Final Report and Feasibility Study

Independence, Iowa

Program Partners:

Iowa Department of Transportation
Trees Forever
Iowa State University

Iowa's Living Roadways community visioning

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About RITLAND+KUIPER Landscape Architects

Craig Ritland founded the firm Craig Ritland Landscape Architect (CRLA) in 1970 in Waterloo, Iowa. Since developing the master plan for George Wyth Memorial State Park in the early 1970s, this office has participated in many of the important public improvements that have added to the quantity and quality of open space in Iowa. With over 50 years of experience, Craig Ritland is still the lead principal of the firm, bringing invaluable insight and expertise to each project.

In 2013, CRLA became RITLAND+KUIPER Landscape Architects, a full-service landscape architectural firm with Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Board and State Registered Landscape Architects. The firm consists of three full-time Landscape Architects with 78 years of combined experience.

Throughout our history, RKLA has provided park and recreation master planning and detailed design and construction services for a diverse array of city, county, and state recreation areas.

We enjoy utilizing a highly interactive process with our clients, often through the facilitation of public input. One example of this is our annual work over the past 25 years with the Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program with Iowa State University and Trees Forever. We have guided the public input in more than 40 different communities and have helped them develop plans that, in many cases, have led to successful community enhancements.

RITLAND+KUIPER
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Program Overview

Independence is one of 10 communities selected to participate in the 2023 Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program. The program, which selects communities through a competitive application process, provides professional planning and design assistance along transportation corridors to small Iowa communities (populations of fewer than 10,000).

Goals for the Visioning Program include:

- Developing a conceptual plan and implementation strategies with local communities
- Enhancing the natural, cultural, and visual resources of communities
- Assisting local communities in using external funds as leverage for transportation corridor enhancement

Each visioning community works through a planning process consisting of four phases of concept development:

1. Program initiation
2. Needs assessment and goal setting
3. Development of a concept plan
4. Implementation and sustained action

Each visioning community is represented by a steering committee of local residents and stakeholders who take part in a series of meetings that are facilitated by field coordinators from Trees Forever. Iowa State University organizes design teams of professional landscape architects, design interns, and ISU faculty and staff. The program is sponsored by the Iowa Department of Transportation.

Community Goals

The Independence visioning committee identified a number of goals and priority areas during the visioning process, which are included below:

- 1st Street Corridor Improvements
- Trail Connections
- Signage & Way-finding

Capturing the Independence Vision

Based on the needs and desires of the local residents, as well as a detailed inventory of community resources, the design team developed a conceptual transportation enhancement plan. This plan, as well as the inventory information, is illustrated in the following set of presentation boards. These boards include the Program Overview, Bioregional Assessment, Transportation Assets and Barriers Assessment, Transportation Behavior and Needs Assessment, Hispanic Interview, Transportation Inventory and Analysis, Concept Overview, and Community Design Boards.

Program Overview

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Community Goals

The Independence visioning committee identified a number of goals and priority areas during the visioning process. These include:

1st Street W Improvements: 1st Street W is a prominent corridor as you enter Independence from the west. The steering committee would like to improve the aesthetics of the corridor, as well as address drainage issues, add amenities, and enhance safety.

Trail Connections: The existing trails are poorly signed and lack amenities the community would like, such as signage, benches, lighting, and exercise equipment. The steering committee would like to expand existing trails and sidewalks to connect to priority locations within the community.

Signage & Way-finding: Independence has a new logo that the steering committee would like to use to create a consistent family of signage. The committee expressed its desire for community-wide way-finding signage to help residents and visitors find destinations.

Independence
Program Overview

RITLAND+KUIPER Landscape Architects
Landscape Architect: Samantha Price, ASLA
Intern: Andrea Fager, Iowa State University
Iowa State University | Trees Forever | Iowa Department of Transportation

Iowa's Living Roadways community visioning 2023

Bioregional Assessment

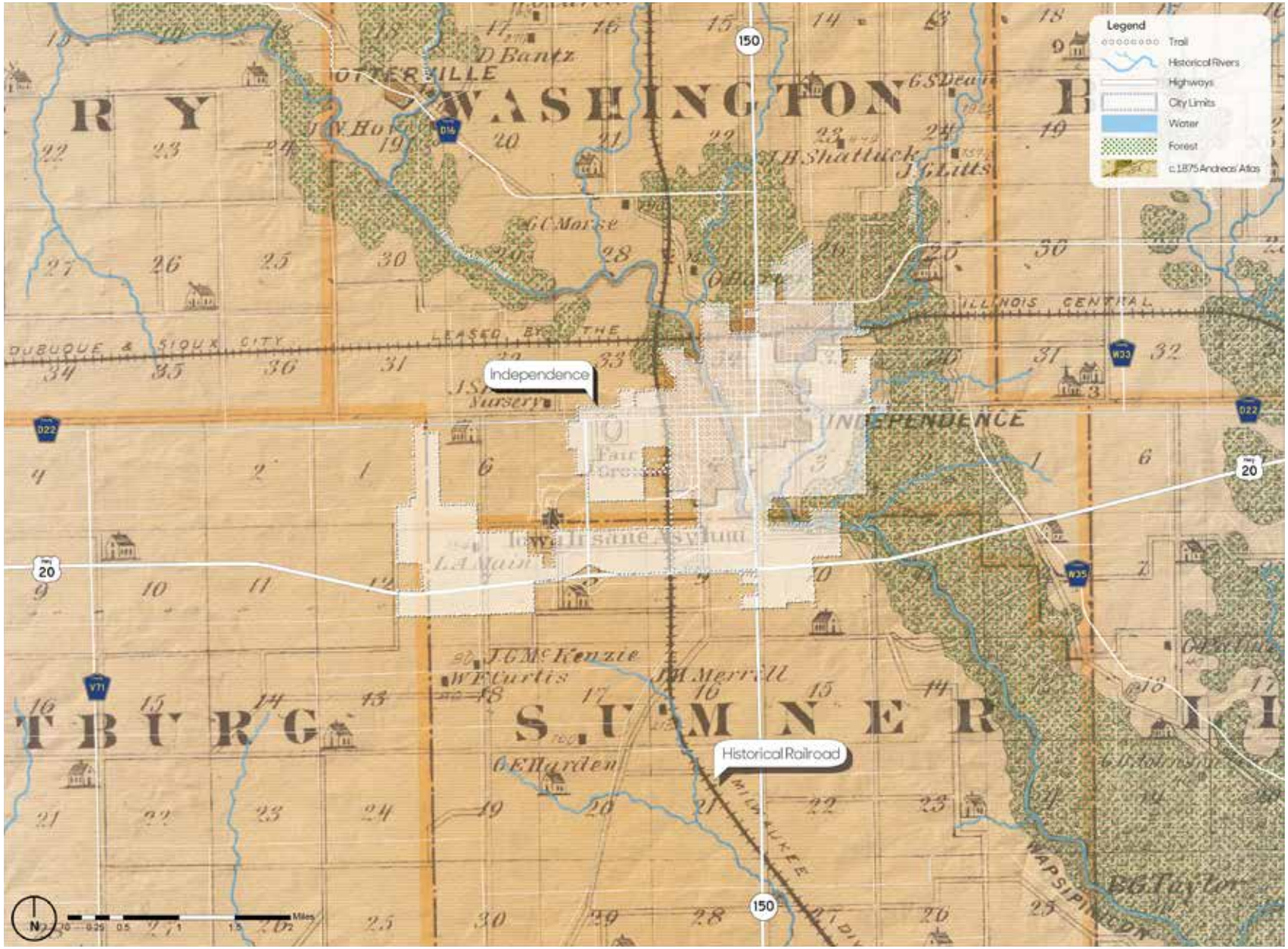
Historical Settlement Patterns

This page uses a map from *A.T. Andreas' Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa, 1875* overlaid with present-day town boundaries and water bodies. Published in 1875, Andreas' Atlas is an extraordinary resource showing the post-Civil War landscape of Iowa, including settlement features (towns and villages, churches, schools, roads, railroads, etc.) and landscape features (water bodies, vegetated patches such as timber and swamp, and major topographic features). A high-quality scan of the Atlas has been arranged to correspond closely with present-day map, revealing major landscape changes as well as features that have persisted, such as railroad rights-of-way and in some cases remnant vegetation patches.

Independence in Context

Compare the 1875 boundaries of your town to the current boundaries. How much has your town grown?

Compare the course of the rivers in 1875 to their current course. Are there major changes in alignment or location? Are there vegetation patches shown in the 1875 map still in existence?


Legend
Trail
Historical Rivers
Highways
City Limits
Water
Forest
c.1875 Andreas Atlas
Independence
Historical Railroad
WASHINGTON
SUMNER
INDEPENDENCE
ILLINOIS CENTRAL
DUBUQUE & SIOUX CITY
LEASED BY THE
Iowa Insane Asylum
Miles

Historical Vegetation

The vegetation information shown here is derived from township maps made by the General Land Office (GLO) surveys beginning in 1836 through 1859. This information was digitized in 1996 as a resource for natural resource management and is useful "... for the study of long term ecological processes and as baseline data for the study of present day communities."[1]

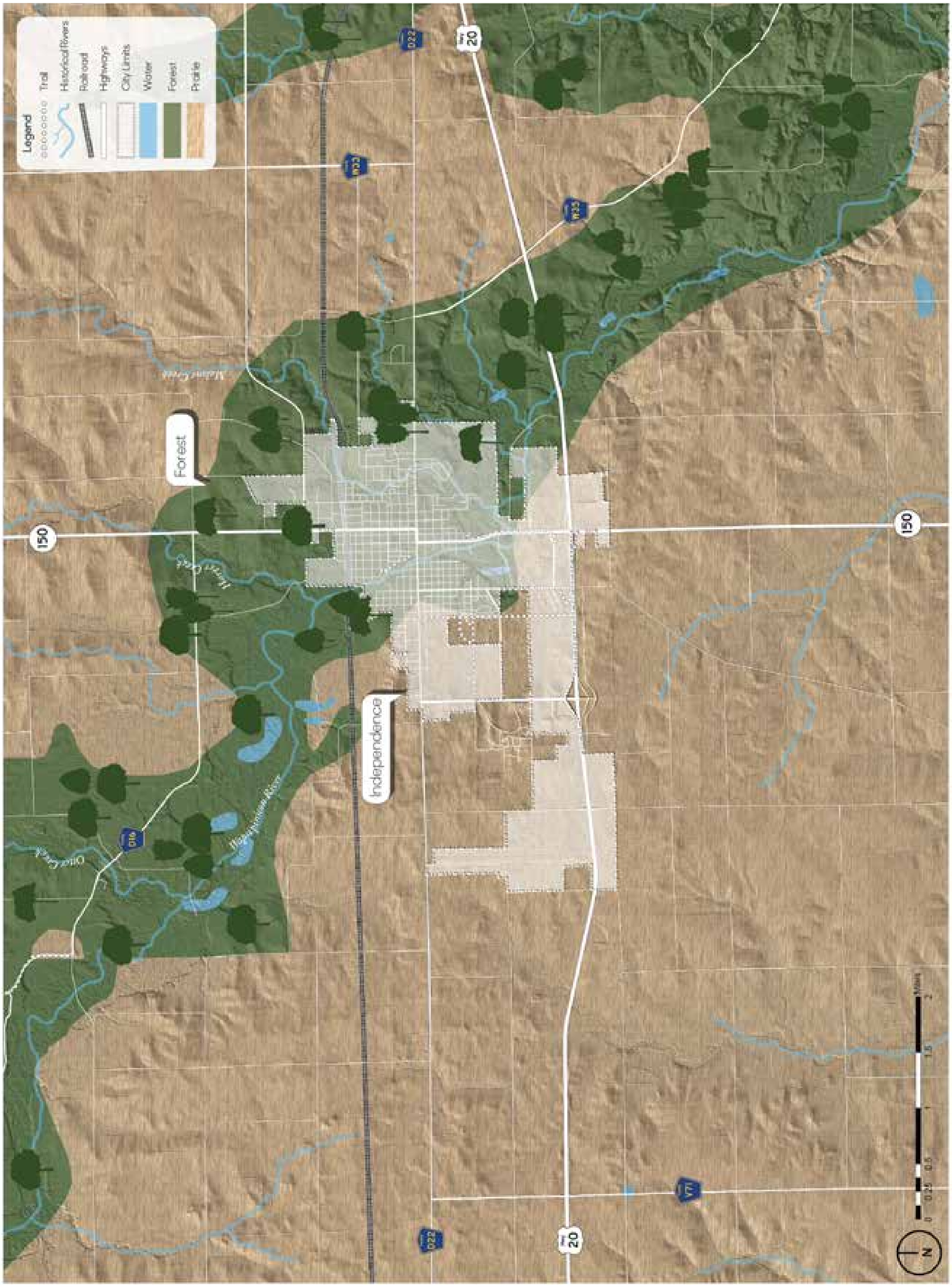
The plant community names mapped by the GLO surveyors varied. The original terminology they used has been preserved in the original data, but we have renamed them on this map to reflect names used to describe contemporary vegetation communities.

Not all communities will have all vegetation types, because various conditions that affect vegetation—such as geology, wind exposure, seasonally high water or groundwater, and frequency of fire—differ from place to place. Early land surveyors mapped the following vegetation types, some of which may not be present in the vicinity of your community:

The vegetation types are defined[1]:

1. Forest : Tree dominated, with a mostly closed canopy. Ground vegetation shade tolerant. developed under infrequent fire.
2. Prairie: Perennial non-woody plants; fire dominated.

1 J.E. Ebinger, "Presettlement Vegetation of Coles County, Illinois," Transactions of the Illinois Academy of Science (1987): 15-24, quoted in Michael Charles Miller, "Analysis of historic vegetation patterns in Iowa using Government Land Office surveys and a Geographic Information System" (master's thesis, Iowa State University, 1995), 8.

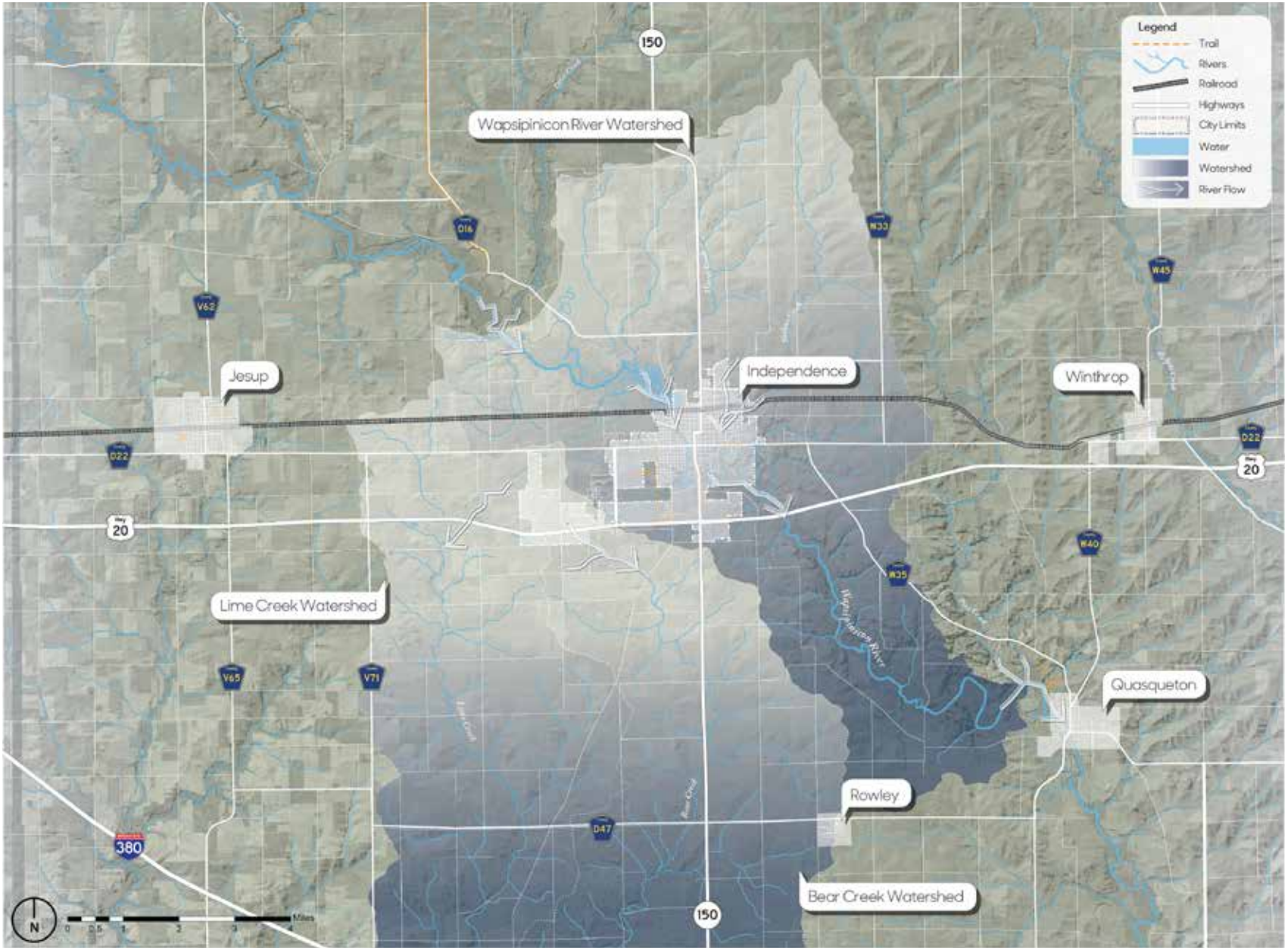

Legend
Trail
Historical Rivers
Railroad
Highways
City Limits
Water
Forest
Prairie
Forest
Independence
150
20

Regional Watershed

A watershed is a defined area or ridge of land with a boundary that separates waters flowing to different rivers, creeks, or basins. Watershed boundaries show the extent of a drainage area flowing to a single outlet point and determine whether precipitation is directed into one watershed or an adjacent watershed.

It is important to note that there are multiple levels of watersheds; for instance, the Iowa River watershed is composed of a dozen smaller watersheds, and the Iowa River watershed is a sub-basin of the Mississippi River watershed.

Where a community is located in relation to its surrounding watershed(s) determines its capacity to manage regional watershed issues such as flooding. For example, a community located near the end of a watershed (close to the outlet point) will have little capacity to reduce the amount of water draining toward it from upland areas.

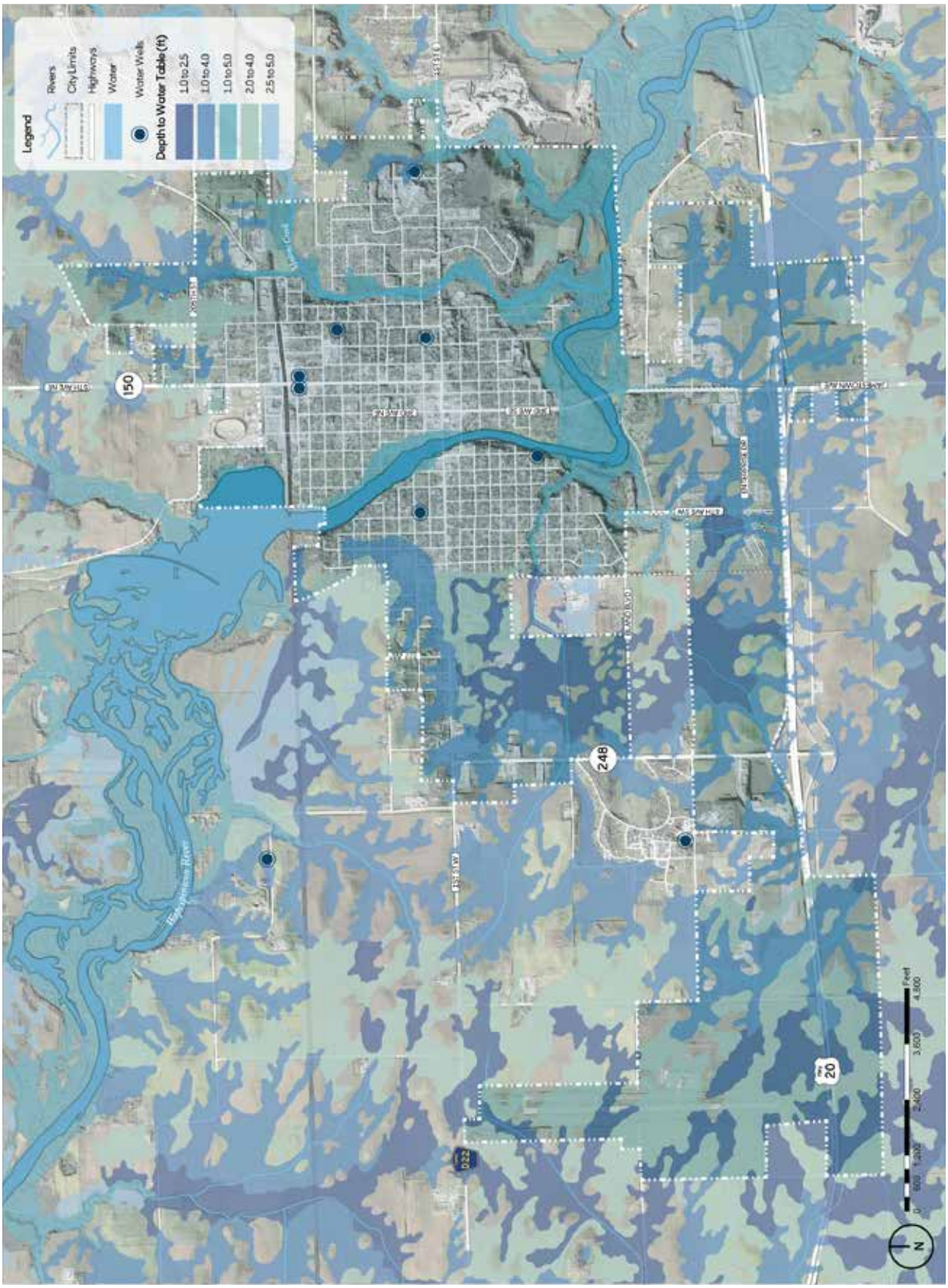

Legend
Trail
Rivers
Railroad
Highways
City Limits
Water
Watershed
River Flow
Wapsipinicon River Watershed
Jesup
Independence
Winthrop
Lime Creek Watershed
Quasqueton
Rowley
Bear Creek Watershed
150
20
380
N
Miles

Depth to Water Table

The water table is defined as the distance below the surface at which the ground is saturated with water. Depth to water table is represented as a range because it varies due to seasonal changes and precipitation volumes. For example, following spring snowmelt, an area with a depth to water table ranging from one foot to three feet is likely to be at or near one-foot depth.

The map shows how close to the surface groundwater can be. Pavement and foundations are affected by groundwater near the surface. Freezing and thawing and upward pressure of rising groundwater can cause cracks or "frost boils" in pavement. Foundations can be wet and require "dewatering," which can be expensive.

Where the value is less than zero feet, water can well up out of the ground. This causes localized flooding, even if there is no surface water draining to the area.

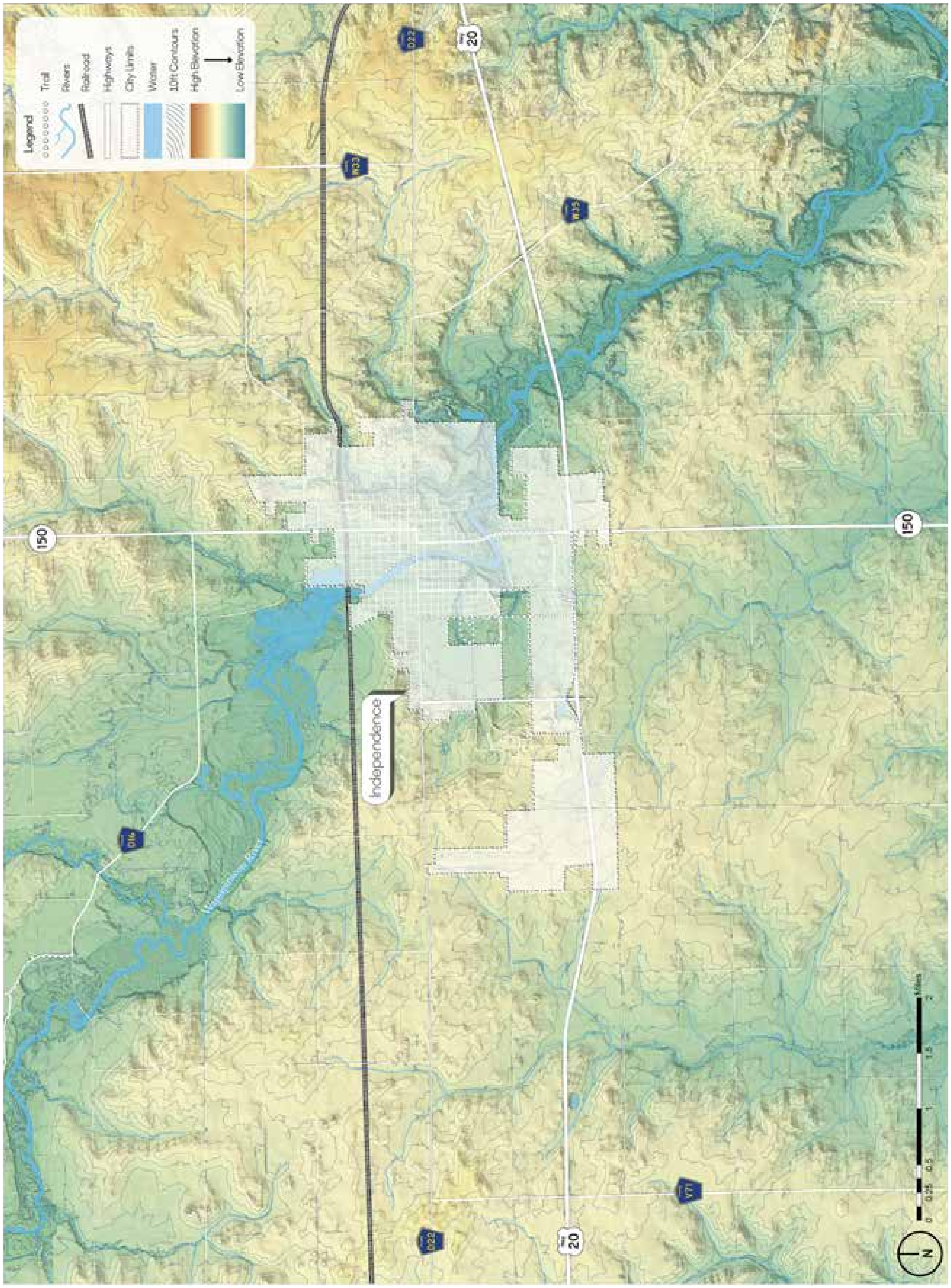

Legend
Rivers
City Limits
Highways
Water
Water Wells
Depth to Water Table (ft)
10 to 25
10 to 40
10 to 50
20 to 40
25 to 50
150
248
20
Feet
4,800
3,600
2,400
1,200
0
N

Elevation and Flow

This map displays topographic differences in elevation using a combination of contour lines and the color gradient depicted in the legend. The high and low points have also been located. Note the relationship of your community to the surrounding elevation. Is it located in a valley or on high ground, or is it split between the two?

If your community lies within or near a floodplain or floodway, the map reflects these features. Not all communities will have these elements; if they are absent on this map, none are present.

Flood risk is correlated to low-lying land. This map shows your community's flood risk as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Map Service Center. The map shows the two most important flood zones if present: the Base Flood and the Regulatory Floodway (consult legend). Base Flood is the zone having a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year, also referred to as the "100-year floodplain." The Regulatory Floodway is the channel of a stream plus any adjacent floodplain areas that must be kept free of encroachment so that the 1% flood discharge can be accommodated without increasing the base flood elevation.


Legend
Trail
Rivers
Railroad
Highways
City Limits
Water
10ft Contours
High Elevation
Low Elevation
Independence
150
150
20
20
W33
W35
D22
D22
D16
V71
Miles
N

Present-day Land Cover

The land-cover map depicts both natural and man-made land cover types with aerial imagery. The Iowa DNR created 15 unique classes for this dataset to differentiate land covers. Refer to the legend for a breakdown of land-cover types within your community boundaries.

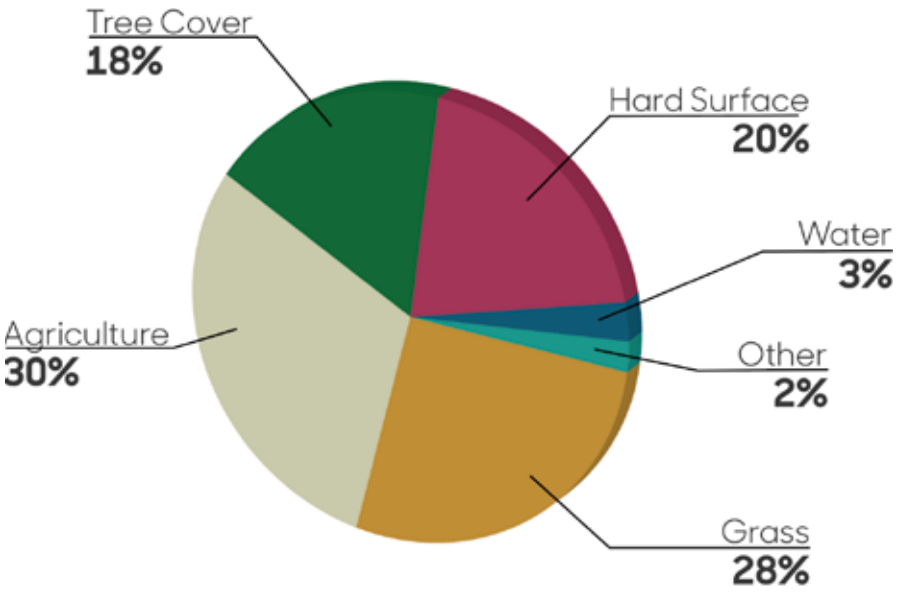
What do you observe about the dominant landcover types in your community?

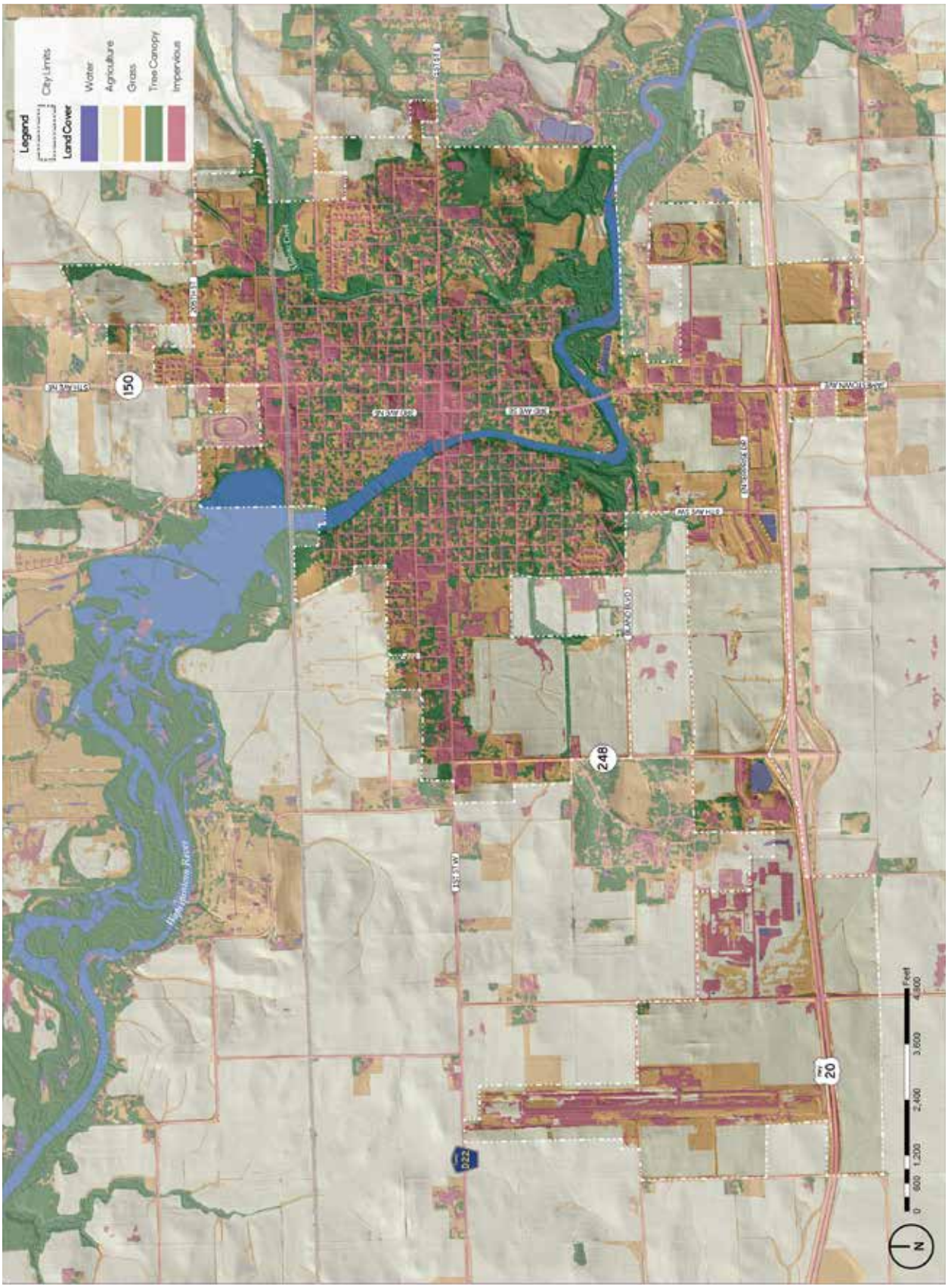
Where is the tree canopy most concentrated?

Look at how much of your community consists of impervious surfaces (e.g., parking lots, roads, buildings) compared to the other surfaces (e.g, water, grass, and agriculture). What does this mean for surface-water movement?

Tree cover affects microclimate. Are places surrounded by canopy more pleasant in the summer? How do these places feel in the winter?

Percent Land Cover Type




Legend
City Limits
Land Cover
Water
Agriculture
Grass
Tree Canopy
Impervious
150
248
20
022
Feet
0
600
1,200
2,400
3,600
4,800
N

Landscape Change Over Time

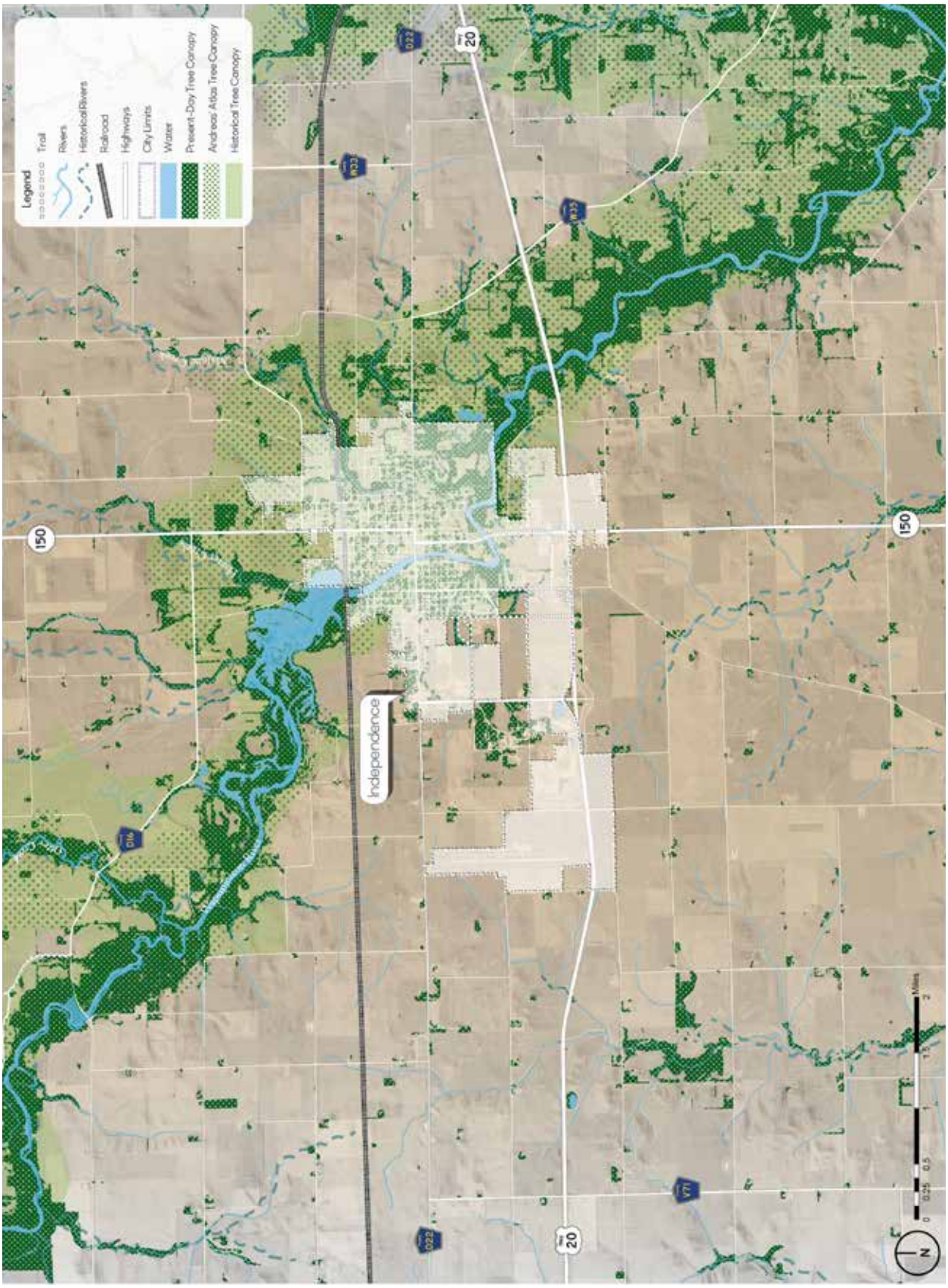
The map on this page shows how the landscape has changed over time, with an emphasis on vegetation and drainageways.[1] The map is helpful for understanding how landscapes change and considering how these changes might affect how well the landscape works to support human and ecological needs.

Trees are invaluable. They clean the air, create shade, and cool the atmosphere. They intercept rainfall and consume groundwater, which helps mitigate stormwater runoff. Carefully chosen and placed trees provide communities identity and residents with a sense of home. In Iowa, a prairie state, we increased tree cover to create shade and a sense of enclosure within rural towns. Lack of natural fires and burning has also generally increased tree cover along rivers and floodplains. Other areas of trees have diminished due to clearing for roads, agriculture, or other purposes.

What changes do you see to the tree canopy surrounding your community? Where has the tree canopy decreased? Where might the tree canopy have increased? Consider what changes to the landscape might have led to the increase or decrease of trees in the region (e.g., farming practices, community development, establishing homesteads and windbreaks, preservation of natural resources).

This map also shows current and historical stream and river corridors. Alterations to waterways such as channelization have been made to increase drainage, but can lead to increased erosion, sediment movement, and flooding where the straightened portion ends. Storm sewers also affect streams and waterways where outfalls drop urban runoff into the corridor, which can dramatically decrease water quality. How have streams and rivers changed? Do these changes appear to be man-made or natural?

1 This map shows the difference between the present day tree canopy gathered from the DNR's Land Cover data and past landscape cover, as defined in the General Land Office (GLO) surveys from 1836 through 1859 and the *A.T. Andreas' Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa from 1875*.


Legend
Trail
Rivers
Historical Rivers
Railroad
Highways
City Limits
Water
Present-Day Tree Canopy
Andreas' Atlas Tree Canopy
Historical Tree Canopy
Independence
150
150
20
20
Miles
N

Transportation Assets and Barriers

Overview

Transportation is integral to small-town life and a vibrant economy. In the context of the Community Visioning Program, we recognize walking, biking, and driving as quintessential modes of travel to various destinations important to residents and visitors. Access to these destinations is crucial for many everyday activities—getting to work and school, participating in community events, and providing for basic needs such as food, health care, and healthy activity.

In this participatory assessment, we want to find out which factors and conditions affect transportation use in Independence, where these factors and conditions are most prevalent, and how they influence route and transportation choices locally. Because residents have the best knowledge of how Independence's transportation system works, we use focused, small-group conversations, mapping, and photos of the best and worst to understand local transportation.

Different Users = Different Needs

To capture insights about transportation from a variety of perspectives, we invited Independence residents with different transportation needs to participate in focus groups. A total of 36 residents attended Independence's workshop. Participants were separated into five user groups and the Independence steering committee.

Actives

This user group represents those in the community who engage in outdoor recreation, including cycling, walking, running, swimming, skiing, etc. The availability of multiple venues for outdoor recreation matters to this group.

Mobility Impaired

This user group is directly affected by accessibility barriers such as high curbing and uneven sidewalks that make it difficult to operate mobility-aiding equipment effectively. Handicapped parking, curb ramps, and smooth surfaces are critical transportation features.

Older Adults

Accessibility—both in terms of physical access and proximity—is a major concern for this user group. Because some people in this user group do not or are unable to drive, having goods and services within walking distance is important.

Youth

This group uses primarily non-motorized modes of transportation, so pedestrian- and bike-friendly streets and sidewalks are important. These users value the ability to get to destinations on foot or via bicycle and having goods and services within walking distance.

Parents

Safety of their children is a primary concern of this user group. Access to safe and easy routes to school activities is another significant factor to this group. Parents of young children desire smooth, wide surfaces for strollers.

Steering Committee

The common denominator for this user group is that their observations are influenced by special knowledge of the transportation system acquired during the Community Visioning assessment process. As a result, this group is more representative of decision makers.

Historical buildings; wide, new sidewalks; and well maintained streets have made the downtown area a desirable destination.

The concentration of schools along 1st Street creates constant traffic, which, along with the absence of sidewalks, impedes kids' access to school.

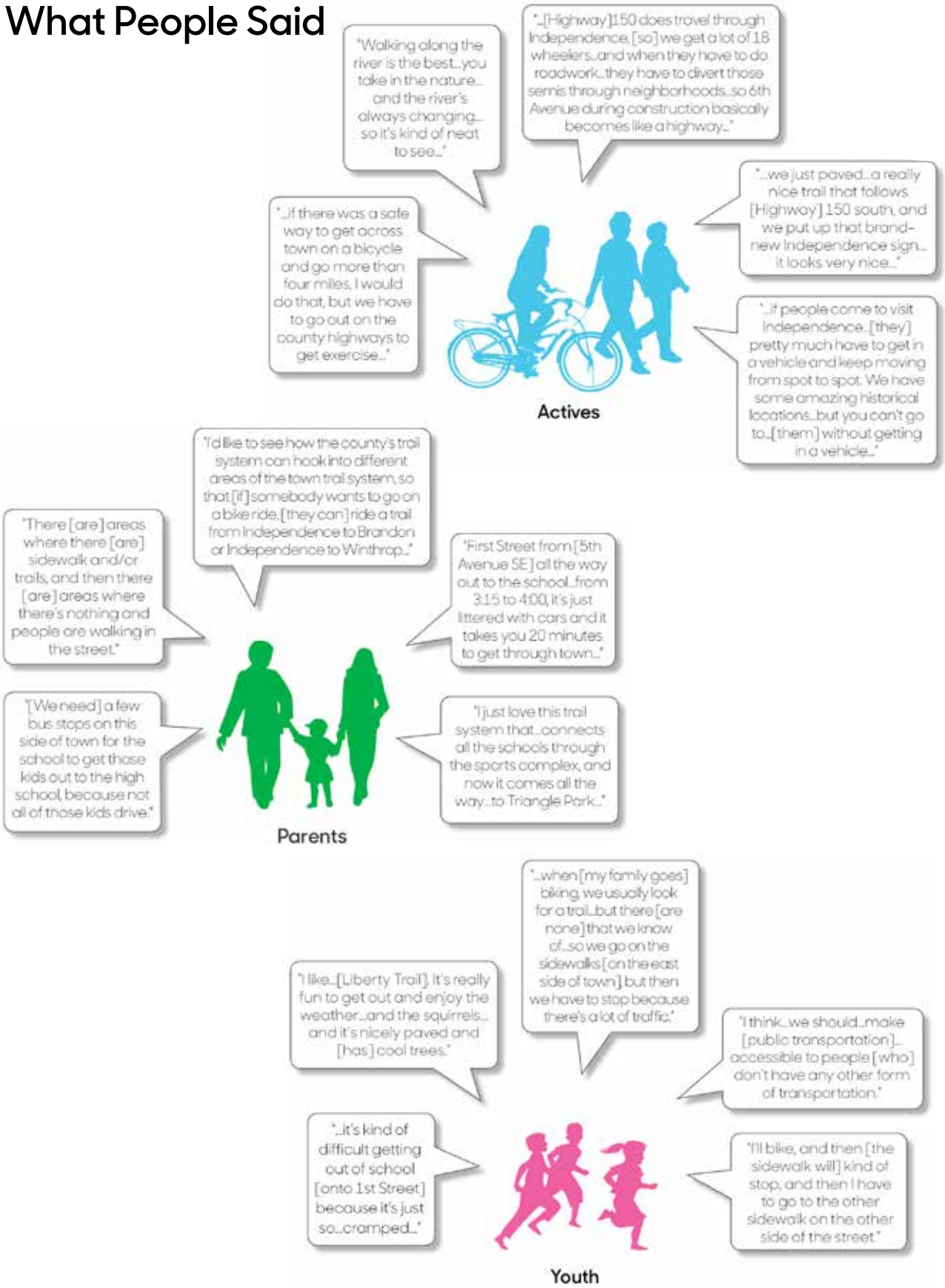
The Liberty Trail is well shaded and has minimal traffic noise; it also provides good connections to the high school and road network.

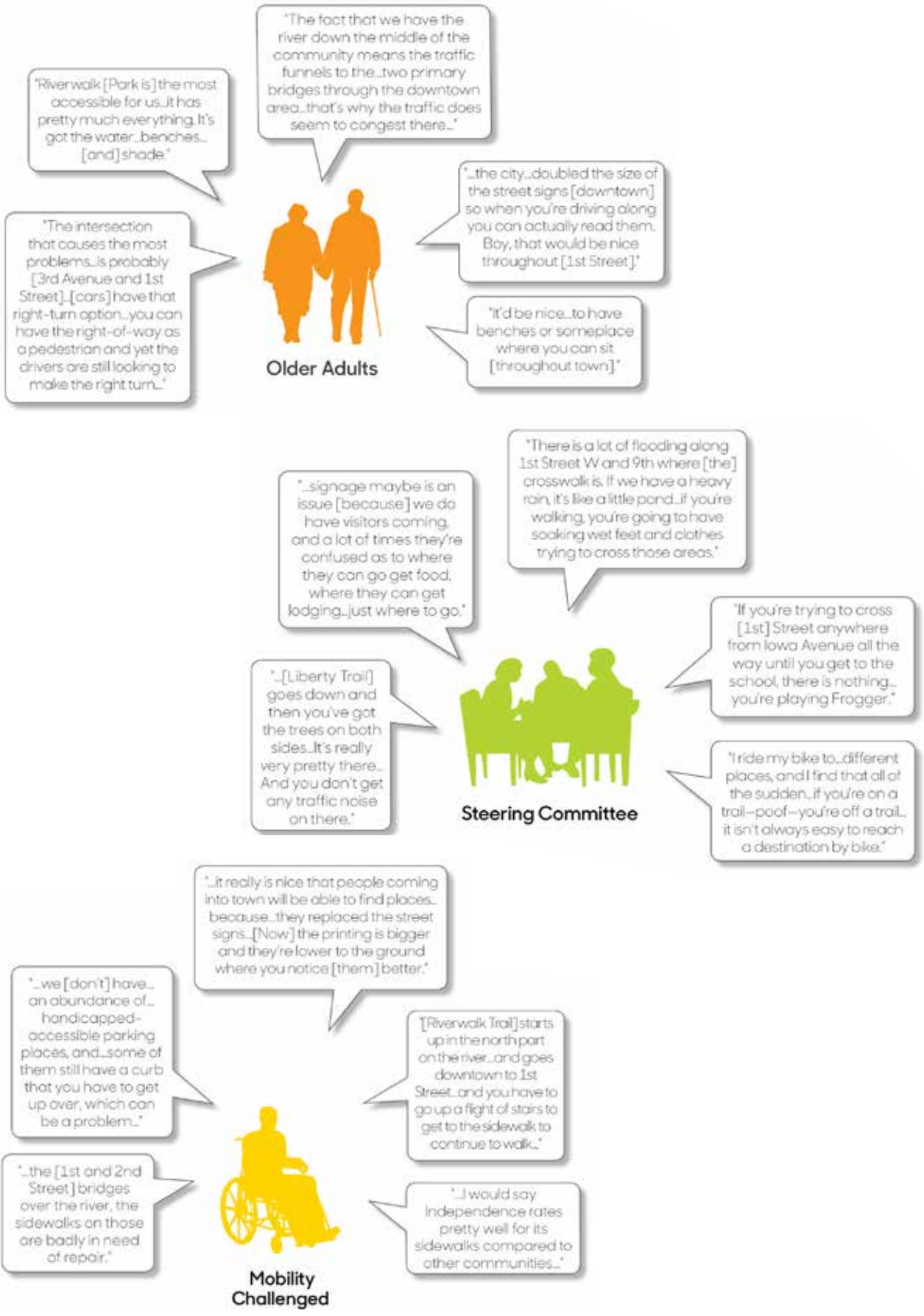
Downtown streets are hard to cross because of high traffic, especially at school pickup and drop-off times.

Teacher's Park has lots of trees, green space, a riverfront view and a handicapped-accessible trail.

Pedestrians have trouble crossing at 1st Street and 5th Avenue, which are both part of Hwy 150, because of heavy traffic; the stoplight creates traffic congestion.

What People Said




"The fact that we have the river down the middle of the community means the traffic funnels to the...two primary bridges through the downtown area...that's why the traffic does seem to congest there..."
"Riverwalk [Park is] the most accessible for us...it has pretty much everything. It's got the water...benches... [and] shade."
"...the city...doubled the size of the street signs [downtown] so when you're driving along you can actually read them. Boy, that would be nice throughout [1st Street]."
"The intersection that causes the most problems...is probably [3rd Avenue and 1st Street]...[cars] have that right-turn option...you can have the right-of-way as a pedestrian and yet the drivers are still looking to make the right turn..."
"It'd be nice...to have benches or someplace where you can sit [throughout town]."
Older Adults
"There is a lot of flooding along 1st Street W and 9th where [the] crosswalk is. If we have a heavy rain, it's like a little pond...if you're walking, you're going to have soaking wet feet and clothes trying to cross those areas."
"...signage maybe is an issue [because] we do have visitors coming, and a lot of times they're confused as to where they can go get food, where they can get lodging...just where to go."
"If you're trying to cross [1st] Street anywhere from Iowa Avenue all the way until you get to the school, there is nothing... you're playing Frogger."
"...[Liberty Trail] goes down and then you've got the trees on both sides...It's really very pretty there... And you don't get any traffic noise on there."
"I ride my bike to...different places, and I find that all of the sudden...if you're on a trail—poof—you're off a trail... it isn't always easy to reach a destination by bike."
Steering Committee
"...it really is nice that people coming into town will be able to find places... because...they replaced the street signs...[Now] the printing is bigger and they're lower to the ground where you notice [them] better."
"...we [don't] have... an abundance of... handicapped-accessible parking places, and...some of them still have a curb that you have to get up over, which can be a problem..."
"[Riverwalk Trail] starts up in the north part on the river...and goes downtown to 1st Street...and you have to go up a flight of stairs to get to the sidewalk to continue to walk..."
"...the [1st and 2nd Street] bridges over the river, the sidewalks on those are badly in need of repair."
"...I would say Independence rates pretty well for its sidewalks compared to other communities..."
Mobility Challenged

Emerging Themes

Discovering themes and consistencies among user groups helps the steering committee to identify solutions to address the needs of all. The chart on the opposite page displays each user group's collective thoughts on particular issues in comparison with the other user groups in the community.

Actives walk, bike, and run for exercise and/or recreation. They enjoy biking along the Amish Highway because it is scenic and doesn't carry much traffic. This group would like better access to the kayak ramp. Actives also want more trees and talked about proactively replacing ash trees.

Mobility-challenged individuals drive and walk to get around. They find that high curbs and tactile pavement on curb cuts are obstacles for people using wheelchairs and walkers. This group mentioned that there is not enough handicapped-accessible parking downtown.

Older adults primarily drive and walk. They would like more trees and landscaping along existing trails, along with better trail access. This group noted that while there is off-street parking downtown, many people don't know about it because there is no signage.

Youth walk, bike, ride the bus, and roller-skate. They enjoy going fishing with their families and swimming at the aquatic center. This group suggested solving the school traffic problem by building a subway system that would end at the school.

Parents drive and walk in town. They are primarily concerned with the safety of their children. This group suggested paving the existing gravel road near the school campus and extending it to 6th Street SW to help alleviate school traffic-flow problems.

Steering committee travel by vehicle, UTV, side-by-side, and golf cart. This group also walks and bikes. Committee members worry that traffic issues on 1st Street will negatively affect businesses along that street. They find large parking lots, such as the lot at the end of the trail in Teacher's Park, to be visually unappealing.

User Types

User Types	Destinations and Activities: Liberty Trail	Destinations and Activities: Riverwalk Park	Destinations and Activities: Walking for Exercise & Recreation	Valued Features: Access to Natural Areas	Valued Features: Pedestrian Access & Connectivity	Undesirable Qualities and Features: Flooding & Drainage Problems	Undesirable Qualities and Features: Inadequate Sidewalk Infrastructure	Undesirable Qualities and Features: Insufficient Parking	Undesirable Qualities and Features: School Traffic Flow	Undesirable Qualities and Features: Heavy Traffic & Congestion	Undesirable Qualities and Features: Absence of Way-finding Signage	Most Desired Improvements and Activities: Safer Crossings for Walkers & Cyclists	Most Desired Improvements and Activities: Expanded Trail Network	Most Desired Improvements and Activities: More Efficient Traffic Flow at Schools	Most Desired Improvements and Activities: Improved Way-finding System	
Actives	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		●	Actives walk, bike, and run for exercise and/or recreation. They enjoy biking along the Amish Highway because it is scenic and doesn't carry much traffic. This group would like better access to the kayak ramp. Actives also want more trees and talked about proactively replacing ash trees.
Mobility Challenged	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		Mobility-challenged individuals drive and walk to get around. They find that high curbs and tactile pavement on curb cuts are obstacles for people using wheelchairs and walkers. This group mentioned that there is not enough handicapped-accessible parking downtown.
Older Adults	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Older adults primarily drive and walk. They would like more trees and landscaping along existing trails, along with better trail access. This group noted that while there is off-street parking downtown, many people don't know about it because there is no signage.
Youth	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●	●		Youth walk, bike, ride the bus, and roller-skate. They enjoy going fishing with their families and swimming at the aquatic center. This group suggested solving the school traffic problem by building a subway system that would end at the school.
Parents	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●		Parents drive and walk in town. They are primarily concerned with the safety of their children. This group suggested paving the existing gravel road near the school campus and extending it to 6th Street SW to help alleviate school traffic-flow problems.
Steering Committee	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	Steering committee members travel by vehicle, UTV, side-by-side, and golf cart. This group also walks and bikes. Committee members worry that traffic issues on 1st Street will negatively affect businesses along that street. They find large parking lots, such as the lot at the end of the trail in Teacher's Park, to be visually unappealing.

Transportation Behaviors and Needs

Overview

The survey provides the visioning steering committee with objective, representative information for the goal-setting phase of community visioning. The quantitative data collected from survey responses complements the qualitative information gathered from the focus groups at the transportation assets and barriers workshop.

The modes of transportation that residents use and the routes they take suggest suitable types of transportation enhancements in these areas. Having a sense for people's willingness to help either financially or with their time is important because many transportation enhancements are funded from multiple sources, including grants, private donations, in-kind contributions, and volunteers. Understanding what types of improvements are important to residents gives the committee insight into how to prioritize projects.

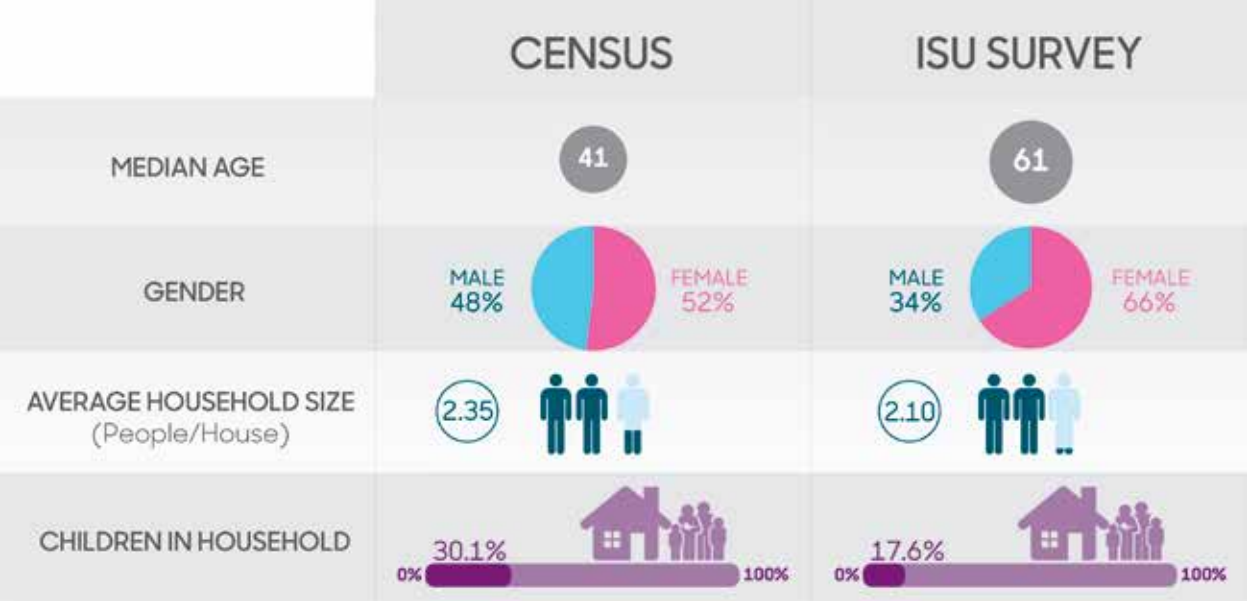
With assistance from Iowa State University's Survey Research Services staff in the Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology (CSSM-SRS), ISU visioning program staff conducted a survey to better understand the transportation patterns, behaviors, needs, and desires of Independenc residents. Surveys were mailed to 600 randomly selected residents living in Independence and the surrounding area. To increase the response rate, the study was publicized through the local media and follow-up packets were mailed to nonrespondents. With adjustments for ineligible respondents (e.g., incorrect addresses, no longer living in the community), the final sample size was 532. A total of 145 people returned surveys, for a response rate of 35.5%. (A response rate of 20% is considered valid.)

We asked survey recipients what routes they use most often for going to work, walking, and biking. In addition, we asked what qualities and features are important to trail users. We also discovered what residents think is most important in terms of transportation enhancements that address issues such as accessibility, mobility, and safety. Finally, we learned whether or not residents are willing to contribute their time or their financial resources to making enhancements to Independence. This series of boards summarizes the results of the survey as follows:

- Willingness to Help
- Enhancement Priorities
- Commuting Routes
- Walking Routes
- Biking Routes
- Desired Trail Features

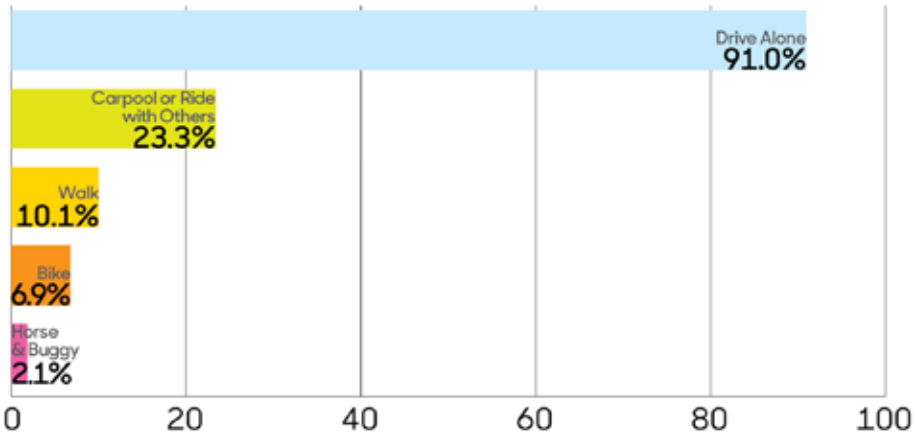
How We Did

The demographics of the respondents are somewhat different from those obtained from the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS). For example, the survey respondents median age of 61 is significantly older than the ACS estimated average age for Independence residents of 41. In terms of gender, females are significantly over-represented at 66% of respondents compared to the ACS estimate of 52%. Average household size among survey respondents is somewhat lower than the ACS estimate, and the percentage of households with children among survey responses is significantly lower.



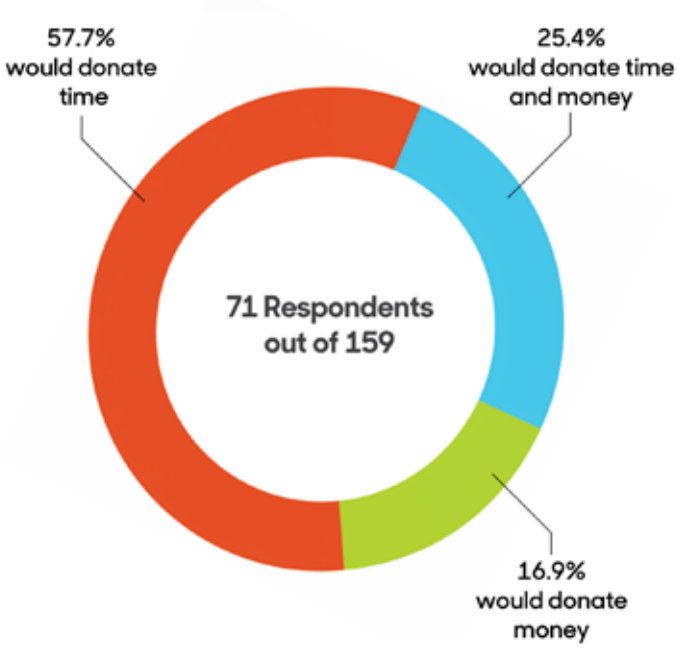
How Independence Residents Travel

Most survey respondents drive to important destinations such as the convenience store, the post office, school, and church (91%). More than 23% carpool or ride with someone else. More than 10% of respondents indicated that they walk and nearly 7% bike. A small percentage of people use horse and buggy for transportation (2.1%).



*Please note that some respondents indicated that they use more than one mode of transportation to get to work; therefore, percentages add up to more than 100%.

Willingness to Help



Most survey participants who answered "Yes" to this question are willing to contribute their time to community improvements (57.7%), while 25.4% would help financially and contribute their time. Nearly 17% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to contribute financially.

Compared to other small towns in Iowa, Independence residents are somewhat more willing to become involved in improving their community. In 2014, on average, 43% of residents in small, rural towns volunteered to help with a community project.[1] Independence exceeds this average by 2%.

How Do You Get People to Help?
Ask, Show, and Advertise Opportunities
In 2014, the most common reason residents in small-town Iowa said they didn't become involved in community projects is that no one asked them (34%). Twenty-eight percent on average said that they don't have time, which is significantly lower than the 2004 average of 59%. Sixteen percent indicated that they didn't know how to become involved, and 7% said that no community project needed volunteers.[1] These results indicate that the best ways to get people involved in community projects is to simply ask, along with advertising opportunities through traditional and social media outlets.

1 *Sigma: A Profile of Iowa Small Towns 1994 to 2014* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, 2015).

Survey Participants Said...

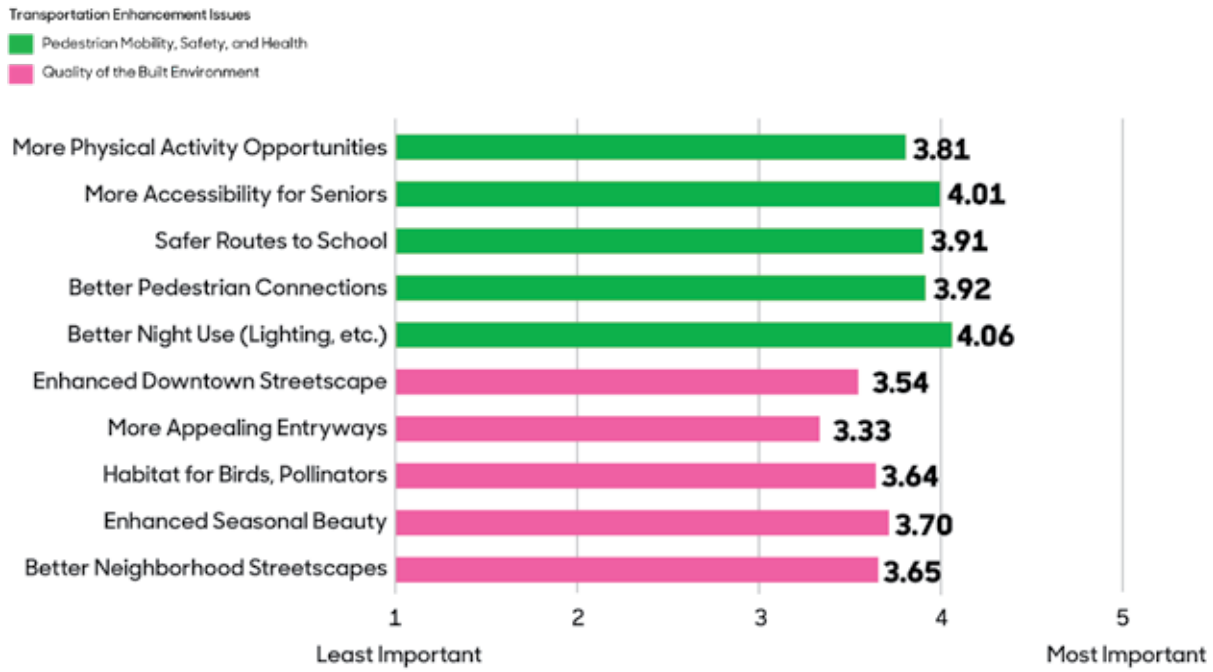
"There needs to be a traffic survey done on 2nd Ave NE to consider putting up some stop signs. Even though this is a farm-to-market road, it is still a residential neighborhood. The Amish won't even go down this road anymore because of the speeding cars..."

"While maybe not feasible, a public transit route would be nice. The way the town is set up one route with a loop to main destinations could possibly work."

"Independence has done well over the past few years to enhance trail systems and parks...We feel safe walking at all times and enjoy having a variety of areas to explore in town."

Priorities

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, participants in Independence ranked improving night use as most important, with a mean value of 4.06. Other types of transportation enhancements that address pedestrian mobility, health, and safety are also considered significant, including improving accessibility for seniors (4.01), creating better pedestrian connections (3.92), developing safer routes to school (3.91), and creating more opportunities for physical activities (3.81). In terms of quality of the built environment, survey respondents consider enhancing seasonal beauty as most important (3.70), followed by improv6ing neighborhood streetscapes (3.65), and creating habitat for birds and pollinators (3.64). These findings are consistent with the views expressed by focus group participants during the Transportation Assets and Barriers workshop held in February 2023.



Survey Participants Said...

"I would walk more at night if the paths had more lights."

"I wish there were more light for night walking and more chairs/seats for the elderly...[we need] spots to throw dogs' waste; lots [of people] walk their dogs in town."

"[There is] much need to help handicapped/disabled to have better access to parks and walking trails."

"There needs to be better dedicated access for pedestrians and bikes across the railroad tracks and across the downtown bridges."

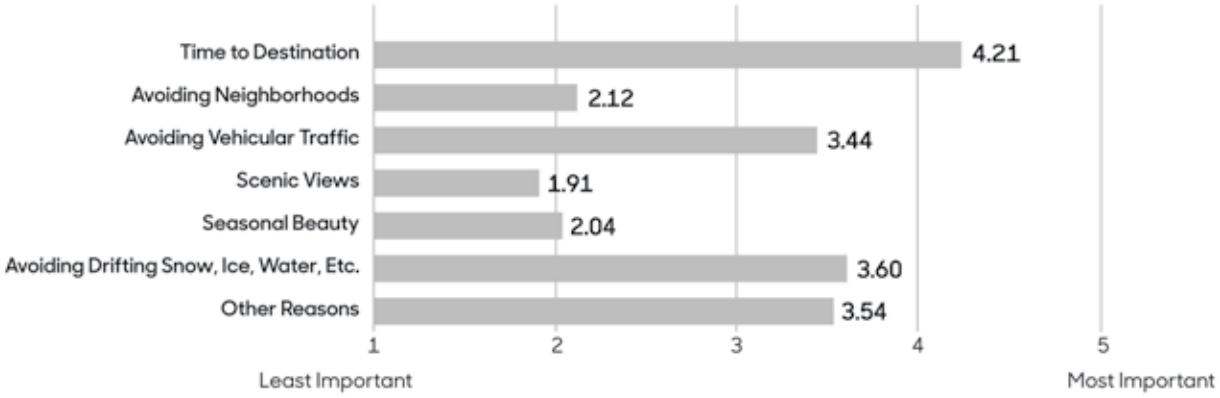
Commuting Routes

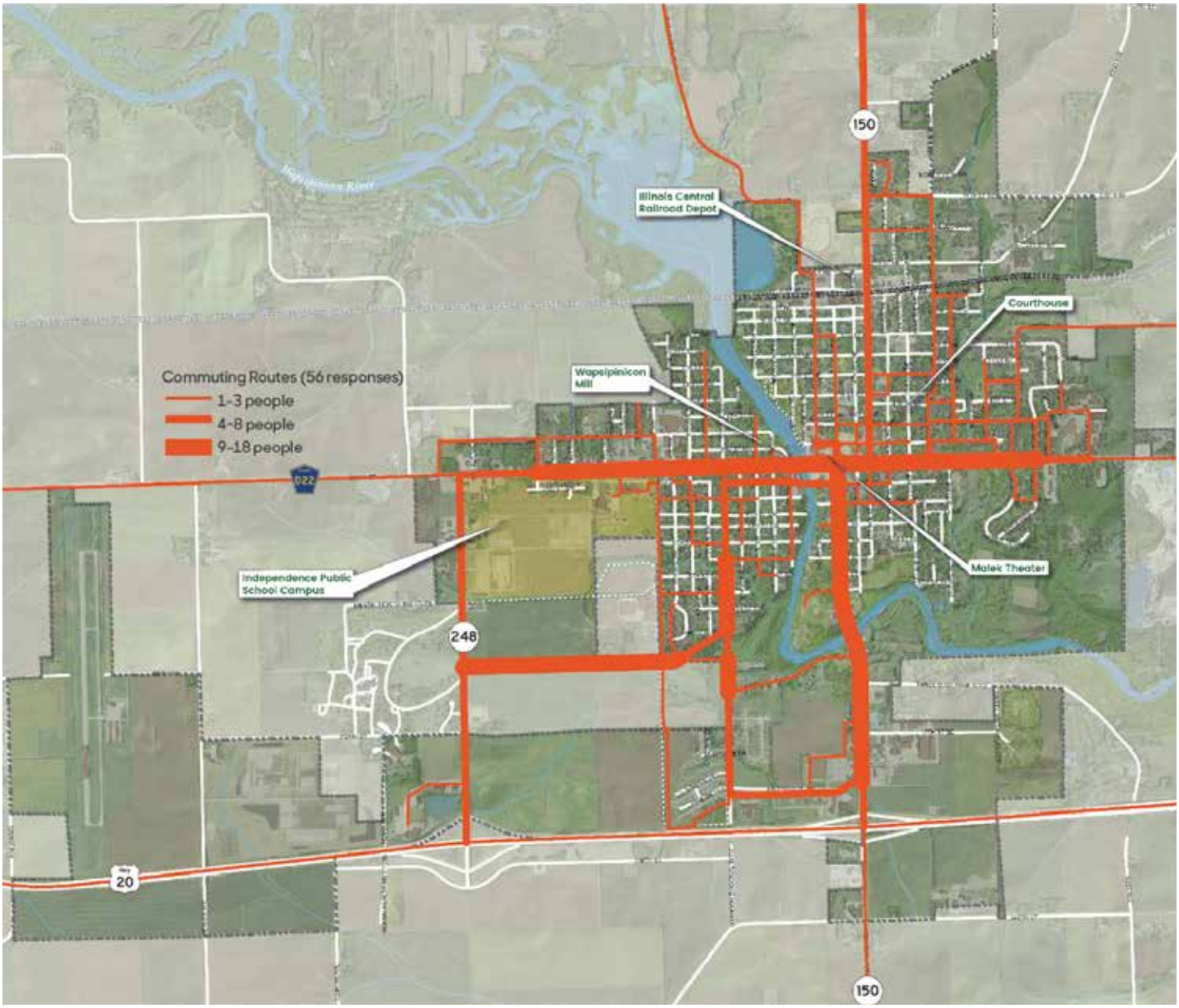
This map shows the commuting routes identified by 56 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. The primary east-west commuting corridor into and out of Independence is County Road D22/1st Street, and Highway 150 is the major north-south route. The most heavily used corridors in town are 1st Street, 5th Avenue NE, 3rd Avenue SE to US 20, Bland Boulevard, and Iowa Avenue, which also connects to US 20.

The circulation patterns that emerge when routes for biking, walking, and commuting are overlaid suggest suitable types of transportation enhancements. For example, where pedestrian and vehicular traffic intersect, such improvements could include creating better visibility, defining crossing points, or improving signage.

Why They Go That Way

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that factored into their choice of commuting route. Among Independence participants, time to destination is the most important factor in determining commuting routes, with a mean value of 4.21. Avoiding weather-related issues such as snow and ice is also somewhat important (3.60), as well as other reasons—which include avoiding stoplights, availability of gas, and taking the most direct route (3.54)—and avoiding vehicular traffic (3.44). Scenic views, seasonal beauty, and avoiding neighborhoods are not critical factors in determining commuting routes.





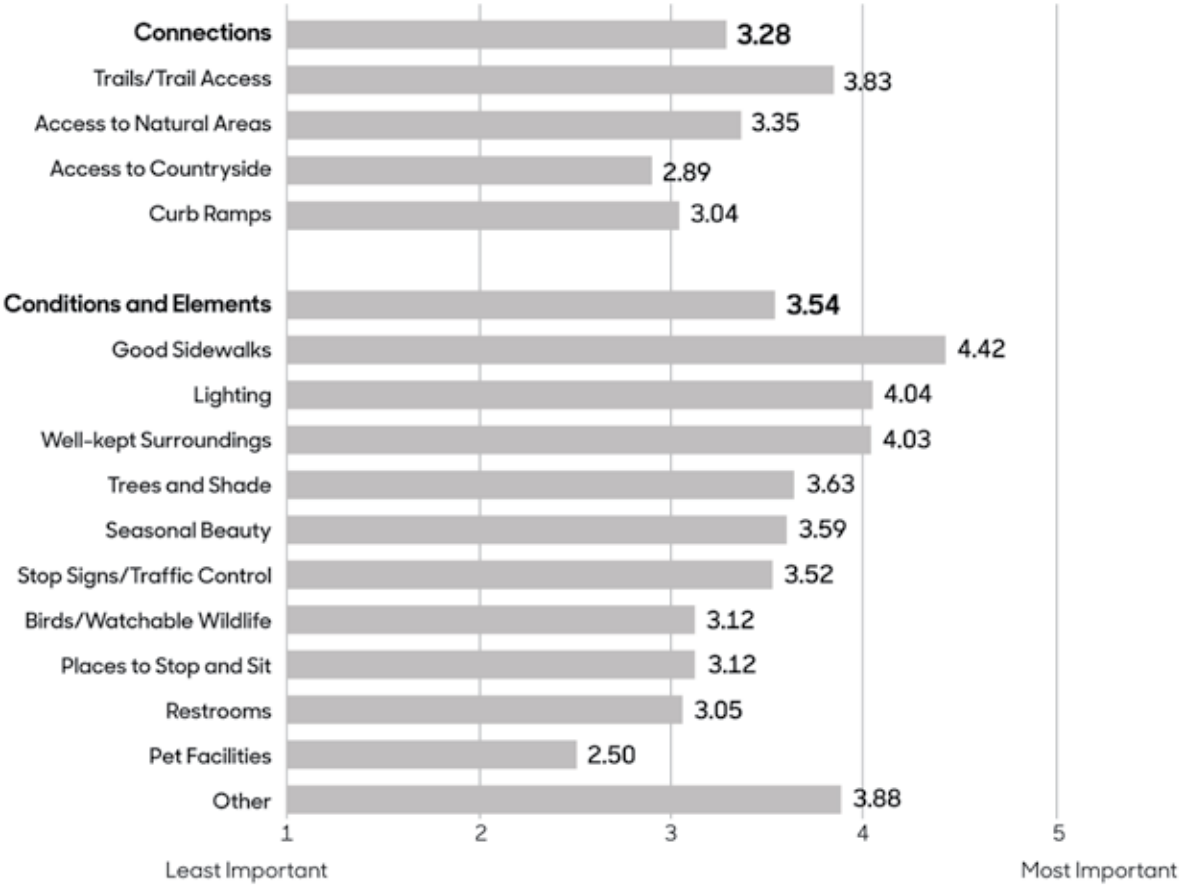
Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislibx/.

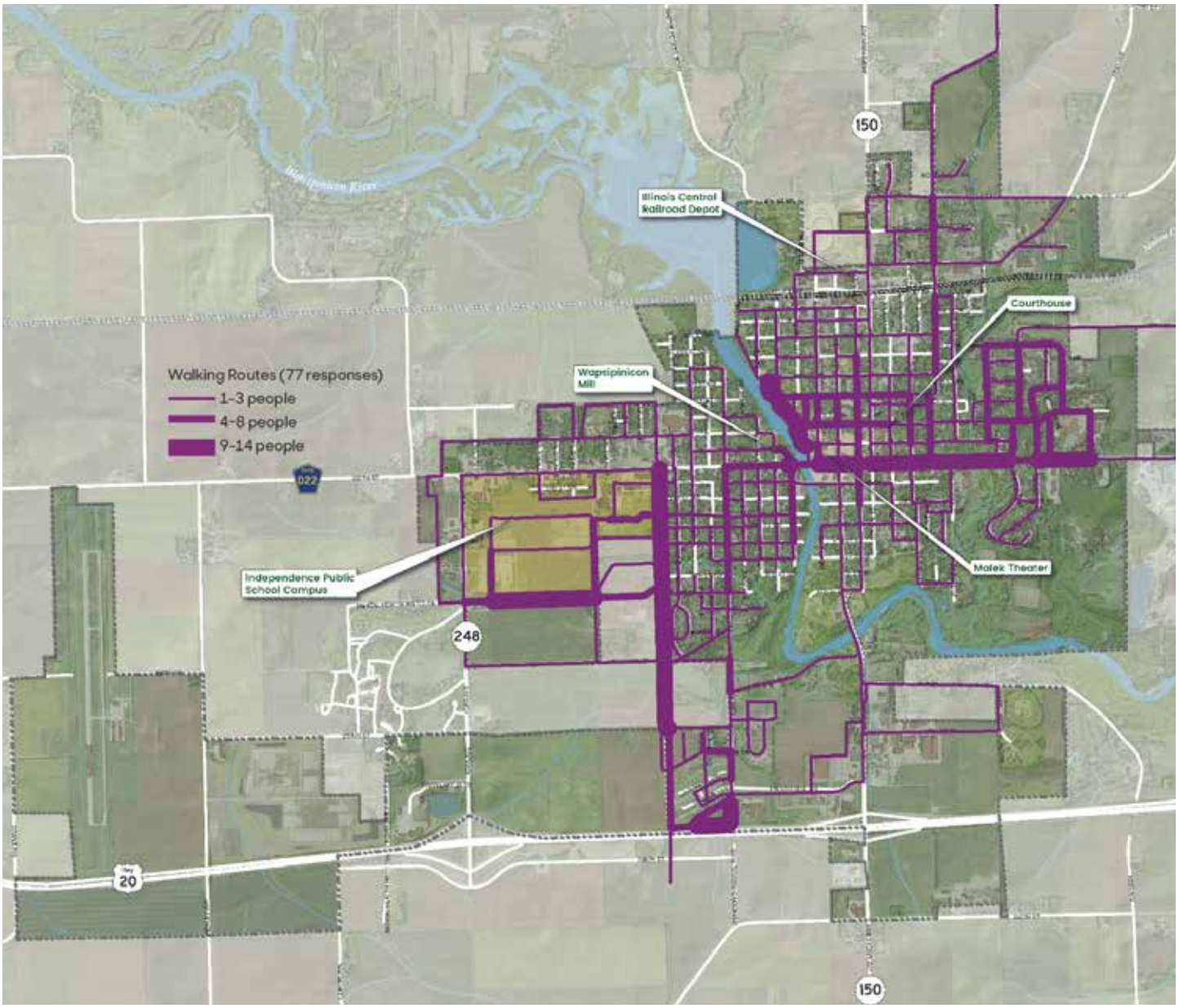
Walking Routes

This map shows the walking routes identified by 77 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. Riverwalk Trail, Liberty Trail, Triangle Park Trail, and the trail by the hospital are popular walking venues among survey respondents. Streets in town frequented by walkers include 1st Street from the river east to the hospital, portions of 8th Avenue NE, 6th Avenue SW, streets connecting to River Walk Trail from the east, and the residential streets northwest of the hospital.

Why They Go That Way

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their walking experience better. These features are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Independence participants consider conditions/elements more important that connections, with mean values of 3.54 and 3.28, respectively. In terms of connections, access to trails is most important with a mean value of 3.83. Good sidewalks (4.42) are the most important condition/element to walkers, followed by lighting (4.04) and well-kept surroundings (4.03), and other factors, including sidewalk or trail surface, low traffic, views of community activity, proximity to destinations (3.88).





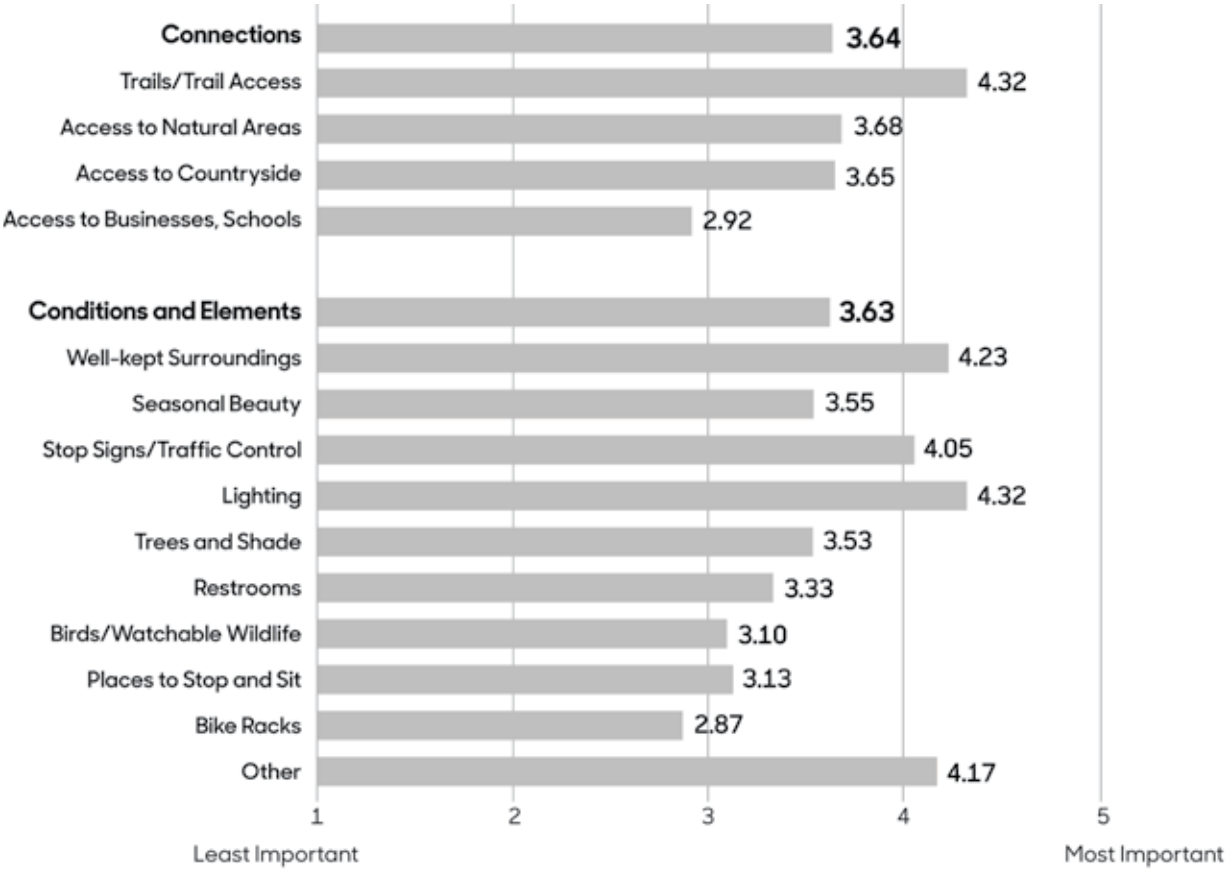
Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislibx/.

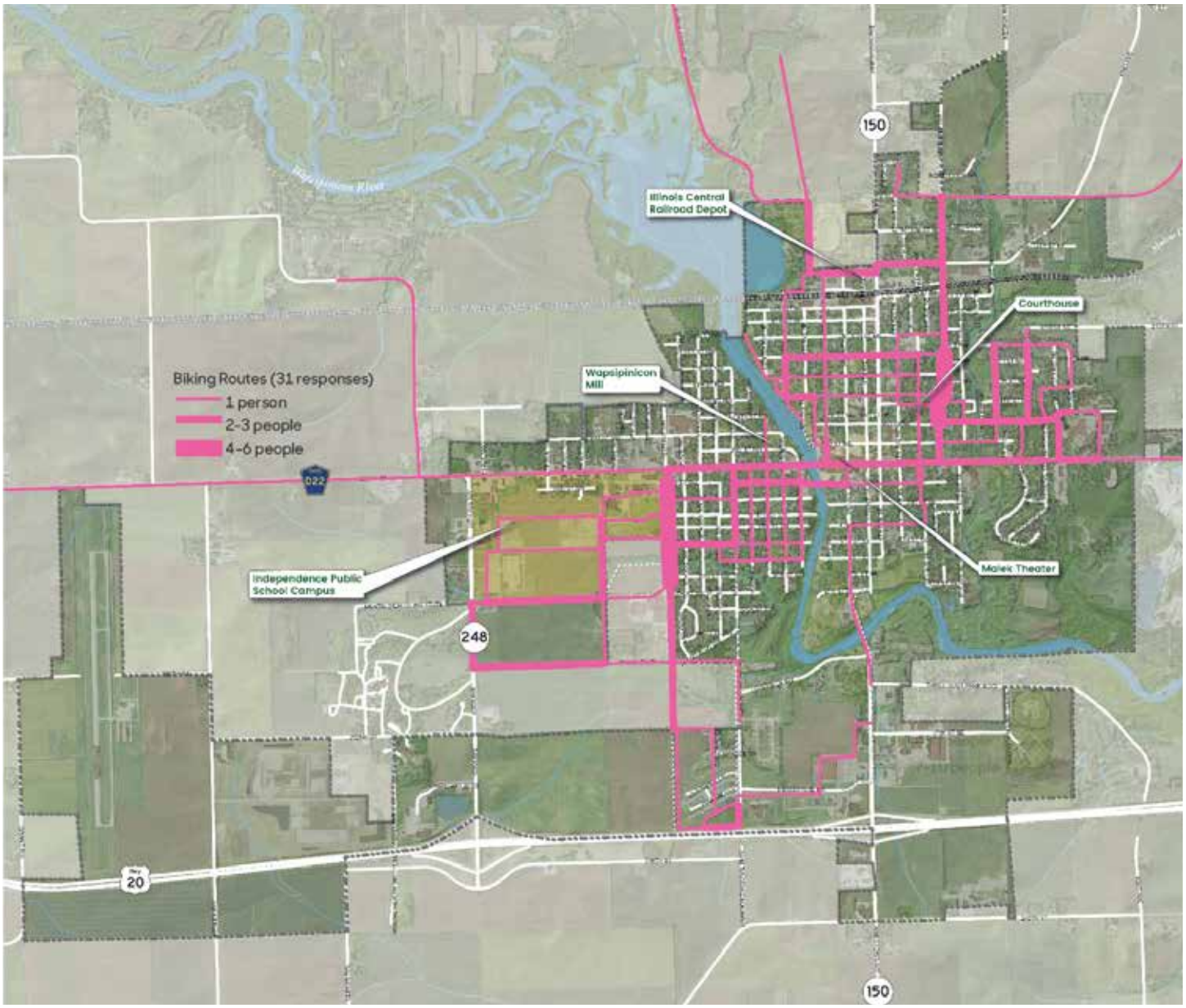
Biking Routes

This map shows the biking routes identified by 31 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. Bikers most often use Liberty Trail, as well as the Triangle Park Trail and the trail by the hospital, although to a lesser extent. Popular city streets for biking include 1st Street, portions of 8th Avenue NE, and 7th Street NE and 5th Street NE, presumably to access River Walk Trail. Some people bike out of town along County Road D22 and 205th Street to the east.

Why They Go That Way

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their biking experience better. These features are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Independence participants consider connections and conditions/elements almost equally important, with mean values of 3.64 and 3.63, respectively. Access to trails is most important connection to survey respondents with a mean value of 4.32. In terms of conditions/elements, lighting (4.32) is the most important among bikers, followed by well-kept surroundings (4.23) and other factors, which include traffic volume, trail/lane width, and clean surfaces (4.17). Stop signs/traffic control (4.05), seasonal beauty (3.55), and trees and shade (3.53) are also significant elements.

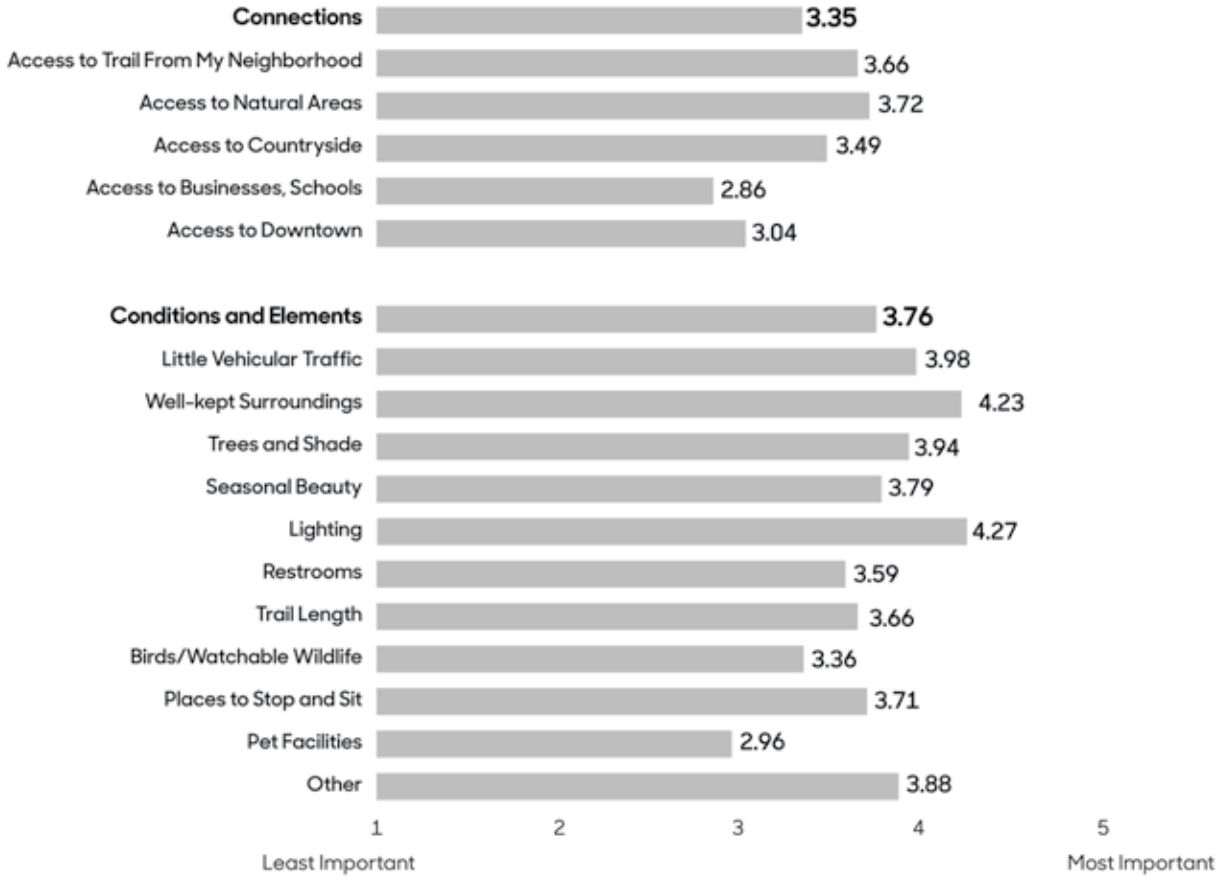




Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislibx/.

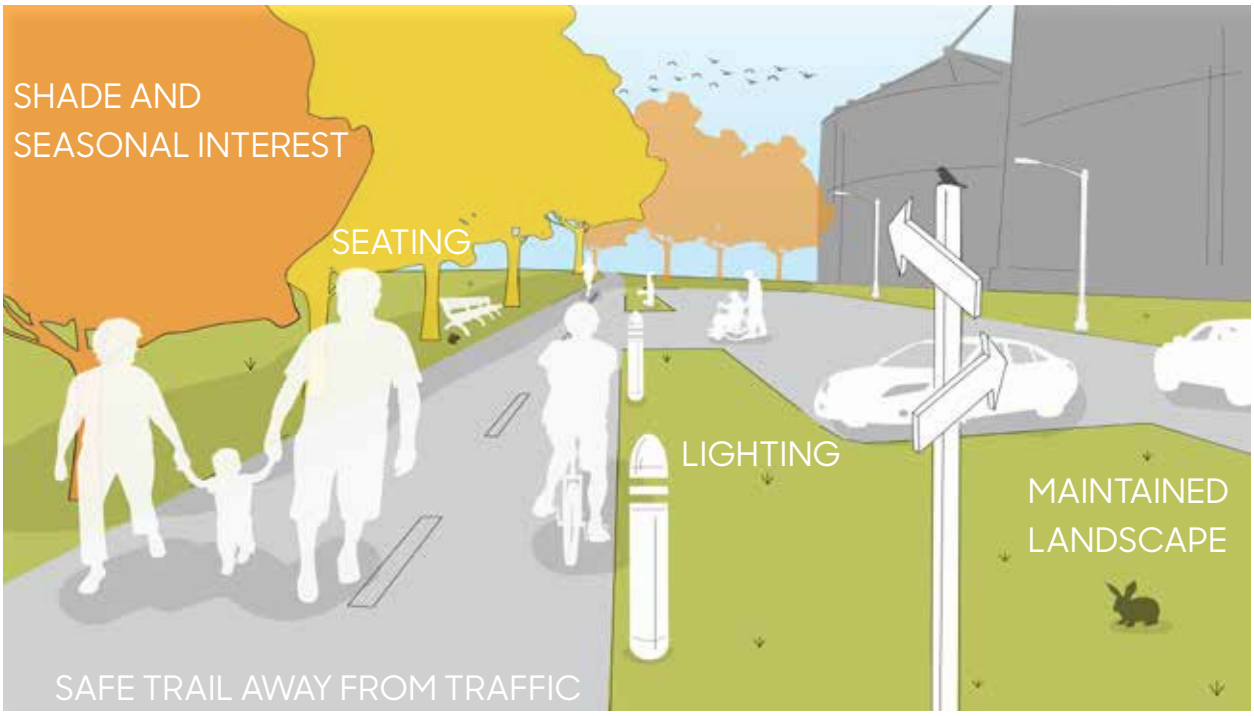
Desired Trail Features

Trails are off-street paths that are paved or unpaved and can be used by pedestrians and cyclists. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their trail experience better. Like the bike route features, they are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Conditions/elements are more important to Independence trail users than connections, with mean values of 3.76 and 3.35, respectively. Access to natural areas is most the important connection among trail users, with a mean value of 3.72. In terms of conditions/elements, lighting (4.27) is most important, followed by well-kept surroundings (4.23). Little vehicular traffic (3.98), trees and shade (3.94), and other factors (3.88)—including trail surface, proximity to parking, multiple access points, and the availability of trail maps—are also signficant for trail users.



"I would like all trails connected. For example, the trail on the east side of the river is great, but too short. I want to walk and/or bike in natural areas—not downtown."

"Liberty Trail could use better lighting other that in proximity of the schools after dark. (It is a great trail.)"



Transportation Inventory and Analysis

Knowledge of the transportation systems in and around a community is critical for sustainable transportation enhancement planning. Independence's transportation system includes roadways, sidewalks, and an active railroad.

The Independence visioning design team met with the local officials to identify existing , past, and future transportation system capital improvements, maintenance activities and issues, and other transportation-related constraints and opportunities in the area.

"Historic Highway 20" is a common phrase heard when discussing anything related to transportation in Independence. Rerouted to the south of the community, it previously ran straight through the heart of Independence. 1st Street is still a major thoroughfare for Independence, carrying between 5,000-8,400 vehicles per day (Iowa Department of Transportation 2021 Daily Traffic County). In addition to vehicle volume, Independence Elementary and Middle School drop- off is located off 1st Street W, creating traffic issues that resulted in several businesses relocating to other areas of town.

The Wapsipinicon River bisects Independence with only two bridges crossing in the center of the community resulting in traffic congestion. Traffic lights along 1st Street add to the issue, with cars lined up over the course of 12 to 15 blocks during school drop-off and pick-up times.

The relocated businesses and new development are in the south side of town, along Iowa Highway 150 creating new traffic issues. Congestion and visibility were complaints in the area between Enterprise Drive and Lover's Lane. A TEAP study on Iowa Highway 150 completed in 2021 made a long-term recommendation to convert this section from a traditional two-lane road to a three-lane road with a two-way left turning lane in the center.

The main thoroughfares through the community allow easy access to Highway 20, Iowa Highways 150 and 248, and County Road D22; have bridge access across the river; and connect to the main destinations of the community. However, this configuration results in those same areas being problems for the community with congestion, visibility problems, unsafe intersections, and pedestrian access issues.

Independence has been developing trails throughout the community that connect the schools, the commercial development area, many of the community's parks, and other popular destinations. Future trail extensions are desired to connect to the sports complex on the southeast side of town and to create a connection on the north side of 1st Street W to the north side of the community.


Legend
Area of Concern (Vehicular)
Area of Concern (Pedestrian)
Truck Traffic Route
Existing Trail
Desired 10' Trail
Flooding Area
Snow Drifting
2021 Daily Traffic Counts
Popular Destination
Roadside Vegetation
A Traffic Concern: Traffic back up before and after school extends on 1st Street W from Highway 248 to Highway 150
B Traffic Concern: Bridge on 1st Street looking west restricts vehicular flow during volumes of high traffic
150
248
20
322
B
3240
5400
3170
3400
2750
1520
3160
6200
3320
2260
2460
8900
4680
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
FUTURE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
N

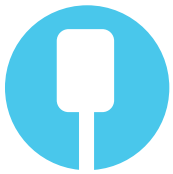
What, Where, & Why

The What, Where, and Why meeting is a critical component in the development of a successful project. Setting and prioritizing goals allows the design team to focus its efforts and resources more effectively to help the community develop a vision for Independence based on its goals.

The design team met with the Independence steering committee to discuss its goals. The steering committee presented its takeaways from previous discussions about the transportation assets and barriers, transportation analysis, and bioregional information.

Using the nominal group method to organize the meeting and discussion, the committee identified goals and values based on information from the assessments. Each committee member also included reasoning for improvements around town and highlighted specific programming needs for areas of improvement. These objectives and desired improvements were recorded during an open discussion. Each idea was listed and then like items were categorized into specific themes.

The design team organized programming themes for the city of Independence using the goals and desired improvements identified by the steering committee during the discussion, giving greater weight to those goals receiving more votes and common ideas presented multiple times. The following chart reflects a representation of the outcomes of the goal-setting process.

Community Themes/Issues Based on Assessments	Broad-based Outcomes/Goals	Why Change Anything?	What Exactly & Where?
1st Street W Improvements 	· Green space/landscaped pedestrian areas with benches to rest · Improve overall appearance of city · Improve safety for those walking or using bikes in the area · Add interpretive signage with historical information · Remove some pavement and hardscapes · Add drainage area, grasses, and trees · Improve existing sidewalks · Create an entryway to the west side that is appealing to traffic and pedestrians · Revitalize the business corridor by first improving the aesthetics · Relocate/remove deteriorating buildings · Create destinations on 1st Street W	· Safer for kids and families to walk along · Create more accessibility · Add beautification to corridor · Enhance appearance and aesthetics · West side has missing sidewalks · Improve transportation for people traveling to work · Recreational use · Control drainage, runoff, and flooding · Area looks dreary · Historic town · Draw people to town · Currently gives a poor view of town · Currently shows a lack of city pride · Bring traffic toward existing businesses · Attract new businesses · Stimulate development of community	· Bioretention cells for storm water east of Early Childhood Center · Add sidewalks on north side of 1st Street W across from school campuses · Connect sidewalks throughout town · Add trees and landscaping · Add new sidewalks on the west side of town near Subway · Benches on trails · Keep nostalgia everywhere · Add sidewalks across from Early Childhood Center · West end of Independence add sidewalks, benches, art, etc. · Pocket parks, possibly near old A&W · Visitors center; use empty buildings · Add sidewalks west of Spahn & Rose on 1st Street W
Trail Connections 	· Increase recreational use of trails · Improve safety · Connection to trails throughout Independence · Get grants for trails · Increase lighting along trails · Add benches and rest areas along trails · Add different amenities throughout the trail system	· Complete trail loop by connecting all existing trails within the community · Expand recreation opportunities for community members · Provide an additional means of transportation · Lighting is needed	· Improve lighting for safer use during evenings and early morning · Connect Liberty Trail to Hwy 150 · Connect trail to pool · Connect Mental Health Institute to schools · Pave trail from Triangle Park (where Liberty Trail ends) to Hwy 150 · Create trail from Enterprise Drive to Liberty Trail · Add amenities around new courthouse building and adjacent buildings
Signage 	· Provide way-finding signage throughout Independence · Add new park names to signage · Signage on trails · Signage on buildings	· Increase traffic to businesses · Ease of use navigating Independence · Informational for residents and visitors	· Provide signage at trail locations · Add signage to 1st Street · Include signage on the main roads · Add emergency markers on the trails

Community Concept Plan

During the Design Workshop Open House, residents were encouraged to come learn about the Community Visioning process, review the analysis that had been done, and give input on design concepts that were guided by the steering committee. Residents had an opportunity to review all the analysis boards provided by Iowa State University, interact with the design team, and leave feedback on the projects. The open house was an essential part of the process for the design team to better understand and finalize conceptual ideas based on the community's desires.

1st Street W improvements focus on safety, drainage issues, aesthetics, and amenities. During the Design Workshop, residents were able to manipulate a streetscape model that showed different elements such as lawn areas, trees, trails, sidewalks, and bioretention areas. Residents used Wikki Stix to show alternative routes that would alleviate congestion on 1st Street W. The design team used input from both exercises to shape the conceptual design of 1st Street W.

Residents of all ages expressed interest in creating more trail and sidewalk connections throughout Independence. Workshop participants had the opportunity to draw the routes they frequent or wish to utilize safely. From this activity, the design team was able to prioritize new sidewalk connections and the desired routes for walking trails. Community members also showed an interest in adding amenities to all the trails throughout Independence.

Using the existing Independence logo, adding additional way-finding signage throughout Independence can help residents and visitors find destinations in town such as Liberty Trail or Riverwalk Park. Additionally, signage can help with "branding" of the community and create a cohesive palette for signage.

Proposed Design Concepts in Independence

1st Street W Corridor

1st Street W is a major thoroughfare for Independence, carrying between 5,000 to 8,400 vehicles per day (Iowa Department of Transportation 2021 Daily Traffic County). As you enter Independence from the west, there is no welcome signage. You are greeted with vacant buildings, very little green space or trees and a lot of concrete. The Independence Elementary and Middle Schools are located along 1st Street W and create traffic issues throughout the day, especially during drop off and dismissal times.

During the What, Where, Why meeting, the steering committee prioritized improving the aesthetics and addressing safety and traffic issues along this important corridor. The intersection of Iowa Avenue and 1st Street W is a prime location for a single-lane roundabout that would improve traffic flow and safety. The center of the roundabout would include entrance signage, decorative brick paving and low-growing plant materials, creating an inviting entrance feature as you enter Independence from the west and south. Independence lacks uniform streetscape furniture. The steering committee suggested a palette of furniture that fits the historical nature of the community. The proposed streetlight was chosen by the committee because it is a cross between two of their existing streetlights and continues the historical/period theme. This palette could be used throughout Independence and begin to unify the improvements to the community.

The north side of 1st Street W has major electrical lines in the right-of-way; the design team is suggesting ornamental trees to soften the appearance of these lines and aid in the overall aesthetics. The south side of the road would accommodate overstory tree plantings. The design team suggested locations for tree plantings that would not impact existing business signage or building facades along this corridor.

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The proposed roundabout would improve traffic flow and create an inviting entrance into Independence from the south and west.

Streetscape Furniture Palette

The steering committee suggested a light fixture they had photographed in a different community. This fixture combines the acorn style fixture and modern fixture present in downtown Independence.

Bench: Victor Stanley CS-10

Backless Bench: Victor Stanley CS-296

Litter Receptacle: Victor Stanley SD-42

Independence
1st Street W Corridor

RITLAND+KUIPER Landscape Architects
Landscape Architect: Samantha Price, ASLA
Intern: Andrea Fager, Iowa State University
Iowa State University | Trees Forever | Iowa Department of Transportation

Iowa's Living Roadways community visioning 2023

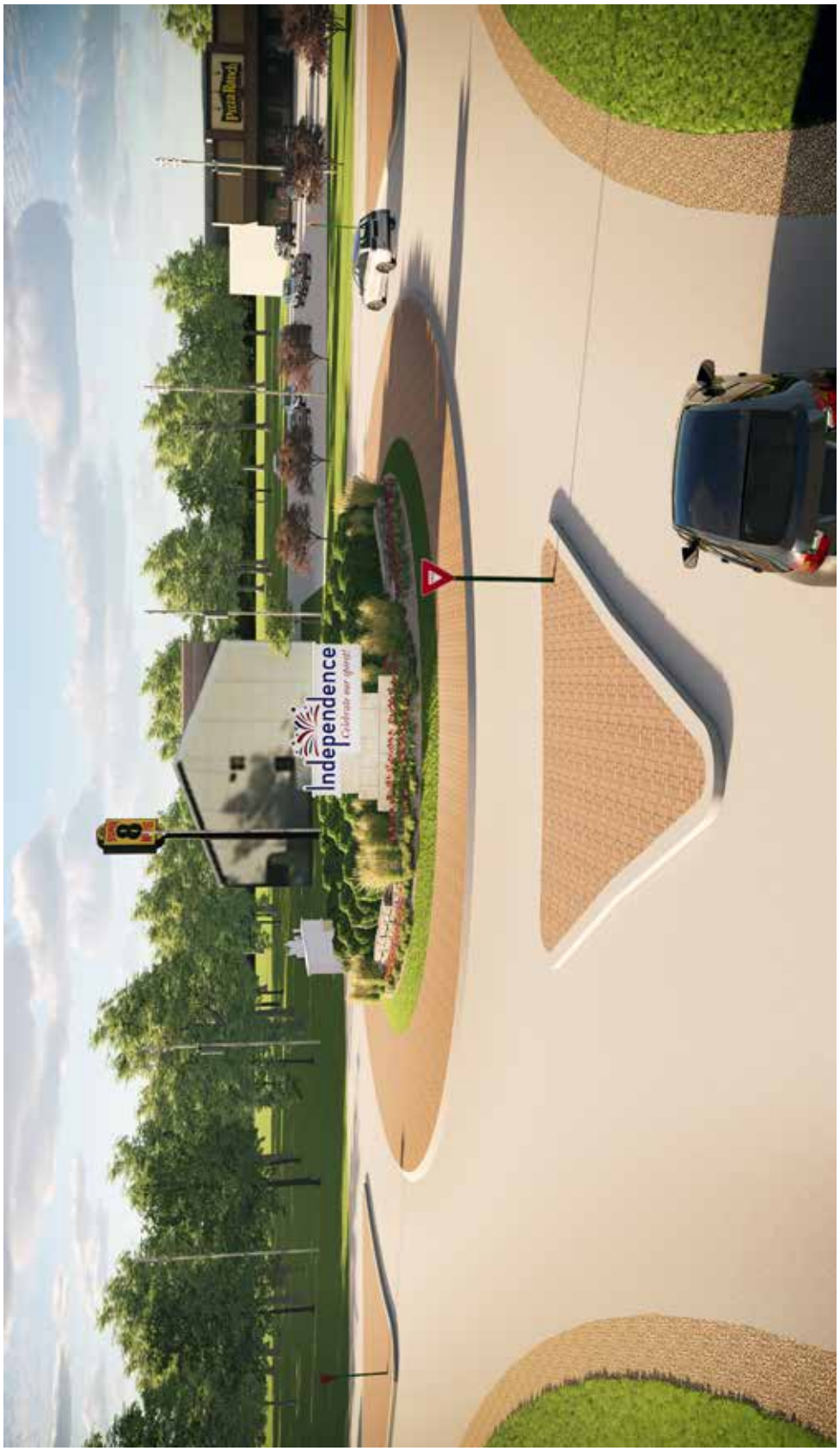
1st Street W Corridor – Opinion of Probable Cost

The following cost opinion is based on estimated material quantities and contracted installation prices. Project costs can decrease with donated materials, reduced cost materials, and volunteer labor. All quantities are estimated and a site survey should be conducted prior to implementation to verify quantities shown in the cost opinion. A signage study will determine quantity, type and locations of signage along this corridor.

Abbreviations used in the following cost opinion include:

CY = cubic yard SF= square feet EA = each LS = Lump Sum
TBD = to be determined SY= square yard

1st Street W Corridor	QTY	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal
General Requirements				
Traffic Control	1	TBD		
Temporary Erosion Control	1	TBD		
Temporary Utilities	1	TBD		
Site Grading	1	TBD		
Demolition				
Excavation	667	CY	$14.00	$9,333.33
Roundabout				
Roundabout	1	TBD		
Pavement				
4" Paved Sidewalk	2,222	SY	$70.00	$155,555.56
ADA Curb Ramps with Warning Panels	12	EA	$850.00	$10,200.00
Plantings & Seeding				
Lawn Seeding (2' Each Side of Sidewalk)	20,000	SF	$0.25	$5,000.00
Overstory Trees - 2" Caliper	26	EA	$500.00	$13,000.00
Understory Trees - 1" Caliper	24	EA	$350.00	$8,400.00
Bioretention Area (See Cost Estimate on Page 52)				
Bioretention Area	1	LS	$267,621.67	$267,621.67
Amenities (a la carte)				
Interpretive Signage	2	EA	$750.00	$1,500.00
Pedestrian Way-finding Signage	2	EA	$500.00	$1,000.00
Way-finding Signage	2	EA	$1,000.00	$2,000.00
Victor Stanley CS-10 Bench (4')	1	EA	$1,916.00	$1,916.00
Victor Stanley CS-10 Bench (6')	1	EA	$2,047.00	$2,047.00
Victor Stanley CS-296 Backless Bench (4')	1	EA	$1,632.00	$1,632.00
Victor Stanley CS-296 Backless Bench (6')	1	EA	$1,832.00	$1,832.00
Victor Stanley SD-42 Trash Receptacle	1	EA	$1,515.00	$1,515.00
			Subtotal	**$475,526.56**
		Contingency (10%)		$47,552.66
		Mobilization (15%)		$71,328.98
		Design/Engineering (15%)		$71,328.98
			TOTAL	**$665,737.18**



Proposed roundabout at intersection of Iowa Avenue and 1st Street W

1st Street Corridor W

A portion of the parking lot between 13th Avenue NW and 10th Avenue NW, could be converted to green space with bioretention cells, plantings, sidewalk, and benches. The steering committee is working with Buchanan County and private landowners to break up the "sea of concrete," as one steering committee member described it.

The bioretention cells could help alleviate some of the flooding issues along 1st Street W caused by the large amount of paved surfacing. In addition, the proximity to the schools creates a great opportunity for learning about bioretention areas. The design team recommends installing signage explaining the value of this best management practice for handling stormwater.

Substantial electrical lines run along the north side of 1st Street W. The design team is recommending ornamental trees along most of the north side of 1st Street W and overstory trees set back from the electrical lines in the proposed green space section.

10th Avenue NW to 2nd Ave NW will be reconstructed in 2024 and will include an 8-foot trail along the south side of 1st Street W.

Legend

- Overystory Tree
- Understory Tree
- ① Proposed Sidewalk
- ② Proposed Green Space
- ③ Proposed Bioretention Cells
- ④ Existing Highly-visible Crosswalk
- ⑤ Direction of view for existing conditions and proposed improvements eduts shown on the right

1st Street W Corridor

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10th Avenue NW to 2nd Ave NW will be reconstructed in 2024 and will include an 8-foot trail along the south side of 1st Street W.

South side of 1st Street W:
Updated street lights
Proposed overstory trees
Proposed sidewalk

North side of 1st Street W:
Proposed understory trees
Proposed sidewalk

Section A-A

South side of 1st Street W:
Updated street lights

North side of 1st Street W:
Proposed understory trees
Proposed sidewalk
Proposed bioretention cell
Proposed overstory tree and shrub plantings

Section B-B

Existing Conditions at 1st Street W & 13th Ave NW

Proposed Improvements

The proposed 30 feet of additional green space allows for both overstory and ornamental tree plantings, bioretention cells, sidewalk, benches, and lawn.

Independence
1st Street W Corridor

RITLAND+KUIPER Landscape Architects
Landscape Architect: Samantha Price, ASLA
Intern: Andrea Fager, Iowa State University
Iowa State University | Trees Forever | Iowa Department of Transportation

Iowa's Living Roadways community visioning 2023

1st Street W Corrior- Opinion of Probable Cost

The following cost opinions are based on estimated material quantities and contracted installation prices. Project costs can decrease with donated materials, reduced cost materials, and volunteer labor. A site survey should be conducted to verify quanties. A soils test should be completed to determine the bioretention area soil type and design to determine stormwater runoff capabilities.

Abbreviations used in the following cost opinion include:

EA = each LS = lump sum CY = cubic yards SY = square yards

SF = square foot

1st Street W Corridor - Bioretention Area	QTY	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal
General Requirements				
Traffic Control	1	LS	$5,000.00	$5,000.00
Temporary Erosion Control	1	LS	$5,000.00	$5,000.00
Temporary Utilities	1	LS	$7,500.00	$7,500.00
Site Grading	1	LS	$5,000.00	$5,000.00
Demolition				
Pavement Removal	1,433	SY	$15.00	$21,500.00
Excavation	956	CY	$14.00	$13,377.78
Pavement				
8' Paved Trail with 6" Granular Subbase	382	SY	$70.00	$26,755.56
ADA Curb Ramps with Warning Panels	6	EA	$850.00	$5,100.00
Plantings & Seeding				
Lawn Seeding	4,300	SF	$0.25	$1,075.00
Overstory Trees - 2" Caliper	8	EA	$500.00	$4,000.00
Understory Trees - 1" Caliper	12	EA	$350.00	$4,200.00
Shrubs	40	EA	$60.00	$2,400.00
Bioretention Area				
Amended Soils	4,000	SF	$18.25	$73,000.00
Bioretention Plantings	1	LS	$10,000.00	$10,000.00
Amenities (a la carte)				
Interpretive Signage	1	EA	$750.00	$750.00
Pedestrian Way-finding Signage	1	EA	$500.00	$500.00
Benches	3	EA	$2,000.00	$6,000.00
			Subtotal	**$191,158.33**
			Contingency (10%)	$19,115.83
			Mobilization (15%)	$28,673.75
			Design/Engineering (15%)	$28,673.75
			TOTAL	**$267,621.67**

Design Expertise Recommended

Projects may require help beyond the capability of the Independence visioning committee or available city staff. For this improvement project, the visioning committee should expect to engage the services of a landscape architect and civil engineer.

Proposed bioretention area with trail, signage and plantings.

Trail Connections

Connectivity Plan & Trail Improvements

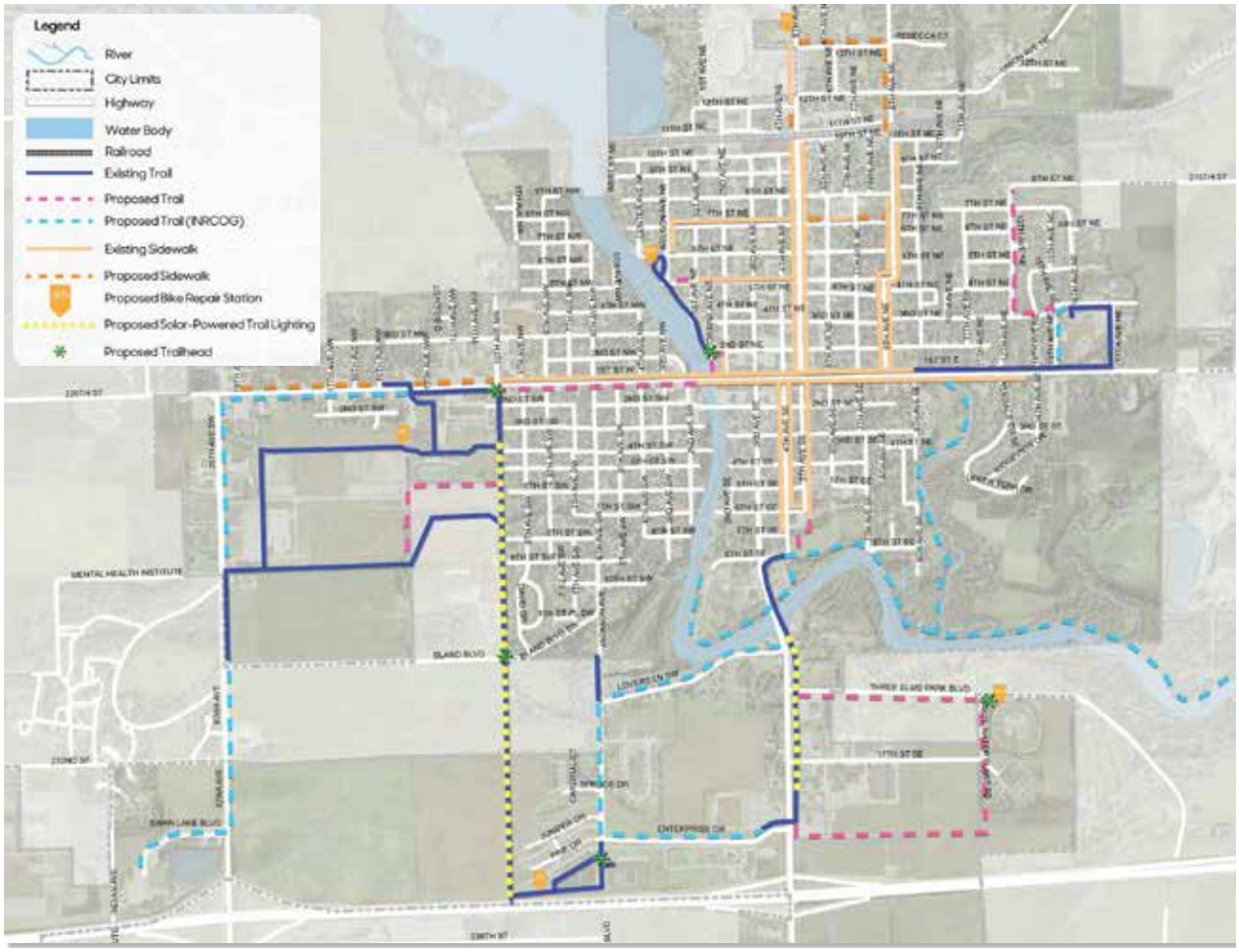
The existing trails and sidewalks in Independence are not connected, which is an issue for many residents. Improving trail amenities and connectivity was mentioned many times during the focus groups and design workshop. One resident mentioned, "There [are] areas where there [are] sidewalk and/or trails, and then there [are] areas where there's nothing and people are walking in the street," (re: What People Said, 3b).

The addition of trail amenities throughout the trail system would allow for a better user experience. Lighting on the existing trails is inconsistent and increased lighting was desired to improve trail safety and accessibility. During the design workshops aging residents expressed a desire for frequent resting places along the trails.

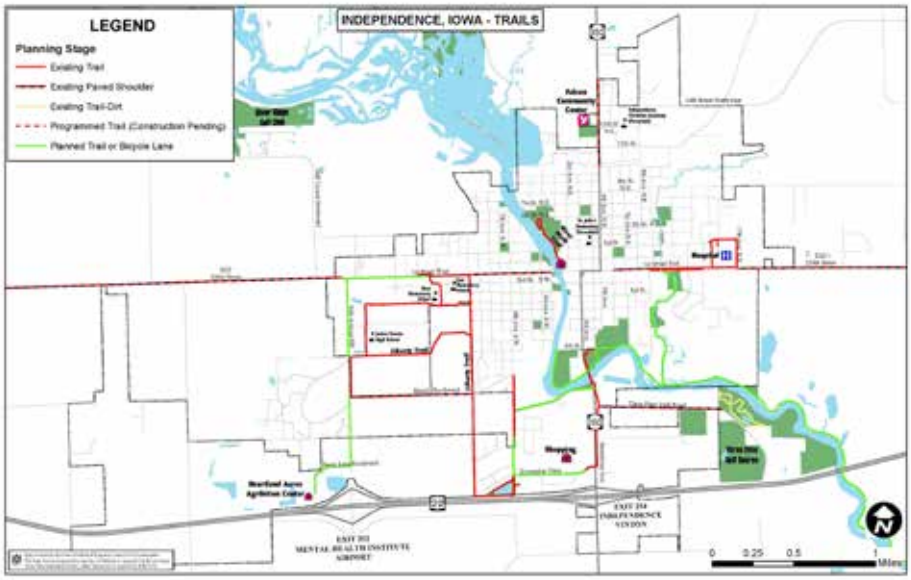
Liberty Trail currently links the west side of town to the schools, but there are no trail connections to the east side of the community with the Wapsipinicon River being the divider. "I ride my bike to...different places, and I find that all of the sudden...if you're on a trail—poof—you're off a trail... it isn't always easy to reach a destination by bike," (re: What People Said, 3b). The design team worked with INRCOG to determine what the existing connectivity issues were and what areas additional sidewalks or trails could be added. The design team recommended the addition of sidewalks and trails throughout town to better connect the systems as a whole.

Proposed trailheads throughout the community would provide trail users with a location for a rest stop, bike repair station, dog stations, trash receptacles, and directional way-finding signage to popular destinations.

Proposed amenities on existing trails include solar lighting, signage, and benches.



Proposed connectivity plan



Existing trails plan completed by INRCOG

Opinion of Probable Cost

Connectivity Plan & Trail Improvements

The following costs are meant to guide the steering committee as they determine which parts of the overall trail plan they want to focus on. Amenities and plantings are shown as a la carte items and can be easily multiplied if a project needs more than one. An overall total is not being provided, but is a means to determine costs for a variety of options that could be implemented throughout the community. Project costs can decrease with donated materials, reduced cost materials, and volunteer labor. A site survey should be conducted prior to implementation to determine site grading and quantities. Based on the project, the steering committee may need to enlist the help of a landscape architect, civil engineer, or signage company.

Overstory Tree Recommendations

Understory Tree Recommendations

The design team recommends planting a diverse palette of trees along the corridor. These recommendations are just the starting point. Additional varieties should be planted.

Abbreviations used in the following cost opinion include:

SF = square feet LS = lump sum CY = cubic yards SY = square yards
EA = each TBD = to be determined LF = linear foot

Trail Connections	QTY	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal
General Requirements				
Traffic Control	1	TBD		
Temporary Erosion Control	1	TBD		
Site Grading	1	TBD		
Parking Lot (per 1,000 SF)				
Excavation	30	CY	$14.00	$414.81
6" PCC Concrete with 6" Granular Subbase	111	SY	$70.00	$7,777.78
Handicap Parking Sign	1	EA	$150.00	$150.00
Pavement Removal for 100 LF*				
Sidewalk, 100 LF, 4" depth, 4' wide	44	SY	$15.00	$660.00
Curb & Gutter, 100 LF	100	LF	$20.00	$2,000.00
Sidewalk or Trail Installation per 100 LF*				
Granular 10' Trail (Crushed Limestone 6" Thick)	1,000	SF	$1.75	$1,750.00
4' Paved Sidewalk	45	SY	$70.00	$3,150.00
6' Paved Sidewalk	67	SY	$70.00	$4,690.00
8' Paved Trail	89	SY	$70.00	$6,230.00
10' Paved Trail	112	SY	$70.00	$7,840.00
Pavement Markings for Share-the-road	100	LF	$1.25	$125.00
ADA Curb Ramps with Warning Panels	1	EA	$850.00	$850.00
Highly-Visible Crosswalk	1	EA	$500.00	$500.00
Speed Limit Pavement Marking	2	EA	$250.00	$500.00
Share-the-road Signage	1	EA	$150.00	$150.00
Plantings for 100 LF*				
Overstory Trees - 2" Caliper	2	EA	$500.00	$1,000.00
Understory Trees - 1" Caliper	2	EA	$350.00	$700.00
Seeding at Trail Edge (6' both sides)	1,200	SF	$0.25	$300.00
Amenities (a la carte)				
Solar LED Pedstrian Lighting	1	EA	$2,500.00	$2,500.00
Interpretive Signage	1	EA	$750.00	$750.00
Pedestrian Way-finding Signage	1	EA	$500.00	$500.00
Way-finding Kiosk	1	EA	$2,000.00	$2,000.00
Bicycle Repair Station	1	EA	$2,000.00	$2,000.00
Benches	1	EA	$2,000.00	$2,000.00
			Additional fees to add to the overall cost:	
*Probable cost is for 100 linear foot of trail or sidewalk.		Contingency		10% of total cost
		Mobilization		15% of total cost
		Design/Engineering		15% of total cost
			TOTAL = overall costs + additional fees	

Trail Connections

Highway 150 Trail & 3 Elms Park Road Trail

Many residents expressed their disappointment in the disconnect to some of their favorite destinations within Independence. The Independence Baseball/Softball Complex and the Falcon Civic Center are among the top destinations that residents felt unable to access via walking or biking.

The existing pedestrian/cyclist route to the Independence Baseball/Softball Complex is a paved shoulder trail. Residents think this type of trail is not a safe way for youth to access this destination. Many residents preferred an off-road trail solution that would run along Three Elms Park Boulevard but would have a buffer between the trail and the roadway.

The Falcon Civic Center located on the north end of Independence is a great resource for the community, but people have to drive to get there because the current sidewalk stops two blocks short of this popular location. The creation of a sidewalk or trail in front of the Buchanan County Visitor Center would allow residents to walk or bike to the Falcon Civic Center since adjacent sidewalks are already in place. It would also make it easier for people to get to the visitor center on foot or on a bike.

Existing conditions

Proposed trail connection

Existing conditions

Proposed improvements

Opinion of Probable Cost

Highway 150 Trail & 3 Parks Road Trail

The following cost opinions are based on estimated material quantities and contracted installation prices. Project costs can decrease with donated materials, reduced cost materials, and volunteer labor. All quantities are estimated and a site survey should be conducted prior to implementation to verify quantities shown in the cost opinion.

Abbreviations used in the following cost opinion include:
SF = square feet LS = lump sum CY = cubic yards SY = square yards
EA = each

Highway 150 Trail	QTY	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal
General Requirements				
Traffic Control	1	LS	$1,000.00	$1,000.00
Temporary Erosion Control	1	LS	$1,500.00	$1,500.00
Site Grading	1	LS	$5,000.00	$5,000.00
8′ Trail				
Excavation	96	CY	$14.00	$1,344.00
4″ PCC w/ 6″ gravel	320	SY	$70.00	$22,400.00
Lawn/Seed Mix & Prep (2′ each side)	1440	SF	$0.50	$720.00
ADA Curb Ramp	1	EA	$850.00	$850.00
Highly-visible Crosswalk	1	LS	$500.00	$500.00
			Subtotal	**$33,314.00**
		Contingency (10%)		$3,331.40
		Mobilization (15%)		$4,997.10
		Design/Engineering (15%)		$4,997.10
			TOTAL	**$46,639.60**

3 Elms Park Road Trail	QTY	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal
General Requirements				
Traffic Control	1	LS	$2,500.00	$2,500.00
Temporary Erosion Control	1	LS	$5,000.00	$5,000.00
Site Grading	1	LS	$20,000.00	$20,000.00
8′ Trail				
Excavation	887	CY	$14.00	$12,418.00
4″ PCC w/ 6″ gravel	2365	SY	$70.00	$165,573.33
Lawn/Seed Mix & Prep (5′ each side)	26610	SF	$0.10	$2,661.00
ADA Curb Ramp	11	EA	$850.00	$9,350.00
			Subtotal	**$217,502.33**
		Contingency (10%)		$21,750.23
		Mobilization (15%)		$32,625.35
		Design/Engineering (15%)		$32,625.35
			TOTAL	**$304,503.27**

Trail Connections

2nd Street NE Sidewalk & Pocket Park

River Walk Trail is a beautiful trail along the Wapsipinicon River that dead ends in a parking lot, with no clear route to get to Brimmer Park to the south or 2nd Ave NE to the east. Both routes lead to Independence's business district on 1st Street E. The design team suggested a new sidewalk on the south side of 2nd Street NE. This link would allow River Walk Trail users to be connected to the business district via a hard surface trail or sidewalk. Improvements to the parking lot where River Walk Trail ends would create a better user experience ans would include signage directing users where to go to access the nearby shops, restaurants, and businesses.

The steering committee suggested the alleyway south of Malek Theatre be turned into a public plaza area with outdoor seating, art, festoon lighting, and decorative pavers. Changing the alley drive would also allow for replacing the curb and adding a parallel parking spot on 2nd Ave NE. The plaza area would not impact the existing parking area to the east nor the egress for the adjacent buildings.

Legend

1. Existing Sidewalks or Trails (Typical)
2. Proposed Sidewalks (Typical)
3. Proposed Public Plaza

Trail Connections

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A worn "cow path" shows the desired connection along 2nd Street NE to Riverwalk Park.

The proposed trail connection to Riverwalk Park includes a crosswalk to the existing trail and provides a paved walkway to 2nd Ave NE.

Legend

1. Existing Sidewalks or Trails (Typical)
2. Proposed Sidewalks (Typical)
3. Proposed Public Plaza

The steering committee suggested utilizing the narrow alleyway to the south of Malek Theatre for a public plaza area.

The proposed plaza space could include art, festoon lighting, planters, trash receptacles, outdoor seating, and decorative paving.

Independence
Trail Connections

RITLAND+KUIPER Landscape Architects
Landscape Architect: Samantha Price, ASLA
Intern: Andrea Fager, Iowa State University
Iowa State University | Trees Forever | Iowa Department of Transportation

Iowa's Living Roadways community visioning 2023

Opinion of Probable Cost

2nd Street NE Sidewalk & Pocket Park

The following cost opinions are based on estimated material quantities and contracted installation prices. Project costs can decrease with donated materials, reduced cost materials, and volunteer labor. All quantities are estimated and a site survey should be conducted prior to implementation to verify quantities shown in the cost opinion. The design team suggests getting pricing from several sources to ensure you get a competitive price.

Abbreviations used in the following cost opinion include:

EA = each LS = lump sum CY = cubic yards SY = square yards

2nd Street NE Sidewalk	QTY	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal
General Requirements				
Traffic Control	1	LS	$1,000.00	$1,000.00
Temporary Erosion Control	1	LS	$500.00	$500.00
4' Sidewalk				
Excavation	12	CY	$14.00	$168.00
4" PCC w/ 6" gravel	38	SY	$70.00	$2,660.00
Lawn/Seed Mix & Prep (2')	170	SF	$0.50	$85.00
Plantings				
Shrubs	20	EA	$60.00	$1,200.00
Mulch	340	SF	$1.00	$340.00
			Subtotal	**$5,953.00**
		Contingency (10%)		$595.30
		Mobilization (15%)		$892.95
		Design/Engineering (15%)		$892.95
			TOTAL	**$8,334.20**

Design Expertise Recommended

Projects may require help beyond the capability of the Independence visioning committee or available city staff. For this improvement project, the visioning committee should expect to engage the services of a landscape architect and civil engineer.

Proposed sidewalk on 2nd Street NE to River Walk Trail.

Abbreviations used in the following cost opinion include:

EA = each LS = lump sum CY = cubic yards SY = square yards
TBD = to be determined LF = linear foot SF = square foot

Pocket Park	QTY	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal
General Requirements				
Traffic Control	1	LS	$1,000.00	$1,000.00
Temporary Erosion Control	1	LS	$1,000.00	$1,000.00
Pavement				
Demolition	1	LS	$10,000.00	$10,000.00
Excavation	44	CY	$14.00	$622.22
4" PCC w/ 6" gravel (Subbase for Brick Paving)	133	SY	$70.00	$9,333.33
Decorative Brick Paving	1,200	SF	$20.00	$24,000.00
6" Concrete Curb	14	LF	$20.00	$280.00
Site Utilities				
Electrical	1	TBD		
Amenities				
Festoon Lighting	1	LS	$15,000.00	$15,000.00
Bistro Tables	4	EA	$3,000.00	$12,000.00
Planters	2	EA	$500.00	$1,000.00
Mural	1	TBD		
			Subtotal	**$72,235.56**
			Contingency (10%)	$7,223.56
			Mobilization (15%)	$10,835.33
			Design/Engineering (15%)	$10,835.33
			TOTAL	**$101,129.78**

Design Expertise Recommended

Projects may require help beyond the capability of the Independence visioning committee or available city staff. For this improvement project, the visioning committee should expect to engage the services of a landscape architect, lighting company, and civil engineer.

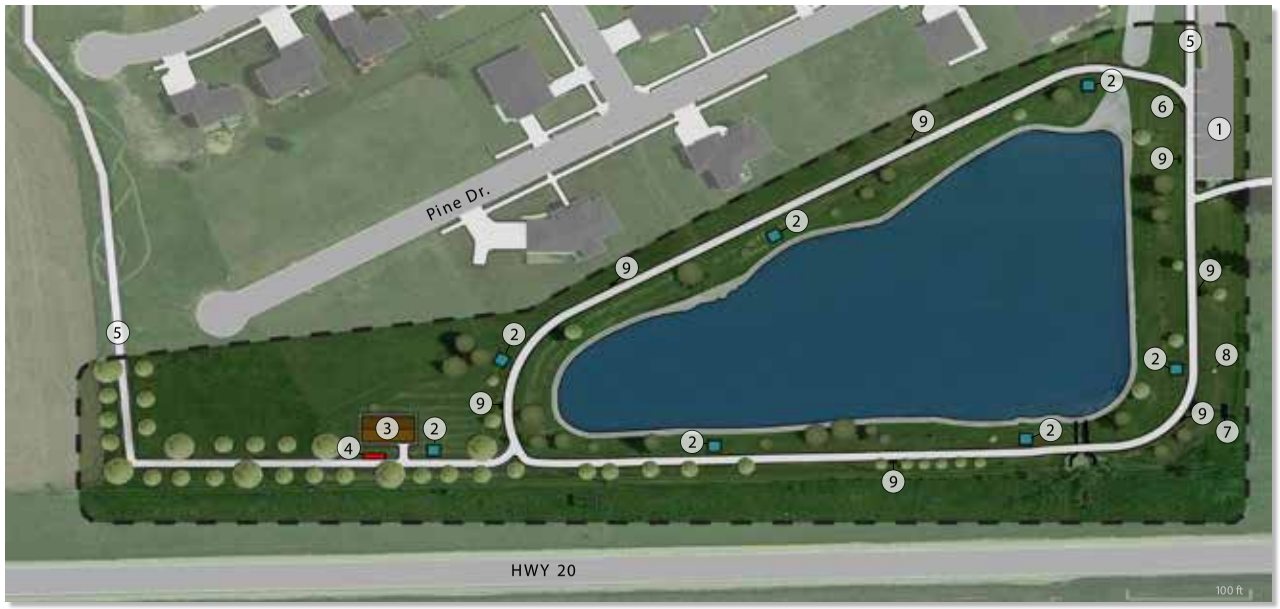
Proposed pocket park south of Malek Theatre.

Triangle Park Trailhead

Triangle Park features a loop trail with parking, benches, a little free library, and shade trees. Additional amenities could be added to this park to make it a destination trailhead. The design team is proposing the addition of a picnic shelter, bike repair station, and several outdoor exercise stations. Community-wide improvements such as solar lighting, trash receptacles, benches, and signage could also be added along the existing trail.

Additional trail connections to the north along Jackson Avenue and east along Enterprise Drive will link Triangle Park to the proposed community-wide trail system.

Proposed Triangle Park enhancements include a picnic shelter, bike repair station, tree plantings, signage, and exercise stations.



Proposed Triangle Park Trailhead improvements.

Legend

1. Proposed Parking Lot Improvements
2. Proposed Exercise Station
3. Proposed Picnic Shelter
4. Proposed Bike Repair Station
5. Existing Trail
6. Existing Little Free Library
7. Existing Town Sign
8. Existing Flag Pole
9. Existing Bench

Residents asked for improvements along existing trails such as the trail around Triangle Park.

Proposed Triangle Park enhancements include a picnic shelter, bike repair station, tree plantings, signage, and exercise stations.

Triangle Park Trailhead

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Additional trail connections to the north along Jackson Avenue and east along Enterprise Drive will link Triangle Park to the proposed community-wide trail system.

Independence
Triangle Park Trailhead

RITLAND+KUIPER Landscape Architects
Landscape Architect: Samantha Price, ASLA
Intern: Andrea Fager, Iowa State University
Iowa State University | Trees Forever | Iowa Department of Transportation

Iowa's Living Roadways community visioning 2023

Triangle Park Trailhead- Opinion of Probable Cost

The following cost opinion is based on estimated material quantities and contracted installation prices. Project costs can decrease with donated materials, reduced cost materials, and volunteer labor. All quantities are estimated and a site survey should be conducted prior to implementation to verify quantities shown in the cost opinion. The design team suggests getting pricing from several sources to ensure you get a competitive price.

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EA = each LS = lump sum CY = cubic yards SY = square yards

Triangle Park Improvements	QTY	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal
General Requirements				
Site Survey	1	LS	$5,000.00	$5,000.00
Demolition & Site Grading	1	LS	$5,000.00	$5,000.00
Parking Lot				
Excavation	83	CY	$14.00	$1,166.67
6" PCC Concrete with 6" Granular Subbase	500	SY	$70.00	$35,000.00
Handicap Parking Sign	1	EA	$150.00	$150.00
Plantings				
Overstory Trees - 2" Caliper	10	EA	$500.00	$5,000.00
Understory Trees - 1" Caliper	6	EA	$350.00	$2,100.00
Amenities				
12' x 18' Picnic Shelter	1	LS	$25,000.00	$25,000.00
Way-finding Kiosk	1	LS	$2,000.00	$2,000.00
Benches	1	EA	$1,200.00	$1,200.00
Exercise Stations with Paved Surfaced with Rubber Surfacing	7	EA	$10,000.00	$70,000.00
Bicycle Repair Station	1	EA	$2,000.00	$2,000.00
Picnic Tables	2	EA	$1,500.00	$3,000.00
Bicycle Rack	2	EA	$750.00	$1,500.00
			Subtotal	**$158,116.67**
			Contingency (20%)	$31,623.33
			Mobilization (15%)	$23,717.50
			Design/Engineering (15%)	$23,717.50
			TOTAL	**$237,175.00**

Design Expertise Recommended

Projects may require help beyond the capability of the Independence visioning committee or available city staff. For this improvement project, the visioning committee should expect to engage the services of a landscape architect, signage company, and civil engineer.

Proposed Triangle Park Trailhead improvements.

Signage & Way-finding

Many residents expressed their disappointment in the disconnect to some of their favorite destinations within Independence. The Independence Baseball/Softball Complex and the Falcon Civic Center are among the top destinations that residents felt unable to access via walking or biking.

The existing pedestrian/cyclist route to the Independence Baseball/Softball Complex is a paved shoulder trail. Residents think this thye of trail is not a safe way for youth to access this destination. Many residents preferred an off-road trail solution that would run along Three Elms Park Boulevard but would have a buffer between the trail and the roadway.

The Falcon Civic Center located on the north end of Independence is a great resource for the community, but people have to drive to get there because the current sidewalk stops two blocks short of this popular location. The creation of a sidewalk or trail in front of the Buchanan County Visitor Center would allow residents to walk or bike to the Falcon Civic Center since adjacent sidewalks are already in place. It would also make it easier for people to get to the visitor centeron foot or on a bike.

Proposed way-finding signage on 1st Street W directing people to Liberty Trail.

Proposed way-finding signage for pedestrian and vehicular use

Proposed way-finding kiosk

Proposed interpretive signage could be used for way-finding or to showcase historical information about Independence.

Existing entrance sign

Existing city trail map created by INRCOG.

Proposed way-finding signage on 1st Street W directing people to Liberty Trail.

Signage & Way-finding

The steering committee wants to create cohesive way-finding signage that could be used to help people locate destinations while visiting Independence.

During the focus group meeting one resident said, "...when [my family goes] biking, we usually look for a trail...but there [are none] that we know of...so we go on the sidewalks [on the east side of town], but then we have to stop because there's a lot of traffic," (re: What People Said, 3b).

The steering committee mentioned that visitors struggle with locating destinations in Independence, including restaurants, lodging, and entertainment (re: What People Said, 3b). The design team created a palette of way-finding signage using the existing logo that could showcase various destinations such as Liberty Trail, the downtown, and Riverwalk Park.

Independence
Signage & Way-finding

RITLAND+KUIPER Landscape Architects
Landscape Architect: Samantha Price, ASLA
Intern: Andrea Fager, Iowa State University
Iowa State University | Trees Forever | Iowa Department of Transportation

Iowa's Living Roadways community VISIONING 2023

Signage & Way-finding - Opinion of Probable Cost

The following cost opinion is based on estimated material quantities and contracted installation prices. Project costs can decrease with donated materials, reduced cost materials, and volunteer labor. All quantities are estimated and a site survey should be conducted prior to implementation to verify quantities shown in the cost opinion. The design team suggests getting pricing from several sources to ensure you get a competitive price.

Abbreviations used in the following cost opinion include:
EA = each

Signage + Way-finding*	QTY	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal
Vehicular Way-finding Signage	1	EA	$1,000.00	$1,000.00
Signage Cap	1	EA	$350.00	$350.00
Pedestrian Way-finding Signage	1	EA	$500.00	$500.00
Way-finding Kiosk	1	EA	$2,000.00	$2,000.00
Interpretive Signage	1	EA	$750.00	$750.00
*The total cost of the project is variable depending on quantity and what type of sign is used. A way-finding study should be done to determine all the destinations the community would like to show.				

Design Expertise Recommended

Projects may require help beyond the capability of the Independence visioning committee or available city staff. For this improvement project, the visioning committee should expect to engage the services of a landscape architect, signage company, graphic designer and electrical engineer.

Implementation Strategies

The Visioning Program is just the beginning of the planning process for implementation of projects that will contribute to an enhanced quality of life in Independence. Although there is much value in data gathering, analysis, conclusions and recommendations, the greatest value is providing the residents of Independence with the opportunity to look at their community from different perspectives and to motivate future positive change. It is the design team's intent to provide the community with a framework for significant future development and enhancement of community resources. It is recommended that projects be approached individually, keeping in mind some may occur at the same time or may require phasing to be completed. Short-term projects are those that can be more easily accomplished or address safety issues. Long-range projects will need to be implemented as funding allows. Based on the strategy that early success builds momentum, we recommend the first projects be those that can be more easily accomplished and be highly visible.

Where to start: The sidewalk from River Walk Trail along the south side of 2nd Street NE would be a great starting point. This connection was well received at the public presentation and would improve connectivity in the downtown area.

1st Street W Corridor: 10th Street to the Wapsipinicion Bridge is slated for construction in 2024. Updated lighting, tree plantings, and new signage could be implemented during construction. Plans to include any additional amenities should be considered immediately so funding can be secured.

Most residents loved the proposed roundabout because it is safer and would allow better traffic flow. Significant engineering and design would be completed before this can be implemented. Continue showing the public the graphics and the idea of a roundabout to gain acceptance on this significant change.

As the remaining portions of 1st Street W are redeveloped, plans should include where additional trail and sidewalks connections could be made, improved lighting, and signage locations.

The first step for the bioretention area is to secure an easement for the area on private property. A runoff study should be conducted to determine how much runoff the area receives to determine the bioretention size needed. Additional soils testing and stormwater calculations will be needed to finalize the study for the project.

Trail Connections: New sidewalks or trails throughout the community can be phased as time and resources allow. The city of Independence is fortunate to have a significant amount of existing trails. Adding way-finding signage calling out these trails would be a good 1st step project.

The committee should begin discussions with Buchanan County regarding the off-road trail to the Softball/Baseball Complex because this area is not within city limits.

The trails connections information should be shared with INRCOG and included as part of its overall trails master plan for Independence.

Signage & Way-finding: Due to the extensive need for way-finding signage throughout Independence, a study should be completed first to determine the locations, destinations and signage type. This project could be phased as funding allows, with the first signs being destinations such as Liberty Trail, Triangle Park, and the Softball/Baseball Complex, which were all mentioned throughout the public input meetings

Triangle Park Trailhead: A great first step for this project would be to pave the parking area to allow for ADA-accessible access to the existing trail. Additional amenities can be added as funding is secured. The steering committee could look into a REAP grant for the shelter house, site amenities, and plantings.

The community was invited to review the concept boards before the Friday evening varsity football game.

Available Resources

There are many creative ways that communities can raise the resources necessary to fund and implement projects. The following list is a compilation of various sources and opportunities for funding the projects conceptualized during the visioning process. This list is not all-inclusive; it is meant to serve as a tool to assist in brainstorming ideas.

Funding Opportunities

- Grants
- Partnerships (private and public)
- Trusts and endowments
- Fundraising and donations
- Memorials
- Volunteer labor
- Low-interest loans
- Implementation of project in phases

Funding Sources

- Iowa Department of Transportation
- Iowa Department of Natural Resources
- Iowa Department of Education
- Iowa Department of Economic Development
- Utility companies
- Trees Forever

Grant Programs

- Alliant Energy and Trees Forever Branching Out Program
- Federal Surface Transportation Program (STP)
- Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP)
- Iowa DOT/DNR Fund Iowa
- Iowa DOT Iowa's Living Roadways Projects Program
- Iowa DOT Living Roadways Trust Fund Program
- Iowa DOT Pedestrian Curb Ramp Construction Program
- Iowa DOT Statewide Transportation Enhancement Funding
- Iowa DNR Recreation Infrastructure Program
- Land and Water Conservation Fund
- National Recreational Trails Program
- Pheasants Forever
- Revitalization Assistance for Community Improvement (RACI) Grant Program
- State Recreational Trails Program
- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

Appendix A

Refer to the full Community Project Funding Guide at:
https://treesforever.org/Community-Project-Funding-Guide/

Trees Forever Community Project Funding Guide

The following shows what categories are in the table of contents. Refer to the online guide which includes specific grants available for each category of the table of contents.

Table of Contents

Appendix B

Refer to the full IDOT funding guide at: https://iowadot.gov/grants-programs

The full list is available on the website. The following grants are not all of the potential funding sources but could be used as a starting point:

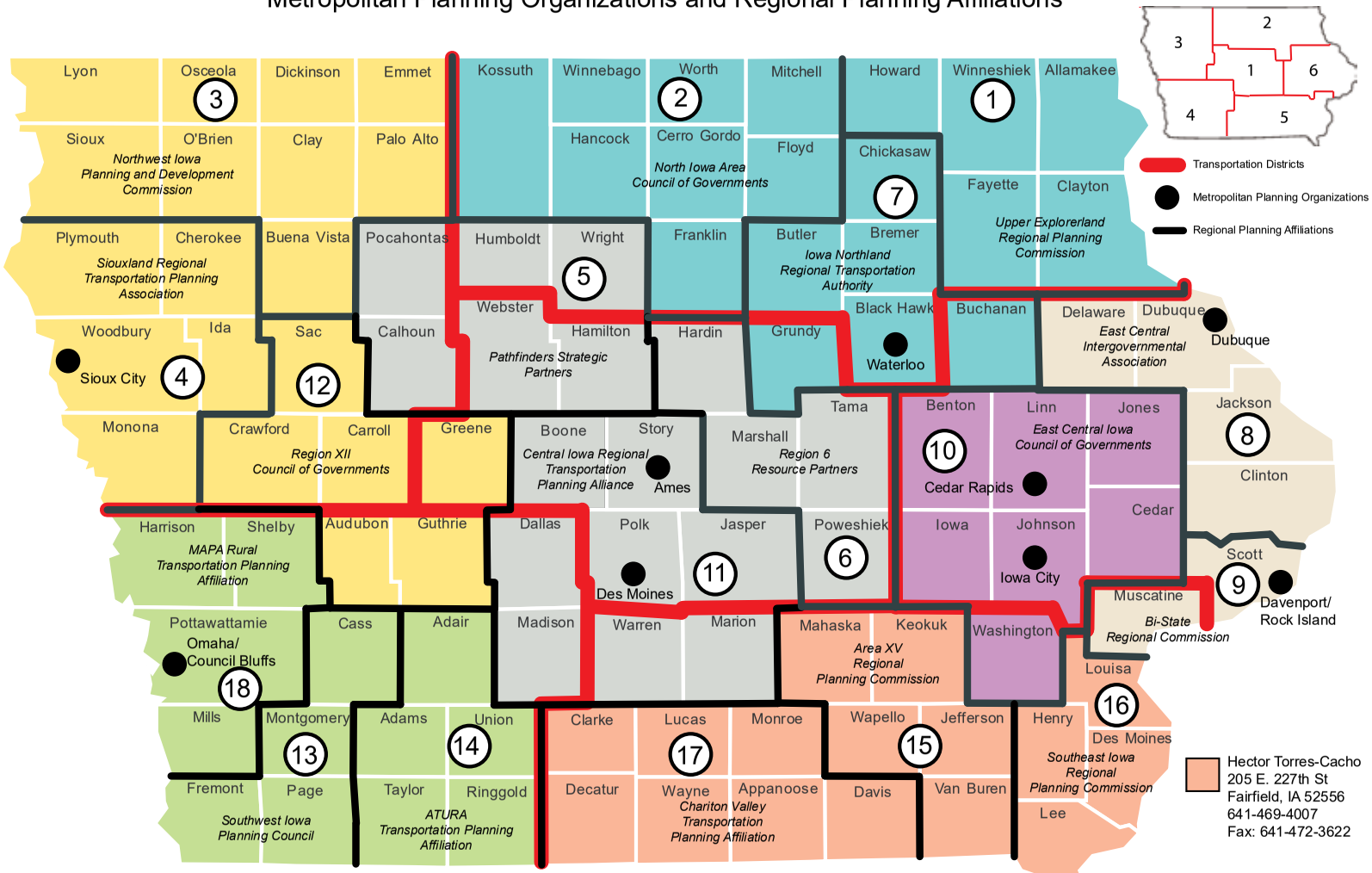
- **DOT/DNR Fund** for trails and enhancments
- **Transportation Alternatives Program (Ta Set-Aside Or Tap)** for safe routes to school, trails and enhancements, and recreational trails
- **Living Roadways Trust Fund** fortrails and enhancements
- **Federal And State Recreational Trails** for trails and enhancements

District Transportation Planners' Areas of Responsibility

Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Regional Planning Affiliations

IOWA DOT

July 2023



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