

# 2 Vision

The Vision provides a basis for identifying the specific goals and objectives needed to lead the City of St. Charles in the direction of implementation. Together, the Vision Statement, and Goals and Objectives begin to present a framework for future policy decisions and actions.

The Vision Statement that follows is a description of the City of St. Charles as the community desires to be in the future and is written as a “retrospective.” The Vision Statement identifies how the City has changed in the 15 years since the updated Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2013.

## In 2028...

St. Charles is a thriving community that has balanced the character of local quality of life, centered upon quality housing and local community services, with regional prominence attributed to its economic, natural, and cultural foundations. What St. Charles has been given by history – the Fox River, a unique and attractive downtown, important commercial corridors and strong neighborhoods – remains intact as the “DNA” around which innovative and complementary investment has occurred.

The City continues to strengthen connections throughout the community by enhancing traffic flow, improving safety, growing its bike path system, and providing effective transit options. The new Fox River bridge crossing at Red Gate Road has created greater mobility and riverfront access for residents travelling by car, bike and foot. Close coordination with IDOT and KDOT has resulted in safer traffic patterns at many of the City’s major intersections, while the comprehensive bike path network connects the Fox River, downtown, major retail corridors, and neighborhood-based schools and recreational areas. Major transit improvements, such as the Bus Rapid Transit service on Randall Road and local circulator routes, allow more people to come to the community for shopping and entertainment.



*It is important that the settlement which arises on the banks of this river will develop a character unique among other communities...*

*- Legend of the Four Sons of Charlemagne*

## Chapter 2 Vision



Downtown St. Charles is truly “everyone’s neighborhood.” It has strengthened its connection to the Fox River through strategic open space and development techniques that provide access to a comprehensive riverwalk. It has balanced the preservation of its historic character with modernization that makes it competitive with other communities throughout Chicagoland. Downtown is fully accessible by car, transit, and bicycle thanks to a managed parking system, proper control of truck traffic, and a wayfinding system that allows residents and visitors to spend entire days enjoying activities and shopping. The historic Arcada Theater is the foundation of its resurgence as an entertainment and cultural center for the western suburbs that has exposed new generations to the community’s local character and regional significance. Nearby college facilities have injected additional intellectual resources into the downtown, as students, professors and visitors take advantage of local services, restaurants and shopping. Additional downtown multi-family housing and the completion of the First Street development have created thriving and exciting places for residents and visitors.

St. Charles has become a more fun place for people of all ages to live. The Fox River is the spine of a system of parks and open spaces that penetrate every part of the City. Local parks provide easy access to places of recreation and tranquility. New developments integrate green space into their designs so that the comprehensive network of parks is held intact and expanded as the City grows. An expanded, interconnected network of sidewalks, trails, and paths provide safe, comfortable, and convenient environment to walk or bike between homes, play space, shopping, and community facilities. Recreation programs continue to provide activities for residents of all ages, so that physical health is a fun and inherent part of the St. Charles lifestyle.

The City has worked hard to ensure that residents and visitors see St. Charles as an attractive and cultured place. Downtown has built upon its historic character to become a regional cultural center. Our prominent commercial corridors, such as Randall Road and East Main Street, have transformed into attractive gateways through investments in public streetscaping and the careful design of private development. Areas of new growth reflect the distinctive character of St. Charles, and are an extension of the fabric and quality of life that makes our community unique.

St. Charles has also become a truly sustainable city and is careful to balance the impact of sustainable practices with a desire to maintain strong community character. St. Charles is more livable, beautiful, and prosperous and is now reaping some of the benefits of the past years prioritizing and implementing restorative, ecologically-focused land management and development practices. We recognize the value of our unique natural assets, and have become leaders in strategies that sustain all vital community assets. The City has instituted a program of Best Management Practices to slow, cool, cleanse, and infiltrate surplus rainwater. Green infrastructure provides and promotes water quality enhancement, water and energy conservation, soil health, biodiversity, and habitat improvement. The core identity of the City is and will continue to be centered on the Fox River as a recreational and educational asset. Both new development and retrofits of existing buildings and infrastructure incorporate sustainable green infrastructure practices. By mitigating development impacts through these restorative practices, the river and the entirety of the public realm continues to improve and attract increased investment in the community.



The City has been successful in capturing development that has transformed portions of the community into strong and sustainable areas. Downtown is a growing commercial and cultural center. The former St. Charles Mall site has been redeveloped with viable uses that are an asset to surrounding neighborhoods. The east side of the community has benefited from the redevelopment of the Charlestowne Mall, the continued presence of Pheasant Run, and the strong employment base provided by industrial development. Collectively, they act as an attractive “front door” to St. Charles that offers great opportunities for living, working, playing and shopping. Randall Road continues to be a critical regional corridor with growth that serves St. Charles and surrounding communities. Development on Randall Road has been modernized to respond to new market needs, and the Kane County Fairgrounds site has become the centerpiece of redevelopment. These pieces, as well as local development in other parts of the City, have created a strong local tax base, broadened the range of local goods and services, and strengthened the regional image of the City.

The neighborhoods of St. Charles are the foundation of its quality of life. Older neighborhoods are stable thanks to reinvestment in existing housing and their ability to meet the needs of a broad range of households. New housing provides increased options for those who want close access to regional commercial goods and services. Multi-family housing development, with a higher proportion of owner-occupied units, contributes to the great character and image of the community. All neighborhoods share a common goal of strengthening local character through high quality housing, easy connections and mobility to surrounding amenities, and a pride in the assets that help establish the identity of St. Charles. Neighborhoods have become safer due to a combination of traffic calming and local policing. Residents of all ages are accommodated by a variety of housing types that allow long-time residents to age in place. High-quality schools, parks, and local services provide the opportunity for residents to be life-long citizens of St. Charles and have become the foundation of a community filled with pride and self-identity.

Together, all of these improvements helped the City of St. Charles evolve substantially since 2013. The positive momentum created by these collective efforts sets the stage for future decades of healthy and sustainable growth, as well as the continued success of St. Charles as an important natural, cultural, and economic resource for the region.

St. Charles has gained prominence in the Chicago region. Its high quality of life – good housing, exceptional local schools, parks and natural features, historic and contemporary development, etc. – has made it a desirable place for all types of families to live. Its unique commercial, cultural and recreational amenities have made it a destination for visitors and tourists from throughout the Midwest. City leadership has responded by making the St. Charles experience as enjoyable as possible, from wayfinding that allows visitors to understand the community, to the local character and identity that etches memories of a truly unique and exciting place.