R-3B Neighborhood Planning

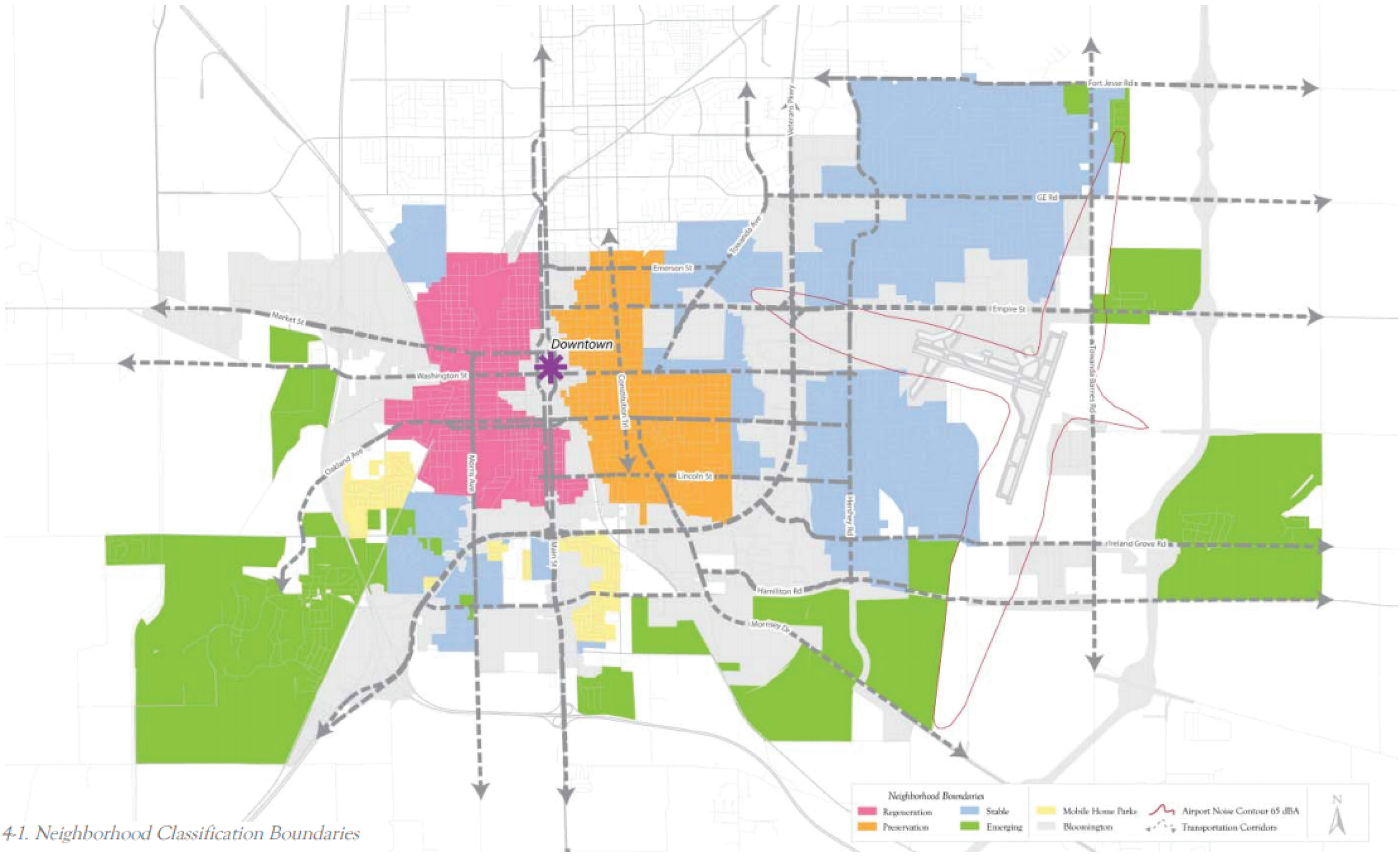

Figure 4-1. Neighborhood Classification Boundaries

REGENERATION AREA

LOCATION

West side of Bloomington bounded by the Downtown and Main Street along the east, I-55/74 on the west, Miller Park on the south.

CHARACTERISTICS

- Historically this area housed working class neighborhoods that served the Downtown and the Chicago/ Alton Railroad and later the west-side coal miners. It was stable until the 1960's and has suffered severe disinvestment since then.
- Grid street pattern with mature tree lined streets is very conducive to the multimodal transportation.
- Typical block is approximately 1/10th of a linear mile or three acres. Neighborhood blocks present a mix- of uses and residential densities. High and medium density residential blocks are prevalent closer to the Downtown and along the commercial corridors.
- Residential parcel sizes vary significantly from 30'X120' to 150'X100' with larger lots and houses closer toward the western edge of this area.
- Majority of the houses in this area are one-story cottage or two story foursquare detached houses typical of the 19th and early 20th century.
- Average square footage of a single family house is 1,000 sq. ft. and assessed value is less than $35,000, making it one of the most affordable areas in the City.
- Many houses sit on small lots that are legally non-conforming per current standards.
- Larger homes originally built for single family use were now converted into multi-family units resulting in inadequate off street parking.
- This area contains a higher percentage of rental units.
- As a result, the short and long term vacancy rates in the regeneration area are higher compared to the rest of the City.
- The infrastructure in this area, both above and under ground, is at least 100 years old and is in severe disrepair, contributing to the area's unattractiveness for private investment.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- High concentrations of low-income households, rental units, absentee landlords and crime results in issues such as transiency, social disconnect and lack of property maintenance. These issues pose a threat to property values and the area's long-term viability and sustainability.
- School choices and neighborhood desirability have a complex relationship. The social issues in the neigh- borhoods affect the educational achievements of the school students. This area is served by District 87. The schools serving this area have lower test scores by comparison to other schools in the City. This can be attributed to several social factors including transiency, poverty and health conditions in the neighborhood. Education helps break the cycle of poverty and create economic prosperity. Hence, education should be the center of the revitalization efforts in this area.
- The declining property rates make it very difficult not only to attract new investment but also for current homeowners to invest in their properties. • This area is one of the most affordable areas in the community. Rehabilitation and preservation of hous- ing stock in this area is key to maintaining Bloomington as an affordable community.
- There are many not-for-profit, grassroots and neighborhood organizations committed to improving the quality of life in this area. The City should collaborate with them to improve the physical, social and econom- ic aspects of this area.

This area suffered decades of disinvestment. The City, along with the many community stakeholders, should make revitalization of this area the highest priority during this plan horizon period.

PRESERVATION AREA

LOCATION

The old east side of Bloomington bounded by the Downtown and Main Street along the west and Veterans Parkway on the east and south.

CHARACTERISTICS

- This area housed the elite members of the community during the 19th and early 20th centuries. At that time, these upper income neighborhoods expanded eastward with the expansion of the trolley system. This was the start of the east-west social divide in the community.
- Today, this area houses several locally and nationally designated historic districts including the Franklin Square District, East Grove Street Historic District, Whites Place Historic District, and Davis Jefferson Historic District (see Figure 4-2). Many individual-properties are also listed on the national registry of historic properties.
- Mature tree lined streets in grid pattern is very conducive to multi modal transportation.
- This area houses many fashionable and attractive houses, many of which are designed by local architects George Miller and Arthur Pillsbury. Dominant architectural styles of homes here include Queen Anne, Italianate, Colonial, Tudor, Mission and Spanish Revival.
- Neighborhoods closer to the Downtown have smaller blocks, approximately 1.5 acres and accommodate a variety of densities, tenancies and uses. Example: Dimmitt's Grove Neighborhood. Lot frontages here range from 40' to 60' and depths vary from 80' to 140'. Assessed values of homes in these neighborhoods range from $35,000 to $75,000.
- Neighborhoods further east have larger blocks, approximately four acres and are predominantly single family, owner occupied housing units. Example: Founders Grove. Residential lot sizes here are fairly standard. Lot frontage varies between 50' to 65' and depth between 115' to 130'. Assessed values of homes range from $35,000 to over $100,000.
- Larger homes originally built for single family use are now converted into multi-family units resulting in inadequate off street parking. This is a major challenge for this area.
- The once elite neighborhood today houses a mix of income levels with a higher concentration of moderate income households.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- The Illinois Central Railroad that once traversed the north-south path through Bloomington passed through this area. While the rail line itself is long gone, it left its industrial remnants along its path adjacent to the residential neighborhoods. Today, many of these properties are vacant or underutilized. This abandoned rail corridor was converted into the Constitutional Trail in the last 25 years. This alteration in the nature of this corridor presents a tremendous opportunity to transform the land uses incompatible with residential uses into those that compliment the trail and the surrounding established historic neighborhoods.
- The preservation area is packed with historic resources,some of which have local historic designation. Neighborhoods not currently part of historic districts are generally hesitant to seek local historic designation, due to incomplete understanding of the requirements and limited resources available for their rehabilitation. The primary threat to these historic structures is conversion to multi-family units. When not planned properly, densities can have a negative impact on the surrounding property values and the neighborhood itself. The City should work closely with these neighborhoods to prepare neighborhood level plans to help protect these valuable historic and cultural assets.
- This area is also served by District 87. Some elementary schools in this area are more desirable than others. This again can be associated with the complex and multi-layered relationship between the neighborhood demographics and school performance. Education is a key component to keeping this area desirable.
- Downtown revitalization efforts can greatly benefit from the Preservation as well as the Regeneration Areas and vice-versa.
- The infrastructure in this area, both above and under ground, is at least 100 years old and in severe disrepair. This can be a key factor in stabilizing the declining property values and attracting additional private investment to the area.
- There are many active neighborhood associations committed to improving the property values and the quality of life in this area. The City should work with them to create neighborhood level plans to address needs specific to each neighborhood within this area.

This area should be prioritized for investment of public dollars, after the Regeneration area. The City should consider updating its historic preservation plan and adding resources strategically to protect the historic resources.