

Mount Sterling Comprehensive Plan 2011



**Prepared
by
Two Rivers Regional Council**
September 2011

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BACKGROUND

THE PLANNING PROCESS

It is extremely important that the Mount Sterling Comprehensive Plan be a product of the citizens. Each element should be something the entire town can support. In order to get an accurate picture of what the people of Mount Sterling want their town to be like in the future, Two Rivers Regional Council (the entity that took the lead) utilized two methods. The first was a survey distributed to each household in the city in 2007. There were 173 surveys completed out of a total of 934 households which makes this a statistically significant sample. Of those 165 respondents, 99 were female and 66 were male. The average age of respondents was 55 years. The age range with the fewest responses was 20-29 years; the age range with the most responses was 50-59 years.

The second method was a series of visioning sessions. The first public hearing was held July 16, 2009. Sixteen people were in attendance. The session began with a brain storming session on what they wanted Mount Sterling to be in the year 2035. The responses were gathered and later divided into categories. The categories fell into six subjects (as seen on pages 25-30 of this document): Business Community, Community Appearance, Housing, Recreation, Safety, and Youth. Public meetings were held on each subject to establish goals, outcomes desired and possible activities to achieve those outcomes. This process makes the Comprehensive Plan unique and relevant to Mount Sterling.

The next step is to recommend adoption of the plan by the City Planning and Zoning Committee, then distribute the plan to the community, allowing 30 days for public comment. The final step will be for the Mount Sterling City Council to adopt the plan. Two Rivers Regional Council made every effort to include all of the community stakeholders in this process. The assessments from the Illinois Municipal Assistance Program, the Brown County Action Team and Kiku Obata & Co. helped inform the process as well.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

MOUNT STERLING was founded in 1833 and became the county-seat of Brown County on February 1, 1839. Mount Sterling is the largest town in Brown County with a population of 2,070 (in 2000). The next largest town is Versailles at 567 people. The city covers an area of 1.08 square miles, or 704 acres. The city is not in a flood plain and is surrounded by rich farming country with extensive deposits of clay and coal. Mount Sterling is 39 miles from Quincy (population 40,000) to the west, 37 miles to Jacksonville (population 19,939) to the east and 65 miles to Springfield (population 111,454) to the east.



Population

The city has a **population density of 1,923.48 people per sq. mile** for Census 2000 and an average housing density of 977 houses per square mile. As of 2000 there were 1,051 housing units in Mount Sterling.

According to Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Brown County's population of those over 60 years old is projected to go from 1,138 in 2010 to 1,696 in 2030. This reflects a 49% increase.

Conversely, those ages 20-30 years old will decrease from 1,419 in 2010 to 1,236 in 2030 which is a 13% decrease. The decrease in the population of school age children is far less dramatic than the young

adult ages. This aging of the population will affect housing, transportation, medical and recreation demands of the area in the future.

Mount Sterling compared to Illinois state average:

- Median house value **below** state average.
- Hispanic race population percentage **below** state average.

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- Black race population percentage **significantly below** state average.
- Foreign-born population percentage **significantly below** state average.
- House age **above** state average.
- Percentage of population with a bachelor's degree or higher **below** state average.

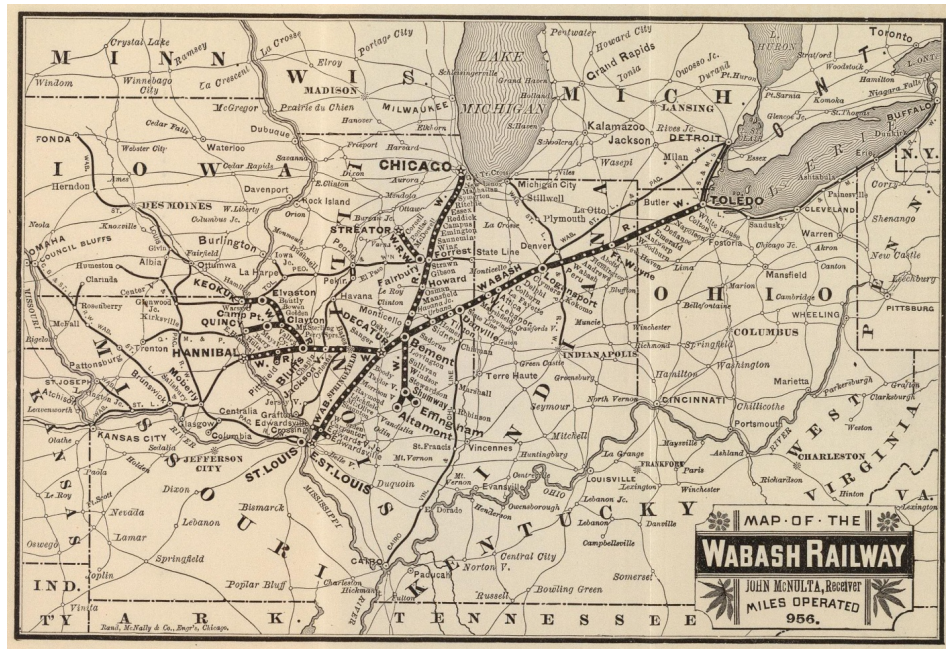
Year	Population
1880	1,445
1890	1,655
1900	1,960
1910	1,986
1920	1,932
1930	1,724
1940	2,140
1950	2,246
1960	2,252
1970	2,182
1980	2,186
1990	1,922
2000	2,070
2010	2,030

Source: U.S. Census

Transportation

Mount Sterling was founded on the Northern Cross Railroad in 1837, the first railroad in Illinois. Later part of the Wabash, the passenger depot still stands and is used as a museum. (map-1887) There is currently no local rail service in Mount Sterling as this portion of the railroad was dissolved in the early 1970s.

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The primary entrances into Mount Sterling are shown below.



North bound on IL 99 into town.

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South bound on IL 99 into town.



East bound on US 24 into town.



West bound on US 24 into town.

The current major routes of egress are US 24 which runs through the town (east and west). IL 99 also runs through town (north and south). IL 107 merges into IL 99 at the south end of town. These routes are Class II Highways. The daily traffic count on US 24 is 6,500 vehicles at the center of town. There are currently no designated bike paths.

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Mount Sterling has a public transportation system for low income persons and those with disabilities or age of 60 and over through the West Central Mass Transit District. The service is Door-to-Door, demand response available Monday-Friday, and until 2:00 on Saturdays.

Mount Sterling owns a Municipal Airport just west of town which can accommodate jet engine aircraft on its one runway.



Type: Airport, **Status:** Operational, **Activation Date:** 09/01/1972, **Runways:** 1, **Land Area Covered By Airport:** 200 acres, **Ownership:** Publicly owned, **Facility Use:** Open to public, **Site Number:**

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04890.21*A, **Location ID:** I63, **Region:** Great Lakes, **District Office:** CHI, **Unicom Frequency:** 122.800 Hz, **Common Traffic Advisory Frequency (CTAF):** 122.800 Hz, **Aeronautical sectional chart:** St Louis, **Tie-In FSS ID:** STL, **Tie-In FSS Name:** Saint Louis, **Tie-In FSS Toll-Free Number:** 1-800-WX-BRIEF, **Elevation:** 734 ft, **Elevation determination method:** Surveyed, **Elevation Source:** 3RD PARTY SURVEY (2006-07-07), **Air traffic control tower:** No, **Boundary ARTCC (FAA) computer ID:** ZCK, **Boundary ARTCC ID:** ZKC, **Boundary ARTCC Name:** Kansas City, **Airspace Determination:** No Objection, **Federal Agreements:** No, **NOTAM Service:** Yes, **NOTAM Facility ID:** STL, **Last Inspection Date:** 09/17/2008, **Inspection Group:** State aeronautical personnel, **Inspection Method:** State

Housing

While Mount Sterling has a low median household income (\$32,548 vs. Illinois \$56,235), the cost of living index is 73.2 (compared to the national average of 100). The city has a significantly higher than average percentage of one person households (39 %) than the state of Illinois has (26.8%). Thirty percent of housing units are occupied by persons 65 years or over. Rentals are primarily single detached homes.

The median value of a housing unit in 2008 was \$79,545. Median gross rent per housing unit in 2008 was \$398. The homes represent a variety of mid 20th century architecture with a few historical homes interspersed. The neighborhoods retain a rural feeling with no sidewalks. The 2000 U.S. Census shows that 75% of the homes in Mount Sterling were built before 1979.

According to a study done by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs in 2009, there is a shortage of affordable houses that are in good condition. The community considers many of the homes and rentals in the lower price range of insufficient size and condition. Brown County Housing Authority has 66 subsidized units at six locations in the city (8 two bedroom units, 2 three bedroom units and 56 one bedroom units). BCHA currently is at 100% occupancy and has a waiting list.

The community has no assisted living units as of this writing forcing many elderly to leave Mount Sterling for suitable living.



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Education

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		MOUNT STERLING	ILLINOIS	U.S.
	Number	Pct	Pct	Pct
Population 25 and Older	1,400			
Not finished high school or GED	289	21	18.7	19.6
High School Graduates or GED	534	38.1	27.7	28.6
Some college or Associates	391	27.9	27.6	27.4
Bachelor's degree	104	7.4	16.5	15.5
Master's, professional or doctorate degree	82	5.9	9.5	8.9

As seen in the chart above, Mount Sterling fares very well for those completing high school or some college, as compared to Illinois. The percentages of those who receive a Bachelor's, Master's or above falls markedly behind Illinois.

There is one public elementary school, one junior high school and one high school that serves the entire county and has a total of 760 students. St. Mary's is a parochial school that goes to 8th grade. Mount Sterling falls within John Wood Community College's district in Quincy, Illinois, which has a small satellite facility in Mount Sterling.

Colleges/Universities nearest to Mount Sterling:

- WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY (about 33 miles; MACOMB, IL)
- LINCOLN LAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE (about 64 miles; SPRINGFIELD, IL)
- UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT SPRINGFIELD (about 64 miles; Springfield, IL)

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- JOHN WOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE (Main campus about 45 miles; Quincy, IL. Satellite location at Dot Foods Learning Center; Mount Sterling)
- MACMURRAY COLLEGE (37 miles; Jacksonville, IL)
- ILLINOIS COLLEGE (37 miles; Jacksonville, IL)
- SPOON RIVER COLLEGE (65 miles; Mount Sterling, IL and 43 miles; Macomb, IL)
- CARL SANDBURG COLLEGE (93 miles; Galesburg, IL)
- QUINCY UNIVERSITY (45 miles; Quincy)

Public schools in Mount Sterling:

- [Brown County High School](#) (500 E MAIN ST; Grades: 9 - 12)
- [Western Illinois Correctional Center School](#) (RR 4 BOX 196; Grades: 12 - 12)
- [Brown County Elementary School](#) (501 NW CROSS ST; Grades: Pre-K - 4)
- [Brown County Middle School](#) (504 E MAIN ST; Grades: 5 - 8)

Parochial School in Mount Sterling:

- St. Mary's School (408 W. Washington Street; Grades Pre-K to 8)

Community Services

Mount Sterling has a variety of service agencies that serves the area.

Big Brothers, Big Sisters of West Central Illinois, provide one-on-one relationships with adults to at risk youth.

Brown County Against Cancer, provides financial support to Brown County residents battling cancer.

Brown County Public Library, offers reading materials and computer access.

Brown County Ministerial Alliance, provides Christmas food baskets, help with utilities and emergency needs.

Brown County Public Health Department, 120 E. Main Street, provides environmental health services, family case management, (women, infants, and children) WIC and TPS (Teen Parent Services), immunizations, blood pressure, hearing and vision testing and tobacco cessation program.

Brown County Senior Citizen Services, of the Area Agency on Aging, provides a lunch site and Meals on Wheels, education on Medicare Part B, Transportation

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for medical appointments, amplified phones for the hearing impaired, tax service and information and referral.

Brown County United Way, provides charitable support to local non-profits for those in need.

Mental Health Centers of Western Illinois provides out-patient counseling for individuals, families and couples, Psychiatric Services 1 X week, substance abuse out-patient and early intervention, DUI assessments and out-patient treatment, and supervised residential independent living apartments with 24 hours a day supervision.

National T.I.T. Society, Illinois Chapter, runs an Adopt a Family program and sends girls to camp.

Parent and Child Together (PACT), provides Home Based Head Start and Early Head Start services to families who meet income guidelines.

Pregnancy Resource Center, Inc., provides free and confidential options and support.

Quanada provides services for domestic violence victims to include individual and group counseling, advocacy and shelter.

Two Rivers Regional Council is a community action agency that provides utility assistance, weatherization, home rehabilitation, food pantry and has a thrift store in town.

West Central Illinois RSVP, matches seniors up with volunteer opportunities.

City services

Mount Sterling has an all-volunteer Fire Department and a Police Department of 6 employees which is 2.62 officers per 1,000 residents. It has a commercial waste disposal system; the water supply comes from Clayton-Camp Point Water District with an excess capacity of 430,000 gallons per day. The sewage treatment plant has a capacity of 300,000 gallons a day, with a current load of 220,000. Ameren Illinois/CIPS is the gas and electric supplier.

Healthcare Facilities

The nearest hospital is SARAH D CULBERTSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, a Critical Access Hospital (about 16 miles; RUSHVILLE, IL). BLESSING HOSPITAL is a Level II

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Trauma Center. (about 33 miles; QUINCY, IL)

Quincy Medical Group has a clinic in town. Both Quincy and Jacksonville have multiple health services. Brown County Mental Health is also located in Mount Sterling and provides a wide spectrum of mental health services.

The city has one long term care facility, Heritage Health Manor. It has 87 beds and is skilled care/Medicare certified.

There is one dental center which has two dentists.

Churches

- Holy Family Church
- First Christian Church
- First United Methodist Church
- First Baptist Church
- Mt. Sterling Church of the Nazarene
- First Lutheran
- Presbyterian Church of Christ
- Cornerstone Christian Church

Current Economic Conditions

Unemployment rates for Brown County remain low at 4.9% as of the writing of this narrative. The civilian labor force is 1,039 according to the U.S. 2000 Census. Much of Mount Sterling's labor force lives in adjoining counties. The median income in Brown County is \$54,100; per capita income is \$25,068 and 10.9% of the people in Mount Sterling are below the poverty level.

The largest employer, Dot Foods, Inc. (a Fortune 500 Company) employs a total of 1,700 people at the Mount Sterling location. Many of these employees are commuters as 339 live in Mount Sterling, 447 live in Brown County and 914 live outside Brown County. Mount Sterling could be considered a commuter town, with many housing, goods and service dollars leaving the city. It is the city's challenge to keep those dollars in the local area.



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Dot Foods, Inc.

Dot Foods, Inc. was founded in 1960 by Robert F. Tracy, a resident of Mount Sterling. The company is still run by family members, with sons Pat Tracy as the Chairman of the Board, and John Tracy the Chief Executive Officer. Their motto is "Delivering supply chain solutions to the food industry". Dot Foods distributes 70,000 products from 500 food industry manufacturers to over 3,300 distributors. The headquarters is in Mount Sterling with warehousing and distribution facilities. There are seven other regional distribution centers in California, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, New York and Oklahoma. The Tracy family has a foundation (Tracy Family Foundation), founded in 1997, which has been very generous to the community. The Tracy family is generally viewed by the community as generous and involved without being controlling in civic matters.

Other than Dot Foods, the correctional facility located south of town was the largest job creator in Mount Sterling's history. Western Illinois Correctional Center was opened in 1989 after an intensive citizen campaign to win the bid.

The major employers in the community (in or near Mount Sterling) are:

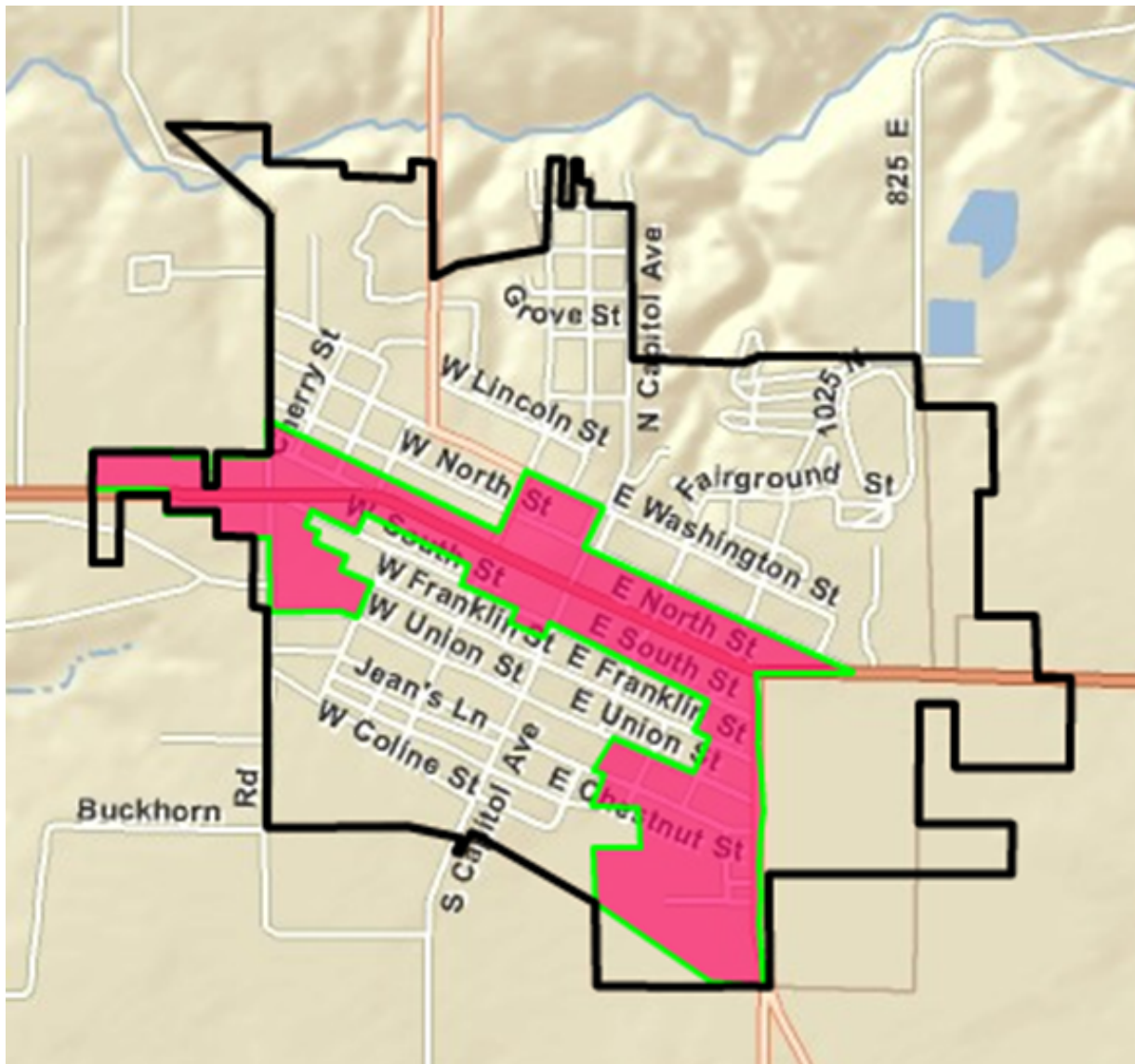
- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| • Dot Foods | 1,700 employees |
| • Western Illinois Correctional Center | 439 employees |
| • Brown County CU School District 1 | 116 employees |
| • Timewell Tile | 97 employees |
| • Heritage Manor | 80 employees |
| • Dave Clinard Trucking, Inc. | 60 employees |
| • Brown County Mental Health | 48 employees |

Mount Sterling has one 20 acre TIF (Tax Increment Finance) District established in 1993, due to be retired in 2016. It is located on the southeast corner of US Route 24 and IL Route 99. The TIF brought in Subway restaurant, Dollar General, IGA and Farmers National Bank. A second TIF is being developed to encompass the downtown business district.

Mount Sterling was included in Quincy's Enterprise Zone #30 of Quincy when it was extended to Mount Sterling in 2005. This allowed Dot Foods to build a 119,000-square-foot expansion in 2007 creating 50 new jobs.

It is a major concern that there are significant dollars leaked to neighboring counties. Electronics and Appliances, Motor Vehicles and Parts, and General Merchandise, Furniture and Home Furnishings are the economic sectors with the highest leakage.

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Mt. Sterling TIFF II district

Mount Sterling Illinois Comprehensive Plan-Community Profile

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Retail MarketPlace Profile

Mount Sterling_1
145 W Main St, Mount Sterling, IL 62353-1223
Ring: 1 mile radius

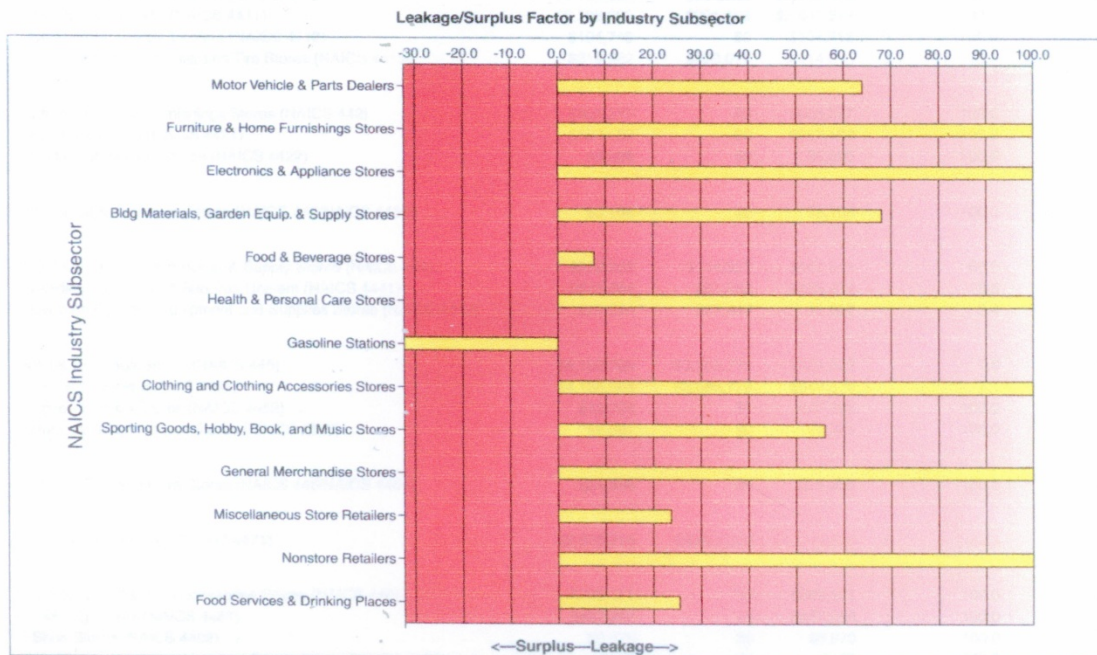
Latitude: 39.98601
Longitude: -90.76579

Summary Demographics

2010 Population	1,908
2010 Households	914
2010 Median Disposable Income	\$29,388
2010 Per Capita Income	\$18,089

Industry Summary

	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink (NAICS 44-45, 722)	\$15,183,373	\$11,419,300	\$3,764,073	14.1	30
Total Retail Trade (NAICS 44-45)	\$13,273,772	\$10,284,713	\$2,989,059	12.7	19
Total Food & Drink (NAICS 722)	\$1,909,601	\$1,134,587	\$775,014	25.5	11



Sources: Esri and Infogroup

Data Note: Supply (retail sales) estimates sales to consumers by establishments. Sales to businesses are excluded. Demand (retail potential) estimates the expected amount spent by consumers at retail establishments. Supply and demand estimates are in current dollars. The Leakage/Surplus Factor presents a snapshot of retail opportunity. This is a measure of the relationship between supply and demand that ranges from +100 (total leakage) to -100 (total surplus). A positive value represents 'leakage' of retail opportunity outside the trade area. A negative value represents a surplus of retail sales, a market where customers are drawn in from outside the trade area. The Retail Gap represents the difference between Retail Potential and Retail Sales. Esri uses the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to classify businesses by their primary type of economic activity. Retail establishments are classified into 27 industry groups in the Retail Trade sector, as well as four industry groups within the Food Services & Drinking Establishments subsector.

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Recreation



YMCA Mount Sterling Community Center

A premier fitness, the Mount Sterling Community Center YMCA was built in 2004 with funds from Robert and Dorothy Tracy, Dot Foods, and the Tracy Family Foundation. It currently has 2,536 members and employs 36 people. The facility attracts members from the neighboring counties of Schuyler, Pike, Adams, Morgan, Hancock, Cass and McDonough.



Lake Mount Sterling

Mount Sterling owns Lake Mount Sterling just one mile north of the city limits. The reservoir lake is 24 square acres and 21 feet deep and has Blue Gill, Channel Catfish and Large Mouth Bass. There is no swimming allowed on the lake.

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Rolling Greens Golf Club

Situated near the lake is a 140 acre 18-hole golf course, Rolling Greens Golf Club. Rolling Hills has been providing golf to the areas surrounding Mount Sterling, Illinois for just over 40 years and is open to the public. It is located one mile north of town and just south of Mount Sterling Lake. It was a nine-hole course until 2009 when 9 additional holes were added.



Brown County Fair

The Brown County Fairgrounds has been at the northeast part of the city since 1874. It was chosen a few years ago as one of the Nation's "Blue Ribbon Fairs" for its first class harness racing. Through the cooperation of the Illinois Department of Agriculture, Balmoral and Maywood Parks in Chicago and the Illinois Racing Board, the Brown County Fair is the only county fair in Illinois that offers pari-mutuel wagering.

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Ridge View Winery



Ridge View Winery is located amid heavily wooded ravines and valleys 9 ½ miles southwest of Mount Sterling. The first Ridge View vineyard of four acres was established with Chardonnay grapes in 2000, followed in 2002 by a second vineyard with Frontenac, Marechal Foch, and GR-7 varieties - bringing the total acres to five and one-quarter with over 3,000 vines. In 2007 four dozen Corot Noir were added. Ridge View Winery hosts many events in their facility.

Parks



Joel Oliver Memorial Pool and Skate Park is located in the northwest portion of the city near Clark Park.

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Rotary Park located at Maple and Field Street, approximately 2 acres.



Brown County Little League field.

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Clark Park near the pool and skate park is 28 acres.

Lodging

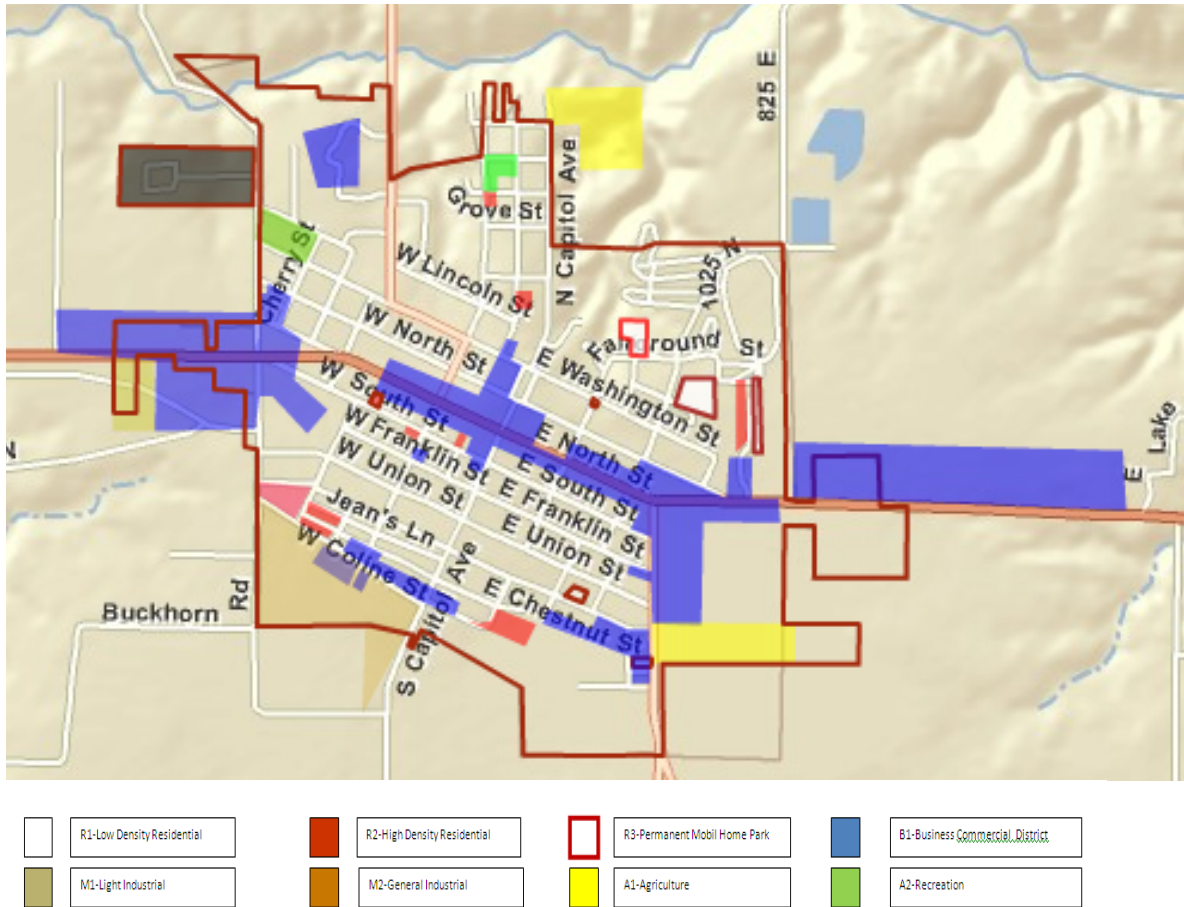


Irish House Hotel, Rt 4, Mount Sterling, IL 62353 has 30 guest rooms.

Zoning

Mt. Sterling adopted a zoning code on January 1, 1996. It is not currently being enforced. Below is the existing zoning map of Mount Sterling, with the Business Commercial. District shaded in the large blue area in the center.

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Historic Architecture

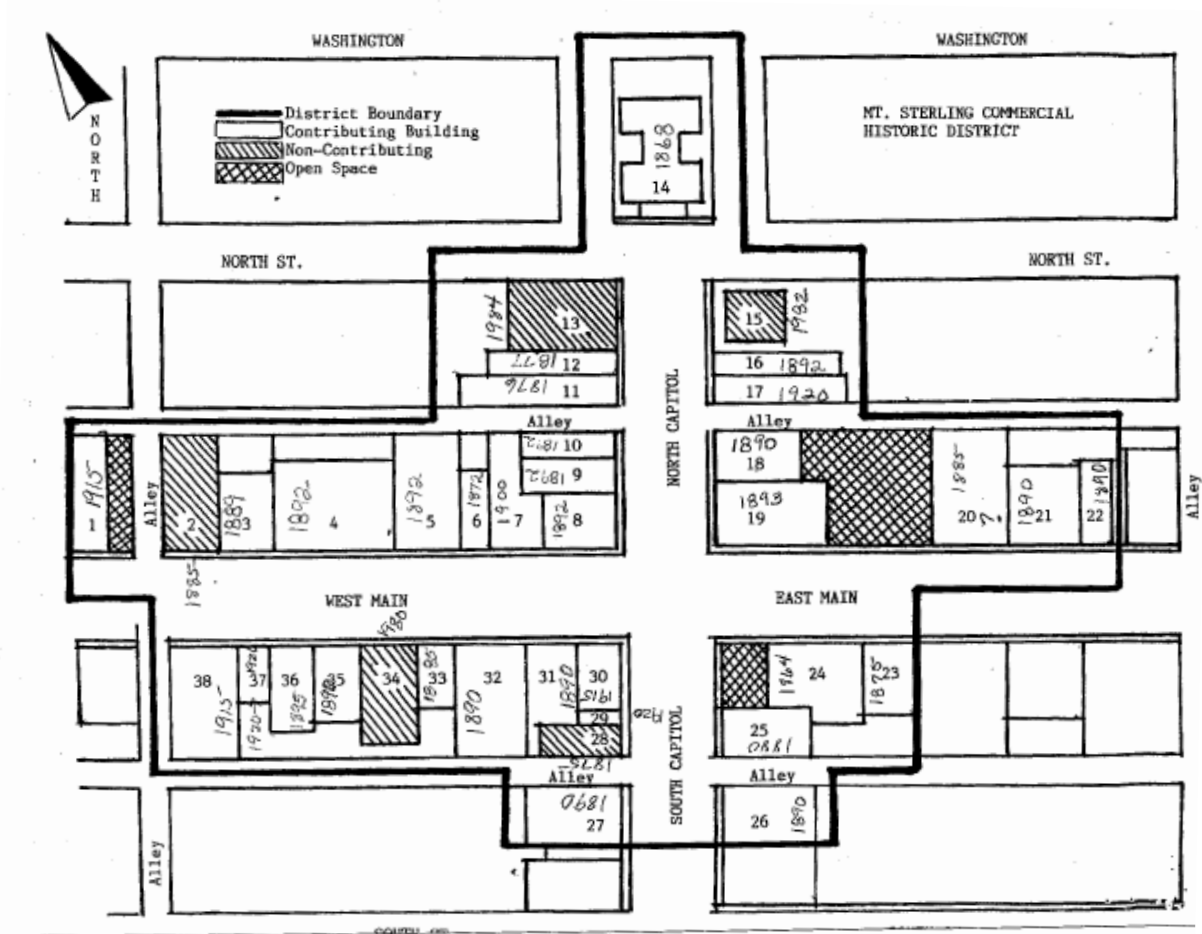


Downtown buildings

A small portion of Mount Sterling Commercial Historic District is on the National Register of Historic Places. The District is roughly bounded by Brown Co. Courthouse, Alley E of Capitol, South St., and Alley W of Capitol. (see map

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below) A majority of the architecture in the downtown central business district is of the Italianate design and to a lesser extent, the Chicago Style. The Courthouse is Neo Classical Revival with Colonial and Gothic elements. Most of the homes in Mt. Sterling are of the Bungalow, Four Square & English Cottage styles dating from before the turn of the century until about the end of the 1920's.



MT. Sterling Historic District designation boundaries

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Brown County Courthouse built in 1868.

TIMELINE:

- 1833 Mount Sterling founded
- 1837 the first railroad in Illinois built, the Northern Cross. The railroad went from Quincy, through Mount Sterling, Jacksonville, Springfield and ended at the Indiana line.
- 1839 Brown County split from Schuyler County and designated Mount Sterling the County seat.
- 1848 The Democrat Message began printing.
- 1858 Abraham Lincoln came to Mount Sterling to deliver a campaign speech.
- 1868 the second courthouse was built.
- 1874 the Brown County State Fair begins in Mount Sterling
- 1897 Mount Sterling High School built.
- 1947 Brown County Elementary School was built
- 1950 Mount Sterling High School became Brown County High School, consolidating Versailles and Mount Sterling.
- 1960 Dot Foods began.
- 1987 Portion of Mt. Sterling placed on the National Register
- 1989 the Western Illinois Correctional Facility opened in Mount Sterling
- 1996 zoning code adopted
- 1997 the Tracy Family Foundation was founded
- 2000 Dot Foods records \$1 billion in revenue.
- 2005 Brown County Action Initiative began.

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Site of Lincoln Senate Campaign Speech October 1858

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A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

MOUNT STERLING IN 25 YEARS

The community was asked to envision how they want Mount Sterling to be in 25 years. Public meetings were held to determine the categories that were important to them. Then individual visioning sessions were held for each element, to suggest goals, activities and outputs. The following categories are the results of these visioning sessions: Business Community, Community Appearance, Housing, Recreation, Safety, and Youth.

Mount Sterling's Vision

The Mount Sterling community is experiencing both commercial and residential growth. With quality infrastructure, willing volunteers, and a cooperative spirit throughout the community, Mount Sterling hosts a wide variety of retail, industrial, and service businesses. Continuous planning for additional commercial growth is necessary because downtown vacancies are nonexistent. As Brown County's commercial center, Mount Sterling has built an impressive job base and provides numerous housing opportunities. Given its size, Mount Sterling residents take special pride in offering a sound local economy while retaining its small town charm. With high quality schools, numerous recreational opportunities, and ongoing commitment to community beautification and improvement, Mount Sterling is recognized as one of the most sought after places in rural Illinois to live and work.

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NEW POLICY FRAMEWORK

Business Community

GOAL: To establish a vibrant Uptown.

Mount Sterling strives for a **unique, attractive, and diverse** business community making Mount Sterling a **destination** for shopping and services. The downtown business district shall be vibrant, fully occupied and an inviting place to visit, meet friends and explore. The city will have a diversified employer base that meets the needs of the residents.

Objectives:

- Downtown buildings filled with new businesses
- Variety of businesses
- Greater diversity of employment
- More small businesses
- Lake/park business opportunities
- More restaurants
- Specialty shops that draw people from out of town
- Uniqueness
- Diverse Industry

Activities:

- Anchor business or non-profit to bring people to area
- Coffee shop/art shop/bookstore
- Large box store like Pamida
- Development of infrastructure needed for business growth
- Businesses that build on local resources
- Tax incentives/loan opportunities
- Assistance to small businesses/start ups
- Create appealing/charming main street
- Support mechanism to encourage entrepreneurs
- Planning consultant needs to be hired
- Create chamber of commerce
- Develop and enforce Zoning

Community Appearance

GOAL: Ensure that Mount Sterling retains the look and feel of a small town.

Mount Sterling strives to be a desirable community with an inviting and progressive appearance, with attractive parks, streets and properties. Through initiatives and programs, real estate will increase in value, population will grow

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and Mount Sterling will be an appealing model community while retaining the look and feel of a small town. With these added incentives and valuable resources, Mount Sterling will continue to be a community its citizens can be proud of.

Objectives:

- Improve value of real estate
- Will receive awards, recognition and media coverage
- Beautification projects on budget
- Population growth

Activities:

- Get youth groups and volunteer organizations to provide labor and resources for projects
- Zoning and Covenants
- Encouragement and recognition
- Sidewalk program; infrastructure improvements; curb appeal; Streetscape improvements: trees, benches, lighting, façade improvements.

Housing

GOAL: To maintain a traditional neighborhood design pattern while increasing the density level.

Mount Sterling will create conditions that yield safe, affordable and attractive housing. A variety of housing options will encourage all demographics to make Mount Sterling their home throughout their lifetime.

Objectives:

- Attract young workforce
- Meet the needs of seniors, so that they can stay in the community
- Keep families in the community
- Population density growth
- Maintain a traditional neighborhood design pattern

Activities:

- Create senior housing
- Increase amount of rentals
- Clean up vacant/dilapidated housing
- Establish and enforce housing codes
- Improve zoning map
- Create assisted living units

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- Create more affordable housing
- Build more houses valued from \$75,000-125,000.
- Created incentive for building homes.

Recreation

GOAL: Increase recreational opportunities while protecting the natural features of the area.

Rich recreational resources in Mt. Sterling will improve the quality of life for those in the region and will increase the economic strength of the city. We will create new recreational opportunities while protecting the natural features of the area. This will create a *unique* and distinct environment in which people of all ages will live, work, raise a family, and experience a brighter future.

Objectives:

- Increased revenue from lodging
- More people using the lake
- Generate camping fees
- Increased use of golf course
- Sale of food
- Sales tax revenue
- More businesses will come to town
- Increase number of jobs
- Increased traffic by lake/golf course
- Population growth
- Protect the natural features of the area

Activities:

- Fishing
- Outdoor amphitheater
- Better playground equipment
- Large club house at golf course/on the lake to hold events
- Festivals
- Shower and bathroom facilities at lake
- Camp ground around lake
- Clubs such as bike club, archery club, trap/skeet club,
- Bike path
- Bike/walking path that winds through downtown and through the country side
- Food available at lake
- Fishing and golfing tournaments

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- Lake housing
- Niche restaurant
- Softball/baseball field
- Water activities/kayaks and canoes
- Fishing tournaments and clinics

Safety Statement

GOAL: Maintain the safe environment of the area.

Mt. Sterling's infrastructure, government, services and schools need to grow with the city in order to meet new challenges and threats as they occur, resulting in Mount Sterling being a safe community to raise a family. An increase in citizen generated activities, which would be supported by local officials, will maintain a community that is free of violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and unsafe housing and infrastructure.

Objectives:

- Safer sidewalks
- Sidewalks
- School police resource officer
- Fewer deaths and accidents
- Increase ACE patrol capacity
- Petition or statement
- Juvenile participation and education with law enforcement

Activities:

- Scheduled teen activities
- Drug and alcohol education
- Citizens advisory board
- Neighborhood watch program
- Tax abatement incentives to promote property maintenance
- Security assessments for businesses
- Safe/star house
- Life alert/well being checks on elderly
- Coordination of law enforcement between agencies
- Designated crossing area at middle/high school
- Mount Sterling Police officer in West Central Drug Task Force

Youth

GOAL: Retain the youth in the area by creating a sense of community and belonging.

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Mount Sterling strives to offer quality education. The youth are engaged in the community, high achievers in and out of school, and will become the future leaders of Mount Sterling. Youth will desire to stay or return to Mount Sterling as adults to raise their own families.

Objectives:

- Youth more engaged in community
- High academic achievement and success
- High percentage of youth go to college
- Delinquency reduced
- Recognition for achievement
- Coordinated youth services`

Activities:

- Teen based recreation
- Mentoring opportunities
- Internship opportunities
- Widen fine arts opportunities
- Increase technology capacity in schools
- Promote recreational programs that already exist.
- Improve communication between organizations
- Create a sense of community and belonging

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IMPLEMENTATION OF VISIONS

The next step in achieving the goals of the community stated through the visioning sessions is to begin implementation. Committees of concerned citizens need to be created to develop action plans for each goal. Some of the goals can be incorporated in Brown County Action teams. Some goals are already being acted upon by other parties.

BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

It is recommended that the city prepare and adopt an Economic Development Plan that would serve as a complimentary document to the comprehensive plan. The Economic Development Plan should identify specific attraction targets, specific business retention efforts, marketing strategies, and incentive policies. It will also establish who is responsible for directing the economic development program within the municipality. It is recommended that the city also take the time to develop, discuss, and prepare an Economic development Plan that would identify the types of businesses desired and not desired and the efforts or programs that the city would undertake to attract and retain investment, including incentives and an action plan.

The Tracy Family Foundation, in response to the community's overall desire to improve the uptown area and to attract new businesses, has hired a firm to research, assess and make design recommendations for the business district. Kiku Obata and Company from St. Louis was selected by the steering committee for this project and will began work in the Spring of 2011. This will provide guidelines for business development in the historical area.

Brown County Action Team, Economic Development Committee is exploring the development of a Business Incubator to complement the Uptown Plan. This is meant to assist the growth of home based businesses and encourage their establishment in the business district. The Community Betterment Committee has a project to raise money for benches, plantings and waste containers in the business district, pending design recommendations of Kiku Obata.

The Brown County Library is planning an expansion of their facilities in the area, details not yet available.

The City of Mount Sterling is planning the addition of an uptown TIF district which can be use as an incentive for business growth and development. They have employed the firm *The Economic Development Group LTD* for this purpose.

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COMMUNITY APPEARANCE

It is critical for the City of Mount Sterling to utilize the municipal tools that are available to them to eliminate blight and distressed properties. Among these are the adoption and enforcement of Property Maintenance Codes in order to control the vacant properties and properties in disrepair, both residential and commercial. Another tool is a review of the current Zoning Codes so that it continues to guide appropriate growth in the community. The Planning and Zoning committees are currently looking at these issues through the development of this comprehensive plan.

Kiku Obata and Company's design plans will help Mount Sterling create an identifiable 'look' and brand. This will help the city move toward their desire to be a retail destination for surrounding communities. The Brown County Action Team Community Betterment committee is also planning activities to enhance the community appearance.

HOUSING

Through a housing assessment study done by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs in 2009, it was determined that there is inadequate housing in Mount Sterling to accommodate a variety of demographics. During the visioning sessions held for this comprehensive plan, it was stated that the community wants senior housing and rental properties in order to help seniors remain in the community and attract young adults.

The West Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging has applied for a grant from HUD in order to build senior housing in Mount Sterling. Currently the only option for seniors when they need more accommodating housing is to move out of town. With the approval of the HUD grant, 16 units will become available to those who wish to downsize to senior housing units. This will have the effect of making 16 homes available for new occupants in a city with very little new housing construction.

RECREATION

Mount Sterling currently has a fair amount of parks and facilities within the city limits, however the space reflects just 5% of the total area. Based on the community's vision for recreation in Mount Sterling, it is apparent the city sees the lake to the north and adjacent golf course as opportunities for improved recreation. This has great potential for development by selling lake front properties and increasing recreational activities for the public. The lake is also a potential partner for the golf course due to its proximity. To implement this vision a team of interested parties need to develop action plans and get municipal and civic buy-in.

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SAFE COMMUNITY

One of the strengths of a small community is the safe environment it affords to its members. Mount Sterling is very proud of their safe community and wish for that to remain, with just a few improvements. The biggest threat to safety would be the aging infrastructure i.e. houses, commercial buildings, streets, and sidewalks.

Safe Routes to School funds from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) were applied for in the last three years. The first application was funded for walking or biking to school programming. The second application was to put sidewalks on the streets surrounding the elementary, middle and high schools. The application is pending as of this writing.

Resulting from the second SRTS Grant Proposal, a request was made to Illinois Department of Transportation to allow a crosswalk across US 24 where the High School and Middle School is located. There is much community concern about the dangers of students crossing the highway. The community is trying to work within the confines of IDOT regulations to solve this problem.

YOUTH

Mount Sterling, like many small towns, is experiencing population loss. The trend of young adults, once they leave school is for them to settle in urban areas. Many will return in their parenting years or later. For this reason Mount Sterling invests heavily in their youth, seeing them as the future community leaders.

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FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Illinois Municipal Assistance Program (IMAP) Findings

Both good governance and good management style make for good government and a good business climate. A well governed, clearly organized, effectively managed, receptive, responsive cooperative municipal government are key ingredients in a successful recipe for economic development.

Business, big and small, wants stability, certainty, decisiveness, fairness and quick action from the local government. Residents want a safe, attractive, and economically viable, community with good schools and recreational activities. This quality of life emanates from focused municipal and special district government as well as private community investment. The community cannot progress if a single element is missing.

First impressions are important. If a community does not present or show well, it will be difficult to sell it. Physical appearance, easily obtained information, a welcoming attitude, on the part of elected and appointed officials, a willingness to assist, quick follow up, and a focused commitment to economic development all help make a good first impression to sell the community in as a place to do business. A good location, sites, sufficient and motivated workforce, and a good quality of life will be wasted if the private sector cannot obtain information about the community, determine who they need to speak with in order to do business, and have confidence that the community is both progressive and has a plan for the future. They must be willing to navigate the channels of City Hall or they will be frustrated and pursue opportunities elsewhere.

The following issues were identified by the IMAP team that, when addressed, could be beneficial to the future growth of the city.

Economic Development

BUDGET: The budget is one of the most important documents created by any unit of government, including Mt. Sterling. A good budget is not only a financial road map, but constitutes the city's most important policy document that is created by legislative action and policy discussions each year. As such, the budget is a critical communication tool that should be readily understood by

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those both and familiar and unfamiliar with administrative and financial affairs. As such, the present appropriation ordinance that dually serves as the city's budget document should be targeted for improvement. A separate budget document should be created with more detail, explanation and depth including summary charts, narratives of departments and programs, and charts that present in pictorial format, financial information that can be understood by the reader. The present city appropriation document contains almost no information about how it was created, how revenues were determined, what the intended purposes of the expenditures are, or explanations for increases, decreases or changes.

It is suggested that the Government Finance Officers Association Distinguished Budget Presentation criteria found at Appendix d of the IMAP draft be considered for guiding budget document preparation in the future.

Land Use

In Illinois, land use is a recommended part, and an integral part of a comprehensive plan. (65 ILCS 5/) A more active role in land use affairs will allow the city to become more effective in land use management. The city will pursue a contractual option for staffing a position similar to a Senior Staff Planner/Code Enforcement Officer. This position would require a thoroughly experienced planning and development professional who can concentrate on being the city's point person in dealing with all the issues this position requires. This will be a position that addresses the interpretation and applying the advice received by the planning professional that will be employed on policy issues. This position can be a shared position with another local municipality. The city should devote a portion of its strategic thinking to a zoning code document/zoning ordinance. (IMAP, 30)

Capital Improvements Plan

The city should start a long-term Capital Improvements Planning process that will

address community needs and enhance its economic vitality. A sound CIP will help the city prioritize projects based upon merit and plan how to pay for them far in advance. Project "merit" would entail an engineering sufficiency assessment with a ranking by type of infrastructure that is based upon condition and useful life expectancy. New, replaced, or repaired infrastructure should be listed. Again, as mentioned previously, examples could include streets, storm sewers, water mains, sanitary sewers, and public buildings/facilities. Particular attention should be paid toward reconstructing streets with curb and sidewalks including the commercial districts of town.

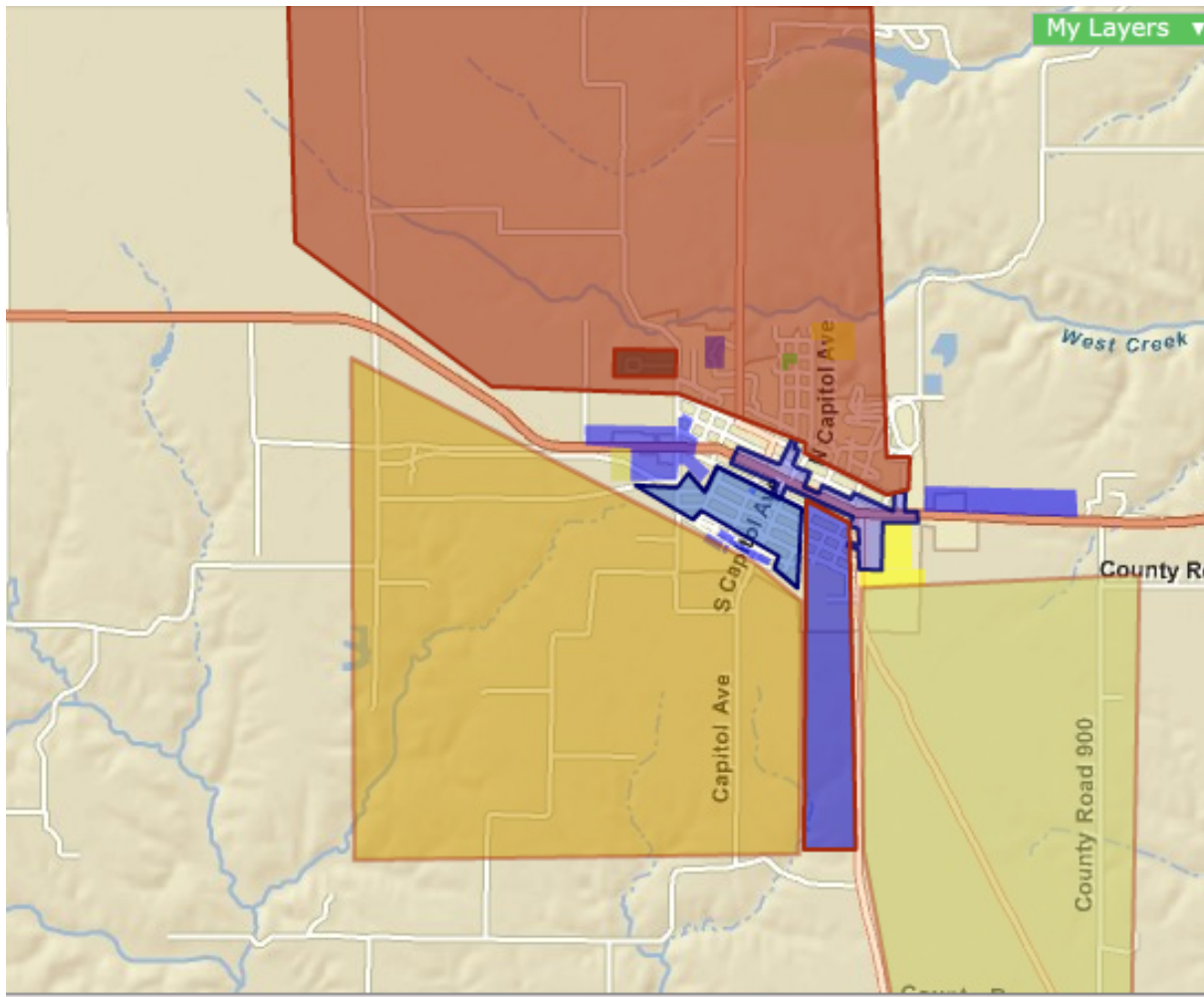
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Establishment of the future land use map

To provide for a logical pattern of land use intensity and density which is consistent with the existing land use patterns, consistent with the existing infrastructure systems, and sensitive to the natural systems and character of the community.

- Mount Sterling shall direct new residential development to areas that are compatible with established land use patterns that can be supported by available public facilities.
- Mount Sterling shall provide adequate land for commercial uses and direct new commercial uses to areas which are compatible with established land use patterns which can be supported by available public facilities and supports the importance of these uses in maintaining a balanced mix of land uses and sustaining a viable economy.
- Mount Sterling shall provide adequate land use for industrial development and direct new industrial to areas which are compatible with established land use patterns and public facilities. Mount Sterling supports the importance of these uses in maintaining a balanced mix of land uses and their role in sustaining a viable economy.
- Mount Sterling shall provide adequate land for community facility uses and recognize land owned by other governmental entities for educational and conservation purposes. These uses include public administrative complexes, parks and recreation facilities, public education facilities, and public conservation areas.
- Mount Sterling shall identify and recognize areas within the community which currently have or may be conducive to a mix of zoning and land uses. These areas are generally located along the Route 24 Corridor and require flexibility in order to respond to changes in market demands within the community. These changes include the nature of Main Street as a regional transportation corridor, growth in the industrial sector in the southern part of the community, and future residential development in the northern portion of the city as the community reaches build-out.

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Source: Two Rivers Regional Council; ESRI community analyst, GIS software

- The area shaded in red near the upper left portion of the map might serve as a residential district area with a minimum of 10 percent dedicated to parks or open areas and green spaces.
- The section to the lower left shaded in tan would be dedicated to general industrial.
- The areas in the center of town and inclusive of the mixed business strip along State Route 107 to the immediate west could be designated a mixed use district including high density residential, commercial, office, institutional and recreational areas. These districts would also serve as buffer zones between higher intensity land uses and sparsely populated residential and recreational areas
- The area at the bottom right of the map shaded light tan would be designated light industrial, which would include some light manufacturing and warehousing uses.
- The remaining unshaded areas would continue to serve their current uses such as agricultural land with a review by public officials

Mt. Sterling Design Plan

Design Guidelines & Standards Best Practices:

Building styles and facades

The review and control of architectural elements is one of the most critical elements in unifying design. A set of guidelines is needed to guide the reuse of existing historic properties as well as new development. Building styles should be left in compliance with styles that are conforming to contextual existing structures throughout Mt. Sterling. On the north side, a mixture of different styles will be permitted and much of the future uses will include moderate to affordable income housing, with higher densities. Such styles and facades can include:

- Italianate
- Bungalow
- Four Square

Signage

The style and design of a sign can play a huge role in the perception of a downtown. It is essential that Mt. Sterling follow a set standard for their signage. By setting a standard for their signage, residents and visitors alike will quickly know how to identify signage and where to expect signage. Roads and intersections should be clearly marked, as should commercial stores and buildings. Parks and historic buildings should also be clearly marked with the appropriate signage. The signage should be well lit (when appropriate) and readable from a car moving the posted speed limit. Maximum size limits and setbacks need to be determined in order to keep the signs from becoming obtrusive.

- Attractive and effective
- Clear communication
- Distinguishable from a distance
- Aesthetically pleasing and blends with the style of the uptown

Lighting

Lighting serves public safety and conveniently highlights points of interest, adds to architectural designs and landscape design of buildings and is designed around a theme to fit surrounding buildings and elements. Lighting and signage should match the style and uniformity of the context that has been approved for future developments.

- Attractive and effective
- Uniform design centered around a common theme

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- Unobtrusive
- Avoid the look of large parking lot and airport style
- Consistent with multiple site projects



Monroe, Michigan before streetscape improvements



After photos of streetscape improvements.
Source: City of Monroe municipal website

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Bike Paths and Lanes

A bike path could be developed around the city and a lane through town along US 24. This would provide a long loop for recreation riding, as well as a path through the main downtown area of Mt. Sterling. Bike lanes can be as narrow as four foot wide, but five feet wide is the preferred width in most design manuals. The lane should have a four to six inch stripe that encouraged parked cars along the road to park as close to the curb as they can, to provide as much room possible for the bike lane. At intersections, the cyclists are allowed to travel in with the regular vehicle travel lanes even when a bike lane is present. When making a left turn, a bicyclist is expected to turn from the left lane and not the bike lane. Motorists should always be aware that cyclists might merge into the flow of traffic. With a bike lane Mt. Sterling will need to add signs that are required by law. The signs will be both freestanding signs and painted in the bike lane.

- Reduce traffic speed
- Reduce the number of cars on the road

Pedestrian Trails

Trails would also be a nice addition for the Mt. Sterling. Having foot trails that are unpaved and go through the woods and into the park system would be both relaxing and provide a nature like or park like setting in the town itself. The unpaved trails could be constructed of dirt, crushed gravel or wood chips. The paved versions of trails would be connecting the downtown area to the surrounding houses and business, as well as in the forms of sidewalks.

Other Recommendations

- Creation of an appealing & charming main street with the help of a local Special Service District through the creation of an updated TIF district
- Developing a potential Main Street like program or Special Service District (SSD)
- Support mechanisms to encourage entrepreneurs
- Planning consultant needs to be hired or contracted
- Create a Chamber of Commerce
- Develop and enforce zoning by creation of a modern and interactive zoning map
- Capitalizing on brownfield funding if it is available
- Creation of a Business Improvement District (BID)

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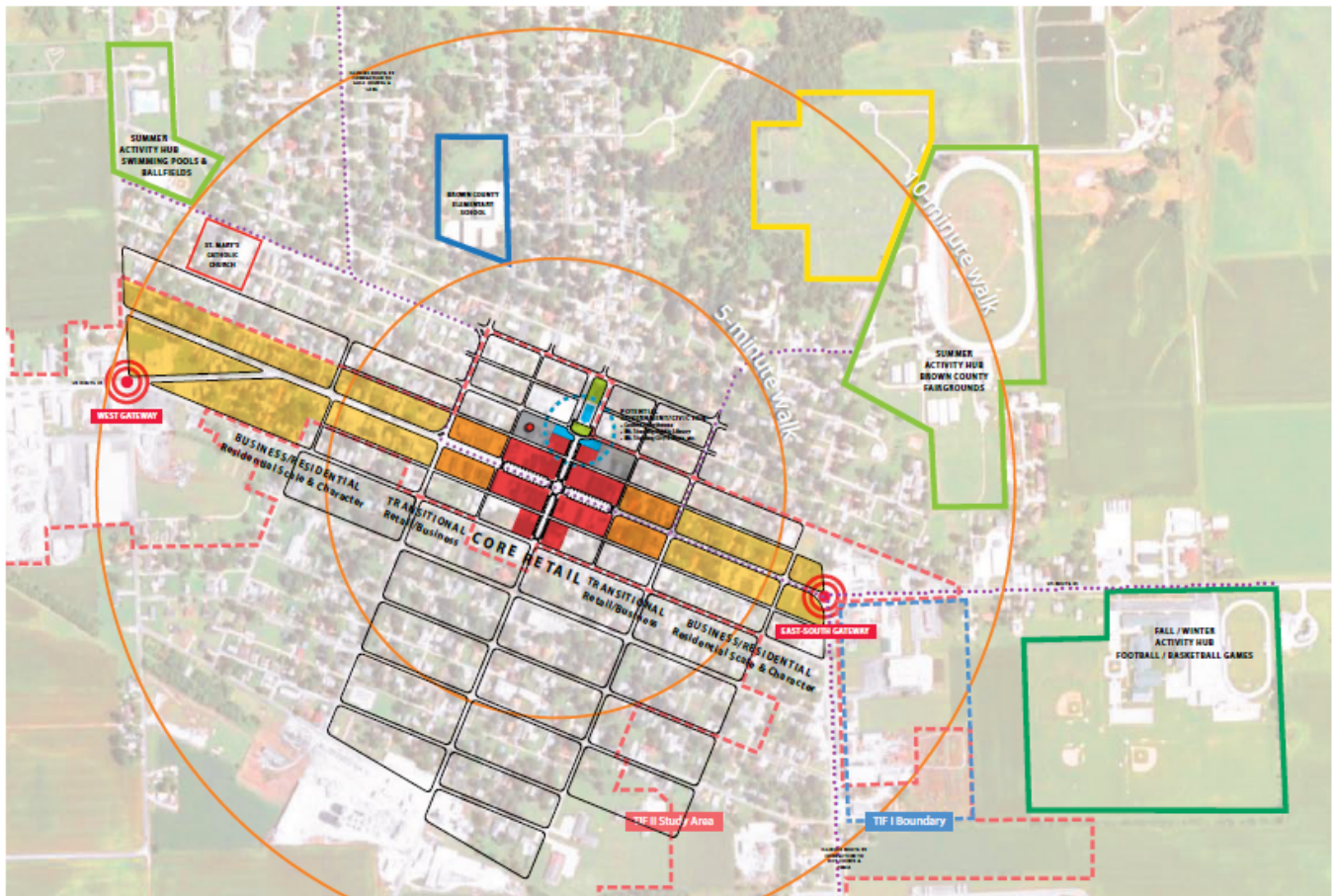
Uptown Redevelopment Plan

Kiku Obata & Company is currently working with Mt. Sterling City Council, Tracy Family Foundation, University of Illinois Extension – Adams/Brown, and Mt. Sterling Steering Committee on developing the Mt. Sterling, Illinois Uptown Long-Range Strategic Plan – A Redevelopment Blueprint. The core focus of this plan is in the area bounded by South Street, Washington Street, East Cross Street and West Cross Street. The blueprint will enable the community to create a profound and relevant sense of place, create a sustainable future, and provide the guidance for future development to insure a prosperous, authentic, and healthy, Mt. Sterling in the 21st century.

The final Redevelopment Blueprint, completed in summer of 2011, will provide an overall concept for the redevelopment, suggested merchandise strategy for the retail spaces, a short-term and long-term economic strategy, and events strategy for attracting more visitors, district character strategies, a streetscape strategy and a set of design and development guidelines. The report will also contain a suggested prioritization & implementation plan along with potential ideas for grants and funding sources.

Time, talent, and resources for this collaborative effort are being provided by many entities: Mt. Sterling City Council, Tracy Family Foundation, University of Illinois Extension – Adams/Brown, and Mt. Sterling Steering Committee members. Input from numerous individuals has been solicited via interviews and focus groups. The Plan was finalized in late Summer 2011 and shared with the community at 2 public hearings.

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OVERALL CONCEPTS

MT. STERLING REDEVELOPMENT BLUEPRINT

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Implementation

Five years – 2016

- Update current land use map
- Update future land use map
- Update zoning map
- Update master plan
- Complete a build-out analysis for the Planning Area
- Development of New Recreational Spaces
- Promotion of Downtown Events

Ten years – 2021

- Develop a bike path
- Update the streetscapes
- Adoption of Local Initiatives and Programs
- Business Owner Incentives

Appendix

- "*Comprehensive plan*" means a regional plan adopted under Section 5-14001 of the Counties Code, an official comprehensive plan adopted under Section 11-12-6 of the Illinois Municipal Code, or a local land resource management plan adopted under Section 4 of the Local Land Resource Management Planning Act.
- "*Department*" means the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.
- "*Land development regulation*" means any development or land use ordinance or regulation of a county or municipality including zoning and subdivision ordinances.
- "*Local government*" or "*unit of local government*" means any city, village, incorporated town, or county.
- "*Subsidiary plan*" means any portion of a comprehensive plan that guides development, land use, or infrastructure for a county or municipality or a portion of a county or municipality.
P.A. 94-793, eff. 5-19-06.)

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Notes

- (20 ILCS 662/) Local Planning Technical Assistance Act
- Planning and Community development, Components of a Comprehensive Plan, Tyler and Ward, 2009 Huron Valley Publishing, Ann Arbor, MI
- Illinois P.A. 94-793, eff. 5-19-06
- IMAP draft, NIU Outreach, Center for Governmental Studies, Dekalb, IL

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