



The River District, which expands downtown Elkhart eastward into an underutilized post-industrial zone, has moved quickly from planning to implementation.

Completed with Stantec Urban Places.

The award-winning Implementation Plan for the River District provides an object lesson in how to turn planning into reality. Importantly, the client was a public-private partnership collectively bent on change and committed to focusing its resources on one largely uninhabited district adjacent to a downtown core. The goal was to consolidate, and apply best-practices urban design to, a collection of disparate efforts that lacked a unified vision. The plan creates a neighborhood anchored by a new aquatic center, a supermarket, hundreds of units of housing, and a civic square all linked by a beautified main street.

Several features distinguish the plan. A careful shared-parking study demonstrated how a planned \$10-million parking structure was not needed, allowing that funding—already allocated—to be directed towards more impactful public works. Additionally, plans for an auto-oriented streetscape with many buildings behind parking lots were reconfigured to line sidewalks with friendly building fronts. Finally, a four-lane central avenue was reconfigured to two lanes with parallel parking and a treed median, a transformation that is already complete. By mid-2020, the new supermarket, aquatic center, and the first large housing development are all open, and construction continues.

2019 Merit Award Winner, International Downtown Association.

2020 Merit Award Winner, Congress for New Urbanism

Contact: David Weaver, RDIT Chair

dave@weimpactgroup.com