



*A new rail stop at lower right provides the opportunity for Hammond to bring its downtown back to life.*

With Stantec Urban Places.

2023 Merit Award, Congress for New Urbanism

Formerly one of the largest, busiest downtowns in Indiana, the city of Hammond—the inspiration of the film *A Christmas Story*—has seen almost complete disinvestment in its core since the 1960s. Fortunately, many healthy pre-war buildings remain, and bold leadership recently secured for the city a new rail stop offering convenient commuter service to the Chicago loop.

To make the most of this opportunity, the City hired Speck Dempsey (then Speck & Associates) to create a downtown plan that would shape demonstrated regional housing demand into an urban framework to attract investment. The resulting plan has five principal strategies:

- To reconfigure the street network to maintain a robust grid despite the barrier presented by the train tracks;
- To create two new public spaces, a main square and a transit square;
- To transform Hohman Avenue, the city’s main street, from a surface highway to a “shared space,” a drivable linear plaza.
- To identify sites for new housing and create an urban code to shape its form.
- To restripe almost every downtown street, most of which are currently engineered to invite speeding.

In an early win, the plan managed through the charrette process to move the train station one key block closer to the heart of downtown, making walking connections between shopping and transit truly viable.

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