



# **City of Joliet**

## **Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee**

### **Meeting Agenda**

Committee Members:  
Mayor Terry D'Arcy  
Councilman Cesar Cardenas  
Elaine Bottomley  
Warren Dorris  
Nora Gruenberg  
Jen Howard  
Wendell Martin  
Hugh O'Hara  
Christopher Parker  
Doug Pryor  
Steve Randich  
Juan Rico  
Jim Roolf  
Dr. Theresa Rouse  
Diana Viveros  
Boise Walker  
Damon Zdunich

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**Wednesday, July 2, 2025**

**10:00 AM**

**City Hall, Council Chambers**

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Citizens who are unable to attend the meeting can email comments in advance of the meeting to [publiccomment@joliet.gov](mailto:publiccomment@joliet.gov).

### **CALL TO ORDER**

### **ROLL CALL**

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes 5-07-25

**Attachments:** [CPAC Meeting Minutes 5-07-25.pdf](#)

### **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD ON AGENDA ITEMS**



This section is for anyone wanting to speak regarding agenda items and are allowed a maximum of 4 minutes. It is not a question and answer period and staff, and the Commission members do not generally respond to public comments. The City Clerk has a copy of the public speaking procedures; please note, speakers who engage in conduct injurious to the harmony of the meeting shall be called to order by the Presiding Officer and may forfeit the opportunity to speak.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Existing Conditions Report - City of Joliet

**Attachments:** [20250623\\_CityofJoliet\\_Existing ConditionsReport\\_High Res.pdf](#)

## **STAFF REPORTS**

## **MEMBER COMMENTS**

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

This section is for anyone wanting to speak regarding non-agenda items and are allowed a maximum of 4 minutes. It is not a question and answer period and staff, and the Commission members do not generally respond to public comments. The City Clerk has a copy of the public speaking procedures; please note, speakers who engage in conduct injurious to the harmony of the meeting shall be called to order by the Presiding Officer and may forfeit the opportunity to speak.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

This meeting will be held in an accessible location. If you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact The City Clerk Office, 150 West Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432 at (815) 724-3780.



# City of Joliet

150 West Jefferson Street  
Joliet, IL 60432

## Memo

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**File #:** TMP-8762

**Agenda Date:**7/2/2025

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# City of Joliet

150 West Jefferson Street  
Joliet, IL 60432



## Meeting Minutes - Pending Approval

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

10:00 AM

City Hall, Council Chambers

## Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee

### *Committee Members:*

*Mayor Terry D'Arcy*  
*Councilman Cesar Cardenas*  
*Elaine Bottomley*  
*Warren Dorris*  
*Nora Gruenberg*  
*Jen Howard*  
*Wendell Martin*  
*Hugh O'Hara*  
*Christopher Parker*  
*Doug Pryor*  
*Steve Randich*  
*Juan Rico*  
*Jim Roolf*  
*Dr. Theresa Rouse*  
*Diana Viveros*  
*Boise Walker*  
*Damon Zdunich*

Citizens who are unable to attend the meeting can email comments in advance of the meeting to [publiccomment@joliet.gov](mailto:publiccomment@joliet.gov).

## **CALL TO ORDER**

## **ROLL CALL**

<b>Present</b>	Terry D'Arcy, Cesar Cardenas, Elaine Bottomley, Warren Dorris, Nora Gruenberg, Jen Howard, Wendell Martin, Hugh O'Hara, Doug Pryor, Steven Randich, Juan Rico, Jim Roolf and Damon Zdunich
<b>Absent</b>	Christopher Parker, Theresa Rouse, Diana Viveros and Boise Walker

ALSO PRESENT: Deputy City Manager Christa Desiderio, City Clerk Lauren O'Hara, Media Engagement and Communications Director Rosemaria DiBenedetto, Community Development Director Dustin Anderson, Neighborhood Services Director Joe Fleischauer, Interim Corporation Counsel Todd Lenzie, Planner Jayne Bernhard, Planner Raymond Heitner, and Community Development Administrative Assistant Lauren Helland

Boise Walker arrived at approximately 10:05 a.m.

Warren Dorris left at approximately 10:55 a.m.

Juan Rico left at approximately 11:50 a.m.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
4-23-25**

**[TMP-8545](#)**

Attachments:     [CPAC Meeting Minutes 4-23-25.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Nora Gruenberg, seconded by Doug Pryor, to approve Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes 4-23-25. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:**                     D'Arcy, Cardenas, Bottomley, Dorris, Gruenberg, Howard, Martin, O'Hara, Pryor, Randich, Rico, Roolf and Zdunich

**Absent:**                 Parker, Rouse, Viveros and Walker

## **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD ON AGENDA ITEMS**

Doug Kasper spoke about the environment.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None

## NEW BUSINESS

### Stakeholder Interviews

[TMP-8542](#)

Attachments:     [Key Person Small Group Interview Schedule.docx](#)  
                              [Staff Report Stakeholder Interviews.docx](#)

Planner Jayne Bernhard explained the consultant team would facilitate small group discussions with Joliet area stakeholders in the summer that focus on the themes of Economic Development, Environment, Mobility and Transportation, Housing and Neighborhoods, Quality of Life, Infrastructure, and Land Use and Future Development. Ms. Bernhard asked the Committee to identify possible stakeholders for those stakeholder interviews.

A discussion was held about the structure, duration, and amount of stakeholder interviews. There was discussion about whether the stakeholders would have continued participation. Community Development Director Dustin Anderson and Ms. Bernhard explained the Committee's concerns would be conveyed to the consultant firm.

There was a robust discussion regarding the themes of Economic Development, Environment, Mobility and Transportation, Housing and Neighborhoods, Quality of Life, Infrastructure, and Land Use and Future Development, which included identifying potential people or organizations that could participate in the stakeholder interviews.

### Public Engagement Events

[TMP-8543](#)

Attachments:     [Staff Report Public Engagement Events .docx](#)

In response to the Committee's discussion and questions, Mr. Anderson and Ms. Bernhard explained data would be gathered during public engagement events and consultants would synthesize the information in Phase 2 of the Comprehensive Plan Project.

Ms. Bernhard inquired if the Committee wanted to provide public engagement event examples at that time or via email. At the consensus of the Committee, Ms. Bernhard encouraged the Committee to email staff in response to four questions in the staff report.

### Project Visioning

[TMP-8546](#)

Attachments:     [Staff Report Project Visioning .docx](#)  
                              [Vision Statement Worksheet.pdf](#)

Ms. Bernhard explained the agenda item would be discussed at another meeting.

## STAFF REPORTS

Ms. Bernhard explained the Downtown Joliet Equitable Transit-Oriented Development Plan open house would take place on May 14 and highlighted Joliet Area African American Historic Context Study Community Interviews Event that would take place on May 17. Ms. Bernhard explained staff would contact Committee Members about utilizing a City issued iPad or iLegislate app to view meeting agendas.

## MEMBER COMMENTS

Boise Walker highlighted a resident's inquiry about intermodal traffic on the Illiana Expressway and commented about Joliet's growth in relation to the City's appearance when entering from neighboring cities.

Jim Roolf encouraged others to take pride in their community.

Mayor Terry D'Arcy thanked the Committee Members for their time and thoughts.

Committee Members thanked City staff for their work.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

None

## ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Wendell Martin, seconded by Elaine Bottomley, to approve adjournment. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** D'Arcy, Cardenas, Bottomley, Gruenberg, Howard, Martin,  
O'Hara, Pryor, Randich, Roolf, Walker and Zdunich

**Absent:** Dorris, Parker, Rico, Rouse and Viveros

This meeting will be held in an accessible location. If you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact The City Clerk Office, 150 West Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432 at (815) 724-3780.



# City of Joliet

150 West Jefferson Street  
Joliet, IL 60432

## Memo

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**File #:** TMP-8761

**Agenda Date:** 7/2/2025

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# City of Joliet Comprehensive Plan

## Existing Conditions Report



June 2025

*Image source: City of Joliet*





Joliet is a city rooted in resilience and positioned for transformative progress. Guided by sustainability, and innovation, we envision a future that honors our rich heritage while embracing bold, inclusive growth. From river to rail, neighborhood to downtown, Joliet is poised to thrive—connected, adaptable, and ready for generations ahead.

# Table of Contents

- 01 Introduction.....04
- 02 Community Profile.....12
- 03 Past and Ongoing Plans and Reports.....24
- 04 Demographics and Socio Economic Analysis.....34
- 05 Market Analysis and Economic Development.....48
- 06 Multi-Modal Mobility.....80
- 07 Land Use and Development.....98
- 08 Open Space and Natural Resources.....120
- 09 Infrastructure and Utilities.....134
- 10 Appendix.....146





Image source: City of Joliet

# 01

## Introduction

### Building Joliet’s Next Chapter

How Today’s Environment Will Shape Tomorrow’s Vision

The City of Joliet is developing a New Comprehensive Plan—the first major update in over 60 years—to strategically guide future land use, growth, and development. This visionary planning document will:

- Serve as a foundational framework for future land use decisions, rooted in the community’s shared values, priorities, and aspirations.
- Proactively address emerging challenges and leverage new opportunities to ensure sustainable, equitable, and impactful growth.
- Guide effective physical planning informed by robust market analyses, providing clear, coordinated, and actionable recommendations.

- Identify equitable, catalytic projects and initiatives designed to position Joliet as a dynamic hub of economic activity within the greater Chicago region.
- Prioritize targeted subarea plans that integrate arts and culture, adopt innovative eco-systems strategies, and enhance multi-modal transportation connectivity.
- Establish a clear, realistic implementation roadmap, ensuring priority projects and initiatives effectively translate into tangible community improvements.
- This Comprehensive Plan will equip Joliet to thoughtfully direct change, amplify positive community impacts, and shape a vibrant future for generations to come.



# The Purpose of the Existing Conditions Report

## Laying The Groundwork For Joliet’s Future Planning Decisions

The Existing Conditions Report (ECR) provides a comprehensive snapshot of current conditions in the City of Joliet and serves as the foundation for developing the City’s new Comprehensive Plan. It gathers and organizes a wide range of data—demographics, land use, infrastructure, housing, economy, mobility, natural resources, and more—to help establish a shared understanding of Joliet today.

This report does not make recommendations. Instead, it presents objective information about the City’s physical, social, and economic landscape. By analyzing trends and identifying existing assets and challenges, the ECR supports a fact-based planning process and helps frame the key questions the Comprehensive Plan will aim to address.

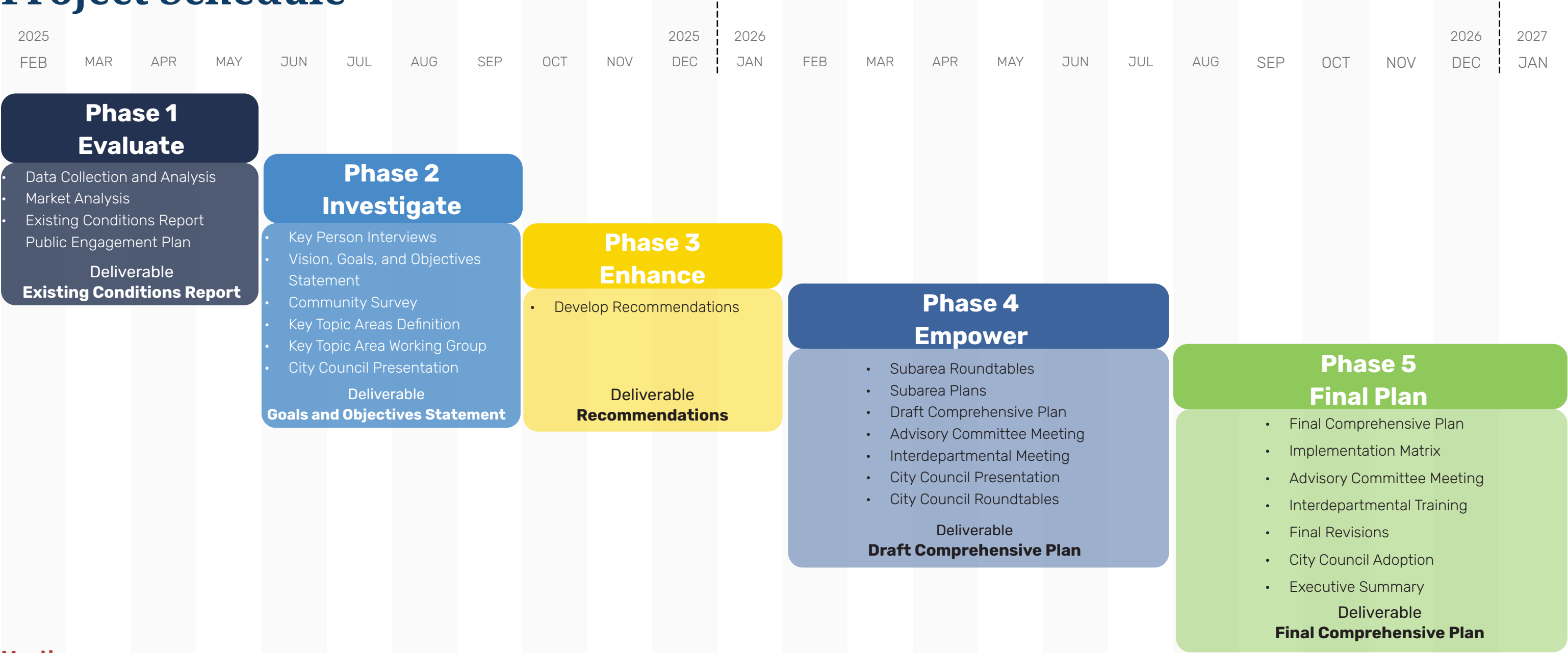
The ECR also includes a review of past and ongoing plans, offering insight into how previous efforts inform current priorities. Through maps, data analysis, and summaries of local context, the report supports transparency and invites informed participation in the planning process. The summary also identifies gaps and areas that need more robust analysis. These opportunities will shape future deliverables and inform the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan.

As the planning process moves forward, the ECR will serve as a reference point—ensuring that future strategies are grounded in present-day realities while allowing space to explore possibilities for Joliet’s long-term growth and development.

Image source: City of Joliet



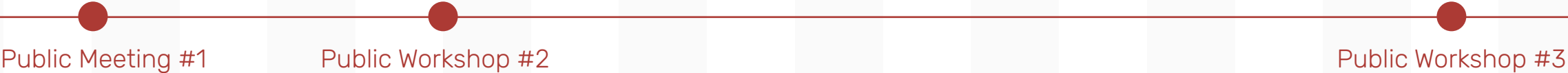
# Project Schedule



## Meetings



## Public Engagement





# Regional Context and Connectivity

## Joliet's Strategic Location within Northeastern Illinois

The City of Joliet is strategically located within northeastern Illinois, offering a unique blend of natural assets, multimodal connectivity, and regional integration that supports its role as a dynamic urban center. As shown in the regional map, Joliet sits at a key junction of Will and Kendall counties, where major infrastructure corridors intersect with natural systems such as the Des Plaines River, the Illinois and Michigan Canal, and surrounding floodplains and wetlands. These physical and ecological systems, combined with Joliet's extensive air, rail, and roadway networks, position the city as a vital connector within the region and a driver of coordinated growth, economic development, and environmental stewardship.

**Aviation:** Joliet holds a distinct competitive advantage due to its robust infrastructure, strategic location, and multimodal connectivity. In addition to its proximity to two major international airports—Midway and O'Hare—accessible via I-55, I-80, and I-355, Joliet is also served by the Lewis University Airport. Owned and operated by the Joliet Regional Port District since 1989, Lewis University Airport has seen over \$80 million in investments to meet the needs of corporate aviation, further strengthening Joliet's position as a business-friendly and logistically connected hub. This layered air connectivity enhances Joliet's appeal to visitors, residents, and industry alike, reinforcing its role in the regional and global economy.

**Natural Resources:** Joliet's geographic and economic landscape is further defined by the Des Plaines River, which runs directly through the City. This waterway has historically played a foundational role in the City's development—supporting industrial growth, recreation, and ecological vitality. Today, the Des Plaines River remains a central natural asset, contributing to the City's identity and potential for expanded green and blue infrastructure, waterfront revitalization, and tourism.

**Transit:** Amtrak service and two Metra rail lines strengthen Joliet's regional and intercity transit access, linking it directly to downtown Chicago and other communities within the metropolitan area. With a well-connected downtown Gateway Transportation Center Train Station serving as a transportation hub, Joliet is well-positioned to support both commuters and visitors alike.

**Regional Center:** Joliet is a growing city with a complex jurisdictional footprint. It spans across Will County and extends into Kendall County, reflecting its evolution as a regional center. The City's boundaries interface with several neighboring municipalities, including Minooka to the southwest, Plainfield to the northwest, Shorewood to the west, and New Lenox to the east. These shared boundaries shape intergovernmental coordination, land use transitions, and growth management strategies.

Joliet's regional positioning—at the confluence of major transportation networks, counties, and communities—provides a strong foundation for continued investment, sustainable development, and regional leadership in the decades ahead.

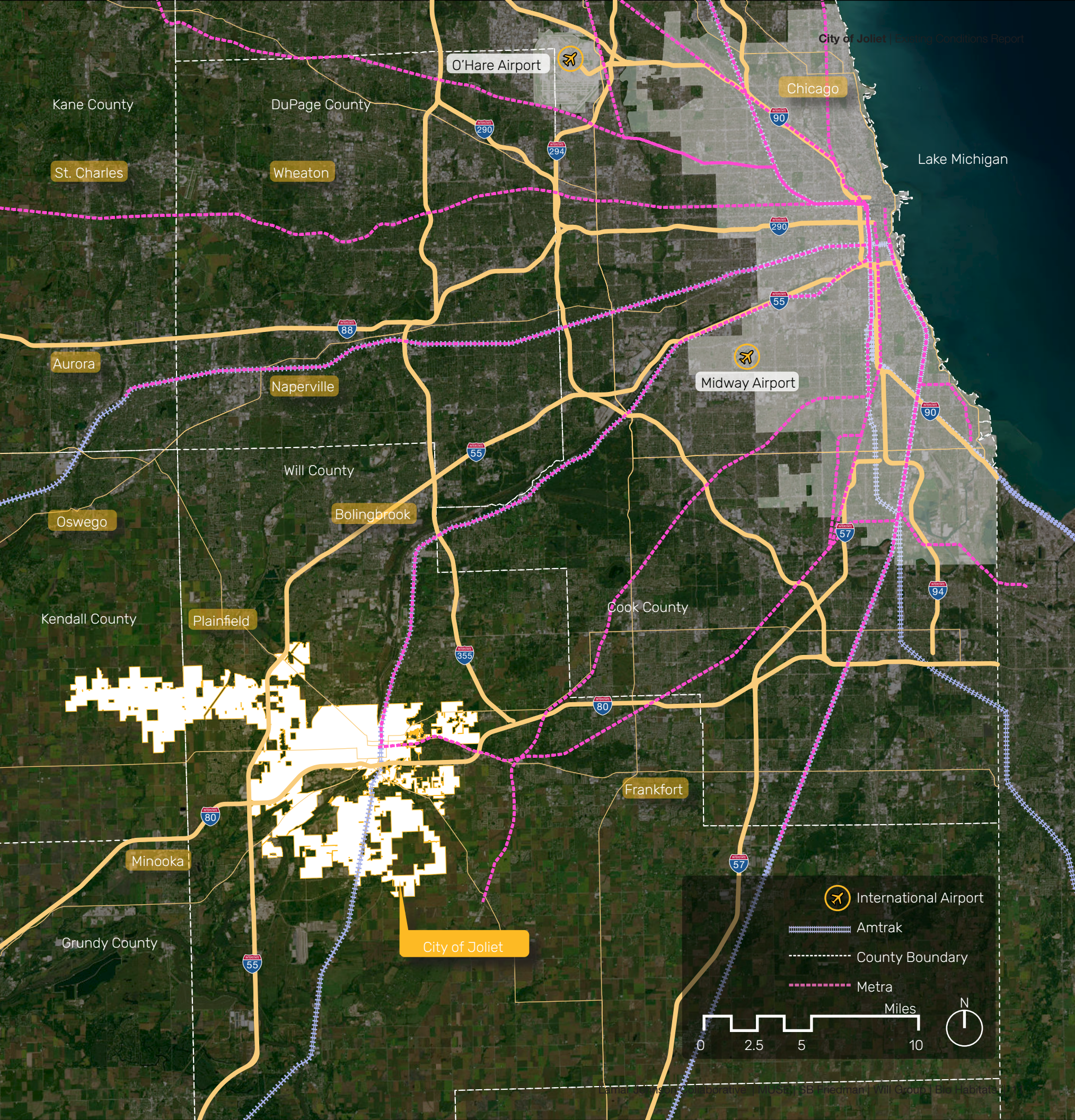






Image source: City of Joliet

# 02

## Community Profile

### Revisiting Joliet’s Past

#### A City Shaped by Industry, Community, and Change

Founded in 1834 and incorporated in 1852, Joliet’s growth was shaped by its location along the Des Plaines River and its role in various industries on the Illinois & Michigan Canal—a key connector between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. Early industries, particularly limestone quarrying and steel production, earned Joliet the nickname “City of Stone” and “City of Steel” both established it as a regional manufacturing hub.

The City’s industrial base expanded with the arrival of railroads and later, Interstates 55 and 80, reinforcing Joliet’s position within national transportation networks. Suburban growth patterns followed, with annexations extending the city west and south to accommodate new subdivisions, commercial centers, and industrial parks. Zoning codes, infrastructure investments, and planning studies guided this development over time.

In response to late 20th-century economic shifts, Joliet diversified its economy to include healthcare, education, logistics, and tourism. The emergence of large-scale intermodal freight facilities, such as CenterPoint Intermodal Center, has further defined the City’s role as a logistics center in the Midwest. Downtown revitalization, adaptive reuse of historic sites, and investments in civic amenities reflect ongoing efforts to balance economic development with quality of life and historic preservation.

Joliet’s population growth and expanding development footprint continue to drive demand for coordinated land use, infrastructure planning, and environmental resilience. The City’s historical evolution informs its current trajectory as it plans for future opportunities and challenges across its diverse neighborhoods.



# Planning for the Next Chapter

Joliet’s identity has always been shaped by movement—of goods, of people, and of ideas. From its early days as a canal town to its rise as an industrial hub and its current position as a regional center for logistics, healthcare, education, and culture, the City has continually adapted to meet new challenges and seize emerging opportunities. Each wave of growth has left its imprint on Joliet’s neighborhoods, infrastructure, economy, and civic life.

Now, with a population over 150,000 and new pressures and possibilities on the horizon, Joliet stands at a defining moment. The City’s first new Comprehensive Plan in more than 50 years offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reflect on what has made Joliet successful—and to plan intentionally for a future that is more equitable, resilient, connected, and sustainable.



Image source: City of Joliet





Image source: City of Joliet

# Community Character

## Joliet as a Regional Center

The City of Joliet is positioned at the intersection of regional connectivity and national logistics, shaping its community character and future trajectory. Ongoing investment in transit infrastructure continues to strengthen Joliet’s accessibility, providing critical links to regional destinations, employment centers, and the greater Chicago metropolitan area. Enhancements to commuter rail service, roadway networks, and public transit support both current mobility needs and long-term growth.

Joliet’s national freight capabilities, anchored by its intermodal facilities and access to major transportation corridors, serve as a foundation for sustained economic vitality. As supply chain industries evolve, Joliet is poised to expand its role as a key inland port and logistics center.

These transportation and economic assets not only reinforce Joliet’s identity as a hub of economic activity but also present opportunities to diversify industries, attract new investment, and strengthen quality of life for residents.

The City’s strategic positioning offers a strong platform for shaping a resilient, connected, and economically vibrant future.

Joliet’s strategic location, coupled with its comprehensive transportation infrastructure encompassing highways, railroads, and intermodal facilities are assets that not only facilitate efficient movement of people and goods but also underpin the City’s economic vitality and its appeal as a destination for business and industry.

## Community Diversity

Joliet is characterized by a rich tapestry of cultural and ethnic diversity, reflecting a dynamic community that has evolved over decades. As of July 2023, the City’s population stood at an estimated 150,489 residents, encompassing a broad spectrum of racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The demographic composition of Joliet is notably diverse. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2023 American Community Survey estimates, the racial and ethnic breakdown is as follows:

- White (Non-Hispanic): Approximately 43.5% of the population identifies as White alone
- Hispanic or Latino: This group comprises about 34.7% of the population, with a significant portion of Mexican descent
- Black or African American: Representing around 16.7% of residents
- Asian: Approximately 2.1% of the population
- Two or More Races: About 13% of residents identify as multiracial

It is important to note that demographic percentages may not sum to exactly 100% due to the U.S. Census Bureau’s methodology, which classifies Hispanic or Latino as an ethnicity (allowing overlap with any racial group), reports multiracial individuals separately, and may exclude some smaller groups or nonresponses from summary data.

This diversity is further highlighted by the City’s educational institutions, cultural events, and community organizations that celebrate various heritages and traditions. For instance, local festivals and cultural gatherings, like Fiesta En Calle, Joliet Blues Festival, and Grape Harvest Fest, provide platforms for residents to share and experience the rich customs and practices that contribute to Joliet’s unique community fabric.

The City’s commitment to inclusivity is evident in its public engagement initiatives, which aim to ensure that all community voices are represented in decision-making processes. By implementing targeted outreach strategies, Joliet endeavors to engage traditionally underrepresented populations, thereby

strengthening community cohesion and fostering a more inclusive civic environment. For example, Joliet’s comprehensive planning process prioritizes bilingual resources and inclusive outreach strategies—such as public workshops and multilingual communications—to ensure the needs and voices of immigrant and low-income residents are reflected in local planning efforts. Joliet’s demographic diversity is a defining characteristic that enriches the City’s cultural landscape. This multifaceted community composition not only enhances the social fabric but also contributes to the City’s resilience and vibrancy.

## Natural Resources and Ecology

Joliet’s park system further enhances its ecological landscape. Parks such as Pilcher Park—home to over 640 acres of forested land—offer extensive trails, a Nature Center, and the Bird Haven Greenhouse and Conservatory, which houses tropical plants, seasonal floral displays, and community education programs. These resources not only serve as critical green infrastructure but also offer residents year-round access to restorative natural spaces, bolstering quality of life and public health.

The City also benefits from being adjacent to Forest Preserve Districts of Will County holdings, like Hammel Woods, and Rock Run Preserve and the Lower Rock Run Preserve, which are both within city limits. These preserves offer passive recreation opportunities and function as critical buffers for flood control and stormwater management. Notably, Rock Run and the I&M Canal Trail form part of a larger regional trail network that links Joliet to nearby communities and supports active transportation through walking and biking. The presence of these interconnected greenways reinforces regional ecological health and supports Joliet’s aspirations for sustainability and resilience.



Image source: City of Joliet



plans recommended integrating naturalized detention basins, requiring the preservation of mature trees, and minimizing impervious surface area. These policies are critical not just for aesthetics but for maintaining local biodiversity and reducing urban heat island effects.

Joliet’s location within the Des Plaines River watershed also presents unique ecological challenges. Climate change projections for the Midwest anticipate increased precipitation intensity, making the City’s floodplains and low-lying areas particularly vulnerable. The City of Joliet has taken steps to address this by working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop a flood levee and mitigation strategy north of Ruby Street to protect parts of downtown.

Sustainability initiatives in Joliet continue to evolve. The City has participated in regional sustainability planning efforts through Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and is included in discussions around habitat restoration, open space connectivity, and low-impact development. The Downtown Joliet Equitable Transit Oriented Development (ETOD) Plan efforts, and the forthcoming Comprehensive Plan present an opportunity to further weave green infrastructure, habitat restoration, and nature-based solutions into urban development frameworks.

Joliet’s ecological assets are integral to its identity, public health, and long-term resilience. The City’s river corridors, parks, preserves, and green infrastructure not only provide vital services—like flood protection and air purification—but also shape the community’s connection to nature. Joliet is well-positioned to elevate its natural resources as a foundation for sustainable growth and climate resilience.



Image source: City of Joliet

**Housing Infrastructure**

Joliet’s housing infrastructure reflects the city’s physical and economic growth over time—from a historic industrial city to a modern, suburbanizing community. The current housing stock spans a broad range in age, including pre-war homes in the Near West Side and East Side neighborhoods, mid-century ranch homes in post-war subdivisions, and newer large-lot construction on the city’s western and southern edges. While this suggests variation in housing age and form, community feedback and existing conditions analysis indicate that housing diversity in type—such as multi-family, missing middle, or accessible housing—is limited across many parts of the city. This lack of variety is further reinforced by current zoning and development patterns, which have contributed to concentrations of aging single-family rentals in some areas and an undersupply of new, affordable options in others. These dynamics present critical challenges related to affordability, quality, and neighborhood cohesion. For more detailed analysis see the Housing Chapter.

Older neighborhoods in Joliet—such as those in Districts 4 and 5—contain a significant number of aging homes, many of which were built before 1950. These areas often struggle with disinvestment, aging infrastructure, and housing code violations. The City has previously launched initiatives to address these issues, such as the Quality of Life Plan (2007), which proposed the creation of a community development corporation (CDC) to facilitate housing rehabilitation and infill development. While Unity CDC was formed to fill that role, it became inactive in the 2010s, and the City has since relied on external partners like Habitat for Humanity and Cornerstone Services to deliver housing services. There is ongoing interest among City staff to reinstate and retool a rehabilitation loan program for these neighborhoods.

The City has also experienced rapid residential growth on its western edges, particularly in Kendall County and far west Will County. Developments like Greywall Club and Caton Ridge were built in the early 2000s to meet demand for suburban-style homes with modern amenities. However, the 2008 housing crash



Image source: City of Joliet

stalled many of these subdivisions, leaving some partially completed. Development has since resumed, but housing in these areas is often auto-dependent, lacks diversity in housing types, and contributes to urban sprawl.

One of Joliet’s major challenges is housing affordability and the lack of attainable housing near jobs and transit. Many of the City’s lower-income neighborhoods are located far from the intermodal job centers and major industrial corridors, creating transportation burdens for working families. While Joliet has rental housing options, there remains a shortage of high-quality affordable units. The City’s rental ordinance, recently expanded in 2022, now includes single-family and duplex rental units, providing greater oversight and accountability. However, citizens continue to raise concerns about long-term renters living in substandard conditions.

Another key issue is the growing demand for diverse housing typologies, particularly for seniors, young professionals, and multi-generational households. Joliet’s Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD) Plan is beginning to address this by encouraging higher-density residential development near transit hubs, such as the

Gateway Center and downtown. The plan envisions new mixed-use and multi-family buildings within a half-mile radius of transit, preserving existing affordable units while accommodating growth in a compact, walkable footprint.

As the City updates its Comprehensive Plan for the first time in over 50 years, it has an opportunity to set a new housing vision—one that promotes reinvestment in aging neighborhoods, expands infill development, aligns housing with transit and job centers, and increases the overall quality and affordability of its housing stock. With targeted policies, strategic incentives, and strong community partnerships, Joliet can shape a more inclusive and resilient housing future for all of its residents.

**Economic Growth**

Joliet’s economy has long been defined by its geographic advantages and industrial heritage. Historically a hub for steel production, river commerce, and manufacturing, the City has evolved into a critical node in the national logistics and freight network. In recent decades, Joliet has seen a transformation from traditional heavy



industry to a more diverse economy that includes transportation, warehousing, education, healthcare, tourism, and service-oriented sectors.

The City’s location at the intersection of Interstates 55 and 80, along with its access to Class I railroads and the Des Plaines River, has made it a magnet for logistics and distribution investment. The CenterPoint Intermodal Center—Joliet and Elwood—has become one of the largest inland ports in North America, attracting companies like Amazon, Walmart, and Dollar Tree. These developments have generated thousands of jobs and reinforced Joliet’s reputation as a freight and distribution powerhouse.

However, the rapid growth of warehousing and intermodal development has come with trade-offs. While new economic engines may unlock the potential for the City, balance between social needs and quality of life continues to be discussed. The City has recently adopted specific industrial zoning districts, such as the Intermodal Terminal Zoning District (I-T), and has participated in regional transportation planning efforts to mitigate infrastructure strain.

Downtown Joliet has also emerged as a focal point for economic reinvestment. The 2015 Downtown Plan emphasized positioning the area as a vibrant hub for young adults, culture, and entertainment. Recent public and private investments include the renovation of the Rialto Square Theatre, completion of Gateway Transportation Center, and the forthcoming City Square at Chicago and Clinton Streets. Designation of Downtown Joliet as a National Register Historic District in 2023 has opened up access to historic tax credits and spurred interest in adaptive reuse projects.

Joliet’s economic development toolbox includes a wide array of incentives, such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, Special Service Areas (SSA), Shared Sales Tax agreements, Enterprise Zones, and the new River Edge Redevelopment Zone (RERZ), which will further enhance its ability to attract redevelopment. Since 2019, the City has approved nearly \$1 million in building improvement grants through its SSA alone, illustrating a strong commitment to revitalizing aging commercial properties.

In addition to logistics and redevelopment, Joliet’s economy is supported by key educational and healthcare institutions like Silver Cross Hospital, Joliet Junior College, and the University of St. Francis. These institutions not only provide critical community services but also serve as major employment centers. Joliet Grade School District 86 and Will County are two of the City’s largest employers, further reinforcing

the importance of the public sector in the city’s economic landscape. The City is working closely with local schools and workforce training providers to align skills development with job market demands, particularly in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and logistics.

Looking ahead, the City’s infrastructure analysis—currently underway with Urban3—will offer further insights into the fiscal impact of the City’s infrastructure on development patterns, to help Joliet target future investments more strategically. With thoughtful planning and regional collaboration, Joliet is poised to capitalize on its assets while managing the pressures of growth, to create a balanced, equitable, and resilient economy for future generations.

Together, these elements paint a picture of Joliet as a city with deep roots, dynamic growth, and untapped potential. Its strategic location, cultural richness, ecological assets, range of residential development, and evolving economy provide a strong foundation for the next generation of planning. As Joliet moves forward with its Comprehensive Plan, these existing conditions will serve as the groundwork for shaping a more inclusive, resilient, and future-ready city that honors its past while embracing new opportunities.

**Health and Medical Facilities**

Major health care providers include Saint Joseph Medical Center and Silver Cross Hospital. Additional services are provided through local clinics and social service organizations.

**Educational Facilities**

The City of Joliet is served by nine public grade school districts and there are three parochial grade schools in the City. The largest grade district is Joliet Public Schools District 86, which provides education for grades Pre-K through 8 across 21 schools, with a total enrollment of approximately 9,553 students. The district reflects the City’s diverse population, with students speaking 21 different languages at home, highlighting the importance of multilingual education and cultural inclusivity within the community.

There are currently four public high schools districts that serve residents in the City of Joliet. Joliet Township High School District 204 serving the largest portion of the City, with approximately 6,918 students at its Joliet Central and Joliet West campuses. Joliet Catholic Academy is the only parochial high school in Joliet, with an enrollment of nearly 600.

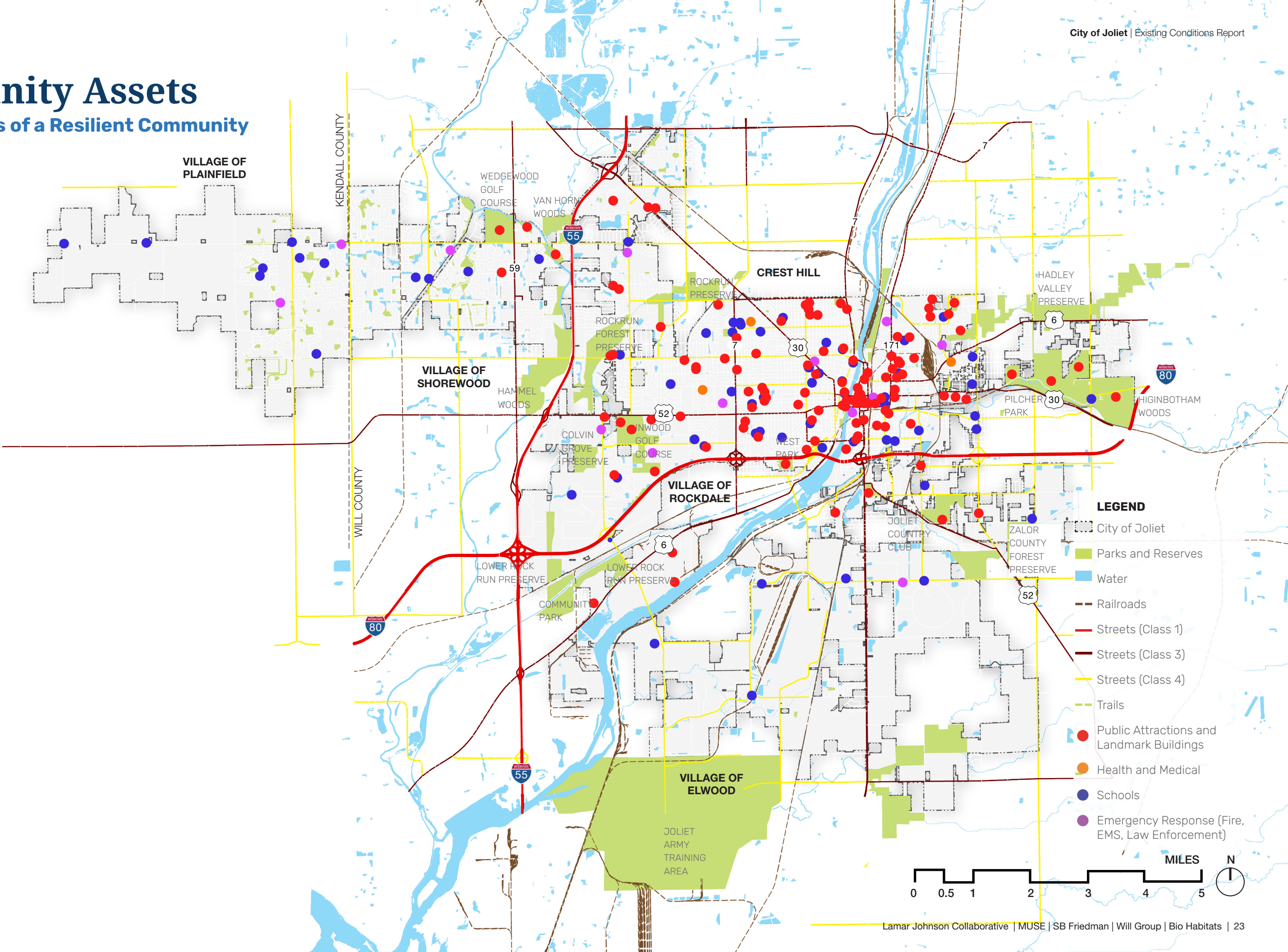


Image source: City of Joliet



# Community Assets

Building Blocks of a Resilient Community





# 03

## Past and Ongoing Plans and Report

A review of past and ongoing plans provides important context for understanding how Joliet has approached growth, development, and infrastructure investment over time. These plans—ranging from citywide frameworks to subarea studies and regional initiatives—reflect evolving priorities, economic shifts, and policy responses to local and regional challenges. Together, they offer a foundation of institutional knowledge and community engagement that informs the current planning process. This chapter summarizes key planning efforts that have shaped Joliet’s built environment and policy landscape, while also identifying opportunities to align the new Comprehensive Plan with prior recommendations, implementation progress, and emerging needs.

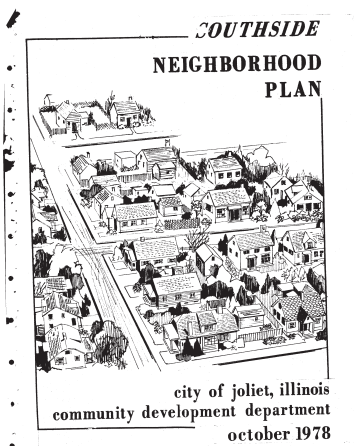


# Past Plans and Reports

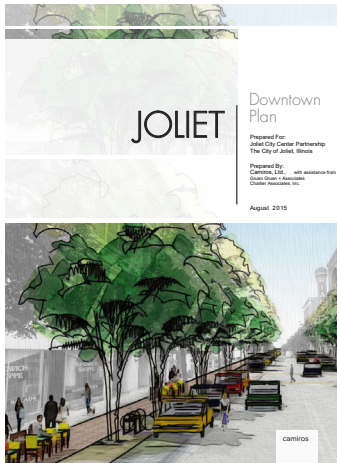
## Planning Joliet Through the Years



- Master Plan
- Cathedral Area Plan
- Southeast Neighborhood Plan
- Southside Neighborhood Plan
- South Chicago Street Revitalization Plan
- Northeast Neighborhood Plan
- Southwest Neighborhood Plan



- **Kendall County Sub Area Comprehensive Plan**
- **South Side Comprehensive Plan**
- **Near West Side Neighborhood Plan**
- **Quality of Life Plan Districts 4 and 5**



- Restore, Renew, and Reinvest Plan
- Intermodal Transportation Master Plan
- Designated Historic Properties Update
- Historic Properties Design Guidelines Manual
- **Tree Preservation Ordinance and Urban Forest Management Plan**
- Downtown Joliet National Register Historic District
- Illinois State Penitentiary-Joliet National Register Historic District
- St. John's Neighborhood Historic Resource Survey

Adopted Plan

1920-1940

1981-2000

2011-2020

2024 -Ongoing

1941-1980

2001-2010

2021-2023

- City of Joliet Plan
- Joliet Zoning Ordinance



- Joliet City Center Development Plan



- Historic Route 66 Planning
- **Joliet Downtown Plan**
- Will County Freight Plan
- Redevelopment Plan: Silver Cross Hospital Campus
- Joliet Correctional Center & U.S. Steel Redevelopment Report
- **Chicago Street Corridor Plan**

- Equitable Transit-Oriented Development Plan
- I-80 Des Plaines River Bridge Community Plan
- Illinois Route 53 Phase 1 Study
- Will County 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan
- Downtown Floodplain and Flood Levee Project
- Downtown Parking Study and Modernization Project
- Joliet Area African American Historic Context Study
- Downtown Joliet Historic Resource Survey Report

# Planning Foundations: Past, Present, and Ongoing Initiatives

Over the years, the City of Joliet has advanced a wide range of planning initiatives to shape its physical growth, economic vitality, and community well-being. These efforts demonstrate a sustained commitment to neighborhood reinvestment, equitable transportation, downtown revitalization, environmental stewardship, and historic preservation. Collectively, these plans form a comprehensive foundation of policy direction and place-based visioning. They offer critical insights into past priorities, highlight areas for continued action, and serve as a guide for future planning efforts. The following is a list of major past, ongoing, and topic-specific plans that have informed the City’s evolution.

### Guiding Document

- **Kendall County Sub Area Comprehensive Plan, Kendall County and City of Joliet (2004)\***
- **South Side Comprehensive Plan, City of Joliet (2007)\***
- **Near West Side Neighborhood Plan, City of Joliet (2007)\***
- **Quality of Life Plan – Districts 4 & 5, United Way and Community Partners (November 2007)\***

### In-Process Plans

- Equitable Transit Oriented Development Plan, City of Joliet, RTA, and CMAP
- I-80 Des Plaines River Bridge Community Plan, IDOT and City of Joliet
- Choice Neighborhoods Initiative – Transformation Plan, HUD, City of Joliet

### Downtown Planning & Projects

- **Joliet Downtown Plan, City of Joliet and CMAP (2015)\***
- **Chicago Street Corridor Plan, City of Joliet (2018)\***
- **City Square & Chicago Street Reconstruction Project, City of Joliet and IDOT (2024)\***
- Downtown Joliet National Register Historic District, City of Joliet and IL SHPO (2023)
- Downtown Parking Study & Modernization Project, City of Joliet
- Downtown Floodplain and Flood Levee Project, City of Joliet and US Army Corps of Engineers (ongoing)
- Gateway Transportation Center & High Speed Rail, IDOT, Amtrak, and City of Joliet (ongoing)

### Economic Development Plans

- Restore, Renew and Reinvest Plan, State of Illinois and local partners (2022)
- Joliet Correctional Center & U.S. Steel Redevelopment Report, City of Joliet and State of Illinois (2012)
- Silver Cross Hospital Redevelopment Plan, Private Developer and City of Joliet

### Transportation Planning

- Illinois Route 53 – Phase 1 engineering study, IDOT (In-process)
- Will County 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan, Will County Division of Transportation (In-process)



- Intermodal Transportation Master Plan, City of Joliet (2022)
- Freight Plan, Will County CED and CMAP (2017)
- Will County 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan, Will County Division of Transportation (2017)

### Historic Preservation

- Joliet Area African American Historic Context Study, City of Joliet and Preservation Partners (in-process)
- Downtown Joliet Historic Resource Survey Report, City of Joliet and Historic Preservation Commission (2025)
- St. John’s Neighborhood Historic Resource Survey, City of Joliet (2023)
- **Historic Properties Design Guidelines Manual, City of Joliet (2022)\***
- Designated Historic Properties Update, City of Joliet (2022)\*
- Illinois State Penitentiary-Joliet Historic Resource Survey, City of Joliet (2023)

### Sustainability & Environmental Initiatives

- Parks, Open Space & Recreation

### Older Plans

- Neighborhood Plans, City of Joliet (late 1970s)
- Joliet Sustainability Master Plan, City of Joliet (1959)
- Joliet Zoning Ordinance, City of Joliet
- City Plan of Joliet, City of Joliet (1921)

### Neighborhood Organizations & Homeowners Associations

- Neighborhood Organizations
- Homeowners Associations

### Plans by Private Development

- Rock Run Collection
- The Boulevard

**\*Adopted Plan**



# Key Topic Area Definition

## Connecting the Dots: Insights from Plans, Gaps, and Opportunities

A review of past planning reports was conducted to evaluate recurrent themes and potential priorities of the City by topic area. This review identifies opportunities for further investigation that were not originally contemplated in the reports reviewed. Plans are categorized in seven groups based on their content. The plans were then reviewed and analyzed for potential opportunities or gaps in content. The groups of plans and a summary of potential opportunities are below:

### 1. Plans Completed before 2010:

Existing plans have not been updated, and lack integration of contemporary challenges and opportunities.

Examples include:

- Kendall County Sub Area Comprehensive Plan (2004)
- South Side Comprehensive Plan (2007)
- Near West Side Neighborhood Plan (2007)
- Quality of Life Plan – Districts 4 & 5 (2007)
- Master Plan (1959)
- Neighborhood Plans (1970s)
- City Plan of Joliet (1921)

### 2. Housing Affordability and Diversity:

Affordable and workforce housing supply lags demand. Further investigation into barriers to homeownership, including cost, would define right-fit housing typologies and price points. Key areas for incentivization to remove barriers to homeownership, including analysis of supplementary data sets such as average household income, alongside an assessment of housing stock conditions could define a housing strategy framework which currently does not exist in the reports reviewed. Potential tools to incentivize development should be updated to include new programs that were not integrated into the reports

reviewed.

### 3. Transportation Connectivity:

Several proposed roadway and transit improvements remain in-progress or have funding challenges. A concentration on effective and efficient mobility and connectivity across the region is introduced in the reports reviewed, however implementation is still to be defined.

### 4. Environmental Resilience:

Strategies for climate change adaptation and green infrastructure are not currently integrated into the reports reviewed can be developed to ensure the City remains resilient. Key areas to address include air quality, contaminated sites, urban heat island effects, and health indicators such as asthma and cancer rates.

### 5. Economic Development:

The reports reviewed had limited information on how to implement a unified strategy to leverage incentives and promote economic growth. Definition of opportunities for targeted development was underdeveloped in the reports reviewed but could strengthen the city.

### 6. Historic Preservation:

While many properties have been documented, a citywide strategy for adaptive reuse and heritage tourism is needed. Documentation of the number of historic structures and neighborhoods could guide preservation efforts.

### 7. Recreational Opportunities:

The city currently does not have a comprehensive parks master plan. This would be important to address gaps in recreational facilities and ensure equitable access to green spaces.

Further analysis for each report can be found in the appendix. The analysis includes the specific gaps of each report, what aspects of the plans remain unrealized as well as alignment between resources, priorities, and planning. It is recommended to review adopted and relevant plans and reports for priorities as it relates to the City of Joliet’s goals for the future.



Image source: City of Joliet

## Past Plans Key Observations

To address the key gaps or underdeveloped content relevant to the City today, areas of opportunities and recommendations emerged that are relevant to a city-wide comprehensive plan and will be further addressed during this planning process. Those recommendations include:

- Consider creation of a **citywide housing strategy** that identifies priority areas for greater diversity of housing type like affordable and workforce housing, infill and rehabilitation, and transit-oriented development.
- Determine appropriate **alignment of economic development with land use policy** by establishing a coordinated strategy that leverages incentives, activates priority corridors, and identifies opportunity areas for business incubation, logistics, and neighborhood-serving retail.
- Incorporate planning strategies around **multimodal mobility and connectivity** by prioritizing sidewalk, trail, and bicycle infrastructure gaps, improving last-mile and local transit service, and identifying key street extensions and potential funding mechanisms.
- Coordinate with the local park districts, school districts and Forest Preserve District of Will Count to facilitate a planning process

to address **citywide parks and recreation framework** that includes an equity and access audit, addresses undeserved areas and facility needs, and integrates stormwater management, climate resilience, and public health goals.

- Address **climate resilience and environmental justice** into land use planning by identifying flood-prone and heat-vulnerable areas and incorporating green infrastructure and hazard mitigation into development strategies.
- Advance **historic preservation and cultural identity through a citywide framework** that supports preservation, adaptive reuse, and the development of heritage trail networks.
- Consider the creation of an **implementation task force** to coordinate cross-departmental execution of plan recommendations and ensure alignment with external partners and ongoing initiatives.

To ensure the Comprehensive Plan addresses longstanding challenges and leverages future opportunities, these recommendations outline key strategies for integrating housing, mobility, economic development, environmental resilience, and implementation into a unified citywide vision.





photo: Adobe Stock / AJ's Photo Art

# JOLIET

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Many routes, One future

## Community Engagement

**“I love the diversity of Joliet. That applies to the people as well as parts of the community.” - Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee Member**

Community engagement plays a critical role in the planning process to ensure the Joliet Comprehensive Plan reflects the community’s priorities and vision for the City’s future.

Informed by Joliet’s demographic and community data, the engagement approach provides people from all walks of life the opportunity to shape the plan. Through a series of public workshops, small group interviews, pop-up events, and a community survey, residents will provide input in each phase of the planning process.

The initial step in the community engagement process is to develop a brand for the Comprehensive Plan. During the brand exploration with the consultant team, the Advisory Committee shared their love for Joliet’s

diversity, historic buildings, and community history. The branding concepts emphasized three central themes: growing from strong roots; connecting the past, present, and future; and continuing Joliet’s history of foundational strength. Each theme reflects the City’s rich heritage while positioning it for a bright, forward-looking future.

The selected logo features the tagline **“Many routes, One future”**. The logo design depicts major transportation routes in Joliet — rail, roadway, and waterway — flowing into a tree that symbolizes the community growing together. The selected logo and tagline serve as the foundation for the visual identity of the Comprehensive Plan and will be featured in materials moving forward.



# 04

## Demographics and Socioeconomic Analysis

Image source: City of Joliet



# Population & Household Change

## Population has remained relatively stable with households increasing.

With a population of approximately 150,000, Joliet is the largest city in Will County and the seat of the County government.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, household growth has exceeded population growth. Between 2018 and 2023, Joliet’s population increased by 1,800, or 1%, the same rate as population growth countywide. Over this same time, the number of households increased by 3,300 (7%), and the average household size decreased from 3.1 to 2.9.<sup>2</sup> Decreases in average household size are the result of smaller family sizes and more single-person households.

## The number of older residents is growing while the youth population is shrinking.

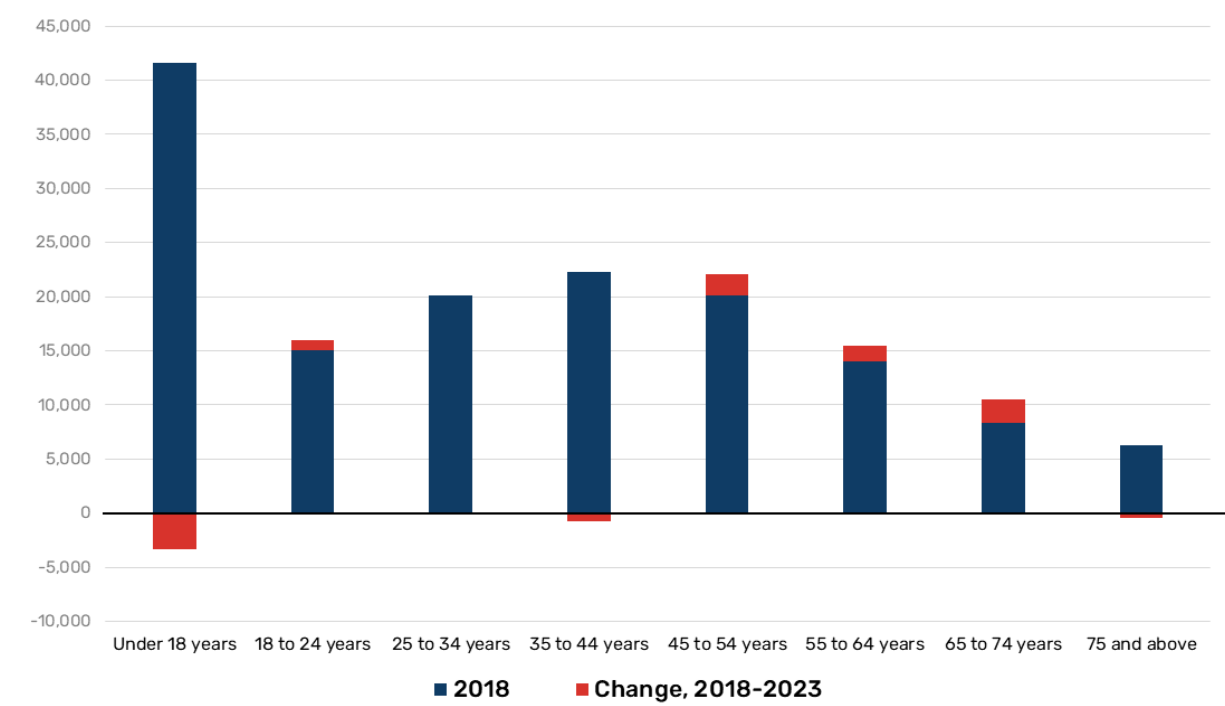
The population increase between 2018 and 2023 was driven by a 5,480-person increase in residents between the ages of 45 and 74. Over the same period, the population of residents under the age of 18 decreased by 3,340.<sup>3</sup> The

population of adults aged 18 to 44 held more constant, with marginal increases and decreases (Figure 1). These population changes over the past decade are reflected in the median age of Joliet residents, which increased from 33.7 in 2018 to 35.3 in 2023. Overall, the aging population reflects national and regional trends, while the decreasing youth population is similar to other midsize, Illinois cities.<sup>4</sup>

## Increasing households, smaller household sizes, and aging residents are indicative of changing housing preferences and needs.

Older residents who want to age in place in their communities may require smaller, accessible homes such as townhomes or ranch-style homes with first-floor bedrooms. There may also be increased demand for age-restricted, affordable multifamily housing as well as assisted-living facilities. Additionally, smaller homes can benefit first-time home buyers, young professionals, or young families with fewer children.

Figure 1. Population Change by Age (2018–2023)



Source: 2014–2018 and 2019–2023 ACS 5-year estimates

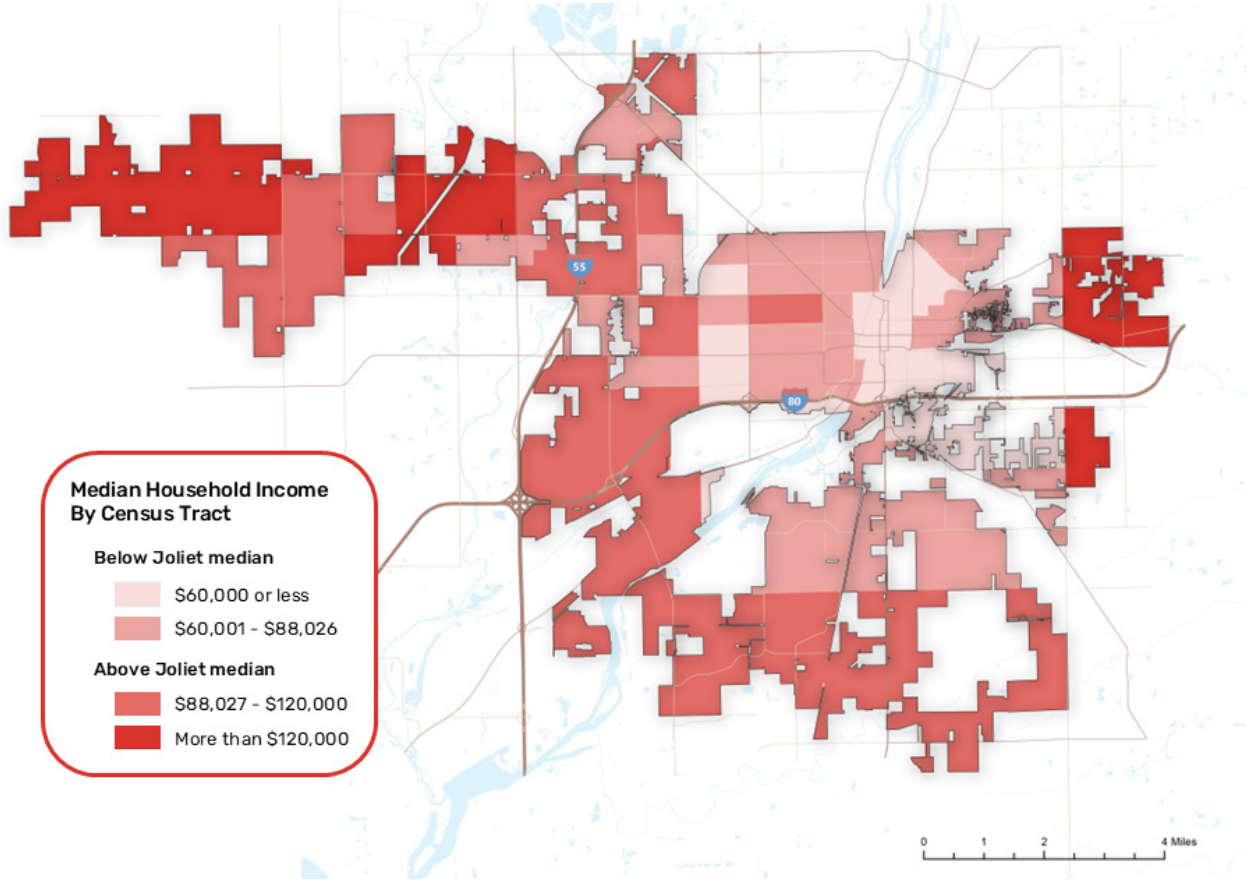
# Income

## There are existing geographic and racial disparities in income.

Joliet’s median household income is \$88,000, compared to \$107,800 across Will County.<sup>5</sup> Within Joliet, income varies significantly by geography and race. Older neighborhoods closer to downtown have median incomes below the citywide median, while incomes are higher across the far west, east, and south areas of the City where newer housing subdivisions are concentrated (Figure 2).

Lower-income areas are also more likely to be predominantly Black or Latino (Figures 2 and 3). Compared to a median household income of \$100,600 for White residents, median household income is \$78,600 for Latino residents and \$53,500 for Black residents. Between 2018 and 2023, median household income increased by 25% for White residents and 38% for Hispanic residents (+\$20,400 and +\$21,500, respectively, unadjusted for inflation). For Black residents, median household income increased by only 13% (+\$6,100), less than the 19% increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) over the same period.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 2. Median Household Income by Census Tract (2023)



Source: 2019–2023 ACS 5-year estimates

# Race & Ethnicity

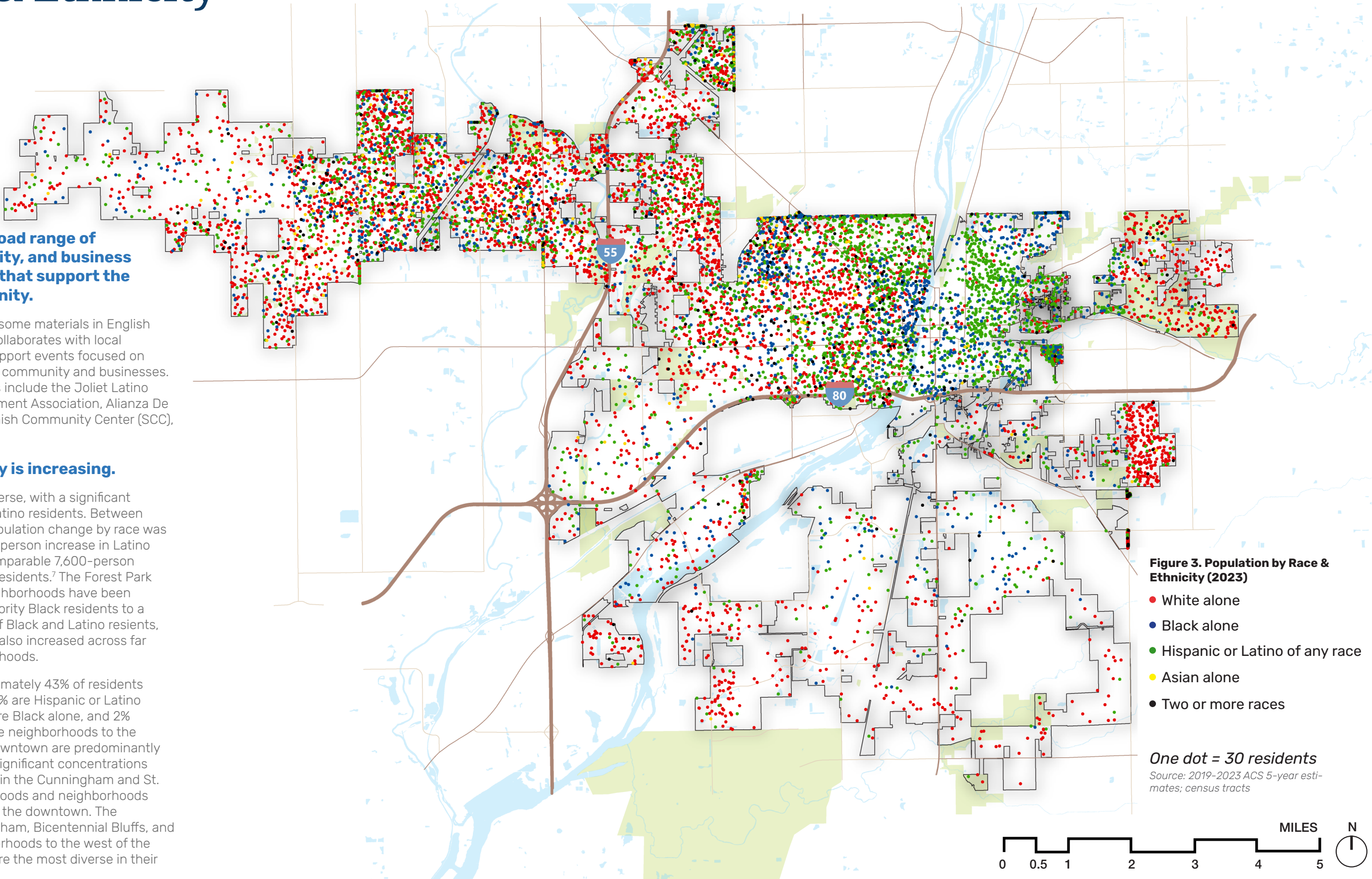
**Joliet has a broad range of civic, community, and business organizations that support the Latino community.**

The City publishes some materials in English and Spanish and collaborates with local organizations to support events focused on uplifting the Latino community and businesses. Local organizations include the Joliet Latino Economic Development Association, Alianza De Negocios, the Spanish Community Center (SCC), and others.

**Racial diversity is increasing.**

Joliet is racially diverse, with a significant concentration of Latino residents. Between 2018 and 2023, population change by race was driven by an 8,100-person increase in Latino residents and a comparable 7,600-person decrease in White residents.<sup>7</sup> The Forest Park and Southside neighborhoods have been changing from majority Black residents to a more diverse mix of Black and Latino residents, while diversity has also increased across far west side neighborhoods.

As of 2023, approximately 43% of residents are White alone, 35% are Hispanic or Latino (of any race), 17% are Black alone, and 2% are Asian alone. The neighborhoods to the northeast of the downtown are predominantly Latino, with other significant concentrations of Latino residents in the Cunningham and St. Patrick's neighborhoods and neighborhoods to the southeast of the downtown. The Cathedral, Cunningham, Bicentennial Bluffs, and Reedwood neighborhoods to the west of the Des Plaines River are the most diverse in their racial composition.





# Employment Trends

**Overall employment in Joliet has been relatively stable over the past decade.**

As of 2022, there were approximately 52,000 jobs in Joliet, just below the 2010–2022 average of 53,100 jobs. Coming out of the Great Recession, employment was lowest in 2010 at 50,300 jobs, before reaching a high of 55,600 in 2017. Employment fell to around 51,700 in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic and has nearly recovered. Overall, jobs increased by a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 0.3% between 2010 and 2022.<sup>8</sup>

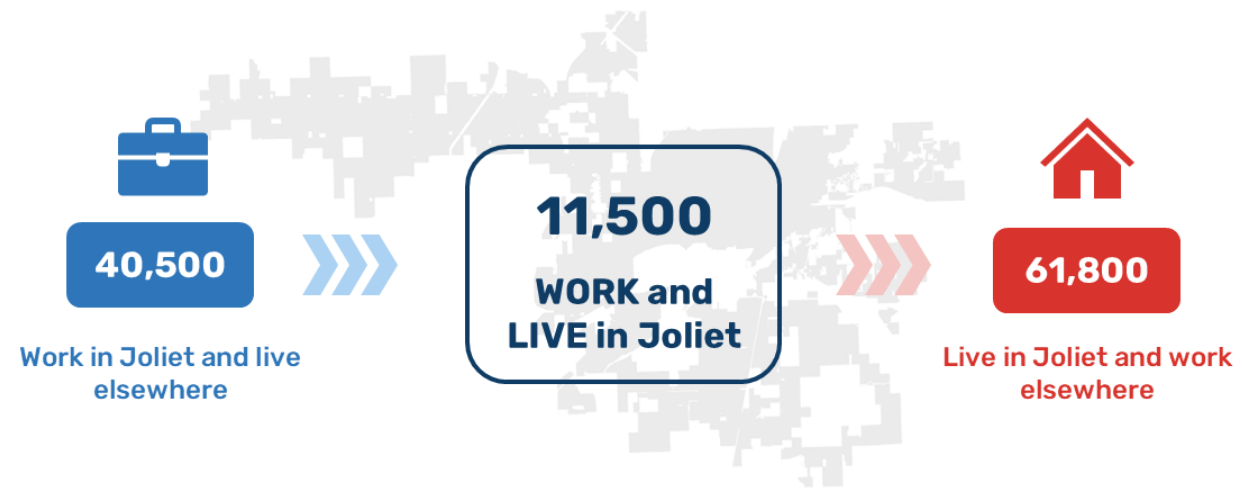
In Will County overall, employment is expected to grow by a CAGR of 1.4% through 2030.<sup>9</sup> Jobs in Joliet are expected to grow at a slightly faster rate than the region with an annual growth rate of 1.9%.<sup>10</sup> Overall, this translates to the addition of 3,100 jobs in Joliet between 2025 and 2030.

**Joliet’s labor market is focused in the southwest suburbs, with some draw from Chicago.**

Of the approximately 52,000 jobs in Joliet, 22% (11,500) are filled by Joliet residents (Figure 4). An additional 40,500 people commute to Joliet for work from elsewhere (Figure 5). Top home locations include Chicago (3,100 workers), Shorewood (1,400 workers), and Crest Hill (1,100 workers). Overall, 50% of Joliet workers live in Will County, 18% in Cook County, and 5% in DuPage County.

There are 73,400 employed residents in Joliet, with 84% (61,800) commuting to other locations for work. Approximately 12% of employed Joliet residents work in Chicago, while many others work in nearby municipalities (Figure 6).

Figure 4. Joliet Commuting Patterns (2022)



Source: Longitudinal Employer–Household Dynamics (LEHD) 2022, all jobs

**Recent unemployment decreases coincide with reduced labor force participation, particularly for Black residents.**

As of 2023, Joliet had an unemployment rate of 5.8%, a slight decrease from 6.1% in 2018.<sup>11</sup> However, labor force participation also decreased over the same period, falling from 70.5% to 68.9%. This indicates that some amount of the decrease in unemployment could be accounted for by residents leaving the labor force altogether. The decrease in labor force participation was greatest for Black residents, falling from 68.9% in 2018 to 64.5% in 2023. Unemployment rates are also higher for Black residents, at 10.1% in 2023 compared to 5.4% for Latino residents and 4.5% for White residents (Figure 5). Labor force participation and unemployment rates remained relatively constant for Latino residents between 2018 and 2023.

Figure 5. Unemployment by Race and Ethnicity (2018 and 2023)

	2018	2023
Black or African American alone, not Hispanic or Latino	11.6%	10.1%
Hispanic or Latino, of any race	5.6%	5.4%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	4.5%	4.5%
<b>Joliet overall</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>5.8%</b>

Source: 2014–2018 and 2019–2023 ACS 5-year estimates

# Industry Sectors & Occupations

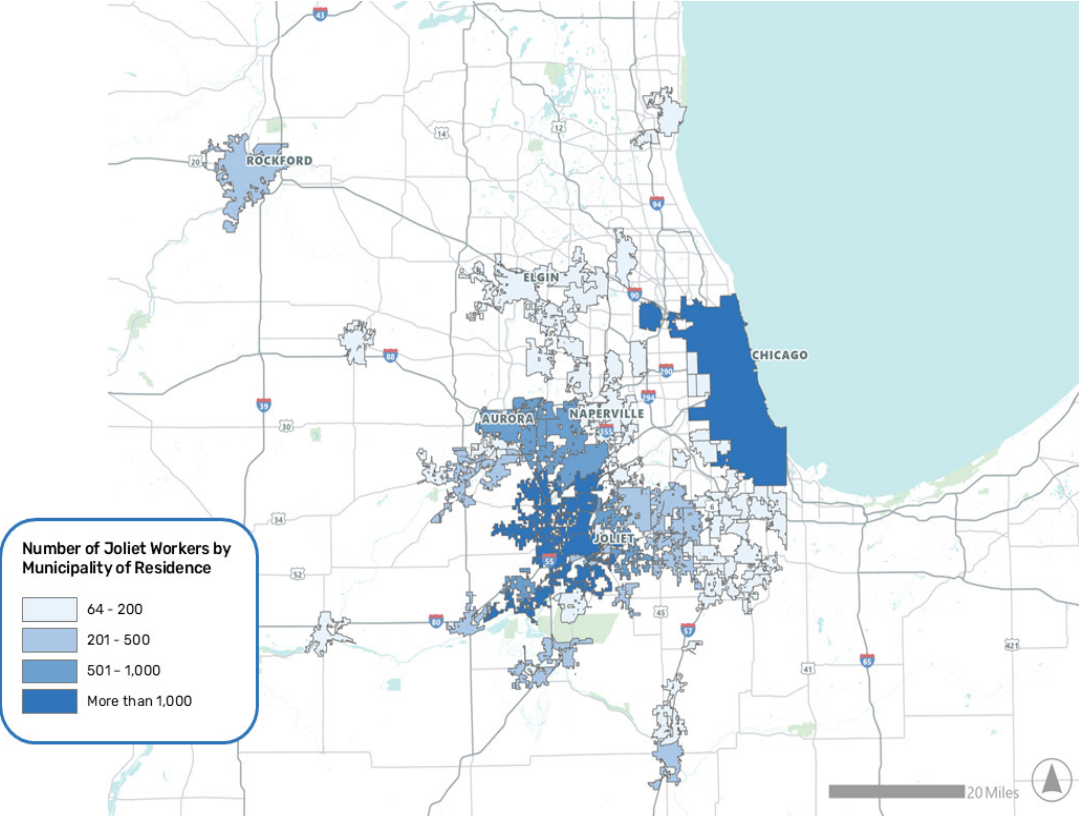
**There have been employment gains in transportation and retail sectors, with losses in healthcare and education.**

Top sectors of employment in Joliet include Retail Trade (7,290 jobs, or 14% of total), Transportation and Warehousing (7,030 jobs, or 14%), Health Care and Social Assistance (6,820 jobs, or 13%), and Education Services (4,820 jobs, or 9%). Transportation and Warehousing employment has grown rapidly, with jobs more than quadrupling since 2010 (+5,640 jobs). Retail Trade employment has grown at a slightly slower pace, adding 1,200 jobs since 2010. Employment in Health Care and Social Assistance—historically the largest sector by total jobs—has been declining. This decline

began before the COVID-19 pandemic, with 1,190 jobs lost between 2010 and 2019, and has continued since, with an additional 2,050-job decline between 2019 and 2022. Employment in Education Services has experienced more fluctuation, increasing by 1,130 between 2010 and 2019, declining steeply in 2020, and then slowly increasing through 2021 and 2022. Employment has remained steadier in other top sectors including Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation and Public Administration.<sup>12</sup>

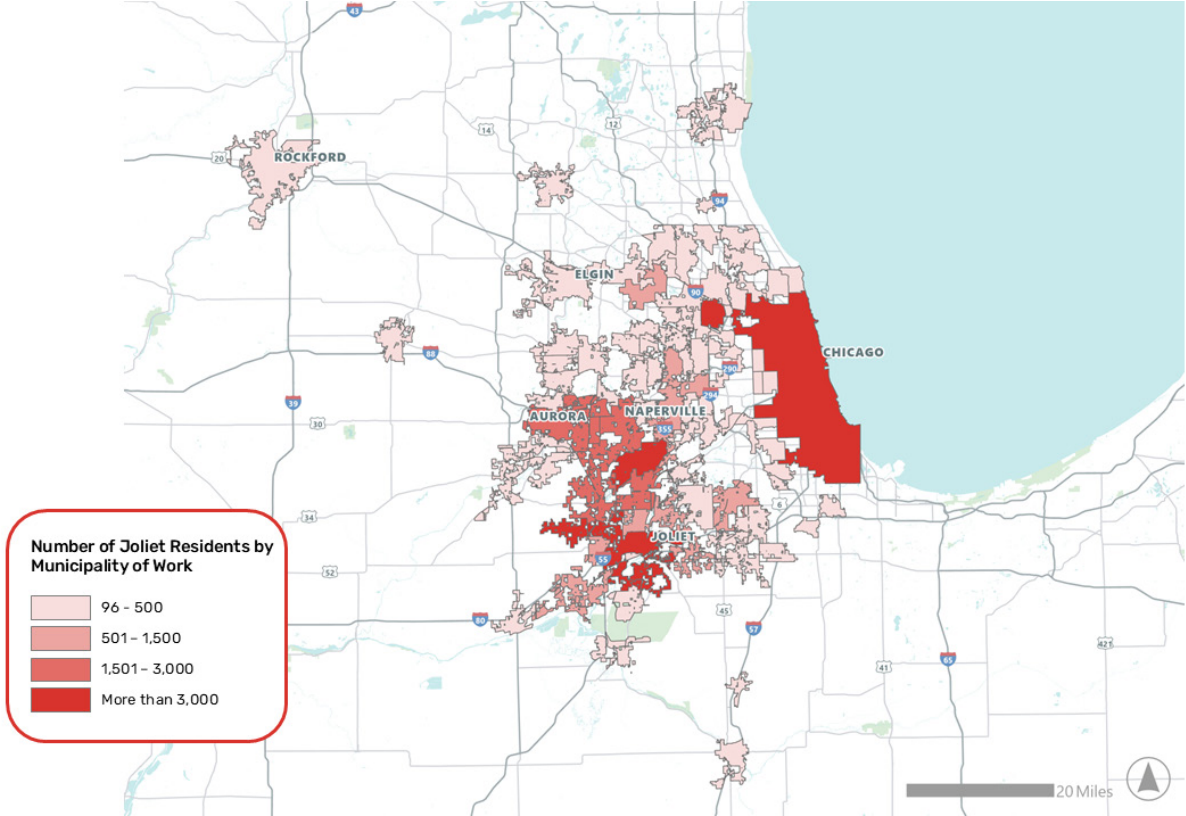
Top employers in 2023 included Amazon, St. Joseph Medical Center, and Will County government.<sup>13</sup>

Figure 6. Where Joliet Workers Live (2022)



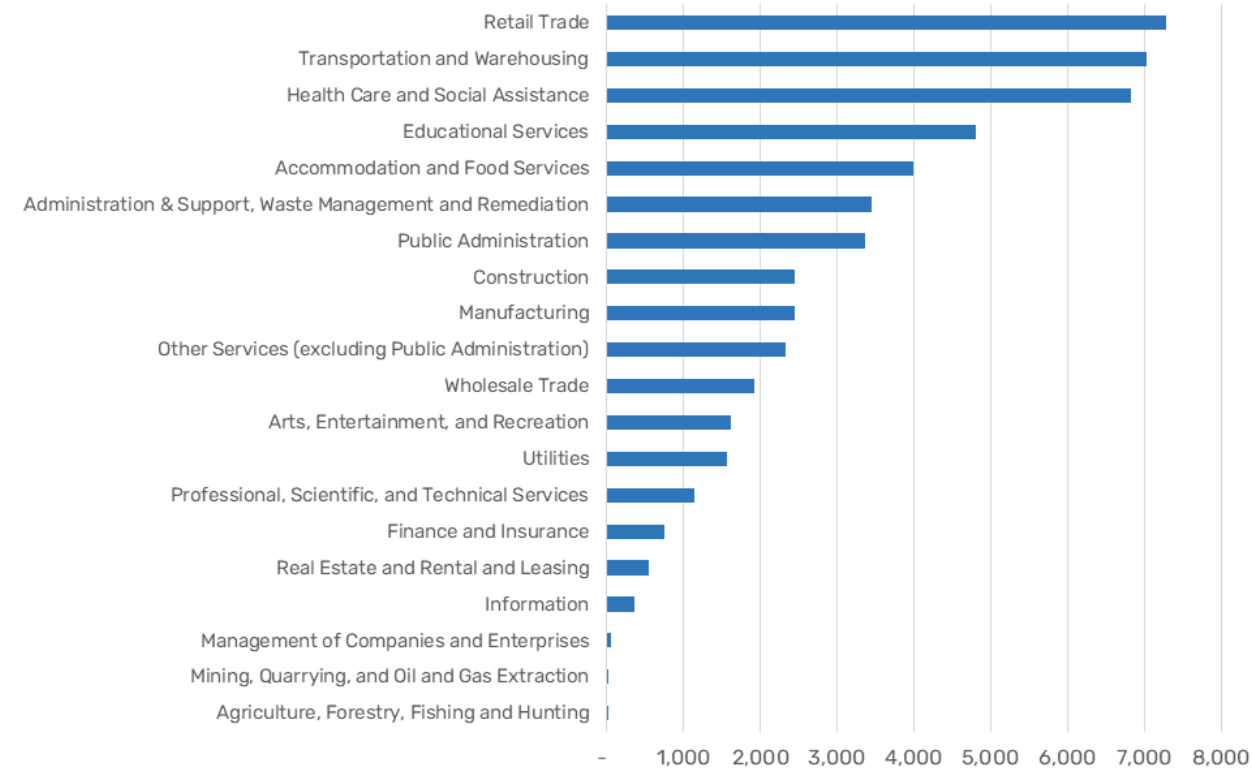
Source: LEHD 2022, all jobs, top 100 municipalities by total workers employed in Joliet.

Figure 8. Where Joliet Residents Work (2022)



Source: LEHD 2022, all jobs top 100 municipalities by total Joliet residents employed.

Figure 7. Joliet Workers by Employment Sector (2022)



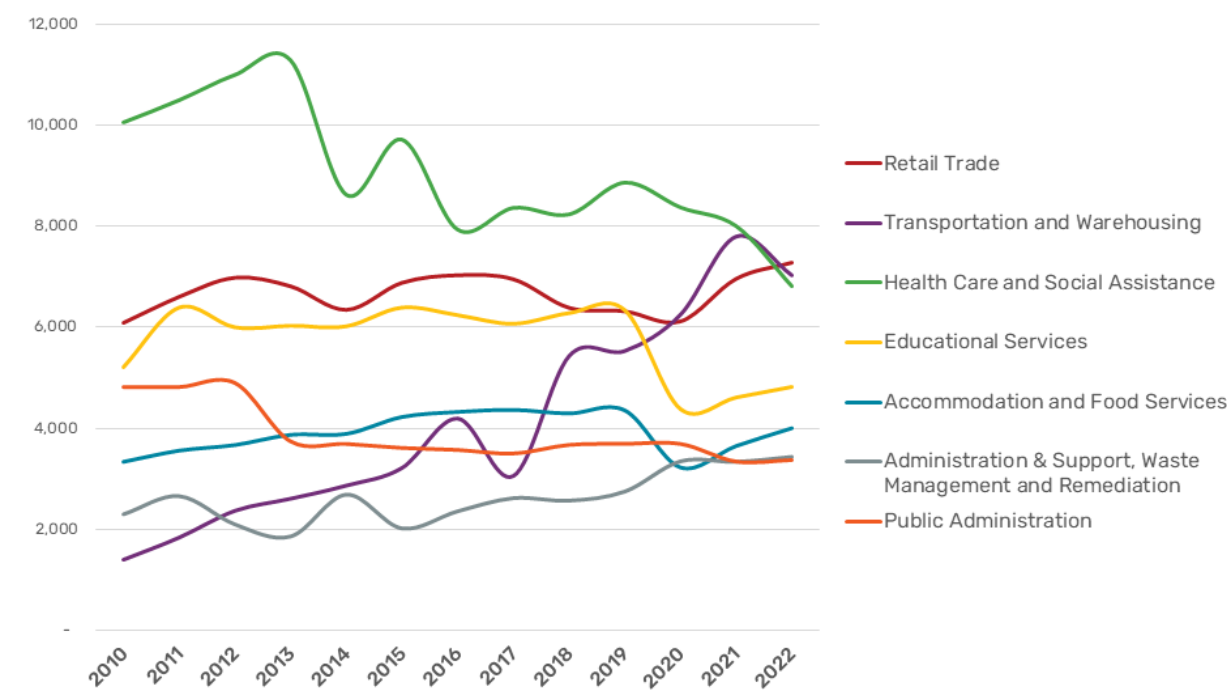
Source: LEHD 2022, all jobs

Figure 9. Joliet Residents by Employment Sector (2022)



Source: LEHD 2022, all jobs

Figure 10. Joliet Employment by Sector (2010–2022; sectors with >3,000 jobs only)



Source: LEHD 2010–2022, all jobs

Occupations with the greatest number of jobs reflect the top employment sectors.

Reflecting the significant increase in Transportation and Warehousing-sector jobs, the two highest-employment occupations in Joliet are laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, with 2,720 employed, and stockers and order fillers, with 2,250 employed.<sup>14</sup> These two occupations also experienced the greatest job gains between 2010 and 2024, increasing by 1,530 and 1,310 jobs, respectively. Other high-employment occupations include general and operations managers (1,590 employed), retail salespersons (1,560 employed), and home health and personal care aides (1,310 employed).

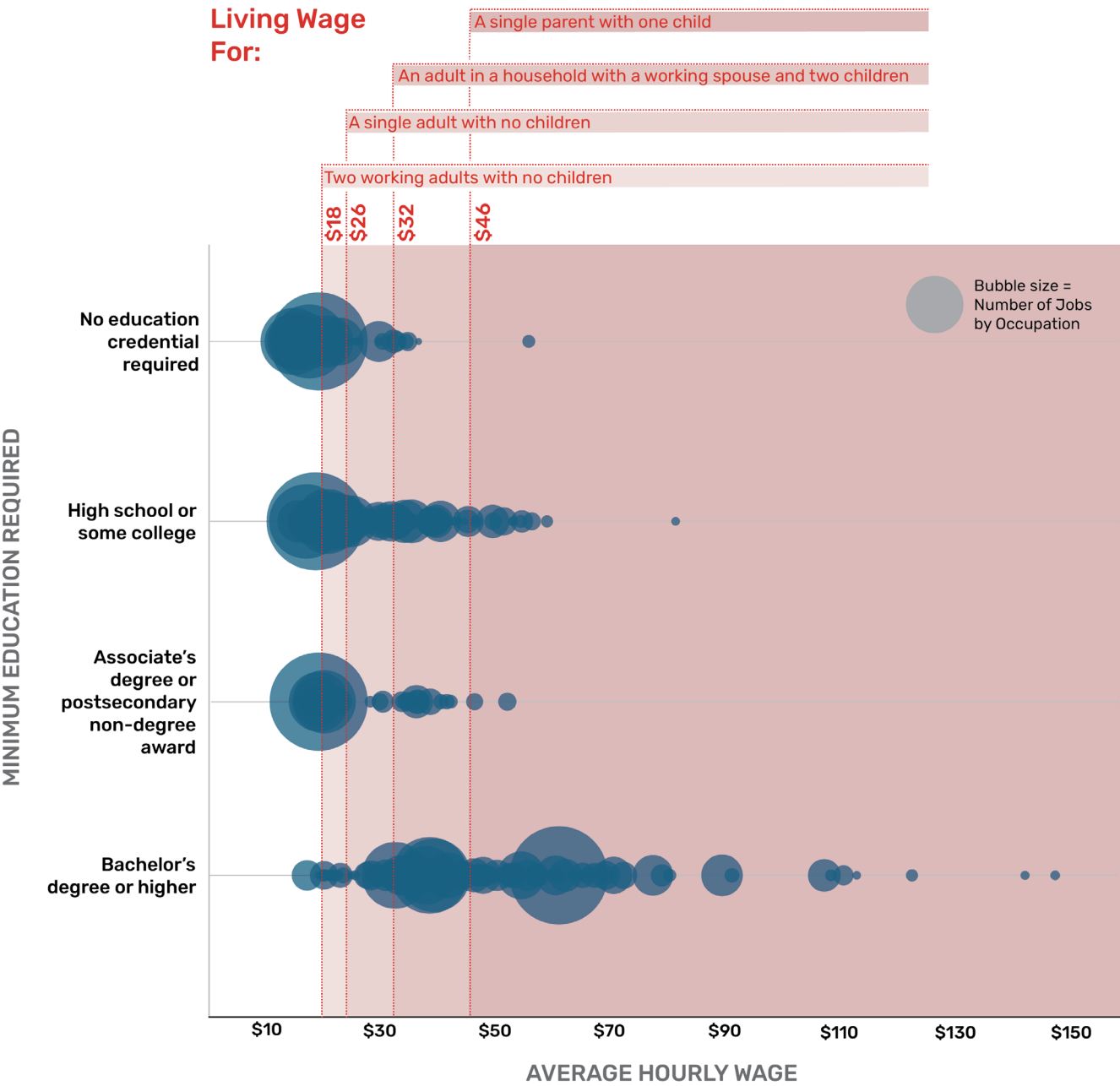
Many high-growth occupations have median wages below a “livable” wage for Will County.

A livable wage is the estimated local wage a full-time worker would require to meet their family’s basic needs, including food, childcare, health care, housing, transportation, civic engagement,

broadband, and other necessities. The livable wage varies by household composition—for instance, livable wage is lowest for two working adults with no children (\$17.77 per hour in Will County), slightly higher for a single adult with no children (\$26.31 per hour), and continues to increase for individuals and families with one or more children (\$25.41 to \$69.17 per hour), depending on the number of children and whether the family has one or two employed adults.<sup>15</sup>

While transportation and logistics jobs have increased substantially, these occupations tend to have median wages below the livable threshold, regardless of whether the family has children. Wages are higher for managerial and education jobs, but only to an extent—the median wage of an elementary school teacher is livable for two working adults with no children but drops below the livable threshold for families with children. Other high-growth occupations such as home health and personal care aides, teaching assistants, and janitors have median wages below the livable threshold for working families both with and without children. Figure 11 shows the distribution of Joliet jobs by wage and minimum education required.

Figure 11. Number of Jobs by Occupation, Minimum Education Required, and Average Hourly Wage (2024)



Source: Lightcast, MIT Living Wage Calculator Will County 2025



# Educational Attainment

**A significant share of the population has lower levels of educational attainment compared to the county and state.**

Approximately 15% of Joliet residents aged 25 or above have less than a high school education, compared to 8% in Will County (Figure 12). Conversely, only 25% of Joliet residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 36% in Will County and 37% statewide.<sup>16</sup>

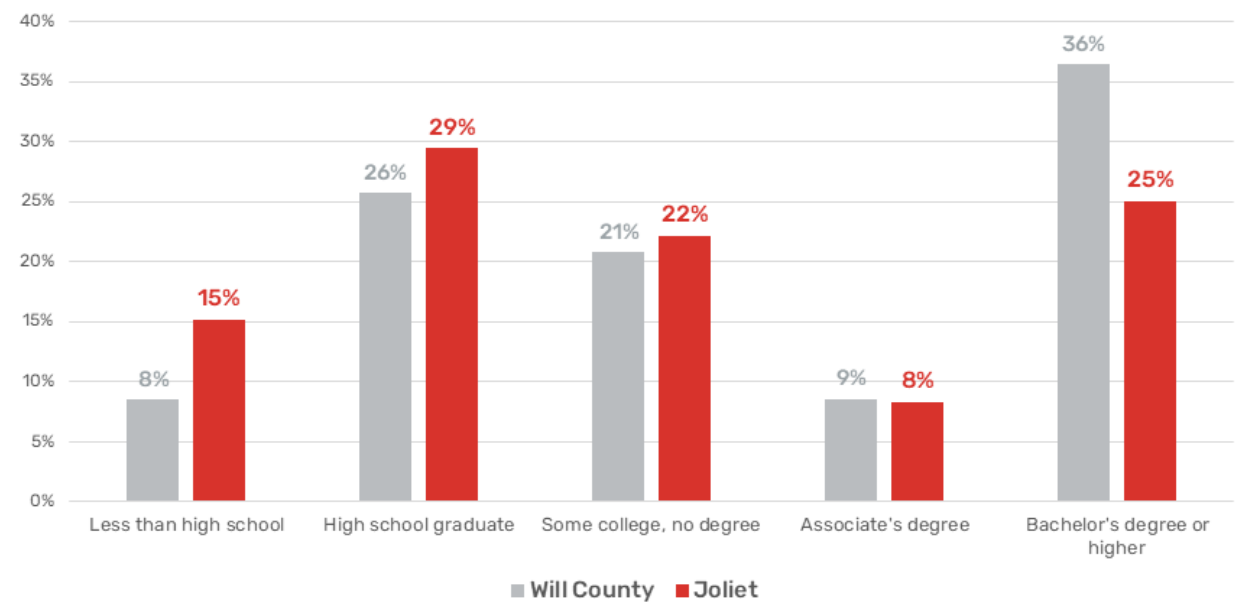
**Educational attainment also varies by race within Joliet.**

On a population share basis, Latino residents have significantly lower levels of educational attainment than White residents, and slightly lower levels than Black residents. Only 13% of Latino residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 21% of Black residents and 30% of White residents.<sup>17</sup> Latino residents are also less likely to be high school graduates. Almost 37% of Latino residents have not graduated high school, compared to 6% of Black residents and 4% of White residents.

Generally, wages are correlated to educational attainment. The three highest-wage, high-growth jobs in Joliet (general and operations managers; secondary school teachers; and elementary school teachers) all require a bachelor's degree. The three lowest-wage, high-growth jobs (janitors and cleaners; teaching assistants, except postsecondary; and home health and personal care aides) do not require a college degree.<sup>18</sup>

However, there are a number of higher-wage occupations that require less than a bachelor's degree. In Joliet, most occupations requiring a high school diploma or associate's degree with steady employment and with median wages over \$30 per hour are in the skilled trades (e.g., electricians, plumbers, construction, mechanics), public service (e.g., police officers, firefighters), or supervisory/middle-management roles.<sup>19</sup> Supporting career pathways to managerial roles within existing jobs and industries and building pipelines to trade and public service jobs can help support job seekers without a bachelor's degree advance to higher-paying careers.

Figure 12. Educational Attainment for Population 25 Years and Over (2023)



Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates



# Key Considerations

## Demographic & Socioeconomic Analysis

- Demographic shifts will be driven by aging residents, smaller households, and increasing racial diversity. Household growth can drive baseline demand for additional retail space, while aging households may have different retail needs and preferences compared to younger residents. Older residents may also have specific housing needs, including smaller, single-story homes within close proximity to services and community amenities. Increasing racial diversity points to a need for inclusive strategies for resident engagement and a strategy for economic growth focused on providing equitable benefits to all community members.
- Overall employment has remained relatively flat while top employment sectors are shifting, with implications for workers and residents. Health care and education jobs have been decreasing, while transportation, warehousing, and retail jobs have increased. Transportation, warehousing, and retail jobs tend to be lower-wage, and workers may struggle to afford housing and other essentials such as childcare. As housing costs in Joliet continue to increase at a faster pace than wages, a greater share of Joliet workers may choose to live in other communities with a greater supply of affordable housing (see *Housing section*).



# 05

## Market Analysis and Economic Development

Image source: City of Joliet



# Housing Typology & Tenure

**Housing in Joliet is predominantly single-family and owner-occupied, with a slight decrease in renters over the past five years.**

Joliet has approximately 50,650 occupied housing units. Of these units, 73% (37,020) are owner-occupied and the remaining 27% (13,630) are renter-occupied. Between 2018 and 2023, the number and share of homeowner households increased in Joliet as well as Will County overall. In Joliet, homeowner households increased by 3,640, while the number of renters decreased slightly (-350 households). While homeownership rates in Joliet increased for White, Black, and Latino residents between 2018 and 2023, rates for Latino and Black households trail those of White households. Approximately 86% of White households in Joliet are homeowners compared to 71% of Latino households and 43% of Black households.<sup>1</sup>

Owners are significantly more likely to live in single-family homes, while renters live in a range of housing types. Approximately 96% of

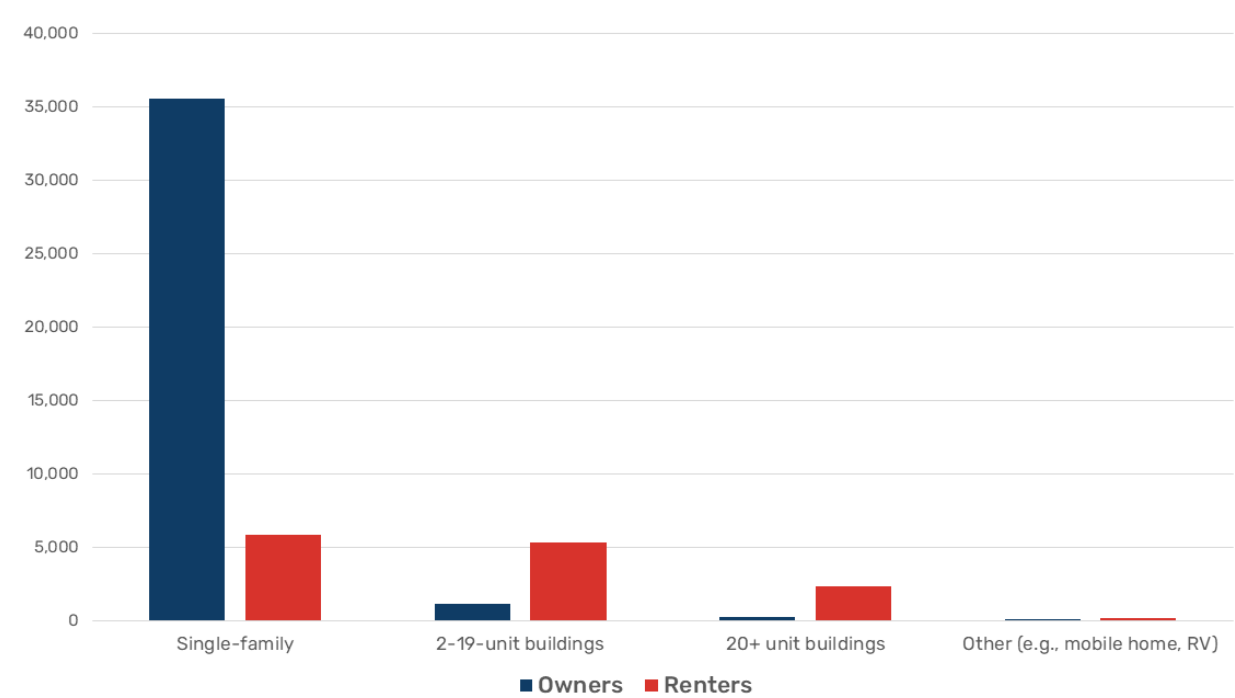
all owner-occupied households live in traditional single-family homes or attached single-family homes like townhomes, while the remaining 4% live in multifamily condominium buildings. Conversely, 43% of renters live in single-family homes and 56% live in multifamily apartment buildings.<sup>2</sup>

## Housing Vacancy

**Vacancy is decreasing but remains higher than county levels.**

Joliet’s overall housing vacancy rate is 5.6%, including both for-sale and rental homes. Vacancy has fallen from the 2018 rate of 7.1% but still sits higher than the county rate of 4.5%. Compared to the county, a greater share of Joliet vacancies are off-market vacancies — units not actively for sale or rent. Approximately 55% of vacant units in Joliet are vacant and off-market, compared to 43% countywide.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1. Number of Joliet Households by Tenure and Unit Type (2023)



Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates

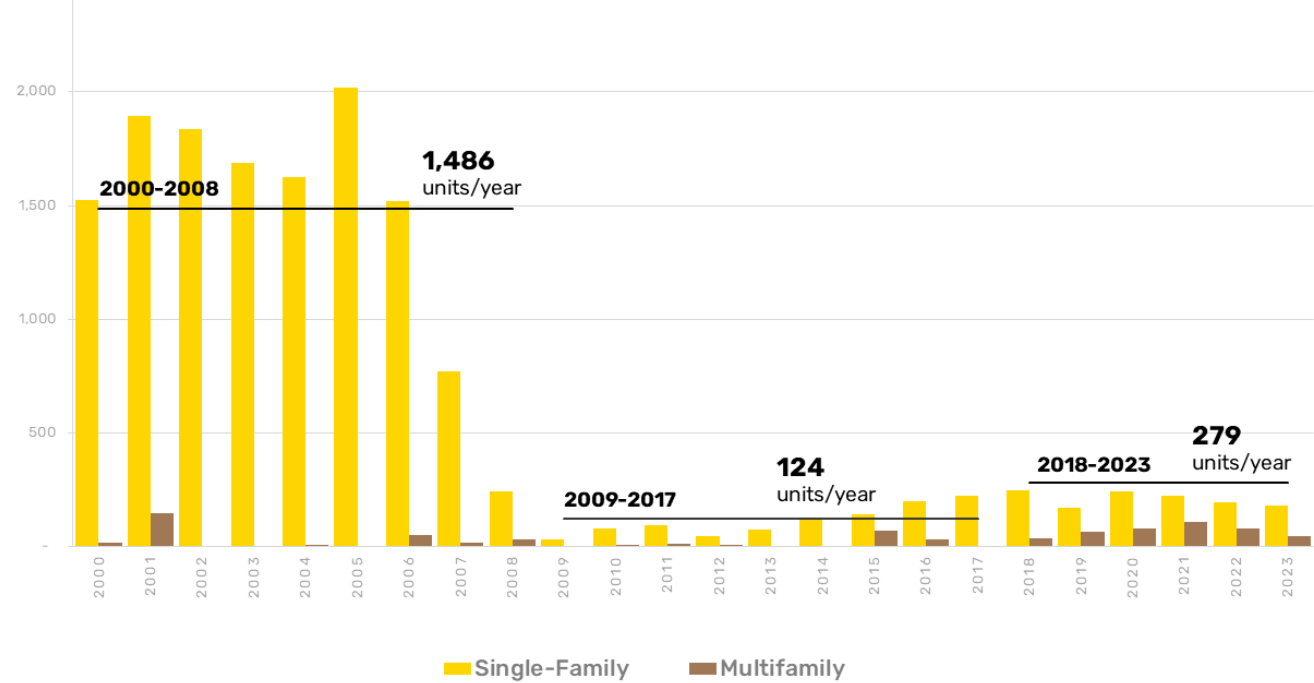
# Housing Development

**Housing construction boomed in the two decades leading up to the Great Recession but has slowed significantly since.**

Housing construction has slowed significantly since 2010, with only 5% (2,540) of all units built during this most recent period.<sup>4</sup> Between 2009 and 2017, an average of 124 units were permitted per year, down significantly from the 2000-2008 average of 1,486 units per year (Figure 2).<sup>5</sup>

The pace of new construction has increased slightly relative to 2009-2017 levels, with the share of multifamily housing (2+ units) also increasing. Between 2018 and 2023, an average of 279 units were permitted per year, with 25% of those units in buildings with two or more units. Comparatively, only 10% of units built between 2009 and 2017 and 2% built between 2000 and 2008 were in buildings with two or more units.

Figure 2. Joliet Building Permits (2000-2023)



Source: US Census 2000-2023

# Housing Age

More than 70% of Joliet’s housing is over 25 years old.

While older homes may be more affordable, housing structures typically need substantial reinvestment after 20-30 years. As structures approach or exceed this age, there is greater potential for substandard housing conditions and/or greater need for investment.<sup>6</sup>

The City’s oldest housing is centrally located near the river and downtown (Figure 4). The City’s second major period of development (1990-2009) occurred primarily in areas to the west and along the eastern fringe of the City. Since 2010, new construction has occurred in the far west, with some scattered development across the rest of the City.

Figure 3. Total Housing Units by Year Built (2023)

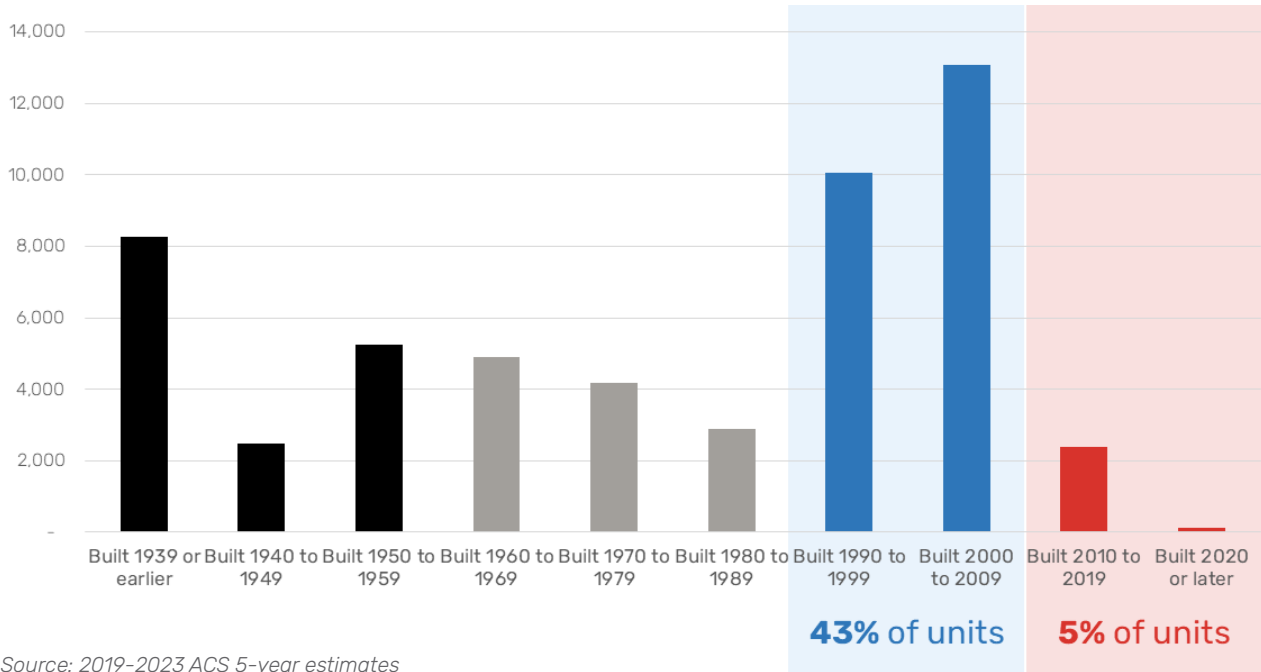
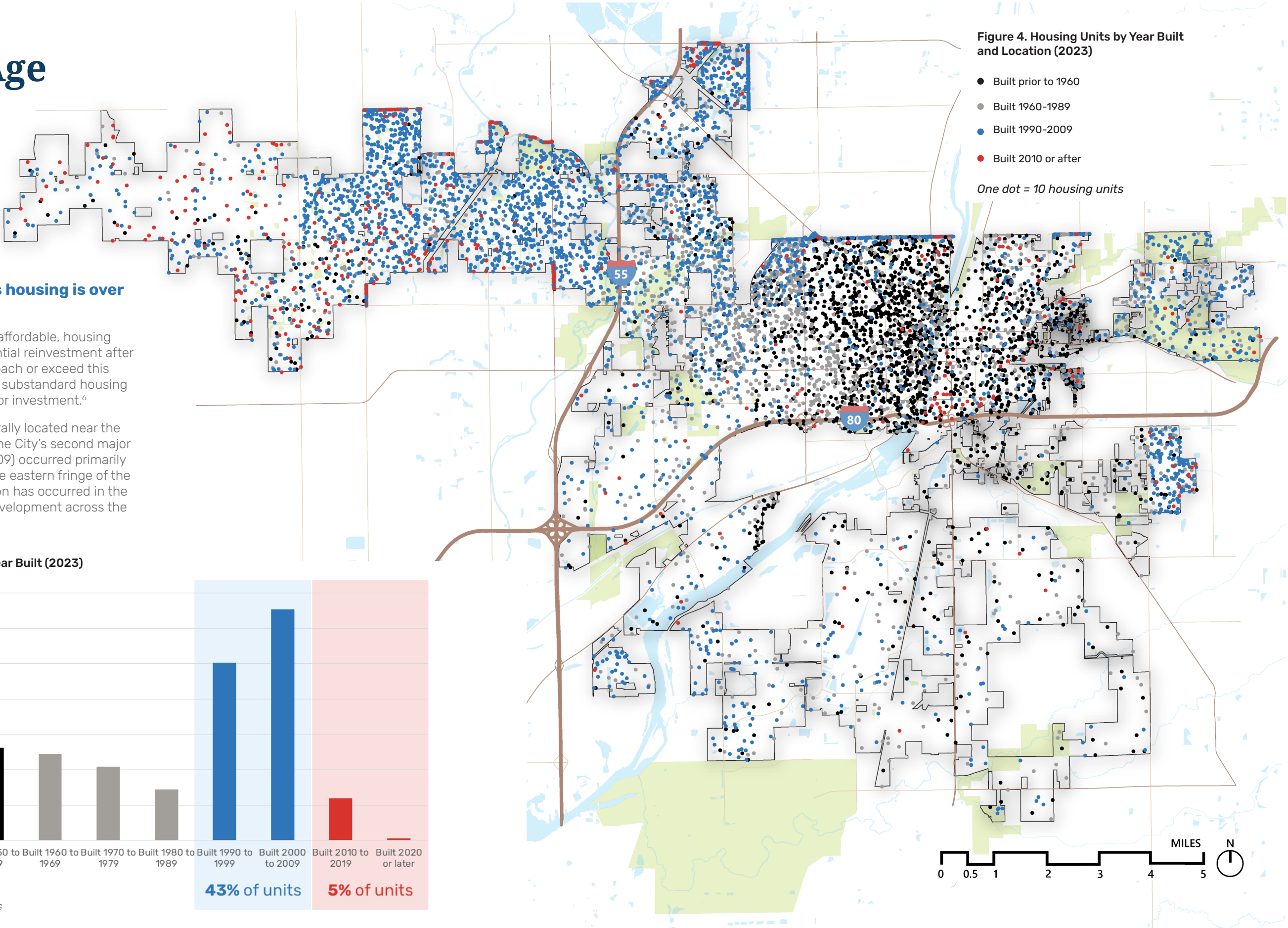


Figure 4. Housing Units by Year Built and Location (2023)

- Built prior to 1960
  - Built 1960-1989
  - Built 1990-2009
  - Built 2010 or after
- One dot = 10 housing units





# For-Sale Housing Market

**For-sale home price increases have been outpacing inflation and wage growth.**

In 2024, the median sale price for both detached and attached single-family homes in Joliet was \$260,000.<sup>7</sup> Between 2015 and 2024, median sale prices more than doubled, increasing by \$135,000 for detached homes (an 8.5% compound annual growth rate, or “CAGR”) and \$137,000 for attached homes (8.7% CAGR). These year-over-year growth rates significantly

outpaced inflation, which increased at a CAGR of 2.8% over the same period, and wages, which increased by a CAGR of 3.4%.<sup>8</sup>

Sale price and total sale volume also vary by location within the city. In 2023 and 2024, the West and Near West North areas had the most sales transactions overall, averaging 390 and 230 sales per year, respectively (Figure 5). Average sale prices were highest in the Far West area at \$350,000 and lowest in the Near West South area at \$200,000.<sup>9</sup>

**Sale prices increased regardless of the age of the home.**

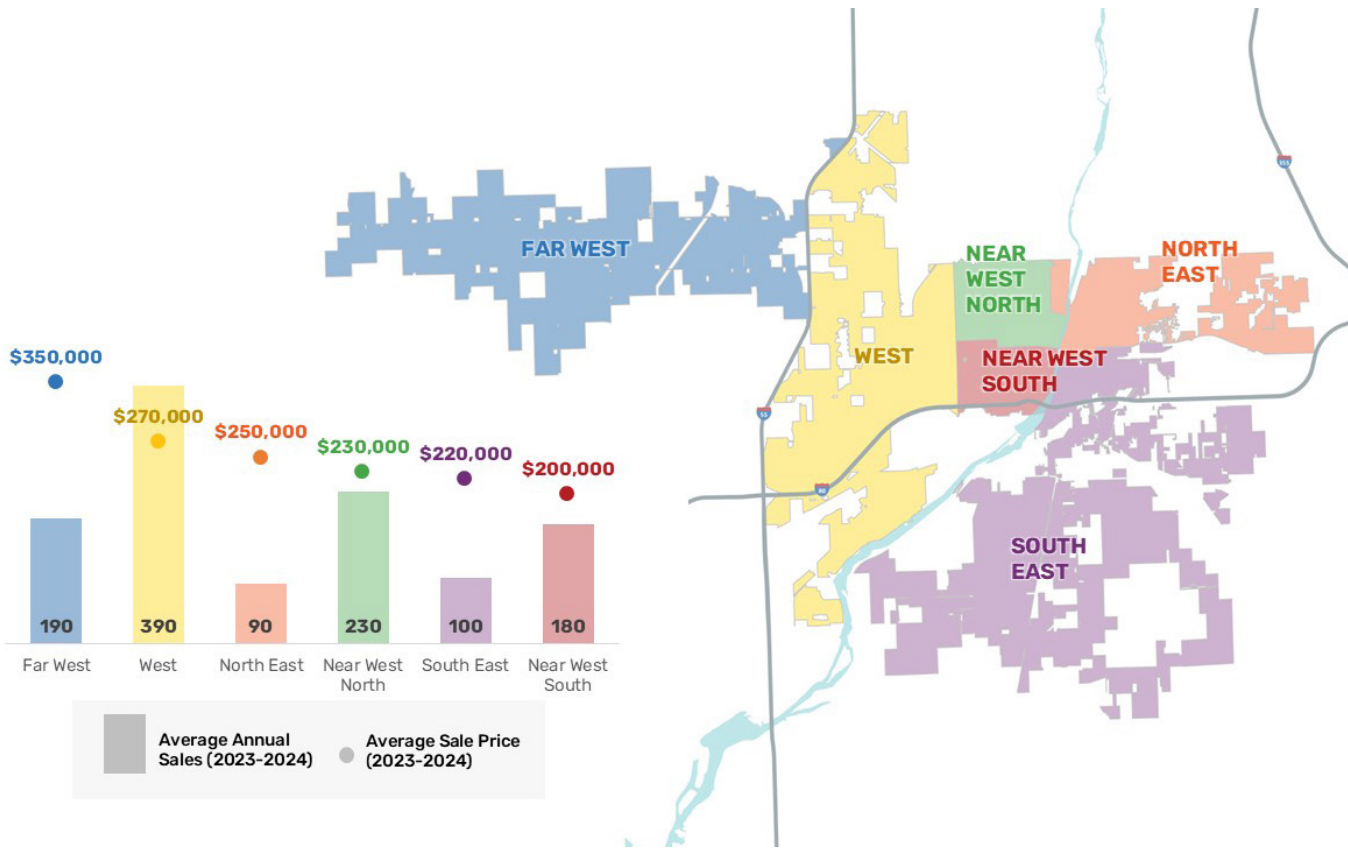
Typically, new construction homes are more expensive than older homes. Between 2015 and 2024, the average sale price for a newer construction detached single-family home built in 2010 or after was \$307,000, a \$121,000 (65%) premium over homes built prior to 2010.<sup>10</sup>

Sale prices increased regardless of the home’s age in this time period. However, increases were even more pronounced for older homes. The

Near West North area has a large share of older housing, and home prices increased at a 10.2% CAGR between 2015 and 2025—the fastest across all neighborhood service areas (Figure 6). For detached single-family homes, average sale prices for newer-construction homes increased by \$128,000 or 52% between 2015 and 2024, while the price of older homes increased by \$141,000 or 116%.

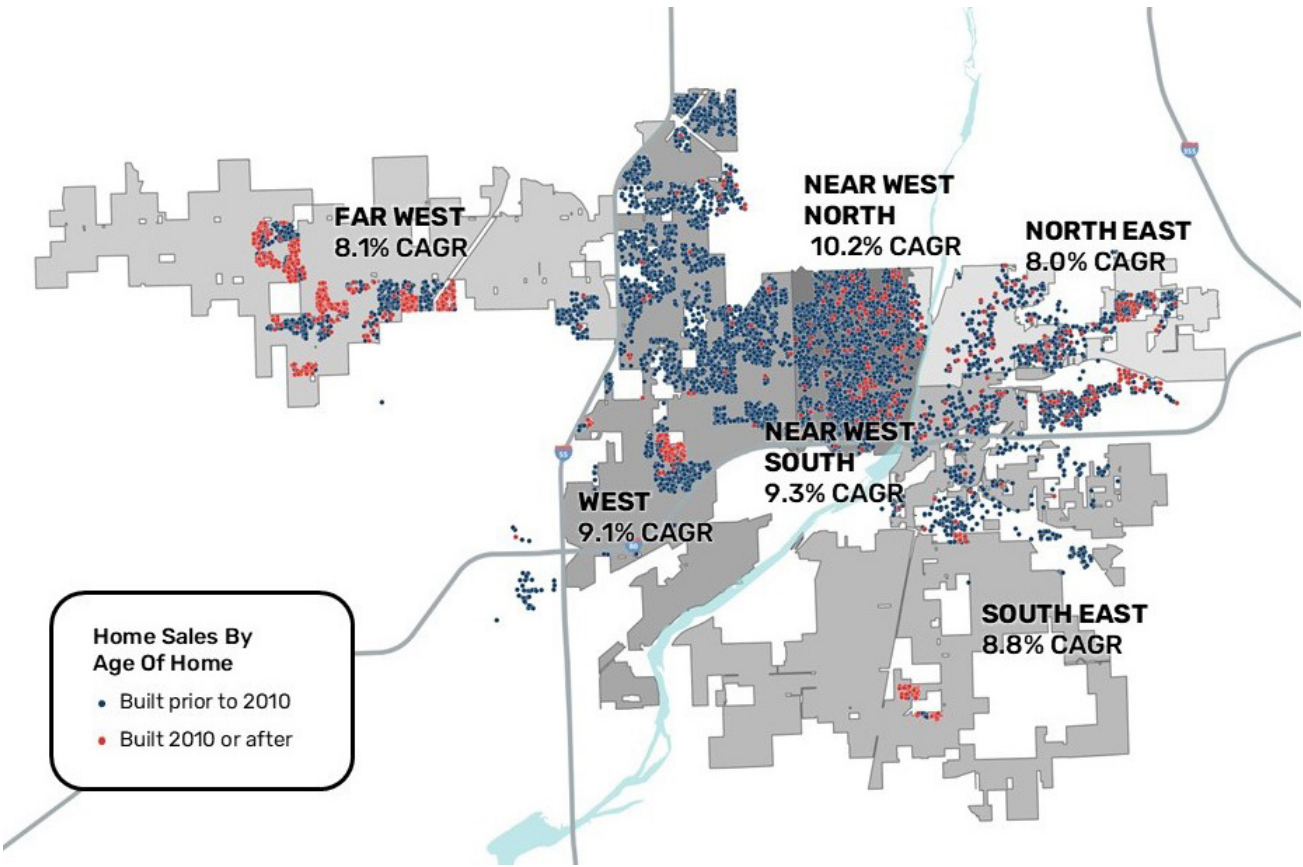
Across all single-family home types and ages, sale price increases were most acute between 2020 and 2024.

Figure 5. Average Sale Price and Average Annual Sales by Area (2023–2024 sales)



Source: MLS, all sales in 2023–2024

Figure 6. Home Sales by Age and Sale Price CAGR by Area (2020–2024)

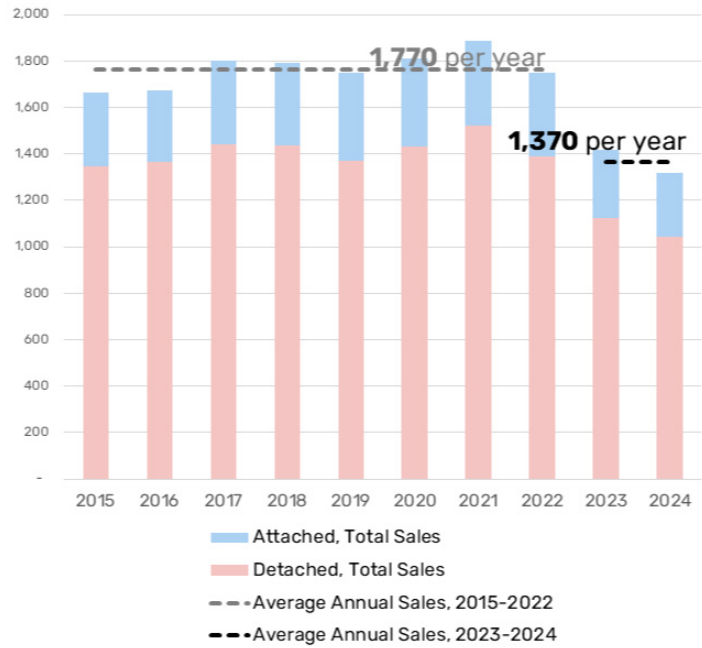


Source: MLS, all sales from 2015–2024

Increasing sale prices, decreasing time on market, and low inventory indicate a competitive, constrained housing market.

Between 2015 and 2024, median sale prices more than doubled. Over this same period, the average time a home was on the market decreased by 56 days or 66%, as shown in Figure 8. The most dramatic decreases occurred between 2020 and 2021, with increased competition fueled by low interest rates in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic. In the years following, housing market demand has been suppressed by interest rates. As interest rates have risen, decreasing transactions have contributed to keeping sale prices high and time on market low. Between 2015 and 2022, there were an average of 1,770 home sales per year (Figure 7). In 2023 and 2024, that figure dropped to 1,370, a decrease of 400 sales per year.

Figure 7. Total Home Sales Per Year (2015–2024)



Source: MLS, all sales from 2015–2024

Rental Housing Market

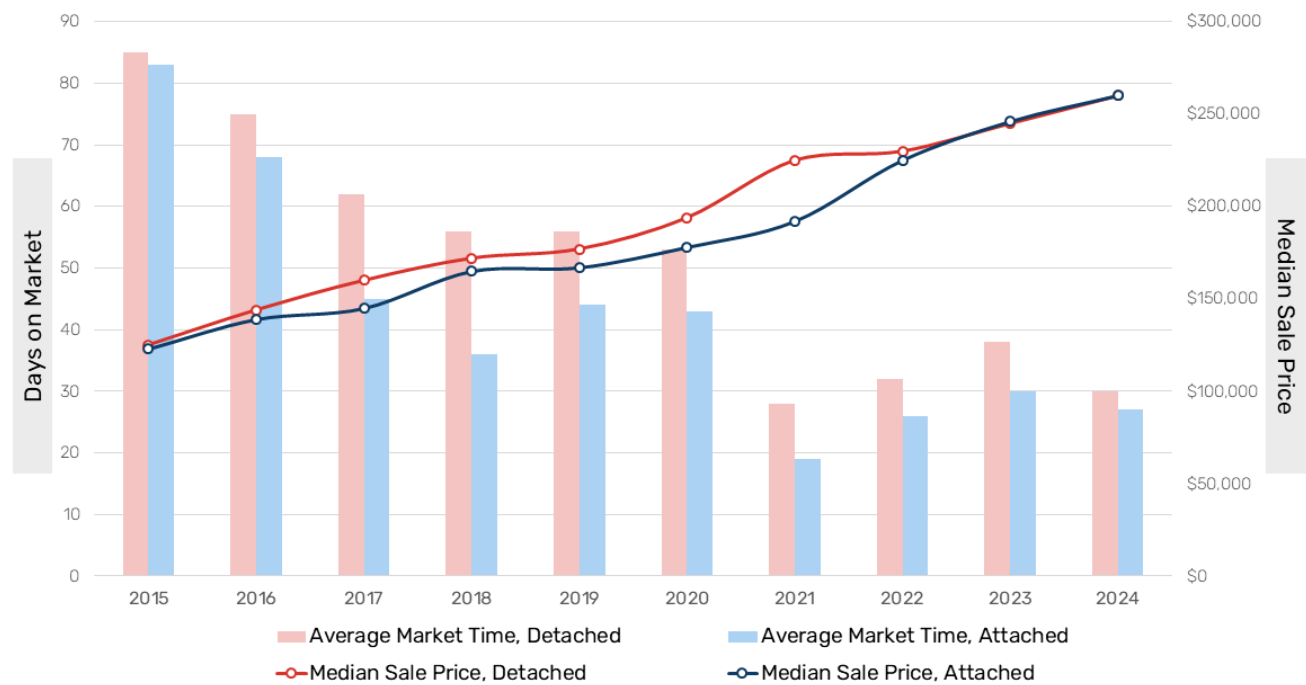
The market-rate rental housing market is experiencing rising rents, decreasing vacancy, and limited new construction.

Rents have been increasing in Joliet, though at a slightly slower rate than sale prices. Average asking rents across all of Joliet’s market-rate multifamily housing rose from \$920/month in 2015 to \$1,330/month in 2024, a CAGR of 4.2%.<sup>11</sup> Over this same period, vacancy dropped from 6.3% to 3.8% despite the delivery of 222 new units in 2023 (Figure 9). Vacancy decreases were particularly acute between 2019 and 2021, dropping from 6.1% to 2.6%, indicating demand for rental housing.

Rent growth was similar when assessing all rental housing in Joliet, including the approximately 5,800 households who rent single-family homes. Between 2018 and 2023, the median gross rent for all renters in Joliet increased from \$1,000/month to \$1,240/month, a CAGR of 4.1%.<sup>12</sup>

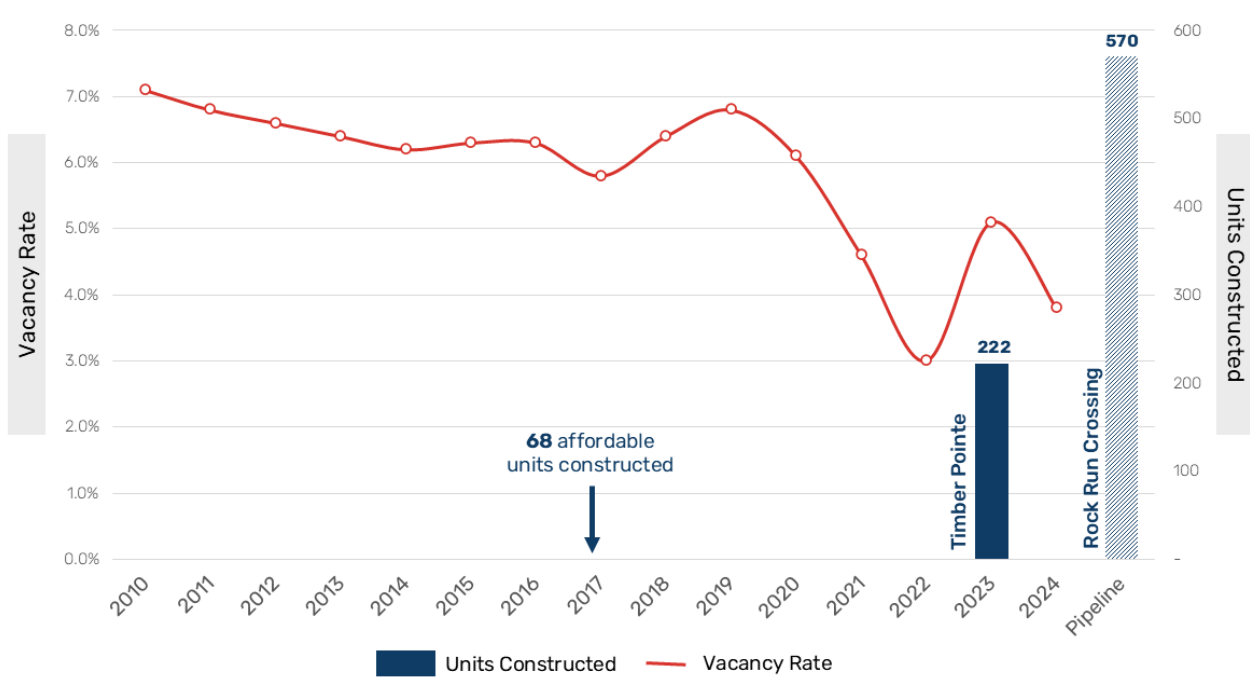
Rents are significantly higher for new construction. Two market-rate rental projects have been completed since 2015—Timber Pointe Apartments (178 apartment units) and Timber Pointe North (48 rental townhomes)—with average effective rents of \$2,120 and \$2,170 per month, respectively.<sup>13</sup> These units offer luxury amenities including private entrances and professional management. An additional 570 units are proposed at Rock Run Collection, a new mixed-use development.

Figure 8. Single-Family Average Market Time and Median Sale Price by Type and Year (2015–2024)



Source: MLS, all sales from 2015–2024

Figure 9. Market-Rate Multifamily Rental Vacancy and Units Constructed (2010–2024)



Source: CoStar

# Housing Affordability

**Increasing rents and sale prices have led to greater rates of housing cost-burden for low- and moderate-income households.**

Housing is considered affordable if a household spends no more than 30% of their income on housing-related cost; those who spend more than 30% of their income on housing are considered cost-burdened. As housing costs rise, more households may experience housing cost-burden, particularly if incomes remain stagnant or increase at a slower pace. Overall, 29% of Joliet households are housing cost-burdened, slightly lower than the state (30%) and national (32%) rates.

Over the past five years, overall housing cost-burden decreased in Joliet, falling from 34% in 2018.<sup>14</sup> However, housing cost-burden increased for low- and moderate-income households over the same period. Increases were most acute for moderate-income households, rising from 53% to 64% for households with incomes from \$35,000-\$49,999 and from 28% to 38% for those with incomes from \$50,000-\$74,999 (Figure 10). While increases in rates of cost-burden were not as severe for lower-income households, the actual

number of households making under \$34,999 decreased between 2018 and 2023.<sup>15</sup> This indicates that some amount of the lesser increase in cost-burden could be accounted for by lower-income households leaving the City altogether.

**Income-restricted affordable housing is also a core component of Joliet’s housing stock.**

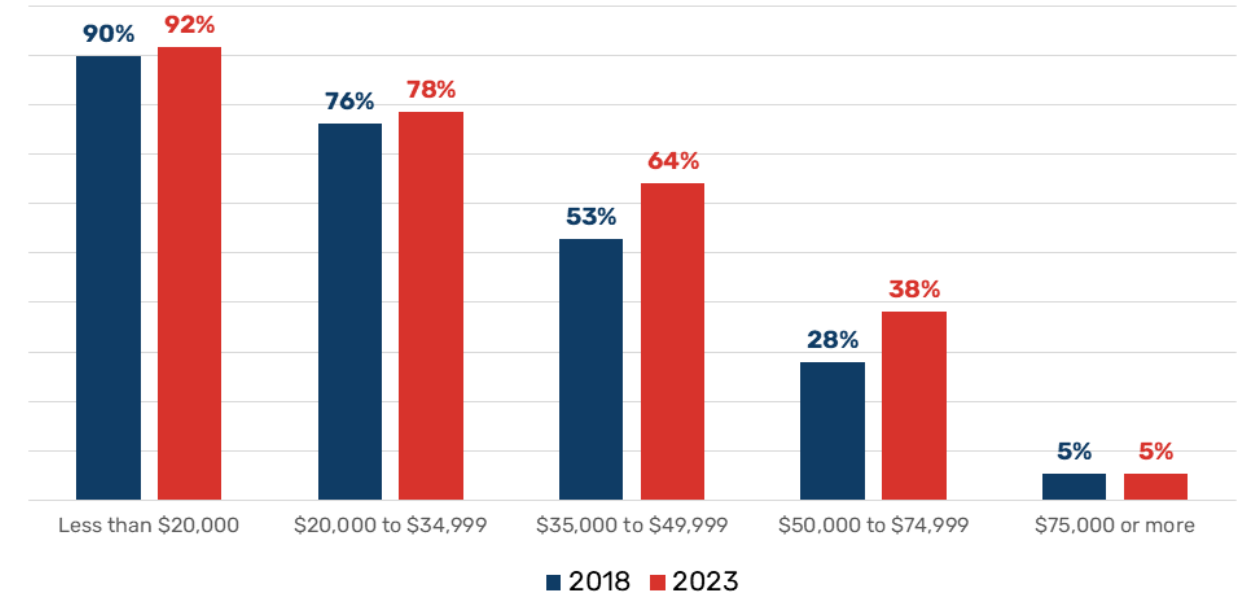
There are approximately 1,300 units of income-restricted affordable housing in Joliet, including mixed-income housing, public housing, and other units that receive some form of public subsidy to keep rents affordable for low- and moderate-income households.<sup>16</sup> Recent construction of income-restricted affordable housing has been focused on developing mixed-income communities with units that are affordable at a range of incomes. In 2017, 68 mixed-income single-family and townhome units were developed at Water’s Edge to replace the Des Plaines Gardens public housing development. An additional 116 mixed-income units have been developed as part of Phases 1 and 2 of the Liberty Meadow Estates project, with additional units planned for future phases.

# Key Considerations

## Housing Supply

- Single-family housing is the dominant housing typology, but disparities in access exist. Almost all of Joliet’s owner-occupied housing consists of detached and attached single-family homes. However, Latino and Black residents are significantly less likely to be homeowners than White residents. Historically, many single-family homes have also been renter-occupied; however, these numbers are decreasing, leaving fewer housing options for renter households.
- Recent construction has been limited, leading to increasing rents and for-sale home prices. Sale price increases have outpaced both inflation and wage growth, which may present challenges for first-time and/or moderate-income homebuyers. New multifamily rental construction has been limited, and new units have a significant price premium over older rental housing.
- Housing has become increasingly less affordable in recent years, particularly for households making under \$75,000 per year, who are experiencing increasing rates of housing cost-burden. While housing costs have risen across the board, low- and moderate-income households may have less flexibility in their household budgets to adjust to rising costs, especially if wages increase at a slower pace.
- Investments in the City’s older, existing housing stock can help preserve homes that are affordable for working households. Addressing market-driven vacancies, particularly those due to age and/or disrepair, is a cost-effective way to add new units to the housing inventory while also investing in neighborhood stabilization.

Figure 10. Percentage of Cost-Burdened Households by Income (2018 and 2023)



Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates



# Housing Demand

**Future housing demand is a factor of changing population size, household composition, and housing preferences by age. Based on historic construction trends and projected demographic changes, Joliet could reasonably expect demand for 300–420 additional housing units annually through 2035.**

This equates to approximately 3,300–4,700 total units through 2035. Demand for specific types of housing—detached or attached single-family and multifamily—are based on housing preferences and homeownership rates by age as the demographic composition of the City changes over time. In Joliet, these factors include marginal population increases, decreasing household size, and an overall increase in households driven by a decreasing number of households headed by residents under age 54 and an increase in the number of households headed by older residents.<sup>17</sup> Continuing recent trends, a greater share of future overall housing construction is projected to be comprised of multifamily units. Annual demand for between 117 and 141 units of multifamily housing is projected.

In the near-term, there are 849 units of detached single-family housing and 256 units of attached single-family housing at various stages of construction, permitting, and review as of March 2025. An additional 570 units of multifamily rental housing are also proposed.<sup>18</sup> Collectively, these units could account for 2.5 to 3.5 years of future housing demand when compared to the projected demand estimates.

**Regional and macroeconomic trends – including supply chain disruptions, increased material and labor costs, rising interest rates, and high insurance costs – continue to make new construction expensive and challenging.**

These challenges impact the for-sale and multifamily rental markets by slowing growth and increasing costs which are then passed on to households in the form of higher home prices and rents. This is demonstrated through significant price premiums for new construction for-sale homes (+65% price premium for new construction) and rental apartments (+75% price premium).<sup>19</sup>

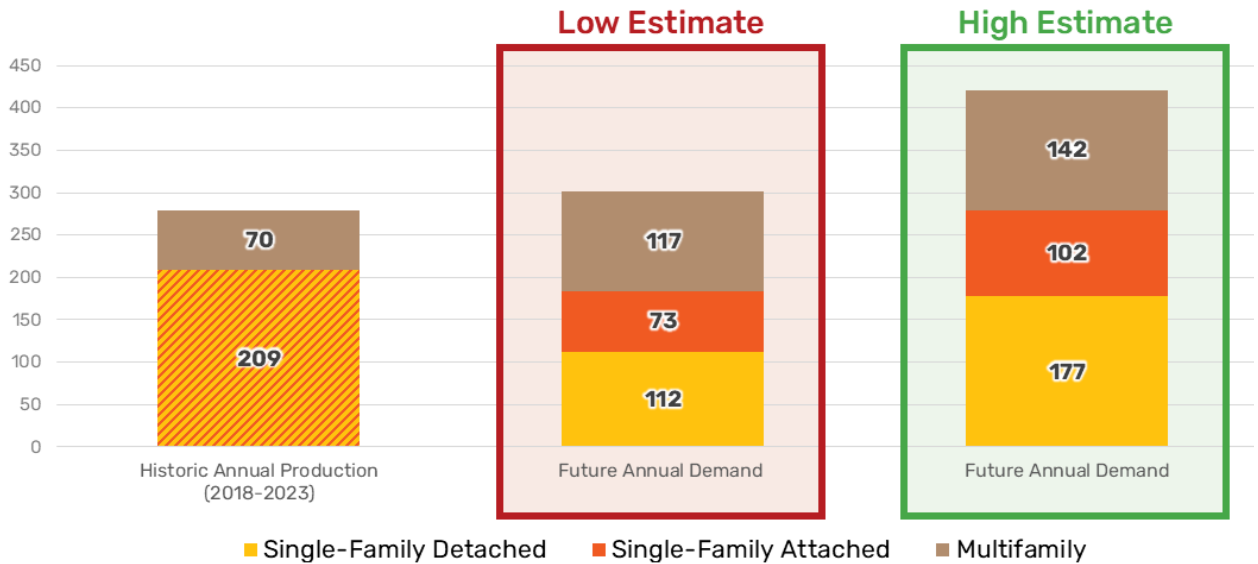
# Key Considerations

## Housing Demand

Projected demand for **300 to 420 units** annually (2025-2035)  
Projected demand for a total of **3,300 to 4,700 units** (2025-2035)

- Increasing households and smaller household sizes drive demand for **smaller, starter homes**.
- An aging population drives demand for **smaller, accessible, single-story homes, age-restricted rental apartments, and assisted-care living**.
- Increasing cost-burden for low- and middle-income residents drives demand for **workforce housing affordable at area wages**.
- Low vacancy for multifamily rental, limited new construction, and loss of renter households indicates an unmet demand for **rental housing**.

Figure 11. Projected Annual Housing Demand by Type (2025-2035)



Source: ACS 2019-2023 5-year estimates and PUMS, CoStar, SB Friedman, Urban Institute, US Census Building Permits



# Industrial Market

In recent years, industrial development has been driven by an increase in e-commerce with ramifications related to supply chains, intermodal shipping capacity, and distribution space.

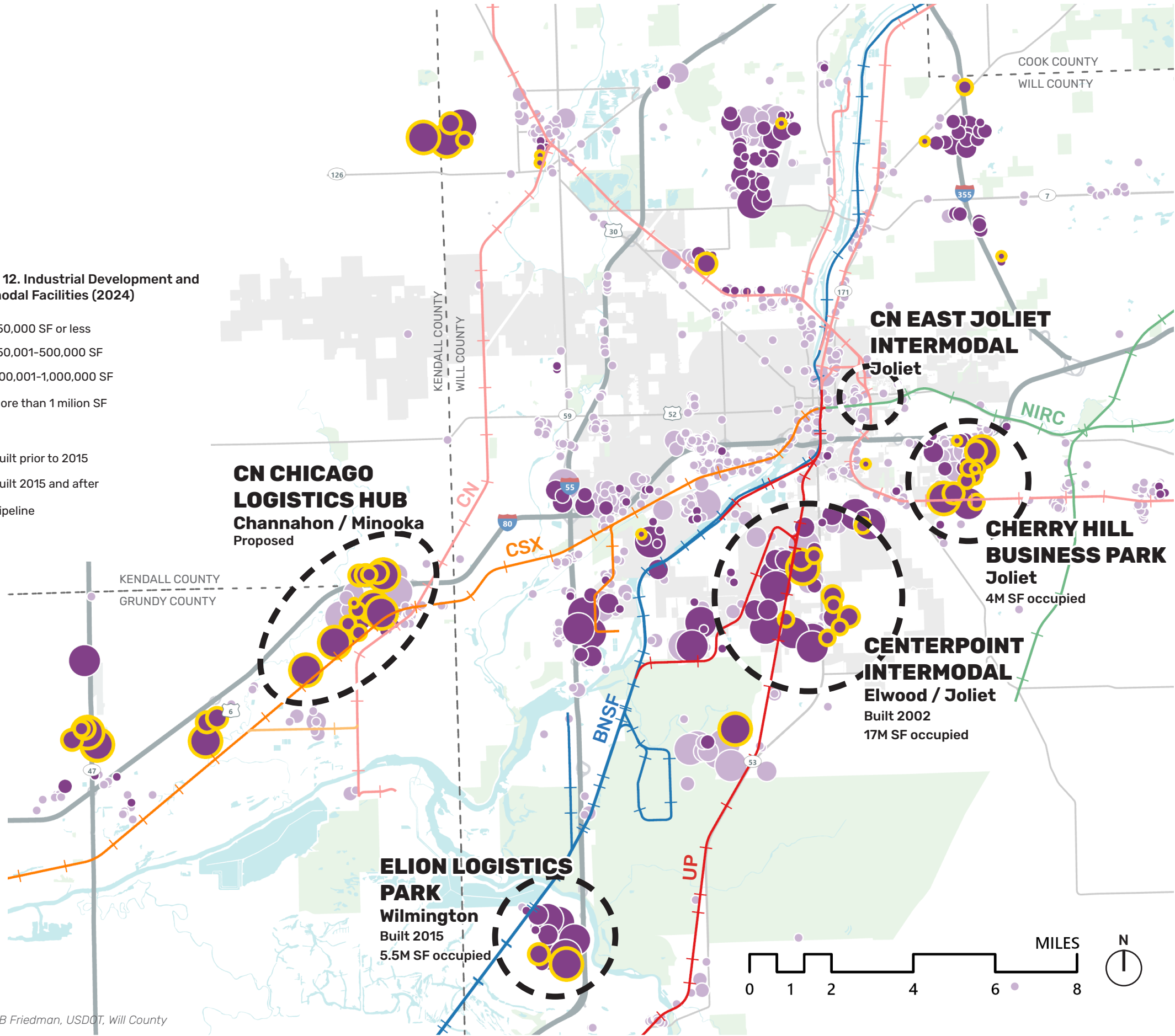
Major e-commerce retailers require increasingly large regional distribution centers that meet the demand for one- and two-day deliveries. These regional distribution centers also need ready access to multiple modes of freight transportation—including rail, interstates, navigable waterways and international airports—to connect to both domestic and global supply chains.<sup>20</sup>

Joliet’s strong access to transportation networks, location in the Chicago region, and intermodal capacity have led to a booming industrial real estate market focused on transportation, distribution, and logistics (TD&L).

In Will County, five Class 1 railroads, multiple intermodal facilities, four interstate highways, and three navigable waterways create connections to regional and national freight markets, making it a center for global trade. CenterPoint Intermodal Center—the largest inland port in the nation—has dual campuses in Elwood and Joliet and handles over 3.5 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of cargo annually, the fifth most among all US ports.<sup>21</sup> Elion Logistics Park was developed further south in Wilmington on the BNSF rail, and an additional intermodal facility—CN Chicago Logistics Hub—is planned just southwest of Joliet in Grundy County (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Industrial Development and Intermodal Facilities (2024)

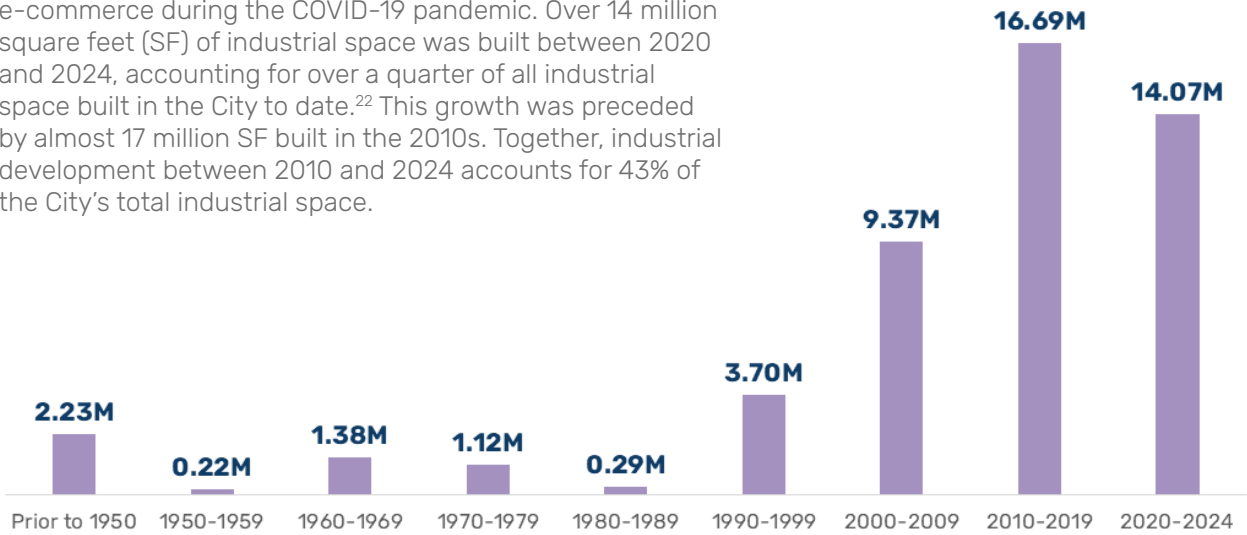
- 150,000 SF or less
- 150,001-500,000 SF
- 500,001-1,000,000 SF
- More than 1 million SF
- Built prior to 2015
- Built 2015 and after
- Pipeline



Source: CoStar, Esri, SB Friedman, USDOT, Will County

Figure 13. Industrial SF by Year Built

Industrial real estate growth in Joliet has been particularly strong in recent years, accelerated by growth in e-commerce during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 14 million square feet (SF) of industrial space was built between 2020 and 2024, accounting for over a quarter of all industrial space built in the City to date.<sup>22</sup> This growth was preceded by almost 17 million SF built in the 2010s. Together, industrial development between 2010 and 2024 accounts for 43% of the City’s total industrial space.



Source: CoStar

**Reflecting increasing e-commerce, demand for distribution and logistics space has defined Joliet’s industrial real estate market in recent years.**

Of the total 51.6 million SF of industrial space in Joliet, distribution facilities comprise 62% (32.0 million SF) and warehouse facilities comprise 27% (14.1 million SF).<sup>23</sup> Since 2010, new development has been almost fully driven by the need for distribution facilities. Approximately 84% of all industrial space developed since 2010 has been distribution space with an additional 11% comprised of warehouse space. Distribution facilities tend to be significantly larger than other industrial uses. Distribution spaces in Joliet have an average of 670,000 SF, compared to 150,000 SF for manufacturing and 70,000 SF for warehouses.<sup>24</sup> Spaces built since 2010 are even larger: new construction distribution spaces are an average of 760,000 SF, while new warehouses average 260,000 SF.

**Recent development of manufacturing space has been limited but could increase given national efforts to expand manufacturing onshoring.**

Manufacturing uses comprise only 7% of total industrial square footage in Joliet. New development of manufacturing space has slowed significantly in recent years: less than 1% of industrial space built since 2010 has been for manufacturing uses.<sup>25</sup>

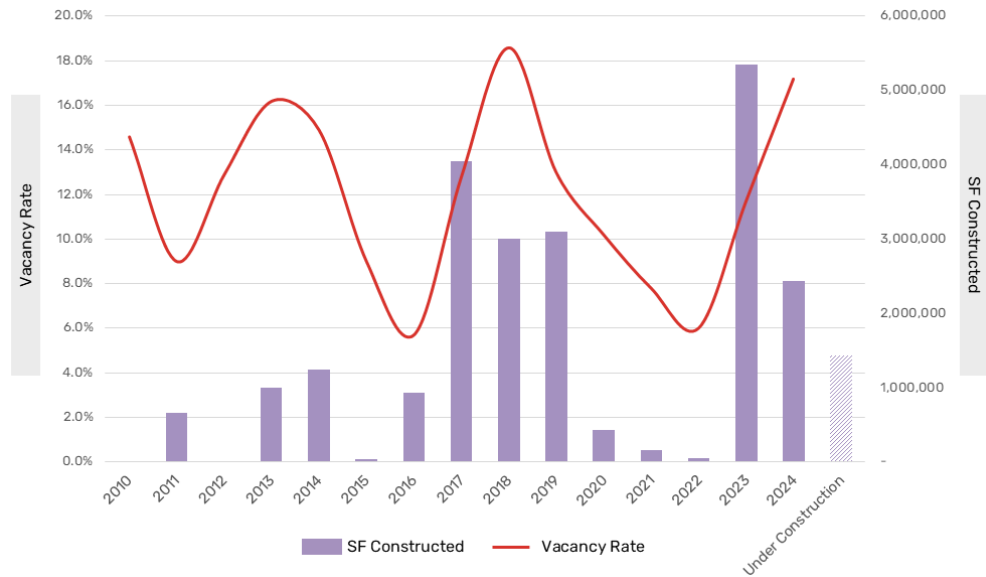
Despite limited growth, Joliet is well-positioned to expand manufacturing, especially as national momentum around manufacturing onshoring accelerates. Building resilient supply chains—including diversifying domestic production and logistics capacity—is a key component of manufacturing onshoring. Joliet’s existing transportation assets, robust supply of distribution and logistics facilities, and intermodal capacity give the City and region a key competitive advantage as this trend accelerates.

**Despite substantial growth in recent years, increasing vacancy, negative net absorption, and slowing new construction indicate a softening industrial real estate market.**

Vacancy typically increases as new space is constructed and decreases as the space is leased up and absorbed, as shown in Figure 14. Between 2014 and 2023, over 18 million SF of industrial space was built in Joliet.<sup>26</sup> While the vacancy rate fluctuated as this space was delivered, net absorption remained positive, demonstrating consistent, high demand for industrial space. However, net absorption in 2024 was negative for the first time since 2013, indicating softening demand with more space vacated than leased. The vacancy rate increased to 17.2% in 2024, up from 11.7% in 2023 and a low of 6.0% in 2022. This dynamic reflects national trends following an intensive period of growth in 2020-2022.

Across the regional submarket, vacancy rates are lowest for flex space.<sup>27</sup> Flex spaces tend to be significantly smaller than distribution facilities and can accommodate a wide variety of industrial, office, and other business users. While the market for distribution may be relatively saturated, opportunities could exist for flex space that appeals to a broader range of businesses.

Figure 14. Industrial Vacancy and New Construction (2010-2024)



Source: CoStar

# Key Considerations

## Industrial Market

- Industrial uses are a core component of Joliet’s economy and real estate market. The City is well positioned to access regional, national, and international markets.
- Development has boomed in recent years, but the pace of growth is slowing. Increasing vacancy, negative net absorption, and limited new construction indicate that the market may be softening, particularly for large-scale distribution facilities.
- Alternate industrial development typologies, such as smaller, flexible spaces that can accommodate a variety of end users, could present an opportunity for additional growth in the future.
- The national push towards manufacturing onshoring presents a key opportunity to diversify Joliet’s local economy, grow high-wage jobs, and support the industrial real estate market. Joliet is well-positioned to expand manufacturing given key competitive advantages such as strong transportation networks, distribution space, and intermodal capacity.



# Retail Market

## Joliet has a relatively stable, established retail market.

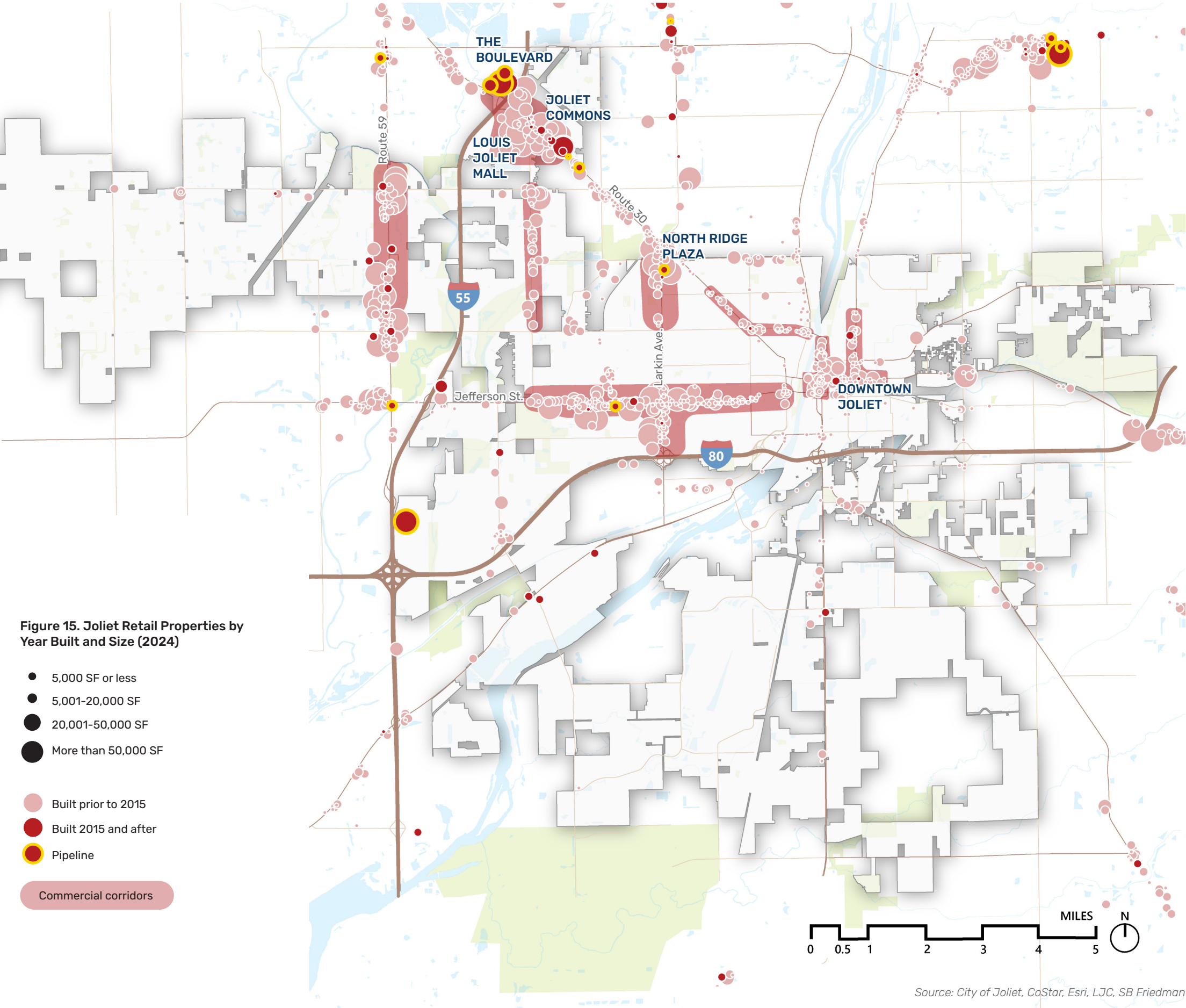
Overall, there is 9.6 million SF of retail in Joliet, with an additional 240,000 SF proposed as part of the Rock Run Collection development.<sup>28</sup>

Nationally, new retail construction remains low, and expanding retailers are increasingly looking to occupy vacant space. Both real estate investors and tenants are demonstrating a “flight-to-quality,” favoring high-quality retail centers located in key locations along prime transportation routes with proximity to dense and/or growing population centers. Location preferences are also driven by a desire for strategic co-tenancies by high-performing big box retailers and smaller outlots that prefer to locate in existing retail centers. Over-retailed commercial corridors in less-trafficked locations are rightsizing their retail supply by assessing opportunities for repurposing, converting, and/or demolishing existing or obsolete spaces.

Reflecting these nation trends, recent retail construction in Joliet has consisted primarily of single- and multi-tenant outlot development and standalone, mid-size retail tenanted by national retailers (Figure 16). Since 2015, 230,000 SF of retail has been developed in Joliet, the majority just south of the I-55/ Highway 30 interchange near several of the large shopping centers.




Figure 15. Joliet Retail Properties by Year Built and Size (2024)

- 5,000 SF or less
- 5,001-20,000 SF
- 20,001-50,000 SF
- More than 50,000 SF
- Built prior to 2015
- Built 2015 and after
- Pipeline
- Commercial corridors



Source: City of Joliet, CoStar, Esri, LJC, SB Friedman

Figure 16. Examples of Retail New Development Typologies (2024)

			
	<b>Aspen Dental, American Mattress, AT&amp;T Joliet Commons</b>	<b>Portillo's North Ridge Plaza</b>	<b>Car Max Route 59</b>
Address	2901 Plainfield Rd	1444 N Larkin Ave	500 Houbolt Rd
Type	Multi-tenant outlot	Single-tenant outlot	Single-tenant
Location	Home Depot outlot by Joliet Commons	Northridge Plaza	Standalone
Year Built	2017	2021	2023
Size	8,200 SF	3,300 SF	8,900 SF
Percent Leased	80%	100%	100%

Source: CoStar, Google Maps

Retail markets typically encompass a diverse array of property types and scales to meet different consumer needs.

Retail clusters are categorized into three major typologies based on their general market reach: regional-serving, community-serving, and downtown/main street. These typologies differ based on scale, number and type of anchors, and size of trade area.

Regional-serving retail in Joliet is concentrated near the I-55/Lincoln Highway interchange (e.g., Louis Joliet Mall and Joliet Commons), along Jefferson Street, and near the I-80/Larkin Avenue interchange. These retail clusters can include regional or super-regional malls anchored by major department stores, power centers with multiple large anchor tenants, and master-planned lifestyles centers with national retailers and a focus on dining and entertainment.

- While the Louis Joliet Mall has lost major department stores and restaurant anchor tenants in recent years, new multi- and single-tenant outlot retail have been developed nearby. A multifamily housing developer has also expressed interest in redeveloping the former Sears site, which would provide over 250 units of housing at this underutilized property, although no concrete plans have been submitted.

- The Boulevard, a 171 acre phased, mixed-use lifestyle center project just north of the I-55 & Route 30 interchange, is located within both the City of Joliet and Village of Plainfield. The first phases have been completed, adding dining and retail destinations. When fully complete, it will include a mix of residential, retail, restaurant, entertainment, and other commercial uses and may include multi-family uses within a pedestrian friendly campus.
- Rock Run Collection’s 240,000 SF of proposed retail development will provide additional lifestyle-oriented uses when complete.

The development underway at these three major retail hubs aligns with national trends for regional-serving retail centers, which continue to reposition and be reimaged as mixed-use centers as consumer preferences and trends evolve. Nationally, brick-and-mortar retail is increasingly driven by demand for experiential retail focused on food, services, well-being, and entertainment. While momentum of this growth was stalled by the pandemic, the last three years have seen a recalibration of this trend. For more traditional retailers, creating a unique shopping experience can also help attract customers who might otherwise buy products online.

Community-serving retail is concentrated along the city’s main commercial corridors of Jefferson Street, Route 59, Larkin Avenue, and Route 30. Most new developments in the past 15 years have been retail to serve the local neighborhoods. Frequently, these developments are outlots in midsize shopping centers, outlots of regional-serving retailers, or standalone, greenfield developments and primarily tenanted by national retailers providing essential goods. Examples include new development at North Ridge Plaza (including Portillo’s, Starbucks and Discovery Clothing) and outlot development at the Home Depot (including Aspen Dental, American Mattress and AT&T), and a standalone Dollar General and Starbucks on Houbolt Road.

Retail consumer buying power and preferences are driven by shifts in household composition, age, and income. Community-serving retail is particularly impacted by changing demographics due to its focus on essential household items within a local market. As household density increases, more retail can be supported within the local market. As the share of older residents increases, there may be increasing demand for certain types of retail goods or services and less demand for others. As incomes increase, households may spend more on non-essential retail goods and services. However, if the costs of housing, child care and other essential needs rise faster than incomes, households may limit their spending in non-essential areas. Rising and persistent inflation, an uncertain economic climate, and other macroeconomic factors can also impact consumer spending.

Growing e-commerce also has impacts on community-serving retail. Over the last decade, the market share of online sales has steadily increased, with a massive expansion in 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the start of 2025, e-commerce retail sales accounted for 16.4% of total retail sales in the U.S., up from 4.1% in 2010.<sup>29</sup> This trend has changed how traditional brick-and-mortar retail stores integrate digital offerings (e.g., curbside pickups, drive-throughs, showroom-style retail) with in-person services.

Joliet’s downtown retail market provides smaller-scale, predominantly storefront retail in a walkable, pedestrian-oriented setting. Compared to regional-serving and community-serving retail, downtown retail offerings are more likely to be local and/or small businesses rather than national retailers. While downtown retail markets serve the local community, they typically draw from a broader market as well.

While downtown retail space is older, it benefits from co-location near amenities that attract visitors and support local tourism such as the Rialto Square Theatre, The Forge, the Joliet Area Historical Museum, Joliet Union Station, and the Joliet Slammers Stadium. Downtown retail is also supported by traffic from office workers, including Will County government employees, and educational institutions like Joliet Junior College and the University of St. Francis.

The City administers various incentive programs focused on supporting downtown businesses. These include the City Center SSA, which provides grants to offset the cost of façade, exterior and interior improvements, and the City Center TIF District, which has 12 active projects as of early 2025. A broader Downtown TIF District was also recently established, though no active projects currently exist. In addition to incentives for businesses, public investments can also help bolster the downtown’s retail market by supporting increased foot traffic and pedestrian interaction with local businesses. Projects underway include the City Square and Chicago Street Reconstruction projects.

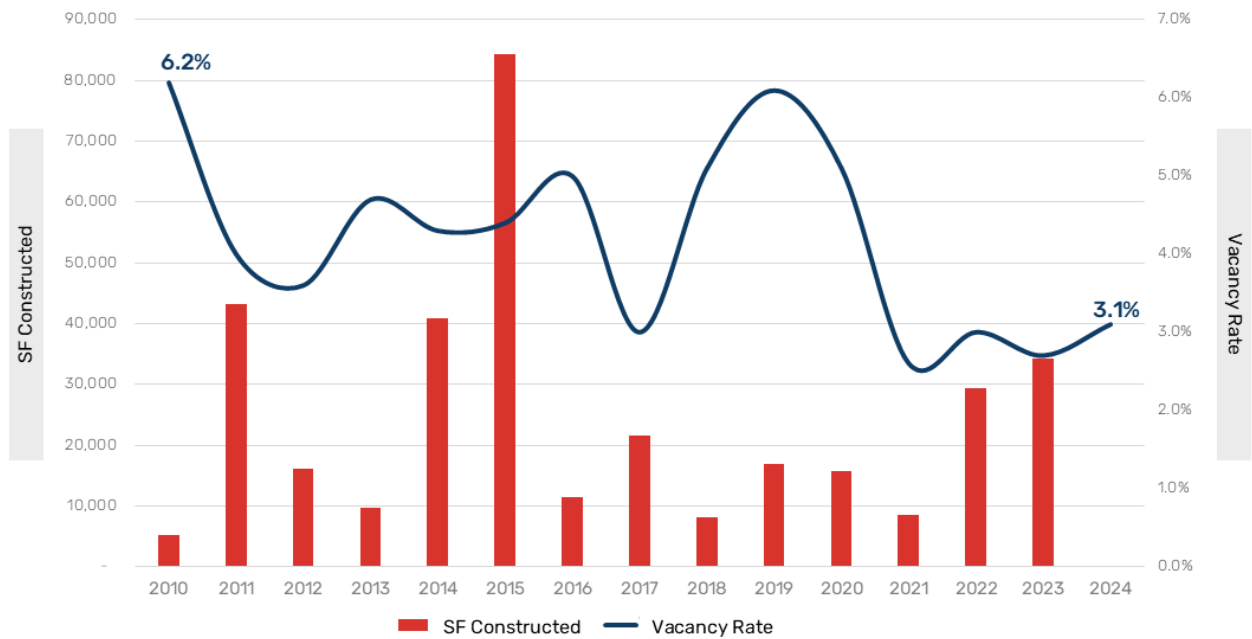


Retail vacancy has generally remained low and is comparable to the broader submarket.

As of June 2025, Joliet’s retail vacancy rate was 3.1%, lower than peer communities such as Aurora (5.4%) and Naperville (4.5%).<sup>30</sup> There has been consistent retail leasing activity in Joliet, comprised primarily of small food and service retail as retailers continue to right-size

their footprints. Large recent leases include Burlington and Galleria Furniture (2024), DD’s Discounts (2023), and Planet Fitness (2022). Overall, roughly 340,000 SF of retail space has been leased since 2020.

Figure 17. Retail Vacancy and New Construction (2010-2024)



Source: CoStar

# Key Considerations

## Retail Market

- Joliet is home to a variety of retail typologies to support regional tourism and serve local consumers.
- Convenience-oriented, outlot retail development has dominated in recent years.
- Development of lifestyle-oriented retail is ramping up, with the re-envisioning of the Louis Joliet Mall as a mixed-used development, The Boulevard, and Rock Run Collection in various stages of development and planning. This reflects national retail trends and the growing demand for experiential retail offerings.
- Retail change typically mirrors demographic trends related to population and household growth, incomes, resident age, and consumer preferences. Significant new retail development would likely be limited without additional population growth and/or increases in tourism.
- Pedestrian, streetscape, and public-space investments can help continue to boost the downtown retail market.



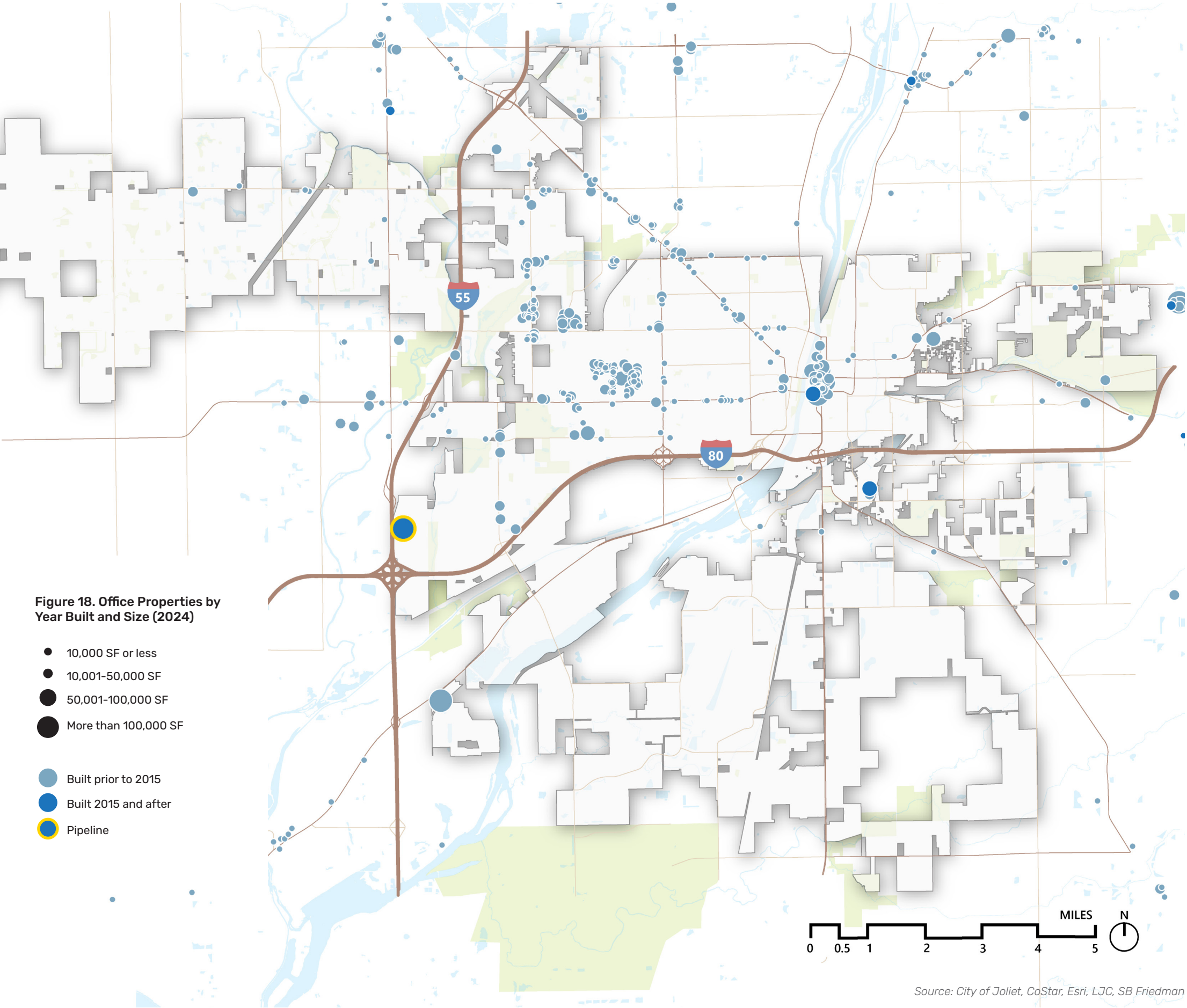
# Office Market

**In total, there is 3.9 million SF of office space in Joliet, with limited new development in recent years.**

There are concentrations of office space in the City’s downtown, anchored by public administration offices, and near St. Joseph Medical Center, with a large number of medical offices. Most office development occurred in the 1970s through the 2000s. Fifty office buildings comprising 660,000 SF of office space were built in the 2000s, the largest decade of growth, but development has been limited since. Only five new office buildings have been built since 2010.<sup>31</sup>

**Figure 18. Office Properties by Year Built and Size (2024)**

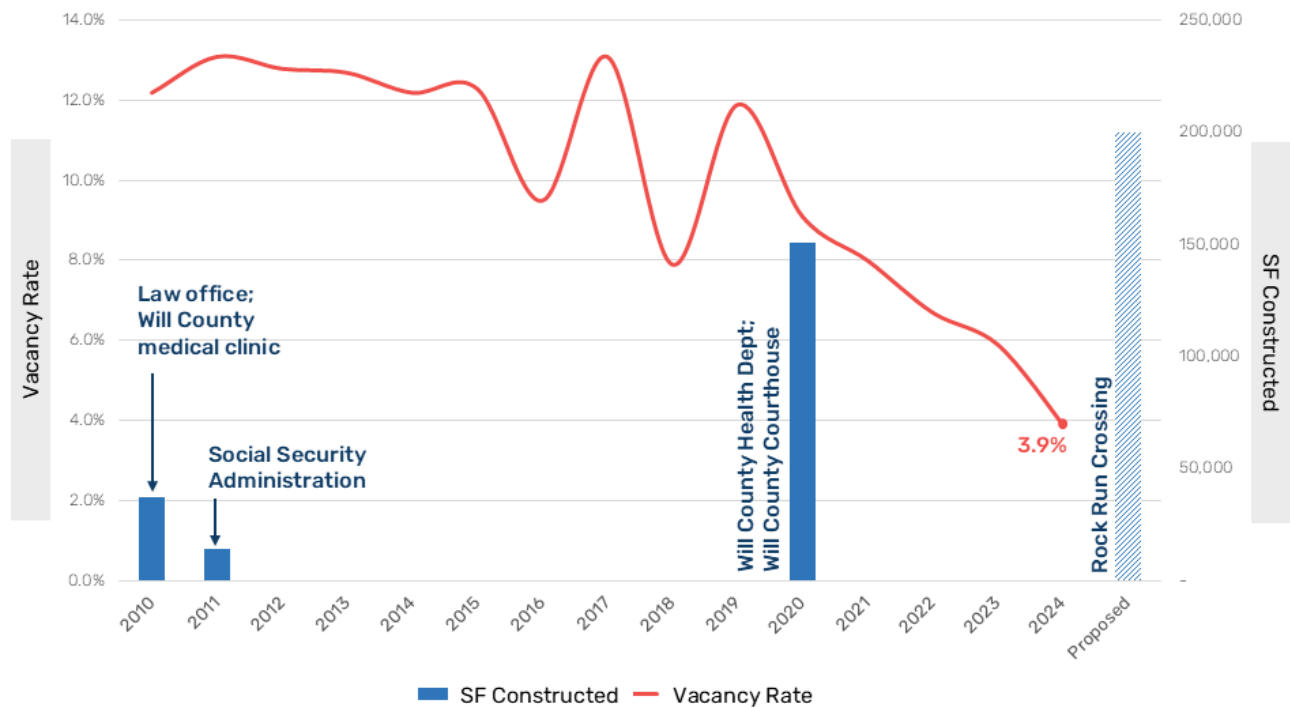
- 10,000 SF or less
- 10,001-50,000 SF
- 50,001-100,000 SF
- More than 100,000 SF
- Built prior to 2015
- Built 2015 and after
- Pipeline



Source: City of Joliet, CoStar, Esri, LJC, SB Friedman



Figure 19. Office Vacancy and New Construction, 2010-2024



Source: CoStar

**As the county seat, limited recent office construction has been driven almost fully by public facilities.**

Built in 2020, the two largest new construction properties include offices for the Will County Department of Public Health and the Will County Courthouse (Figure 19). Office space for the Social Security Administration was developed in 2011, and a County medical clinic was built in 2010. The demand for public administration office space also helps keep Joliet’s overall office vacancy rate relatively low. As of June 2025, the vacancy rate for office space in Joliet is approximately 3.9%, lower than peer cities such as Naperville (12.5%) and Aurora (15.3%). The vacancy rate has been declining steadily since 2020.

In terms of private market office space, only one property has been developed over the past 15 years—a 7,700-SF law office built in 2010.<sup>32</sup>

**Regionally, new private office development has been driven by demand for medical office space.**

Hospitals tend to have a broad local or even regional draw, supporting an expanded office market for specialists, rehabilitation centers, and other medical services. As essential services that support residents, medical services, and demand for medical office space are driven by large and/or growing populations. Medical offices are typically located near hospitals, medical centers, or major highway interchanges, helping to expand their market.

Over a quarter of Joliet’s total office market is comprised of medical office space, and 53% of all office space leased in 2024 went to health care and social assistance tenants. An additional 200,000 SF of office space is proposed at Rock Run Collection, which is currently being marketed as medical office space.<sup>33</sup>

# Key Considerations

## Office Market

- In recent years, the office market has been driven by demand for government office space. Private-sector development has been extremely limited.
- Regionally, most new office development is targeted towards medical users. As the third largest City in the state and the home of a large hospital system, Joliet is well positioned to expand into this market segment. Specific healthcare needs will continue to evolve tied to changing demographics and increases in older residents.



# Hotel Market

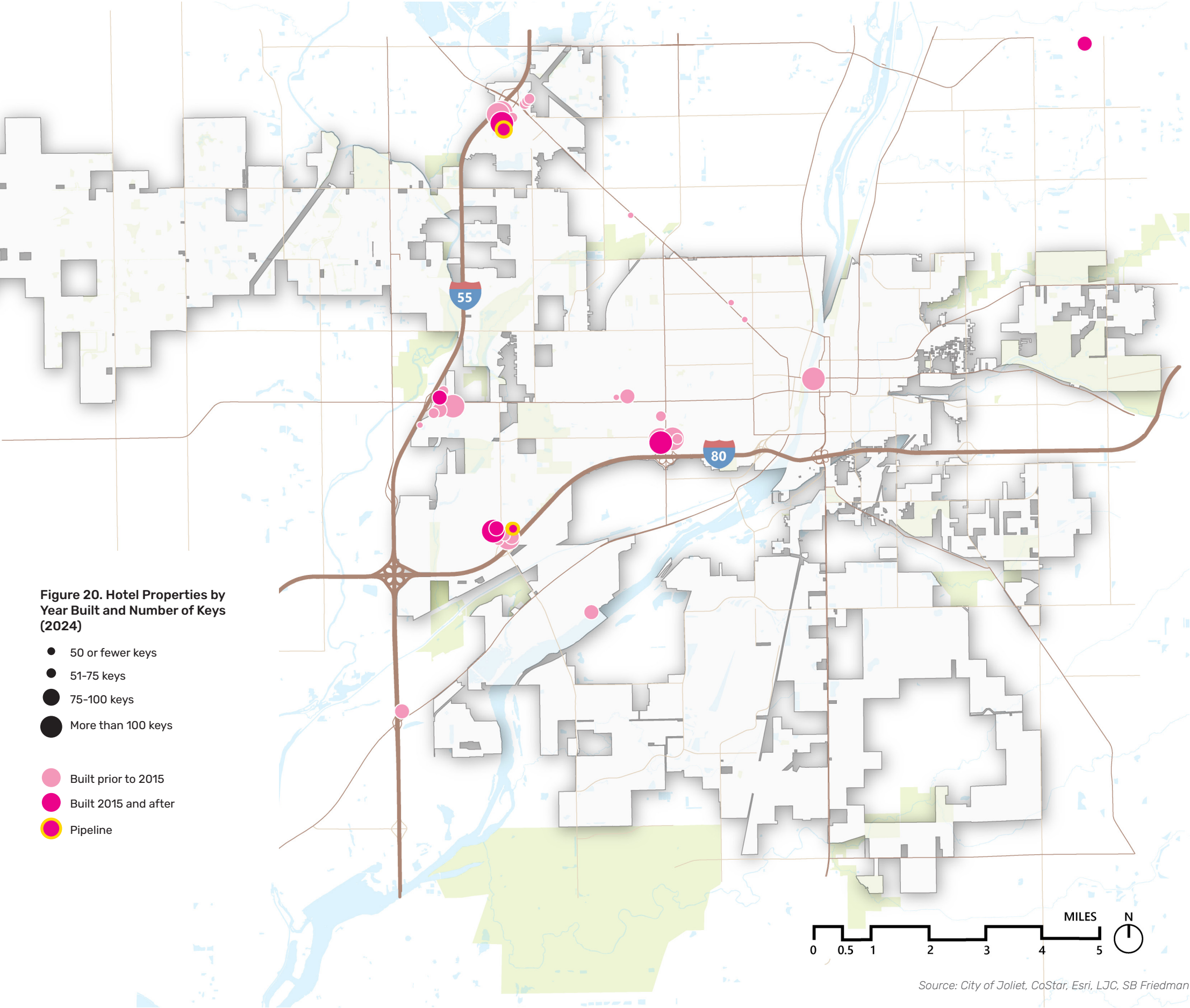
**Joliet’s hotel market is driven by both location and tourism amenities.**

The market is comprised of economy and midscale hotels located predominantly near major highway interchanges, attracting patrons who are traveling either to or through the area. The convergence of I-55 and I-80 is a key juncture for people traveling east/west across the country as well as south from the Chicago area.

Two hotels support the City’s casinos. Harrah’s Casino in downtown Joliet operates an attached 200-room upper midscale hotel, while the Hollywood Casino further south along the Des Plaines River operates an attached 100-room midscale hotel. Both hotels were built in the 1990s and renovated in the 2010s. The Hollywood Casino is moving from its current location to the Rock Run Collection, with plans to open in late 2025. While some new hotel development is anticipated at Rock Run Collection, the casino has no plans to construct an attached casino hotel as part of their relocation.

**Figure 20. Hotel Properties by Year Built and Number of Keys (2024)**




- 50 or fewer keys
- 51-75 keys
- 75-100 keys
- More than 100 keys
- Built prior to 2015
- Built 2015 and after
- Pipeline



Source: City of Joliet, CoStar, Esri, LJC, SB Friedman



Figure 21. Example Hotel Typologies

			
	<b>Best Western Joliet Inn &amp; Suites</b>	<b>Harrah's Joliet Casino</b>	<b>Holiday Inn &amp; Suites Joliet Southwest</b>
Address	4380 Enterprise Dr	151 N Joliet St	1471 Rock Creek Blvd
Class	Midscale	Upper Midscale	Upper Midscale
Keys	60	200	120
Year Built	1999	1998 / renovated 2015	2018

Source: CoStar

Overall, Joliet has 30 hotels with a total of 2,462 keys.

Eleven are economy hotels, eight are midscale, and an additional eleven are upper midscale. There are no upscale or luxury hotels in the City. Hotel development expanded in the 1990s, with half of all existing hotels and keys built during this decade. Hotel development has picked up again slightly in recent years, with two new hotels built in 2022 and 2023. An additional three hotels comprising 241 keys are in the development pipeline, two near the I-80/Houbolt Rd interchange and a third near the I-55/Route 30 interchange.<sup>34</sup>

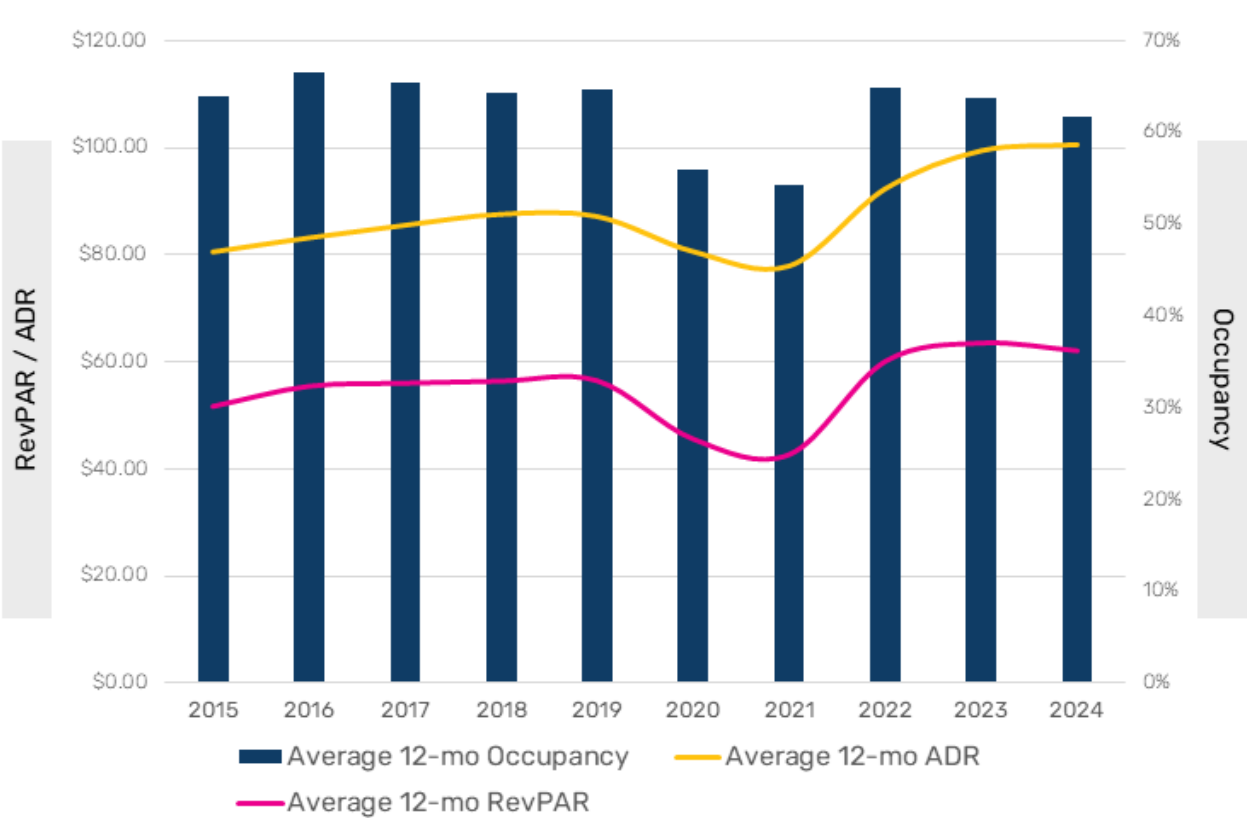
Hotel performance and recovery post-pandemic has been strong.

Hotels were particularly hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, as stay-at-home mandates in 2020 and early 2021 limited travel. Average 12-month occupancy dipped from 65% in 2019 to 56% in 2020, while revenue per available room (RevPAR) decreased from \$56 per room to \$45 (Figure 22). Occupancy rebounded back to pre-COVID levels in 2022, dipping only slightly with the delivery of 190 keys across two new hotels built in 2022 and 2023. RevPAR has increased past pre-COVID levels, at \$62 per room as of November 2024.<sup>35</sup>

Near-term hotel demand is likely to be met by hotels currently under construction, proposed or in the planning stages.

In addition to the three hotels (241 keys) that are currently in the development pipeline, future hotel development is planned at Rock Run Collection. When completed, Rock Run Collection is intended to add over 500 additional keys to Joliet’s hotel supply. Its hotel properties will be supported by the relocation of the Hollywood Casino to the site, other future shopping and entertainment uses, and visitor traffic from the development’s key location at the I-80/I-55 interchange.

Figure 22. Hotel Average 12-Month Occupancy, ADR (Average Daily Rate), and RevPAR (Revenue per Available Room) (2024)



Source: CoStar (as of November 2024)

Key Considerations

Hotel Market

- Joliet’s hotel market is supported by its geographic location near major interstates and the City’s two casino hotels which draw regional visitors.
- There has been some recent hotel development, with increased development expected to continue. All hotels in the development pipeline are located near major interchanges, including over 500 rooms planned at Rock Run Collection.





Image source: City of Joliet

# 06

## Multi-Modal Mobility

### Integrated Mobility for a Connected Joliet

The City of Joliet has long served as a crossroads of American trade. Its robust transportation network includes major interstates, freight corridors, commuter and national rail service, and a navigable waterway. These systems continue to support its role as a growing regional center in northeastern Illinois. With 532 miles of rail, three intermodal facilities, and terminals for bulk freight movement on the Des Plaines River, Joliet functions as a major freight hub. The City also has direct access to interstates 55 and 80, close access to I-355, and connections to numerous state and U.S. routes.

As residential, industrial, and commercial development expands, Joliet faces increasingly complex mobility demands. Understanding how people and goods move by foot, bike, bus, train, water, or car is essential to planning for a safe, connected, and inclusive future. This

Multi Modal Transportation Analysis will assess current transportation conditions and how they impact the movement of residents, goods, and services throughout Joliet.



# Roadway Network

## Functional Class

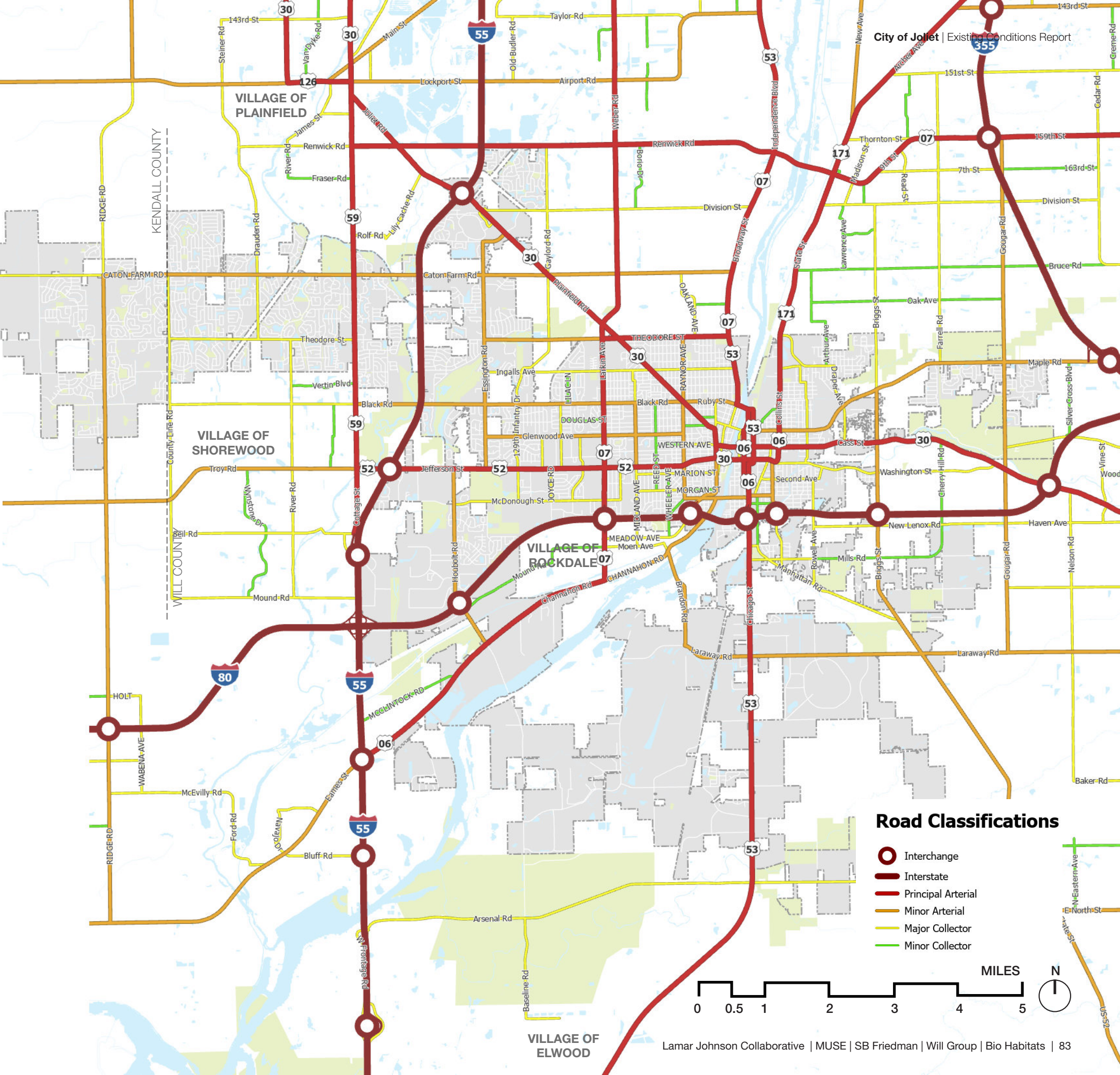
The US Department of Transportation assigns functional classifications to roadways to define their role within the broader transportation network. These classifications help determine funding eligibility, design standards, and planning priorities. In the City of Joliet, the roadway network is composed of several functional classes that reflect varying levels of mobility and access.

**Interstates:** These are high-speed, limited-access roadways designed for long-distance travel and the efficient movement of people and goods. Interstates are part of the National Highway System and serve major regional, statewide, and national traffic. Access is controlled through interchanges, and they typically have multiple lanes, medians, and no at-grade intersections. The City has direct and close access to many interchanges on Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Interstates I-55 and I-80 as well as near access to toll highway I-355 run by the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority (ISTHA).

- I-80 (IDOT) East-west access across the region and country.
- I-55 (IDOT) Access to the City of Chicago as well as north-south access within the region.
- I-355 (ISTHA) Access to the northern suburbs within the region.

## Interstates

- I-55 and Route 30
- I-55 and Route 52
- I-55 and Route 59
- I-55 and I-80
- I-80 and Houbolt Road
- I-80 and Larkin
- I-80 and Raynor Avenue
- I-80 and Route 52
- I-80 and Richards St.
- I-80 and Briggs





## Regional Connectivity

The City of Joliet, located approximately 40 miles southwest of downtown Chicago in Will County, Illinois, benefits from a robust network of regional transportation connections that enhance its accessibility via US, State and local routes.

### Principal Arterial

Principal arterials serve major activity centers and carry high volumes of traffic over long distances within urban or rural areas. They provide mobility through their connectivity with interstates and other smaller arterial routes. Access is more controlled than on lower classifications, and signalized intersections are common in urban areas. The principal arterials within the City and region are all Illinois and US Routes and make the City of Joliet a central hub for traffic within the region.

- **US-6** East-west route transiting the City and providing access to I-355 in the Village of New Lenox and I-55 in the Village of Channahon.
- **US-30** East-west route providing access to I-55 in the northwest near the Village of Plainfield and I-80 in the Village of New Lenox.
- **US-52** East-west route providing access to I-55 near the Village of Shorewood and combined access with IL-53 to I-80.
- **IL-7** North-south route through the City providing access to I-80 and north to Crest Hill and Lockport.
- **IL-53** North-south route through the City providing access to I-80 and access north to Romeoville down to Elwood and Wilmington.
- **IL-59** North-south regional access providing access to I-55 on the south to Plainfield and Naperville to the north.
- **IL-171** North-south access to Lockport and I-355 towards Lemont.

### Minor Arterial

Minor arterials interconnect with principal arterials and provide access to smaller activity centers, commercial areas, and neighborhoods. They offer a balance between mobility and access, supporting moderate-length trips and linking to the collector street system.

Examples of Minor Arterials:

- **Caton Farm –** East-West access from Route 53 to Ridge Road with bridges over I-55 and the Dupage River.
- **Black Road-** East-West access from Route 53 to County Line Road with bridges over I-55 and the Dupage River.
- **Laraway Road –** East-West/North-South from Route 30 to municipal boundary.
- **Essington Road –** North-South access from Jefferson Street to Route 30.
- **Ridge Road –** North South access from Eames Street to Caton Farm Road.
- **Gougar Road –** North-South access from Laraway Road to 159th Street.

The Roadway Network Map provides additional detail on the Minor Arterial Road network.



### Major and Minor Collectors

Collectors serve a dual function: gathering traffic from local roads and distributing it to arterials.

- **Major Collectors-** Serve more significant traffic generators, such as schools and shopping centers, and connect rural towns or neighborhoods to arterials.
- **Minor Collectors-** Serve shorter distances and connect local roads in residential or rural areas to major collectors or minor arterials.

### Local

Local roads provide direct access to residential, commercial, and industrial properties. They make up the majority of roads by mileage but carry a small proportion of overall traffic. Local roads prioritize property access over through movement and typically have lower speed limits.

### Roadway Jurisdictions

Joliet has a network of transportation jurisdictions within its boundaries and adjacent planning areas. These include the Illinois Department of Transportation, Will County, and the City of Joliet. Indirectly, the Illinois State Highway Authority is responsible for Interstate 355. Each of them is responsible for varying levels of maintenance as well as major improvements to the road network and may have intergovernmental agreements in place for maintenance and funding partnerships.

### Truck Routes

The City of Joliet is at the crossroads of the United States and provides multiple truck routes throughout the City, Will County and beyond. The Illinois Department of Transportation in conjunction with Will County and the City of Joliet designate the following roads as Class I or Class II Truck Routes.

#### Class I (Interstates)

- Interstate 55
- Interstate 80
- Interstate 355 (adjacent)

#### Class II (Major Arterials)

- US Route 30
- US Route 52- 1,000 Heavy Vehicles per day
- Illinois Route 59
- Illinois Route 53
- Illinois Route 7
- Illinois Route 171

#### Class II (Local Arterials)

- Laraway Road
- Briggs Street



# Freight

The City of Joliet includes a robust regional freight network that includes four Class I railroads, bulk barge freight on the Des Plaines River, and access to three interstates for freight and intermodal services.

## Rail

The City of Joliet is served by four Class I freight railroads. The Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railroad (BNSF), Union Pacific Railroad (UP), the Canadian National Railroad (CN) and the Chessie System and Seaboard Coastline Railroad (CSX) each provide nationwide to worldwide reach to the City for its goods and commodities. This freight rail network connects Joliet to major ports- including Oakland, Los Angeles, Houston, and Norfolk - as well as to Canada, Mexico, and other logistics centers.

Amtrak also provides Class I passenger service across the country connecting it to cities across the country. Amtrak’s network provides direct connection to Chicago, St. Louis, Dallas, and San Antonio as well as connecting service across the country.

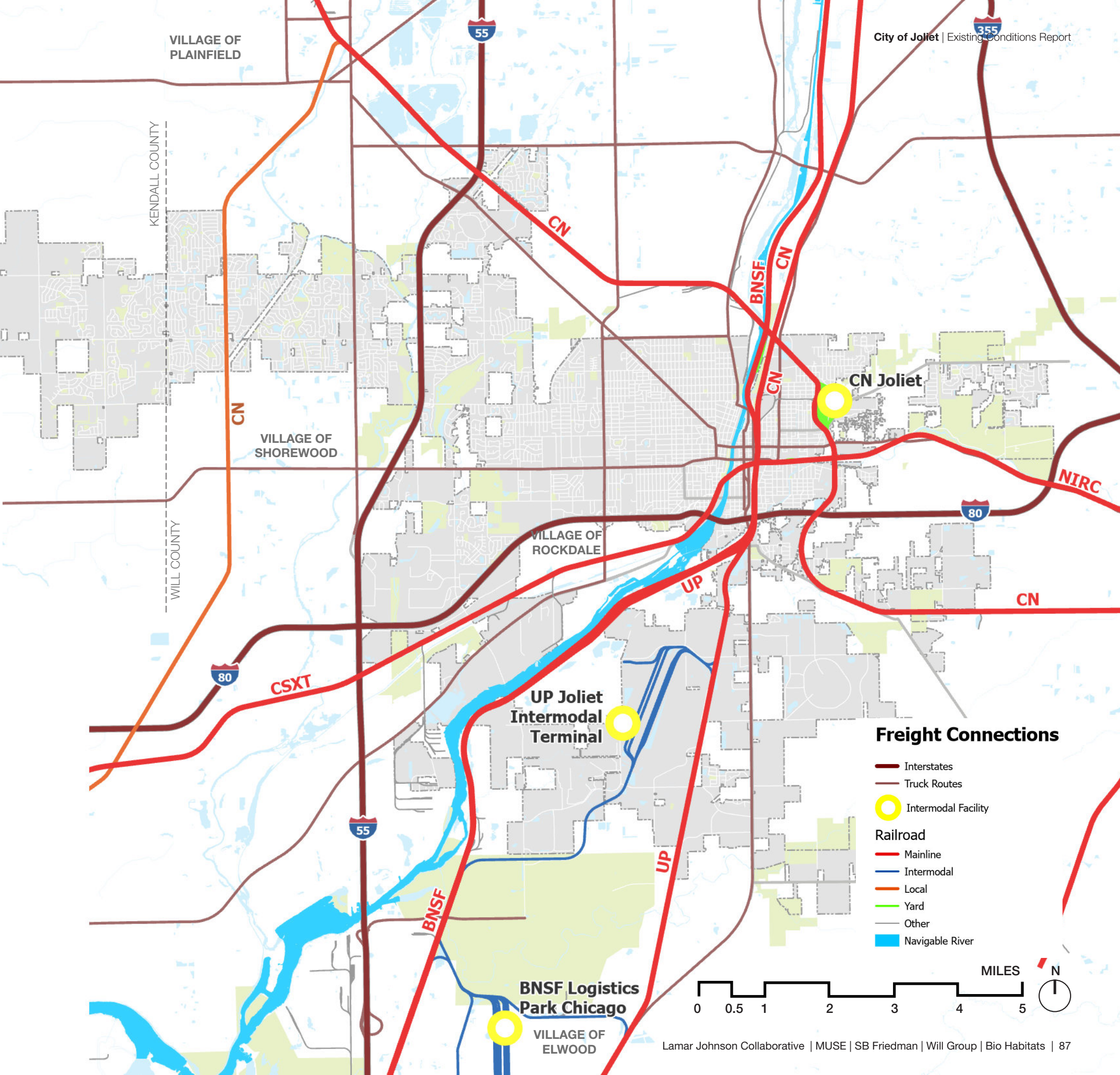
## Intermodals

The City of Joliet is served directly by three intermodal facilities. The two largest are the BNSF Logistic Park Chicago and the Union Pacific Global IV. Both of these facilities are within the Centerpoint Intermodal Center. The third is located east of downtown and is the CN Joliet yard. These facilities:

- Combined handle over 3.5 million twenty-foot equivalent (TEUs) international containers every year, 5th in the nation
- Combined hand 76 million bushels of grain annually
- Have the most intermodal lifts in the region at the BNSF Intermodal Facility

## River/Barge

The Des Plaines River, through Joliet, is a component of the Illinois Waterway system which provides a commercial shipping route from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River and access to markets via the Great Lakes and Mississippi River and beyond. Through this waterway linkage, raw materials and bulk product are shipped through Joliet as well as from Joliet along the numerous barge access points such as the Will County Barge Terminal in CenterPoint properties.

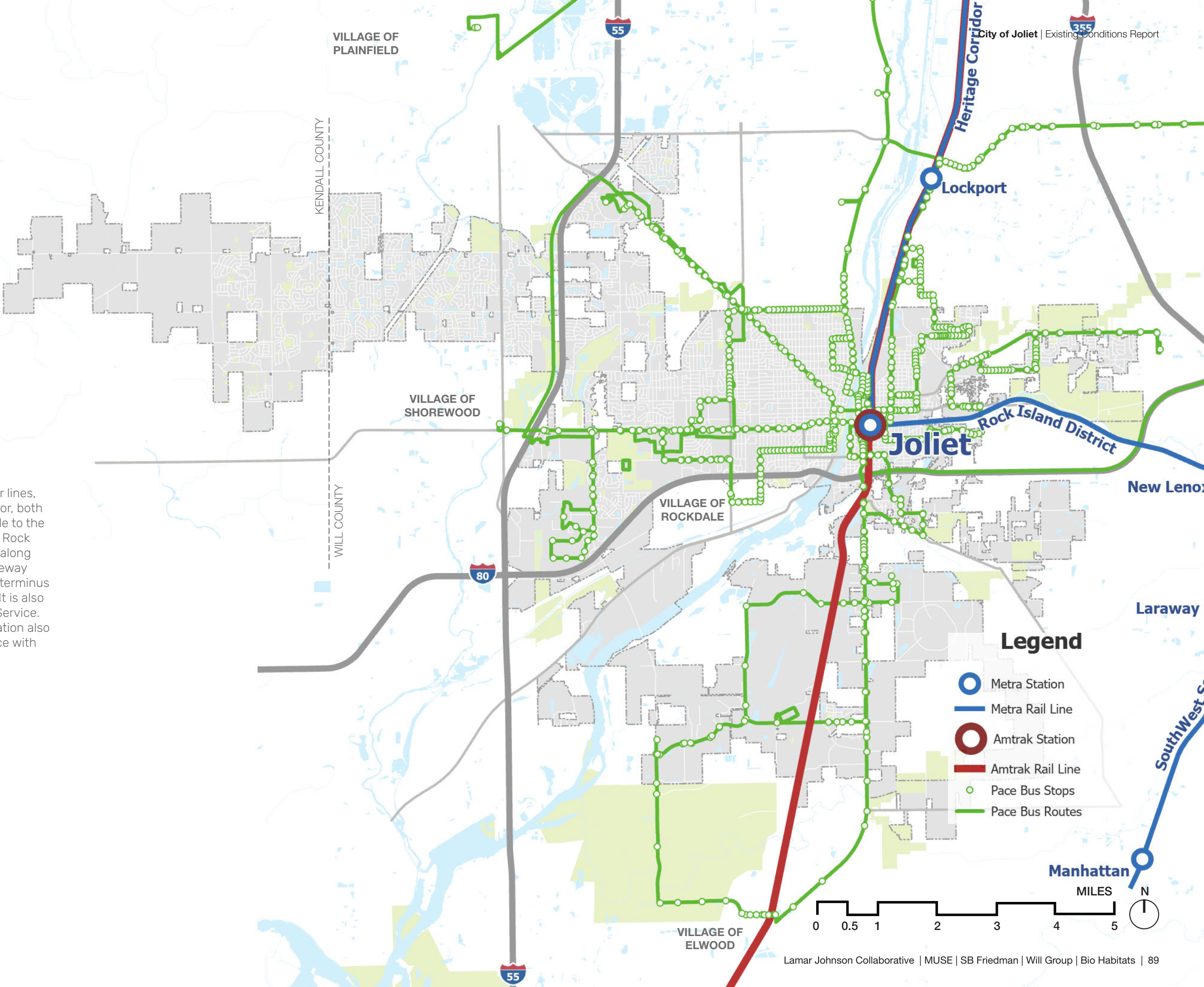




# Transit

## Rail

Joliet is currently served by two active commuter lines, known as the Rock Island and the Heritage Corridor, both operated by Metra. Train service has been available to the citizens of Joliet since at least 1852, first with the Rock Island Railroad which operated for over 170 years along the same route as the Rock Island. The Joliet Gateway Transportation Center Train Station serves as the terminus to the Rock Island and Heritage Corridor Service. It is also a stop for Amtrak for its Texas Eagle and Lincoln Service. The Joliet Gateway Transportation Center Bus Station also serves as the main hub for Joliet area Pace service with 10 buses per day.





Metra

Joliet is served weekdays by 42 trains per day on the Rock Island, 21 in each direction on weekdays. On Saturdays, there are 10 inbound trains and 11 outbound. On Sundays and Holidays, Metra provides a total of 16 trains – with eight in each direction. The Rock Island service begins at Joliet Gateway Transportation Center train station and terminates at LaSalle Street Station in Chicago (a total of 40 Miles).

The Heritage Corridor provides six trains per day during the weekdays, three in each direction. The Heritage Corridor runs a total of 37.2 miles with its terminus at Chicago Union Station. There is no weekend or Holiday Service on the Heritage.

The SouthWest Service line provides stops nearby for residents in the east and southeast areas of Joliet at Laraway Road and the Village of Manhattan. This service is limited for these two stops to five trains in each direction on weekdays. The SouthWest Service runs a total of 29 miles from the Village of Manhattan to its terminus at Chicago Union Station. There is no weekend or Holiday Service on the Southwest Service.

Boardings per station were last tracked in 2018. Joliet station saw a total daily boardings of 776 for inbound trains on the Rock Island District and 220 on inbound trains on the Heritage Corridor. The Laraway Road station on the SouthWest Service saw 19 inbound boardings.

Amtrak

Amtrak provides passenger service as a Class I railroad via Joliet Gateway Transportation Center train station. Amtrak provides daily service through the Lincoln Service and the Texas Eagle.

The Lincoln Service runs four trains per day with connectivity between Chicago and St. Louis. The service includes major stops in Bloomington–Normal and Springfield with intermediate stops along the way including Dwight, Pontiac, Carlinville, and Alton.

Amtrak’s Texas Eagle Service offers daily services (one train in each direction) connecting Chicago and San Antonio with stops in St. Louis, Conway, Arkansas and Dallas. The Eagle Service also provides an intermediate connection to Los Angeles with stops in El Paso, Tucson, and Palm Springs among others.

Pace

The City of Joliet is served by Pace for its bus service to its residents. The City has multiple bus routes operating across the City with its main hub within the Joliet Gateway Transportation Center. These routes include (2024 Total Route Ridership):

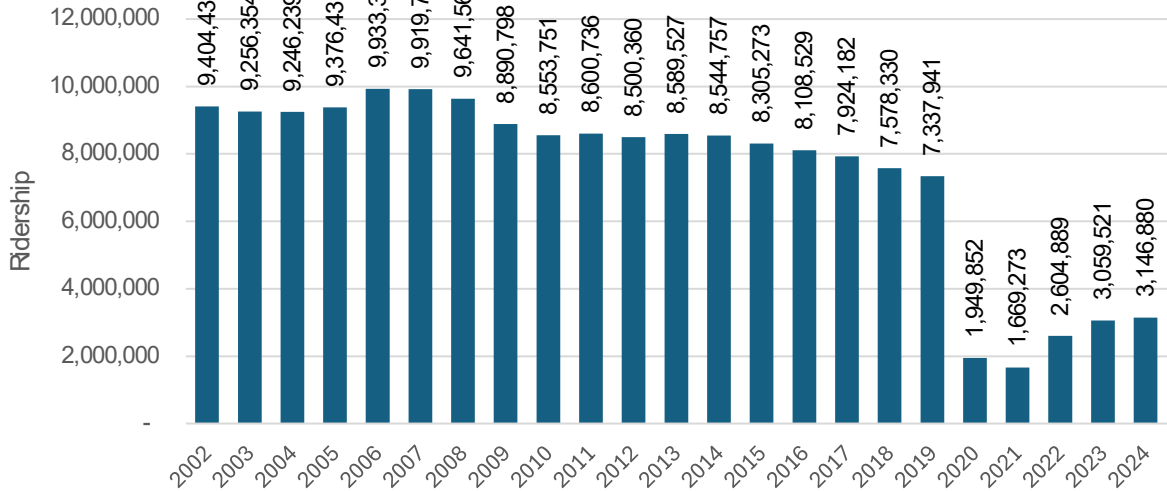
- 361 Harvey – Laraway Express (1,424)
- 501 - West Jefferson (5,892)
- 504 - South Joliet (1,061)
- 505 - West Joliet Loop (4,576)
- 507 - Plainfield (4,028)
- 508 - East Joliet (1,462)
- 509 - Joliet – Fairmont (1,458)
- 511 - Joliet – Elwood – CenterPoint (107)
- 512 - Joliet - CenterPoint (17)
- 832 - Joliet – Orland Park (506)
- 834 - Joliet – Downers Grove (5,316)

These routes provide a hub and spoke system with transfers across the City. Pace also provides ADA services across the City of Joliet.

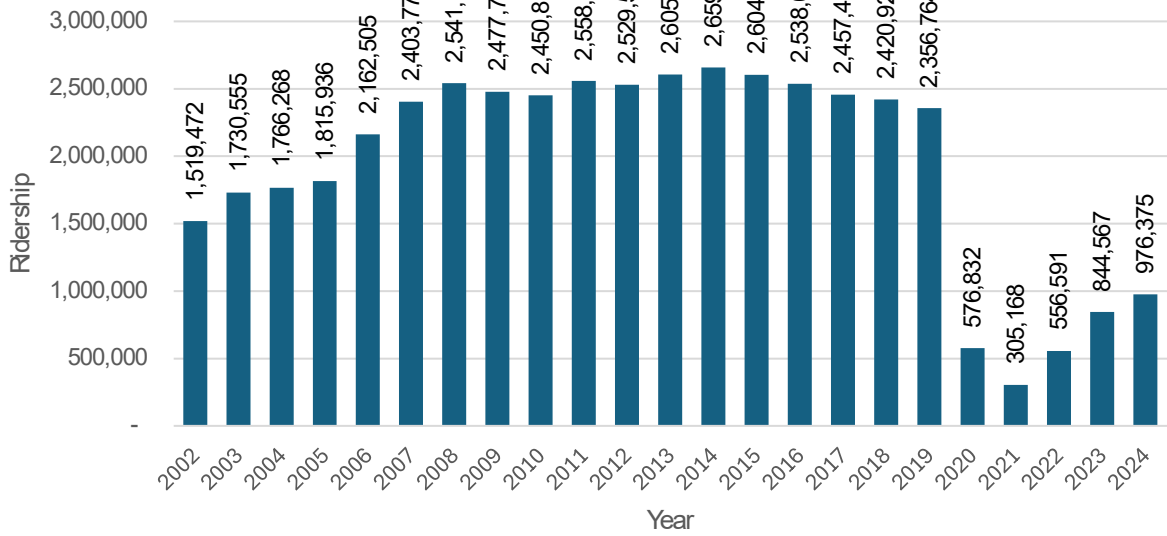
Air Transportation

The City of Joliet is served directly by the Joliet Regional Airport which is owned and operated by the Joliet Park District. The airport provides business and personal service to its residents. Joliet is also served regionally by Lewis University Airport located 2.5–3 miles north of the City in nearby Romeoville. US, regional and international connectivity is provide by O’Hare International Airport and Midway International Airport.

Rock Island District



SouthWest Service



Heritage Corridor





# Intra City Vehicular Network

## Vehicle Crash Hot Spots

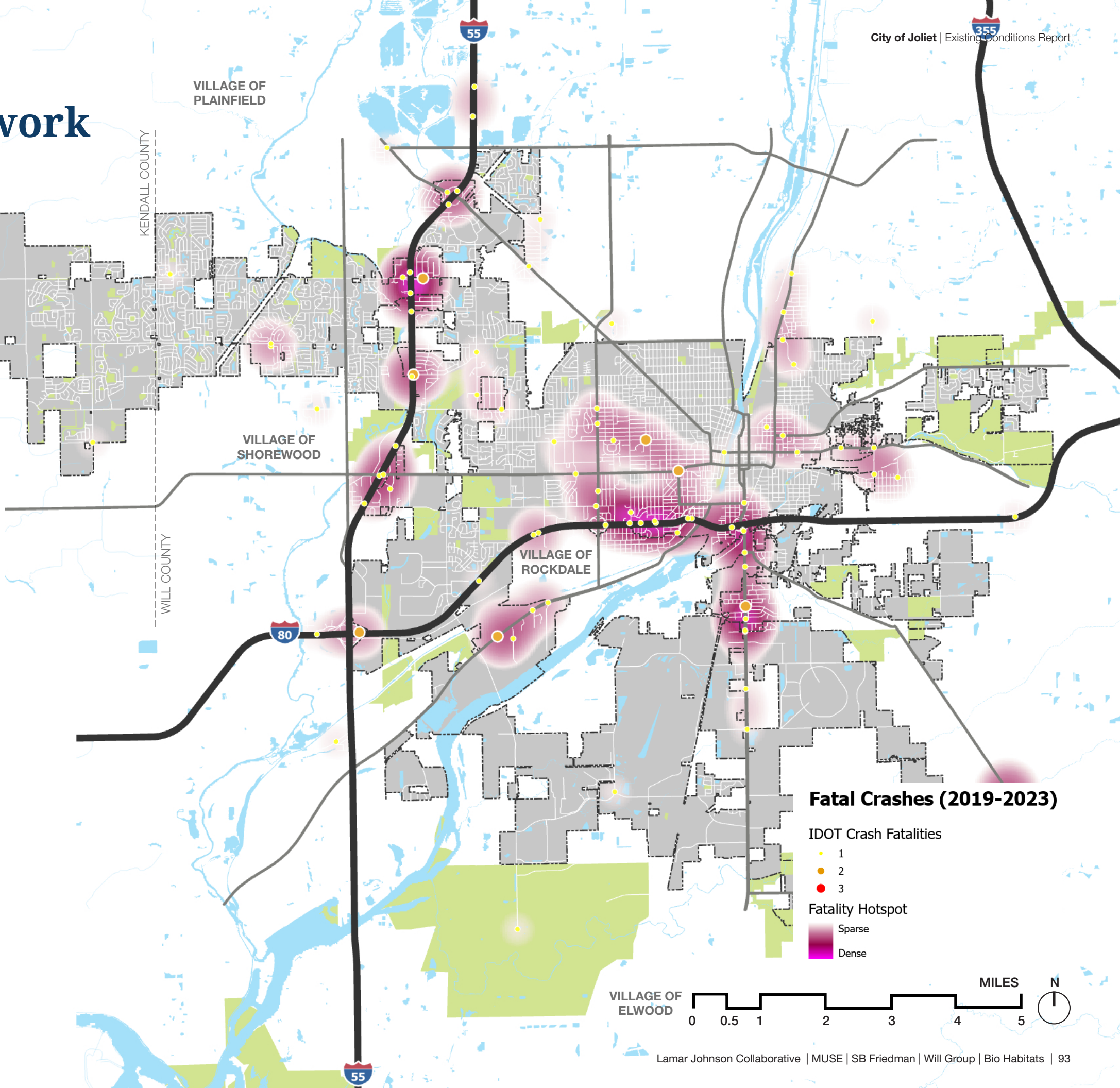
The heat map for vehicle crash hot spots shows several areas across the City of Joliet that are of concern. The most significant areas of concern are predictably at the major intersections at its interstate highways.

- **Interstate 80-** The two most significant areas of concern are both along Interstate 80. The first area is at I-80 at its intersection with Illinois Route 30. The most significant hot spot is at I-80 at the Route 53 exit just to the east of the Des Plaines River.
- **Interstate 55-** While not as dense from a crash hot spot perspective as Interstate 80, Interstate 55 also has several intersections that are of concern. The intersections of Interstate 55 and Jefferson Street and Route 30 are areas of significant traffic collisions.

## Fatal Crashes

The fatal crashes exhibit provides a heat map of fatal crashes from 2019 – 2023 as recorded by the Illinois Department of Transportation. The vast majority of fatal crashes occurred on Interstate 55 and Interstate 80. Interstate 55 has a very notable density of fatal crashes between US Route 30 and Jefferson Street (US Route 52). Interstate 80 shows a significant concentration of traffic fatalities between Larkin and Route 53.

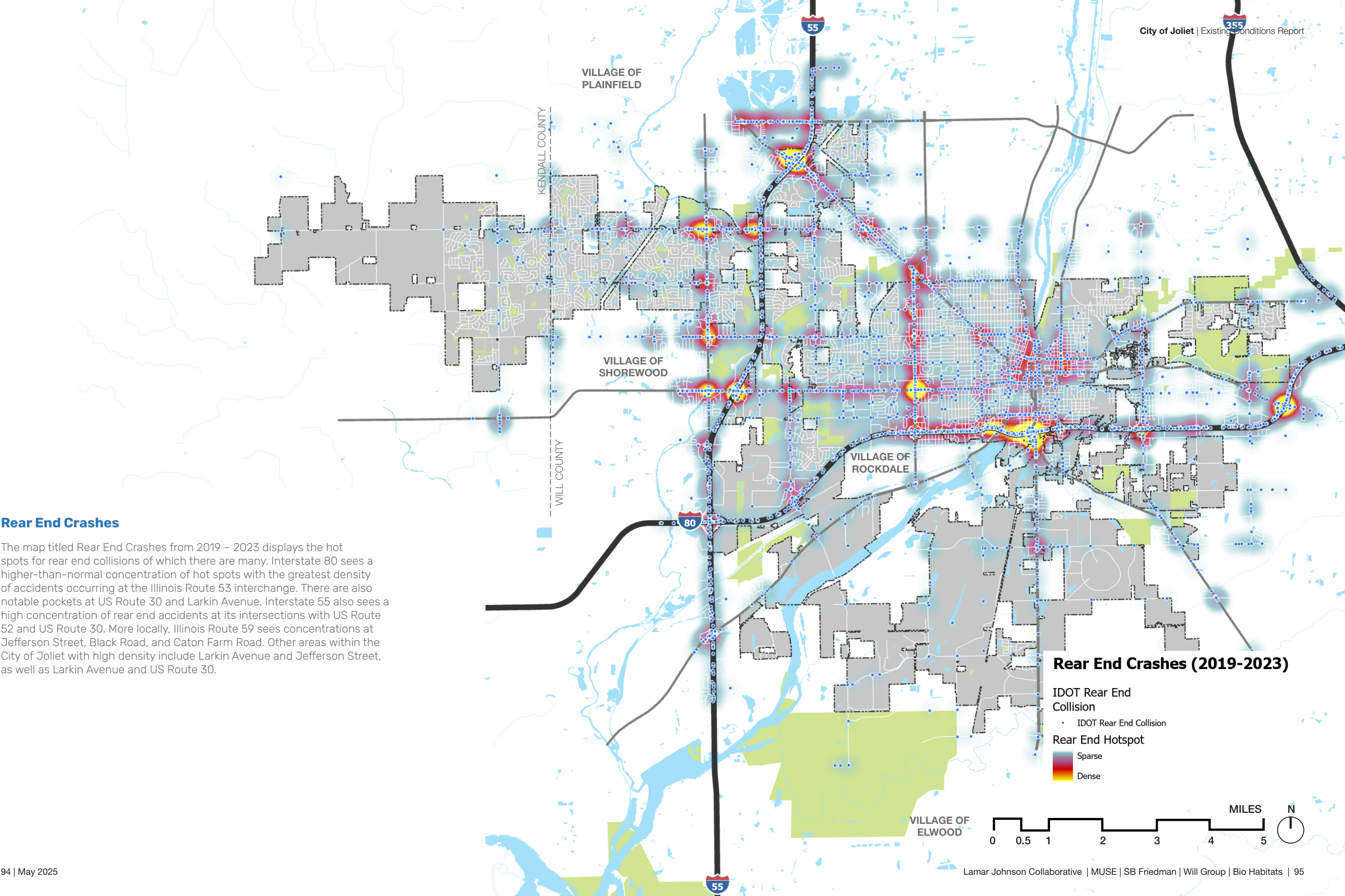
Outside of the fatalities on the Interstates, several areas within the City of Joliet also showed significant concentrations of fatal traffic accidents. These areas include Illinois Route 53 between Laraway Road and Interstate 80 as well as a strong concentration on US Route 6 between Larkin Avenue and Houbolt Road.





Rear End Crashes

The map titled Rear End Crashes from 2019 – 2023 displays the hot spots for rear end collisions of which there are many. Interstate 80 sees a higher-than-normal concentration of hot spots with the greatest density of accidents occurring at the Illinois Route 53 interchange. There are also notable pockets at US Route 30 and Larkin Avenue. Interstate 55 also sees a high concentration of rear end accidents at its intersections with US Route 52 and US Route 30. More locally, Illinois Route 59 sees concentrations at Jefferson Street, Black Road, and Caton Farm Road. Other areas within the City of Joliet with high density include Larkin Avenue and Jefferson Street, as well as Larkin Avenue and US Route 30.





# Pedestrian/Bike Access

## Pedestrian Trails and Bike Routes

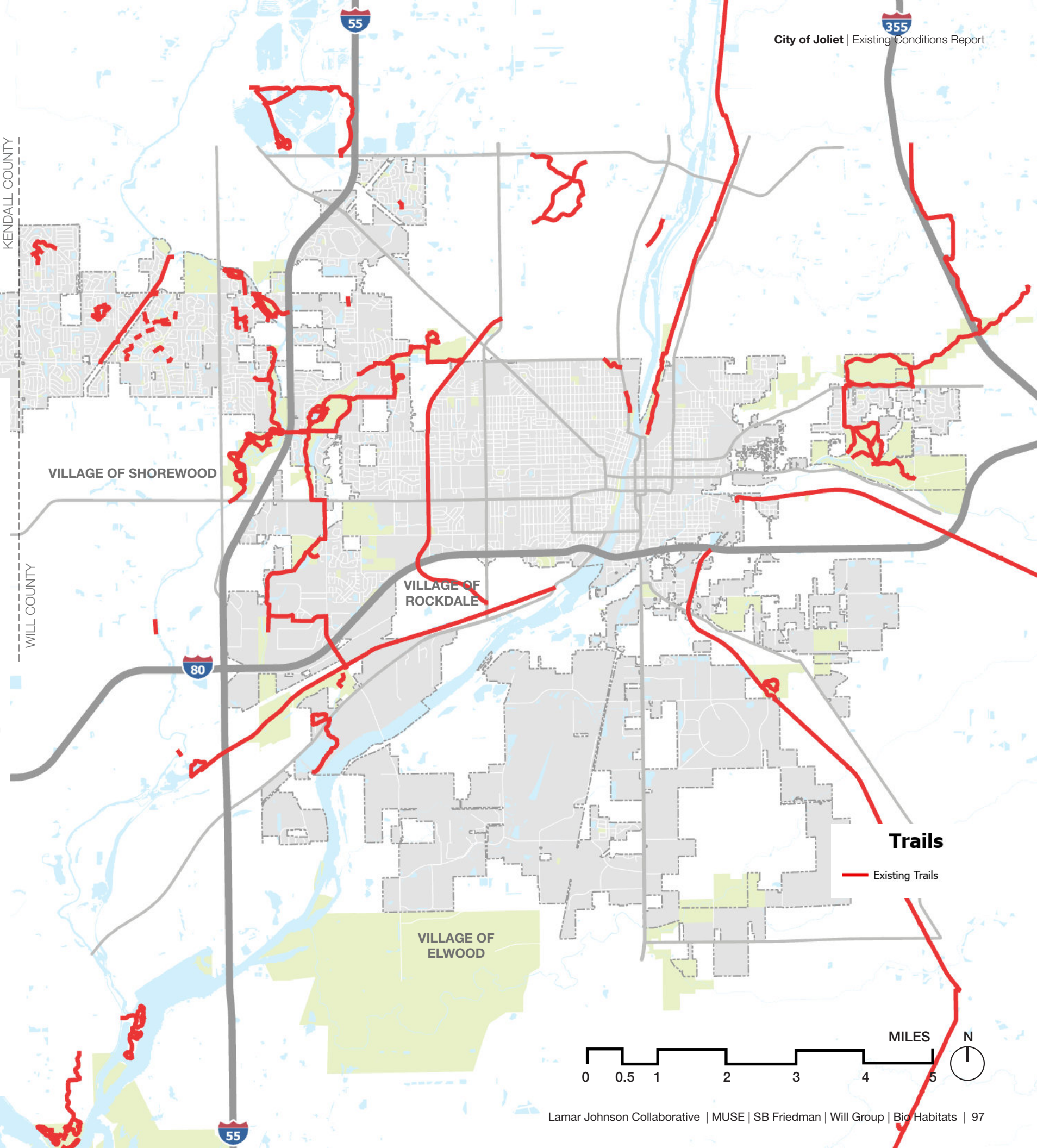
The City of Joliet has a fairly robust trail system that provides lower stress walking and bicycling opportunities within the City that connect to major regional trails including the I & M Canal trail, Joliet Junction Trail and the Rock Run Greenway Trail.

- **Rockway Run Greenway Trail**– This trail is a 11.29-mile trail that runs from Crest Hill south through Joliet connecting the Theodore Marsh to the north to the I & M Canal at the far south end of the City. It includes access points at the Rock Run Preserve at Essington Road and Black Road, at the Colvin Grove Preserve/Joliet Junior College (JJC) South Lot near Houbolt Road as well as at the Lower Rock Run Preserve at the I & M access near Hollywood Road.
- **I & M Canal Trail**– The I & M canal trail stretches over 61.5 miles in total from Joliet to LaSalle. The prime route that runs through Joliet is the Gaylord Donnelley Trail that is an 11-mile route that is part paved and part crushed limestone that connects Joliet and Lockport. This portion of the trail is accessible in Joliet at the old Joliet Iron Works near Ruby Street and includes the ruins of the Joliet Iron Works and the original canal facilities.
- **Joliet Junction Trail**– The Joliet Junction Trail is a 4.36-mile route on the north end of town near Crest Hill that runs north-south through the City. The trail is accessible from the Theodore Marsh at Gaylord Road and near Joyce Road and the Wal-Mart parking lot.
- **Old Plank Road Trail**– The Old Plank Road Trail is a 22 mile route that starts on the east side of Joliet at a trailhed on E Washington Street. The trail heads east along a converted railroad right-of-way through New Lenox and on to Chicago Heights.
- **Wauponsee Glacial Trail**– Wauponsee Glacial Trail is a 22.3 mile trail that starts in the City of Joliet at Rowell Road just south of I-80. The trail heads south on converted rail-road right-of-way through the Village of Manhattan and on to the Kankakee River just south of the City of Wilmington.

## Sidewalks

Most streets within the core of the City of Joliet contain sidewalks on both sides of its streets. There are some gaps in sidewalk connectivity throughout the City. Sidewalks located in the traditional downtown and immediate blocks are of poor to fair conditions with some areas of new public improvements. Most prime arterial and minor arterial streets in the City have sidewalks that create separation of pedestrian/vehicular conflict. Likewise, most new areas of town that have been constructed with the typical residential street and sidewalk layout that provides more modern separation within the typical 66 foot right of way.

There are several notable exceptions though that will require further study as outlined elsewhere.





# 07

## Land Use and the Regulatory Environment

Land use patterns shape Joliet’s physical form, and development character. Land use and zoning decisions will be guided by the City of Joliet’s Comprehensive Plan and implemented through the City’s Zoning Ordinance.

This chapter analyzes Joliet’s existing land use patterns and the regulatory framework established by the Zoning Ordinance. It identifies key trends and opportunities for improvement to ensure land use classifications are consistent with desired development and growth patterns. The findings will provide a foundation for future land use and zoning recommendations in the comprehensive planning process.

Existing land uses in Joliet were documented using the City’s most recent land use Inventory, and supplemented with local parcel data. Zoning information was documented using the City’s official zoning map and zoning code. Maps on the following pages illustrate existing land use and zoning across Joliet.

Image source: City of Joliet



# A District Framework

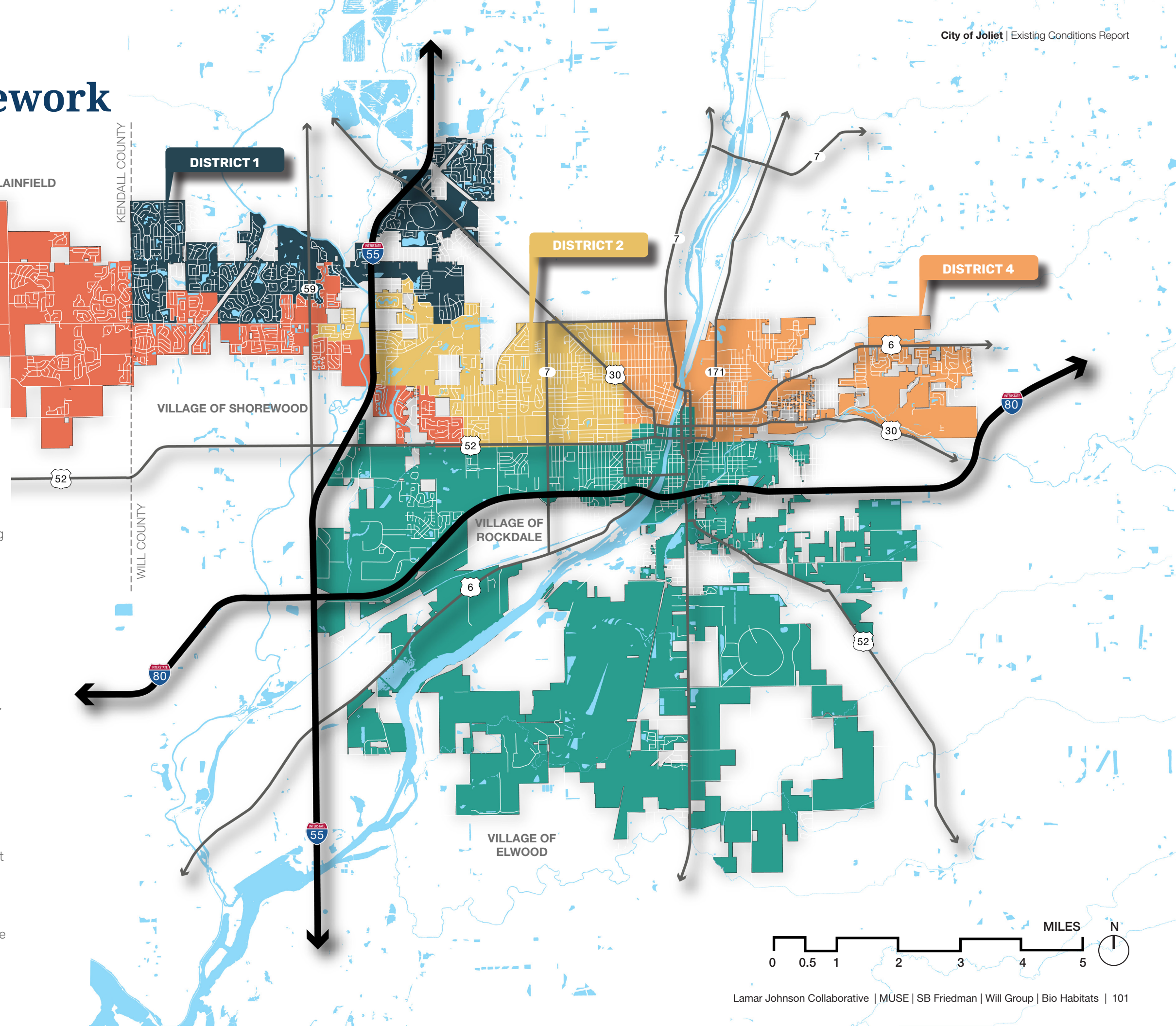
## Shaping Representation for Today's Joliet

The City of Joliet underwent a redistricting process in response to the decennial 2020 U.S. Census, resulting in revised district boundaries that became effective on June 21, 2022. Redistricting is a critical tool in ensuring equitable political representation, as it aligns council districts with shifts in population and demographic composition.

The 2022 redistricting process considered population growth, demographic changes, and City geography while seeking to preserve community integrity and representational fairness. The revised districts will guide electoral representation and neighborhood advocacy for the coming decade, and they provide an updated framework for the distribution of city services, investments, and outreach efforts with current population realities.

By updating council district boundaries, Joliet has established a more balanced framework for political representation and municipal governance. The revised districts will guide how residents are represented on the City Council and will help align city services, infrastructure investments, and community engagement efforts with the realities of Joliet's current and future population.

Redistricting is more than a technical requirement—it is a strategic tool to support inclusive governance and to ensure that every resident has a voice in shaping the city's future.

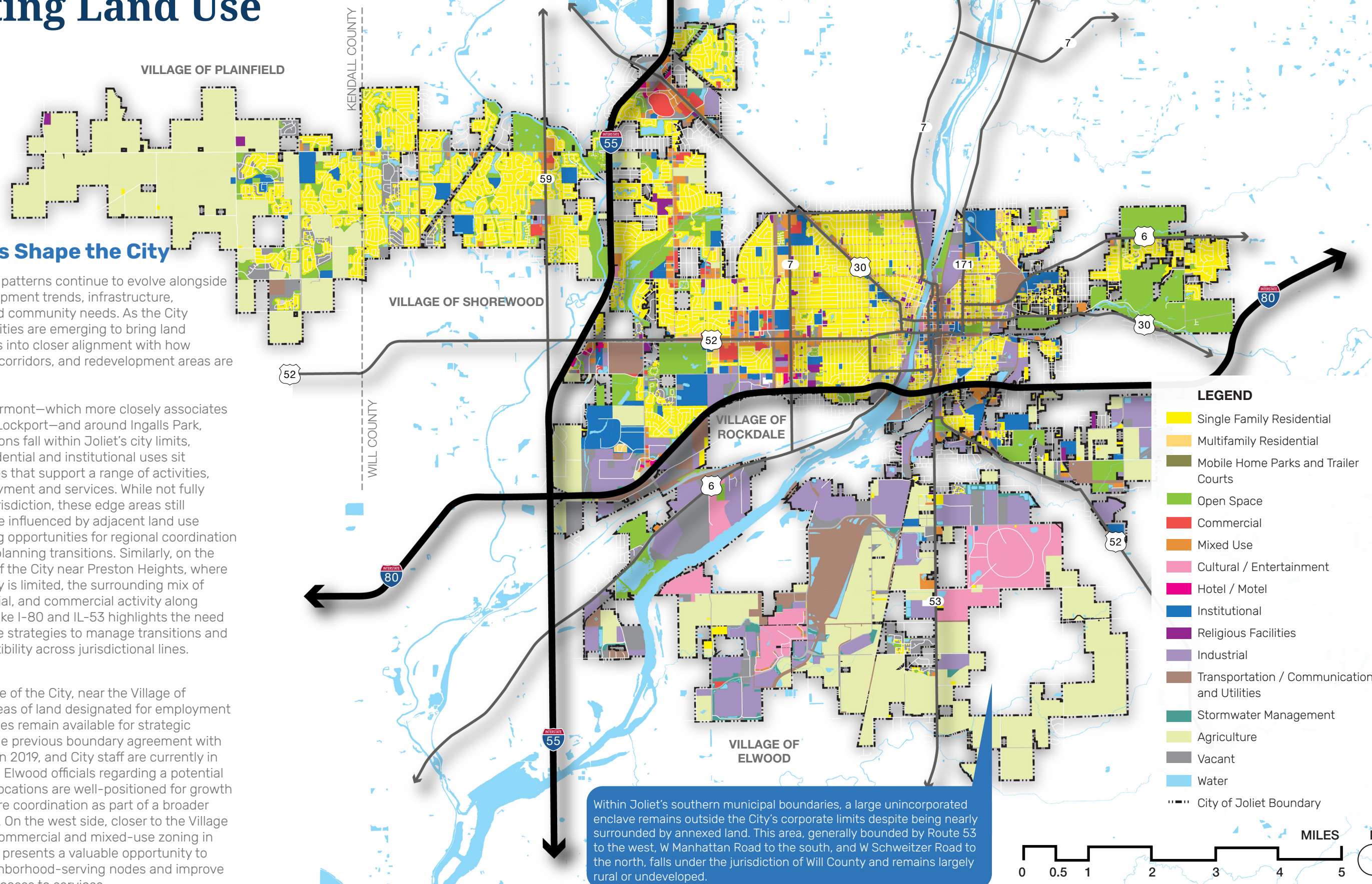




## Land Uses Shape the City

In areas near Fairmont—which more closely associates with the City of Lockport—and around Ingalls Park, where only portions fall within Joliet’s city limits, established residential and institutional uses sit adjacent to zones that support a range of activities, including employment and services. While not fully under Joliet’s jurisdiction, these edge areas still influence and are influenced by adjacent land use patterns, offering opportunities for regional coordination and thoughtful planning transitions. Similarly, on the southern edge of the City near Preston Heights, where Joliet’s boundary is limited, the surrounding mix of housing, industrial, and commercial activity along major corridors like I-80 and IL-53 highlights the need for clear land use strategies to manage transitions and promote compatibility across jurisdictional lines.

On the south side of the City, near the Village of Elwood, large areas of land designated for employment and industrial uses remain available for strategic development. The previous boundary agreement with Elwood expired in 2019, and City staff are currently in discussions with Elwood officials regarding a potential renewal. These locations are well-positioned for growth and infrastructure coordination as part of a broader economic vision. On the west side, closer to the Village of Shorewood, commercial and mixed-use zoning in residential areas presents a valuable opportunity to strengthen neighborhood-serving nodes and improve walkability and access to services.





An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood in Joliet, Illinois. The image shows a dense collection of houses with various roof colors (red, grey, blue) and styles, interspersed with lush green trees. A paved road runs diagonally through the center of the neighborhood. The overall scene depicts a typical residential area with a mix of housing and mature vegetation.

# Existing Zoning Ordinance Review

## Unlocking Potential Through Zoning

The City of Joliet's zoning ordinance establishes a traditional use-based regulatory framework that governs land development and community character across residential, commercial, industrial, and special use districts. While the ordinance includes standards for primary land uses, parking requirements, signage, historic preservation, and the approval of Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), its structure and language are often unclear, inconsistent, and difficult to navigate. Modernization of the zoning code presents an opportunity to better support orderly growth and provide more accessible guidance for larger, master-planned projects.

The City of Joliet's Subdivision Ordinance (Chapter 29 of the municipal code) governs the division of land and establishes design standards for streets, lots, utilities, and open space. It serves as a key tool to guide orderly growth and ensure infrastructure coordination.

While the ordinance provides a regulatory foundation, several elements could benefit from modernization—particularly around street design, green infrastructure, and open space dedication. Aligning subdivision standards with contemporary planning goals will be essential to support infill development, multimodal connectivity, and climate resilience.

The current ordinance reflects a regulatory approach largely rooted in conventional suburban and industrial development patterns. While it addresses basic accessory uses such as home occupations and residential outbuildings, it does not explicitly allow for emerging housing types such as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). Minimum lot sizes remain aligned with traditional single-family residential formats, and there is limited regulatory support for “missing middle” housing typologies, such as duplexes, triplexes, and courtyard apartments.

Additionally, Joliet's zoning ordinance does not currently incorporate form-based coding

elements, transit-oriented development (TOD) overlays, or housing policies aimed at fostering mixed-income neighborhoods. Joliet's zoning ordinance falls short on sustainable development standards and does not address the challenges posed by older industrial uses located near historic residential areas. This is observed in older neighborhoods on the near east side, along Collins Street, and parts of the central city, where historic residential areas are located close to legacy industrial sites. In many parts of the city, aging housing stock sits next to underutilized industrial parcels, creating conflicts and missed opportunities for reinvestment. Updating the code to include performance standards, green infrastructure, and adaptive reuse incentives could help guide these areas toward more compatible, sustainable redevelopment.

Modern light industrial and innovation-oriented districts are not clearly defined in Joliet's current zoning framework, highlighting an opportunity to diversify both economic activity and future housing options. These types of zones—where anchor institutions, start-ups, and incubators co-locate and collaborate—have become key drivers of inclusive growth. As noted by the Brookings Institution, such districts foster innovation by clustering advanced manufacturing, research, and entrepreneurial support in well-connected areas. Regional examples include Chicago's Fulton Market Innovation District, the Illinois Medical District, and the emerging STAR Innovation District in Lockport.

As Joliet continues to evolve, aligning zoning regulations with contemporary planning best practices — including housing flexibility, multimodal development support, and climate resilience strategies — will be critical to achieving a more inclusive, sustainable, and adaptable urban environment.



# Existing Zoning

## Bridging Policy and Place

Joliet's existing zoning map reflects a range of residential, industrial, and commercial uses shaped by past growth. As the City plans for future development, there are areas where zoning adjustments could improve alignment with existing land use and guide new investment more effectively.

A key zoning challenge in Joliet is that many residential lots on the near west and east sides of the City are smaller than the minimum lot size required by their respective zoning districts. As a result, these properties are classified as non-conforming, limiting redevelopment options and complicating efforts to reinvest in older neighborhoods.

Near I-80 and I-55, industrial zoning is located near residential neighborhoods. These areas may benefit from clearer transitions and updated zoning to support both housing and employment uses. In the far south side, industrial and residential zones overlap in several places, presenting an opportunity to refine zoning boundaries to match community conditions.

On the east side of the City, current zoning does not always align with existing development or desired future patterns. In some cases, commercial or industrial zoning remains in predominantly residential areas, creating uncertainty for long-term neighborhood stability. Revisiting these zoning classifications could help reinforce residential character while identifying appropriate locations for local businesses and employment uses. On the west side, near the Shorewood and Plainfield boundaries, commercial districts are interspersed within residential neighborhoods. These areas should be reviewed to ensure that business activity complements the surrounding context in terms of scale, access, and land use compatibility.

Scattered pockets of high-density residential zoning appear within lower-density areas across the City. These areas may offer opportunities to support housing variety while maintaining neighborhood form.

Modernization of zoning to reflect current land use and support coordinated growth across Joliet will be investigated during the planning process.

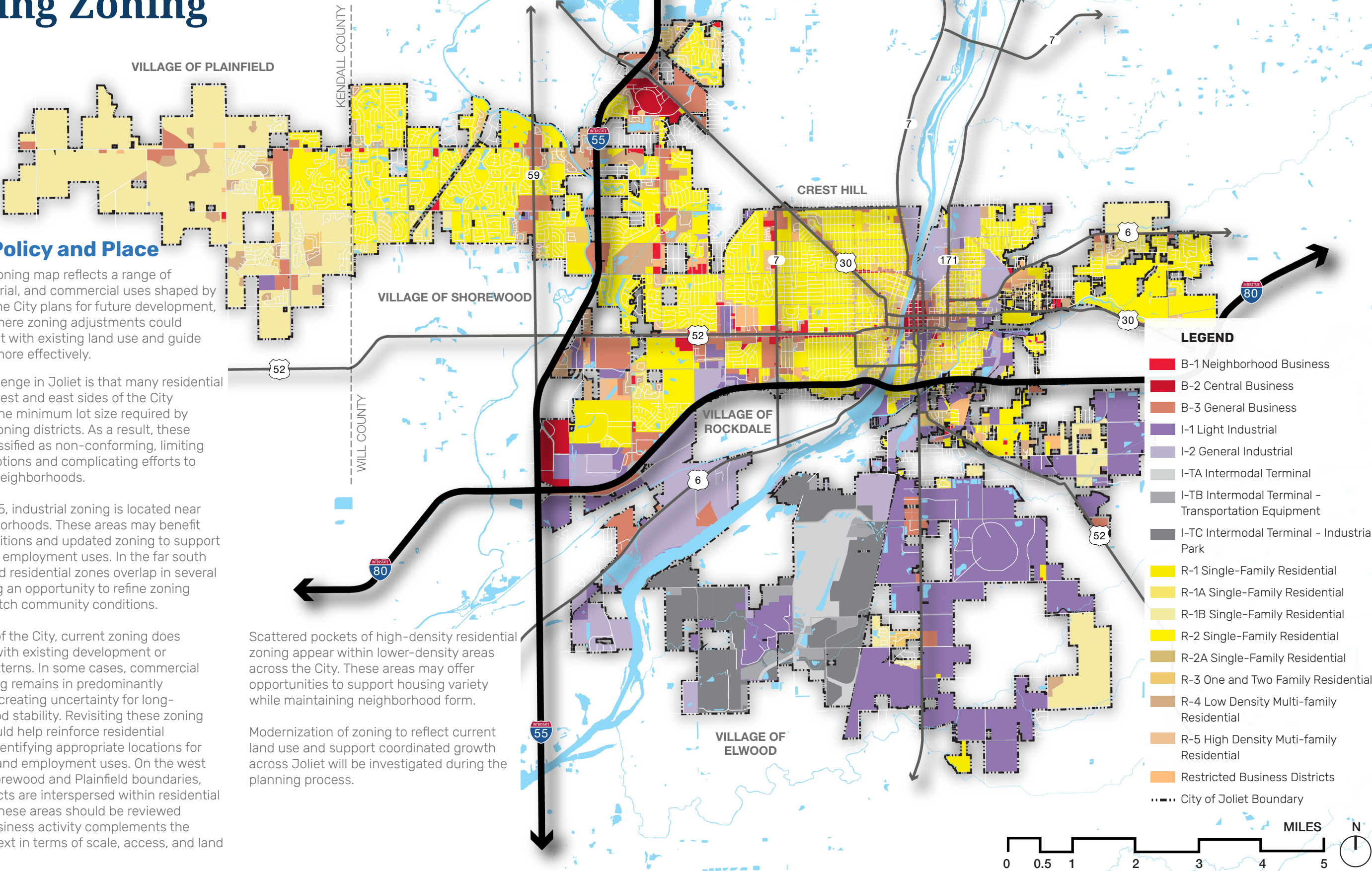






Image source: City of Joliet

# Shared Edges, Shared Futures

## Coordinated Growth Through Boundary Agreements

As urban growth continues to shape the greater Joliet region, intergovernmental boundary agreements remain a critical planning tool for ensuring orderly development, fiscal efficiency, and collaborative governance. Joliet’s proactive approach to maintaining and updating these agreements with surrounding municipalities reflects commitment to regional coordination, land use clarity, and long-term vision.

The most recent updates to boundary agreements—particularly those with New Lenox, Manhattan, Channahon, Shorewood, and Oswego—highlight an era of maturing intermunicipal relationships. Most of these agreements, originally enacted in the mid-to-late 2000s, are approaching their expiration, prompting necessary conversations about renewal, realignment, and strategic foresight. The boundary agreement between the City of Joliet and the Village of Elwood expired in 2019. As of this writing, both municipalities are engaged in ongoing coordination to explore terms for a renewed or updated agreement that will clarify jurisdictional limits and guide future growth along the shared boundary. The near-simultaneous expirations of the New Lenox and Manhattan agreements in 2026, for example, present a timely opportunity to reassess jurisdictional edges in light of changing development pressures, infrastructure expansion, and community priorities. The Joliet-Elwood boundary agreement expired in 2019. At the time of this writing, City of Joliet staff are working with the Village of Elwood staff on a potential new boundary agreement.

Presently, the City of Joliet does not have active boundary agreements with the neighboring municipalities of Crest Hill, Lockport (expired

in 1995), or Romeoville (expired in 1999). In many cases, especially near Crest Hill and Romeoville, there is little unincorporated or undeveloped land remaining between municipal boundaries, which limits the potential for future expansion and underscores the importance of intergovernmental coordination on land use, infrastructure, and service delivery.

These agreements are not merely administrative tools—they are foundational components of a shared regional framework. They influence annexation potential, infrastructure phasing, school and park district coordination, and even environmental stewardship across municipal boundaries. For Joliet, reaffirming or recalibrating these agreements ensures that the City’s growth aligns with the broader needs of Will County and surrounding jurisdictions.

Furthermore, the data reflects that municipalities like Shorewood and Channahon have maintained relatively up-to-date agreements, with Shorewood’s extending through 2031. Such long-term alignment provides a stable context for both municipal investments and private development, while reducing the risk of jurisdictional disputes.

As we look ahead, Joliet should remain at the forefront of regional planning dialogue. Updating these agreements with mutually beneficial approaches to equitable growth, environmental resilience, and infrastructure sustainability will ensure that the City not only grows—but responsibly. These efforts, rooted in collaboration and mutual respect, form the basis for a stronger, more connected metropolitan future.



# Multi-Jurisdictional Boundaries

## Joliet at the Center of the Region

The City of Joliet shares jurisdictional edges with several neighboring municipalities, each defined through intergovernmental boundary agreements. This map illustrates the extents of these agreements with villages including Channahon, Manhattan, Minooka, New Lenox, Oswego, Plainfield, and Shorewood.

These boundaries help guide annexation, land use planning, and service coordination. While many follow clear lines, some areas—particularly near Elwood, Manhattan, and Shorewood—reflect more nuanced edges shaped by evolving development patterns, infrastructure needs, and past intergovernmental agreements. In the southwest, older subdivisions combined with the area’s proximity to County Line Road have contributed to irregular municipal boundaries and fragmented development patterns, while areas west of Route 59 continue to experience dynamic growth near Shorewood. These boundary conditions present an opportunity to strengthen coordination with neighboring jurisdictions and ensure future land use and infrastructure decisions remain cohesive and mutually beneficial.

Expressways like I-80 and I-55, as well as Route 52 connects Joliet with surrounding communities and regional destinations. These shared corridors support commuting, freight movement, and economic development, making them a common interest among municipalities. Coordinated planning along these routes can enhance

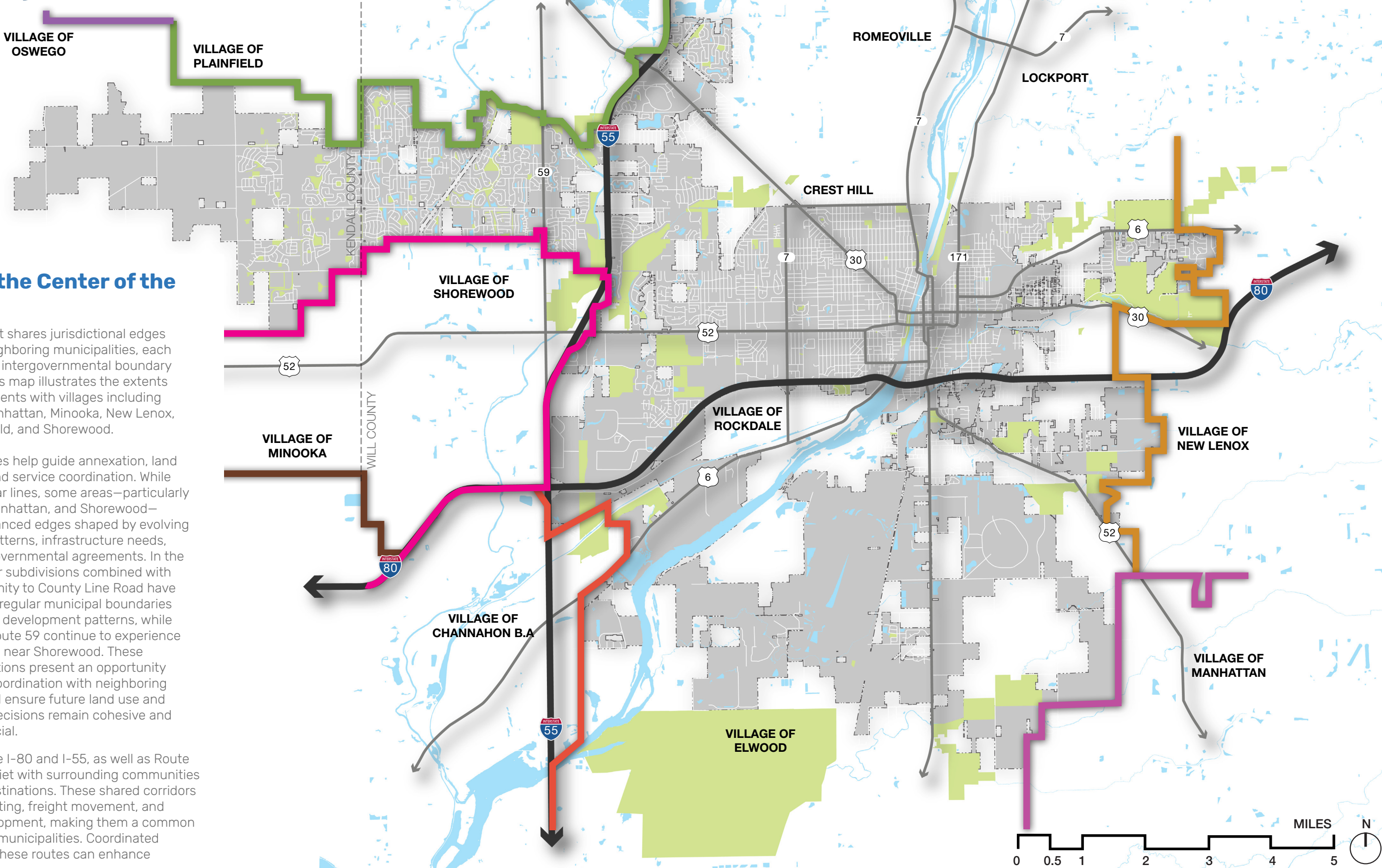






Image source: City of Joliet



Image source: City of Joliet

# Character Zones

## Character Area Definition

As part of the Joliet Comprehensive Plan, character zone typologies are used to understand and categorize areas of the City based on shared spatial, economic, transportation infrastructure, and ecological characteristics. These placetypes help establish a baseline for evaluating land use patterns, form, and function across the City and provide a framework for future policy considerations. The character area described below represent a range of urban conditions and are illustrated with examples from across Joliet.

### Recommended Character Areas

Each character zone typology below includes parameters for selection and a sample of areas within Joliet that illustrate its characteristics.

**Central Business District:** Defined by compact blocks, mixed land uses, and civic and cultural institutions, this typology supports government, entertainment, and transit access within a walkable environment. In Joliet, the downtown core exemplifies this pattern, with key civic buildings, historic architecture, and multimodal infrastructure concentrated in a centralized district.

**Waterfront or Riparian Corridor:** This typology describes areas adjacent to the Des Plaines River and other waterways where civic, industrial, or open space uses interface with ecological systems. Joliet’s Bluff Street and riverfront corridor illustrate these conditions, with a mix of land uses, floodplain considerations, and potential for enhanced public access and environmental restoration.



**Corridor Transformation Areas:**

Underutilized parcels fall within this typology. West Jefferson Street and Collins Street corridors are examples where older commercial structures, wide rights-of-way, and fragmented land use patterns present opportunities for coordinated reinvestment like the Essington Road Corridor.

**Employment and Industrial Area:**

Characterized by large-scale warehousing, logistics, and manufacturing uses with specialized infrastructure needs, these areas anchor the regional economy. The area surrounding CenterPoint Intermodal Center on Joliet’s southwest side is a key industrial and freight logistics hub. It features extensive access to interstate highways (I-80 and I-55) and Class I rail infrastructure, supporting a high concentration of freight-dependent activity. This district exemplifies the region’s role in national logistics and supply chain networks.

**Shopping and Commercial Areas:**

These areas contain region-serving retail development such as malls and big-box stores, often with large surface parking areas and limited integration of other uses. The Louis Joliet Mall represent this typology, where traditional retail formats are adapting to market shifts and redevelopment interest.

**Institutional and Educational Areas:**

This character area is focused on major campuses such as colleges, high schools, or public service facilities. Joliet Junior College and the adjacent I-55 growth area are examples, where a concentration of educational land use intersects with open space and potential for future campus-adjacent development.

**Historic and Cultural Areas:** Areas with concentrations of historically or culturally significant structures, often under consideration for preservation or adaptive reuse, fall into this category. The Old Joliet Prison and the surrounding Collins Street corridor illustrate this typology, where legacy buildings contribute to local identity and tourism potential.

**Legacy Residential Areas:** Primarily residential neighborhoods developed before 1970, with aging infrastructure, modest housing stock, and stable occupancy levels. These areas retain a strong community fabric but

require ongoing maintenance and reinvestment. Given Joliet’s diverse range of neighborhood types—varying in age, form, and proximity to employment or industrial areas—future planning efforts may define three to four distinct residential character areas to better tailor land use strategies, housing policies, and infrastructure improvements. For example, the St. Patrick neighborhood west of the river illustrates a legacy residential area with reinvestment potential and adjacency to mixed-use zones.

**Brownfield Area:**The Brownfield Character Area captures areas within Joliet historically shaped by industrial activity, heavy manufacturing, and energy production – many of which now face environmental degradation, underutilization, or vacancy. These sites, often clustered along rail corridors, the Des Plaines River, and former utility or steel facilities, reflect the City’s industrial legacy while also offering significant potential for transformation.

**Transportation Area:** The Transportation-Oriented Character Area is defined by its connectivity to regional and national mobility networks, including passenger rail, freight infrastructure, interstate highways, and transit corridors. Anchored by assets such as the Gateway Transportation Center, Joliet Metra/Amtrak Station, Interstate 80 and I-55 interchanges, and CenterPoint Intermodal Center, these areas function as critical nodes in the City’s economic and mobility system.

These character area typologies provide a foundational lens through which to understand the diverse spatial patterns across the City of Joliet. By grouping areas with similar physical form, infrastructure conditions, and land use functions, this framework supports a more place-specific approach to policy development, investment prioritization, and community engagement. The typologies do not represent fixed boundaries but rather shared characteristics that can inform future planning and implementation efforts across the City. As the comprehensive planning process continues, these character areas will help guide more detailed analysis, scenario testing, and strategy development that reflect the unique context and potential of each part of Joliet.



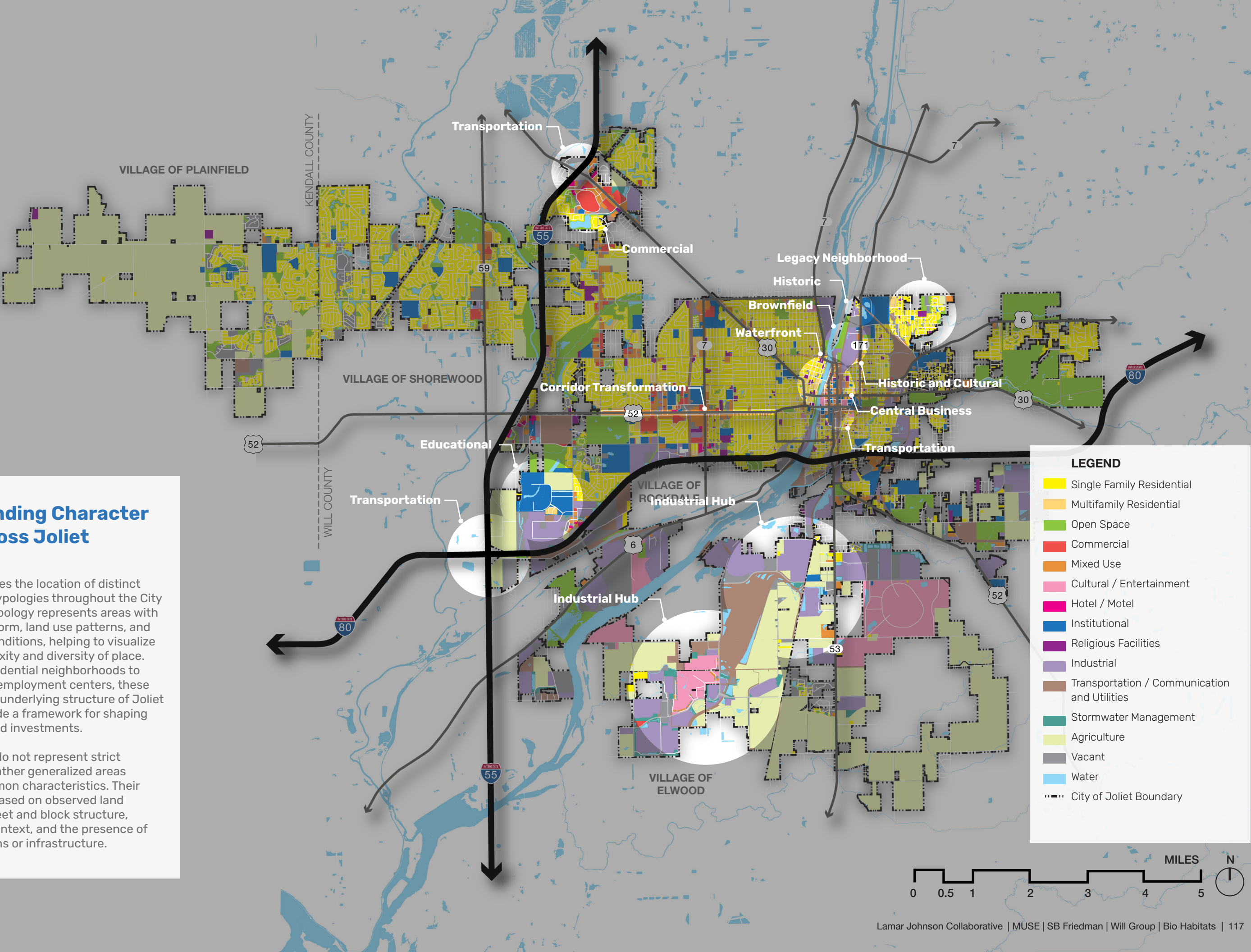
Image source: City of Joliet



# Understanding Character Areas Across Joliet

This map illustrates the location of distinct Character Area Typologies throughout the City of Joliet. Each typology represents areas with shared physical form, land use patterns, and infrastructure conditions, helping to visualize the City’s complexity and diversity of place. From historic residential neighborhoods to freight-oriented employment centers, these zones reflect the underlying structure of Joliet today—and provide a framework for shaping future policies and investments.

Character areas do not represent strict boundaries but rather generalized areas that exhibit common characteristics. Their identification is based on observed land use patterns, street and block structure, environmental context, and the presence of anchor institutions or infrastructure.









































Character Zone Matrix

To complement the map, a Character Area Matrix further describes the range of land uses found within each typology, highlighting their functional role in the City. For example, while the Central Business District may include a balance of civic, residential, and commercial uses, Employment and longterm industrial sites reflect a more industrial legacy. Understanding these land use patterns is essential for aligning future zoning, design standards, and reinvestment strategies with the unique needs and opportunities of each area.

Together, the map and matrix offer a spatial lens through which to guide equitable growth, infrastructure modernization, preservation, and new development—ensuring that planning reflects the physical reality of Joliet’s neighborhoods, corridors, and employment districts.

Character Area	Land Use Designation												
	Single-family	Multi-family	Open Space	Comm/Retail	Mixed-use	Cultural and Ent	Hotel/Motel	Inst.	Relig.	Industri	Trans	Storm water	Agri
Central Business District													
Waterfront/Riparian Corridor													
Corridor Transformation													
Employment and Industrial Areas													
Shopping and Commercial Areas													
Institutional and Educational Areas													
Historic and Cultural Areas													
Legacy Residential Areas													
Brownfield													
Transportation and Infrastructure Areas													



## 08

# Open Space and Natural Assets

**Active and passive recreational parks invite residents to enjoy outdoor activities.**

## Ecological Context

Like all urban and suburban landscapes, Joliet developed over an underlying ecological system of geology, waterways, and natural plant communities that informs the unique experience of living in Joliet. Some of those systems are particularly important to understanding modern conditions.

Joliet is the dividing line between two ecoregions that are characterized by different soils and plants, both underlain by the limestone that was one of Joliet's earliest economic drivers. To the north, the Valparaiso Morainal Complex has glacial soils that supported both forest and prairie systems, with swamp white oak forests and marshes in poorly drained areas. The glacial landscape is still studded with small lakes and marshes, and lacks a well-integrated drainage system. To the south, the Illinois Prairie was characterized by dark, very fertile soils that developed under prairie. The hydrology of both has changed as communities installed tile drains and ditches to move water out of marshy areas for agriculture, but the underlying soil conditions of poor drainage contribute to problems such as basement flooding.

## Landscape Connections and Green Infrastructure

Ecosystems are not closed systems, and flows of energy, materials, and people are constantly exchanged on the landscape between areas of differing land cover and land use. Habitat areas that are fragmented and disconnected from neighboring areas cannot support natural systems very well, so the larger the area of contiguous habitat, the more species and ecological functions that habitat can support.

In an urbanizing and working landscape such as Joliet, where development and infrastructure fragment the habitat, managing hydrology and plant and animal communities requires thoughtful interventions on multiple scales. Corridors connecting parks and open space support natural systems and ecosystem services such as flood control and pollination. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) provides access to Green Infrastructure Vision data that highlights the ecological networks that connect natural areas (Figure 8-1).

Image source: Chad Merda



# Open Space and Natural Assets

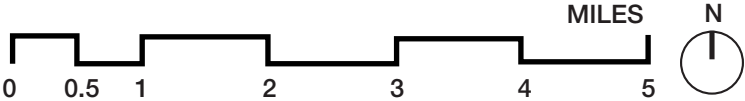
## Open Space and Habitat Values

Joliet’s park system is dispersed across the City, with more parks to the west, larger areas preserved to the east, and areas of regional habitat value to the south. This map shows both the parks and preserves as well as areas of regional ecological importance.

Much of the south side of the City has recognized biodiversity value because it is designated as a “Conservation Opportunity Area” by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, in large part because of its proximity to Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and the Joliet Army Training Area, which was at one time slated as a protected extension of Midewin.

Ecological Networks (from the regional Green Infrastructure Vision) are areas where protection and support of ecosystem services could be an important investment. These largely follow waterways, which are important to flood-risk reduction and the flow of species and plant material as well as water.

- LEGEND**
- Greenway
  - Park and Preserve
  - High landscape diversity
  - Ecological Networks
  - Recognized Biodiversity value
  - Water
  - Joliet City Boundary





# Park Access

## Parks & Preserves

According to the Trust for Public Land, 79% of Joliet residents live within a 10-minute walk to a park (Figure 8-2), compared to 65% of residents in Peoria or 88% in Naperville. The 104 parks within City limits represent 7% of land area. Joliet includes three park districts, which are separate taxing bodies. These park districts are Joliet Park District, Plainfield Park District, and New Lenox Park District. The Will County Forest Preserve District also protects open space in Joliet, and other land uses, such as cemeteries and school grounds, often offer passive open space opportunities. .

Joliet Park District was established in 1922 to manage the area's first parks, which were designated in 1899: West, Highland, and Pilcher Park. As of 2021, it served 160,000 people with six indoor facilities, two aquatic centers, and 74 parks, managing 1750 acres of parkland and supported by 62 full time recreation staff with a total budget of \$22,600,000. The expenditure per person was about \$141.

Plainfield Park District was established in 1966 over 43 square miles for a small township that has become a growing suburb with a median income of \$100,000 and high demand for park programming. As of 2021, it served 107,500 people with four indoor facilities, one aquatic center, and 934 parks, managing 1542 acres of parkland and supported by 39 full time recreation staff with a total budget of \$12,200,000. The expenditure per person was about \$113.

New Lenox Community Park District was incorporated in 1969 to serve 32 square miles of the township. As of 2024, it served 68,000 people with eight indoor facilities and two splash pads, managing 597 acres of parkland. Only a few of these parks, such as Thunder Ridge, fall within the city limits of Joliet.

The Forest Preserve District of Will County also manages significant open space resources in Joliet. Established in 1927 over 728 acres, the district has grown to over 23,000 acres, though most fall outside Joliet. Although its mission focuses first on preserving the diversity of native flora and fauna and native ecosystems, it is an important steward of lands that offer passive recreational opportunities such as hiking or birdwatching. Most importantly, these preserves also provide ecosystem services, protecting waterways, infiltrating and cleaning water, and supporting much of Joliet's urban tree canopy.

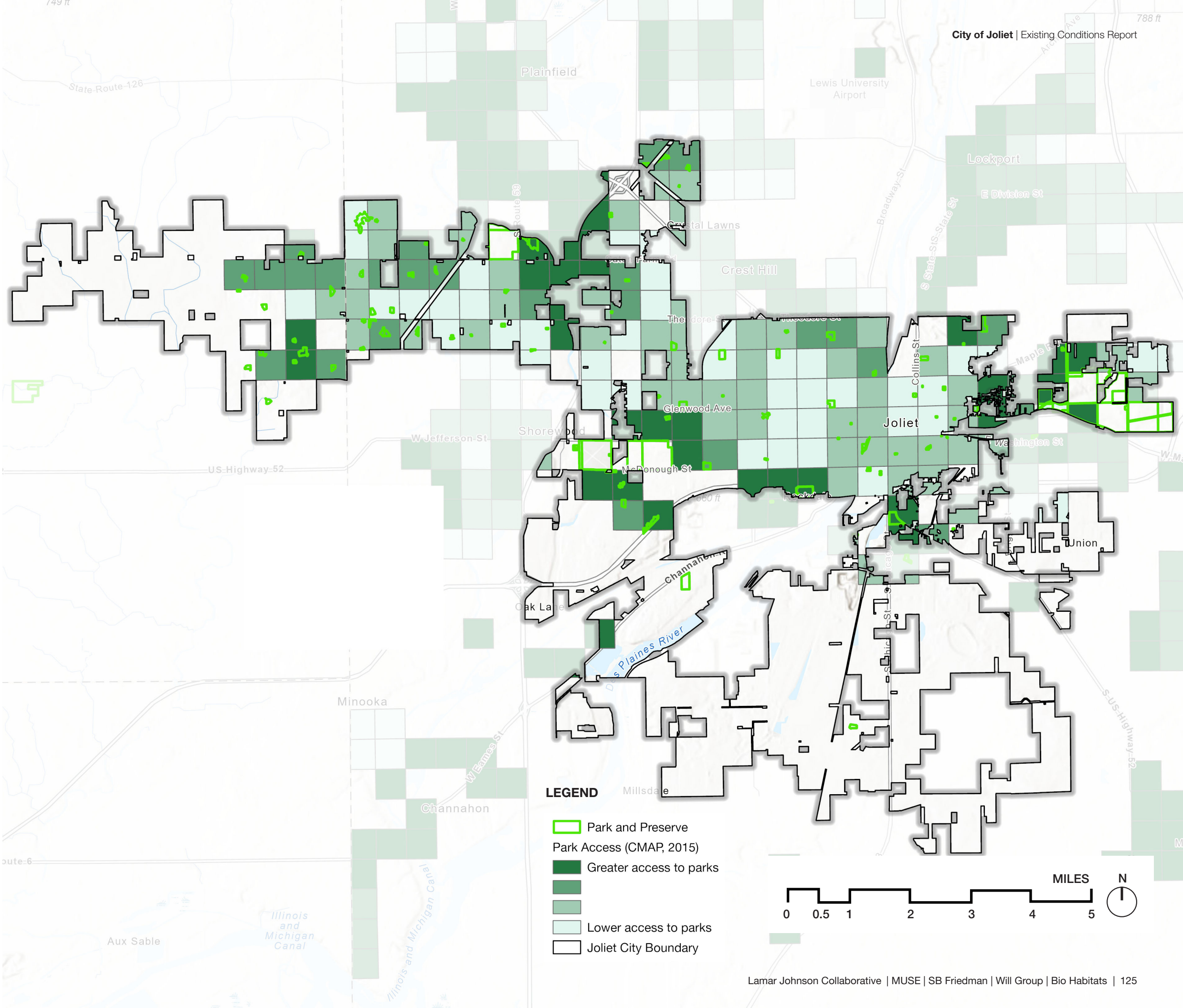






Image source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineering

# Waterways, Wetlands, & Riparian Corridors

Joliet’s waterways and wetlands frame the city and its open space.

## The Heart of the City

Joliet has always been partially defined by the Des Plaines River and relied on its waterways and canals for multiple services, from irrigation to transportation. Today, it is still a hard-working river, supporting barge traffic and carrying most of Chicago’s treated wastewater from the highly-regulated Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, which joins the Des Plaines River slightly north of Joliet. This legacy of effluent and industrial development has kept the Des Plaines largely tucked away from downtown life. Like many post-industrial waterfronts, the shorelines along the Des Plaines downtown tend to be armored and largely inaccessible to the public. They speak to a river that is engineered as transportation infrastructure, as does the large-scale engineering of canals and locks connecting the Des Plaines to the Mississippi River. Notably, the Brandon Road Lock and

Dam complex is located south of downtown, connecting the Des Plaines River to the Illinois Waterway. The lock and dam complex is the most likely pathway for Asian Carp to invade the Great Lakes, where they would decimate the \$7 billion fishing industry.

The historic uses of these waterways have created the conditions for their condition today, but water quality has improved under modern regulation upstream and locally. The City of Joliet is an active member of the Lower Des Plaines Watershed Group, a membership-based group of municipalities, townships, and the county who work together to improve water quality and help each member meet their Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit requirements. Currently, using safer road salt and reducing the overall chloride in the river is a priority for the group.

## Additional Watersheds

Outside the Des Plaines watershed, portions of ten other watersheds also fall within the City boundary, as well as its manmade waterways. The Illinois & Michigan Canal represents a critical piece of Joliet history, because it transformed transportation and shipping in the region, offering a connection to the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. Although today it no longer connects, ending at the Joliet Ironworks, it remains a recreational site and important to non-vehicular traffic in the area.

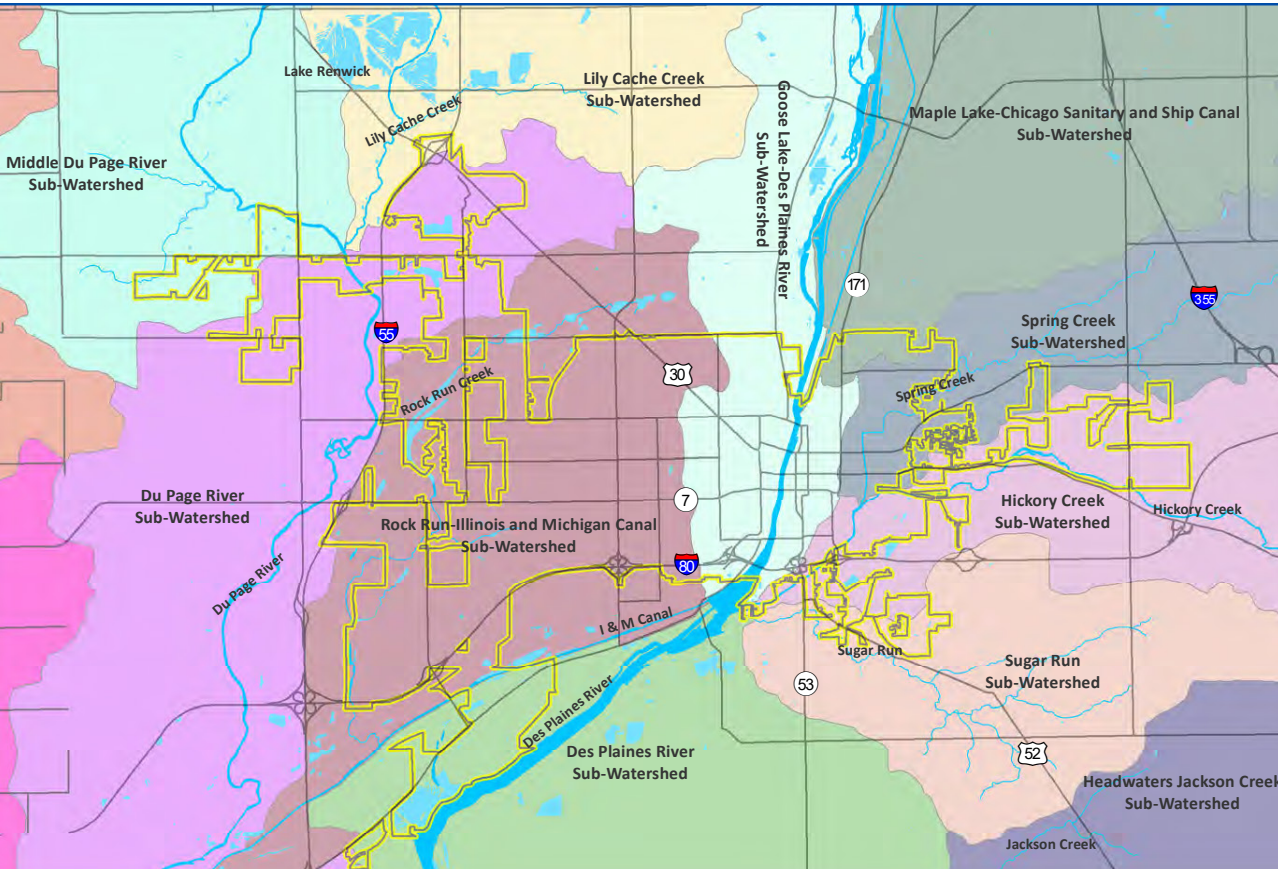
Among natural rivers, the DuPage River comes from the north and continues south through Will County to join the Des Plaines River in Channahon, draining a total of 380 square miles. Much like the Lower Des Plaines Watershed Group, the Lower DuPage River Watershed Coalition supports monitoring, assessment, and restoration projects designed to address water quality and habitat improvements throughout the area.

Hickory Creek, which is protected by Pilcher

Park and the Potawatomi Woods Preserve, is one of the most unaffected stream systems that touches Joliet, with a drainage area closer to 50 square miles to the east of the City. Its water quality is good until it meets Spring Creek, supporting a diversity of aquatic life and all of its designated uses. Spring Creek tends to have low levels of oxygen and excessive nutrients and sediment, so it is unable to support a diversity of aquatic life.

Rock Run is a watershed that would be largely within the boundaries of Joliet if it still flowed directly to the Des Plaines instead of joining the Illinois and Michigan Canal. As a relatively small watershed, its lowered water quality largely responds to suburban land use, though it runs through Rock Run Preserve and Theodore Marsh.

Theodore Marsh is a remnant of a once-common landscape feature. Historically dense with marshy spots and pocket wetlands, most of the City’s wetlands have been drained, and the remaining wetlands are often found in parks or the forest preserve.





# Climate Resilience

**Climate resilience is the ability to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to changes in weather patterns.**

## Climate Trends & Predictions

In Illinois, annual average temperatures are projected to increase by 3 to 5°F by the mid-21st century, with the number of days of temperatures reaching over 95°F estimated between 18-25 days, up to triple the eight days/year average of the early 2000s. In cities, this will exacerbate the urban heat island effect, where urban areas experience significantly higher temperatures than surrounding rural areas, especially at night. This is largely due to the materials used to build cities, which retain more heat than natural surfaces. A more volatile climate may also result in unusually cold winter temperatures.

Average total precipitation is likely to increase by a couple of inches per year, but it may become less evenly distributed, with nine days of extreme precipitation that could trigger flooding (up from six days/year in the early 2000s). Also, warmer temperatures increase rates of evaporation and transpiration, putting more moisture in the air and driving heavier precipitation events.

The effects of these changes are likely to be heat and flooding hazards for Joliet, both of which are accelerated by increasing development, more paved surfaces, and loss of vegetation. Natural vegetation and hydrology, alongside engineered interventions, can mitigate these hazards.

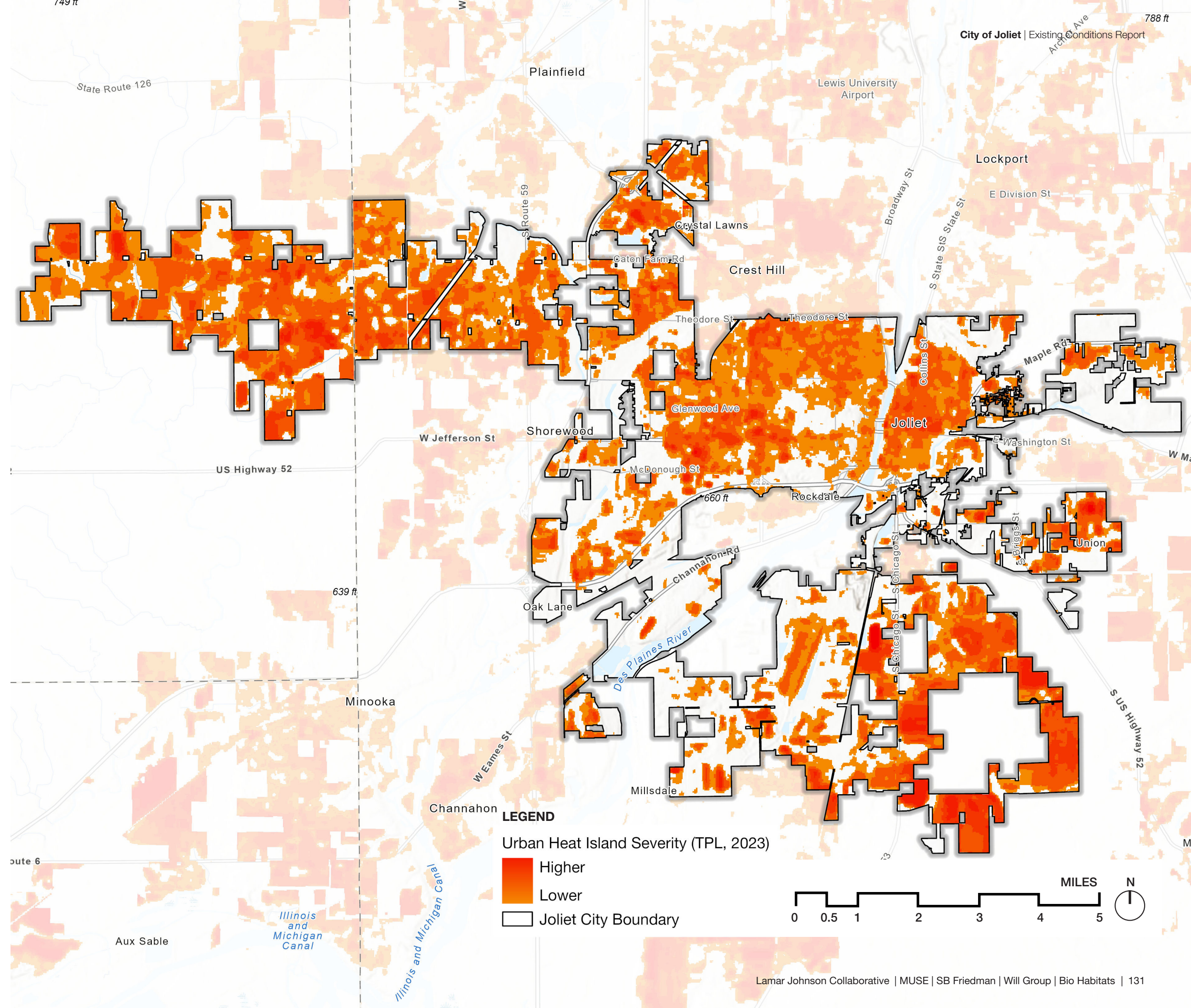


Image source: City of Joliet



## Natural Resilience to Heat: Urban Forest

This maps shows how forested areas to the east of the City reduce the urban heat island effect.





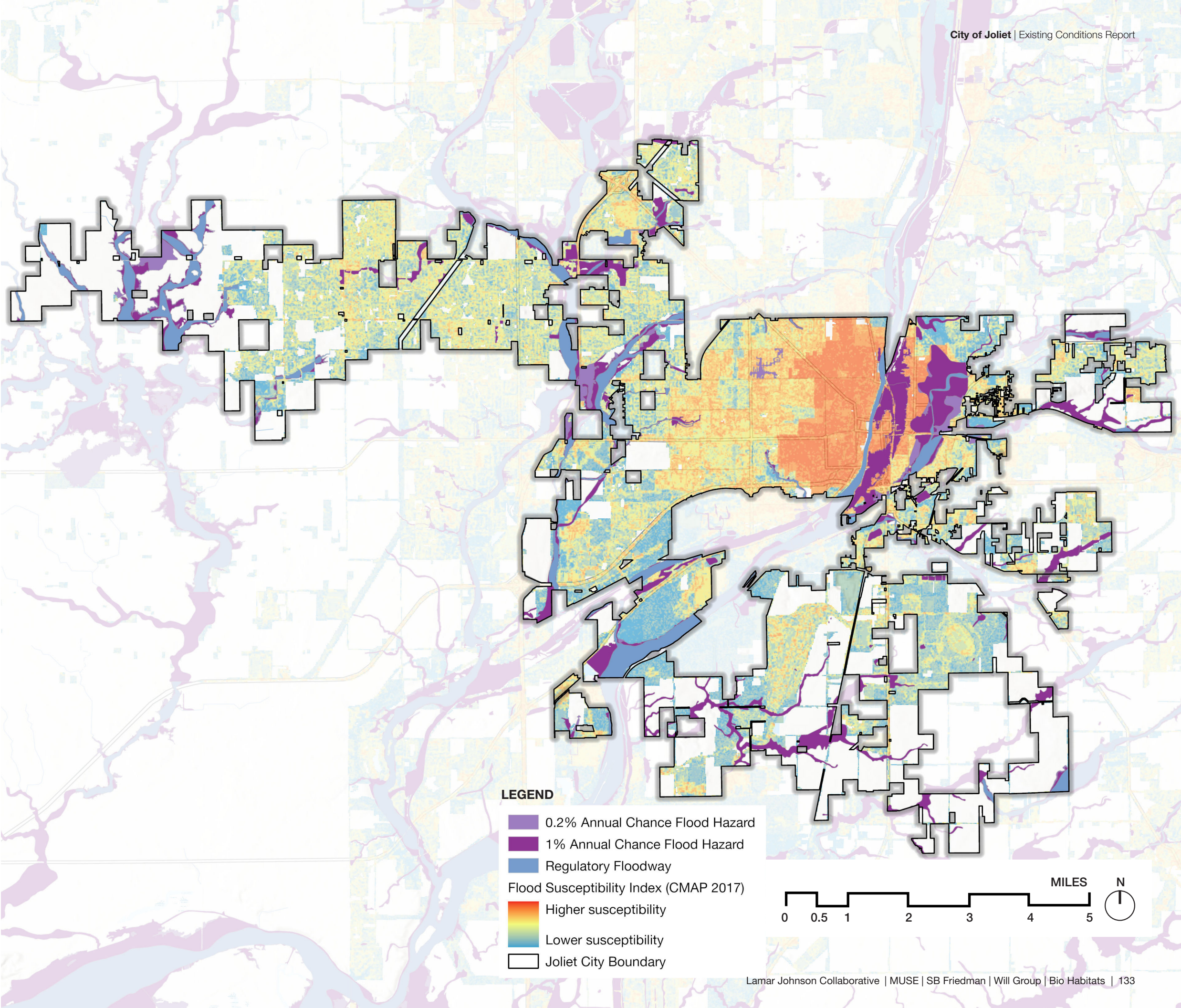
# Floodplains and Flood Risk

## Natural Resilience to Flooding: Waterways

The City of Joliet is grappling with flood protection. The west side of Joliet is on relatively high ground, whereas the east side is low-lying. In some areas, downtown Joliet is more than 15 feet below the 0.01 annual chance exceedance (sometimes called the 100-year floodplain) flood elevation of the Des Plaines River.

In February 2019, FEMA published new Flood Insurance Rate Maps for Will County in which portions of Joliet along the east side of the Des Plaines River were added to the Des Plaines and Hickory Creek floodplains. This newly designated floodplain stretches from Ruby Street south through downtown Joliet and residential areas to Hickory Creek. Ongoing work to construct a flood control levee along the Canal will allow the downtown and residential areas south of downtown to be removed from floodplain designation. The City is in the process of acquiring the land required to install the levee and complete remediation.

Alongside this flooding concern of the large rivers, smaller, dispersed events and basement flooding are predicted to be more common under future conditions of climate trends and land use change. Retaining water as close to possible to where it falls instead of shunting it quickly to streams can help reduce flood risk.





# 09

# Infrastructure and Utilities

## Water Supply

### Delivery Innovation and Partnerships Changing Joliet’s Water Source

The Illinois State Water Survey groundwater modeling indicates that the deep aquifers used by the City of Joliet for its water supply will no longer support enough pumping to meet the City’s maximum day summer demands by the year 2030. Used as a national example of groundwater use, the water levels of the sandstone aquifers were 300 feet below sea level in 2014, and over 800 feet below predevelopment levels in Joliet. This is in part because sandstone aquifers like the large Ironton–Galesville Aquifer are overlain by less permeable materials that limit vertical infiltration of water. The gallons per capita per day declined 6.8 % from 2008–2018, but the rate of withdrawal is still unsustainable. In response, the Joliet City Council decided in January 2021 to pursue a partnership with regional municipalities to bring in treated Lake Michigan water purchased from the City of Chicago.

In 2024, the Grand Prairie Water Commission (GPWC) was officially created, and immediately acquired two sites needed for the construction of GPWC intermediate pumping and storage facilities. The Tunnel Extension is planning to break ground in the second quarter of 2025. Implementing the Alternative Water Source

Program is expected to cost nearly \$1.45 billion by its completion in 2030.

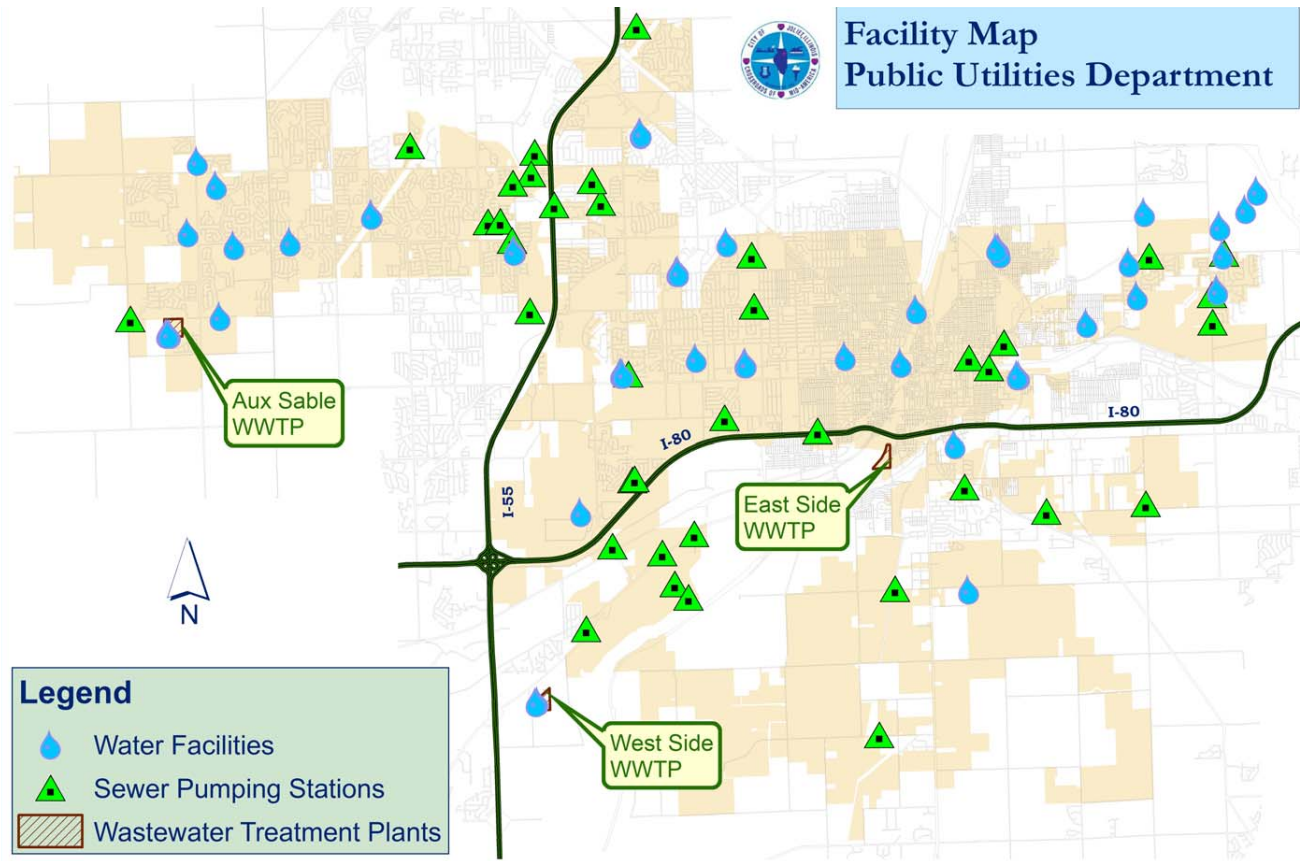
The implications for water costs cannot be known precisely, but they are likely to more than double over the next five years. One response to this reality is Joliet’s “Rethink Water” campaign to encourage water efficiency and conservation measures and help the public prepare for the change. The City also has a water conservation ordinance, which restricts the days and hours during which residents and businesses may water their landscaping. A low flush toilet rebate program is in place as well as a rain barrel subsidy program.

### Who Needs Potable Water?

Currently, industrial users are responsible for about 10% of Joliet’s public water consumption or about 1.45 million gallons per day. The Public Utilities Department is encouraging such customers to use effluent water instead of drinking water. Nationally, water reuse (like using sink water to flush toilets) and “purple pipe” systems are increasingly common for residences however, Illinois plumbing code currently does not allow for this type of water use.

Image source: City of Joliet





# Wastewater

The City of Joliet works consistently to maintain and improve its aging infrastructure.

## System Overview

The City of Joliet provides wastewater services to residential, commercial, industrial, private utilities, and private sanitary districts covering over 40 square miles across Will and Kendall Counties. To do so, it operates a complex wastewater infrastructure, including 608 miles of sewer mains, 50 lift stations, and three treatment facilities. Portions of the original sewer collection system date to the 1800s and include both separated sewers and combined sewers, which direct runoff from rain into the same pipes as sewage. Combined sewage is a common problem in older cities, where heavy rains can overwhelm

the system and lead to overflows of untreated wastewater to the Des Plaines River. Joliet has made considerable progress on this issue since 1985, reducing its number of permitted Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) outfalls from 32 to four. Nevertheless, servicing and replacing the infrastructure requires consistent effort. The current rehabilitation for priority sewer infrastructure areas started in 2017 with a goal of rehabilitating 1% of the system annually and is ongoing. Sewer rates have increased from an average monthly cost of \$32 in 2016 to \$44 in 2023 for 5,000 gallons.

## Wastewater Treatment

The Westside Wastewater Treatment Plant, which provides wastewater treatment for portions of Joliet, Channahon, and Shorewood, was constructed in 1972 and had a major upgrade in 2002. In 2019, the City completed a capacity evaluation at the Westside Wastewater Treatment Plant. The plant is permitted to treat a design average flow of 14 million gallons per day and a design maximum flow of 28 million gallons per day. With anticipated growth to occur in the Westside service area, the city is undertaking a Westside Wastewater Treatment Plant expansion to implement improvements necessary to expand the treatment capacity to an average flow of 18.16 million gallons per day, upgrade aging facilities, and meet new regulatory requirements.

The Eastside Wastewater Treatment Plant has seen multiple upgrades in recent years including the addition of biological phosphorus removal treatment processes and construction of the Wet Weather Treatment Facility to minimize combined sewer overflows to the Des Plaines River. The Plant is permitted to treat a design average flow of 18.2 million gallons per day and a design maximum flow of 45.5 million gallons per day. The Aux Sable Wastewater Treatment Plant was expanded in 2019 to its current capacity of 7.7 million gallons average day flow and 17.3 million gallons maximum day flow. The Plant has also been upgraded for biological phosphorus removal.





# Storm/Floodplain/Drainage

## The Upstream Impact of Industry on Streams

### Stormwater and Waterways

Water travels pathways through the rivers, stream corridors, and stormwater infrastructure that make up an integrated, connected, natural, and engineered City system. Managing floodplains, wetlands, streams, and stormwater is about balancing human needs with natural systems for the shared purposes of maintaining water quality and reducing the risk of flooding and erosion. The outcomes affect both human safety and the well-being ecological systems.

When these components work together efficiently, each has specific benefits.

- Well-managed floodplains prevent flood damage to homes, businesses, and infrastructure, allow pollutant filtration and groundwater recharge, and provide habitat for wildlife. Floodplain programs and protections can also lower flood recovery and insurance costs for communities.
- Wetlands are critical for infiltration and groundwater recharge in NE Illinois, and the species they support are distinct from those that rely on moving water. Smaller, seasonal wetlands are critical for amphibians because predatory fish are absent.
- Streams and their stream corridors offer similar benefits in filtering runoff, reducing pollution, and supporting habitat for fish, amphibians, birds, and plants. Healthy corridors also protect land and infrastructure from being washed away.
- Stormwater systems capture and slowly release runoff to prevent flash floods and erosion. They protect water quality as the first opportunity to prevent oils, heavy metals, and trash from entering rivers and eventually oceans.

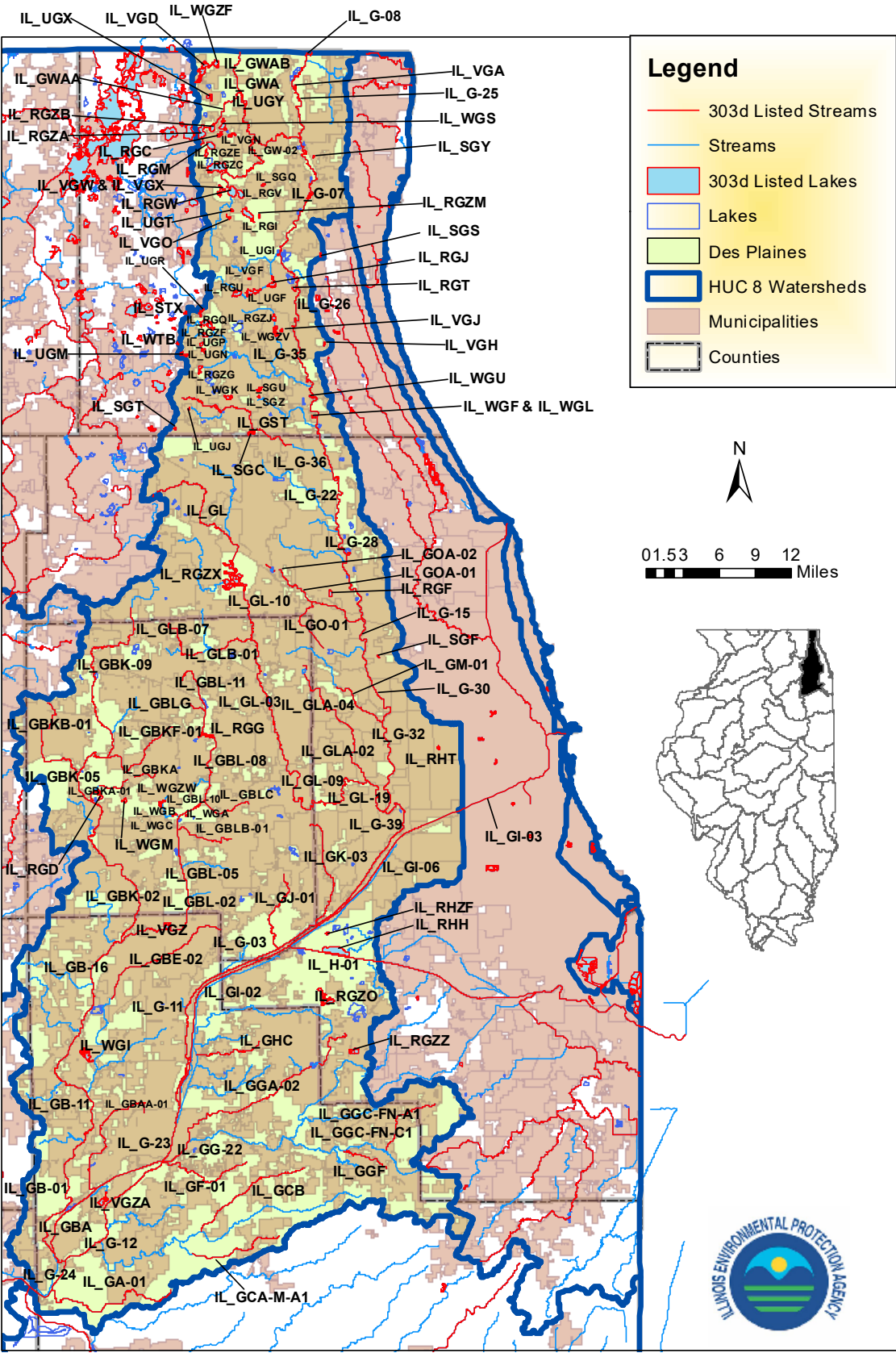
### Water Quality & Impaired Streams

Provisions of the Clean Water Act section 303(d) require each state to identify waters for which existing required pollution controls are insufficient to meet state water quality standards. The standards depend on the designated use of the stream, which could be as public water supply, for swimming, fishing, or agriculture. Many of the City of Joliet’s waterways are designated as impaired, meaning they do not meet water quality standards set by regulatory authorities—usually because of pollution or other environmental stressors. The complete list of impaired streams in the larger Des Plaines watershed helps put water quality in regional context.

Many factors contribute to poor water quality in urban streams, including:

- Stormwater runoff containing fertilizers or pollution from urban surfaces.
- Sewage leaks or overflows.
- Loss of natural stream buffers that filter and clean water.
- Higher water temperatures that aquatic life cannot tolerate.
- Altered geomorphology from development that straightens or lines stream channels, preventing infiltration or speeding water up until it scours the channel bottom.

Des Plaines Watershed (HUC 07120004)



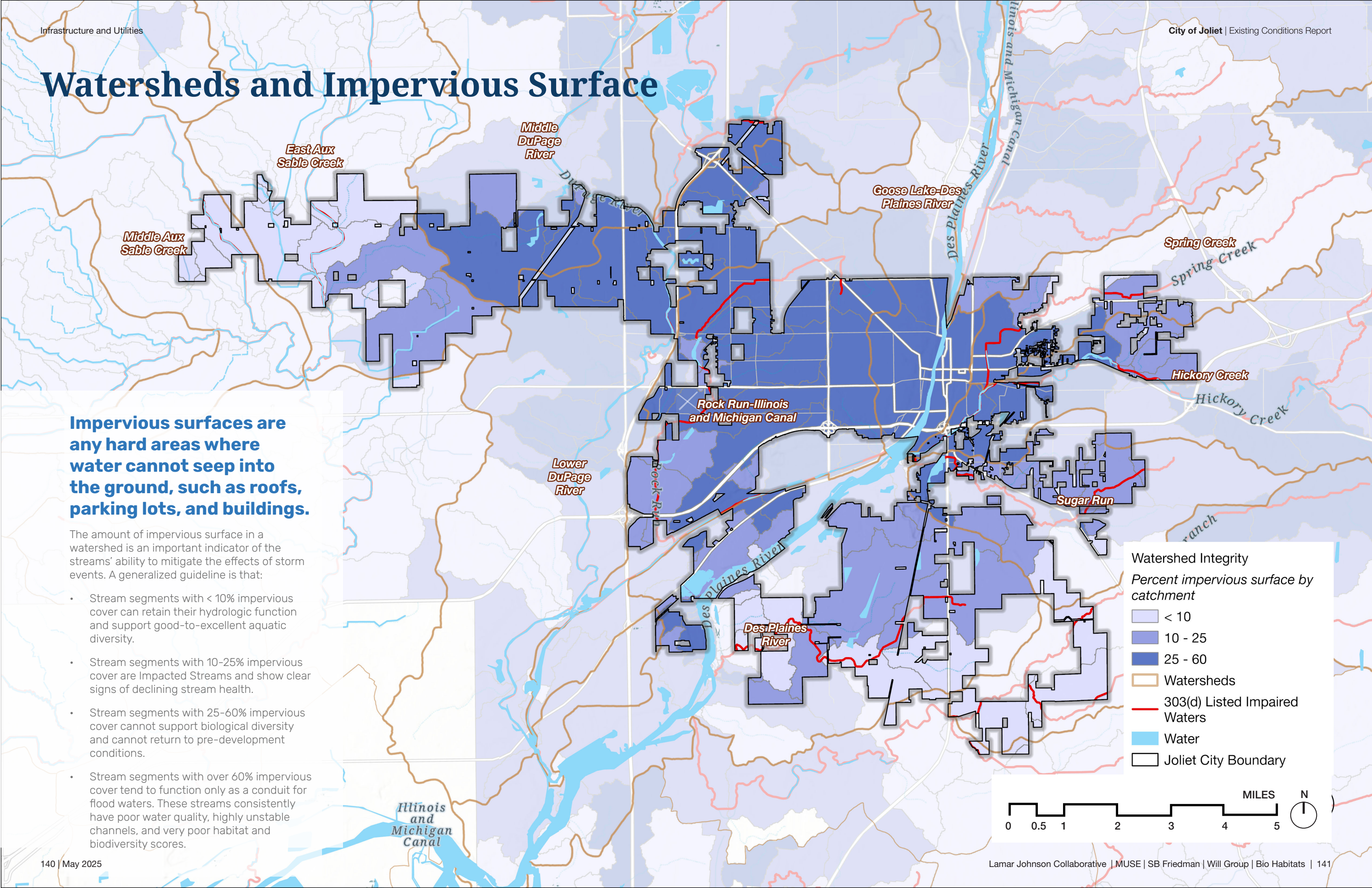


# Watersheds and Impervious Surface

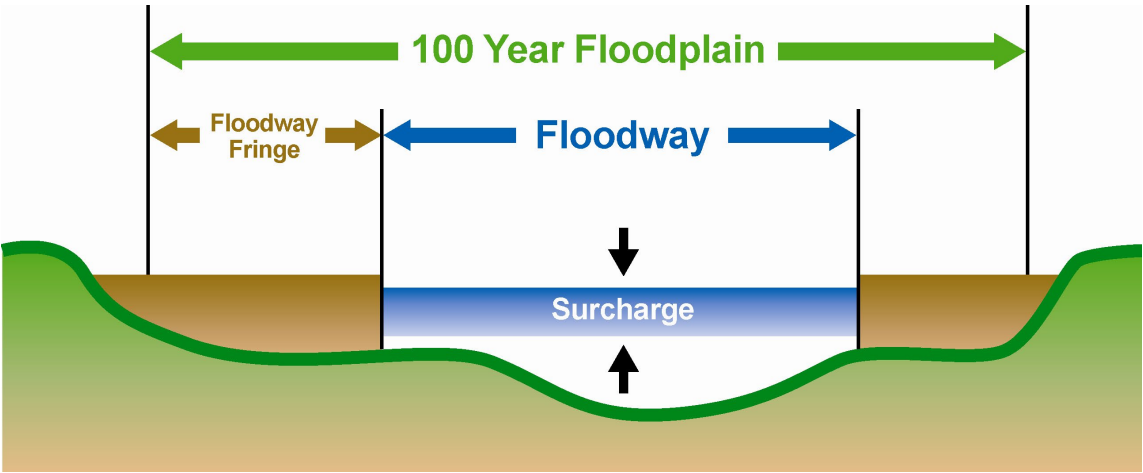
**Impervious surfaces are any hard areas where water cannot seep into the ground, such as roofs, parking lots, and buildings.**

The amount of impervious surface in a watershed is an important indicator of the streams' ability to mitigate the effects of storm events. A generalized guideline is that:

- Stream segments with < 10% impervious cover can retain their hydrologic function and support good-to-excellent aquatic diversity.
- Stream segments with 10-25% impervious cover are Impacted Streams and show clear signs of declining stream health.
- Stream segments with 25-60% impervious cover cannot support biological diversity and cannot return to pre-development conditions.
- Stream segments with over 60% impervious cover tend to function only as a conduit for flood waters. These streams consistently have poor water quality, highly unstable channels, and very poor habitat and biodiversity scores.







Jurisdictional Overview

The City of Joliet is the permitting authority for all land disturbing activities, but it is not solely responsible for the regulations. Guidance for compliance with the federal Clean Water Act is issued by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, and minimum standards for several aspects of stormwater regulations are set by Will County and mirrored by Joliet. The state stormwater statutes also specify that County stormwater plans be submitted to the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) for review and recommendations. Although without direct authority, the NIPC has developed model ordinances that municipalities and counties are encouraged to adopt.

Floodplains and Waterway Corridors

“Floodplains” is a term that is used in both legal and common terms, so they can be subdivided for precise regulatory language.

A “Regulatory Floodway” means the channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to

discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than a designated height.

In Joliet’s Code of Ordinance, a floodplain means land adjacent to a body of water with an elevation at or below the base flood or the one hundred (100) year frequency flood elevation.

The City also defines flood fringe as the portion of the floodplain outside of the regulatory floodway.

Sec. 8-507 of the City of Joliet Code of Ordinance prohibits most development in the floodway, except for appropriate uses that will not cause a rise in the base flood elevation. Appropriate uses exclude most new structures, but could include flood control structures, utility infrastructure, playing fields, garages or sheds, and parking lots.

Sec. 8-506 allows development in and fill in the rest of the floodplain if protection is provided against the base flood or one hundred (100) year frequency flood by proper elevation, or compensatory storage.

# Green Infrastructure

Homeowners and communities can help manage stormwater with green infrastructure that keeps rain where it falls and gives it time to infiltrate into the soil. Green infrastructure reduces strain on storm sewer systems, lessens flooding, and protects local waterways.

Native Plants

Rain Gardens & Bioswales

Rainwater Harvesting

# BIOSWALES HELP PREVENT FLOODING.

Rainwater that falls on streets and parking lots is directed into the bioswale and slowly soaks into the ground.

Wetland Protection

Wetlands that adjoin rivers, lakes, and other water bodies are protected under the Clean Water Act, which prohibits development and filling in these areas. In Joliet, certain sub-areas, such as the South Side, require a 25-foot vegetated buffer from the ordinary high-water mark, as established by a 2007 City ordinance to protect natural corridors like Sugar Creek, Jackson Creek, and Prairie Creek. Additional sub-area plans, including the Kendall County Sub-Area Plan, support the use of broader buffers as part of green infrastructure and stormwater best practices, even though such standards are not yet applied citywide. Wetlands cannot be used for stormwater detention unless they are of low ecological quality and proposed modifications preserve or enhance their habitat and functional value. Site drainage patterns must also remain largely unaltered to protect wetland performance.

Streams

Streams in the City of Joliet may have watershed management plans that encourage vegetated buffers and other forms of stream protection. Through participation in the Lower DuPage River Watershed Coalition and Lower Des Plaines Watershed Group, and in compliance with their NPDES Permit, the City of Joliet works hard to promote green infrastructure and stream protection practices such as rain gardens, green roofs, permeable pavements, and stream buffers which may not be appropriate in all locations. This multifaceted approach uses social media posts including those pictured above.



## Stormwater Management

The adopted regulations of both the City and Will County address the water quantity and quality of runoff from a development site. The Joliet Department of Public Works, in coordination with the Department of Public Utilities, is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the Stormwater Management Plan and documenting and tracking its success. Some of the regulatory language stems from Will County, which establishes minimum standards for the City of Joliet through a unified countywide stormwater management framework that provides consistent standards throughout the county.

All cities with populations higher than 100,000 must maintain a Phase I National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stormwater permit. The permit includes specific measures to minimize pollution in the city stormwater system and local waterways.

These measures include public education and outreach, public participation and involvement, illicit discharge detection and elimination, construction site runoff, post-construction site runoff, and pollution prevents on and good housekeeping. Recent progress in the City of Joliet includes improved street sweeping and establishing a tracking method with quarterly summaries to document street sweeping debris, grate cleaning, and ditch cleaning.

Joliet has had stormwater management requirements since the 1970s, but updated them in 2014 to completely mirror the Will County ordinance requiring stormwater detention for most developments over 1 acre in size. Generally, developments need to detain stormwater for the two year 24-hour storm event and the 100 year 24-hour storm event. Stormwater flows leaving the site from a 2-year event cannot exceed 0.04 cfs per acre, though the peak discharge could be as fast as 0.15 cfs per acre in the 100-year storm event.



*Image source: Lisa Roppolo*



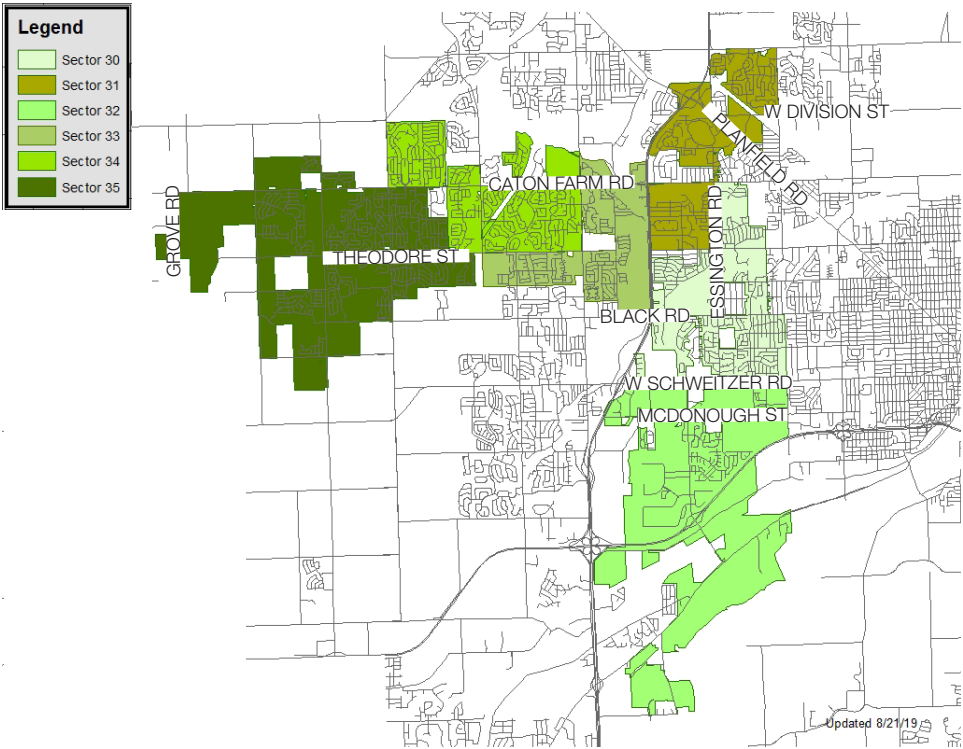


# 10

## Appendix



# Policing District Maps



## West District, Sectors 30-35

The West District encompasses all areas located west of the Joliet Junction Trail and Gaylord Road, extending into both Will and Kendall Counties. It includes District Sectors 30 through 35 and features a mix of residential neighborhoods, commercial corridors, institutional anchors, and regional entertainment destinations.

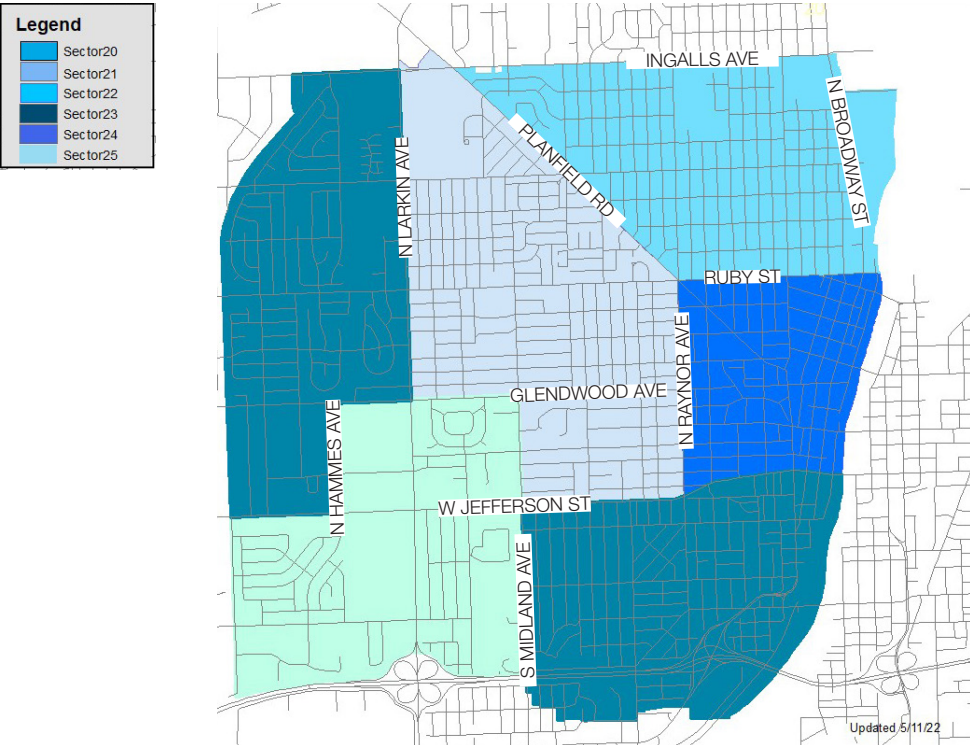
Key civic facilities include the Joliet Police Department's West Sub-Station at 7196 Caton Farm Road, providing public safety services to the western portion of the City. Major business and commercial areas are concentrated along Mall Loop Drive, Route 59, Essington Road, W Jefferson Street, and near key interchanges such as I-80 and Houbolt Road and McDonough Street and Caterpillar Drive.

The district is also home to significant

educational institutions, including Plainfield South High School and Joliet Junior College, the nation's first public community college.

A broad range of residential neighborhoods — including Glenwood Manor, Old Kent, Twin Oaks, Timbers, Sanctuary, Autumn Lakes, Beaver Creek, Grand Prairie, Greywall, and many others — contribute to the district's suburban character and growing population base.

Regional attractions such as the Hollywood Casino add an additional entertainment and economic dimension to the West District.



## Central District, Sectors 20-25

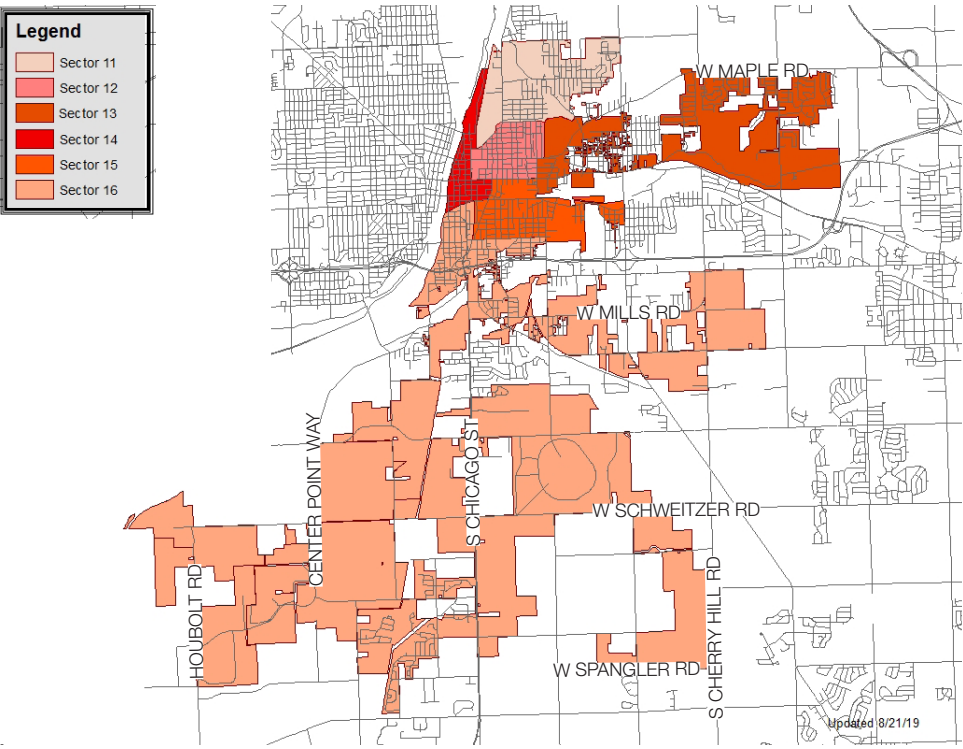
The Central District encompasses the area bounded by the Des Plaines River to the east, Theodore Street to the north, the Joliet Junction Trail to the west, and Interstate 80 to the south. This district includes Sectors 20 through 25 and reflects a diverse mix of civic, commercial, and residential uses.

The district is anchored by St. Joseph Medical Center, serving as a major regional healthcare provider. Central business corridors along Plainfield Road, Larkin Avenue, and West Jefferson Street support a mix of retail, service, and office uses, contributing to the area's economic activity.

Educational facilities include Joliet

Township West High School, an important institutional and community resource within the district.

A variety of residential neighborhoods including St. Pat's, Reedwood, Idleside, Midland West, Cathedral, St. Mary's, Cunningham, Garnsey, Old Plank, Emerald Lawns, Briargate, Bridal Wreath, and Marycrest — provide a range of housing options, from historic districts to postwar subdivisions. Together, these neighborhoods contribute to the Central District's established character and evolving community fabric.



## East District, Sectors 11-16

The East District encompasses all areas of the City of Joliet located east of the Des Plaines River and includes district 11 through 16. This district is defined by a diverse mix of civic institutions, cultural destinations, residential neighborhoods, and regional-scale commercial activity.

Anchoring the district is the Joliet Police Department's main station, located at 150 W Washington Street, which serves as a key civic and public safety facility. The Downtown is home to major regional attractions such as Harrah's Casino, the Rialto Square Theatre, The Forge, and a growing number of restaurants, entertainment venues, and cultural assets.

The district is also home to major educational and recreational amenities, including Pilcher Park, Joliet Township Central High School, and the Joliet Township Pathways

Academy.

To the far south, the East District includes a concentration of freight, industrial, and entertainment uses. Notable destinations include CenterPoint Intermodal Center, Chicagoland Speedway, and the Joliet Autobahn Country Club, which collectively represent the district's significant regional economic and logistical presence.

The neighborhoods in the east district represent a mix of housing types and community development patterns.



## Demographic & Socioeconomic Analysis | Endnotes

- 1 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates
- 2 2014-2018 and 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates
- 3 2014-2018 and 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates
- 4 2014-2018 and 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates; Joliet, Aurora, Rockford, and United States
- 5 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates
- 6 BLS; CPI for all urban consumers in the Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI MSA; not seasonally adjusted
- 7 2014-2018 and 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates
- 8 LEHD 2010-2022, all jobs
- 9 IL Local Workforce Innovation Area 10 Occupation Projections 2020-2030
- 10 Lightcast
- 11 2014-2018 and 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates
- 12 LEHD 2010-2022, all jobs
- 13 Will County Center for Economic Development and CMAP
- 14 Lightcast 2024
- 15 MIT Living Wage Calculator - Will County 2025
- 16 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates
- 17 2023 ACS 1-year estimates, population age 25 and over
- 18 Lightcast 2024
- 19 Lightcast 2024



## Market Analysis and Economic Development | Endnotes

- 1 2014-2018 and 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates
- 2 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates
- 3 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates
- 4 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates
- 5 US Census Building Permits
- 6 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates
- 7 MLS, all sales of single-family attached and detached homes in 2024
- 8 BLS, MLS
- 9 MLS, all sales of single-family attached and detached homes in 2023-2024
- 10 MLS, all sales from 2015-2024
- 11 CoStar
- 12 2014-2018 and 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates
- 13 CoStar
- 14 2014-2018 and 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimates
- 15 Income-adjusted based on inflation
- 16 HUD
- 17 ACS 5-year estimates, ACS 5-year PUMS, Esri
- 18 City of Ottawa Building Permit Data (March 2025)
- 19 CoStar and MLS. See additional detail in previous sections.
- 20 CBRE, Will County Community Freight Friendly Plan
- 21 Will County Center for Economic Development
- 22 CoStar
- 23 CoStar
- 24 CoStar
- 25 CoStar
- 26 CoStar
- 27 CoStar
- 28 CoStar
- 29 Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis
- 30 CoStar
- 31 CoStar
- 32 CoStar
- 33 CoStar
- 34 CoStar
- 35 CoStar