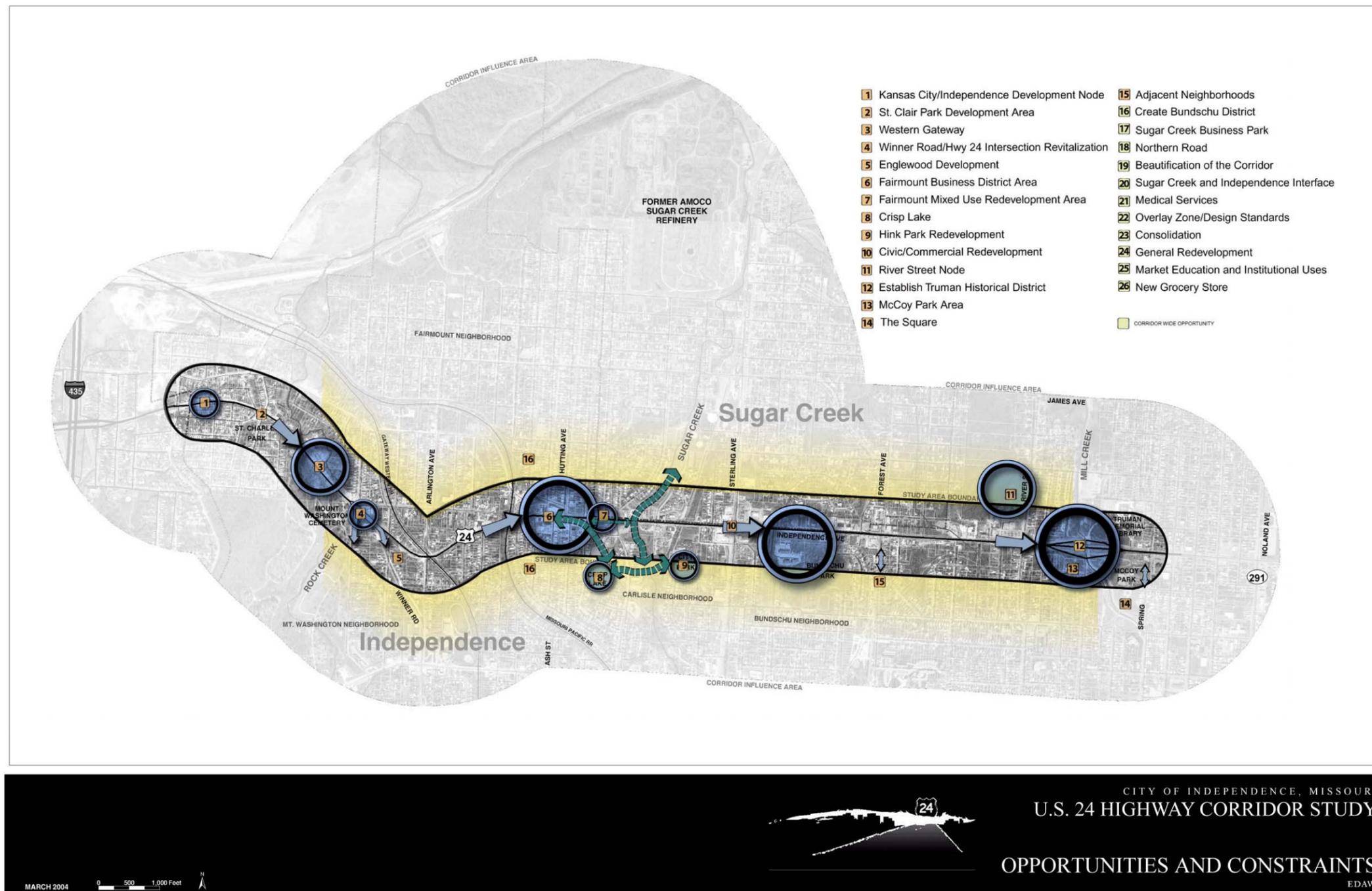


Figure 4-2

**7 Fairmount Business District – Adjacent Development**

Located east of the Fairmount Business District are several underutilized properties. These properties could be redeveloped in a manner that supports the Fairmount Business District. Alternatively, this area could be redeveloped and incorporated directly into the Fairmount Business District.

**8 Crisp Lake**

Crisp lake is an important natural, recreational and cultural amenity. The presence of this lake provides numerous opportunities. A trail connection along an old railroad bed from the Fairmount Business District and Sugar Creek could connect to a new park on the lake. The history of the Fairmount Business District and amusement park could be interpreted along this trail. Redevelopment of the areas near the lake would also provide a mix of new housing choices attracting new families into the area.



**9 Hink Park Redevelopment**

Currently Hink Park is being reclassified as open space due to poor accessibility. This area could provide a location for additional development. For example, the military reserve facility could move parking to behind the buildings in order to increase green frontage on U.S. 24 Highway.

**10 Sterling Avenue and U.S. 24 Highway**

Given its central location within the Corridor as the crossroads of two major transportation corridors, the U.S. 24 Highway and Sterling Avenue redevelopment node is positioned to serve as a “neighborhood” shopping destination supporting such day-to-day retail needs as a supermarket, drug store, and general merchandise. Successful development of the Bluffs at Sugar Creek with R&D and light manufacturing businesses will also enhance the potential of the U.S. 24 Highway and Sterling Avenue redevelopment node to accommodate such support retail businesses as restaurants, day care center, copy center and office supply store.

According to the *U.S. Highway 24 Corridor Market Study*, the U.S. 24 Highway and Sterling Avenue redevelopment node is also well positioned to capture retail sales originating from the drive-by highway traffic. The principal retail businesses benefiting from the highway traffic include fast food restaurants and convenience stores. This node may also accommodate multi-family housing to repopulate the study area. The principal challenge in facilitating urban development at

this intersection is creating feasible building parcels given the existing development and severely sloping topography.

Similar to Crisp Lake, Bundschu Park in this area provides the Corridor with a desirable natural and recreational amenity. Vacant and deteriorating areas around the park could be redeveloped for new housing with a mix of density and housing types. Areas along the park facing U.S. 24 Highway suffer from small lot sizes and severe slopes. These areas could be either redeveloped into different types of commercial or residential land uses or reincorporated into the park and left in a natural state.

**11 River Boulevard Node**

The eastern half of the Corridor houses the Truman Presidential Museum and Library and supports the most stable housing stock and population demographics. The intersection of U.S. 24 Highway and River Boulevard could be a redevelopment node featuring retail, residential, recreational and tourism-related development. The 24 Hi-Way Shopping Center at the northwest corner of U.S. 24 Highway and River Boulevard affords the opportunity for future redevelopment into an expanded neighborhood shopping-center anchored by a modern supermarket. This parcel could also include green space, a connection to Sugar Creek parks, or include other commercial or residential uses.

**12 Truman Historical District**

The Corridor’s eastern gateway includes the Truman Presidential Museum and Library. This destination could be enhanced by improving the physical environment and introducing tourism-related uses such as restaurants and other heritage tourism retailers. Higher design standards and streetscape elements found at the Truman Library (i.e., grass median, lighting) could be continued westward to River Boulevard.



**13 McCoy Park**

McCoy Park has already achieved a character similar to the Truman Library and contains several attractive features such as a new playground. Still, there may be opportunities or additional facilities that continue to increase the regional draw to the park. For example, the trail system along Mill Creek could be expanded and connected to adjacent neighborhoods with interpretive signage provided along the trail. Food and beverage services, gazebo, concert and meeting facilities could be incorporated into the park.

**14 The Square**

One of the primary destinations for visitors is the historic Independence Square. As the “Queen City of the Trails,” additional pedestrian and transit linkages between the Square and redevelopment nodes should be enhanced.

**15 Existing Neighborhoods**

Existing neighborhoods are one of the area’s biggest assets. These areas can be enhanced by improving housing conditions, consolidating parcels, promoting ownership, and encouraging new infill development. Existing neighborhoods should be marketed to first-time homebuyers, young or small families and retirees. New programs should promote home ownership. The enhancement of key commercial areas along the Corridor should be closely coordinated with neighborhood revitalization efforts.

**III. Corridor Wide Opportunities****Partnerships**

One of the biggest opportunities to ensure the viability of the Corridor is a partnership between City governments and local residents. The Corridor has a long history of community pride. Fostering the partnership between local community leaders, civic groups, non-profits and other organizations will be a key tool to rejuvenate the area. An additional opportunity centers on the ongoing partnership between the cities of Sugar Creek and Independence. Their partnership in this plan demonstrates a commitment to revitalize the Corridor. One example of this partnership is the planned Bluffs at Sugar Creek (a 450-acre business park), which could generate demand for housing and commercial space within the Corridor. Other ongoing activities include the development of a joint community center in Sugar Creek within the Corridor Influence Area. Since the Corridor is located within Sugar Creek and Independence, closely coordinated development plans, design standards and general revitalization activities will help the plan become a reality.

**Regional Connectivity**

Key opportunities are present to improve regional connectivity due to the number of north-south drainages that bisect the Corridor. Rock Creek, Sugar Creek and Mill Creek could form the basis of a greenway and trail system that connects to a larger regional trail system. The Cities of Sugar Creek and Independence should continue to cooperate with Jackson County, MARC and adjacent governmental entities to ensure the development of an interconnected trail system according to the MetroGreen trail plan joining the urban and rural green corridors throughout a seven-county region.

**Beautification of the Corridor**

An unusually high concentration of second-tier businesses, such as used auto dealerships, influences the look and image of the Corridor. The reinforcement and creation of design standards, land use codes and signage requirements would improve the Corridor’s visual quality. The appearance of key areas along the Corridor could also be improved through landscaping, sidewalks and other streetscape elements.

**General Redevelopment**

Aside from the specific opportunities listed above, general redevelopment activities could occur over time along the entire Corridor. Key areas could be targeted to help accelerate redevelopment activities. Targeting larger parcels and consolidating land could facilitate redevelopment. The presence of low-intensity land uses such as auto dealerships offer the ability to foster financially feasible redevelopment. Also, a number of incentive programs are already present to assist in these actions.

### IV. Planning Scenarios

Corridor opportunities were used to create general alternative development scenarios. The Technical Advisory Group, Citizens Advisory Group and the public participated in "What-if" exercises to brainstorm potential alternatives. The process envisioned activities that might revitalize the Corridor. Four examples showing some of the differences are described below.

1. One scenario focused on key commercial redevelopment opportunities at Rock Creek and Fairmount BD, and proposed two new regional commercial areas at Sterling Avenue and River Boulevard.

- **Neighborhoods** around St. Clair Park would be rejuvenated, with new infill residential development centered on a redeveloped park.
- **Gateways** will be created including a new one centered on Rock Creek. Areas will be redeveloped with gateway commercial uses such as new restaurants overlooking the greenway. Themed signage would be carried from this area to Winner Road, setting the stage for the entrance to the Fairmount Business District. The Truman Library area will form the study area's eastern gateway. Streetlights and design elements will be extended to River Boulevard. New signage will lead people to the Fairmount Business District and the Square.
- **The Business District** of Fairmount will form the heart of the study area. It will include community services such as a health center. Apartments will be located above the businesses. Shops will be two-facing, both to U.S. 24 Highway and the adjacent residential areas. Commercial businesses that are distinctive and appealing will be located here. Parking will be located around this District.
- **New Mixed-Use** areas will be connected to the Fairmount Business District and include new townhomes around Crisp Lake and the redevelopment of the Hink Park area for moderate-density residential. A new master planned development will occur at the corner of River Boulevard and U.S. 24 Highway, providing new housing choices.
- **Regional Commercial** areas will provide a sound economic base for the area. The intersection of Sterling Avenue and U.S. 24 Highway will have common design elements and consistent landscaping for all corner intersection developments. A cooperative agreement between the Cities of Sugar Creek and Independence will share tax revenue and ensure actions are coordinated.
- **General Commercial** areas will continue to redevelop according to new design guidelines. A shared tax district between Sugar Creek and the City of Independence will provide funding to improve the area.

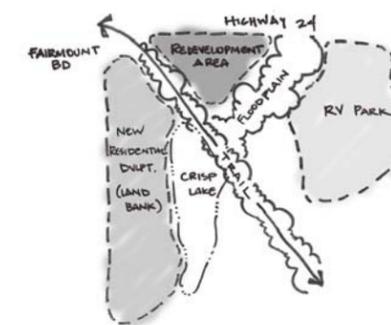
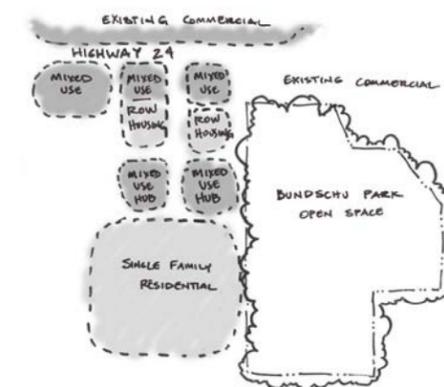
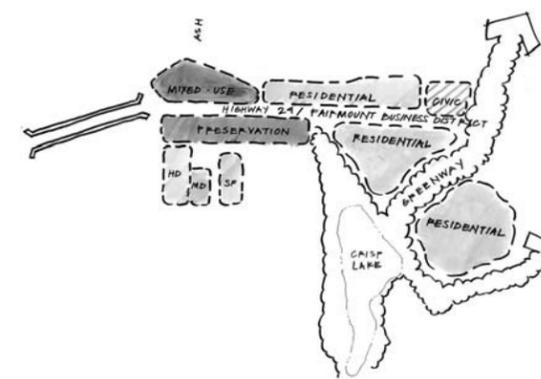


2. Another scenario focused on strengthening the heart of the Corridor, the Fairmount Business District Area. Two smaller gateways set the stage for the area.

- **Neighborhoods** around the area will continue to be improved, consolidating parcels and infusing new housing.

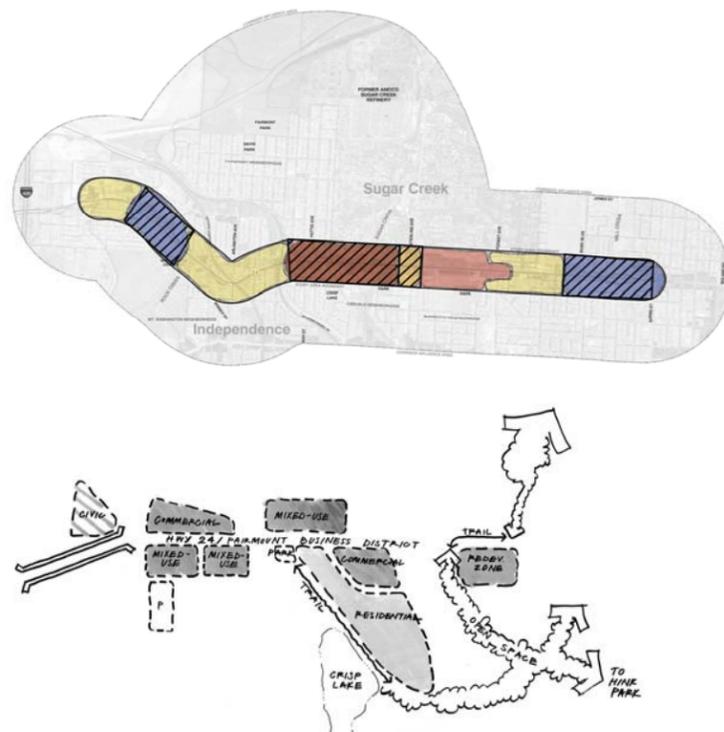


- **Gateways** will be created including a new one centered on Rock Creek. Areas will be redeveloped with gateway commercial uses such as new restaurants overlooking the greenway. Themed signage would be carried from this area to Winner Road, setting the stage for the entrance to the Fairmount Business District. A smaller gateway will be created at the intersection of Winner and U.S. 24 Highway. The Truman Library area will form the study area's eastern gateway. Streetlights and design elements will be extended to River Boulevard. New signage will lead people to the Fairmount Business District and the Square. A new development at River Boulevard, including new multi-family residential and a supermarket will be developed with a suitable design theme.
- **The Business District** of Fairmount will form the heart of the study area. The area will be expanded in two phases. Phase I will include the redevelopment of the historic business district and the bridge. Phase II will include the expansion of the district with design elements and parallel parking continuing east past Hink Park. Existing areas will be redeveloped to include new mixed-use areas. A greenway system will connect the area to the Fairmount Business District, Sugar Creek, Hink Park and the Crisp Lake Area. A new civic use and interpretive area will provide information on the historic Fairmount Park.
- **New Mixed-Use** areas will strengthen the corridor. Areas west of Bundschu Park adjacent to U.S. 24 Highway will be redeveloped and include new commercial development fronting U.S. 24 Highway. Complementary medium and high density residential uses will be situated along arteries to the area. New single-family residential areas will be developed further south along the edge of Bundschu Park.
- **General Commercial** areas will continue to redevelop according to new design guidelines.



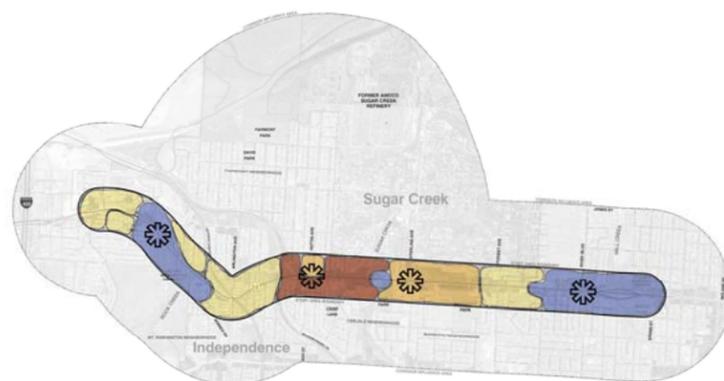
3. This scenario focuses on the development of four places of heritage (Frontier, Fairmount, Cultural and Truman), each forming the components of a healthy corridor.

- **Neighborhoods** adjacent to the corridor will continue to be improved, consolidating parcels and infusing new housing.
- **New Gateways** will be created including a new one as part of a Frontier Heritage Zone. This gateway area will center on Rock Creek and tell the history of the early explorers. Areas will be redeveloped with gateway commercial and interpretive uses overlooking the greenway. The area will be beautified from this gateway to the next heritage zone, Fairmount. The Truman Heritage zone will anchor the eastern part of the corridor. Streetlights and design elements will be extended to River Boulevard with a common theme related to President Truman. The heritage zone will focus on heritage tourism. New developments on the corner of River Boulevard and U.S. 24 Highway will be incorporated into the zone.
- **The Business District** of Fairmount will form the heart of Fairmount Heritage Zone. New mixed-use developments will center on Fairmount District's rich heritage.
- **New Mixed-Use** areas will be connected to the Fairmount Business District and include the Cultural Heritage Zone which will center on the rich Slavic ethnic heritage of the area. New mixed-use development including commercial and residential areas will form a vital link along Sterling Avenue to a new business park.
- **General Commercial** areas will continue to redevelop according to new design guidelines.
- ▨ **Heritage Zone**



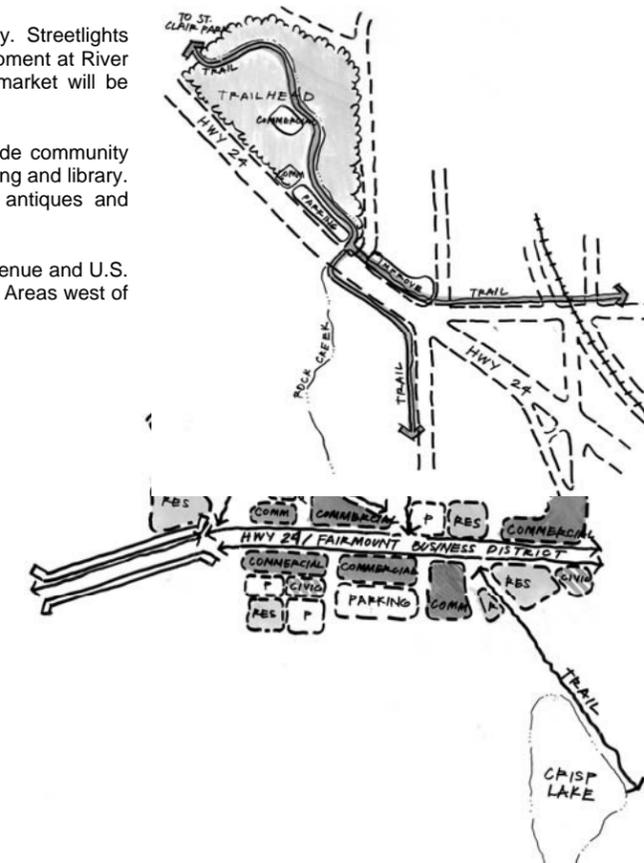
4. This scenario focuses on the development of four nodes, the Western Gateway, Fairmount, Sterling Avenue and U.S. 24 Highway and the Eastern Gateway.

- ⊗ **St. Clair – Winner Road Node** will be a large western gateway node from the St. Clair Neighborhood to the intersection of Winner Road. This area will focus on a softer look with a high proportion of green space. The St Clair Neighborhood would include additional residential infill and the park will be redeveloped. New development will center on the Rock Creek area, including a new trail, trailhead, bike shop and restaurant. Incentives and tax abatements will help establish new development. The intersection of Winner Road and U.S. 24 Highway will be redeveloped and include signage to both the Fairmount Business District and the Englewood area. A loop trail will continue along Rock Creek, connecting to Arlington Avenue, Fairmount Park and the new Business Park. It will then connect to the Fairmount Business District. Themed



signage, curb and sidewalk would be carried from this area to Winner Road, setting the stage for the entrance to the Fairmount Business District.

- ⊗ **Truman Library Node** will form the study area's eastern gateway. Streetlights and design elements will be extended to Forest. A new development at River Boulevard, including a new multi-family residential and supermarket will be developed with a suitable design theme.
- ⊗ **Fairmount BD Node** will form another vital node. It will include community services such as a health center, community center, assisted living and library. The area will also focus on business incubation for artists, antiques and bookstores.
- ⊗ **Sterling Node** will be a mixed-use area centered on Sterling Avenue and U.S. 24 Highway. This area includes new commercial development. Areas west of Bundschu Park adjacent to U.S. 24 Highway will be redeveloped and include new commercial development fronting U.S. 24 Highway. Complementary medium and high density residential uses will be situated along arterials to the area. New single-family residential uses will be developed along the southern edge of Bundschu Park.
- **New Mixed-Use** areas will be connected to the Fairmount Business District node and include a new residential area center on Ash. The area will include new street trees, lighting, curbs and sidewalks, trail, bike lanes, intersection improvements, new homes, housing rehabilitation programs, new commercial services for elderly. The area will form a vital connection between the Fairmount Business District and the new business park in Sugar Creek.
- **Neighborhoods** adjacent to the corridor will continue to be improved, consolidating parcels and infusing new housing.
- **General Commercial** areas will continue to redevelop according to new design guidelines.



After reviewing the opportunities and constraints along the Corridor and examining a number of alternative land use associations, a number of common themes emerged. Potential redevelopment options were tested for policy feasibility, market demand feasibility, and on-the-ground feasibility. Discussing the full range of options for redevelopment allowed the Technical Advisory Group, Steering Committee, and public to develop an ambitious yet realistic palette of preferred activities that will stimulate redevelopment. Based on their input, a clear plan emerged, which is described in the following chapter.