



Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislib/>

**Analysis of Assessments & Survey Data**

Analysis of inventory and survey data can provide an introspective look at a community, particularly when reviewing historic and present-day conditions. In Van Meter, comparing the historic Raccoon River channel against its present alignment reveals how changes to the natural meander shifted the convergence of the two channels northwest of town. These changes also directly impacted agriculture and quarry operations along with orientation of transportation routes.

The placement of roads and railroads illustrates the role geography had on Van Meter's settlement and development patterns. Van Meter was settled in one of the few remaining flat areas near the Raccoon River. It was an ideal location for a water stop for the railroad and is equidistant between Booneville and De Soto. In its early days, the downtown would have been oriented toward the main source of transportation: the railroad. As cars became the main source of travel, roads were constructed, then paved. These were fit to the geography of the area and cut across railroads at ninety-degree angles. In Van Meter, this meant that roads cut across the east edge of town a few blocks from downtown and wound out of the valley along a ridge (now Richland Rd./R16). As the railroad lost prominence, the community's main street shifted to nearby county highways.

The presence (or absence) of water is another factor in Van Meter's development. The Raccoon River north of town serves as a natural barrier for growth. Development has occurred along nearby streams, where relatively flat areas provided space for housing. More recent development has occurred along ridges south of town. When reviewing depth to water table, many of these higher elevation areas indicate water close to the surface. Development in these areas likely creates a greater degree of wear on roads due to freeze/thaw as well as greater incidence of wet basements. Awareness of the water table can guide future development, or provide likelihood of placement for wells.

All of these factors play a pivotal role in how residents engage the natural places and destinations within their community. With transportation corridors being influenced by local geography, one can quickly see that there is an overlap between vehicular and pedestrian traffic. By reviewing these data, we can begin to explore alternate routes to start separating these modes of transportation and decrease conflicts.