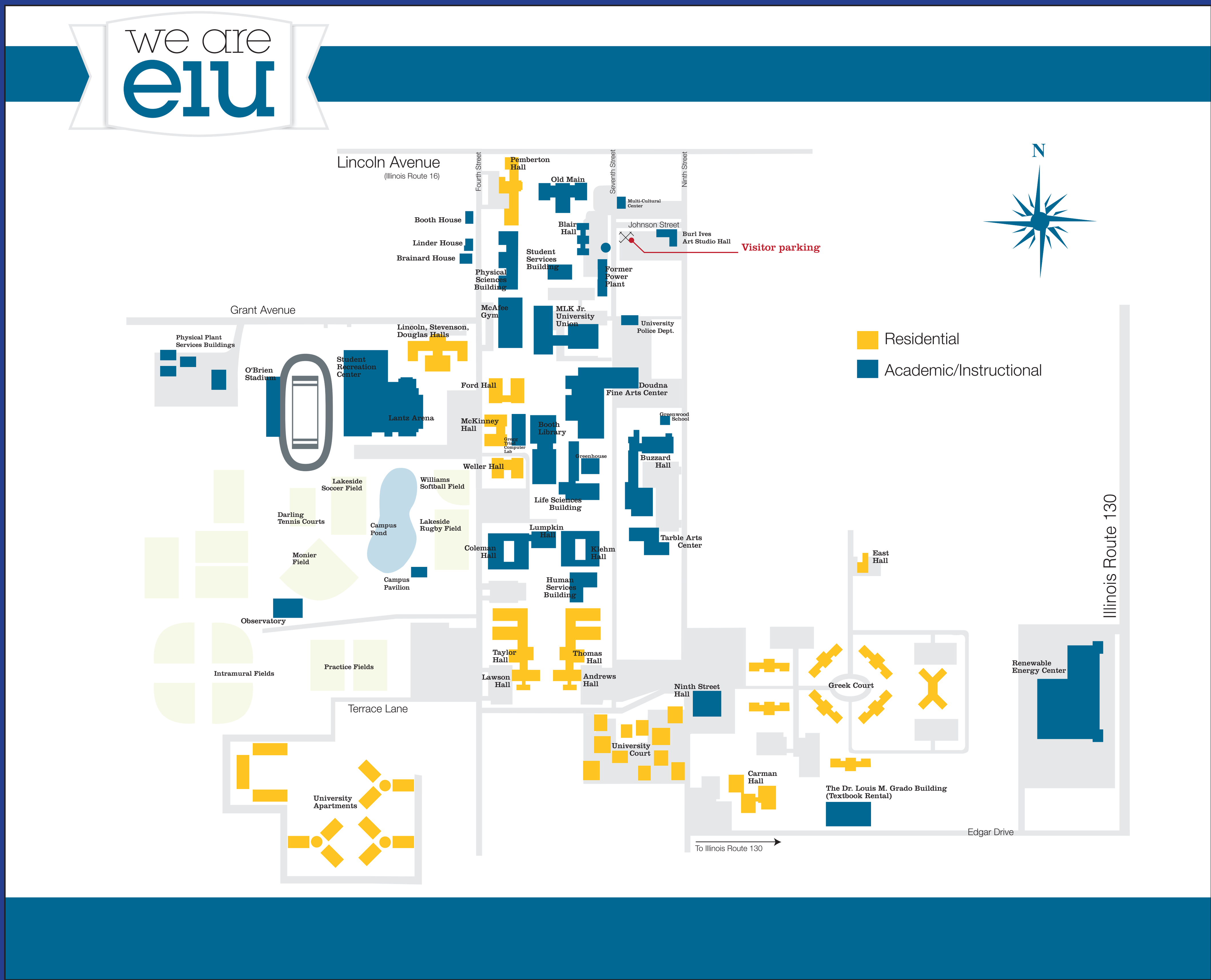

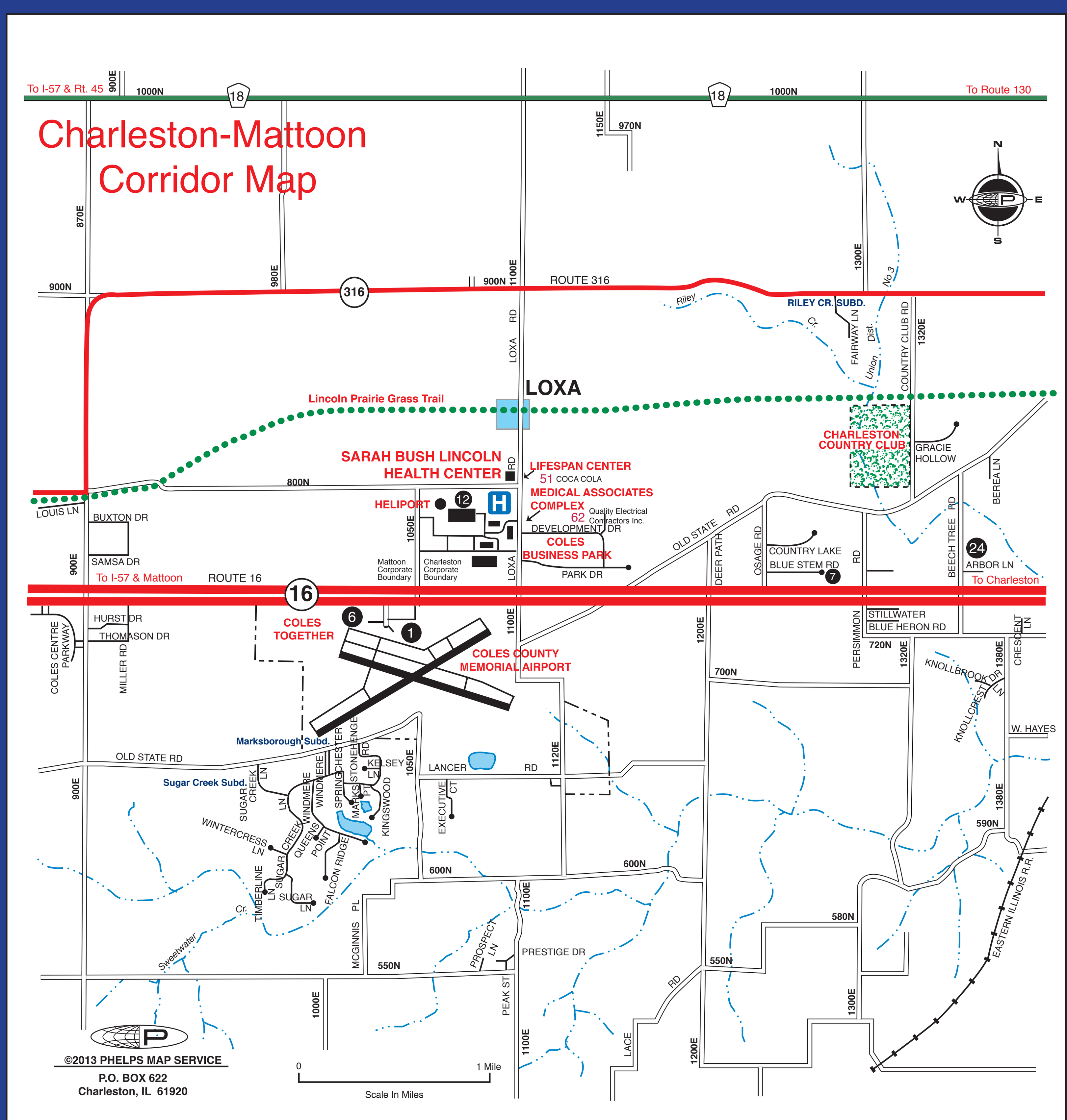

Education

Charleston has a strong and effective school system with an enviable reputation. Three elementary schools, a middle school and a high school provide a solid educational foundation for the children of our community. Charleston schools consistently rank high in comparison with other schools throughout the region. Active parent and community organizations help ensure academic excellence and assist with a wide range of extracurricular activities. Private, church related schools, both elementary and secondary, also operate in Charleston, as well as a wide range of preschool and daycare facilities. Eastern Illinois University, located in Charleston, and Lake Land College, just nine miles away in the neighboring city of Mattoon, provide extensive choices for post-graduation education.

Health Care

The Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Center, located just west of Charleston and easily accessible on Illinois Route 16, is a regional medical center with 128 beds which provides comprehensive health care to the area, including a regional cancer center, behavioral health services, women and children's services, 24 hour emergency care, walk-in clinic, physical therapy facility, and an outpatient surgery center. The Carle Clinic, located five miles west of Charleston offers a wide range of services including primary care, specialty care and many other support services. Twenty-four hour ambulance service, home health care agencies and several physicians and other health care professionals with practices in Charleston make up the community's health care structure.

Recreation

There is no shortage of recreational activities in Charleston. From the Charleston Community Aquatic Center to softball, baseball, volleyball and tennis leagues for adults and youth, almost anyone can find an activity in which to participate. Beautiful Lake Charleston, just south of town, offers fishing and boating. Fox Ridge State Park, situated just eight miles south of Charleston, has expansive recreational facilities, including family and group camping sites, canoeing, picnic areas with pavilions, and hiking trails of varying ranges of difficulty and length.

Lincoln Log Cabin Historic Site, just eight miles outside Charleston, re-creates the year 1845, and volunteer pioneers dressed in period clothing and speaking in period dialect make this living history home of Abraham Lincoln's father and stepmother a charming, fascinating spot.

Whether you are pedaling, jogging or riding a horse, the Lincoln-Prairie Grass Trail is an excellent place to experience the rural sights between Charleston and Mattoon. In town, Charleston's Morton Park with its playground and shelters, its ball fields, tennis courts and horseshoe pits; offers a delightful place for picnics, reunions, or just a pleasant stroll. Other parks and athletic facilities, a bowling alley, a skate park, a public golf course and a driving range, three racetracks, as well as the Coles County Fair ensure a wide range of activities for everyone.

Coles County Fair

The Coles County Fair is credited with being the oldest continuously running fair in Illinois, with the 160th fair being held July 27-August 3, 2014 in Charleston. The first fairs were held east of town in Ellington's Pasture. In the spring of 1854 the Coles County Agricultural and Mechanical Society was formed and the following year the society purchased several acres of elevated land west of Charleston as the permanent site for the fair.

The Coles County Fairgrounds has a colorful history. It was the site of the fourth of the seven Lincoln-Douglas Debates on September 18, 1858 with an estimated crowd of ten to twelve thousand spectators. On May 26, 1917 a tornado ripped through the grounds destroying everything but a few trees as it swept from Mattoon eastward through Charleston. William Jennings Bryant's colorful speeches were once part of the chautauquas held on the grounds and traces still can be found of the sidewalk to the tabernacle where evangelist Billy Sunday once held forth.

Growing from a one-day affair to the weeklong celebration that it is today, the fair features diverse attractions such as livestock shows, carnival rides, domestic displays, tractor pulls, trade exhibits, harness racing, carnival games and food, the demolition derby and more.

Cultural Events

From well-crafted productions at the Charleston Alley Theatre to musical and theatrical productions in Eastern Illinois University's performance venues, cultural events are readily available to Charleston citizens. Eastern's Tarble Arts Center provides a site for a diverse offering of the arts, including exhibits of paintings and sculpture, performances by chamber music groups, poetry readings and classes in arts and crafts. The Coles County Arts Council regularly encourages arts activities in the area, including the CityArt Exhibit, which features a new showing of the work of local artists each month in Charleston's City Building. Outdoor murals and sculptures located in the downtown area give an artistic account of the city's rich heritage. Throughout the summer, the Charleston Community Band and various local bands present evening concerts in Charleston's Kiwanis Park. Doudna Fine Arts Center on the campus of Eastern Illinois University houses its Music, Theatre and Art Departments. The building itself is a piece of art, designed by award winning architect Antoine Predock and created to merge classes, exhibits, rehearsals, performances and concerts all under one roof.

Homes

Homes in Charleston range from newly constructed houses in spacious and well planned developments to genteel, 150 year old two-story residences located along shady, tree-lined streets; from compact and cozy ranches in friendly subdivisions to multi-bedroom executive homes in exclusive neighborhoods and to many varieties in between. There is an abundance of apartments and housing complexes designed with the student renter in mind and others to meet the needs of retired and senior citizens. Realtors from major realty companies are prepared to assist in the location and purchase or rental of a home suitable for nearly anyone's needs. For visitors requiring short term residence, several motels offer a variety of accommodations.

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RECREATION FACILITIES
EIU, Campus Recreation Center 581-2821
Lantz Gymnasium, Private

NATURE TRAILS – STATE PARKS - LAKES
Lincoln-Prairie Grass Trail 348-0430
Fox Ridge State Park 345-6416
Lake Charleston 345-6897
Walnut Point State Park 346-3336

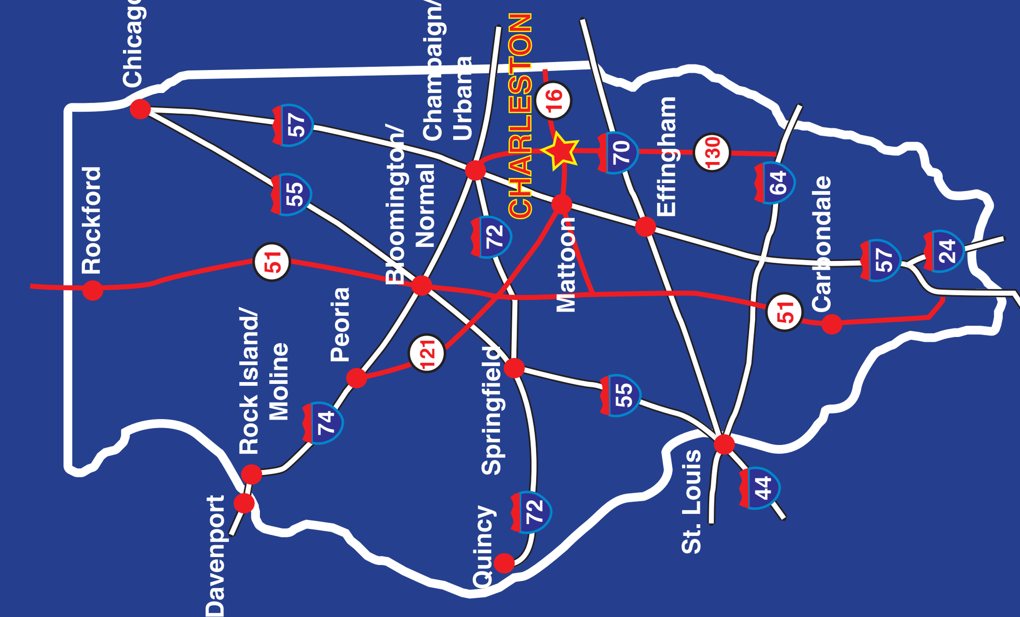
GOLF COURSES
Bent Tree Golf Course, Public 348-1611
Charleston Driving Range, Public 348-1883
Charleston Country Club, Private 345-6603

SWIMMING POOLS
Charleston Community Aquatic Center 345-3233
EIU Lantz Natatorium, Private 581-2821

RACING TRACKS
Charleston Speedway 345-2929
Coles County Dragway 345-7777
Coles County Speedway 348-8035

HISTORICAL POINTS OF INTEREST
Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site 345-1845
Moore Home State Historic Site 345-1845
Thomas Lincoln Cemetery 345-1845
Lincoln-Douglas Debate Museum 348-0430
Five-Mile House 348-0430

CULTURAL POINTS OF INTEREST
Amphitheatre, Kiwanis Park 345-6897
EIU Doudna Fine Arts Center 581-3010
Charleston Alley Theatre 345-2287
Tarble Arts Center 581-2787
Murals Around The Square 348-0430



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Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site, eight miles south of Charleston, was the last home of Lincoln's father and stepmother, Thomas and Sarah Bush Lincoln. Today, the 86 acre site includes a Visitor Center, pavilion and shaded picnic areas as well as the reconstructed Lincoln Cabin and the Stephen Sargent farmstead. Daily domestic and farming activities come alive on the 1840's "living historical farm."

The Charleston square has been the seat of county government since 1835. Several historically significant events are associated with previous buildings on the site. As a young lawyer, Abraham Lincoln unsuccessfully defended a slave owner in what was to become known as the Matson Slave Trial. A marker on the southeast lawn of the courthouse commemorates the "Charleston Riot" which occurred on March 28, 1864 between Southern sympathizers or "Copperheads" and soldiers of the 54th Illinois infantry on furlough at the time.

Location/Transportation

Situated in the rich, black-earth farmland of east-central Illinois, Charleston is located 165 miles south of Chicago, 115 miles northeast of St. Louis and 120 miles west of Indianapolis. The city is served by rail, air and motor freight services. The Coles County Memorial Airport is located just four miles west of Charleston and provides connections to other regional airports as well as to Chicago. Interstate Route 57, a major north-south artery in the Midwestern transportation grid, is just five miles west of Charleston and is easily accessed by Illinois Route 16, a four lane highway which connects Charleston and Mattoon, nine miles to the west. Interstate 70, the nation's prime east-west highway, is only 30 miles south of the I-57/Illinois Route 16 interchange and is accessible by I-57.

Business and Industry

Business and industry are well represented in Charleston. From small crafts and specialty shops to large manufacturing and shipping facilities, business thrives in the community. Eleven major entities employ over 2500 individuals while dozens of smaller shops and stores employ hundreds more. Business is welcome here. And, with nearly 183,000 people residing within a thirty-five mile radius of Charleston, a capable and willing workforce is readily available for business and industrial firms located here. Charleston is a city where the work ethic remains strong and the spirit of community support is high.

Shopping

Charleston offers convenient shopping with something for everyone. Small shops, as well as large discount stores, provide a nice range of shopping facilities for consumers. There are national chains and an interesting blend of locally owned shops and restaurants to make for an enjoyable visit. Friendly merchants and reasonable prices characterize shopping in Charleston.

Calendar of Events

February
Charleston Challenge — Carl Sandburg School
Mid-Winter Classic
Lincoln's Birthday — Lincoln Log Cabin
Open House

March
La Grande Soiree — SBLHC

April
Celebration,
A Festival of the Arts — EIU Campus
Girl's on the Run 5K — CHS Trojan Hill
Art and Antiques — Osage Farm
Tour de Exchange Bike Ride CHS

May
Annual 18th Street — 18th St., Charleston
Spring Block Party
Sheep to Clothing — Lincoln Log Cabin
IHSA Girls
Track & Field State — EIU O'Brien Stadium
Races for all the Paces — SBLHC
IHSA Boys
Track & Field State — EIU O'Brien Stadium
Illinois Heritage Fair — Lincoln Log Cabin

June
Farmers' Market — Charleston Square
Community Band Concerts — Kiwanis Park
Antique Tractor Show — Lincoln Log Cabin
Civil War Saturday — Lincoln Log Cabin

July
Farmers' Market — Charleston Square
Red, White and Blue Days — Morton Park
1845 4th of July Celebration — Lincoln Log Cabin
4th of July Fireworks — Coles County Airport
Community Band Concerts — Kiwanis Park
Concerts in The Park — Kiwanis Park
Antique Farm
Equipment Show — Coles Co. Fairgrounds
Coles County Fair — Coles Co. Fairgrounds

August
Farmers' Market — Charleston Square
Concerts In The Park — Kiwanis Park
Bluegrass Jam — Lincoln Log Cabin
Run for the Fallen — CHS Trojan Hill
Coles County Air Show — Coles County Airport

September
Farmers' Market — Charleston Square
Concerts In The Park — Kiwanis Park
Barn Dance
& Candlelight Tour — Lincoln Log Cabin
Charleston Challenge
Duathlon — Carl Sandburg School

September
Art and Antiques — Osage Farm
EIU Family Weekend — EIU Campus

October
Farmers' Market — Charleston Square
Harvest Frolic — Lincoln Log Cabin
5 Mile House Fall Festival — 5 Mile House
EIU Homecoming — EIU

November
Charleston Challenge
40 Mile Relay — Carl Sandburg School
Festival of Trees — SBLHC
1845 Thanksgiving — Lincoln Log Cabin

December
Christmas In The
Heart of Charleston — Charleston Square
Christmas On The Prairie — Lincoln Log Cabin

The Spirit of the Past . . . . . . A Vision for the Future

Whether you enter Charleston through its attractive corridor to the west, from the wooded hills and sparkling beauty of Lake Charleston to the south, past the clean and modern industrial enterprises on the north or through the fertile and productive farms which lie to its east, you will be immediately captivated by a thriving, progressive city which is proud of its friendliness and community spirit.

Founded nearly two centuries ago, Charleston is a place with a proud past and an exciting future. Charleston has served since the 1830s as the social, economic and political center for the surrounding area and is home today to over 21,000 residents. It is the county seat of Coles county, the home of Eastern Illinois University, the site of manufacturing or shipping facilities for several major national corporations and of many successful, prosperous small businesses. Charleston has a dynamic spirit - a spirit which can be seen in its numerous service clubs and their community assistance activities, in the volunteer work which makes possible the annual Fourth of July Red, White and Blue Days, and in several social and athletic activities for its youth. Religious activities and opportunities for worship are important in Charleston, and churches of many denominations are located here.

A forward-looking community with a bright future, Charleston also has a rich historical tradition. While living in Springfield Abraham Lincoln visited Charleston often, as he rode the circuit as a lawyer and tried cases in the Coles County Courthouse. Many of the sites to visit in and around Charleston are connected with our 16th president.

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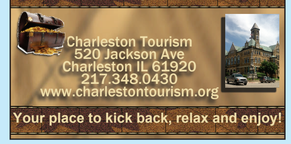
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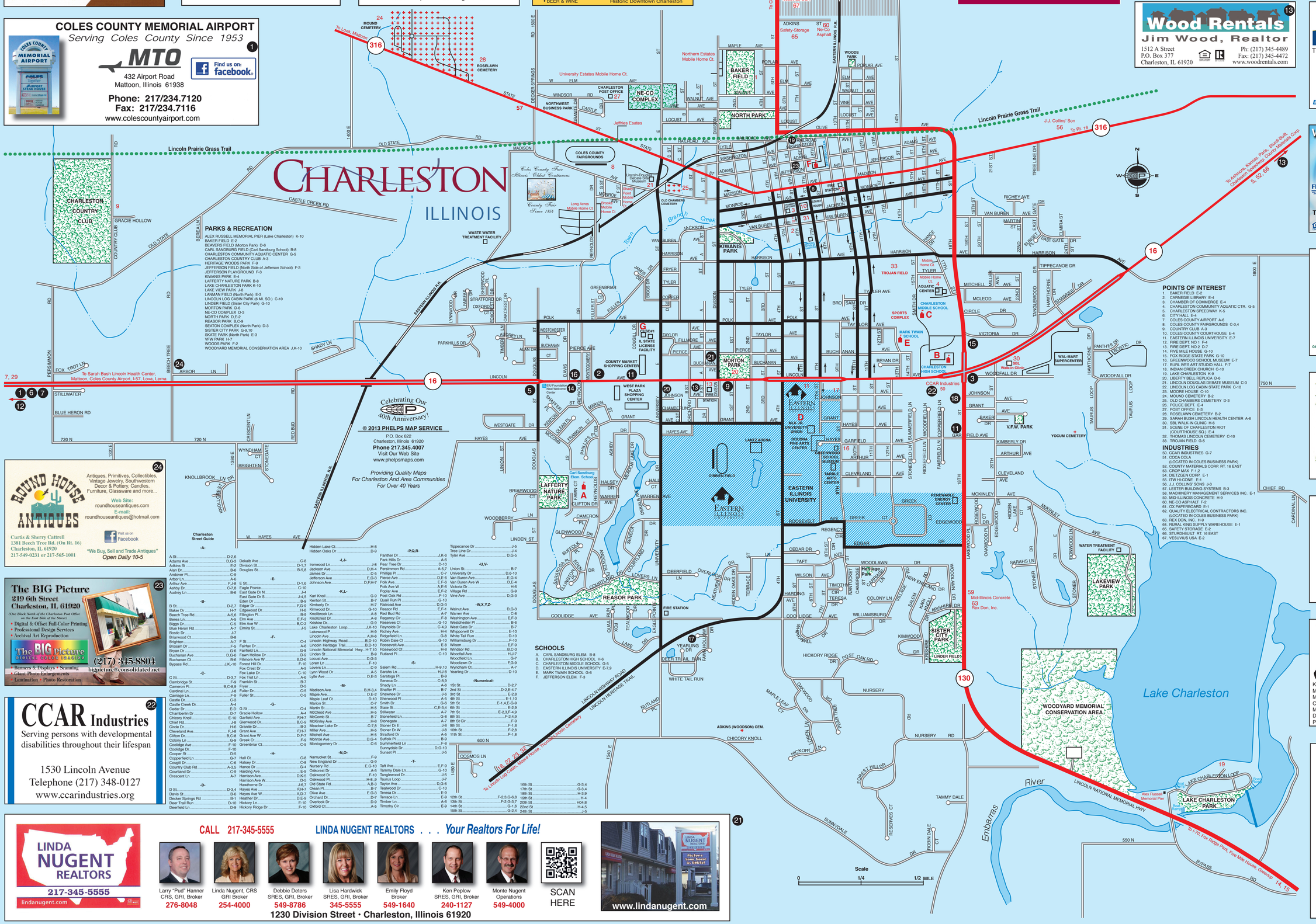
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