

IOWA'S
LIVING
ROADWAYS

Community Visioning Program
Annual Report 2014





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Executive Summary

The Iowa's Living Roadways Program was born of an effort to provide design services to rural Iowa communities. The program is a collaboration involving the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT), the Living Roadway Trust Fund (LRTF), Iowa State University (ISU), and Trees Forever.

Iowa's Living Roadways consists of the Community Visioning Program and the Projects Program. The Community Visioning Program provides planning and landscape design assistance to Iowa's small communities. The Projects Program funds the planting of native grasses, wildflowers, shrubs, and trees along transportation corridors.

Both Visioning and Project Programs provide assistance to Iowa communities with populations of fewer than 10,000, because these smaller communities often lack the resources and expertise needed to design and implement landscape enhancements.

The 2014 visioning communities are Akron, Hanlontown, Huxley, Leon, New Providence, Oxford, Pocahontas, Preston, Sabula, and Urbana. The sustainability and success of the program is evident by the number of actual communities it has touched. Since Iowa's Living Roadways was created in 1996, 209 communities have participated in the Visioning Program and the Projects Program has awarded grants for 500 projects.



Communities



Akron

Trees Forever Facilitator: Brad Riphagen

Landscape Architect: Jen Cross

Intern: Anne Hundley

Akron is a community of 1,486 residents located in Plymouth County and is the starting point of the Loess Hills Scenic Byway. The Big Sioux River and Iowa's border with South Dakota make up most of Akron's northern city limit. State Highways 3 and 12 intersect in the southwest corner of Akron proper.

Its location along the Big Sioux River and its proximity to the Loess Hills make Akron an appealing venue for outdoor recreation. Nine miles of unpaved trails run along the river and the city provides an access point to the river for boating, canoeing, and fishing. At the northeast corner of the community is the Dunham Prairie Preserve, and the Higman Wetland is on the Iowa side of the river. Camping is allowed in the city park from May through the beginning of October.

Akron is also home to the Akron Area Museum and the Akron Opera House, which was built in 1905 and is currently being restored to its original appearance.

Through the Community Visioning assessment process, the Akron visioning committee gathered input from residents regarding transportation patterns, routes, favorite destinations, and barriers to reaching those destinations. Akron residents identified its library, high school, access to recreation opportunities, and an array of local businesses on Reed Street as assets in the community. With the community bounded by two highways, pedestrian safety is a major concern. A special places mapping workshop revealed the values of the steering committee and residents, such as recreation, community growth, and identity.



Based on what they learned during the assessments, committee members identified four major goals on which to focus in the conceptual plan: create entrance signage, dedicate recreational trails, improve pedestrian safety, and design a River View Park and Campground.

The entrance signage proposed by the design team incorporates the brick patterns of the historic downtown buildings and the city slogan, establishing a highly visible identity for Akron. With the existing trails in Akron as a framework, the team created a multi-use trail system to be implemented in three phases and identified sites for two trailheads. In terms of pedestrian safety, the team proposed bump-outs, delineated crosswalks, and traffic-calming devices such as street trees at major highway intersections in town. Finally, the designers developed a plan for River View Park and Campground that accommodates river users, RV and tent camping, and pedestrians and cyclists.

Steering Committee:

Char Hodnefield

Mary Lucken

Bob Frerichs

Derek Briggs

Marlys Johnson

Connie Blake

Angie Price

Randy Collins

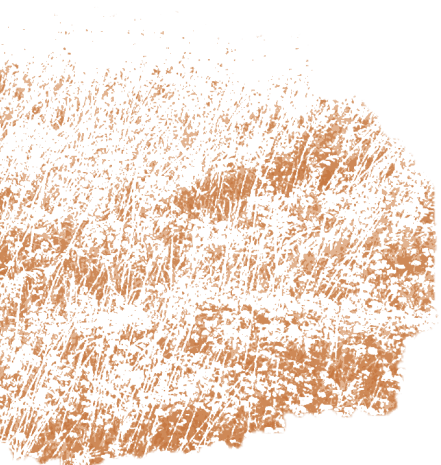
Chad Ericson

Gary Horton

Harold Higman

Melea Nielsen

Brad Britton





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1. *The design team developed a campground plan for the area adjacent to the boat ramp that includes facilities and parking to accommodate river users, RV and tent camping, and a levee trail for pedestrians and cyclists.*
2. *This rendering shows an aerial view of the proposed campground, the proposed levee trail, a trailhead, and facilities for boaters and fishers.*
3. *Part of the multi-use trail plan features on-street trail loops with pavement markings to delineate “sharrows” (designated pedestrian/cyclist lanes).*
4. *The intersection of Reed Street and Highway 12 is a priority because of pedestrian safety issues.*
5. *The design proposed for Reed Street features flashing stop signs, pedestrian lighting, painted pedestrian crosswalks, new sidewalks, ADA-accessible warning pavers, and brick pavers on each corner of the intersection to improve pedestrian safety.*

Hanlontown

Trees Forever Facilitator: Jeff Jensen

Landscape Architects: Joshua Shields and Casey Byers

Intern: Amber Gable

Hanlontown is located in north central Iowa just west of Interstate 35 on Highway 9. The town is conveniently situated only 30 minutes at the most from Mason City, Clear Lake, Forest City, Manly, and Albert Lee. The population has remained at approximately 200 since the community's founding in 1899.

Hanlontown's claim to fame is Sundown Days, an annual celebration held on the Summer Solstice, on which the sun sets between the rails of the Union Pacific Railroad line that runs through town. As part of the celebration, ice cream sundaes are served on the tracks on the evening of June 21. Other events during Sundown Days include a parade and a kiddy tractor pull. In 2001, Sundown Days was featured on the CBS Sunday Morning program.

The heart of Hanlontown is the community center, which houses the fire department, the city clerk's office, the library, and a community room used for city council meetings and for residents' family events.

Other special places in Hanlontown are the Citizen Savings Bank Museum, the Sime-Oswald Cabin, a mini rock garden, and the corner plaza, which has a gazebo, a community events sign, and mural of the sunset on the railroad tracks.

Volunteerism is strong in Hanlontown. Volunteers distribute the monthly newspaper, act as the fire department, and maintain the city park. The Hanlontown Community Club operates an ice cream parlor in Forest City, using the proceeds to sponsor an annual Easter egg hunt, Halloween costume party, and Christmas decorations on Main Street. The Hanlontown Garden Club encourages children to volunteer in planting and maintaining the Main Street flowerpots.

The city encourages healthy lifestyles by providing a defined 1K walking circuit and well treed city park with children's play equipment and five adult exercise stations. Expanding the walking circuit was one of the Hanlontown's initial goals when applying



to the Community Visioning Program. Other goals included increasing tree coverage, expanding the park system, and enhancing community entrances.

The Hanlontown steering committee identified three main priorities: strengthening the visitor experience, enhancing the park system, and improving the aesthetics of Main Street and the museum/gazebo park space. Based on these overarching goals and input during the community assessments, the design team developed a concept plan consisting of four components: entryway and community signage, historic square development, Main Street enhancements, and park improvements. Some of the projects proposed include a family of community signage; a landscaping plan for the historic district featuring informational signage, seating, trees, parking, and a rain garden; and a park plan that incorporates an additional shelter, new sidewalk, and parking.

Steering Committee:

Dave Haugen

Jim Rice

Julie Losee

Kelly Hansen

Michael Kennedy

Rick Scholbrock

Robert Michaelis

Sharon Rice

Wendy Lunning





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1. *One of Hanlontown's goals is to create a historic square in the area of the Savings Bank Museum and Sime-Oswald Cabin.*
2. *Enhancements to the Sime-Oswald Cabin area include seating, a picnic area, and landscaping—including a rain garden.*
3. *The design team developed a family of signs for Hanlontown that highlights its history as a railroad town, as well as the annual celebration, Sundown Day.*
4. *The design team's plan for city park features a new shelter on the east side, sidewalks to make the park more accessible, an information kiosk, and entrance plantings.*

Huxley

Trees Forever Facilitator: Leslie Berckes

Landscape Architects: Joshua Shields and Casey Byers

Intern: Amber Gable

Huxley, known as the “Heart of the Prairie,” is situated on the prairie of Story County, 10 miles south of Ames and 25 miles north of Des Moines. Two major north-south transportation corridors pass through the town. Interstate 35 intersects with the easternmost part of town, while US Highway 69 passes through the heart of the community.

Because it cuts through the most densely populated part of this town of approximately 3,000, US 69 is a major barrier with few safe places to cross. Most of the residential areas are on the east side of the highway. However, many important community destinations—such as the schools, the Citizens’ Community Center, several parks, and the Larson Family Sports Fields—are located on the opposite side.

Huxley’s main attraction is the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail, a 32-mile trail from Slater to Melbourne. The trail passes through the

southern part of town and is connected with city streets, parks, schools, ballparks, and soccer fields. Trail users can enjoy biking, horseback riding, hiking, and snowmobiling. One issue that the Huxley visioning committee wanted to address is the lack of signage and landscaping that identifies the trail.

As expected, the Highway 69 corridor emerged as the major issue during the community assessments. Also reinforced during the assessments were the importance of Huxley’s parks and the lack of connectivity among them.

The design team proposed landscape improvements along the corridor through town to create visual interest. Native prairie grasses and forbs planted in the existing swales would create a strong connection to the “Heart of the Prairie” identity, as well as aid in storm-water management. These bioswales would also provide habitat for birds, butterflies, and other pollinators.



Creating a stronger community identity was another major goal. Monument signage designed in the prairie style was proposed for community entrances, along with prairie vegetation and amenities such as community art, seating, and interpretive signage. The south entrance sign would be located near the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail. The design team proposed a trail connection at the north entrance sign.

The final goal for the community is to promote circulation through town and increase the exposure of local amenities. To accomplish this goal the design team developed way-finding signage to promote pedestrian routes to local parks and created native prairie opportunities to heighten awareness of the prairie landscape. The 3.5-mile “Prairie Tour” through the community would further strengthen Huxley’s prairie identity.

Steering Committee:

Travis Bakken

Selden Spencer

Kevin Cole

Wayne Messer

Mark Miller

Tim Wilson

Dennis Parmenter

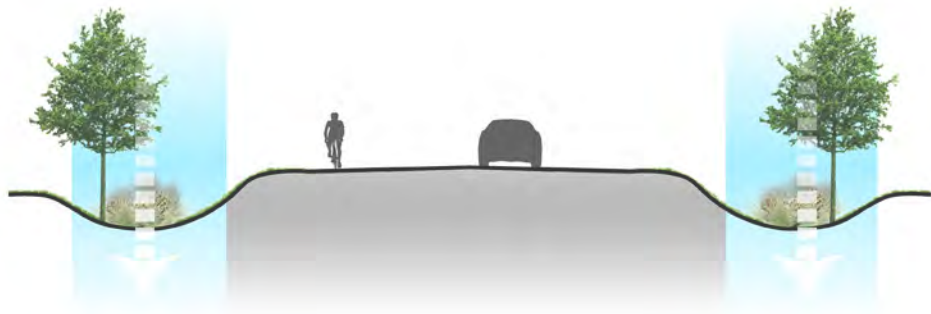
Meg Hannasch

Teresa Hannasch

Justin Moore

Janet Stoll





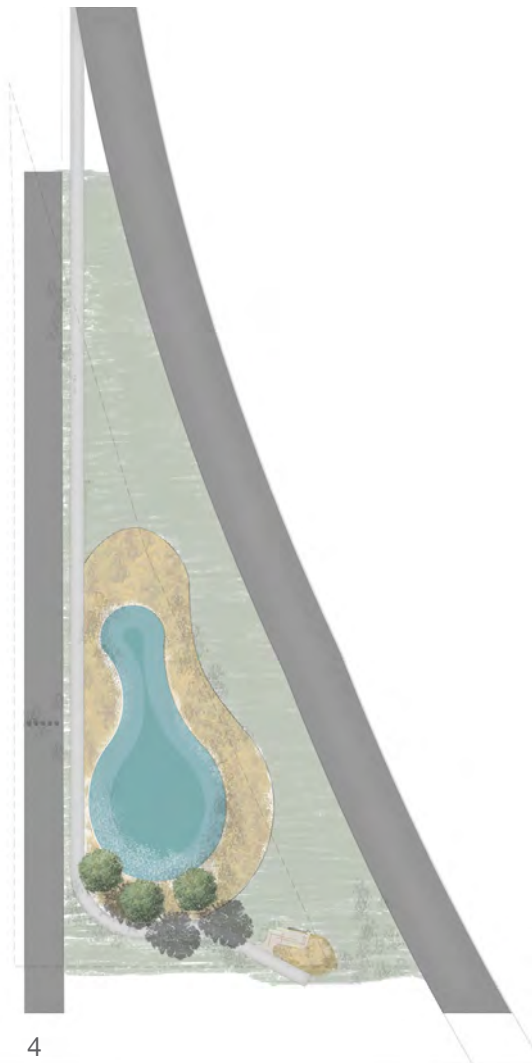
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1. *Adding native vegetation on the sides to the highway will improve water infiltration and reduce pollution and erosion. Native vegetation will also attract birds and butterflies.*
2. *Art panels along the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail reflect Huxley's identity while alerting motorists to the upcoming trail crossing.*
3. *As part of a proposed "prairie tour" through Huxley, the design team proposed a prairie demonstration garden in Railroad Park.*
4. *The plan for the north entrance into Huxley along Highway 69 incorporates a detention basin, which the community is considering for storing and treating runoff from future development.*
5. *The design team developed a family of signage that emulates Huxley's "Heart of the Prairie" identity.*



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Leon

Trees Forever Facilitator: Leslie Berckes

Landscape Architects: David Stokes, Eric Doll, and Eric Becker

Intern: Spencer Sneller

Leon is the county seat of Decatur County in central Iowa in the southernmost tier of counties in Iowa. The community is situated at the intersection of US Highway 69 and State Highway 2, five miles east of Interstate 35. The town was originally established as a shipping point on the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, and Leon's historic depot is an important landmark to its nearly 2,000 residents.

Regionally, there are two historic trails that pass through the area. Pottawattamie Indians used a route that crossed into Iowa as they moved from Illinois to Kansas. Today,

the trail is known as the Waubonsie Trail with Highway 2 roughly following the original route. The Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail travels through Decatur County. From 1846 until 1869 more than 70,000 Mormons moved west on this route as they sought religious freedom in the West.

Leon is fortunate to have the Little River Recreation Area just east of town. Little River is a popular place among all demographics for fishing, camping, and enjoying the outdoors. The recreation area is accessible for pedestrians and cyclists, who can take the Little River Scenic Pathway from Masonic Park. The pathway leads to the boat ramp and playground at the north side of the lake. During the visioning assessment process, residents expressed the desire to extend the Scenic Pathway to the south part of town to increase the accessibility to the recreation area.

A primary concern among Leon residents is pedestrian safety along the two highway corridors through town. The east side of the Highway 69 corridor has benefited from a Community Transformation Grant that funded sidewalk improvements and curb cuts. However, the opposite side has



suffered wear and tear damage, making it hazardous due to unlevelled surfaces such as steps and inclines. Highway 2 lacks sidewalks, making destinations along the highway safely accessible only by vehicle.

During the visioning process, the Leon visioning committee identified a number of goals and priority areas: Main Street and Highway 2 corridor improvements, pedestrian safety and access throughout Leon, recreational trails master planning, addressing storm-water drainage issues using integrated green infrastructure, and street tree restoration. Upon further analysis, the committee's goals were categorized into five themes: trails, recreation, circulation, beautification, and identity.

The concept plan devised by the design team addresses the committee's concerns through the following projects: expansion of recreation trails; improvements to Noel, Harvey, and Masonic Parks; safety enhancements to US 69/Hwy 2 intersection and courthouse square; creation of a signage family that expresses Leon's identity; and implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to improve the water quality and filter out contaminants.

Steering Committee:

Sharon South

Shawna Robinson

Maggie Lindsey

Rachel Duncan

Kat Akers

Shane Akers

Shelley Bickel

Marcia Stephens

Suzanne Cooner

Jo Beth Smith

Russ Cooner

Stephanie Covington

Lorrie Scrivner

Tanya Coffelt





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1. *The design team proposed entrance signage and a city logo, which are featured in these examples.*
2. *This section of the Highway 2 corridor shows infrastructure that accommodates storm-water runoff through a bio-infiltration cell design.*
3. *This bird's-eye view of Main Street in Leon shows bump-outs at intersections, designated crosswalks, and street trees, all of which contribute to pedestrian safety. Furthermore, best management practices in the form of storm-water planters, not only enhance the pedestrian experience but contribute to sustainable water management.*
4. *The concept plan for Leon addresses five themes identified by the visioning committee: trails, recreation, circulation, beautification, and identity.*



New Providence

Trees Forever Facilitator: Meredith Borchardt

Landscape Architect: Craig Ritland

Intern: Shannon Kazynski

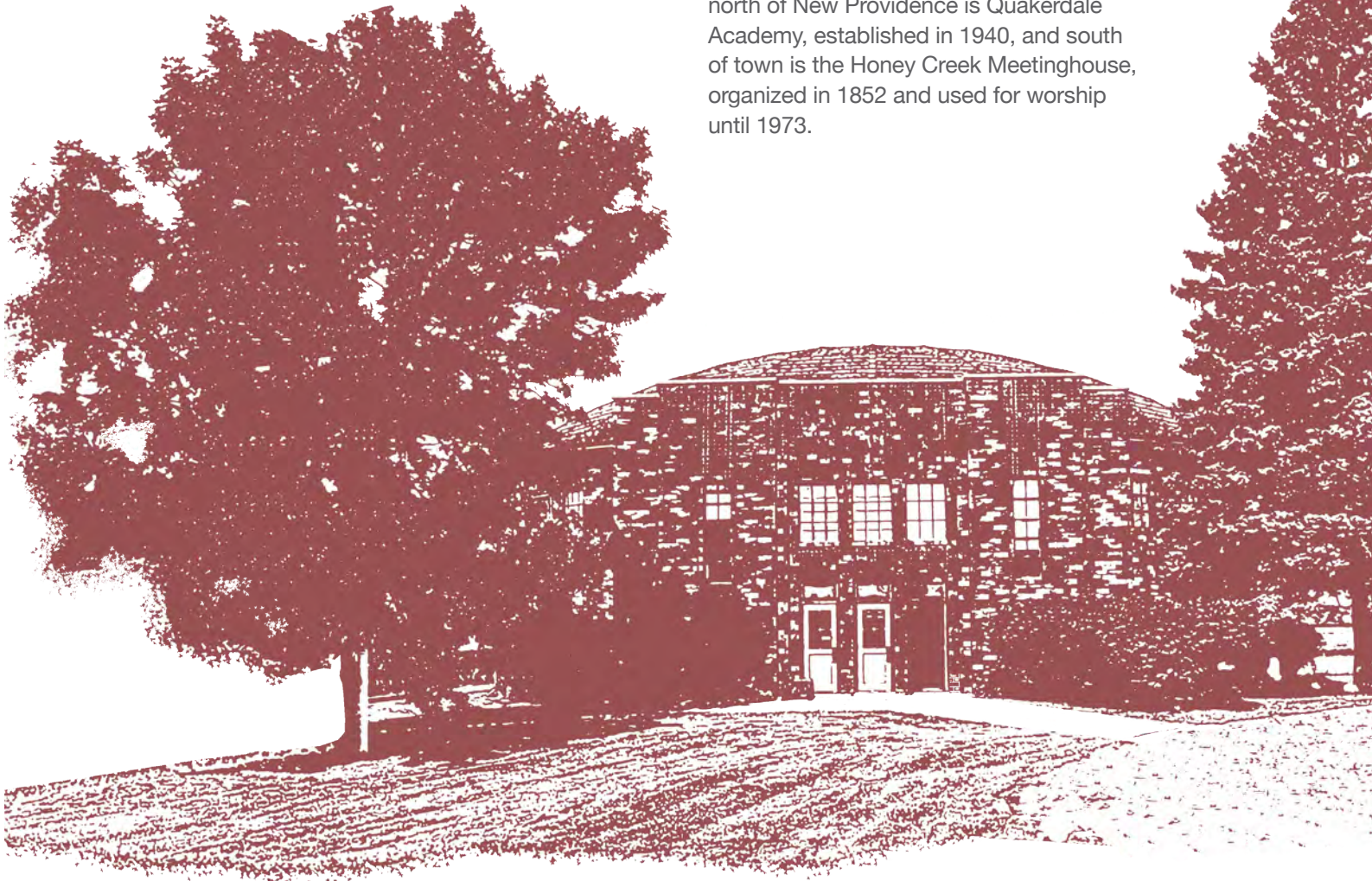
New Providence is situated in Hardin County at the intersection of County Roads S55, S57, and D55. Founded in 1855, this community of 228 residents has a rich history that has been preserved at several sites in and around the community.

Two of its historic landmarks are also two major hubs for community activity in New Providence. The Roundhouse was built in 1936 as a WPA project and was the first round gym of its size in Iowa. For 50 years the Roundhouse served as a venue for school activities, including a number of basketball tournaments. When the

consolidated school district was closed, the city acquired the building and converted it to a community center. The gym was added to the National Registry of Historic Places in 1996.

The Soda Fountain in downtown New Providence was built in the 1930s and is another community hub. Now a museum, the Soda Fountain hosts Monday Morning Community Breakfasts. More than 40 volunteers prepare breakfast for New Providence residents and visitors who can number more than 150 people.

The building is also available for community events. Next to the Soda Fountain is Iowa's oldest hardware store, started in 1863. Just north of New Providence is Quakerdale Academy, established in 1940, and south of town is the Honey Creek Meetinghouse, organized in 1852 and used for worship until 1973.



New Providence applied to the Community Visioning Program with the goals of updating its entrances, adding sidewalks at community destinations, enhancing the roadsides, and creating safe walking areas. The visioning assessment process led to the identification of six priorities: entrance and way-finding signage, a master plan for the Roundhouse, park improvements, trail and sidewalk improvements, Main Street corridor enhancements, and Water Tower Memorial enhancements.

The visioning design team created new entrance signage and way-finding signs for destinations both in and outside the community. The team also designed a sign for the Soda Fountain, which has no sign, making it difficult for visitors to find. The proposed Roundhouse master plan makes the site more visible and accessible. It also incorporated a trail around the ball field behind the building and new sidewalks. Painted crosswalks and bump-outs are proposed to improve pedestrian safety. The park plans also enhance the pedestrian experience with new sidewalks and trees. A new park in the empty lot west of the city park is proposed with play equipment for children of preschool and elementary school ages, trees, and a shelter.

Steering Committee:

Marlene McDonald

Denise Lange

Evelyn Cook

Brenda Crabb

Jean Martin

Jim Martin

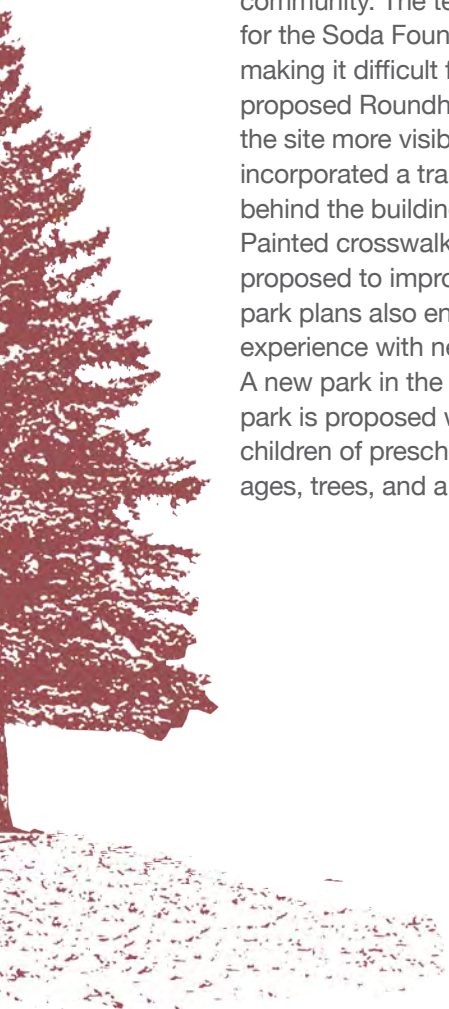
Danae Nelson

Diane Nelson

Denny Reece

Judy Schafer

George "Steve" Stevens





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1. *Proposed enhancements for the Roundhouse are improved parking, a recreational trail, a veterans memorial, a school memorial, new signage, and landscaping to open the view to the unique architecture of the building.*
2. *This plan view for the Roundhouse provides a complete view of the proposed trail route and improved parking, and the locations for the veterans and school memorials and additional trees.*
3. *The proposed elements for West City Park are a shelter, playgrounds for elementary and preschool children, shade trees, and a sidewalk to City Park.*



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4. *The downtown plan addresses pedestrian safety by adding bump-outs and delineated crosswalks at the Main Street intersection. Angled parking proposed for the west side of North Main Street alleviates parking problems by increasing the number of spots.*

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5. *The visioning committee would like a focal point in the open space in the churchyard.*
6. *The design team proposed a stone garden of the Quaker dozen, as well as three metal sculptures representing the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love.*

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Oxford

*Trees Forever Facilitator: Patty Petersen
Landscape Architect: Craig Ritland
Intern: Shannon Kazynski*

Oxford is home to 807 people and is located between US Highway 6 and Interstate 80 in Johnson County, close to Iowa City, the Amana Colonies, and F.W. Kent County Park. In 1998 the town was hit by a windstorm that damaged buildings and uprooted trees, many of which have not been replaced. The Oxford city hall and fire station were among the buildings destroyed in the storm and have since been rebuilt.

Augusta Avenue is the main thoroughfare through Oxford and the location of many of the important destinations in town, one of which is the renowned Augusta Restaurant. Augusta between Wilson Street and the Center Street alley is considered the commercial historic district, which was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1997. Oxford residents would like to restore these buildings and update the streetscape in this area.

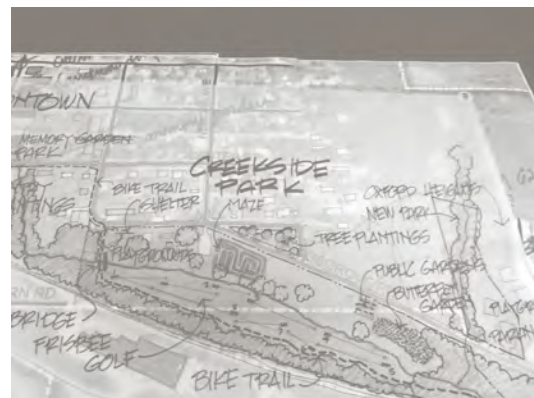
Although great strides have been made in restoring the community after the windstorm, residents want to rejuvenate Oxford by replacing trees and adding vegetation. The Garden Club started a

Memory Park at the edge of town. The club would like to connect the plantings of the Memory Park to the rest of town and add more benches.

Many Oxford residents enjoy walking and cycling outdoors, but there is no designated trail system in town. The Oxford visioning committee was interested in establishing a city trail system that connects destinations such as Creekside Park and Lions Park, as well as trail connections to existing trail systems in Tiffin, Kent County Park, and the Amana Colonies. The visioning committee also wished to address future growth of the community and attract traffic from Interstate 80 and US 6.

Four goals emerged as a result of the community assessment process: enhancing the Augusta Avenue streetscape, improving Creekside Park, incorporating entrance and way-finding signage, and establishing sustainable storm-water management.

The visioning design team proposed a plan for Augusta Avenue that includes bump-outs at the Main and Wilson Street intersections, pedestrian-scale period lighting, underground utilities, and street



trees, all of which would enhance the pedestrian experience and improve safety and accessibility. The design team's trail proposal addresses both the trail system and Creekside Park. The design team proposed realigning the regional trail plan developed by the Johnson County Metropolitan Planning Organization. The new trail plan would locate the pedestrian bridge in Creekside Park, allowing patrons access to all of the park property, and route the trail along streets with low traffic volume to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. Storm-water management is improved by establishing rain gardens. Finally, the visioning concept plan features a family of entrance and way-finding signage that celebrates Oxford's collection of antique fire engines and equipment.

Steering Committee:

Mary Ann Carter

Jeanette Cox

Doug Hill

Penny Jenn

Vicki Kasper

Deb Kinney

Sara Morlan

Crystal Pirkl

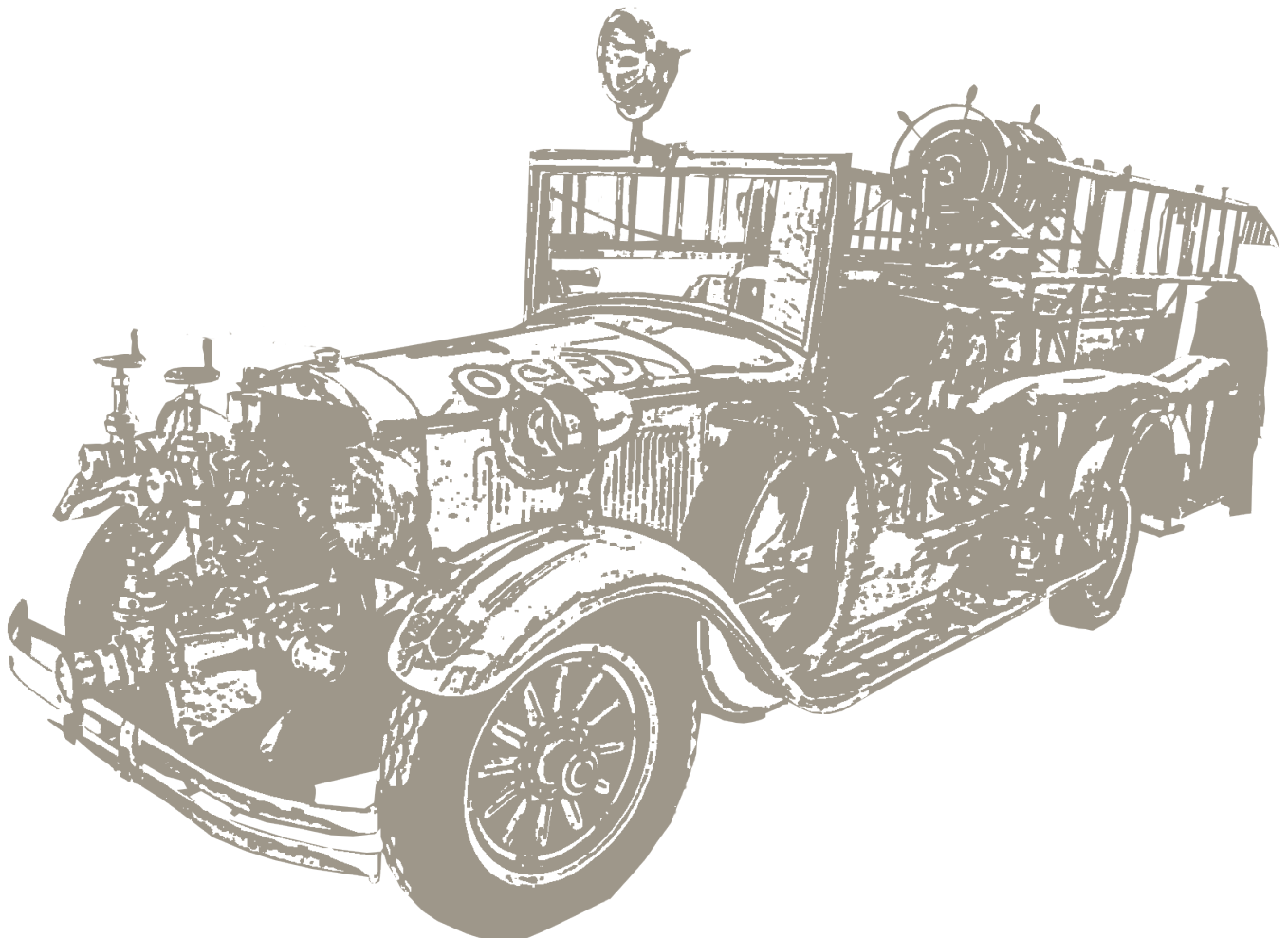
Donna Scheetz

Tom Scheetz

Chris Schueller

Judy Schwab

Gary Wilkinson





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1. *Augusta Avenue is the main roadway through Oxford and is a high priority for the visioning committee. The design team proposed street trees, sidewalk improvements, and bump-outs with period lighting and planters.*
2. *As part of a Creekside Park plan, the design team proposed a bridge over Rhine Creek to increase recreation opportunities and connect a regional trail system.*
3. *The painted crosswalks and bump-outs downtown would improve pedestrian safety, and period lighting and planters would create a friendlier atmosphere.*
4. *The design team proposed multiple sign options centered on the community's antique fire truck collection to create branding for the community.*
5. *The design team proposed sample rain gardens such as the one shown here along with interpretive signage to increase awareness and understanding of sustainable practices.*



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Pocahontas

Trees Forever Facilitator: Brad Riphagen

Landscape Architect: Jen Cross

Intern: Anne Hundley

The county seat of Pocahontas County, Pocahontas is centered in the county at the intersection of Highways 3 and 4. The “Princess City” is named after Pocahontas, the Native American woman who is said to have saved Captain John Smith from death by the order of her father. A large statue of the famous historical figure looks on with open arms in Princess Park at the entrance to Pocahontas along Highway 3. The 25-foot statue, constructed in 1956, is a point of pride in the community.

Another tourist attraction in town is the Udder Cow. Formerly, the “purple cow” signified a place for travelers to stop with family and get ice cream. It has since been replaced with a new cow that carries a similar delicious message to travelers. For many, the Udder Cow is the midpoint between the Great Lakes and Des Moines, serving as a perfect “watering hole” for stretching legs and taking a break.

Pocahontas offers several recreational opportunities, including a golf course, Elbert Park, and public and private hunting areas. Sports fans enjoy three baseball diamonds, three soccer fields, basketball courts, and tennis courts. The town also has a swimming pool with a large slide.

Highway 3 is a major truck route and carries a significant traffic load through Pocahontas. Highway 4, which connects to US Highway 20 to the south, is also busy. As a result, pedestrian and cyclist safety is a significant issue.

Through the visioning process, the Pocahontas steering committee identified five priorities: beautifying Main Street, improving safety and aesthetics at the intersection of Highways 3 and 4, developing a trails plan, enhancing the Highway 3 corridor through town, and updating the city parks.



The Main Street beautification plan proposed by the design team addresses both aesthetics and safety. Bump-outs at intersections would shorten the pedestrian crossing distances while providing places for trees, vegetation, and seating, improving pedestrian safety and comfort. Flashing stop signs, pedestrian lighting, and painted crosswalks are proposed for the Highway 3/4 intersection for increased safety, as well as street trees and sidewalks along the Highway 3 corridor. The design team proposed a system of shared roadways and designated trails throughout the community, with trailheads at Princess Park, Rosenberger Park, and the high school athletic complex. Enhancements to Princess Park include creating a vehicular pull-off on the south side of Highway 3 and a crosswalk with a flashing pedestrian signal, and adding a paved parking lot on the north side next to the park.

Steering Committee:

Eric List

Brenda Vrba

Gary Vrba

Kathy Hendrie

Terry Terrill

Dick Gruber

Helen Beneke

Don Beneke

Zack Wentzel

Jaden Ahlrichs





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1. Decorative lighting, additional street trees, way-finding signage, and painted crosswalks would make the intersection of Highway 3 and Wood Street more pedestrian friendly.



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2. Main Street and the courthouse square are assets that are highly valued by Pocahontas residents.

3. The proposed design for Main Street adds street trees and plantings, colored crosswalks, angled parking, and bump-outs.



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4. To accommodate the many visitors to Princess Park, the design team proposed a designated crosswalk with flashing pedestrian signal on Highway 3, a parking area, and new sidewalks.
5. Rosenberg Park was identified as one of three possible locations for a trailhead in Pocahontas.
6. The proposed trailhead at Rosenberg Park features interpretive signage, plantings, seating, and parking.



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Preston

Trees Forever Facilitators: Emily Swihart, Carole Teator, and Hannah Howard

Landscape Architect: Meg Flenker

Interns: Nicholas Decker and Shiyue Zhang

Preston is the third largest town in Jackson County with a population of approximately 1,100. The town is located along State Highway 64, roughly 12 miles west of the Mississippi River. In 2013, the Preston and the East Central Community School Districts were consolidated to form the Easton Valley Community School District, serving the towns of Preston, Miles, and Sabula. The middle and high schools are located in Preston, bringing many families to Preston for sporting events, art performances, and other school activities. This additional traffic offers opportunities for Preston, but also exacerbates safety issues.

The residents of Preston take great pride in their new bike trail, Copper Creek Trail, which opened in 2010. This seven-mile trail offers beautiful views of Jackson County to trail users. The official trailhead for Copper Creek Trail is Two Good Park, which has public restrooms. However, the park is located several blocks from the trail. The only

facility near the trail is a small pavilion with no water or restroom facilities. Preston Growth and Development would like to create a campground in the area near the pavilion with restroom/shower facilities.

Another asset in Preston is Geno's, an independent pizza restaurant that has developed several ball diamonds and soccer fields. Because of the restaurant's location at the far east side of the community, the only safe way to get there is by vehicle. The same is true of the newer housing developments. Preston residents would like to make both Geno's and the housing developments more accessible to pedestrians and cyclists.

The Preston visioning committee wanted to address safety, as well as create an identity and overall appearance that showcases the positive aspects of the community. During the community assessments, accessibility emerged as a significant issue, particularly for those who are mobility challenged. Creating a



positive image of Preston was also frequently mentioned. The committee identified four main goals through the visioning process: downtown streetscape improvements, Copper Creek Trail enhancements and connections, safety enhancements to several intersections, and Westside Park improvements.

To address Preston's goals, the visioning design team developed a concept plan with eight components: Copper Creek Trail enhancements; gateway improvements addressing both aesthetics and safety; downtown enhancements that address accessibility, safety, and aesthetics; community identity; intersection safety; accessibility and safety of sidewalks along primary corridors; a Westside Park master plan; and an urban trail/sidewalk system within the community.

Steering Committee:

Patti Hoffman

Dana Olson

Bonnie Yaddof

Abby Fuegen

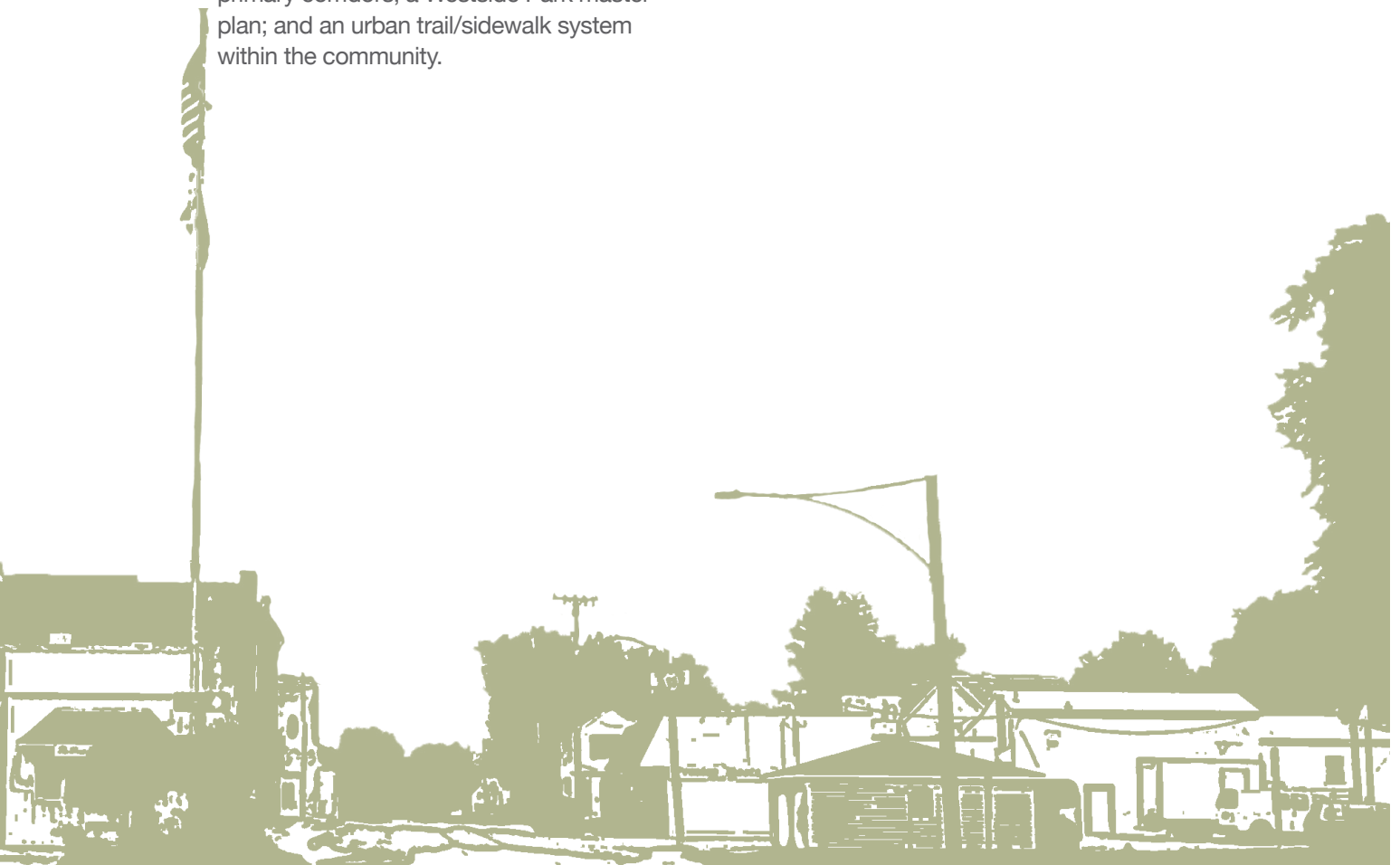
Abby Smithson

Paula Reuter

Brenda Kunau

Terry Mertens

Pansy Oldag





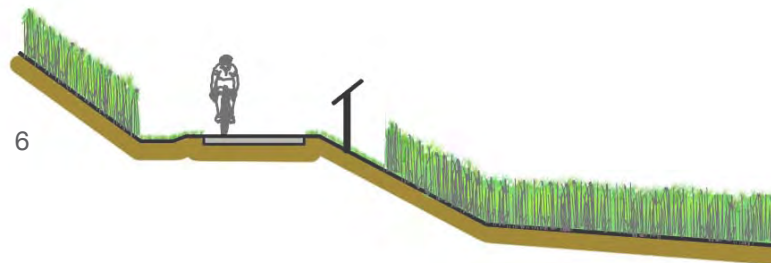
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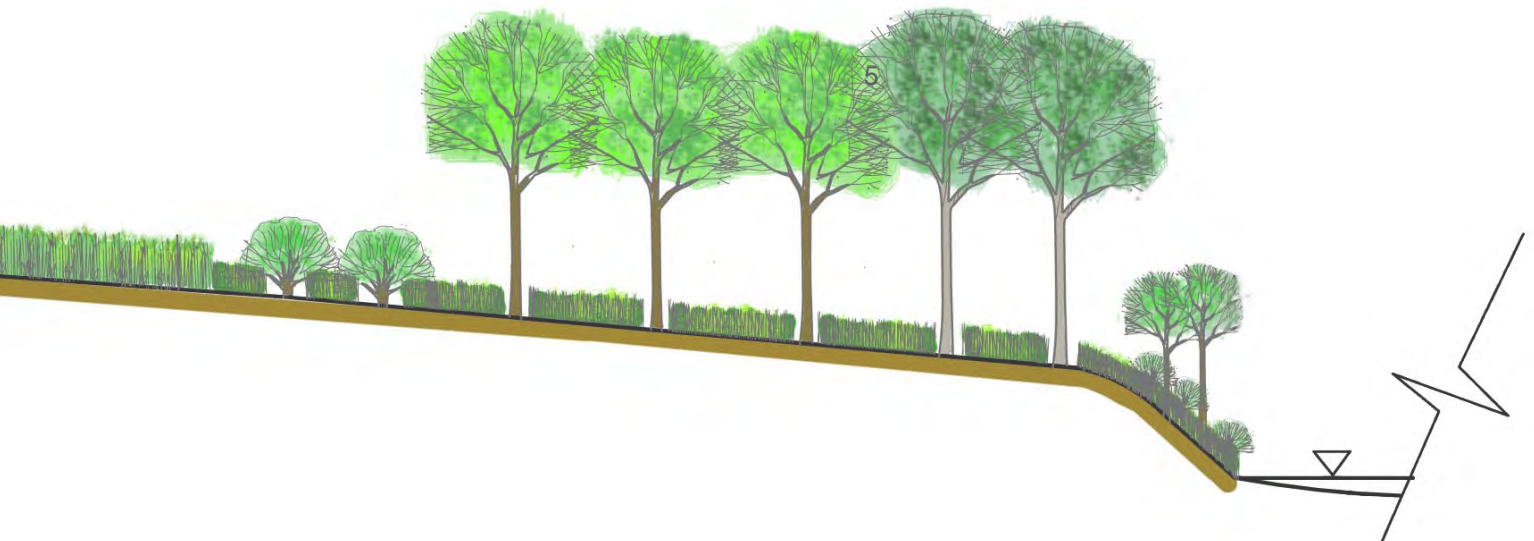


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1. This master plan for Westside Park integrates the park into the overall looped trail system, provides recreational activities for all ages, and keeps open visual fields for safety.
2. Improving the existing downtown streetscape is one of the goals identified by the Preston visioning committee.
3. The proposed design for the downtown streetscape is a decorative paving strip, furniture with the city emblem, vehicular lighting, and green space with street trees.
4. The existing entrance to Copper Creek Trail does not reflect the value that residents place on this important asset.
5. The proposed design for the Copper Creek Trail entrance is to replace the chain-link fence with limestone, incorporate unique overhead metal signage, and pave the path to highlight the trail and attract visitors.
6. This section drawing shows a typical riparian buffer, which is proposed for Copper Creek and will improve water quality, reduce erosion, and provide wildlife habitat while enhancing the beauty of the trail.



Sabula

Trees Forever Facilitators: Carole Teator and Hannah Howard

Landscape Architect: Meg Flenker

Interns: Nicholas Decker and Shiyue Zhang

Known as “The Island City,” Sabula is the state of Iowa’s only island, located on the Mississippi River. Before European settlement, the area was home to first-nation people including the Fox and Winnebago tribes. The town was founded in 1835 and first known as Carrollport, which was later changed to Charleston. Because a Charleston, Iowa, already existed, it was renamed as Sabulum, the Latin term for the site’s sandy soil. Sabulum eventually evolved into Sabula.

A typical river town, Sabula had a sawmill, a flour mill, a blacksmith shop, and a button factory in its early days. In modern times, its economy is based on hospitality and recreation, with four restaurants, three pubs, two bed and breakfasts, campgrounds, and the Island City Harbor. In addition to the harbor, Sabula has a public boat dock, a city dock, and a boat launch at the campground. The community also has several small parks. Residents and visitors enjoy fishing, boating, swimming, and camping. The Sabula

visioning committee wanted to explore ways to improve access to the lakes for residents year-round.

Sabula is accessible only via US Highway 52, which enters from the west, dividing the north and middle lakes, and continues east to Savanna, Illinois. The town is not safely accessible to pedestrians and cyclists, another issue that the visioning committee wanted to address.

During the community assessment process, residents expressed a desire for a designated trail system in the community that includes walkways along the riverfront and the lakefront, as well as a trail to Savanna that connects to the Great River Trail and a trail on Iowa Avenue out of town. Better access to Mud Turtle Island and Driscoll’s Island is also wanted.

The Sabula visioning committee established five goals based on the assessment results: a pedestrian path along River and Lake



Streets, improved public access to the river and the lakes, entryway signage, enhanced streetscapes along Sycamore and Broad Streets, and improved safety at intersections.

The concept plan created by the visioning design team includes a pedestrian-path master plan that incorporates shared roadways, boardwalks, and designated trails that connect important destinations in town. The concept plan also proposes a community identity and a family of signage that establishes the identity at Sabula's entrances as well as throughout town. Streetscape and intersection improvements proposed include bump-outs and delineated crosswalks at intersections, street trees and lighting, and removal of vegetation that obstructs the view.

Steering Committee:

Emily Swihart

Jim Bangasser

Bob Krueger

Eric Hartman

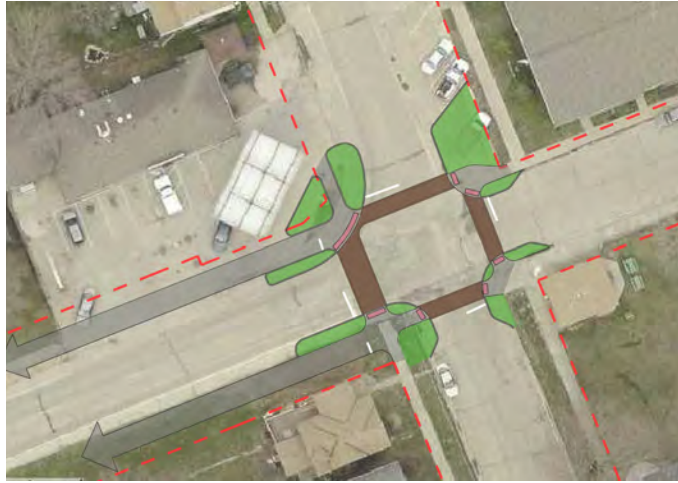
John Jaeckle

Larry LeClair





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1. The proposed logo celebrates Sabula's natural resources and its distinction as Iowa's island city.
2. Green space, decorative crosswalks, and bump-outs are proposed in this design to improve the safety and aesthetic appeal of intersections.
3. The enhancements proposed for the south entrance include a welcome sign with the city logo and a pedestrian path.



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4. This section drawing shows a boardwalk as one option to improve pedestrian access to the South Sabula Lake campgrounds.
5. During public workshops, Sabula residents noted the lack of landscaping at the west entrance sign.
6. The proposed design for the west entry sign adds minimal maintenance vegetation to provide an attractive backdrop year-round. A sculpture of an egret is incorporated to integrate the waterfront theme of the community.
7. Enhancements to the lakefront include a curvilinear path, way-finding banners, and pedestrian and vehicular lighting.



7

Urbana

Trees Forever Facilitator: Dustin Hinrichs
Landscape Architect: Craig Ritland
Intern: Shannon Kazynski

Urbana is located in northeast Benton County, along Interstate 380 and State Highway 150. Urbana participated in the Community Visioning Program in 1996, which resulted in the planting of trees and shrubs throughout town. Since then, the town has grown significantly, with a population increase of more than 40% between the 2000 and 2010 censuses. Currently Urbana has two housing developments and two industrial parks, in addition to “Urbana proper.”

Urbana is fortunate to be on the Cedar Valley Nature Trail, a 51-mile trail that connects the Linn County Metro Area to Waterloo. The trail is a popular venue for outdoor recreation among all demographics in the community. Other nearby recreation opportunities are Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area, Minne Estema County Park, and Wildcat Bluff Recreation Area.

Because it is a bedroom community with a large number of families, safety and connectivity are significant issues for Urbana. Other than the Cedar Valley Nature Trail, residents have no safe place to walk, bike, or

run. Neither of the two housing developments has sidewalks. The newest development, Heartland Acres, is located one-half mile west of Urbana proper along Highway 150 and is safely accessible only by vehicle. The existing sidewalks downtown are in poor condition.

The Urbana visioning committee identified five main goals based on the abovementioned needs: create a Heartland Acres Trail, enhance the streetscapes of Sunset and Wood Streets, plant trees and landscape by city hall and the community center, develop entrance and way-finding signage, and redesign the Wood Street pocket park.

Another goal for the people of Urbana is to enhance the aesthetics of the main streets such as Sunset and Wood Street. Sunset Street is a high-traffic road owned by Benton County. The community hopes to install street trees and lighting with banners. Wood Street is important to residents because it contains a pocket park. This pocket park is being redesigned into a veterans memorial with a new walkway, a gazebo, a memorial brick plaza, a flag display, benches, and plantings.



The concept plan prepared by the design team proposes constructing a trail from Heartland Acres to Urbana proper on the south side of Highway 150. The trail would feature native vegetation, street trees, lighting, and benches if possible. For Sunset Street, a county road, the design team proposes planting shade trees from the community center east past Casey's General Store. The trees would provide shade for pedestrians, as well as traffic calming effects. The city hall/community center complex would also be enhanced with trees and other vegetation, as well as signage. Proposed improvements for Wood Street are more extensive than those for Sunset Street and feature new and refurbished sidewalks, street trees, and new lighting and banners downtown. The pocket park on Wood Street would be redesigned as a veterans memorial.

Steering Committee:

Kelli Westendorf

E Duane Eldred

Vicki White

Terrie Kramer

Rachel Kane

Kelly Schwartz

Emily Kramer

Loren Varney

Mike Kramer

Darcy Duart

Jamie Duart

Loraine Kelty

Traci Wilson

Lew Paine

Trent Kramer

Eileen Schmidt





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2



3

1. There is no pedestrian connection between the Heartland Acres development and Urbana proper along Highway 150.
2. The design team proposed constructing a trail on the south side of Highway 150 with amenities such as prairie plantings, street trees, and lighting.
3. This plan is a proposed landscape plan for the city hall and community center complex, including a variety of trees, perennial plants, signage, and lighting.



4



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4. The Urbana visioning committee identified the downtown pocket park as an area that it would like to renovate.
5. The proposed pocket park renovation converts it to a veterans memorial with a new walkway, gazebo, memorial brick plaza, flag display, and limestone benches.
6. Sunset Street was the visioning committee's highest priority because it is the first impression that many visitors have of the community.



6



People



Interns



Neal Abbott

Neal is originally from St. Louis, MO, and finished his undergraduate studies at Iowa State University in May 2014, earning a bachelor of landscape architecture and a secondary major in environmental studies. He was part of the ISU Community Visioning research team through the spring and summer of 2014 and played an integral part in developing a protocol for and implementing a new special places mapping assessment. During the summer, he assisted in designing and building a series of interactive websites for the 2014 visioning communities. Neal is currently studying transportation planning at the University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning.

Nicholas Decker

Nicholas is a fourth-year landscape architecture student at Utah State University and will graduate in May 2015. This summer he worked as an intern with Flenker Land Architecture Consultants LLC with the communities of Preston and Sabula. His work with the Community Visioning Program focused on developing data-based master plans, creating concepts for trail systems, designing downtown streetscape enhancements, and designing community identity improvements. A Midwest native, Nicholas appreciated the chance to give back to the Midwest after so long away and enjoyed reaching out to small Iowa communities.



Fangzhou Miao

Miao is a second-year graduate student of landscape architecture at Iowa State University. In 2013, he earned his bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from Inner Mongolia Agricultural University in China. He grew up in a small town in Inner Mongolia, and his interest in landscape architecture comes from his hope to make the environment of his hometown more sustainable. Miao joined the ISU visioning research team in spring 2014, assisting with community assessment workshops and with product development. He loves the way that the Community Visioning Program helps citizens improve the places they live and strengthen personal bonds among each other. He values the chance of understanding more deeply American culture as well.



Amber Gable

Amber recently graduated from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture and a minor in horticulture. Born and raised in northwest Iowa, her passion for landscape architecture and community outreach stems from her own experiences serving on economic development committees in her hometown. As an intern with Iowa State's Facilities Planning & Management, she found the most rewarding projects were those in which she was able to work alongside the client from concept to construction. Amber was originally hired by Bolton & Menk as an intern working in the communities of Harlontown and Huxley, and has since become a full-time member of the Bolton & Menk team.



Katherine Gould

Katherine is a fourth-year student from Omaha, Nebraska, currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture and a minor in Spanish. Her love of the outdoors and design introduced her to the field of landscape architecture, and she continues to develop a passion for learning about issues of environmental equity and social justice. Throughout the spring and summer, she enriched her understanding of cultural landscapes, transportation networks, and graphic and written communication of research findings to a larger public. Her favorite part of the visioning process was working with community members to map and discuss past, present, and future realities of the places they call home.



Anne Hundley

Anne graduated with a master's degree in landscape architecture from Kansas State University in May 2013. She is passionate about landscape architecture and its ability to connect communities to their culture and history, giving them a physical representation of their identity. While at Kansas State, she worked on conceptual master planning projects for neighborhoods in Denver and her hometown of Kansas City. She was excited to have the opportunity to help the communities of Pocahontas and Akron develop holistic conceptual master plans to achieve their goals. As she continues her journey in the professional world, Anne looks forward to helping communities realize their potential to create beautiful, enriching environments in which to live.



Shannon Kazynski

Shannon graduated from the Art Institute of Colorado with a bachelor's degree in graphic design. Since graduating, she has worked on many different types of design, including web design, Internet marketing, company branding, and marketing campaigns. Shannon is involved in the marketing committee for Junior League of Waterloo/Cedar Falls. She also enjoys spending time with her family and friends, playing softball and kickball, volunteering, cooking and skiing. Shannon worked for RITLAND+KUIPER Landscape Architects on the communities of Oxford, New Providence, and Urbana this year.



David O'Brien

David grew up in Chatham, Illinois. While pursuing a bachelor's degree in architecture at Iowa State, he became interested in digital media as a means of representation and user experience. David joined the ISU visioning research team initially intending to work primarily with data; the work very quickly turned into an interactive multi-media product intended to facilitate communication between Iowa communities and professional designers. David helped develop a series of websites that synthesize data collected from group discussions and primary research into a tool that individuals can use to quickly explore a community through maps, audio, or pictures. David graduated in May 2014, and currently works at Gensler, an international architecture firm in Washington, DC.



Spencer Sneller

Spencer graduated from Iowa State University with a bachelor of landscape architecture in 2012 and a minor in Spanish. After graduation, he applied his knowledge through small-scale design-build projects around Ames, Iowa, before moving to Des Moines. Spencer has enjoyed working with community members who are passionate about progress in their small towns. Working with Leon afforded him the opportunity to get to know south central Iowa while he spent the summer interning with Jeffrey L. Bruce & Company in Kansas City, Missouri. In the office, he enjoyed interacting with landscape architects and working on a variety of projects. Spencer spends free time with his wife enjoying the outdoors.



Kayla Volkmer

Kayla is a third-year landscape architecture student at Iowa State University. She is pursuing minors in sociology and sustainability. Kayla began working with Community Visioning in spring 2014, mapping community assessment data for several of the 2014 visioning communities, organizing focus group and special places mapping workshops, and managing the data collection process. Over the summer, she took an active role in the creation of the websites for the ten 2014 visioning communities. Kayla is looking forward to expanding her knowledge of landscape architecture during the rest of her undergraduate years.



Matt White

Matt is now finishing up his final year in the graphic design program at Iowa State. Matt joined the Community Visioning Program team in the summer. He was the web developer/designer of the interactive special places mapping website. This website features pages for the ten visioning communities with user interface that highlights the aspects that community residents identified as important on maps of the individual towns. His favorite aspect of the visioning program was working with other designers from different disciplines and the various skills and knowledge that they bring with them in order to develop and design a more in-depth interface.



Shiyue Zhang

Shiyue holds a bachelor's degree in digital art design and is completing his second year in the landscape architecture graduate program at the University of Minnesota. This summer he participated in the Community Visioning Program for the first time as an intern for Flenker Land Architecture Consultant LLC. He worked with the communities of Sabula and Preston, for which he developed concepts for recreational trails, streetscapes, and community identity through logo and way-finding signage development. Shiyue enjoyed working with the visioning program and the community members, and is excited to see the projects that each community implements in the years to come.



Practitioners



Eric Becker

Eric is a licensed project landscape architect for more than seven years at Jeffrey L. Bruce & Company. He has been actively developing and assisting with projects from schematic design through construction documentation and construction administration phases. His work has showcased his knowledge of technical functionality and human interaction within designed spaces. Through national and international travel, he has gained an understanding of the diversity of climate, culture, and site characteristics involved with projects. In his spare time, Eric enjoys spending time with his family and friends and giving back to the community through volunteering. He also enjoys many outdoor activities such as skiing, hiking, and playing softball.



Casey Byers

Casey has experience in both design and construction and has been working as a landscape architect since 2006. He specializes in community master planning, streetscape improvements, gateway feature conceptualization, 3-D modeling, and detailed site design. His work includes several award winning projects in Colorado and the Midwest, most notably a complete streetscape redesign for a major thoroughfare in St. Louis and the master plan for a community in Carmel, Indiana. His involvement in community engagement and preparation of graphics and construction documents have led to the successful implementation of many community-backed projects. He is particularly interested in combining sustainability with functionality and helping clients realize their visions through a thorough design process and attainable results.



Jen Cross

Jen is a member of the landscape architecture studio at RDG Planning and Design and has gained experience with a wide range of project types including early education, park, recreation, open space planning, campus planning, and streetscape revitalization efforts. Jen earned a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from Iowa State University. Jen became involved in the Community Visioning Program as a student intern while at Iowa State, and has continued as a practitioner and intern mentor for the program. Jen enjoys getting to know each community, valuing the input and the enthusiasm residents bring to the program each year. Her passion is visualizing space by integrating hand and computer-generated graphics. She also values the integration of sustainable options into everyday uses and the betterment of a healthy community.



Eric Doll

Eric was born and raised in Des Moines, Iowa, and earned a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture, along with an Iowa ASLA Merit Award, from Iowa State University in spring 2012. As a student at ISU, Eric built a broad skill set and scope of interest. He minored in horticulture with an emphasis on soil science, which provided him with a smooth landing at Jeffrey L. Bruce & Company. His unique travel experiences and passion for art and plants has given him the creativity and passion the profession of landscape architecture needs. When not working, Eric enjoys spending time with his family and friends, playing disc golf, cooking, being outdoors, and occasionally juggling.



Meg Flenker

Meg is a licensed landscape architect with more than 25 years of professional experience in providing services to both the public and private sectors. A graduate of the Iowa State University landscape architecture program and the University of Iowa MBA program, Meg established Flenker Land Architecture Consultants LLC (FLAC) in 1997. Meg has proudly participated in the Visioning Program for more than 12 years, and enjoys working with rural Iowa communities. Most recently, Meg was part of a design team for the City of Parkersburg, Iowa, on a two-mile streetscape renovation of its main highway corridor to be completed this fall—a project vision that she helped Parkersburg create during its 2009 participation in the Visioning Program.



Samantha Price

Samantha graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in landscape architecture in 2009. She was first an intern for Community Visioning Program in 2009 before joining RITLAND+KUIPER Landscape Architects, where she has continued to participate in the Visioning Program as a practitioner and intern mentor. She is currently in the process of completing her licensure and hopes to be a licensed landscape architect within the next year. This year Samantha worked with Craig Ritland in the communities of New Providence, Oxford, and Urbana.

Craig Ritland



Craig earned his degree in landscape architecture from Iowa State University in 1965 and established Craig Ritland Landscape Architects in 1970 in Waterloo. He is best known for his accomplishments in natural resource and cultural preservation of public lands. Craig was named a Fellow by the American Society of Landscape Architects in 2002. Some of his projects have included the Cedar Valley Lakes and Nature Trail projects, a master plan for George Wyth State Park, and downtown Waterloo River Loop projects. In 2013, Craig added Mark Kuiper as a partner to form RITLAND+KUIPER Landscape Architects. He has participated in the Visioning Program every year since 1996 and enjoys relating to the rural public and native Iowa landscapes of the communities he serves.

Josh Shields



Josh is a landscape architect with more than 12 years of experience collaborating with clients on municipal design, master planning and parks/trails planning and design throughout Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, and North Dakota. Josh engages communities by facilitating public input, developing conceptual graphics and construction plans, and working with clients to identify and prepare funding strategies for project success. Since joining Bolton & Menk, Inc., Josh has provided graphics and technical skills for numerous clients while serving as a mentor for a growing landscape architectural staff. He enjoys developing long lasting relationships with clients and relishes assisting communities as they strive to build more sustainable and long-term infrastructure.

David Stokes



A graduate of Iowa State University's landscape architecture program, David is a senior landscape architect with 16 years of experience in urban design; landscape design; comprehensive master planning; and parks, trails, and greenways planning/design. He has significant experience facilitating public input and stakeholder meetings, cultural/environmental assessments, biological assessments, and GIS-related planning and analyses. Since joining Jeffrey L. Bruce & Company, David has worked extensively on integrated systems involving living architecture, green roofs, green infrastructure design, urban agronomic design, storm-water BMP and comprehensive drainage solutions, integrated water management, and net-zero water design for public and private sector clients.

Trees Forever



Carl Barnhart

Carl joined Trees Forever in 2014 and has taken on the role of roadways administrative coordinator. He is a graduate of the University of Northern Iowa, where he earned a bachelor's degree in public relations with a minor in journalism. Carl enjoys being a part of the Iowa's Living Roadways team and is excited to get the opportunity to work with Iowa communities to make enhancements to this great state. Carl has a passion for the outdoors and likes to spend time kayaking, fishing, and biking throughout the state. He lives in Marion with his wife and daughter.



Leslie Berckes

In her role at Trees Forever, Leslie serves as a program manager and field coordinator for the central Iowa region, working with volunteers and organizations on projects such as tree plantings, tree care education, native prairie plantings, and more. Leslie enjoys sharing information on the programs that Trees Forever offers and helping Iowa towns take advantage of these programs to make their communities vibrant places to live. This year she facilitated the visioning process in Huxley and Leon.

Meredith Borchardt

Meredith Borchardt is a field coordinator working with volunteers in northeast Iowa through many different Trees Forever programs and is a program manager for several community forestry programs. She and her husband and two children live outside of Clarksville. She graduated from Luther College with a double major of biology and religion. She later earned a master's of science degree from Iowa State University in botany, doing a research project on the effects of mowing and fertilization on diversity in a new prairie reconstruction.





Dustin Hinrichs

Dustin Hinrichs works in Trees Forever's main office in Marion, Iowa. His focus area is primarily Linn County and other areas of eastern Iowa. He has a master's degree in political science from Western Illinois University and a bachelor's degree in biology and environmental health from Iowa Wesleyan College. Dustin joined the Community Visioning Team in 2012. This year Dustin facilitated the visioning process in Urbana.



Hannah Howard

Hannah is the new southeast Iowa field coordinator and is based in Letts, IA. She recently graduated from Iowa State University with degrees in forestry and animal ecology with an emphasis in forest ecosystem management and interpretation of natural resources. Hannah is passionate about trees (of course) and helping connect people to the natural world. She lives in the country with her brother and sister, fixing up an old farm house, where they've been busy planting trees, restoring prairie, raising chickens, and gardening. Hannah shadowed the visioning process this year in Sabula and Preston.

Jeff Jensen

Jeff is Trees Forever's field coordinator for northwest Iowa and program manager for Trees Forever's water quality program, Working Watersheds: Buffers and Beyond. Jeff lives on his family's farm in northern Kossuth County near Fenton and has a passion for agriculture and alternative crops, particularly hazelnuts. Jeff's background also includes work with growers on a range of local foods issues such as food-safety plans, value-added processing, marketing, and business planning. This year, Jeff facilitated the visioning process in Hanlontown.





Patty Petersen

Patty has a bachelor's degree in horticulture from Iowa State University and has been with Trees Forever since 1991, coordinating tree-planting events, training volunteers with tree selection, reviewing site plans, and facilitating local efforts. Recently, Patty became the membership steward at Trees Forever. In this new role she has the opportunity to meet with both new and longtime Trees Forever members to share the great work of the Iowa's Living Roadways Programs. Before joining Trees Forever, Patty worked as a horticulturist in eastern Iowa for Iowa State University Extension.



Brad Riphagen

Brad has a bachelor of arts in biology and a master of science in land resources with a focus on prairie restoration and soils. He has been a Trees Forever field coordinator since 1995 and has worked in almost all the program areas, including community tree plantings, Community Visioning, and buffer/watershed work. He has also taken a strong interest in reduction of storm-water runoff, especially in urban areas, through the use of infiltration practices such as rain gardens and bio-retention basins. Brad is energized by the interaction with volunteers around the state and especially in southwest Iowa. "The fact that people want to make where they live a better place and that Trees Forever can provide some assistance in their efforts is very gratifying."

Shannon Ramsay

Shannon founded Trees Forever in 1989 as a volunteer; today she has more than 25 years of wonderful Trees Forever history. Whether working with staff, board, partners, or volunteers, Shannon strives to create a structure that supports and sustains those involved. Shannon has served on numerous national and local boards. She enjoys the outdoors, whether biking, kayaking, or gardening. She lives on 45 acres along the Wapsipinicon River in Jones County, Iowa.



Emily Swihart

Emily is Trees Forever's lead designer and manages Trails Visioning for the organization. Emily holds a master of landscape architecture from Kansas State University and a bachelor of science in horticulture from Iowa State. Through her various roles within Trees Forever, Emily works with communities and trail groups throughout the state to dream, plan, and implement projects that enhance the environment and engage community leaders and volunteers. Emily's involvement with Community Visioning has afforded her the unique opportunity to participate as a design intern, Trees Forever facilitator, and this year, she served as a committee member in her hometown of Sabula.



Carole Teator

Carole Teator is Trees Forever's program director and also manages the Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program for the organization. Her duties include leading Trees Forever's nine field coordinators who serve as facilitators for the community visioning process. Carole has master's degrees in both English and community and regional planning from Iowa State University and she has worked for Trees Forever for more than thirteen years.

Iowa DOT

Stuart Anderson

Director, Planning, Programming, and Modal Division, Iowa DOT



Troy Siefert

Director, Planning, Programming, and Modal Division, Iowa DOT



Mark Masteller

Chief Landscape Architect, Iowa DOT



Iowa State University



Julia Badenhope

Director, Iowa's Living Roadways Community
Visioning Program
Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture



Christopher Seeger

Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture
Extension Landscape Architect



J. Timothy Keller

Program Advisor
Professor of Landscape Architecture



Timothy Borich

Director, Extension and Outreach Community
and Economic Development
Associate Dean for Outreach, College of Design



Nora Ladjahasan

Assistant Scientist, Institute for Design
Research and Outreach



Sandra Oberbroeckling

Project Manager, Iowa's Living Roadways
Community Visioning Program
Community Relations Specialist, Extension and
Community and Economic Development

FHWA

Lubin Quinones

Division Administrator, Federal Highway
Administration



Research-based Planning + Participation = Success



Research-based Planning

“Looking back on visioning, it makes a lot of sense. While in the thick of things, I wondered why we were doing it, but now it all fits together.”

A steering committee member made this comment two years after their community completed the visioning process and had implemented some of their projects.

What “makes a lot of sense” is understanding a community’s transportation system before deciding how to change it. This concept seems fairly obvious when it appears on paper. However, in practice that is not always the case. For this reason, the Community Visioning Program engages with local residents through a research-based planning process to demonstrate how it “all fits together.”

Through this “participatory action research,” the Visioning Program paints an accurate picture of a community’s built environment. By bringing them into the research process, the program empowers citizens to express their needs and desires while allowing the local steering committee to gain an understanding of how the environment meets the needs of residents.

A key component of the Visioning Program’s participatory action research is the transportation assets and barriers (TAB) assessment, the goal of which is to discern local needs for sidewalk connections, recreational trails, streetscape and entryway improvements, and so on. This assessment also helps the local committee understand patterns of use and set priorities for improvement.

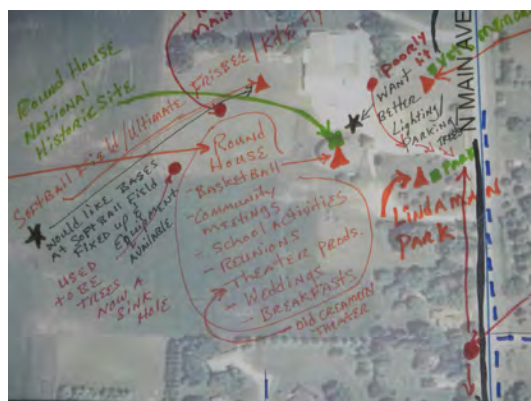
The TAB workshop was first introduced into the community assessments in 2009 in the form of focus groups. Residents were invited to a local facility where they participated in a focus group discussion about transportation assets and barriers, after which they would have the opportunity to take the online Designing Livable Communities survey.

Members of the ISU research team were on hand to assist with the survey.

The workshop was organized around the needs and behaviors of four different user groups: older adults, especially seniors with sight or mobility impairments; active recreationists of all ages; school-age children who roam on foot, bicycle, etc.; and parents of school-age children. In addition to recruiting residents to attend the workshop, steering committee members also took part in the workshop as a fifth “demographic.”

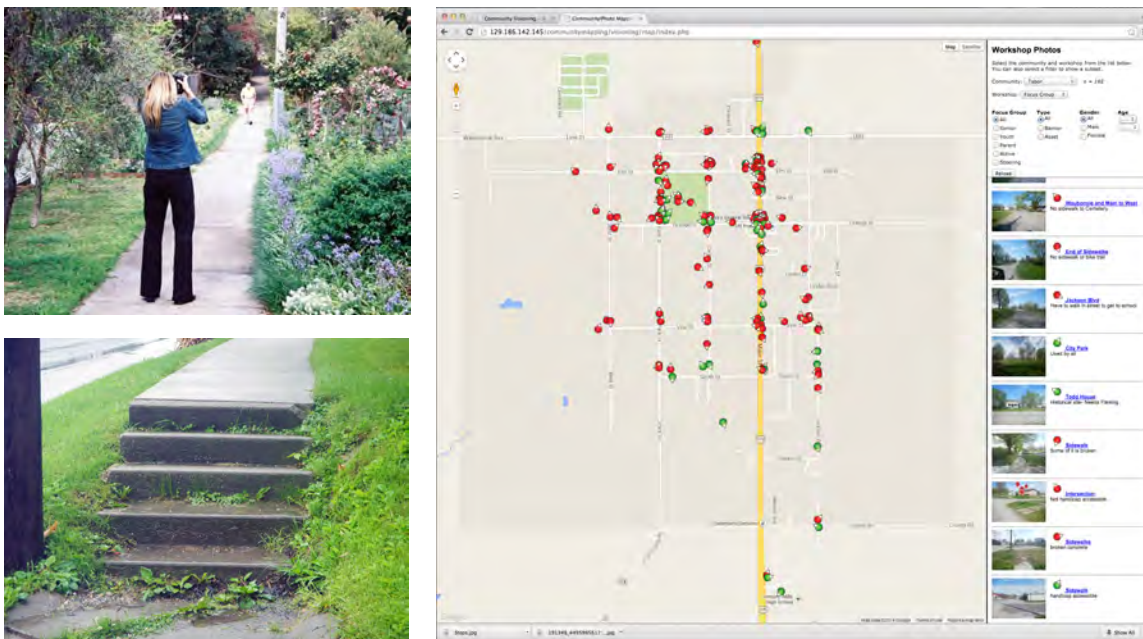
Each group discussed the same set of questions related to uses, destinations, assets and barriers, motivations for travel, and qualities important to satisfying the desire for travel.

In 2010, a visual dimension was introduced into the process. During the focus group



Top: A facilitator records participants’ comments on an aerial map. Bottom: Information recorded on the five maps is consolidated onto one composite map.

+ Participation = Success



Top Left: Workshop participants photograph transportation assets and barriers in their community. Bottom Left: Children identified the steps at this corner as a barrier to riding their bikes on the sidewalk instead of in the street. Right: This interactive online map shows all the assets and barriers photographed by workshop participants.

discussions, a facilitator transcribed participants' comments on a physical map to capture the relationship of space, distance, and locations to necessary and desired uses. The maps from each group were compiled into a digital composite showing routes, assets, barriers, and hidden treasures.

The visual component of the workshop was enhanced in 2012 with the introduction a photo mapping activity. Following the focus group, participants go out into the community with digital cameras and paper worksheets to photograph and document specific barriers and opportunities. The cameras have GPS capability, allowing the photos to be uploaded to an online digital map. ISU interns enter the data on-site. At the end of the day the visioning team presents the raw data in a public meeting, during which residents have the opportunity to discuss and interpret the information with the visioning team.

Knowing where people go, why they go there, how they get there, and where they

cannot go gives the steering committee a solid framework within which to identify and prioritize goals. The TAB workshop data often reinforce the committee's existing knowledge and opinions about the built environment in the community. However, many times the data reveal new opportunities or issues that otherwise would not be addressed during the visioning process.

The combination of public participation and research-based planning plays an important role in the success of both the planning process and the implementation of projects. Follow-up interviews with steering committee members in communities that have participated in the Community Visioning Program as well as site visits to document completed projects demonstrate the effectiveness of the process. The four communities featured here—Robins, Mapleton, Manning, and Villisca—participated in Community Visioning since the TAB workshop was incorporated into the process.

Robins

Robins, a bedroom community in eastern Iowa near Cedar Rapids, participated in the Community Visioning Program in 2009, the first year that the assessment process included focus groups.

All demographic groups indicated that they would like to see functional streetscape enhancements, e.g., repairs, curbing and gutters, sewer systems, sidewalks, and bike/pedestrian lanes. Lack of connectivity was also an issue across demographics. Improving aesthetics throughout town and maintaining and preserving natural areas and parks was mentioned as well. The most frequently mentioned impediments: a lack of sidewalks or limited access and heavy traffic.

“Another nice thing would be signs when you come into Robins.”

—Robins focus group participant

The most popular locations for physical activity among participants were the Cedar Valley Nature Trail, residential areas and the community parks.

Adult focus group participants indicated interest in developing a community identity,



Robins residents take part in a focus group discussion as part of the community assessment process.



In 2011, Robins installed entrance signage with the community logo. Signage and community identity were goals that emerged through the visioning process.

with many people enjoying the existing bedroom community atmosphere. Others indicated a desire to incorporate a natural theme.

Robins has completed a number of projects since participating in community visioning, many of which address issues raised by residents during the focus groups.

- With funding from the Iowa’s Living Roadways Projects Program, the visioning committee planted 36 trees and a wildflower mix along the community’s new Main Street Bridge.
- The visioning committee assisted in planning the type and placement of 199 trees along Main Street.
- The community established a new logo for Robins and incorporated it into entrance signage as well as each street sign and the park signs.
- The group is currently working on a trailhead for the Cedar Valley Nature Trail.

During a follow-up interview in March 2014, five members of the visioning committee talked about how they were impressed with the step-by-step process. The committee still meets regularly, “because of the success of this process.”

Mapleton

In 2011, a Category 3 tornado destroyed 60 percent of Mapleton, a community in Monona County in northwest Iowa. In 2013, Mapleton completed the Community Visioning process, including the TAB workshop consisting of focus groups and photo mapping.

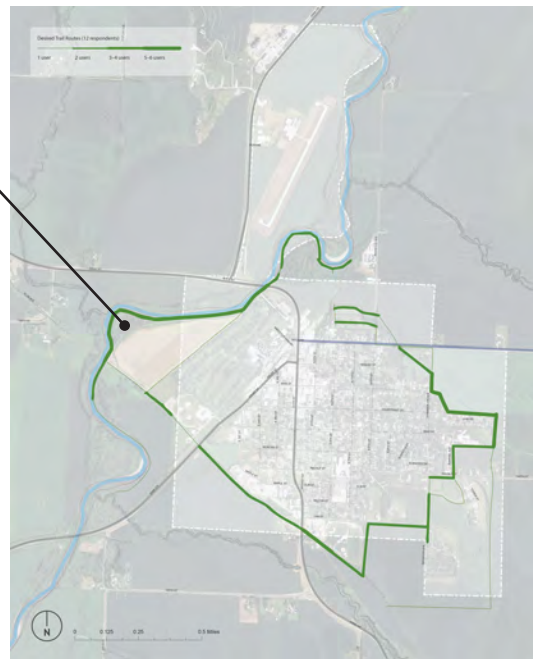
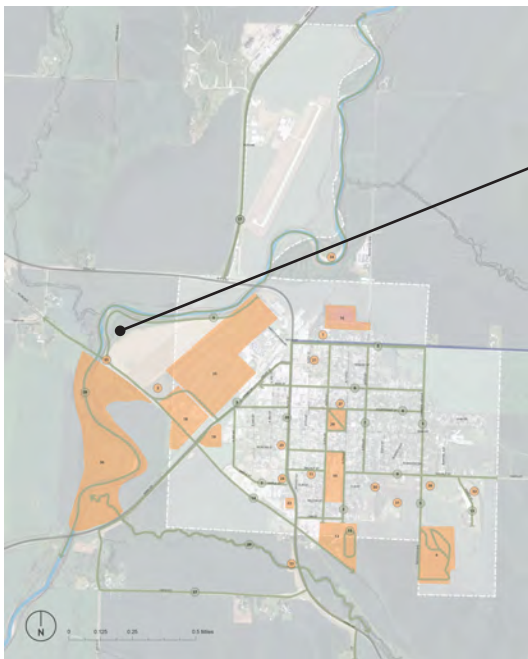
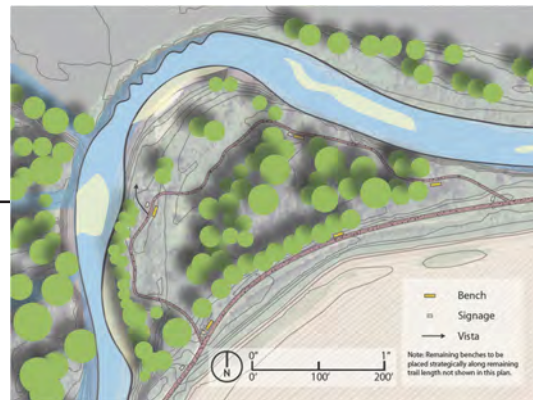
Many of the assets identified during the TAB workshop were natural features, including the Maple River, Mucky Creek, and the Schoenjahn Wildlife Area. The focus groups indicated that youth in particular liked to fish and hang out near the river. Adults mentioned the Schoenjahn Wildlife Area, but are frustrated that the site is inaccessible.

The results of the Designing Livable Communities online survey support the

Bottom left: The Carhart Recreation Area is located along a trail route that residents identified during the TAB workshop. Bottom right: A similar route appeared most frequently as a desired trail among online survey respondents (bottom right map). Right: The plan for the Carhart Recreation Area was included in Mapleton's application for a REAP grant.

focus group findings. For example, the most desired trail route includes a stretch through the Carhart Conservation Area. Additionally, respondents indicated that increasing opportunities for active recreation was very important, with a relative importance of 4 on a five-point scale with 5 being the most important. The only other activity considered more important among respondents was accommodating the mobility needs of seniors.

Based on input from the TAB workshop, the online survey, and other community assessments, the Mapleton design team



developed an open space plan, including a restoration and trail project for the Carhart Recreation Area. The visioning concept plan also addressed storm-water management issues and safety issues created by Highway 141, which bisects the community.

Since completing the visioning process, Mapleton received awards totaling \$33, 786 from the Iowa's Living Roadway Projects Program for two planting projects—one at the pocket park along Highway 141 and the other at the school district bus barn, also along Highway 141.

“I used to [walk in the Carhart Recreation Area] when I was a kid 40 years ago or 30-some years ago and it’s a loop. You could just keep on going all the way.... one of my visions was to have [a trail] down along there.”

—Mapleton focus group participant

In 2013, the REAP (Resource Enhancement and Protection) program awarded Mapleton \$75,000 to construct a riparian area in the Carhart Recreation Area. In addition, the community received a third grant from the ILR Projects Program of \$20,000 for planting native vegetation to control erosion. The City of Mapleton and the Rebuild and Recover Mapleton Foundation committed \$10,000 to the Carhart Recreation Area project. Implementation planning is ongoing.

“This is an exciting time for Rebuild and Recover Mapleton, the Mapleton City Council, and the citizens of Mapleton. We are moving forward, loaded with data and facts from the hours spent on the studies, surveys and planning processes,” said Marie Whiteing, chair of Rebuild and Recover.

Manning

Manning, located in Carroll County along Highway 141, participated in the 2012 Community Visioning Program and was one of the first communities to experience a TAB workshop that included photo mapping.

The safety and appearance of the Highway 141 corridor and the need for a trail system were the two primary issues that emerged during the TAB workshop.

Manning has a number of assets, including a recreation center, Great Western Park, Manning City Park, Heritage Park, the cemetery, and the schools, all of which are located on the south side of Highway 141. Many focus group participants are concerned about the ability of children to safely cross the highway to reach these sites.

TAB workshop participants value opportunities for physical activity and



This section of Manning's trail system was installed in 2014.



Left: Volunteers prepare a site along the Highway 141 corridor for planting prairie vegetation. Right: This photo edit shows how the bed should look once the plants are established.

recreation and expressed a strong desire to connect destinations in town with a trail system. The importance of the trail was also evidenced by the desired trail routes and the transportation enhancement priorities identified by the online survey respondents.

The Manning visioning committee established four overarching goals: trail enhancements and amenities, community signage, Main Street improvements, and Highway 141 enhancements.

Since completing community visioning, Main Street Manning, the City of Manning, and

“My favorite would be somehow connecting the Great Western Park down through 10th Street and over to the Heritage Park. I like going through the residential area as well as looking at the beauty of nature.”

—Manning focus group participant

countless volunteers have collaborated to implement the design concepts proposed through the process. In 2013, the city received a \$75,000 REAP grant to create a 2,200-linear-foot trail that connects the football and soccer fields, the baseball/softball field, City Park, and the recreation center. The town also received a \$245,584 Safe Routes to School grant and a \$57,000 Regional Transportation grant for other trail segments.

According to Geri Spies, chair of the Manning visioning committee, information collected as part of the visioning process has played an important role in securing funds. “The community visioning study has been invaluable in all of our grant applications,” Spies said. “Every inch of ideas and plans has been used,” she added.

Implemented projects to date include the following:

- Highway 141 landscaping was completed. Previous ILR Projects Program grants funded landscaping of both the east and west entrances to Manning. In 2014, seven more beds spanning from east to west through Manning were planted with the help of more than 100 volunteers.

- New Manning signs will soon be erected on the east and west entrances along Highway 141. The two signs are made of steel and placed on a cement base. The materials and construction of the signs were donated and city employees will install the signs.
- In 2013, Garden Club members unveiled a bronze statue of children playing in the city park, which is located along the Highway 141 corridor at the south end of Main Street. Donations have been made towards a second bronze statue.
- The center garden of the city park is under construction with only the retaining wall completed at this time. The garden reflection area will include another bronze statue of children playing. Garden Club members helped design new garden beds and continue to seek donations to complete their bronze statue projects.
- In April 2014, more than 160 volunteers from churches, the city, the fire department, 4-H, Main Street committees, IKM-Manning’s football team, student council, and the National Honor Society took part in a clean-up day for the parks, river, and roadside.
- With overwhelming community support and input, the City of Manning created a Master Trail Plan in 2012 for a large system of trails that will loop throughout Manning and connect points of interest. The trail development comes with an estimated cost of more than \$3.6 million. The trail plan was divided into a minimum of nine segments. In 2013 the city began writing grant proposals for trails, and because of successful grant applications and great community support, two trail segments are moving forward.



Top: Volunteers plant another bed of native vegetation along the Highway 141 corridor. Bottom: This photo edit shows an established roadside planting.

The visioning committee is pursuing a second landscaping project for Highway 141 that will feature artwork of Manning’s four landmarks—the water tower, the Hausbarn, Trinity Lutheran Church, and the old train trestle. Another ongoing plan is to create a new city park in the green space around the train trestle that will include access to the Nishnabotna River for kayaking, tubing, and fishing.

“There are several more projects in the works. Honestly, we have so much going on it is too much to mention all of them,” said Spies. “The best part is the different groups and committees all working together. The feasibility study has helped immensely in obtaining grants.”

Villisca

The southwest Iowa community of Villisca completed the Community Visioning Program in 2012, and, along with Manning, participated in a TAB workshop with photo mapping. The major concerns that the Villisca visioning committee identified in its application were the appearance of community entrances, safety along the US Highway 71 corridor, poor signage, and the condition of the sidewalk system.

TAB workshop participants raised the committee's concerns during the workshop. However, one project that the committee did not initially consider also emerged as a need—a community trails system. Although Villisca has the Harris Harmony Trail, many workshop participants said it is too short and should be expanded. Several people also would like trails to Viking Lake State Park and Hacklebarney County Park to the north, and Nodaway Valley County Park to the south.

“[Harmony Trail is] a highlight of the town, it's a beautiful place, it's just really, really small.”

—Villisca focus group participant

During a follow-up interview with Trees Forever in March 2014, members of the Villisca visioning committee described the photo mapping activity as “a good idea. It helped us see things differently” and “broadened our definition of transportation beyond just vehicles.”

Using input from the community assessments as a guide, the visioning committee established the following goals: gateway signage and corridor improvements, regional and community trail connections,



The Harris Harmony Trail was documented as an asset during the photo mapping activity. However, many people would like it to be expanded.

sidewalk and streetscape improvements, storefront revitalization, a trailhead information facility, and a memorial in the high school courtyard.

The first project that the Villisca visioning committee completed was the Front Door Project—the north entrance corridor and the driving force in Villisca's application to the Community Visioning Program. The north entrance had been a dumping ground for limestone gravel, field soil and some concrete, and was unstable when subjected to rainfall and resulted in extreme bank erosion. Once the site was cleared, the entrance signage proposed in the visioning concept plan was installed. Signs were also installed at the south and west entrances to town.

According to Lee Haisiak, visioning committee member, the entrance enhancements provided the momentum needed to implement several more projects.

“[The] cameras were a good idea. They helped us see things differently.”

—Villisca visioning committee member

“I think it gave credence to not only our committee, but also to our community [in] that this is something that’s going to work, and we were able to continue after that,” said Haisiak.

Other visioning projects completed are the installation of a disc golf course on the



Top: The north entrance corridor to Villisca on US 71 was filled with debris and suffering extreme erosion. Middle: With the help of donated equipment and fuel, the area was cleaned up. Bottom: The Villisca north entrance sign was installed in summer 2013.

east side of town and the memorial in the school courtyard. According to Haisiak, the courtyard project had been proposed prior to Villisca’s involvement in the Community Visioning Program, but during the assessment process it emerged as a priority. Haisiak said that the memorial honors alumni of Villisca schools and includes bricks “all the way from the first graduating class to the last graduating class...representing 100 and some years of Villisca schools.”

Because of its complexity, the committee broke the community trails plan down into phases. The first phase of the plan is the Lovers Lane Trail. Lovers Lane is a closed street on the north end of town. Haisiak explained that this trail segment would extend from US 71 to the cemetery at the northeast corner of town. Because of engineering and grade problems, the trail project is currently on hold. However, an engineer is donating his time to resolve the issues.

This setback has not deterred the visioning committee, which is considering developing a welcome center where Lovers Lane Trail meets US 71. The group has also not ruled out the long-term goals of developing trail connections with the nearby amenities of Hacklebarney Park and Viking Lake.

Haisiak identified additional projects in which the Villisca visioning committee has been involved. Although these projects were not a direct result of the Community Visioning Program, Haisiak believes that the momentum created through the activities of the visioning committee was a catalyst in completing the additional projects, which include a farmers market, an orchard, and a community garden. The idea for an orchard was born at the 2013 Iowa’s Living Roadways Annual Celebration, where a Villisca committee member saw that another visioning community had an orchard and thought, “Why not?”



Although the school courtyard memorial project was not the highest priority among the Villisca visioning committee's goals, but it was something that the community needed and wanted, according to visioning committee member Lee Haisiak.

Lover's Lane Trail Funds

by Roxanna Sieber, Villisca EDD

Alliant Energy and Trees Forever have advised Villisca that their Branching Out grant application for \$4,000 for trees for the Lover's Lane Trail has been funded. The Branching Out project grants funds to be used for "energy-efficiency tree projects to be planted in public areas such as at parks and schools, along city streets, as part of community entryways, etc.

Villisca participated in the Iowa Living Roadways Visioning Program in 2012. An outcome of that program was a plan to create a trail that circles Villisca. The first step in implementing this program is to create a trail along what has been known as Lover's Lane. It is a lane that runs east and west between an area near Highway 71 and the Villisca Cemetery. Over time this area has become overgrown. It is approximately five-eighths of a mile long. The initial planting of trees along the lane will involve 32 trees. The \$4,000 grant will be used to purchase these trees. The grant will also provide for educating the public, particularly students, in the value of trees in promoting energy-efficiency.



Left: Villisca received funding from Alliant Energy and Trees Forever for planting along the Lovers Lane Trail. (From the Villisca Review, January 31, 2013.) Right: Although there has been a setback, the Lovers Lane Walking Trail remains a high priority among members of the visioning committee and residents.



Contact Information

Community Visioning Program

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

Community and Economic Development

2321 North Loop Drive, Suite 121

Ames, IA 50010

515.294.3721

515.294.1354 FAX

jmb@iastate.edu or soberbr@iastate.edu

www.communityvisioning.org



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