Report of the Transportation Work Group

City of Indianapolis
Division of Planning
2013
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Introduction

This report was written in preparation of the Near West Neighborhood Land Use Plan. As part of the planning process, four work groups were established, each with its own topic. This report documents the findings of the Transportation Work Group. This report and the reports of the other work groups will be combined with other materials to form the final plan document.

The Transportation Work Group met twice in April and May 2013. The purpose of the work group was to study issues relevant to streets, curbs, sidewalks, bikeways and mass transit within the study area. The group was expected to set goals and actions as they relate to transportation.

National Road bridge over White River in the 1840s and 50s. Drawing by Christian Schrader.
Public Input
Throughout 2012 a series of interviews and focus group meetings were held with residents, businesspeople and representatives of institutions in the Near West neighborhood as well as with City staff. The purpose of these interactions was to gather information about the area’s assets and resources, and to hear and understand the participants’ issues, concerns and visions for the area. At the kick-off meeting of the planning process, attendees were asked to prioritize these items. The following results formed the starting point of the Work Group’s discussions.

Placements in the following table are based on 3 points for each “high priority,” 2 points for each “medium,” 1 point for each “low” and minus 1 point for each “not an issue or concern.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Priority</th>
<th>Medium Priority</th>
<th>Low Priority</th>
<th>Not a priority</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Issue or Concern</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Upgrades in local IndyGo bus services, such as more frequent buses and better stops.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Want walkable neighborhoods.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>The Near West needs better ways to get people to their jobs or potential jobs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Street lighting on neighborhood streets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Inventory and prioritize street, curb, sidewalk and alley needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Better tie Washington and Michigan streets into downtown for pedestrians and bicyclists.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Need better street lighting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Environmentally sensitive infrastructure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Improve streetscaping along the major streets, such as wider sidewalks, islands, medians, benches, and public art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Concern about pedestrian safety along Washington Street.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Lack of sidewalks west of Warman.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Need repair of streets and sidewalks around School #67.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Develop a bicycle corridor from the B&amp;O route along Michigan Street into the downtown area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Potential Bus Rapid Transit on West Washington Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>No sidewalks on the west side of White River Parkway.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Make the Near West more bicycle friendly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Adding a center turn lane to 10th Street.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Concern about unused railbeds and railroad property.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mass transit running on the CSX corridor from downtown, through the Near West, along the east side of the Speedway and up toward Zionsville.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Potential extension of Holt Road north to 16th Street and beyond.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Develop a bicycle corridor along Lafayette Road leading into White River Parkway.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>More parking needed along Washington Street.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Concern about the future of northwest branch of the belt railroad.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Plan Recommendations
A well-connected transportation system is an important asset to any urban community. A transportation system with a high level of connectivity will have many short links, numerous intersections, and minimal dead-ends. As connectivity increases, travel distances decrease and route options increase. Direct travel between destinations creates a more accessible system.

“Complete Streets” are another important transportation asset. A complete street is one where pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation users of all ages and abilities are able to move along and across it. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from bus stops in an environment that is sensitive to human scale.

As transportation and connectivity improvements are made they should be respectful of the existing context. Context-sensitive design incorporates elements such as livability, sense of place, human-scaled urban design, and environmental protection into transportation projects without sacrificing traditional objectives of safety, efficiency, capacity and maintenance.

The Near West is fortunate to have many components of a well-connected transportation system and Complete Streets; however there is room for improvement. The Near West seeks to:
- Improve the walkability of the area
- Better tie the neighborhood to the Downtown
- Better tie the neighborhood to other job centers
- Have infrastructure that is more environmentally sensitive
Walking
Sidewalks
Sidewalks are commonplace in the Near West neighborhoods. However there are some notable gaps. Few sidewalks exist north of 16th Street. Provision of sidewalks is spotty in the area between 10th and 16th street from Sharon Avenue to the west. Sidewalks are missing on the west side of White River Parkway, along Vermont Street west of Warman Avenue, on Oliver Street and many of the streets south of Oliver.

Gaps in the current sidewalk network create barriers to safe movement for pedestrians. New infrastructure and amenities could heighten the pedestrian experience, strengthening pathways among jobs, housing, and transit and promoting the economic viability of the area’s retail streets. Pedestrian crossings, signals, crosswalk treatments, way-finding signs, street lighting, street furniture and streetscape elements are all important parts of the pedestrian system.

The Work Group noted that providing and maintaining trashcans along major neighborhood streets would be a valuable pedestrian asset. Possibly this could be done by expanding the existing downtown trashcan program across the river.

The Department of Public Works adds sidewalks and crosswalks as money becomes available through its Capital Improvement Plan. Each year the City allocates funds from neighborhood bonds to fund the Sidewalk Program. Sidewalks are requested and prioritized in accordance with the City’s Sidewalk Retrofit Policy. When new development or major redevelopment projects occur, the City’s zoning ordinances require the construction of sidewalks if they are missing from the parcel.

Well built and maintained sidewalks can easily last 50 years and many are still serviceable after 100 years. However many of the sidewalks on the Near West are quite old and in need of repair.

Additional sidewalks were recommended for the following areas:
- St. Clair Street east of Belleview Place
- Walnut Street between Concord Street and Tibbs Avenue
- Garden Avenue from Rochester Avenue to Tibbs Avenue
- The west side of Tibbs Avenue between Washington Street and Walnut Street
- Tibbs Avenue from 16th Street to 22nd Street
- The west side of White River Parkway, including a crosswalk and other improvements at the intersection with New York Street
- The 500 View neighborhood in general

Crosswalks
All intersections function as if there is a crosswalk whether the crosswalk is marked or unmarked. Marked crosswalks are important for safety as they alert motorists to the possible presence of pedestrians and help direct pedestrians, especially the sight impaired.
Crosswalks on major streets should be clearly marked for safety. Some crosswalks may be appropriate locations for enhanced treatments such as center medians or raised crosswalks. These enhancements improve safety by reducing vehicle speed at crosswalks and reducing exposure of pedestrians to vehicles. Center medians can improve crossing safety by providing a refuge space that allows the pedestrian to cross each direction of traffic separately. Center medians are installed only where pavement widths are sufficient. Raised crosswalks increase visibility of the crosswalk and decrease vehicle speeds.

The following crosswalks were identified for improvements:
  - 10th Street and Belmont Avenue (near School #63)
  - White River Parkway at 10th, New York, Oliver and Michigan streets
  - Michigan Street at the Kroger grocery
  - Harding and Oliver streets
  - Tibbs Avenue and Michigan Street (near School #67)
  - The offset streets along 10th Street

Sidewalk crossings of railroad tracks are in bad condition throughout the neighborhood and need to be improved and maintained.
**Bicycling**

The Regional Bikeways Plan envisions a safe network of bikeways, integrated with transit and motor vehicle routes, to provide access to home, work, education, commerce, transit and recreation within the Indianapolis region.

Three types of bikeways are proposed in the Regional Bikeways Plan: bike trails, bike lanes and side paths. Bike trails are separated from traffic and are not located in a street right-of-way. A bike lane is distinguished by pavement markings and signs for the specific use of cyclists. A side path is much like a sidewalk in that it is separated from motor vehicle traffic and is within a street right-of-way.

One existing bikeway can be found in the Near West, the White River Greenway on the west bank of White River from Washington Street to New York Street.

Within the Near West, the Regional Bikeways Plan recommends:
- A greenways trail along Eagle Creek
- A bike lane on Michigan Street from Eagle Creek east into the downtown.
- A greenways trail on the old B&O Railroad as far east as Tibbs Avenue.
- A bike lane on Tibbs Avenue connecting the B & O to Michigan Street.

The Transportation Work Group recommends implementation of the four bikeways listed above as well as the following bikeways:
- The B&O Railroad from Tibbs Avenue to Michigan Street
- Tibbs Avenue from Washington Street to Lafayette Road
- Concord Street/Kessler Boulevard from Vermont Street to Lafayette Road and beyond
- Holmes Avenue from Washington Street to Lafayette Road
- Belmont Avenue from Rhodius Park to White River Parkway
- Harding Street from Morris Street to New York Street
- Walnut Street from Concord Street, across Haughville Park, to Belmont Avenue
- Vermont Street from Tibbs Avenue to Holmes Avenue
- New York Street from Belmont Avenue to White River Parkway
- New York Street from Holmes Avenue to Central Greens
- Ohio Street from Holmes Avenue to Central Greens
- Washington Street from Tibbs Avenue to Holmes Avenue
- Warman Avenue from Washington Street to Morris Street
- Oliver Street from Belmont Avenue to Kentucky Avenue
Driving
As the Near West was originally developed, it was well-placed to take advantage of the city’s network of thoroughfares leading west out of the downtown. East/west movement across the neighborhood is still good.

The Near West is also connected to the region and nation by interstates. Interstate 70, which runs along the southern edge of the community, is accessed at Harding Street and Holt Road. Interstate 65 is nearby and can be accessed on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Street at 10th Street.

North/south travel through the area is more difficult because few streets run continuously through the area. Creation of a north/south arterial to serve the neighborhood is recommended.

Proposed major realignment of 16th Street, Holt Road and Crawfordsville Road in the adjacent Town of Speedway may affect the Near West’s connectivity to the west. These realignments should be modified if it is determined that they will negatively affect the Near West.

Realignment of Tibbs Avenue as it approaches and intersects with Washington Street was recommended by the Work Group. Straightening out Tibbs Avenue could create a safer, 90-degree intersection with Washington Street, open street level views to Little Eagle Creek and add usable space to Central Greens. However realignment may be hampered by the presence of nearby burials and the need to provide access to a proposed school on the southwest corner of Central Greens.

Accident rates can point out locations where street improvements, structural and/or operational, may be needed. According to 2009 traffic accident data the streets in the Near West neighborhoods with the highest number of accidents were:

- 10th Street,
- Michigan Street,
- Washington Street, and
- 16th Street.

When the number of accidents is compared to the amount of traffic the streets with the highest accidents rates were:

- 10th Street between Holt Road and the White River,
- Concord Street between 16th and Vermont streets, and
- Belmont Avenue between 10th and Michigan streets,

Belmont Avenue’s high rating can be largely attributed to the number of accidents at its intersection with 10th Street.

To improve traffic safety further study of the streets segments in the second list is recommended.

The Work Group identified some streets and alleys that are in need of repair. They are:

- Luett Street,
• Warman Street under the railroad,
• The north-south alleys between Tibbs and Holt in the Fairfax, 500 View and Rainbow Ridge neighborhoods.
• Numerous alleys in the Haughville neighborhood.

The Work Group expressed a desire for better notification of upcoming street construction work.
Transit

Routes
Five IndyGo bus routes directly serve the Near West. Three of the routes run east/west through the neighborhood, the #3 – Michigan Street, the #8 – Washington Street, and the #10 – 10th Street. One route, the #25 – West 16th Street, provides east-west service with a loop to the north. One route provides service along White River and then northwest on along Lafayette Road, the #37 – Park 100. There is no north-south service through the Near West. Work Group participants recommended a north-south route to connect the current routes. A recommendation was also made to extend the 20-minute headway service on the 10th Street route from Tibbs Avenue to Holt Road.

Safety
On-bus safety is maintained in a variety of ways. All buses have eight cameras and two microphones and drivers are trained in security. A security firm, hired with federal grant money, has been providing off-duty IMPD officers to monitor bus stops in the downtown and elsewhere. IndyGo reports safety statistics on a regular basis.

Bus stops
Convenient and comfortable bus stops enhance the transit experience and encourage ridership. Upgrading of bus stops with benches and shelters is desired. Priorities for enhanced bus stops are stops with high numbers of boardings, and with existing sidewalks and curbs. However there are many constraints. For example, on 10th street the right-of-way is very narrow so there is little or no room for enhanced stops unless an adjoining business would volunteer to have the bench or shelter placed on their property. Also, enhanced bus stops are not typically located in front of single-family homes.

Enhancement of the bus stop adjacent to the Haughville Library will be occurring soon.

IndyGo offers an Adopt-a-Stop program. The adopter picks up litter and empties the trashcan at the adopted stop (IndyGo supplies the adopter with trash bags). The adopter reports damage or other issues to IndyGo. In return, IndyGo provides the adopter with five one-day fare passes for fixed route service and furnishes the stop with a sign featuring the adopter’s name. People can volunteer to adopt a stop through IndyGo’s website.
IndyConnect
IndyConnect is a long-range transportation plan designed to connect people and places around Central Indiana. It's intended to provide transportation options – from local bus, rapid transit, and roadways to pedestrian and bike pathways – and connect people to jobs, healthcare, education and shopping. It's intended to increase Central Indiana's competitiveness and economic development opportunities while improving the environment, job growth opportunities and quality of life.

A plan endorsed by local elected officials and civic and business leaders in December 2011 suggests a phased implementation – beginning with a 10-year plan to be built in Marion and Hamilton counties. Additional counties could join during that time period and service would be extended within that county according to the plan.

Highlights of the proposed transportation plan include:

- **Bus:** Doubling of the current bus service in the first 10-years, with eventual expansion to nearly triple the current size. This means significantly less wait time between buses and longer hours of service, plus more direct routes. Also included is the addition of community circulators and express bus routes.

- **Rapid Transit Lines:** Five Rapid Transit lines could provide high frequency service to heavily traveled areas. Rapid Transit runs every 5 to 15 minutes, has dedicated lanes or rails, and controls traffic signals to reduce travel time. Rapid Transit features frequent stops at upgraded transit stations with lighting, benches, and announcements so travelers know when the next vehicle is arriving. Light rail or bus rapid transit vehicles can be used to provide rapid transit service.

- **Bike and Pedestrian Pathways:** Plans call for hundreds of miles of trails and pathways that connect to buses, rail and roadways and fill gaps where connections are missing.

- **Roadways and Bridges:** Expanding, maintaining and improving the roadway and bridge system includes road resurfacing, bridge repairs, intersection and pavement improvements, as well as connectivity with walkers and bikers through new sidewalks and bikeways.

For the Near West, the most likely improvements would be:

- General improvements to the bus system such as:
  - Reduced wait times on the bus lines
  - Buses running until midnight on weekdays and 10 p.m. on weekends
  - More direct bus service and fewer required downtown transfers, with 10 additional cross-town routes outside of downtown Indianapolis
  - Seven-day-a-week service on most routes
  - Additional bus routes
  - Six express bus routes with direct service to major economic and commercial centers, including the Indianapolis International Airport and Park 100
  - High frequency bus service on 10th Street and from IUPUI to Park 100 via Lafayette Road
  - Implementation of the Blue Line rapid transit line in the Washington Street corridor
• Implementation of a branch of the Blue Line rapid transit line on the CSX tracks to Zionsville

The Blue Line, as proposed, would run 24 miles from the Indianapolis International Airport to the far eastside of the City. Alternatively, the line’s route may go as far west as western Plainfield, IN. The route would be located somewhere in the Washington Street corridor, most likely on Washington Street itself.

The corridor is being studied for bus rapid transit. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) vehicles look, operate, and feel like a light rail vehicle. They are essentially light rail without the tracks. BRT provides faster service by limiting stops to enhanced passenger stations located near major activity centers along arterial roadway corridors. BRT runs on dedicated lanes and has traffic signal priority. Typically, stops are every 1/2 mile to 1 mile, fares are collected at the stations rather than on the vehicle, and boarding platforms are level with the bus floor.

Stops have been tentatively proposed for the Indianapolis Zoo, Harding Street, Belmont Avenue, Addison Street and Tibbs Avenue.
Central Indiana Long Range Transit Plan

- Blue Line Bus Rapid Transit or Rail Transit
- Future Line Bus Rapid Transit or Rail Transit
- High-Frequency Bus
- Enhanced Local Bus
- Express Bus
- Future Express Bus

Potential Station Locations - Shown for Illustration Only, Locations TBD

This map does not represent a legal document. It is intended serve as an aid in graphic representation only. Information shown is not warranted for accuracy or merchantibility.

City of Indianapolis - Marion County
Department of Metropolitan Development
Division of Planning
Review of existing transportation plans

The Near West has been the beneficiary of many years of City transportation planning efforts. The following planning documents can guide the goals and actions that we will recommend in this plan.

Thoroughfare Plan (2002)
The Thoroughfare Plan documents the interconnecting and hierarchical system of roadways that provides continuity and connectivity across Marion County. Where appropriate the plan recommends street widenings and new street segments. Following are the Near West streets listed in the Thoroughfare Plan. With one exception the existing and proposed pavement widths match. This means that there is only one street widening proposed for the Near West.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street Segment</th>
<th>Existing ROW width</th>
<th>Existing Pavement Width</th>
<th>Proposed ROW width</th>
<th>Proposed Pavement Width</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10th Street From Holt Road to Concord St</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>10th Street From Concord St to White River Pkwy</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th Street From CSX Railroad to Lafayette Rd</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belmont Avenue From 10th St to Michigan St</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belmont Avenue From Michigan St to Washington St</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belmont Avenue From Washington St to Maryland St</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>Belmont Avenue From Maryland St to Oliver St</td>
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<td>Belmont Avenue From Oliver St to I-70</td>
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<td>Concord Street From 16th St to Walnut St</td>
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<td>Concord Street From Walnut Street to Michigan St</td>
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<td>Concord Street From Michigan St to Vermont St</td>
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<td>Kessler Boulevard From 18th St to 16th St</td>
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<td>Lafayette Road From 17th St to 16th St</td>
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Indianapolis Regional Pedestrian Plan (2006)
The Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization’s (IMPO) Regional Pedestrian Plan is a framework for the creation of a regional pedestrian network. The intention of this plan is to create a balanced transportation system throughout the metropolitan area that considers the needs of the pedestrian in a manner similar to the needs of the automobile. The plan documents the demand for pedestrian connections based on qualitative and quantitative analyses. Results from these analyses are recorded as recommended pedestrian facilities, corridors, and districts.

This plan recommends:
- Central Greens and the Regional Center as pedestrian districts. (The portion of the Near West that is within the Regional Center is roughly between Miley Avenue and White River.)
- Washington Street, 10th Street and 16th Street as pedestrian corridors.
- Belmont Avenue, Holt Road, Michigan Street, Kessler Boulevard/Concord Street, Vermont Street between Concord and Warman, and Warman Avenue south of Vermont as collector sidewalks.
- White River and Eagle Creek for off-street multi-use paths.
A pedestrian district is an area characterized by a density of mixed uses and clustered pedestrian destinations within a five-minute walk, supporting central or multiple transit nodes. These are areas that have, or are intended to have, high pedestrian activity and where priority is given to make walking the transportation mode of choice for trips within the area.

A collector sidewalk is a hard surface walkway, for exclusive pedestrian use, along the side of a street, within the right-of-way. It forms the primary grid of pedestrian facilities that provides access to destinations. In comparison to the local sidewalk following local streets, a collector sidewalk follows primary and secondary streets, streets with transit, and streets that complete the pedestrian network.

An off-street multi-use path is envisioned as a hard surface way, separated from the street, for shared use by multiple alternative transportation users such as pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized users.

**Regional Bikeways Plan (2012)**
The Regional Bikeways Plan envisions a safe network of bikeways, integrated with transit and motor vehicle routes, to provide access to home, work, education, commerce, transit and recreation within the Indianapolis region.

This plan recommends:
- A greenways trail along Eagle Creek
- A bike lane on Michigan Street from Eagle Creek east into the downtown.
- A greenways trail on the old B&O Railroad as far east as Tibbs Avenue.
- A bike lane on Tibbs Avenue connecting the B & O to Michigan Street.

A two-mile segment of the Eagle Creek Trail is estimated to cost $3.4 million, while the 3.1 mile long bike lane on Michigan Street has an estimated price tag of $1.6 million.

**Greenways Plan (2002)**
A master plan for Indianapolis Greenways was first adopted in 1994. It was the culmination of a three-year planning effort that included Indy Parks, the National Park Service and the Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development. The plan was updated in 1999 and 2002. Another update is currently underway.

The current 2002 Indianapolis Greenways Plan describes the community’s vision for a regional network of linear open space that connects neighborhoods and promotes recreation, fitness, alternative transportation and conservation. The Indianapolis Greenways Master Plan 2002 perpetuates the dream of park-lined rivers and streams envisioned in the early part of the 20th century while answering the need for reconnecting our communities together in the 21st century.

Among other purposes the Indianapolis Greenways Master Plan 2002 identified and prioritized the development of greenway corridors and trails and identified key portions
of the Greenways System to be conserved or developed sensitively for passive recreation. The Plan also encourages the protection of natural areas and the acquisition of linear open space and greenways throughout the county.

This plan recommends greenways trails on the B&O Rail Corridor, along Eagle Creek and along White River.

**Multi-modal Corridor and Public Space Guidelines**

This document makes recommendations for the development of multi-modal facilities in order to realize the vision of a balanced transportation system. A multi-modal transportation system is defined as a network of facilities designed for joint use with connections between two or more modes of transportation. The recommendations of this document were developed with the intent of implementation over time, as new streets are constructed, as existing streets are reconstructed, and as land is developed or redeveloped. Within the study area, these guidelines could be implemented to allow for a more efficient connection to other modes of transportation such as sidewalks, bus lines, bike paths, and other forms of mass transit in the future.