

# Riverton, Illinois



**Concept Plans for Village Entrances  
and other Community Enhancements**

# **Small Town Roadway Character Pilot Project**

**November 2017**

This report is the result of the *Small Town Roadway Character Pilot Project*, an initiative of the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) to assist small towns in Sangamon County in formulating ways to enhance their image and community recognition.

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## ***Small Town Roadway Character Pilot Project***

### **Introduction to the Project**

This report is the result of the *Small Town Roadway Character Pilot Project*, an initiative of the Springfield and Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) to assist small towns in Sangamon County in formulating ways to enhance their image and community recognition. Because of size, small towns often have difficulty in establishing identities and attractive characteristics that can promote community pride and encourage visitors to tour local points of interest, attend community events and patronize businesses. Visitors' involvement with communities can potentially lead to interest in making small towns their homes and places of employment as well.

### **Small Towns in Sangamon County**

Scattered throughout Sangamon County are some two dozen towns with populations of 5,000 or fewer, most with origins in the early to mid-1800s. Settlers of the Sangamo Country, as it was known, found home sites near waterways where woodlands met open prairies. Rivers provided water and a means of transportation and the forest trees were used for building, cooking and heating in the winter. Some early homesteads attracted others and grew into towns as a result of favorable natural conditions or successful commercial ventures.

Beginning in the 1860s, railroad development greatly benefitted the towns that were fortunate to be located along the lines. Railroads provided convenient shipping of local products to outside markets and imported goods for townspeople to purchase. As time went by, additional towns were established along rail lines, however, communities that had been bypassed tended to decline or disappear.

The twentieth century development of high-speed highways and the interstate system took a toll on small towns. Highways bypassed communities leaving them without through-traffic and seemingly with little to attract motorists to exit the highways and explore their communities. Today, many small communities struggle to maintain their viability and prospects for the future.

This project is an effort to assist small towns in Sangamon County to overcome difficulties faced by contemporary conditions and to promote pride and optimism for their future.

### **Four Pilot Study Towns**

Four Sangamon County small towns are involved in the study. Three towns - Auburn, Riverton and Dawson – are interested in improving their community entrances to entice visitors to explore their communities. The fourth town, Illiopolis, wants to improve their downtown area to create a more attractive environment for current and new businesses.

The study involves developing improvement plans to address the needs that each town identified. In addition, the plans are meant to be models, or templates, that can be adapted for other towns in Sangamon County.

A further objective of this study was to develop enhancement plans that could visually unify towns to create a recognizable image of "A Sangamon County Small Town." To accomplish this goal, several types of community improvements were devised: Downtown Improvements, Entrance "Community Pride" Signs, Highway and Street Sign Enhancements, Wayfinding Signs, Community Welcome Stations, Tree and Flower Planting Programs and Silo Embellishments. Towns may adopt one or more of these enhancement concepts and phasing in the improvements over a period of time that suits each community.



# Village of Riverton, IL

An initial meeting was held in Springfield at the SSCRPC office on July 19, 2017, with representatives of three of the four pilot towns to kick-off the project. Village President Tom Rader and Village Trustees Joe Bartley and Chris Collins represented Riverton at the meeting. The overall parameters of the study, its purpose and anticipated results were reviewed as described in the introduction to this report. Discussion then turned to the village's objectives and what they envision as possible community improvements.

Riverton selected the category of *Arrival Character Areas* as their primary interest. Their goal is to enhance the entrances to town, making them more distinctive and attractive for both residents and visitors. The three major entrances are from the east on Old

Route 36, from the west on Old Route 36 and from the north on 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

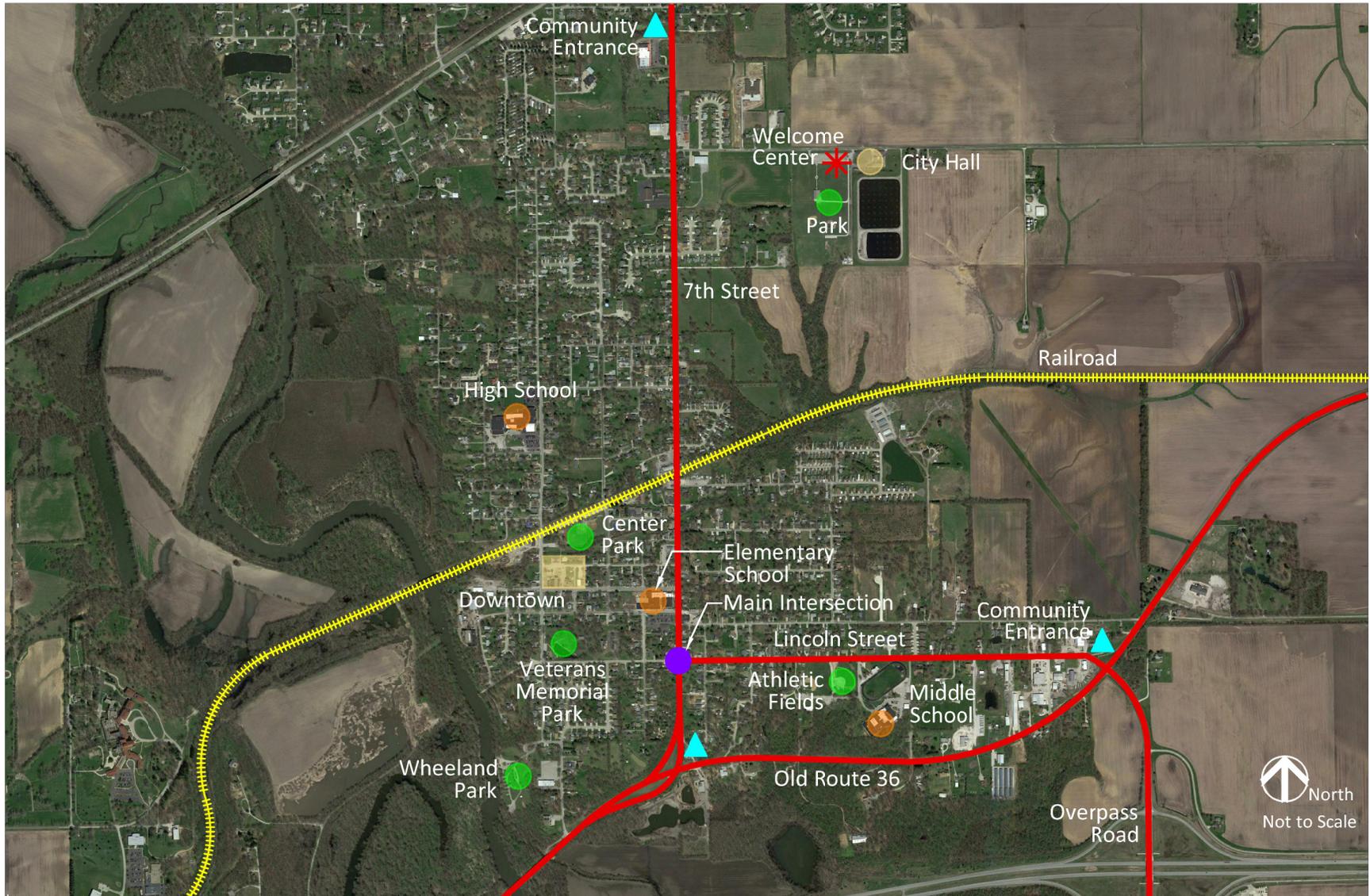
At the east side entrance and junction with Lincoln Street, it is anticipated that improvements will create an area more attractive for commercial development in part by motivating private land owners in the area to improve their properties.

At a Riverton Village Board meeting on September 18, preliminary ideas were presented for consideration. Entrance signs and improvements were discussed as well as the other possibilities for image development within the community. Several components, notably sign enhancements and wayfinding signs seemed appealing to the group at hand.



# Village of Riverton, IL

## Map of Community Features





*Riverton Municipal Center, Dawson Lane*



*Main Street looking east in Riverton*



*Gallina's A Slice of Italy*



*Riverton High School*



*Veterans Memorial*



*Riverton Mason Lodge*



*Riverton Elementary School*



*Riverton Park*

## ENTRANCE “COMMUNITY PRIDE” SIGN

*Distinctive signs at community entrances identify a town and also make a strong visual statement about the character of the community. Other signs within the community, can reinforce the identity and character and provide information useful to both village residents and the public.*

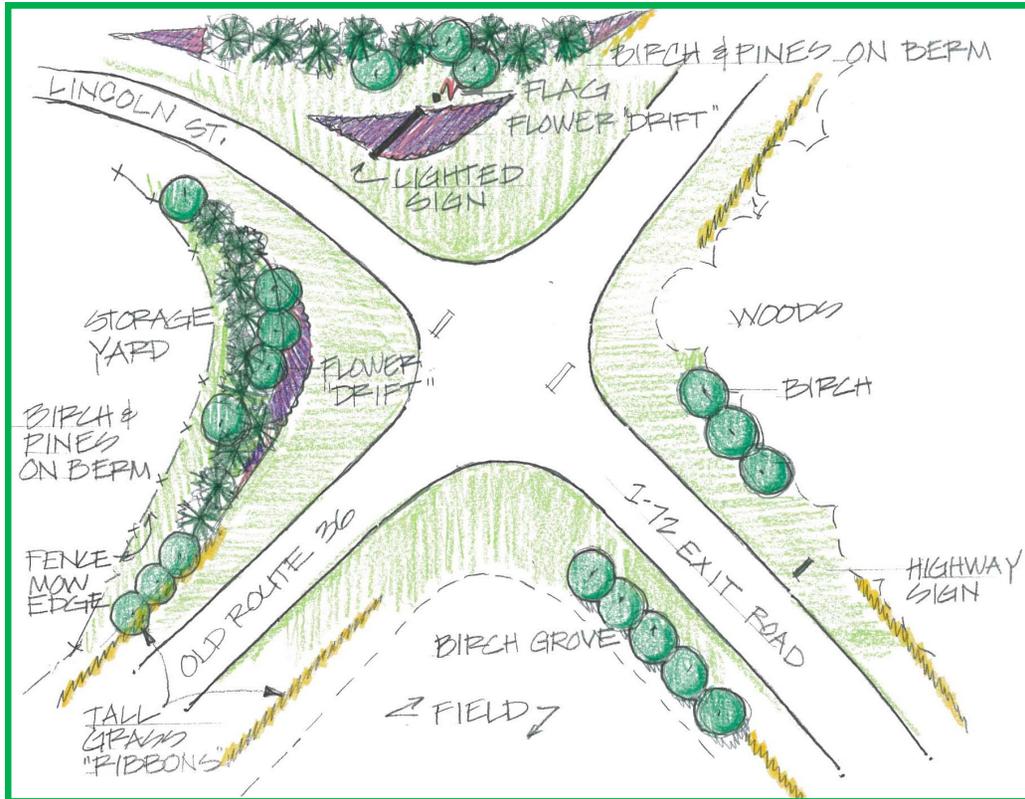
As a bold statement of Riverton’s identity, entrance “community pride” signs would be located at each of the three main entrances to the village. The exact locations for signs should be on property outside the state highway rights-of-way. Ideally the signs would be on public property, set back from the road a safe distance and provide a wide shoulder or pull-off for motorists. Signs could be

large or medium to suit the site available. At these locations, motorists can stop to check their maps or go to Riverton’s web site to find points of interest.

The village name Riverton would be in bold and distinctive lettering along with the community-selected symbol and community web site. The space under the sign board would accommodate a banner to promote community features or upcoming events. Banners can be readily removed or replaced as desired.

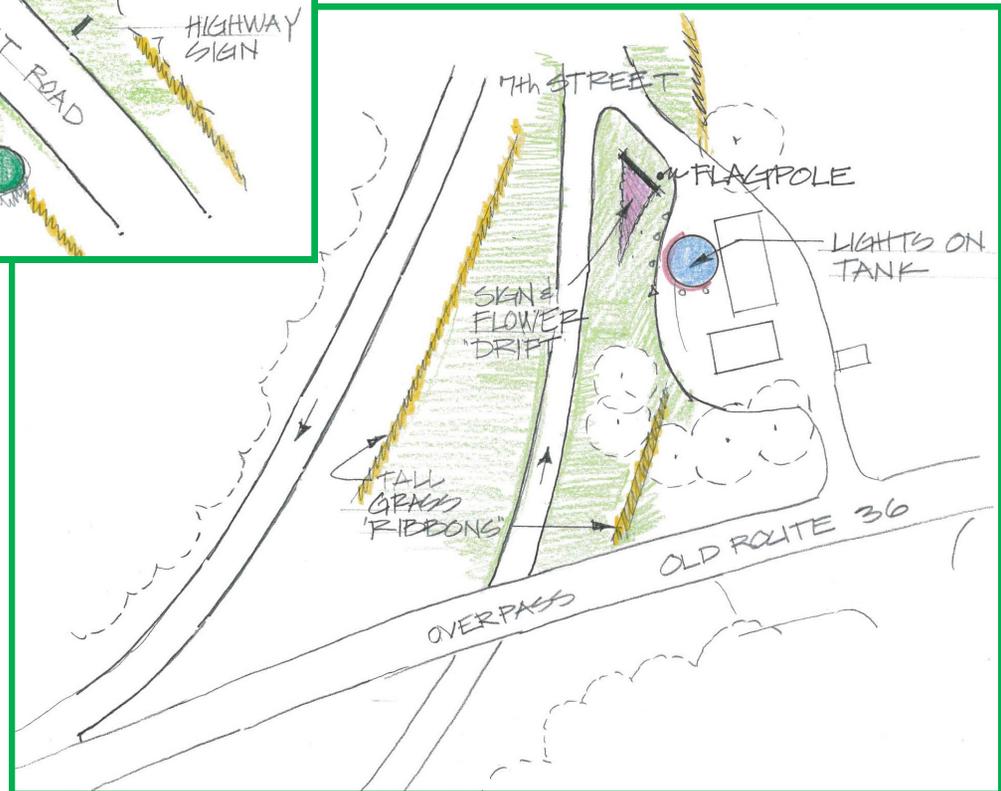
During evening hours, both the existing and new signs would be lighted with power provided from electrical service or solar panels.





**Site Plan:  
Community Entrance East Side**

**Site Plan:  
Community Entrance South Side**



During the Village Board meeting there was some discussion about the benefits of an electronic sign board located at either the south or west Community Entrance. An electronic sign board can do much to keep residents abreast of news and motorists informed of upcoming events. The electronic sign could be enveloped as shown here, as a companion to the standard community pride signs.

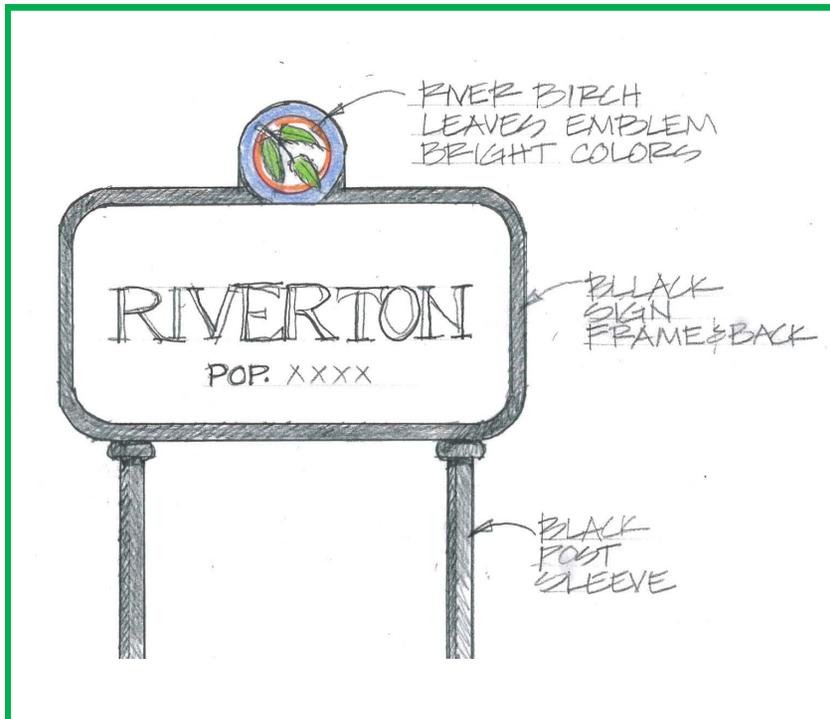


# HIGHWAY CITY SIGNS and STREET NAME SIGNS

## HIGHWAY CITY SIGNS

Enhancing the city signs along the highways can also contribute to the image of Riverton and help to unify it with other towns in Sangamon County. Standard highway name signs are now located on the west and east sides of town along old Route 36. Another name sign is north of town on Seventh Street.

Although highway signs must comply with regulations of the IL Department of Transportation, they can be embellished to become part of an overall community recognition program. Sign panels can be backed and attractively framed to improve their visibility and appearance. Posts can be covered with sleeves to provide more refinement. To further identify the community, an emblem of Riverton can be applied to the sign.



## STREET NAME SIGNS

Street name signs can be enhanced in much the same way as the highway name signs. Frames can be installed around sign panels, posts can be painted, sleeved or replaced with decorative posts and community emblems can be added. Enhancements could begin with the signs along the most-traveled streets, Seventh and Lincoln. Street signs within the village could be addressed in the future, perhaps as a phased improvement program.



# DIRECTIONAL WAYFINDING SIGNS

To aid residents and visitors in navigating around town and finding points of interest, easy to spot and read directional street signs are effective. Signs should visually stand-out from traffic and commercial signs typically found in communities. Signs should direct motorists along reasonably direct routes while taking advantage of scenic streets or landmark locations where feasible. Destinations should be “ganged” on sign panels where possible to minimize the number of signs required.

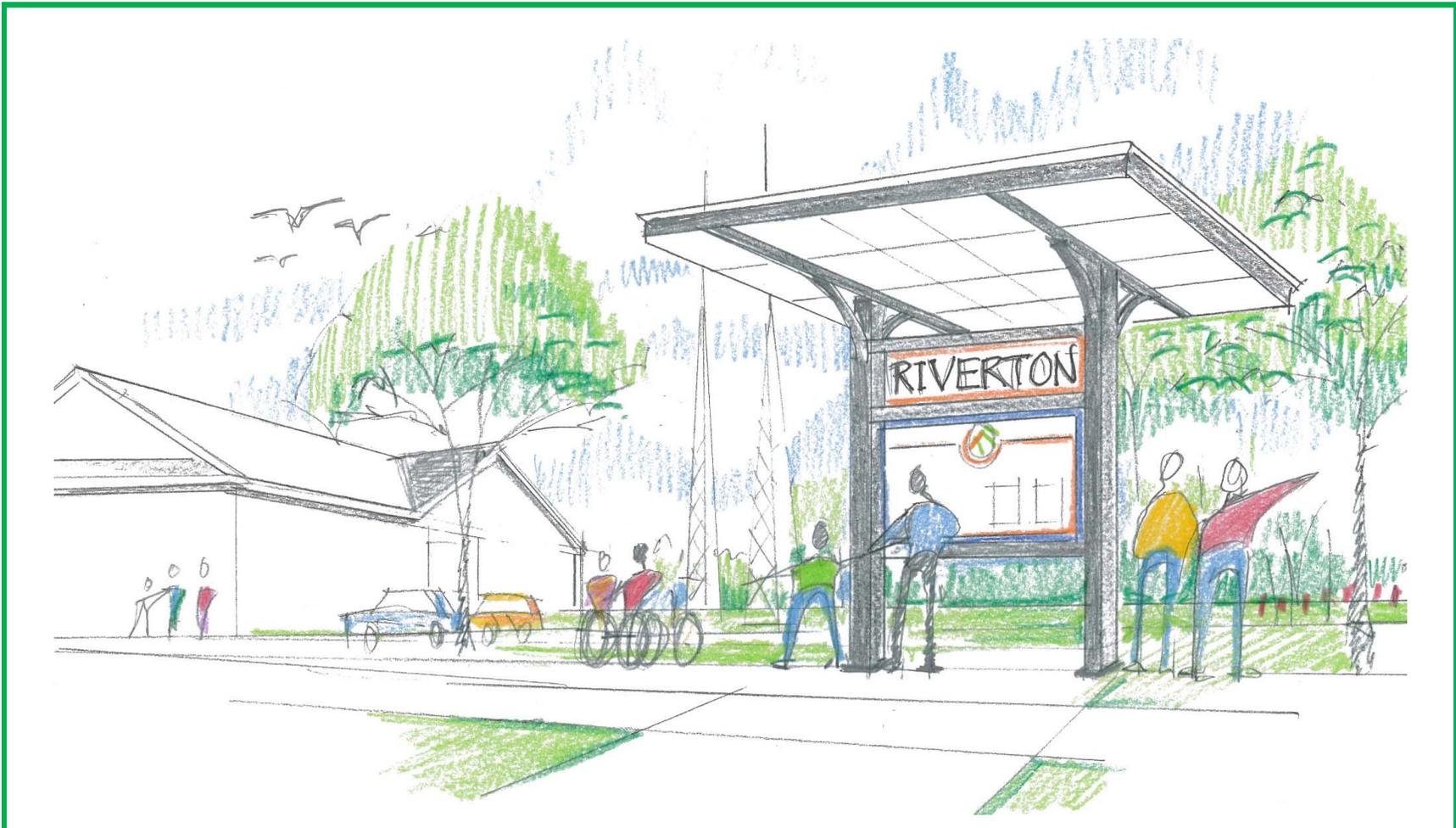
An optimum location for ganged directional signs are along Seventh Street, approaching Lincoln where the sign plaques could include Downtown, Middle School, Elementary School, High School and perhaps other points of interest. As routes diverged, signs would be provided to point the way. Directional signs could also point the way to parks, schools and other points of interest as desired.



# COMMUNITY WELCOME STATION

Riverton could designate a location where residents and visitors can obtain information about the community and have access to public facilities. City maps or brochures might be available or QR codes or other technology provided to access information through mobile devices. Routes for driving, bicycling or walking could be offered.

That location could be Village Hall on the north side of town, or it could be a downtown business or service organization that agrees to provide information to visitors. Ideally, the location would allow access to restrooms and food and drink within close vicinity. In both locations an existing park is nearby with improvements such as a drinking fountain, benches, picnic tables and bicycle parking. The grounds and facilities at a visitor center should be kept clean and well maintained.



# TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

A tree and flower planting program could be initiated in Riverton. Tree planting could be contracted out or managed within the community. Trees and pots of flowers might be purchased in quantity and sold or given to city residents and businesses. Assistance with properly locating and planting the trees would be beneficial. Civic organizations, scout troops or other volunteers might be tapped for service.

Tree species listed below are generally suited to the central Illinois environment. In selecting a tree for an exact location, site conditions should be considered including soils, moisture, sun and shade and exposure to salt spray or chemical use. The visual qualities of each species including size, texture, flowering, etc. are equally as important in making plant selections.

## Shade Trees for Streets and Parking Lots

*Acer miyabei*—Miyabe Maple  
*Acer saccharum* - Sugar Maple  
*Acer rubrum* – Red Maple  
*Acer fremanii* – Freeman Maple  
*Betula nigra* “heritage” - Heritage River Birch  
*Taxodium distichum* - Bald Cypress  
*Carpinus betulus* – European Hornbeam  
*Celtis occidentalis* – American Hackberry  
*Ginkgo biloba* – Ginkgo  
*Gleditsia triacanthos inermis* – Thornless Honeylocust  
*Nyssa sylvatica* - Black Tupelo  
*Tilia Americana* - American Linden  
(Redmond or Sentry)  
*Tilia tomentosa* - Silver Linden  
*Ulmus prospector* – Prospector Elm

## Ornamental Trees for Parks and Boulevards

### Deciduous

*Amelanchier* species – Serviceberry  
*Cercis canadensis* – Eastern Redbud  
*Cornus florida* - Flowering Dogwood  
Crabapple cultivars  
*Cornus kousa* – Kousa Dogwood  
*Magnolia* species  
*Ostrya virginiana* – Ironwood  
*Syringa reticulata* subsp. *reticulata* – Japanese Tree Lilac

### Evergreen

*Juniperus virginiana*—Easter Red Cedar  
*Picea abies* - Norway Spruce  
*Pinus strobus* - Eastern White Pine  
*Pinus thunbergii* – Japanese Black Pine

# SILO EMBELLISHMENTS

Distinctive structures in the community could be highlighted. Night lighting of downtown buildings, churches and other interesting features would add ambiance during evening hours.

The water silo at the southwest entrance to Riverton offers a unique opportunity. Similar to the classic mid-west grain silos found in other small towns, this silo is a conspicuous feature on the landscape. Its massive cylindrical form could be highlighted by night lighting and painting with artistry of any imagined subject or style.

If towns embellished their silos, each in their own way, a cohesion among communities would be created that could attract visitors for the specific purpose of viewing the unique “Sangamon Silos.” A Silo Tour route could be developed or an inter-community Silo Festival established.

Each town could also improve the grounds surrounding the silos, perhaps creating small parks or attractive landscapes. Silos might also be adapted for other uses, either permanent or temporary.



*Water Tank and community organization signs from the south*

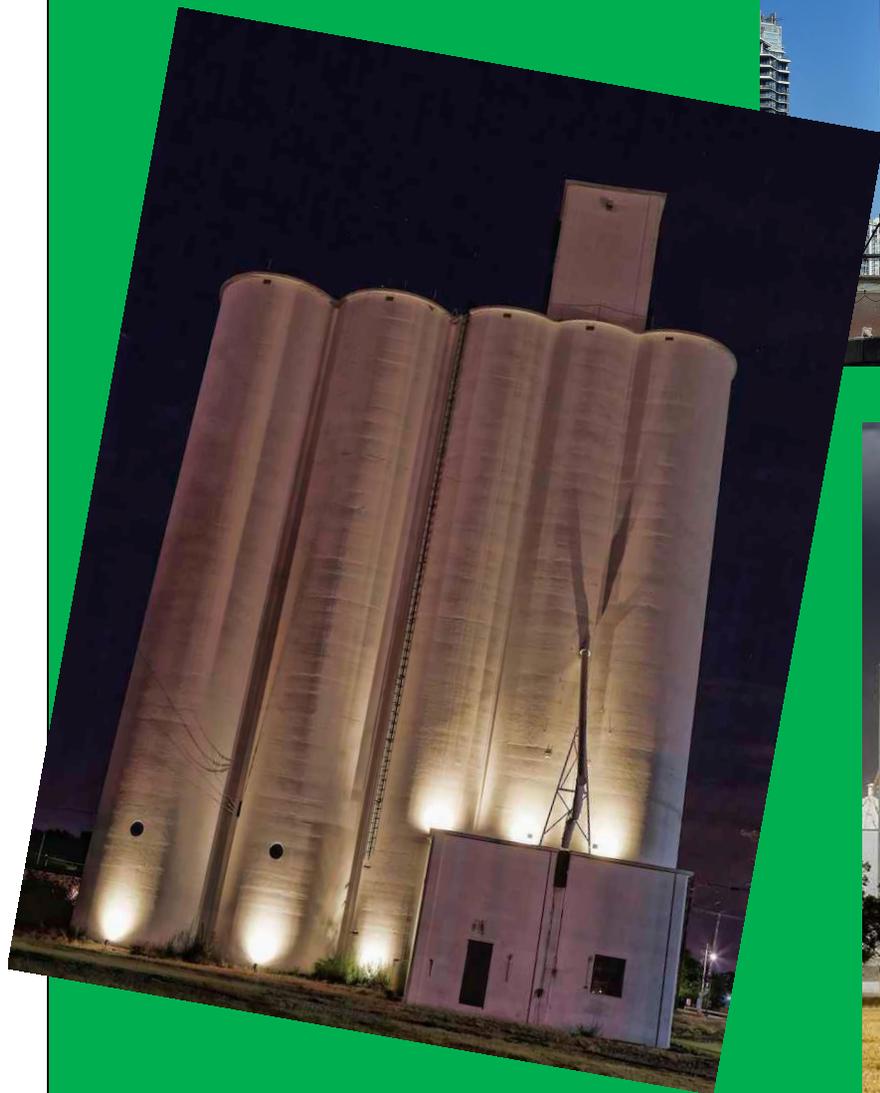


*Water tanks and Route 36 highway bridge from the north*



*Approaching Riverton under Route 36 highway bridge from the south*

*Silo Painting Art*



# Village of Riverton, IL

## BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

The following information is provided to aid in budgeting for future projects, although many factors will affect the actual cost of the work.

First, the improvements outlined in this report are broad-brush, Concept Plans. The scope of this study did not include investigation of critical aspects such as: determining location and condition of underground utilities, surveying for topography and drainage, research of property ownership, assessing the integrity of structures and other matters that could substantially affect the construction work and cost.

The scope of a construction project will greatly affect costs as well, as there is economy in greater quantities. The following information therefor is provided as a range of unit costs.

Some of the items that may affect cost, but require more investigation are also listed.

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <u>Entrance “Community Pride” Signs</u>         |                    |
| Medium  | \$30,000-\$50,000  |
| Large   | \$50,000-\$75,000  |
| Large with electronic sign                      | \$80,000-\$105,000 |
| <u>Highway City Signs and Street Name Signs</u> |                    |
| Embellishment with backing, frame               | \$500/ea.          |
| <u>Directional Wayfinding Station</u>           |                    |
| Large custom frame with sign panels             | \$1,500-\$25,000   |
| <u>Community Welcome Center</u>                 |                    |
| Expand Plaza                                    | \$ 5,000—8,000     |
| Benches, picnic tables                          | \$500—\$1,000/ea.  |
| <u>Tree and Flower Planting Program</u>         |                    |
| Large Shade trees, installed                    | \$600/ea.          |
| Medium-size ornamental, installed               | \$400/ea.          |
| <u>Silo Embellishments</u>                      |                    |
| Lighting  |                    |
| Painting  |                    |
| Artist’s fees                                   |                    |