4 Issues and Concepts
A set of the issues and planning concepts clarifies the unique features of the study area which have a profound impact in the development of the plan. The issues identified have particular relevance to land use, transportation and development. While development occurs, these issues should be addressed to ensure that the intended change is achieved and unintended consequences are avoided. Planning concepts provide a similar selection of issues. However, these are meant to maximize the potential for development of the area and ensure a desirable and successful future. The vision is a unifying statement which describes the future of the Westgate area. Descriptions and pictures of the envisioned changes for the study area help communicate the intent of the plan. The following sections are described in detail in this chapter:

- Major issues within the study area
- A vision for the study area
- Planning concepts
- Future land use designations
- Cross sections for future transportation facilities

Issues
After a thorough analysis of the existing conditions and listening to comments from the public, a series of major issues were identified. These five major issues provide the basis for many of the recommendations in the following chapters.

Natural Environment
The Westgate study area is located near a significant natural resource area captured by Kickapoo State Park, as well as the Salt Fork of the Vermilion River and its adjacent floodplains. The study area is located well above the floodplain, but has flooding concerns due to its flat topography and hydric soil characteristics. Flooding and water quality are significant issues that need to be addressed prior to and during the development of this area. Future development should not cause flooding on adjacent properties or downstream areas. No known natural areas exist in the study area. However, with its close proximity to other natural areas, environmental assessments will be important steps during the development process.

Land Use
Existing land use in the study area is dominated by agriculture, commercial development, single family residential, and rights-of-way from I-74 and US 150. Existing development is at a very low density due to the rural character of the area and the lack of sanitary sewer infrastructure. Other utilities including water, natural gas and electricity are already in place with capacity to serve additional development. The current low density results in a significant amount of land that can be developed without disturbing existing uses. However, the existing uses are varied and lack the welcoming atmosphere or cohesiveness that is desirable for an area of higher density development. Currently, an industrial recycler, pest management office, furniture warehouse, and day care facility are all located along the same stretch of road on Kickapoo Drive. Today, these uses function in the low density environment, but with projected development growth and traffic generation, conflicts may arise. Another concern regarding future development is the presence of old coal mines along the east side of the I-74 interchange. Developers should ensure grounds are stable and undermining activities of the past will not affect future built structures.
Issues

Transportation
One of the biggest concerns regarding transportation is the lack of multi-modal facilities to support walking, biking and transit use in the study area. If the area is to develop as recommended in this plan, the development of a multi-modal transportation network will be necessary. Access off US 150 is currently tightly controlled by IDOT, and the only access to existing and future development is off Henning Road and Kickapoo Drive. IDOT will not allow any additional access points off US 150, so new development will have to be accessed off Henning Road or off additional frontage roads like Kickapoo Drive. Finally, the I-74 interchange has been identified as needing improvement due to tight curve radii along the southwest on and off ramps. IDOT does not have any immediate plans to improve the interchange, but this need may become greater as new development in the area generates additional traffic using the interchange.

Economy
The local economy is heavily loaded in the Trade, Transportation and Utilities and Manufacturing sectors. Unfortunately, both of these sectors have been in decline for a number of years. Sectors that are expected to grow are accommodation and food services, and leisure and hospitality. These sectors are closely related to the parks, natural areas and recreation attractions within Vermilion County. These sectors are projected to have employment growth, but rate low for location advantage. Bolstering the natural environment and opportunities for tourism through trails, paths and other tourism-related services will add to the competitive advantage in these sectors for Vermilion County.

Administrative
Land use planning presents unique challenges for the Westgate area since local government jurisdictions have not enacted zoning controls. Current development is controlled by state regulation and a County subdivision code. Neither of these regulatory systems provide for the control of compatible land uses and unified development regulations. Several options exist for increasing land use controls in the study area, and are discussed in the Implementation Chapter.

Vision
A vision statement was created for the Westgate area which helps unify the study area under a common ideal and principle. The vision statement was created after completing the existing conditions analysis and analyzing the outstanding issues which need to be addressed. The vision statement is as follows:

“The Westgate area in 2035 will support a unique and diverse mix of commercial, office, residential, and recreational uses that integrates existing neighborhoods and establishes an asset for the region. The study area will be served by a multi-modal transportation system that facilitates walking, biking, transit, and driving. Westgate will serve a niche market in East-Central Illinois, and help bolster job growth and economic development in Vermilion County.”
Planning Concepts

As noted in the Existing Conditions chapter, Westgate is uniquely positioned to take advantage of many opportunities due to its location, availability of land, transportation connections, and surrounding environment. Since the study area is situated among many regional amenities and attractors, it was important to identify these elements and incorporate them into the scenario development process. The following elements were identified as having regional importance:

1. **Emerging Growth Center** - As an emerging growth center, Westgate provides an opportunity to complement land uses found in nearby Danville, Oakwood and Tilton, yet create a unique identity of its own. The study area is centrally located around an interstate interchange, providing regional transportation access and an important driver for development. The study area can also provide regional commercial development relating to nearby recreation amenities. As an emerging center, Westgate is located in an area with several niche traits that provide an opportunity to define and distinguish the interchange and its surroundings.

2. **Regional Context** - Having an interchange provides the study area with the opportunity to connect attractions and fill deficiencies beyond its immediate boundaries. Coordination with neighboring municipalities and communities will help identify regional market demands and allow for a desirable response to these demands. The immediate region surrounding Westgate includes three interchanges with varied characteristics. Two are surrounded by residential and low intensity development, while the interchange farthest east provides access to commercial and industrial development. The interchange located in the study area is adjacent to parks, tourist attractions and provides direct connections to many municipalities. Some nearby tourist attractions include: golf courses, Lake Vermilion, Vermilion County Fairgrounds, and the Palmer Arena. Nearby communities of interest include: Danville, Oakwood, Catlin, Tilton, and the residential area of Hillary located just north of the study area.

3. **Natural Areas** - Vermilion County is home to 26 natural areas, eleven nature preserves, five county parks/preserves, one state park, and one fish and wildlife area. Unique natural features of the County include: calcareous seep springs, tulip trees in beech maple forests, ravines and adjacent uplands, oak savannas, and occasional hill prairies on west-facing bluff tops. These natural elements create unique surroundings for the study area. Future development in the study area needs to relate to these surrounding natural features and create connections for residents and visitors.

4. **Visitor Accommodations** - The Westgate study area lacks accessible visitor accommodations. Hotels can be found, however, they are not within a close proximity to the study area and local attractions. There are unique and established restaurants in the area that could see more business with the development of hotels and motels. There is also a lack of retail shopping in the area. A combination of typical retail shopping complexes and boutique and specialty shops will interest and encourage visitors to spend their time and money in Vermilion County.
5. **Single Family Housing** - The study area is surrounded by single family homes south of Batesstown Road and to the north of the study area in Hillary. These established areas provide a distinct character that adds to the rural feel throughout Westgate. Transportation connections to these existing residential areas will give residents the opportunity to use and benefit from new development. Buffers and transitions between land uses will provide the area with seamless continuity, as if it had been built as a cohesive functional unit.

6. **Rural Character** - The Westgate study area is a rural unincorporated area of Vermilion County comprised mostly of agricultural land uses and rural single family development. In stark contrast is US 150, which connects the City of Danville to Interstate 74 and carries a significant amount of traffic. Future development in the study area has the potential to dominate the landscape with parking lots and buildings. Balancing rural character through the design of roadways, buildings and sightlines will set Westgate apart from other areas that surround interstate interchanges.

7. **Interstate Transportation** - Having an interstate interchange puts development pressure on the Westgate area to provide for interstate supportive services like gas stations and fast food restaurants. These pressures will act as a catalyst, but need to be controlled in order to maximize the potential for the area and ensure the coordinated development of land and transportation facilities. Building the study area as a unique site for visitors to stop, for both short and long periods of time, will provide the activity and movement that will establish it as a regional activity center.

8. **Existing Boundaries** - The study area is bounded on all sides by existing development constraints. Existing single family development and environmental features can be found to the north, south, east, and west. These existing development constraints give the relatively unconstrained land within the study area high development potential. At the same time, any development taking place in the study area will have some affect on natural areas and drainage within the study area and in surrounding areas. These effects must be taken into consideration when new development is planned for the study area.

9. **Links to Population Centers** - Future development in the study area will not only serve interstate travelers and local residents, but will serve as a commercial and employment center for surrounding communities. Surrounding population centers such as Danville and Oakwood will play an integral role in supporting any future development taking place in the study area. These population centers will bring buying power to future commercial and retail establishments, as well as providing an employment base for future development.

Figure 4.1 shows the location of the regional elements in proximity to the study area.
Figure 4.1 - Regional Concepts Map
**Future Land Use Descriptions**

**Future Land Use Categories**

Given the long time frame for this plan and the uncertainty of what future development will take place in the study area, a unique set of future land use categories were created. The characteristics of the future land use categories help capture the scale, purpose and market area future development should target. The land use categories also help tie together the issues identified in the study area, and the surrounding regional characteristics by offering a unique mix of uses that incorporates a variety of housing, retail, commercial, employment, and recreational uses into future development. The following land use categories were developed as part of this plan:

1. **Regional Activity Center (RAC)** - The Regional Activity Center offers high intensity, large scale commercial and retail development designed to create a regional draw to the study area. It focuses on anchor stores and the outlot development of restaurants, banks, offices, a hotel/motel, and entertainment facilities. Tech and light manufacturing can be integrated into the activity center, and public or quasi-public uses can act as a central feature drawing the development together. The area is accessible to all modes of travel served by the interstate and local roadways, as well as incorporating facilities for walking, cycling and transit. Residential development occurs at slightly higher densities than what is currently found in the study area, and is often completed as part of the overall site design plan.

2. **Community Activity Center (CAC)** - The Community Activity Center serves the needs of the larger community, but its influence does not reach as far as the Regional Activity Center. Development is typically anchored by a grocer or major retailer. Alternate uses can include: office developments, civic buildings, public or quasi-public uses, entertainment (restaurants, theatres, etc.), a hotel/motel, medical facilities, places of worship, senior or community centers, middle school or high school, and park and ride facilities. While automobile access is provided, an established pedestrian circulation network will provide connectivity within the site and connect to surrounding neighborhood pedestrian networks. Residential development is adjacent to the activity center, and planned at a density similar to that found in existing residential developments.
3. **Neighborhood Commercial (NC)** - Neighborhood Commercial represents relatively low intensity commercial development designed to fit within a neighborhood setting. The uses primarily serve adjacent neighborhoods and local commuters with a site design that fits the scale and character of the surrounding area. Uses can include gas stations, dry cleaners, convenience stores, coffee shops, and restaurants. Site circulation should facilitate safe and easy walking and biking from adjacent neighborhoods.

4. **Employment (E)** - Development in the Employment land use category is designed as a large campus-style office or research park that accommodates low to mid-rise office buildings and light industrial development. The development is intended to meet both community and regional employment needs. This category encourages unified building design, high-quality architecture, open space, landscaping, and multi-modal transportation connections. The establishment of an employment center will help create additional jobs in Vermilion County, and could draw upon surrounding population center labor forces.

5. **Light Industrial (LI)** - This category provides for a variety of light manufacturing, warehousing, research and development, and industry-related office and service activities. The development includes buffers to adjacent land uses and remains consistent with the area’s character and scale. The mitigation of noise, odor or other pollutants is essential.

6. **Townhomes (T)** - Townhomes represent a form of lower density multi-family housing, which can be designed to fit in with the existing rural character of the surrounding area. Townhomes create a low maintenance housing option for young professionals or empty nesters who are not looking to purchase a single family home. Townhomes provide a viable housing option for the employees of newly established Community Activity Centers in and around the site. Pathways and sidewalks give residents the opportunity to walk or bike to work and contribute to creating a vibrant community. This residential category also brings some diversity to the housing options currently offered in the study area.
7. **Single Family Residential (SF)** - Single Family Residential provides a buffer between the planned high intensity and low intensity uses in the study area. This designation applies to single parcels, as well as larger subdivisions of land for the development of multiple single family dwelling units. The scale and character of any new single family housing development should remain consistent with the rural nature of the existing single family homes.

8. **Agriculture (AG)** - Agricultural land uses are those which can be used to produce food or goods through farming. These land uses can help support the community and wider region by producing and selling locally grown food. Agricultural land within the study area may or may not contain a dwelling unit.

9. **Parks and Green Corridors (P)** - Parks and green corridors provide recreational opportunities, stormwater catchment areas and transition zones between land use types. Recreation areas provide gathering spaces for residents and employees, as well as places to hold practices for sports teams. The green corridors also act as pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians to navigate the study area.

10. **Open Space (OS)** - Open areas serve to protect existing resources and views. Land under this designation should remain open to preserve the rural landscape and character of the area.
Transportation Facilities
The vision for the future of the Westgate study area includes the establishment of a multi-modal transportation network which will serve not only motorists, but also pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users. Currently, the development patterns and transportation facilities are not conducive to accommodating other modes of transportation besides vehicles. As future land use and development patterns change, the current transportation network will not support multi-modal connections nor provide travelers with a safe and efficient way to traverse the study area without a car. In order to facilitate the safe movement of all modes in and around the study area, recommended cross sections were developed for different types of transportation facilities that could be constructed or improved in the future. Existing and planned transportation facilities were divided into five different categories. Each category and the proposed cross sections are shown on the following pages.

Major Roadways
The major roadways located within the study area are Interstate 74 and US 150. These two roadways handle a large majority of the vehicular traffic traversing the study area. There are no plans by IDOT to make any changes to the current cross section of I-74 or US 150, therefore these roadways should remain as they are today. It is also not legal to walk or ride a bike on I-74, and US 150 is not being recommended as a walking or biking route. The cross sections for US 150 east of I-74 and west of I-74 are shown in Figures 4.2 and 4.3.
Secondary Roadways are the minor arterials and collectors which provide connections between developments and the major roadways bisecting the study area. Batestown Road and Henning Road are the two secondary roadways which provide access between local streets and major roadways. Secondary roadways have slower travel speeds and less traffic than major roadways, making them more appropriate for the inclusion of multi-modal facilities. These low volume roadways can be made safer for bicyclists by adding Share the Road signage every quarter-mile on both sides of the roadway. This signage will help to make motorists aware of the possible presence of bicyclists on the roadway. On-street bicycle lanes are also being recommended along Henning Road. A cantilever bicycle/pedestrian bridge is also recommended for the overpass along Batestown Road over I-74. Sidewalks are recommended on both sides of Henning Road to connect residential areas on Batestown Road to new development along Henning Road. Sidewalks are not recommended along Batestown Road due to right-of-way constraints and the rural nature of the roadway. The proposed cross sections for Batestown and Henning Roads are shown in Figures 4.4 and 4.5.

Figure 4.4 - Batestown Road Proposed Cross Section

Figure 4.5 - Henning Road Proposed Cross Section
Local Roadways

Local Roadways are roadways that allow direct access into future developments and connect to Secondary Roadways. These roadways have direct access off Secondary Roadways, and provide internal circulation routes to new development in the study area. Local Roadways have lower traffic volumes and slower speeds than that found on Secondary and Major Roadways. These characteristics make them ideal for supporting not only vehicle travel, but bicycles and pedestrians as well. Existing examples of local roadways in the study area include: Kickapoo Drive and Thunderbird Road. A proposed cross section of Kickapoo Drive with future improvements is shown in Figure 4.6. This example provides a model for how all new or reconstructed local roadways should be designed.

Figure 4.6 - Kickapoo Drive Proposed Cross Section
Green Corridor Pathways

Green Corridors are areas set aside to serve as transportation and drainage facilities, natural areas and buffers between incompatible land uses. The main purposes of Green Corridors are to provide a system to move stormwater off development sites to collect in detention basins and to provide a system of interconnected trails for bicyclists and pedestrians to move around the study area. These pathways can be used for both travel and recreational purposes. The pathway system will connect all the major development areas to new housing, making walking and biking more convenient for all residents and employees in the study area. More trips made by walking and biking correlates to less vehicle trips on the roadways. This will reduce congestion, the need for roadway improvements and greenhouse gas emissions. Figure 4.7 shows the proposed cross section for the Green Corridor pathways.

Figure 4.7 - Proposed Cross Section for Green Corridors
Rail-to-Trail Pathway

Rail-to-Trail pathways are multi-use public paths created along former railroad corridors. These pathways are ideal for walking and biking, and can be used as recreation or transportation corridors. The Urbana to Danville Rail-to-Trail pathway is planned to connect the City of Urbana in Champaign County to the Vermilion County Fairgrounds, which is located at the northwest corner of the Westgate study area. The 24.5 mile trail is planned to be constructed as a ten-foot crushed limestone pathway with multiple trail heads. The Westgate Land Use Study recommends extending this pathway from the fairgrounds further east to Henning Road to provide additional connectivity for the study area. The proposed cross section for the Rail-Trail is shown in Figure 4.8.

The recommended cross sections for new and existing roadways, Green Corridors and Rail-Trails will help establish a safe, efficient and multi-modal network. By providing transportation choices to area residents, employees and visitors, pressure and congestion on area roadways will be eased in the future as development brings more people and traffic to the study area.