



section three

EXISTING CONDITIONS

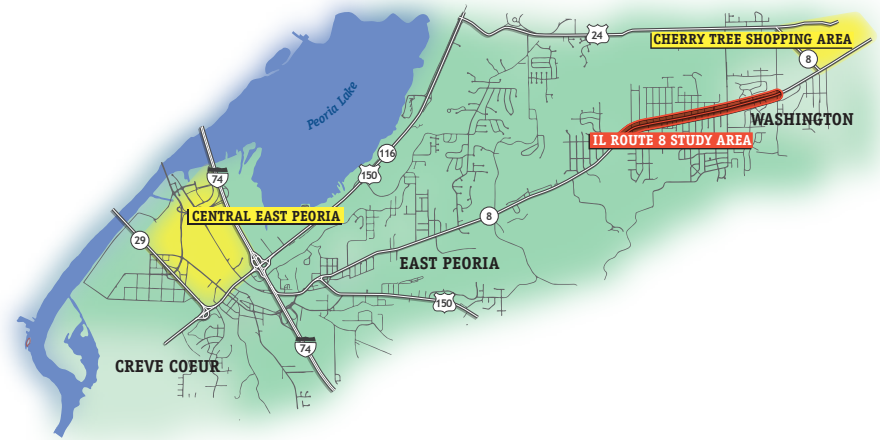
Section Three

Existing Conditions

To create effective solutions to the challenges facing the Corridor, it is important to understand its context. This section of the Route 8-Sunnyland Corridor Plan presents the existing conditions at the time the study was undertaken. The purpose of this section is to identify the factors that will shape recommendations going forward.

Corridor Context

Sunnyland's commercial development has lagged behind that of neighboring areas (shown on the adjacent Figure). By understanding Route 8-Sunnyland's existing conditions and distinct advantages, proposed development can complement and compete with existing commercial areas.



Existing Land Use and Development

Development along Route 8-Sunnyland has occurred over several decades. The Corridor maintains the look and feel of unincorporated areas commonly found along many state roads. This is characterized by an uncoordinated pattern of land use, a lack of sidewalks and an orientation towards automobiles.

Land uses along Route 8 include single-family residential, multi-family residential, public/semi-public and commercial. Figure 2 demonstrates the existing land use and development pattern.

Single-Family Residential

Single-family residential uses exist throughout the Corridor. The most notable concentration of single-family residential is the Rolling Meadows subdivision on the eastern end of the Corridor. Two additional concentrations of single-family residential exist between Berry and Loren on the north and Doris and Bess on the south side of the Corridor. These lots have driveway access onto Route 8 and are scattered between churches, restaurants, bars, and auto services often with little or no screening. It appears that a recent trend has been the conversion of single-family homes into multi-family units which may or may not be legal.

Multi-Family Residential

The largest multi-family residential development within the Study Area is Tall Oaks Village, a 132-unit development with one, two and three-bedroom apartments. Standalone multi-family developments bookend the Study Area at School Road and Route 8 and near the intersection of Stahl and Route 8. These developments are located on or next to lots with commercial uses without any buffering or screening.

General Commercial

General commercial includes retail stores, gas stations, auto service, car washes, restaurants, bars, self-storage and more. General commercial uses are the largest land use by area. These uses often abut residential properties located immediately behind. Sunnyland Plaza is the largest commercial development within the Study Area with a total of 12.5 acres.

Commercial Service/Office

This category of commercial uses includes less intense uses such as personal services (e.g., salons), medical offices, professional services, and banks. Some of these uses occur in multi-tenant buildings that are typically one story in height.

Public/Semi-Public

The public and semi-public category includes various civic uses such as the North Tazewell Fire Department and several churches. Churches are among the oldest and newest buildings in the Corridor with the Lighthouse Tabernacle Church currently under construction.

Agricultural Land and Open Space

Along the western end of the Corridor are several large tracts of land that are in transition from agricultural use to development parcels. This includes the horse farm currently for sale and the area surrounding the East Peoria Events Center. A large parcel of open space fronts the Tall Oaks apartment development.

Unimproved/Parking

Several parcels within the Study Area are used solely for surface parking for neighboring businesses or are unimproved without any buildings or structures. In this state, these parcels are not contributing positively to the tax base and can become an eyesore.

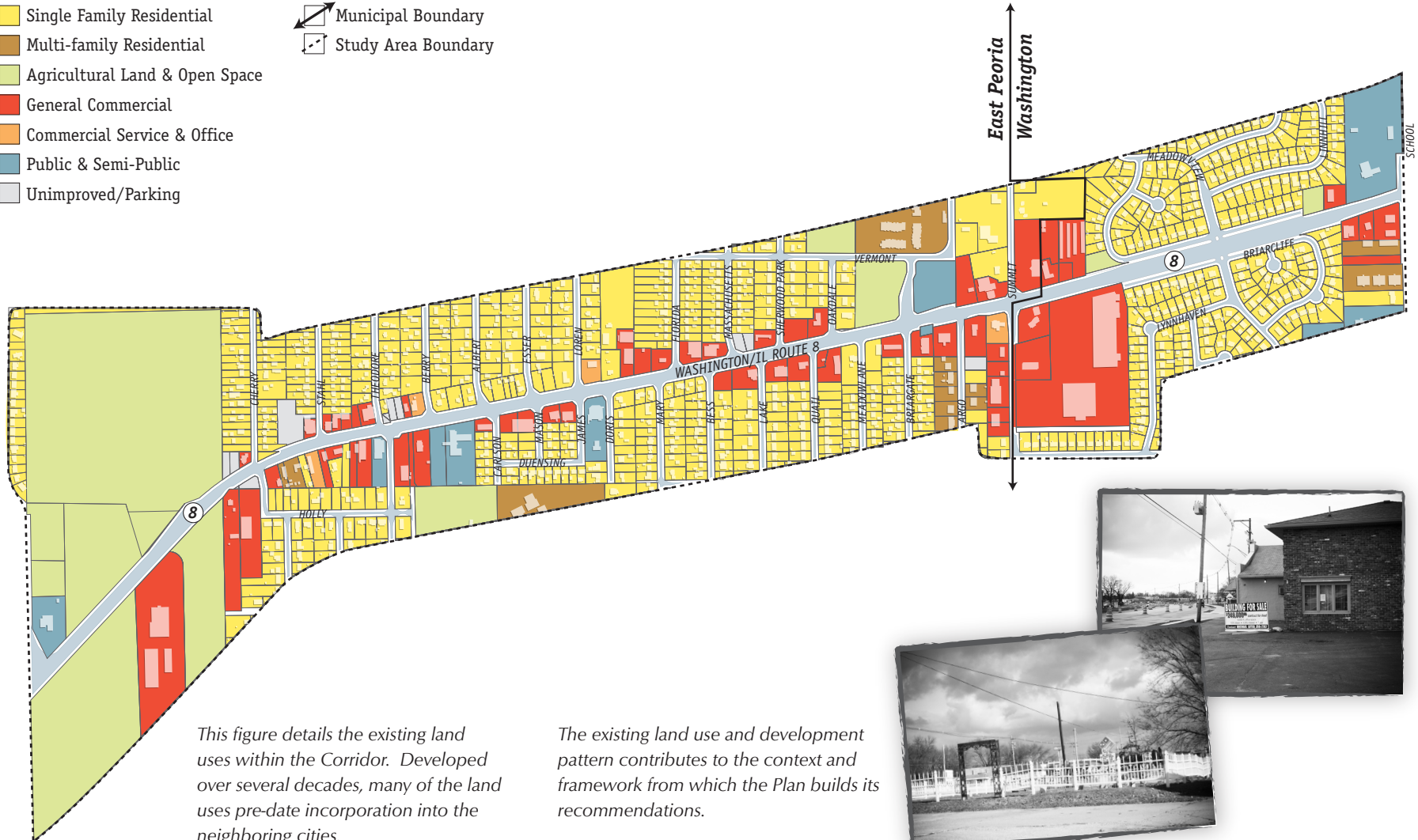
Figure Two Existing Land Use

Land Use

- Single Family Residential
- Multi-family Residential
- Agricultural Land & Open Space
- General Commercial
- Commercial Service & Office
- Public & Semi-Public
- Unimproved/Parking

Additional Map Features

- Municipal Boundary
- Study Area Boundary



This figure details the existing land uses within the Corridor. Developed over several decades, many of the land uses pre-date incorporation into the neighboring cities.

The existing land use and development pattern contributes to the context and framework from which the Plan builds its recommendations.

Current Zoning

Zoning is one of the most powerful tools municipalities have to control, guide, and regulate land use and development. In addition to designating what land uses are permitted in what locations, zoning also sets the standards for the physical form and certain aesthetic components of the built environment – height, setbacks, lot coverage, floor area, parking, signage, landscaping and more. The Sunnyland portion of Route 8 is comprised of nine zoning districts between the two cities (see Figure 3).

City of East Peoria Zoning Districts

Single-Family Residential Districts (C and R-2)

The C (Conservation and Residential Estate) District primarily allows only single-family homes and publicly-owned parks. Intended to accommodate large lot residential development, minimum lot size is set at one acre (10,000 square feet for a planned development). Minimum dwelling size standards begin at 1,100 square feet for a one-story dwelling and 1,400 for a multi-story dwelling.

The R-2 (One Family Dwelling) zoning district allows slightly smaller dwellings than the R-1 zoning district but primarily allows the same uses. There is only one parcel in the Study Area zoned R-2.

Business Districts (B-1 and B-3)

There are three business district classifications in the City of East Peoria; only two are represented along the Corridor. The purpose of the B-1 district is to provide for the professional and business office needs of the city. The overwhelming majority of parcels in the Study Area are zoned B-3, the purpose of which is to provide for certain commercial, wholesale and light industrial uses that are transportation-oriented.

City of Washington Zoning Districts

One and Two Family District (R-1)

As its name indicates, the R-1 district allows single-family dwellings and attached two-family dwellings. The bulk of the City of Washington portion of the corridor is zoned R-1 which includes the Rolling Meadows subdivision.

Multi-Family Residential (R-2)

The R-2 district allows single-family, two-family and multi-family residential uses. The only R-2 parcel in the Study Area is a large lot with a mix of uses including religious and residential.



Commercial Districts (C-1, C-2, C-3)

The purpose of the Commercial Districts is to accommodate businesses by the grouping of compatible businesses in areas well located to serve the needs of the individual businesses and those of the community. Commercial districts are also intended to create convenience to the public, by minimizing traffic congestion, discouraging unsightly and inefficient business development, and promoting business prosperity and shopping convenience. The C-1 District was established to accommodate retail goods of a local nature, serving the nearby population. C-2 uses are those that attract a larger population and are generally more intense than uses in the C-1 district. C-3 is a district established to accommodate commercial service needs.

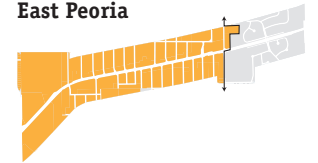
Figure Three Current Zoning

The IL Route 8 - Sunnyland Study Area contains 11 zoning districts between the two different Cities. Together, these zoning districts dictate the uses, setbacks, bulk regulations, and other development controls for all areas of the Corridor.

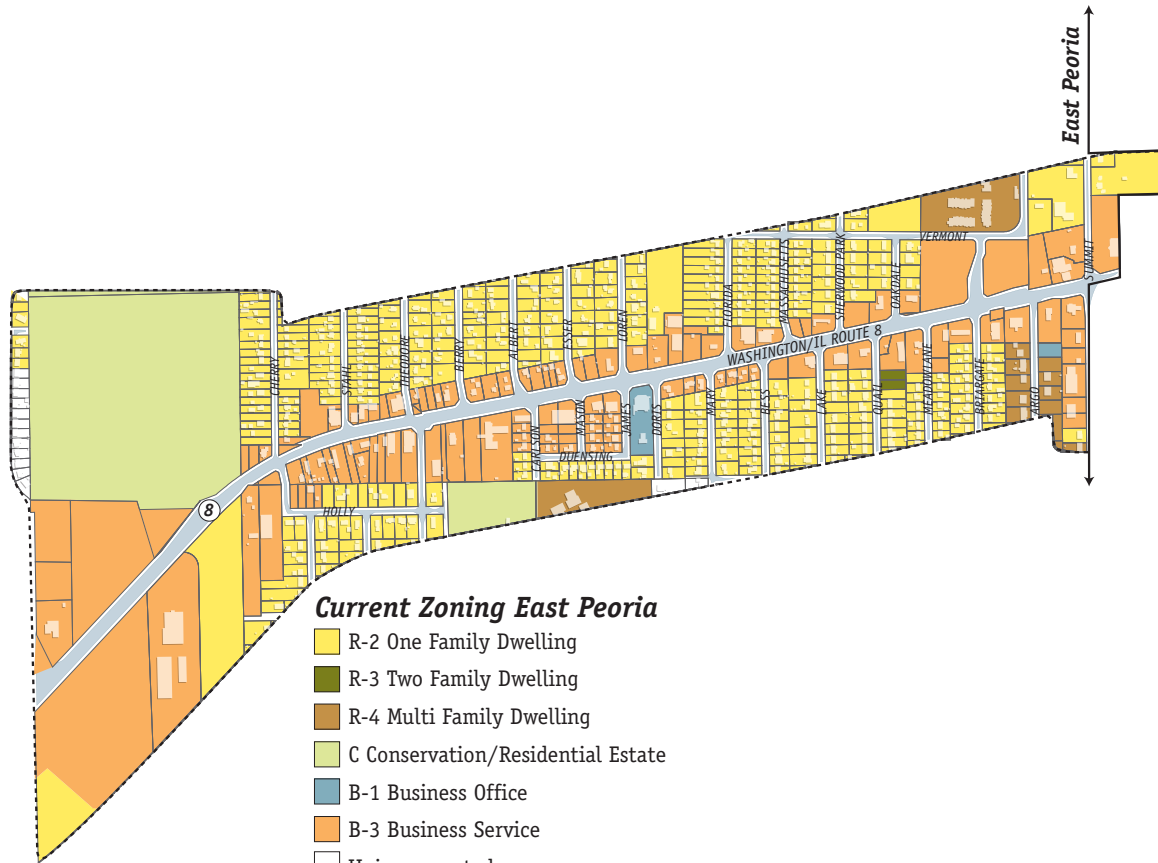
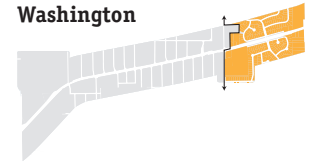
Common Map Features

-  Municipal Boundary
-  Study Area Boundary








East Peoria

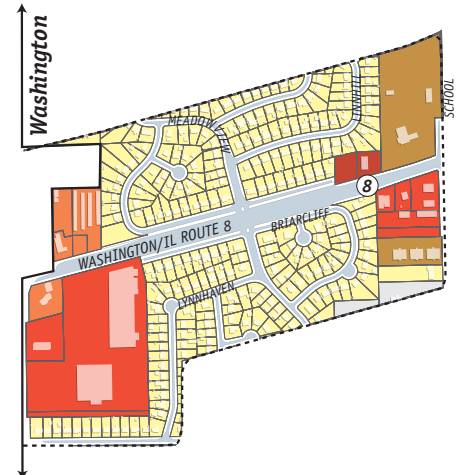


Washington








Current Zoning East Peoria

-  R-2 One Family Dwelling
-  R-3 Two Family Dwelling
-  R-4 Multi Family Dwelling
-  C Conservation/Residential Estate
-  B-1 Business Office
-  B-3 Business Service
-  Unincorporated



Current Zoning Washington

-  R-1 One and Two Family Residential
-  R-2 Multi Family Residential
-  C-1 Local Retail
-  C-2 General Retail
-  C-3 Service Retail

Existing Character

The Corridor is typical of many high-traffic transportation routes. This means that historically, the emphasis has been on accommodating vehicular traffic at the expense of pedestrians. Public amenities within the rights-of-way are limited and the character of the corridor is defined primarily by the condition of adjacent properties. Overall, the existing character of the corridor streetscape is inconsistent and nondescript.

Access and Circulation

The corridor is dominated by vehicular traffic while pedestrian and bicycle access is limited. Pedestrian and dedicated bicycle access does not exist, creating a dangerous situation for those attempting to travel along or across these areas. Pedestrian crosswalks exist in few locations and connectivity to the adjacent residential areas is not provided.

The intersection of Route 8 and Summit Drive is a key intersection with the heaviest concentration of retail and the Study Area's only traffic signal. Currently there are no public amenities at this intersection. The large setback and the architecture of the adjoining land uses do little to enhance the importance of this intersection.

Incompatible Land Uses

As previously detailed, there are a variety of land uses that line the corridor and most lack elements such as landscaping and pedestrian amenities. Regardless of the land use, parking is almost always in the front along Route 8 with little or no screening. Incompatible land uses are rarely buffered from each other.

Utilities

Along Route 8, power lines are highly visible to motorists and pedestrians, providing an unsightly appearance along the Corridor. Streetscape improvement options may be limited with these overhead utilities present. Although an expensive undertaking, burying these utilities to improve the Corridor's appearance should be considered an important long range goal.

One of the important functions of the public right-of-way is to carry utilities such as electric, gas, storm sewers, sanitary sewers, and communication lines. With careful planning, utilities and streetscape elements can co-exist without conflict.

Lighting

The street lighting along the corridor is designed to provide safe driving conditions, but does little to enhance the streetscape and pedestrian environment. The improvements to Route 8 currently under construction include the installation of sidewalks. This provides an opportunity to address the lighting needs of both automobiles and pedestrians.

Signage

The signage in a Corridor is often a visitor's first impression and can have substantial impact on the success of an area. The business signage along Route 8-Sunnyland varies in style, height, size, condition and placement. Regulation and enforcement do not appear to be consistent. Adding to the confusion, signs remain for businesses that are no longer in operation. Billboards are a defining characteristic of the area.

The Cities of East Peoria and Washington are identified with relatively simple identification signs at the borders of each city. Wayfinding signage is limited to signage for Thomas Park.

Buildings

Building conditions vary within the corridor. While many properties are well-maintained, others have deteriorated over time due to a lack of maintenance. From the street, it is difficult to tell with several properties whether they are vacant or occupied.

Parking

Off-street parking throughout much of the Route 8-Sunnyland Corridor is provided in the front of buildings and is poorly landscaped. These unsightly parking areas are a prominent development characteristic of the Corridor.

Buffering and Screening

Garbage cans and dumpsters, loading docks, service entrances, vehicle storage and gas and water meters are vital components for commercial operation. Ideally, these unsightly essentials are screened from view, tucked away and unseen to the casual observer. This is not the case for many properties and businesses within the Study Area, where such facilities are in plain sight. Left unscreened, these elements negatively affect the overall appearance of the Corridor, and pose potential hazards to customers and pedestrians. The Route 8-Sunnyland Corridor Study presents an opportunity to identify these unsightly areas and provide recommendations and policies to better buffer and screen existing elements.

Planning Considerations

This section of the Plan provides information about the factors that will influence the planning process going forward. This includes the issues that are facing the Corridor and the opportunities that exist for improving its appearance, function, and economic viability. Planning considerations begin to establish the foundation and framework which the final Plan and its recommendations will be built upon.

Sunnyland Plaza

Sunnyland Plaza is one of the corridor's landmarks due to its size and scale. The development includes approximately 120,000 square feet of retail, sits on 12.5 acres and has the largest concentration of retail in the Corridor. Sunnyland Plaza is an underutilized shopping center and was recently the subject of a retail market study completed in April of 2009. A redevelopment proposal and potential sale are currently in progress. Vacancies exist and the vast parking lot has not been maintained.

Adjacent Residential Areas

The areas immediately surrounding the Corridor consist primarily of single family residential neighborhoods. Although these neighborhoods are not part of the formal study area, it is important that the Plan recognize opportunities to buffer these areas from the effects of nearby commercial activity. As redevelopment occurs along the Corridor, there is the ability to provide adequate setbacks, connections and buffering and screening between residential and non-residential uses.

Architecture

The architecture of most of the buildings within the Corridor are utilitarian and nondescript. On the whole, the Study Area is void of attractive and significant architecture and related amenities. This is not to say that all sites and buildings are unattractive, but few buildings positively contribute to the Corridor's overall appeal and appearance or help to distinguish Sunnyland as distinct or as a destination.

Curb Cuts and Access

While access points are often conceived as a convenience, in some instances they allow for spontaneous and unanticipated vehicle turning that creates potentially dangerous situations for motorists and pedestrians. Cross access between properties is not common which forces vehicles to use Route 8 to move between properties, even if their next destination is immediately adjacent to their current location. Improved cross access between properties would improve circulation within the Study Area, and would lessen the need to use Route 8 for shorter trips. The Corridor Plan provides an opportunity to create consolidated access points and a plan for removal of unnecessary curb cuts and access points. In addition, there is potential for shared parking and future parcel consolidation.

Lack of “Sense of Place”

A quest for community exists in American culture today. It is that quest that has brought downtowns back from decline, walkable lifestyle malls into popularity, and newer “urban style” mixed use developments into existence, even in smaller towns and the suburbs. Creating a sense of place goes beyond committing to enhance the image of the Corridor; it is taking advantage of available opportunities to design destinations along the Corridor where people go to gather. These places have traditionally been corner stores and town squares, but can be modern bookstores and corner cafes. An opportunity exists for this Study to recommend where and how it is most appropriate to create an image and identity for Sunnyland.

Streetscape

The streetscape along Route 8 is similar to that of many state roads. The streetlights are standard IDOT fixtures, pedestrian amenities are limited, and nothing about the streetscape distinguishes this stretch of Route 8 from other areas. The Corridor Plan should provide recommendations for streetscape improvements, including pedestrian and vehicular scale lighting, continuous and connected pedestrian pathways, street trees, street furniture, way-finding signage, and similar amenities. Unified streetscape elements can help to create a theme and character for the Corridor that makes it more inviting to customers no matter how they arrive.

Extension of Summit Drive

The proposed extension of Summit Drive to Route 24 provides an unparalleled opportunity through improved access and circulation. This important new link will help to achieve land use and economic development goals in the area.

Pedestrian Experience

The Corridor has been developed over time with the automobile at the forefront. While continuing to accommodate the automobile, pedestrians should also feel welcomed. Currently, very few pedestrian amenities have been installed, leaving an uninviting pedestrian experience. Streetscape and pedestrian amenities could dramatically improve the “walkability” of the Corridor and safety. Concept plans of how this might look will be incorporated into the Plan to aid the community in visualizing recommended improvements.

Improved pedestrian amenities that increase safety and circulation will create the desire for residents to walk or bike to businesses in the area, as well as improve commutes for those who work in the area and arrive by foot or bicycle. Pedestrian-scaled lighting, benches, directional signage, and other such amenities could instantly create a more inviting and safe pedestrian environment.

Gateways

Route 8 plays an important role in the regional transportation network and is a major gateway to both the City of East Peoria and the City of Washington. The Corridor Plan should develop urban design improvements for key intersections along this Corridor to announce “entry” into the Corridor and welcome visitors to each city. Gateways could include distinctive landscaping, signage, lighting, or other vertical design features.

Cooperation with IDOT

Route 8 is under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). All improvements (access, geometry, lighting, landscaping, etc.) within the right-of-way must be designed in accordance with IDOT design guidelines, and will require IDOT approval. A good relationship with IDOT is vital in implementing improvements within the right-of-way and the implementation of other recommendations within the Corridor Plan.

Figure Four Planning Considerations

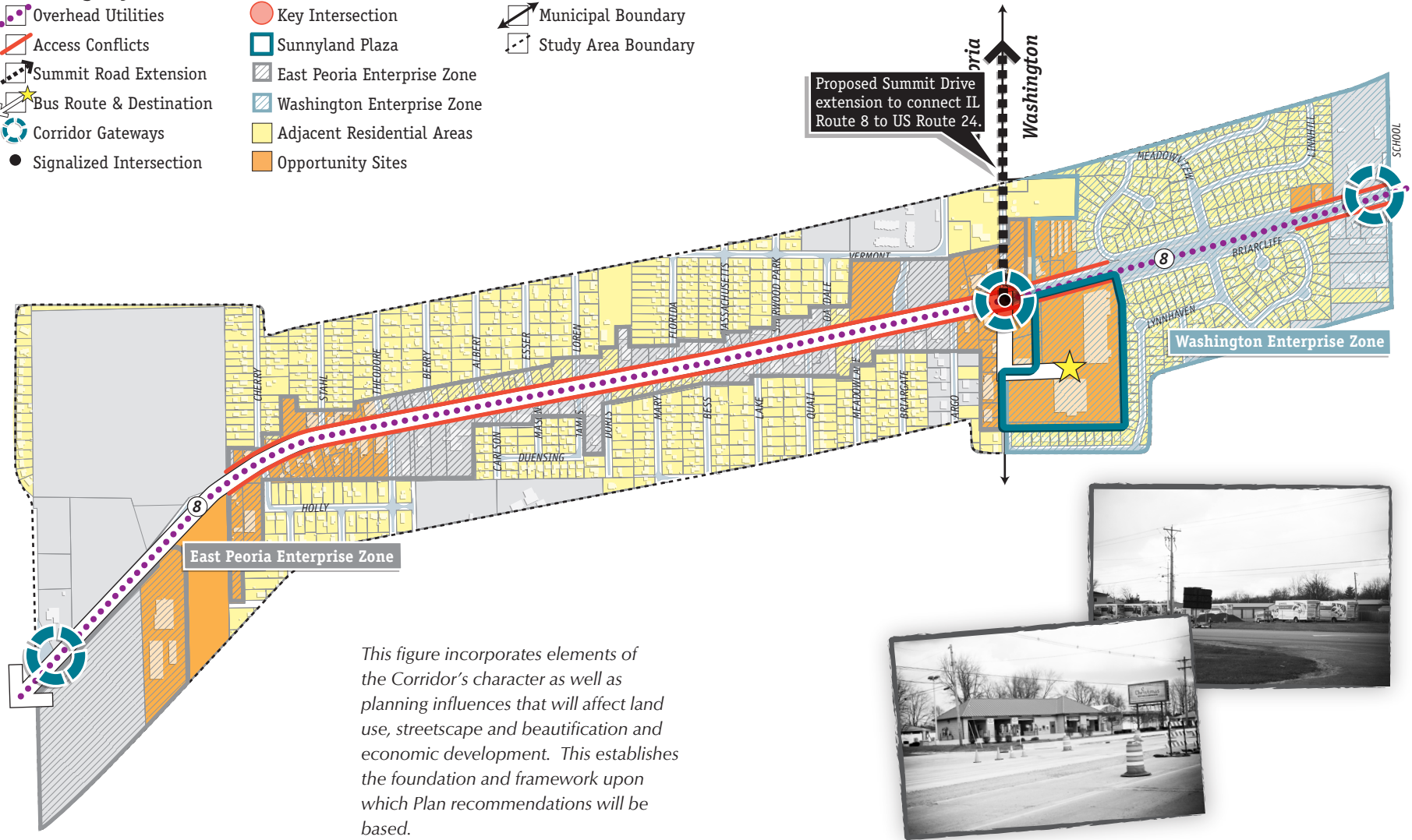
Planning Influences

- Overhead Utilities
- Access Conflicts
- Summit Road Extension
- Bus Route & Destination
- Corridor Gateways
- Signalized Intersection

- Key Intersection
- Sunnyland Plaza
- East Peoria Enterprise Zone
- Washington Enterprise Zone
- Adjacent Residential Areas
- Opportunity Sites

Additional Map Features

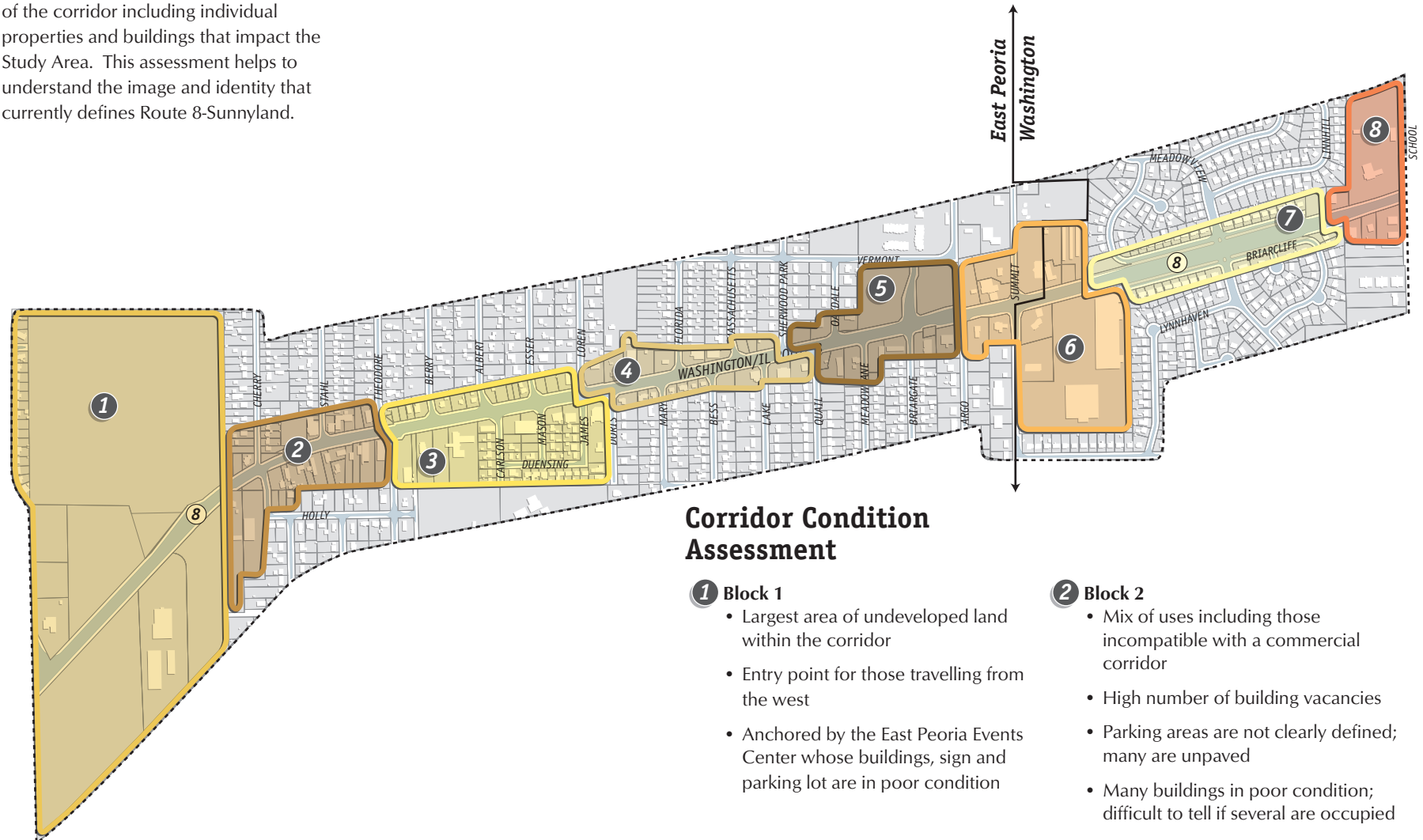
- Municipal Boundary
- Study Area Boundary



This figure incorporates elements of the Corridor's character as well as planning influences that will affect land use, streetscape and beautification and economic development. This establishes the foundation and framework upon which Plan recommendations will be based.

Figure Five Corridor Conditions

This figure illustrates the condition of the corridor including individual properties and buildings that impact the Study Area. This assessment helps to understand the image and identity that currently defines Route 8-Sunnyland.



Corridor Condition Assessment

- 1 Block 1**
 - Largest area of undeveloped land within the corridor
 - Entry point for those travelling from the west
 - Anchored by the East Peoria Events Center whose buildings, sign and parking lot are in poor condition
- 2 Block 2**
 - Mix of uses including those incompatible with a commercial corridor
 - High number of building vacancies
 - Parking areas are not clearly defined; many are unpaved
 - Many buildings in poor condition; difficult to tell if several are occupied
 - Anchored by the North Tazewell Fire Department

3 Block 3

- North side of the street is predominately single-family homes
- Anchored by two churches
- Lacking screening and buffering for adjacent residential areas

4 Block 4

- The north side of the street is dominated by intense commercial uses such as auto services
- This area is characterized by outdoor storage of vehicles and materials visible from Route 8
- The south side of the street is predominately single-family residences

5 Block 5

- This area has a mix of uses including residences, auto service uses, restaurants, retail, service, drive-through liquor and services
- This area is anchored by Tall Oak Village, a multi-family residential development that is set back from Route 8
- Many of the parking areas are unpaved and unmaintained
- The newly constructed car wash on the north side of the street is a model example for parking lot perimeter landscaping

6 Block 6

- This area is anchored by Sunnyland Plaza, a shopping center with a high vacancy rate
- Some of the Corridor's newest and best-maintained properties surround the Route 8 and Summit Drive intersection
- The gas station on the northwest corner is well-buffered from adjacent residential

7 Block 7

- This block is comprised of the Rolling Meadows subdivision and is characterized by well-maintained homes set back from Route 8 and accessed from a frontage road on either side

8 Block 8

- The eastern end of the corridor is anchored by the Faith Lutheran Church which is characterized by mature trees and a distinctive building constructed in 1947
- Except for the gas station, buildings along the south side of this block are in poor condition with unpaved parking lots and outdoor storage visible from the street

