

RIVER DISTRICT

Elkhart, Indiana

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.

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

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.



CLIENT

Public-private partnership

COLLABORATORS

Stantec Urban Places

STATUS

Completed

TIMELINE

2017-2018

AWARDS

2019 Merit Award Winner, International Downtown Association; 2020 Merit Award Winner, Congress for the New Urbanism

CATEGORY

Urban & Suburban Infill

BUDGET

\$250M to date, \$500M expected

REFERENCE

David Weaver, President, dave@weimpactgroup.com, 574.320.2339

SCALE

90 acres



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