

# OUR TOWN ROCKS



Annual Report 2018  
Community Visioning Program



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# Introduction

The Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program was born of an effort to provide design services to small 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.

The Community Visioning Program integrates landscape planning and design with sustainable action to assist community leaders and volunteers in making sound and meaningful decisions about their local landscape. The program empowers local leaders through a planning process that results in a transportation enhancement plan reflecting the values and identity of the community.

A committee of local residents participates in a series of steps toward creating a conceptual plan, including:

- Identifying issues
- Investigating the physical and cultural dimensions of landscape issues

- Setting goals for change
- Developing strategies to meet those goals
- Creating an implementation plan

Throughout the process, the committee receives support from the technical experts at Trees Forever, a professional landscape architecture firm, and the Iowa State University Department of Landscape Architecture.

The sustainability and success of the program is evident by the number of communities with which it has collaborated. Since Iowa's Living Roadways was created in 1996, 232 communities have participated in Community Visioning, more than a dozen of which have gone through the process more than once.

The results of ongoing evaluation show how the program has impacted Iowa communities (see impacts below). Furthermore, our case studies of successful visioning communities support our belief that engaging local residents generates the knowledge necessary to make changes that the community as a whole will embrace.



ABOUT 98% of visioning communities complete at least one project.



NEARLY 50% of visioning communities complete four or more projects.



NEARLY 75% of communities funded projects through local volunteers.



NEARLY 85% of visioning steering committees are still active in some way.



Representatives FROM 63% of communities reported that the program had a positive impact on their town.



MORE THAN 60% of those communities reported that the program positively affected aesthetics and the economy.



OF THOSE COMMUNITIES, 100% identified improved quality of life as a positive impact.

## 2018 Community Visioning Program

The 2018 visioning communities are Coon Rapids, Corning, Decorah, Forest City, Glidden, Graettinger, Merville, Peterson, Plymouth, and Wapello.

The annual report summarizes the essence of the year-long Community Visioning process and the main ideas developed by the design team for each town. In each community summary, we present images from the concept plan, as well as data collected from focus groups as part of the transportation assets and barriers assessment. For five communities – Coon Rapids, Decorah, Forest City, Glidden and Wapello – we also provide selected results from random-sample surveys.

### Focus Groups

We invited residents with different transportation needs to participate in focus groups. In most communities, participants were separated into five user groups and the steering committee, which are defined below.

Each user group identified and mapped assets and barriers, as well as desired improvements. The ISU research team analyzed the focus-group maps and transcripts, giving the steering committees insight into how residents perceive the local transportation system.

### Design Proposals

Based on information gathered from the focus groups, a transportation inventory, an assessment of the local bioregion, and survey results (in five communities), the steering committees in each community identified and prioritized goals. The design team for each community developed a range of design proposals to address these goals.

Together the design proposals work to highlight important community features, establish or strengthen city identity, and elevate aesthetics. The projects also aim to improve local transportation systems for all user types.

## Transportation User Types



**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.



NEOLA

CORNER

123 YEARS

MOBILE EMERGENCY TREATMENT CENTER  
FIRST AID

Proton



# Communities

# Coon Rapids

Coon Rapids (population 1305), located in western Iowa, has a rich history tied to the development of hybrid corn and the benefit of being located adjacent to Whiterock Conservancy. But with recent changes in the local economy, Coon Rapids applied to the visioning program for assistance in making some community improvements to return it to the busy town it once was.

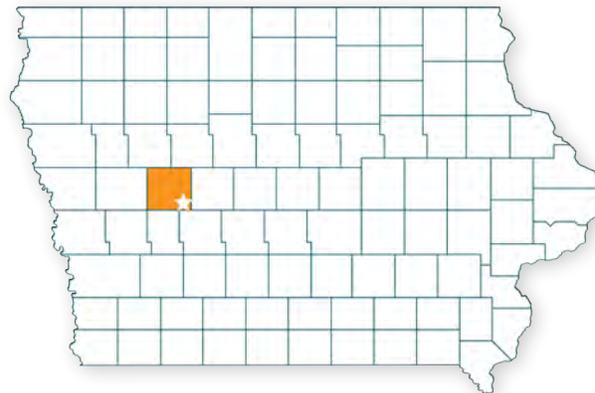
## Community Assessments

Focus-group participants in Coon Rapids feel that their town is safe and has more amenities than most small towns in Iowa. Residents identified the high-quality school system, the water park, Whiterock Conservancy, the river, the county fairgrounds, and local organizations and businesses as assets. At the same time, many areas in town are difficult to walk or bike because of poor quality sidewalks and a lack of crosswalks. The river could use better canoeing access, parks could benefit from beautification, and many areas of town are missing streetlights.

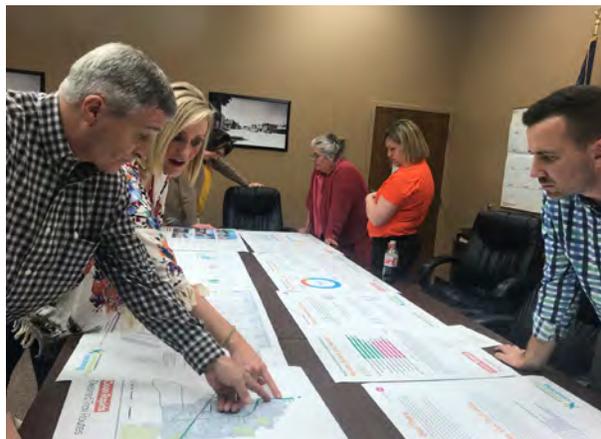
## Planning and Design Summary

Based on information obtained through the community assessments, the visioning committee identified four priority areas:

- Enhanced Community Entrance – Add a gateway monument and landscaping.
- Gathering/Plaza Space – Convert the existing gravel lot south of Railway Street between South 5th and 6th Avenues to a community gathering space, add a stage/performance area, a farmers market pavilion, a play area, a viewing mound, and an open lawn area.
- Downtown Streetscape – Update Main Street with bump-outs, street trees, stormwater outlets, lighting, site furnishings, and widened sidewalks; consider implementing permeable pavement in parking areas; and make ADA-accessibility improvements.
- Trail Connection – Extend the trail to create a complete loop, add a pedestrian bridge, and create a green buffer between the sidewalk and the road.



**Trees Forever Facilitator:** *Leslie Berckes*  
**Landscape Architects:** *Casey Byers and Shannon Gapp, Bolton & Menk*  
**Intern:** *Mahsa Adib*



*Review of community assessments*

## Steering Committee:

*Dave Burmeister*  
*Chris Eddy*  
*Liz Garst*  
*Shelly Greving*  
*Jes Leighty*  
*Katie Mason*  
*Nathan Muench*  
*Charlie Nixon*  
*Sara Roetman*

1

"So we have some very nice trails, but they're just not all connected together. They just end."



2

"Main Street in general, I think the gutters tend to get filled, and we have a lot of water."



2

"When the winter is up and flooding, we can't get into the bridge on Highway 141 because it will be under water."



3

"...on Fifth and Sixth Avenues, the railroad tracks aren't very conducive for crossing by foot or by bicycle."

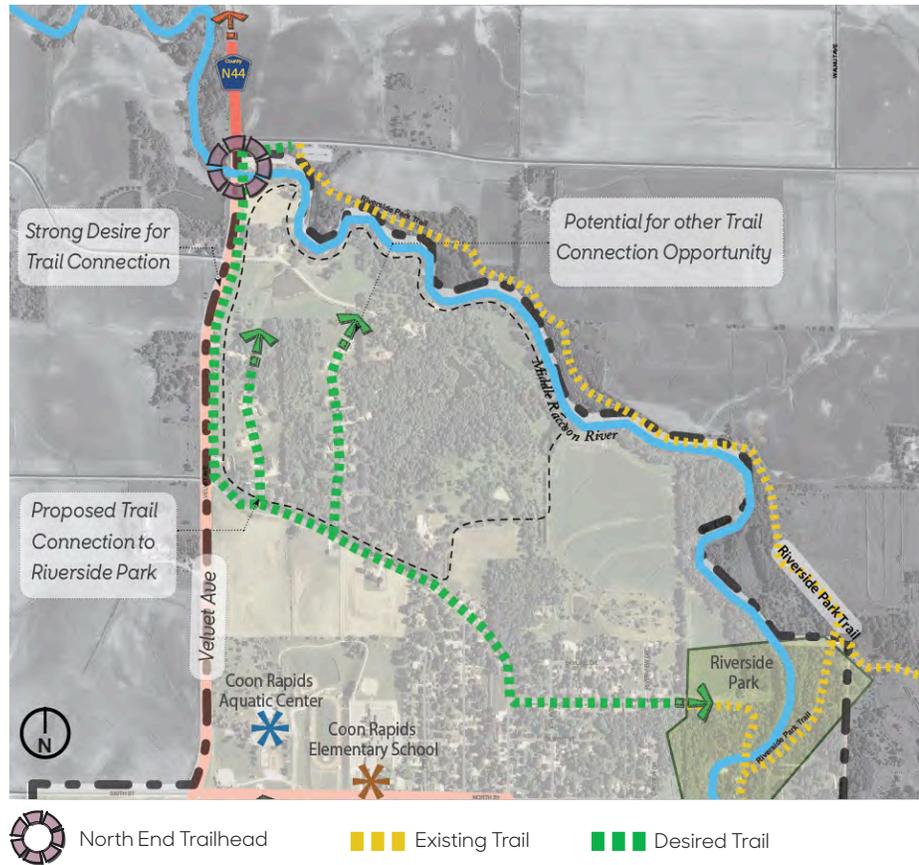


4

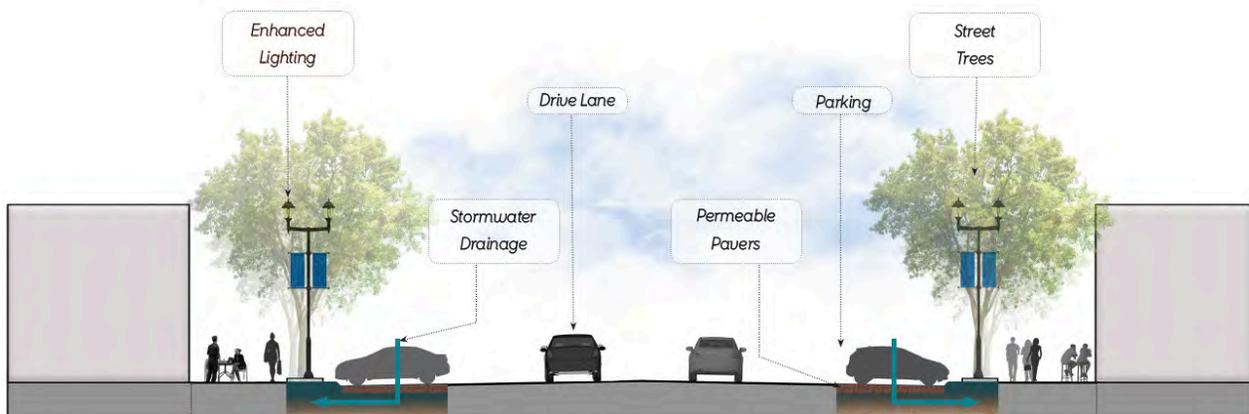
"...before you see Coon Rapids, it takes longer to see Coon Rapids because you don't have any buildings. Looks like there's nothing there."



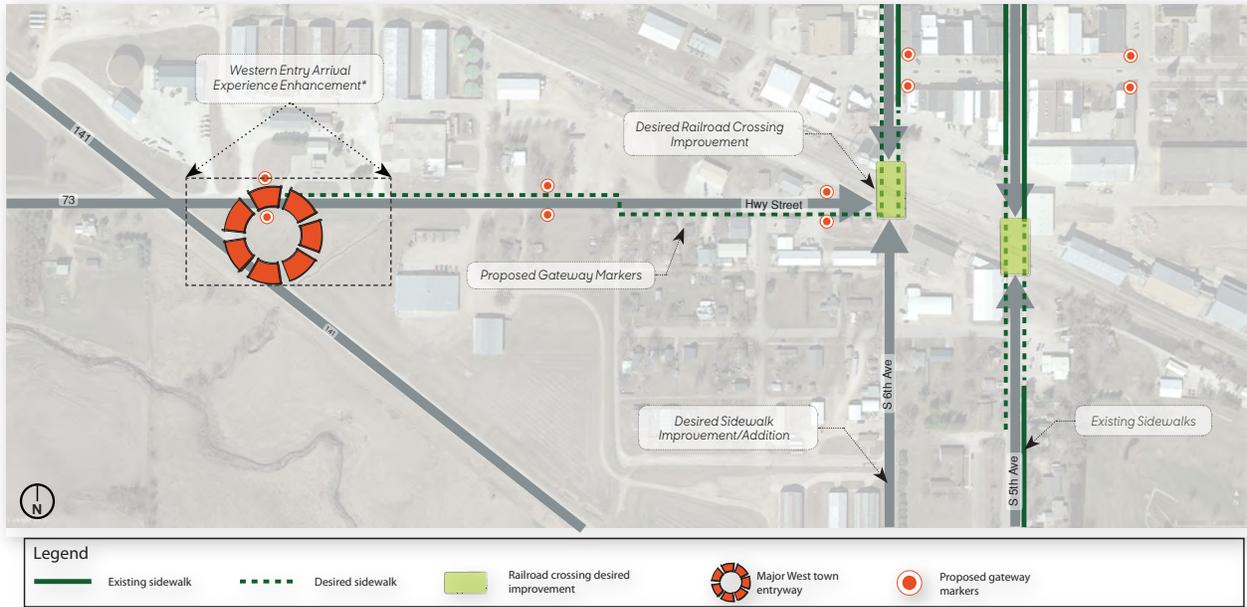
**1** Both focus-group participants and survey respondents expressed the need for trail connections. In response, the design team developed a trail plan that creates a complete loop within Coon Rapids.



**2** Proposed improvements to Main Street incorporate safety, aesthetic and ecological elements. Safety is promoted through removal of central street parking to increase visibility for pedestrians and drivers. Removal of this parking will also allow the community to widen the walks on both sides of the street and will provide space for outdoor dining, street trees, planting areas, gateway markers and other aesthetic elements. Incorporating crosswalks and decorative paving will designate separate spaces for pedestrians and motorists and will heighten visibility of both uses within downtown.



**3** Focus-group participants noted the rough railroad crossings at Fifth and Sixth Avenues as barriers to pedestrians and cyclists. The Highway Street “arrival experience” proposal incorporates railroad crossing improvements to address the issue.



**4** Also a component of the “arrival experience” proposal, this monument would extend the 6th Ave theme to provide continuity and enhance community pride.

# Corning

Corning (population 1,645) is the county seat of Adams County and is located at the intersection of Highways 34 and 148. The community is home to a wealth of outdoor recreation venues, including the East Nodaway River flowing through the south end of town, several historic parks, Lake Binder just northeast of town, and Lake Icaria to the north. Lack of access to these resources, as well as connectivity and walkability throughout town, are issues facing the community.

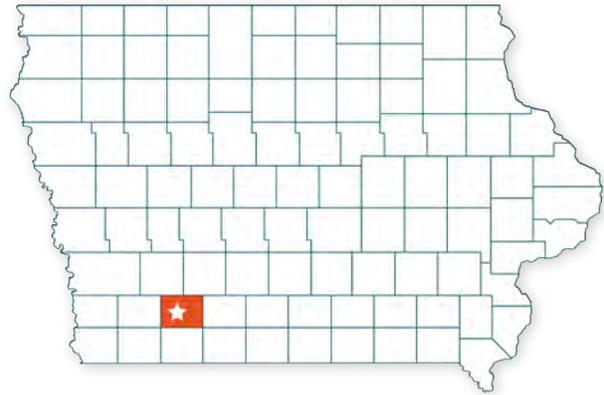
## Community Assessments

The transportation assets and barriers focus groups revealed that the lack of walkability/bikability in town is a major concern among residents. Improving the trail system is a high priority, as well as providing safe access to the East Nodaway River and other local natural resources and amenities. Participants identified poor and missing sidewalks as an issue as well.

## Planning and Design Summary

The Corning steering committee set priorities that addressed the concerns of residents and the design team developed a concept plan consisting of the following components:

- Trail System – Increase connectivity among community assets, particularly connecting Corning’s natural resources to Main Street.
- Natural Resources – Improve accessibility to the river by repurposing the city dump site as an access point and by adding a pedestrian connection to Davis Street.
- Sidewalk Safety – Ensure that pedestrians have the capability to move through town on ADA-compliant sidewalks with sufficient lighting.
- Signage and Way-finding – Introduce an attractive and cohesive signage scheme to enhance Corning’s visual appearance and accessibility for visitors.
- Main Street Landscape – Restructure Main Street intersections with painted crosswalks and curb bump-outs to improve pedestrian comfort, address stormwater runoff, and enhance streetscape aesthetics.



**Trees Forever Facilitator:** *Brad Riphagen*

**Landscape Architects:** *David Stokes and Eric Doll, Jeffrey L. Bruce & Company*

**Interns:** *Rosie Manzo and Jeremy Johnson*



*Design workshop*

## Steering Committee:

*Judy Beckett*

*Michelle Birt*

*Janice Leonard*

*Kennedy Moore*

*Marilea Mullen*

*Bert Peckham*

*Jerry Peckham*

*Beth Waddle*

1

"The sidewalks are too uneven and broken up, including my own. It's not safe for my husband to be out walking. We walk in the street if we do...I think most of us would like to walk outside...we would...if we had a facility to."

2

"There's just not solid sidewalks ... I was training for a long run and I had to run out on the highway because there's just not a good area."



3

"On Main Street...it could be accessible for wheelchairs if they put, even for us, the bumpy dots on the corners and made them slope better. It would be safer for everybody. Really, some of these places are kind of [unsafe] when you are walking and you trip."

2

"[At the intersection between Grove and 6th Street] my friend...thought... 'I'm going to go ride my bike,' ...and she wrecked her bike and skinned her whole entire chin up...It's a bad street to just ride anything on it, except a vehicle."

1

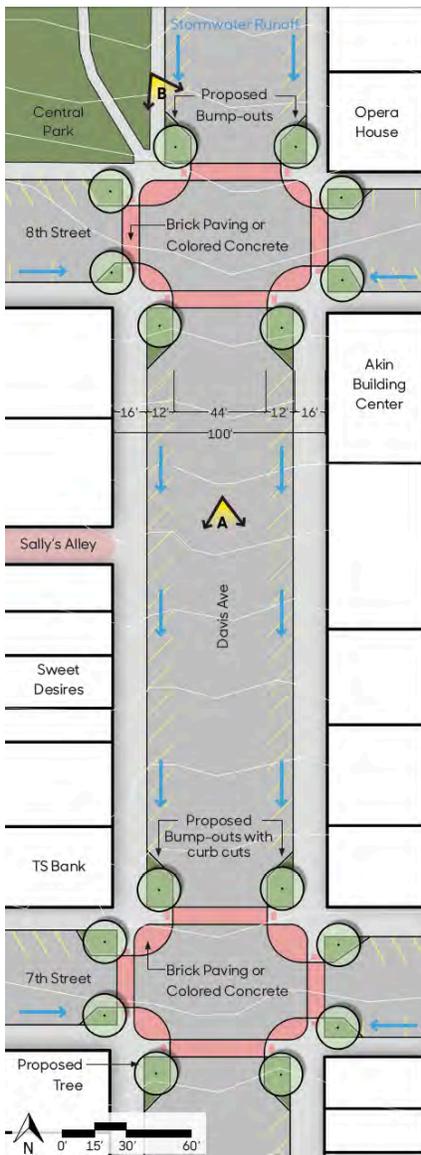
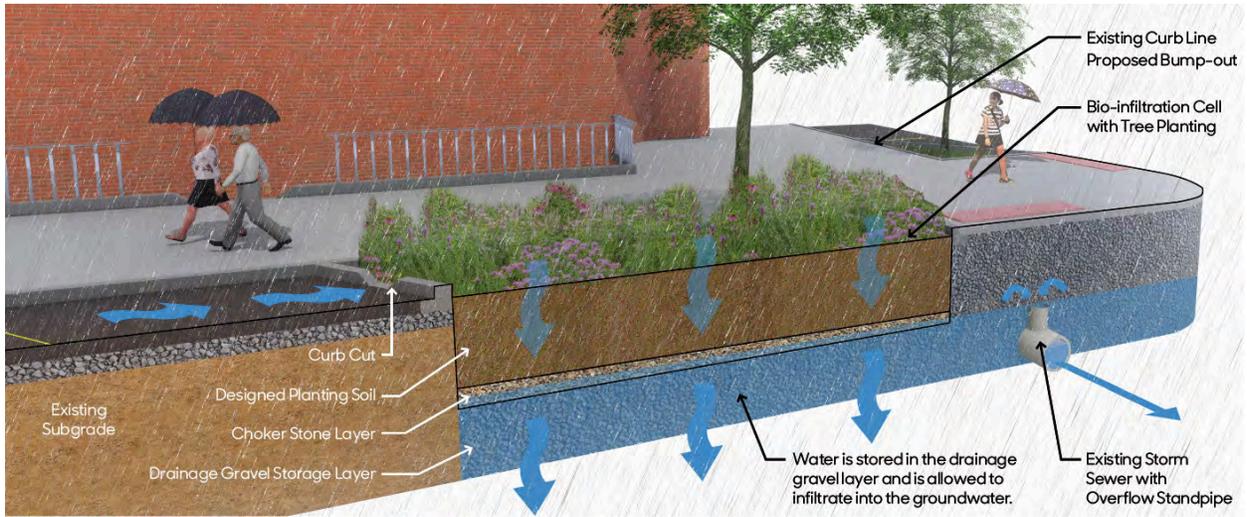
As identified at the community assessment and goal setting workshops, many residents desire safe ways to walk and bike in Corning. The proposed community trails are a combination of separate trails, such as the one shown below, and shared roadways.



2

Sidewalk safety issues were raised by multiple demographic groups during the transportation assets and barriers focus groups. Installing new and ADA-accessible sidewalks improves walkability in the community and promotes outdoor recreation.





**3** The vegetated bump-outs proposed for Main Street intersections not only enhance the pedestrian experience by shortening crossing distances and beautifying the area, but also capture stormwater runoff and clean and filter the water before it reaches the river.

# Decorah

Nestled in the hills of northeast Iowa, Decorah (population 8,127) offers an extensive trail and sidewalk system that encourages active living and provides residents access to many parts of town. The community is home to a number of parks and natural areas, as well as museums, an engaged college, popular restaurants, and microbreweries that attract many visitors.

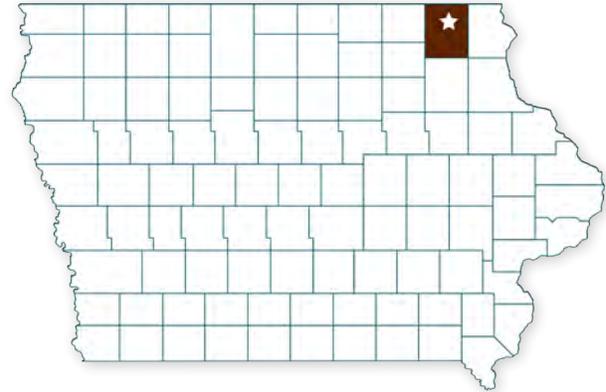
## Community Assessments

The results of the focus-group and random-sample survey assessments show that safe pedestrian crossings, particularly for youth, are a high priority among residents. The assessments also reinforce the importance of trails and trail connections. People want pedestrian/cyclist connection between downtown and the wealth of trails and natural resources in the area.

## Planning and Design Summary

Resident input played an important role in the goal-setting process, through which the Decorah visioning committee identified the following projects:

- Accessibility and Connectivity – Address residents' desire to have a completed and accessible sidewalk system and connect downtown to the many parks and trails.
- Intersection Safety – Improve visibility at busy intersections, making them more pedestrian friendly.
- Traffic Calming – Add planted medians, street trees, visible pedestrian crossings, and signage on major arterial roads such as Montgomery Street.
- Way-finding and Signage – Introduce an attractive and cohesive signage scheme to enhance Decorah's visual appearance and accessibility for visitors.
- College Drive Improvements – Use the right-of-way as a barrier from traffic with added vegetation, design a new trail, and limit vehicles crossing the pedestrian way.
- Heivly Street Improvements – Realign and reorganize the roadway to accommodate a multipurpose trail, green infrastructure, and improved pedestrian access.



**Trees Forever Facilitator:** *Meredith Borchardt*

**Landscape Architects:** *David Stokes and Eric Doll, Jeffrey L. Bruce & Company*

**Interns:** *Rosie Manzo and Jeremy Johnson*



*Design workshop*

## Steering Committee:

*Don Arendt*

*Lorraine Borowski*

*April Bril*

*Jeremy Bril*

*Ross Hadley*

*Steve Luse*

*Kevin Nelson*

*Andy Nimrod*

*Nathan Thompson*

*Scott Timm*

*Kristina Wiltgen*

*Joel Zook*

1

"We have great trails...but downtown isn't really connected to those trails."



2

"For the most part the sidewalks are great, but if you have a stroller of any sort, there [are] a lot of stairs, so you have to kind of like memorize where those are, and remember to cross the street before you get to them."



3

"As you get down into the Phelps Park area, there's no sidewalk whatsoever."



4

"When I'm walking...I almost get run over sometimes because there's no sidewalk."

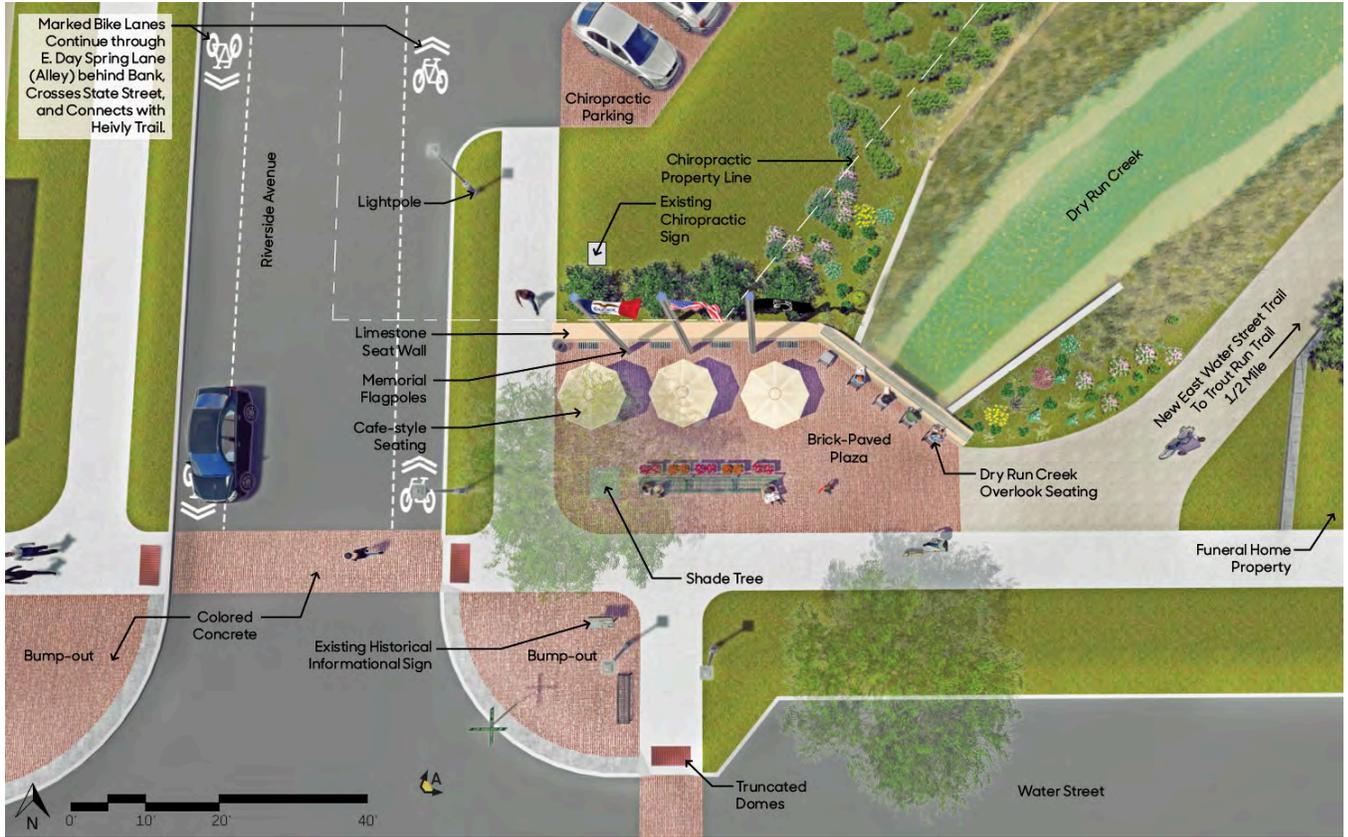


5

"It's not well delineated between pedestrian areas and cars, I don't think, especially along College Drive."



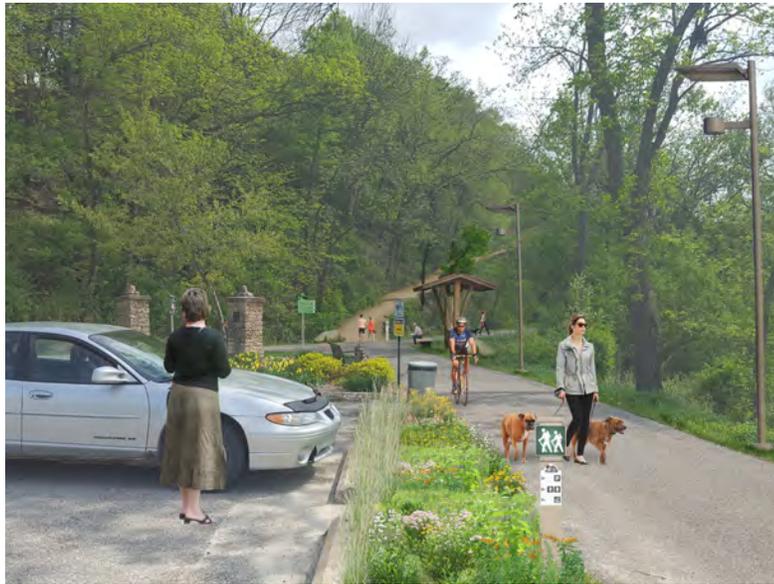
**1** The proposed East Water Street Trail would create a connection between Trout Run Trail and downtown Decorah, starting from a plaza at Riverside Avenue and Water Street that features a limestone seat wall, cafe-style seating, memorial flags, and shade trees.



**2** Enhancements such as curb ramps, as shown here at the entrance to The Depot on Montgomery Street, would make it easier for cyclists, parents pushing strollers, and persons in wheelchairs or on scooters to access local services and amenities.



- 3** A natural-surface trail is proposed from the Dug Road Trailhead to Phelps Park, providing needed pedestrian and cyclist access to the park.



- 4** A multipurpose trail parallel to Heivly Street would provide a safe route for youth traveling to and from the elementary school and the recreation areas north of downtown.

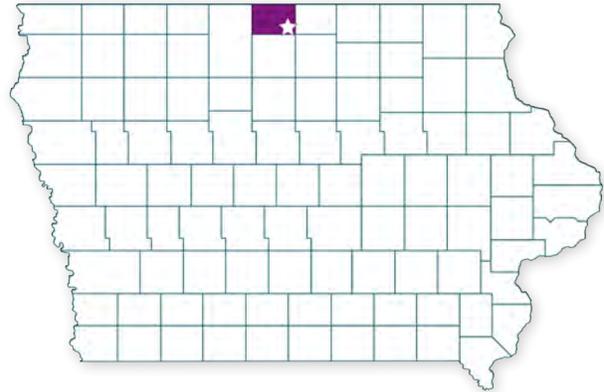


- 5** Converting College Drive to a three-lane street effectively decreases street width, providing space for a defined trail with integrated green infrastructure and way-finding signage.



# Forest City

Forest City (population 4,151), located in north central Iowa, prides itself on the quality and number of trees and natural areas, made evident by the town's motto "Where Nature's Close and Friends are Closer." The city has nine city parks, abundant trails, and two nearby regional parks.



## Community Assessments

Focus groups and a community survey showed that the town has many assets that could be enhanced. Forest City has extensive trail systems, including the Hynes Spur Trail and the Hanson Trail.

Barriers identified through focus groups include the lack of a sidewalk system, busy highways cutting through popular areas of town, and limited way-finding signage. There are also concerns with the safety of access to Pammel Park and the limited amenities throughout it.

## Planning and Design Summary

Based on the assessment and the Forest City visioning committee's identified goals, the design team proposed concepts focused on several key themes:

- Way-Finding and Signage – Incorporate the city logo on entrance and way-finding signage, and increase the number of way-finding signs throughout town.
- Connectivity – Add sidewalks and trails based on priority levels, and add share-the-road signs where necessary to provide additional safe connections in Forest City.
- Park Improvements – Remove the G Street entrance to Pammel Park, relocate the baseball fields, add a dog park and an orchard, expand the disc golf course, improve the camping experience, add rental cabins, and establish a trailhead.
- Cultural Corridor – Reduce the width of J Street, add a trail, feature art pieces, add a gateway structure, improve lighting, and add banners.

**Trees Forever Facilitator:** *Patty Reisinger*  
**Landscape Architects:** *Craig Ritland and Samantha Price, RITLAND+KUIPER Landscape Architects*

**Intern:** *Jerry Philbin*



*Design workshop*

## Steering Committee:

<i>Bob Alsop</i>	<i>Steve Peterson</i>
<i>Beth Bilyeu</i>	<i>Chad Reece</i>
<i>Linsey Current</i>	<i>Missy Reynolds</i>
<i>Andrew Faber</i>	<i>Kathy Rollefson</i>
<i>Kristi Feldman</i>	<i>Robert Schwartz</i>
<i>Norma Hertzner</i>	<i>Barb Smith</i>
<i>Aaron Korth</i>	<i>Sammy Smith</i>
<i>Darwin Lehmann</i>	
<i>Pat Lovik</i>	
<i>Bruce Mielke</i>	
<i>Mike O'Rourke</i>	

1

"I think a real benefit is to have Waldorf University here, because our kids growing up could see Pippi Longstocking, and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra came. It adds to the community."

2

"[It's a] challenge...getting over the Highway on J Street to get to Pammel Park. Recreation for the kids getting into Pammel Park at the technical entrance off of G Street...there's no stop sign [or] street light...yet that's the entrance for the ball fields for the kids, so that's pretty scary."



3

"I moved here when I was 12 or 13 from a really big city, and I was shocked there [are] no sidewalks anywhere—what are you supposed to do?"

1

Residents expressed pride in the cultural opportunities that Forest City has to offer, such as those made possible through Waldorf University. The J Street cultural corridor plan highlights these assets, including the university, the Boman Fine Arts Center, the Winnebago County Courthouse, and Clark Street, which is Forest City's business district.



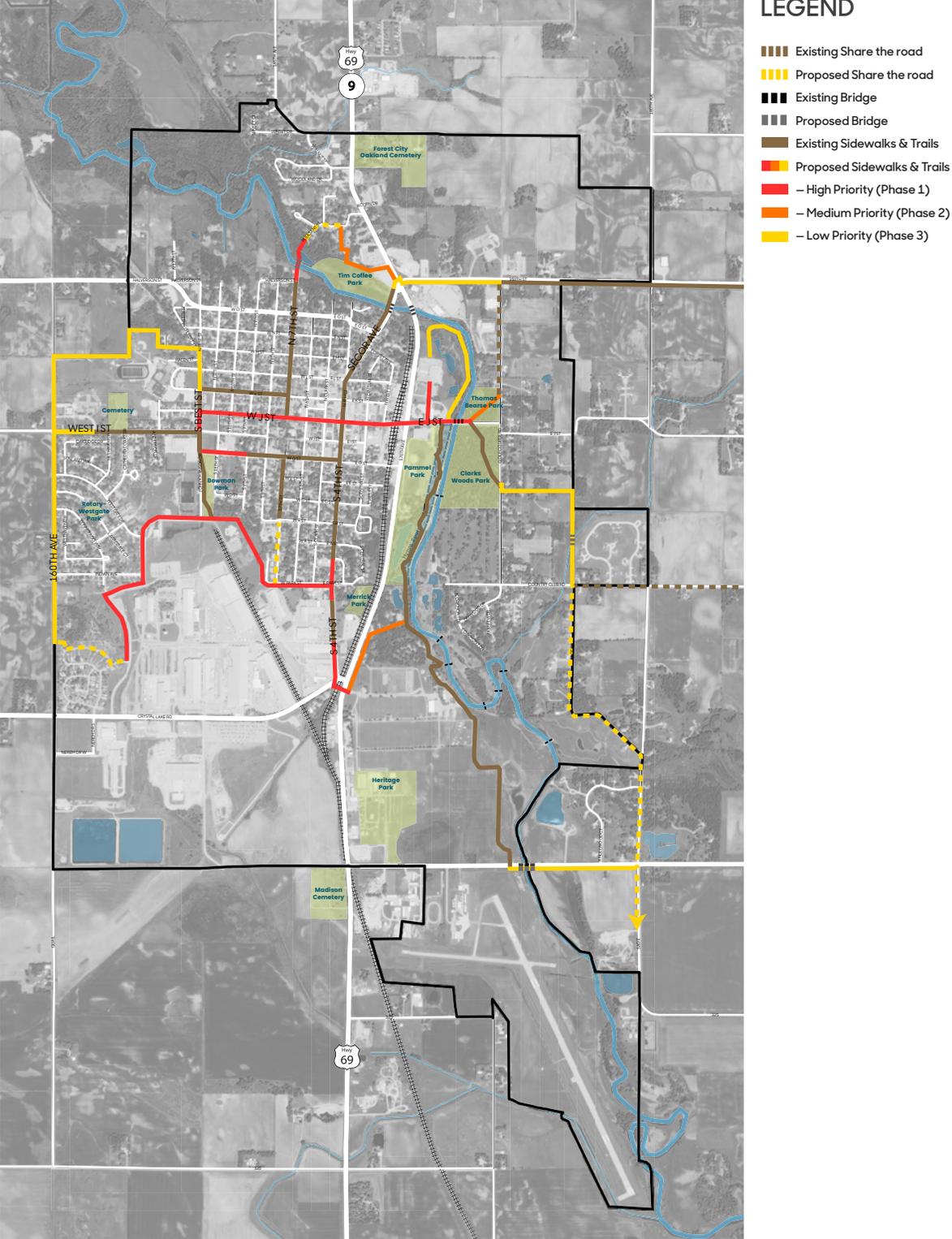
2

Proposed safety enhancements for accessing Pammel Park include 1) a crosswalk at Highway 69 and J Street, 2) a trail on the south side of J Street, 3) realignment of the park entrance road, and 4) a trail connection to Thomas Beale Park.



3

The Forest City connectivity assessment plan is based on feedback from residents, information from the focus groups and survey results, and on-site evaluations of road and sidewalk conditions. The plan analyzes the best locations for sidewalks, trails, and share-the-road routes to optimize the desired connections within Forest City.



# Glidden

Glidden (population 1,146) is located along US Highway 30 in Carroll County. Residents view the highway as both an asset—because it brings a lot of traffic into town—and a barrier—because it cuts off the majority of the community from destinations such as Northland Park and the cemetery.

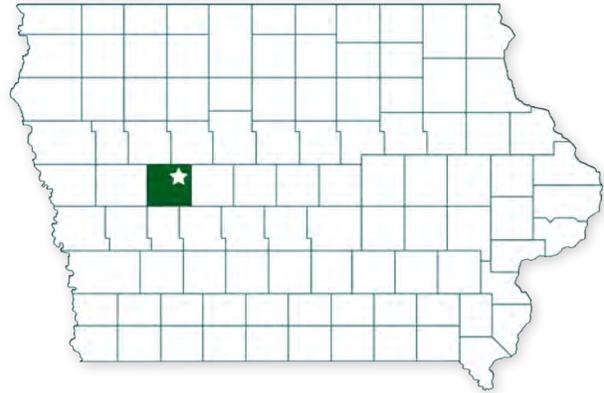
## Community Assessments

Focus-group participants of all demographic types desire a better, more connected sidewalk system throughout town, along with a safe crossing over US 30. Among survey participants, safer routes to school is a priority. Residents of all ages value the recreation opportunities available in Glidden, particularly Northland Park. Both focus-group participants and survey respondents would like the trail in Northland Park to connect to other destinations in town.

## Planning and Design Summary

After the Glidden visioning committee identified goals, the design team led a workshop, during which preliminary concepts were created with help from residents. The concepts explored during the workshop included the following:

- Sidewalk Improvement Plan – Construct five-foot-wide sidewalks or eight-foot-wide trails with a four-foot buffer strip between them and the roadway to provide a safe, dedicated pedestrian corridors throughout the community.
- Highway 30 Corridor – Add pedestrian crosswalks at the intersections of US 30 and Arizona and Montana Streets, and construct a right-turn lane at Casey’s to improve visibility at that intersection.
- Aquatic Center Parking Lot – Pave the parking lot and configure a combination of angled and pull-in stalls, and incorporate trees and landscaping to provide shade while treating stormwater runoff.
- Northland Park Enhancements – Connect the walking trail with the housing development to the north and the cemetery to the west. Deepen the west pond and add an accessible fishing pier. Create a camping area.



**Trees Forever Facilitator:** *Leslie Berckes*  
**Landscape Architects:** *Josh Shields and Shannon Gapp, Bolton & Menk*  
**Intern:** *Jesse Bell*



*Performance objectives meeting*

## Steering Committee:

*Jesse Bruns*  
*Suzy Danner*  
*Lou Forward*  
*Pat Fay*

1

"[I'd like a] trail system for biking and walking for all ages...I think even kids would use it if there was a bigger spot that they could just take off and go a longer distance. We want to extend the trail system."

2

"We have to walk in the street with the stroller because either the sidewalk's in bad condition or they just stop, and then you are trying to find a way to get to the street."



3

"Walking across highways, there [are] a lot of cars, and we can't always see them because of the hill."

3

"Highway 30 is a big barrier...To go across to the trail and if you're walking, the traffic coming into town...from 55 to 45, and it doesn't hit 35 speed limit until another block past it, so the speed there is an issue."

- 1** The transportation survey showed that Northland Park is a major destination for recreation. Residents would like to expand the uses for the park to include fishing and camping, as well as expand the trail system to the housing development to the north and the cemetery to the west.



- 2** To meet accessibility guidelines, the design team developed a sidewalk plan that recommends construction of a five-foot-wide sidewalk or eight-foot-wide trail. A four-foot buffer between the roadway and the sidewalk is also recommended to provide a safe, dedicated pedestrian corridor in the community.

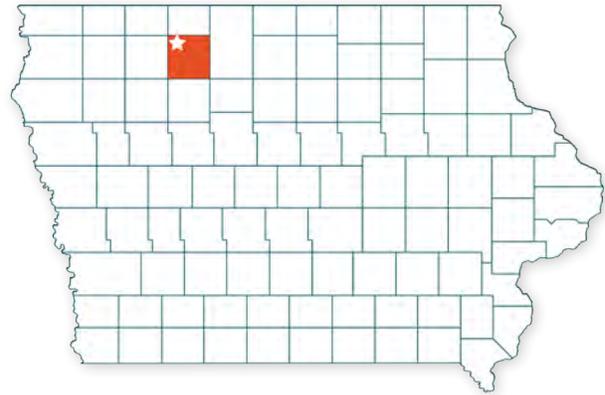




**3** Residents consider Highway 30 a safety concern and a barrier to connectivity. To address these issues, the design team proposed a right-turn lane at Casey's to improve visibility at that intersection (top image), and an official pedestrian crosswalk at the intersections of Highway 30 with Arizona and Montana Streets (bottom image).

# Graettinger

Graettinger (population 811), located in northwest Iowa, promotes itself as a "Small Town With a Big Heart," providing its residents with river valley views, a bustling Main Street, and several community parks. The community applied to the visioning program in search of ideas for linking these assets via improved sidewalk and trail connections and enhancing their downtown area to promote business growth.



## Community Assessments

The transportation assets and barriers assessment revealed that residents value the town's recreation areas. Citizens Park offers playgrounds and seating areas with plenty of shade. Evergreen Park has a walking loop that provides easy access to park amenities, and the golf course has a trail system that can be used by anyone in the community.

While the assets in town are strong, there are also some barriers that inhibit residents from having pleasant transportation and recreational experiences. Many residential areas in town lack sidewalks and lighting, Main Street is too wide with a no shade and lots of flooding, and there is no welcome signage to draw people into town from the highway.

## Planning and Design Summary

With input from the community assessments and the Graettinger visioning committee, the design team proposed concepts focused on several key themes:

- Connectivity – Develop a sidewalk and trail network to connect area destinations and make parks more accessible to all users.
- Recreational Opportunities – Develop sidewalks and trails for walking and biking, provide an area for RV camping, and repurpose dilapidated or underutilized amenities in the parks.
- Economic Development – Add better signage for business district, enhance aesthetics in downtown, and add entry and way-finding signage to increase town's visibility to visitors.

**Trees Forever Facilitator:** *Jeff Jensen*

**Landscape Architects:** *Josh Shields and Nate Schlorholtz, Bolton & Menk*

**Interns:** *Mahsa Adib and Jesse Bell*



*Design workshop*

## Steering Committee:

*Jessica Behrends  
Nancy Bochmann  
Barry Boner  
Ivan Dalen  
Megan Helmich  
Barb Hoffman  
Teaner Hoffman  
Gina Lowman-Hall  
Cassie Oelson  
Linda Schaller  
Karen Spies  
Angie Strohmman*

1

"The sidewalks that are there, a lot of them have tree roots; they're uprooted and broken so a smaller kid can't ride on it... especially training wheels are completely out just because of how bad the sidewalks are."

2

"I think [Citizens Park] is a beautiful, scenic area, although some of it's been what we call the hills and the tracks, back in there it's really beautiful. [You] feel like you're in the country."

1

"In the summertime, I walk on the sidewalks, but you run out of sidewalks."



3

"We don't have any biking trails, so we usually take a sidewalk or the road."

4

"The tennis court's actually smooth, so sometimes some of us go down there and ride our rollerblades or our scooters."

1

Focus-group participants identified missing and broken sidewalks as barriers to walking and biking in the community. The proposed sidewalks/trails plan addresses this issue with a combination of trails and sidewalks that connect important local destinations.

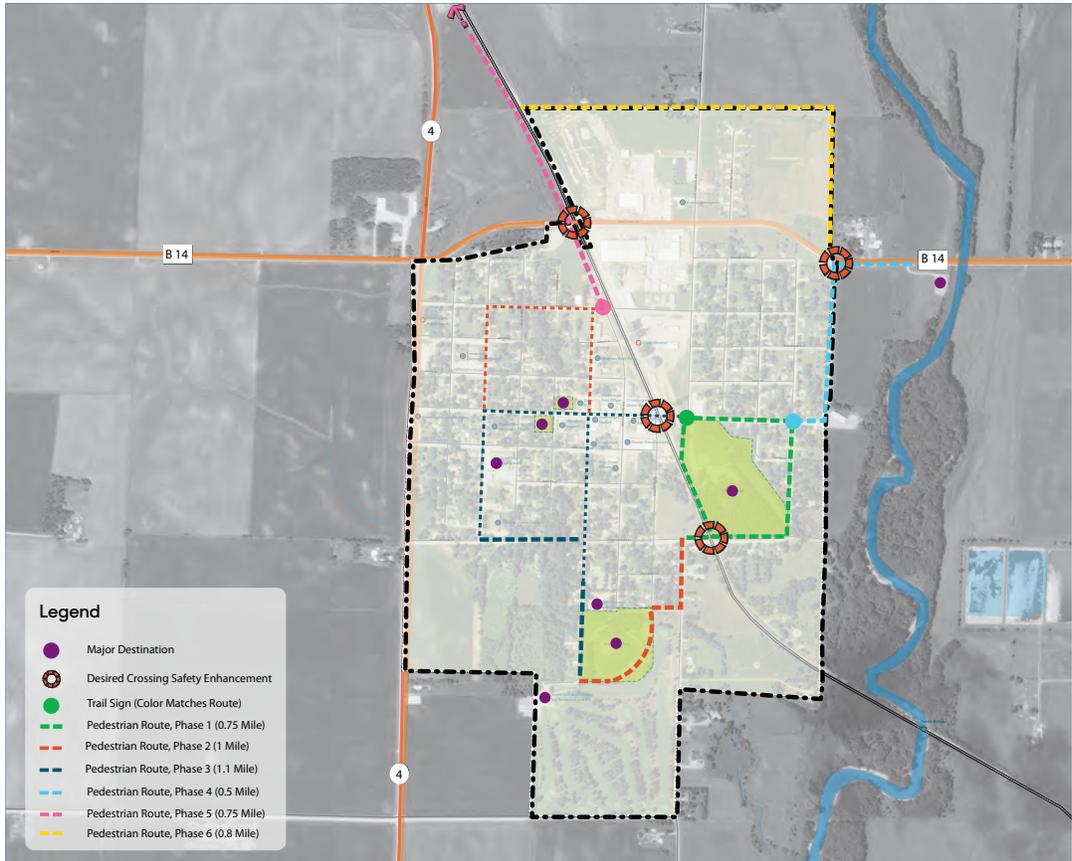


2

Citizens Park is considered a valuable asset in Graettinger. The proposed enhancements to the park include tent and RV camping, open lawn recreation activities, and a trail connecting the park to Lammer's Landing.



**3** Graettinger residents would like a safe venue for walking and biking in and around the community. The sidewalk/trails links popular destinations in town, including the parks, the swimming pool, the high school, and Lammer’s Landing.



**4** Residents indicated a desire for a basketball court during the assessments and goal setting. The existing tennis court is in disrepair and is rarely used for tennis. This amenity could be revamped for basketball and integrated into the trail system to provide access for residents.

# Moville

Moville (population 1,641,) is located 20 miles east of downtown Sioux City along US Highway 20. The community has experienced steady growth in recent years and is eager to keep the momentum going. An important asset in town is the walking trail, which the community would like to expand to increase opportunities for outdoor recreation and to promote healthy lifestyles.

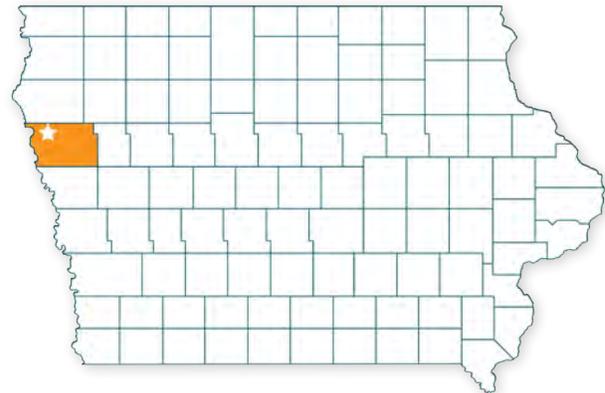
## Community Assessments

The assessment process revealed that residents would like a better, more complete sidewalk system and more trails. Focus-group participants specifically identified the stepped curb on Main Street and the lack of pedestrian/cyclist access on Frontage Road as transportation barriers.

## Planning and Design Summary

The concept plan for Moville is based on priorities identified by residents, as well as guidance from the visioning steering committee, and includes proposals in five major areas:

- Trails and Recreation – Expand the existing community trail to connect to city parks and recreation areas both within and outside city limits.
- Accessibility and Safety – Enhance the sidewalk system by incorporating ADA accessibility, visible crossings, and sufficient lighting.
- Way-finding and Signage – Introduce an attractive and cohesive signage scheme to enhance Moville’s visual appearance and accessibility for visitors.
- Main Street and Downtown Revitalization – Improve accessibility and aesthetics of downtown Moville.
- Frontage Road Renovation – Make businesses along the road more accessible by realigning the road and adding a multiuse trail, and beautify the area with roadside plantings.



**Trees Forever Facilitator:** *Brad Riphagen*  
**Landscape Architect:** *David Stokes and Eric Doll, Jeffrey L. Bruce & Company*  
**Interns:** *Rosie Manzo and Jeremy Johnson*



*Design workshop*

## Steering Committee:

*Robin Beck*  
*Ivy Bremer*  
*Megan Cross*  
*Jim Fisher*  
*David Gleiser*  
*Stee Maxwell*  
*Jodi Peterson*  
*Jessie Phipps*  
*Jeremy Rogers*  
*Nick Rogers*  
*Rebecca Thomas*

1

"That southern Frontage Road needs to be redone, the whole way."

1

"Frontage Road—they're starting to put businesses down there—you can't just walk down there and ride a bike. The roads aren't wide enough."

2

"We actually all go through the cemetery because the trail ends; that really tells you that we need more trails..."



3

"[I avoid sidewalks that don't have curb cuts] or they're bad angles when they do have cuts."

4

"If you're going down to Main Street...there's this giant curb so when I'm trying to go back I have to walk my bike up it."

1

This design addresses residents' desire for a safe place to walk and bike along Frontage Road by realigning the road from 3rd Street to the west and adding a multiuse trail along the entire road. The proposed trail is made more pedestrian/cyclist friendly with the addition of a tree-planted verge, pedestrian-scale lighting, way-finding signage, and native vegetation in the US 20 right-of-way ditch.



2

Residents expressed a desire for more recreation trails in Moville. The design team responded with a trail plan that includes both shared-road trails and separate trails such as the one shown below adjacent to the MYRA fields.



3

The addition of paved sidewalks with curb and gutter and painted crosswalks creates a safe environment for pedestrians. Curb ramps with truncated domes make the sidewalk system accessible for those with disabilities.



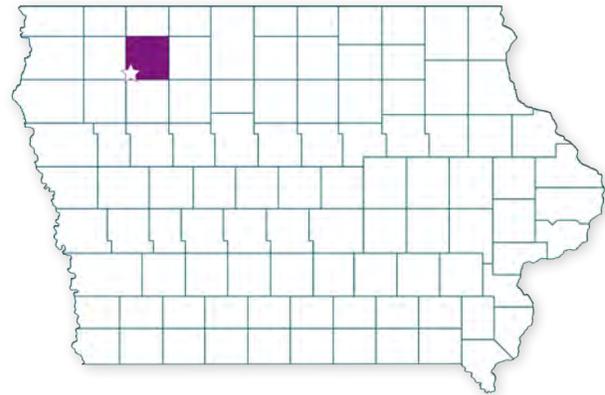
4

Residents consider the stepped curbs along the south side of Main Street a significant barrier to access. To address this issue, the design team proposed modifying the street width and elevation to meet store entryway elevations without steps and providing more pedestrian-friendly amenities such as street trees.



# Peterson

Peterson (population 334) is located in northwest Iowa along the Glacial Trail Scenic Byway. The town has noticeable historic flair, with beautiful Victorian homes, old reclaimed antique stores, and scenic boulevards. Peterson applied for the visioning program with goals of increasing accessibility and safety throughout town, establishing a trail network, and strengthening the identity of the community.



## Community Assessments

During the community assessment process, residents noted that inconsistent signage and the lack of sidewalk and trail networks make it difficult to find historical and ecological features that make the town unique. Additionally, there are many vacant lots in the downtown area that could be beautified and refurbished for businesses or community gathering spaces such as parks and seating areas.

## Planning and Design Summary

Based on the assessments and the Peterson visioning committee's identified goals, the design team proposed the following concepts:

- Trail Network – Develop a trail network that connects amenities, provide scenic loops around town, increase road shoulder width, introduce in-town sidewalks and improved lighting along existing or new routes.
- Signage and Way-finding – Implement street signs that create a town identity through the use of an arced form replicating the town's connection to the landscape, add kiosk panels and wayside exhibit panels at major attractions to relay the story of each site.
- Main Street Improvements – Develop open green spaces that could be temporary or permanent to allow future structures to be built, implement ADA access, add vegetated bump-outs, and add park space on the corner of Highway 10 and Main Street.
- Intersections and Crossings – Paint medians to make parking lanes clearer, add brightly-painted crosswalks, add right-of-way bump-outs, and install signalized/flashing crossing signs.

**Trees Forever Facilitator:** *Jeff Jensen*

**Landscape Architects:** *Carl Rogers and Chad Hunter, Community Design Lab, Iowa State University*

**Intern:** *Shuang Wu*



*Design Workshop*

## Steering Committee:

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Paula Buckman  
Joan Delzell-Bausch  
Doug Elam  
Alan Giese  
Kyle Giese  
Rob Hobbs  
Kim Robb  
Kelse Truitt  
Dallas Tuttle  
Terry Wallace*

1

*"It would be nice to have a crossing across Highway 10, that every kid knows, and have signs or something."*



2

*"We definitely need [a] crosswalk by the swimming pool."*



3

*"We have high curbs [on Main Street] and there's not a handicapped ramp at the post office."*



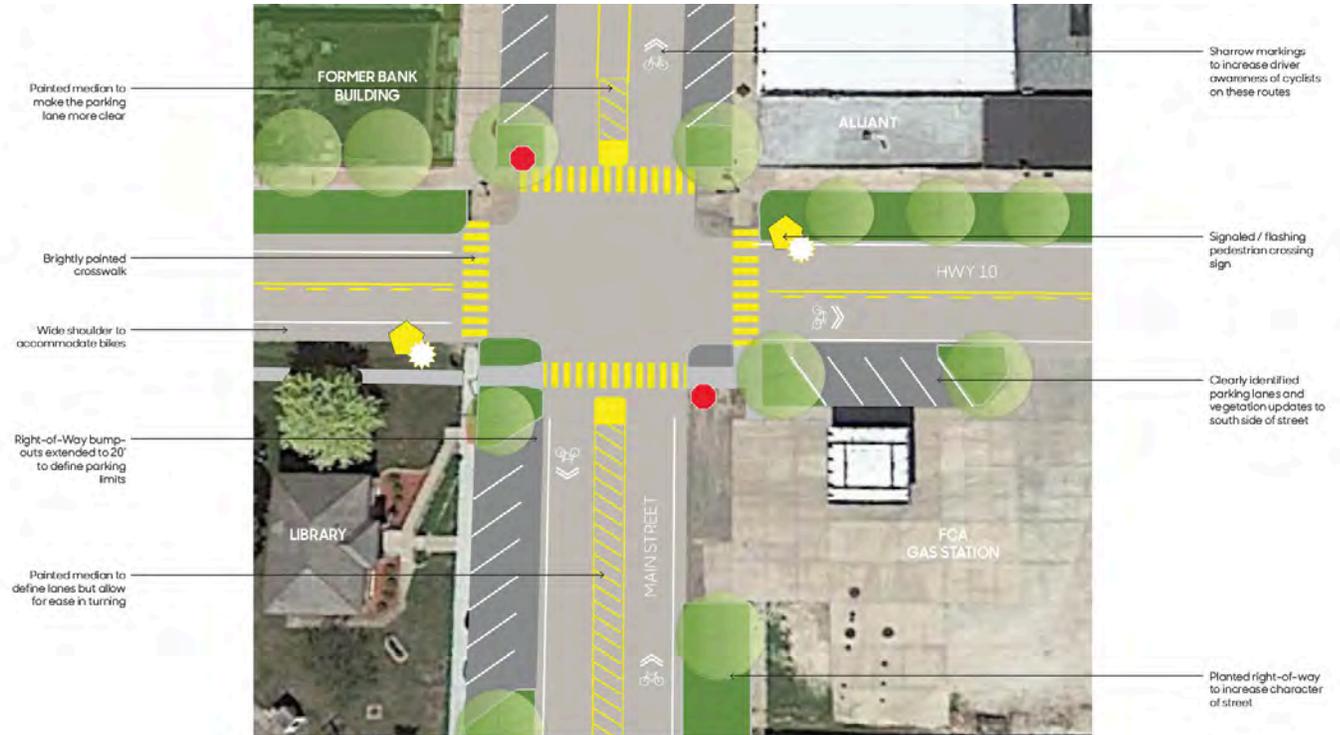
4

*"I think it would be neat to combine the heritage and the trails and have kind of a walking route between the different museums with signage."*



1

Peterson residents identified the intersection of Main Street and Highway 10 as a safety concern because of heavy traffic, as well as the fact that it is the site of the school bus stop. The design team proposed signaled/flashing pedestrian crossing signs, brightly painted crosswalks, and sharrows to alert drivers of the presence of pedestrians and cyclists in the area.



2

Fourth Street is a busy corridor, with both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. In response to focus-group participants' desire for a designated crossing, the design team proposed brightly painted crosswalks and signaled/flashing pedestrian crossing signs at the entrance to the pool.

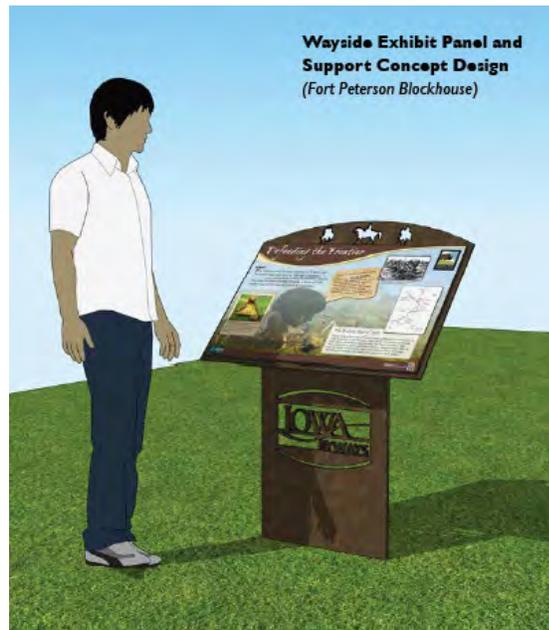


**IMPROVED ACCESS FOR MAIN STREET**



**3** Currently there are minimal universal access points along Main Street. This is of most concern outside the post office and the bank. The proposed access points would provide a ramp in front of these locations. Additional vegetation would be accommodated in the bump-out, increasing the street's visual character and making it more pedestrian friendly.

**4** The design team developed a trail plan that connects Peterson's many historic sites and other local destinations. The trail would feature signage such as the two-paneled kiosk and the wayside exhibit signs shown below.



# Plymouth

Plymouth (population 4,091), located in north central Iowa, promotes itself as a community "in the middle of *everywhere*," since many commuters pass through on their way to and from work in Mason City. Its location along the Shell Rock River provides scenic views and access to many opportunities for water recreation.

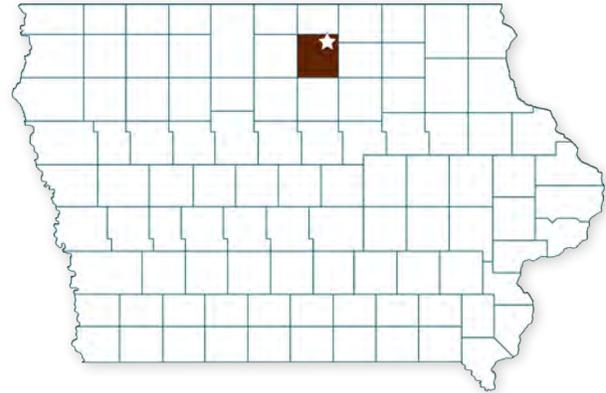
## Community Assessments

The transportation assets and barriers assessment revealed that Plymouth residents hope to be able to beautify and improve their streets and public spaces to make their town a place worth stopping for. While the assets in town are strong, there are some evident barriers. Sidewalks, trails, and unmarked community assets are disconnected from each other, making travel between places in Plymouth difficult. Additionally, Plymouth has seen a decline in the Main Street corridor, with many storefronts going vacant and the exteriors of buildings looking unkempt.

## Planning and Design Summary

Based on the assessment and the Plymouth visioning committee's identified goals, the design team proposed concepts focused on several key themes:

- Way-finding Signage – Create a town logo with the "Plymouth Rock" as a form of community identity, and establish way-finding demarcating parks, trails routes, Shell Rock River access, and other amenities.
- Walkability – Establish "exercise routes," connect new trails to existing trails to increase accessibility, and improve safety of walking routes by adding improved sidewalks, lighting, shade trees, and benches.
- Old School Park Improvements – Decrease the size of the park due to maintenance issues and create new residential lots, and add a splash pad and shelter; or enhance the existing park with a disc golf course, picnic shelters, a splash pad, and native grass plantings to minimize maintenance needs.



**Trees Forever Facilitator:** *Patty Reisinger*

**Landscape Architects:** *Craig Ritland and Samantha Price, RITLAND+KUIPER Landscape Architects*

**Intern:** *Jerry Philbin*



*Transportation assets and barriers workshop*

## Steering Committee:

<i>Dan Barnes</i>	<i>Craig Howard</i>
<i>Neal Brennan</i>	<i>John Kline</i>
<i>Gary Clark</i>	<i>Cecil Kuhlers</i>
<i>Karen Crimmings</i>	<i>Jeff Robak</i>
<i>Shelly Dirksen</i>	<i>Jody Vrieze</i>
<i>Kelli Gerdes</i>	<i>Jon Vrieze</i>
<i>Lori Ginapp</i>	<i>Penny Wyborny</i>

2

"It would be nice...to have some bike paths for the kids. Because most of our sidewalks are either not there or they're just completely messed up. It's safer to ride on the road because they're going to have an accident on the sidewalk."

1

"I would like to see development in the park—more development for people."



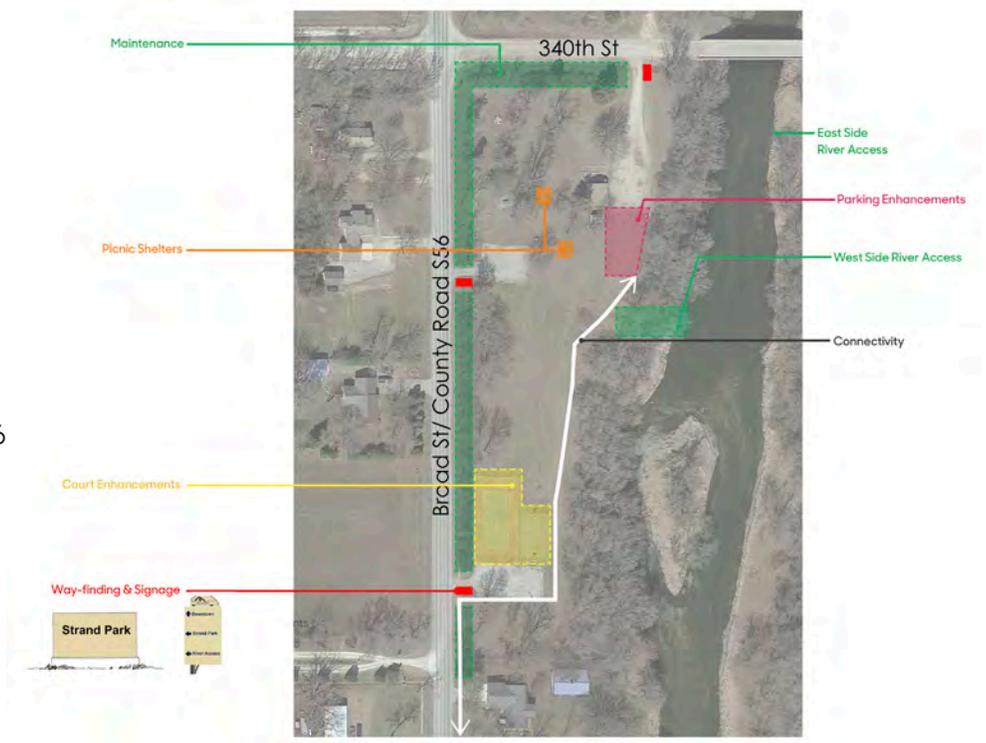
3

"We don't really have a place—nowhere to play."

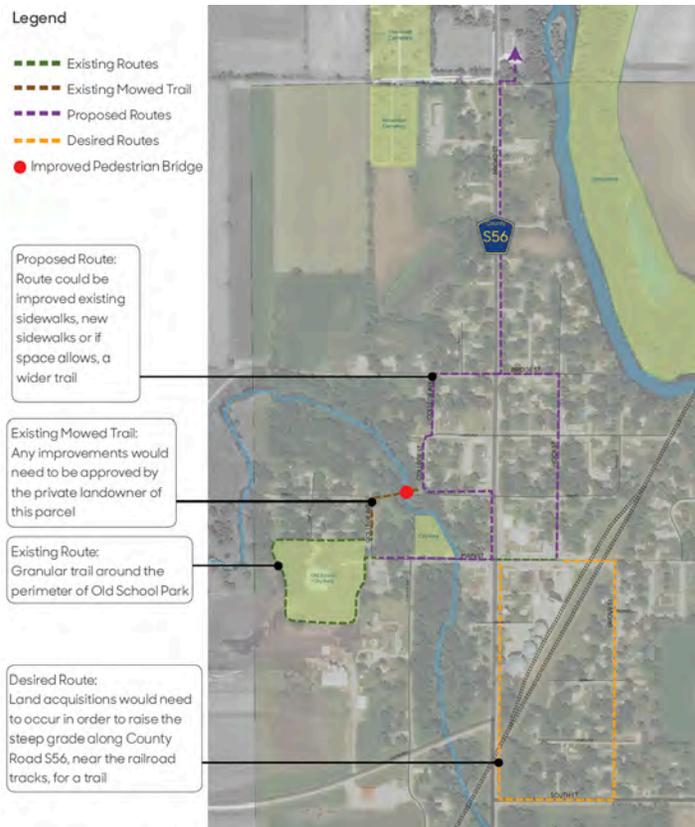
4

"There is no real good, safe spot for our buses to come in and there's no spot for the kids. They all hang out at the post office for cold weather."

**1** In response to residents' desire to see Strand Park developed, the design team proposed expanding the parking area, adding two picnic shelters, resurfacing the basketball and tennis courts, and clearing the overgrown vegetation at the existing river access point. In addition, clearing the vegetation and adding a trail connection along the east side of County Road S56 would make the park more visible and accessible.



**2** The design team created a walkability plan for the community that includes improved sidewalks and amenities such as benches, lighting, and street trees.



**3** To provide more recreational opportunities for Plymouth's youth, Old School Park could be redesigned to add a disc golf course, picnic shelters, and a splash pad. Native grass plantings would provide wildlife habitat and educational opportunities, as well as significantly reduce the amount of mowing required.



**4** The school bus stop is located at the intersection of County Road S56 and Main Street, which is perceived as unsafe. In consultation with the county engineer, the design team proposed several traffic-calming measures, including flashing stop signs, decorative brick pavement, and highly visible crosswalks. In addition, the intersection design calls for a bus shelter so students have a place to wait for the bus during inclement weather.



# Wapello

Wapello (population 2,023) is situated in southeast Iowa along the Iowa River. The county seat of Louisa County, Wapello is a waypoint for travelers moving between the Quad Cities and Burlington. While the frequent traffic provides a welcome economic boost, it also creates its own set of unique challenges surrounding safety and community cohesion.

## Community Assessments

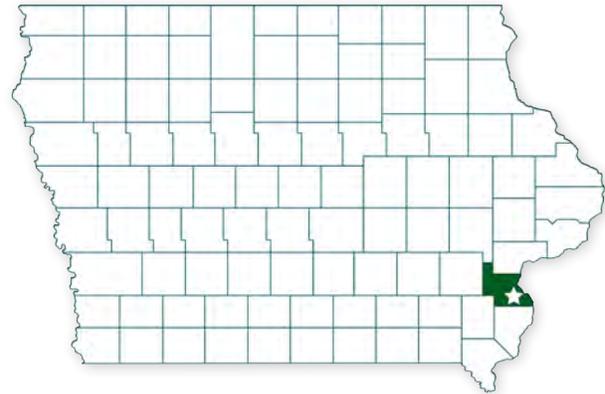
A major priority revealed in the random-sample survey and focus groups was a need for safer streets, particularly for young children and mobility-impaired residents. Highway 61 bisects Wapello and carries much of the traffic passing between Burlington and the Quad Cities. The fast-moving vehicles, poor visibility, and lack of sidewalks along the road make it a safety concern. Participants also noted the lack of quality sidewalks throughout town, causing children to walk to school in the street and making transit difficult for disabled and elderly residents.

Additionally, the assessments indicated a desire for improved streetscapes throughout the town and development of trails and community spaces along the riverfront.

## Planning and Design Summary

Using the results of the community assessments, the design theme has generated projects that serve to improve the following concepts:

- Safety – Add sidewalks, widen existing sidewalks, enhance crosswalks, and implement traffic calming devices such as vegetative buffers to improve safety.
- Celebrating the Iowa River – Take advantage of the riverfront through trail enhancements and multiple overlook sites.
- Highway 61 Transition – Once the state finishes its Highway 61 bypass project, the existing Highway 61 passing through Wapello will fall under city management. Repurpose this road as a future business district and implement traffic calming and beautification strategies.



**Trees Forever Facilitator:** *Emily Swihart*

**Landscape Architects:** *Steve Ford, Steve Ford Landscape Architecture, and Michael LeClere, Martin Gardner Architecture*

**Intern:** *Wan Wei*



*Wapello south entrance sign*

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Veronica Blake  
Jodi Boysen  
Koby Boysen  
Kim Brown  
Ron Durbin  
Sara Ealey  
Katie Hammond  
Kenna Lanz  
Brad Quigley  
Richard Taylor*

1

"Cars are traveling faster [on Highway 99]... we had a couple close calls on 99, my kids, just thinking it was another road."

2

"I would like to bike and walk more just because we are a small community, but we don't generally have safe pathways. I drive Highway 99 to Oakville, and that way, it's ... unsafe because there [are] no shoulders."



3

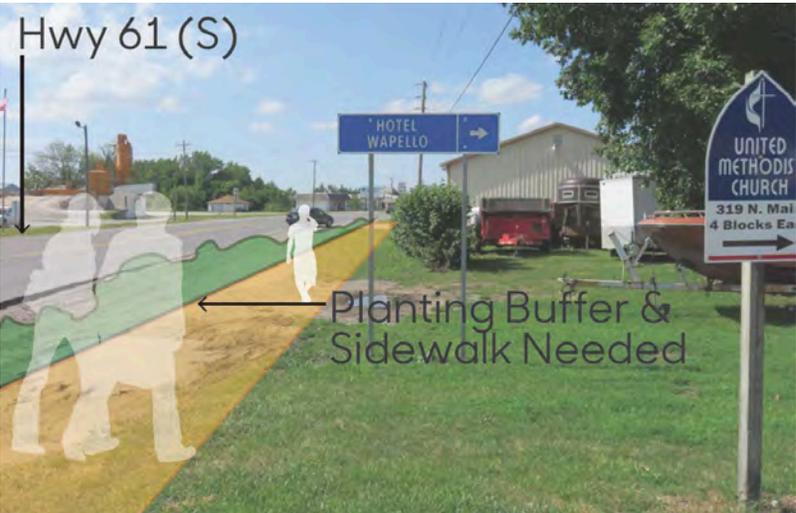
"At one time they talked about having a trail from the landing...up to north of the business district... [It] would be nice to walk along and see the river."

4

"I like the river, the access, [and] the boat landing. I don't think we [en]capsulate the river or natural resources as much as we should. We...need to celebrate that we are a river town."

1

There are no existing sidewalks on most streets in town, and most of the existing sidewalks are cracked or covered with soil or grass. The design proposal for Wapello calls for adding sidewalks where none exist and widening existing sidewalks to better accommodate pedestrians and cyclists.



2

Providing safe routes to school was a top priority among both transportation survey respondents and focus-group participants. Attention to crosswalks, wider sidewalk design, elimination of visual barriers at intersections, and the addition of vegetated buffers slow traffic and reduce the risk of accidents.



3

The proposed riverfront trail would provide an additional venue for outdoor recreation while connecting important destinations in town, including North Park, South Park, and the community center.



4

An overlook plaza next to the community center serves as an outdoor gathering space that can host special community events, complement the community center, and provide interpretive information about the life and history of the Iowa River and Wapello.



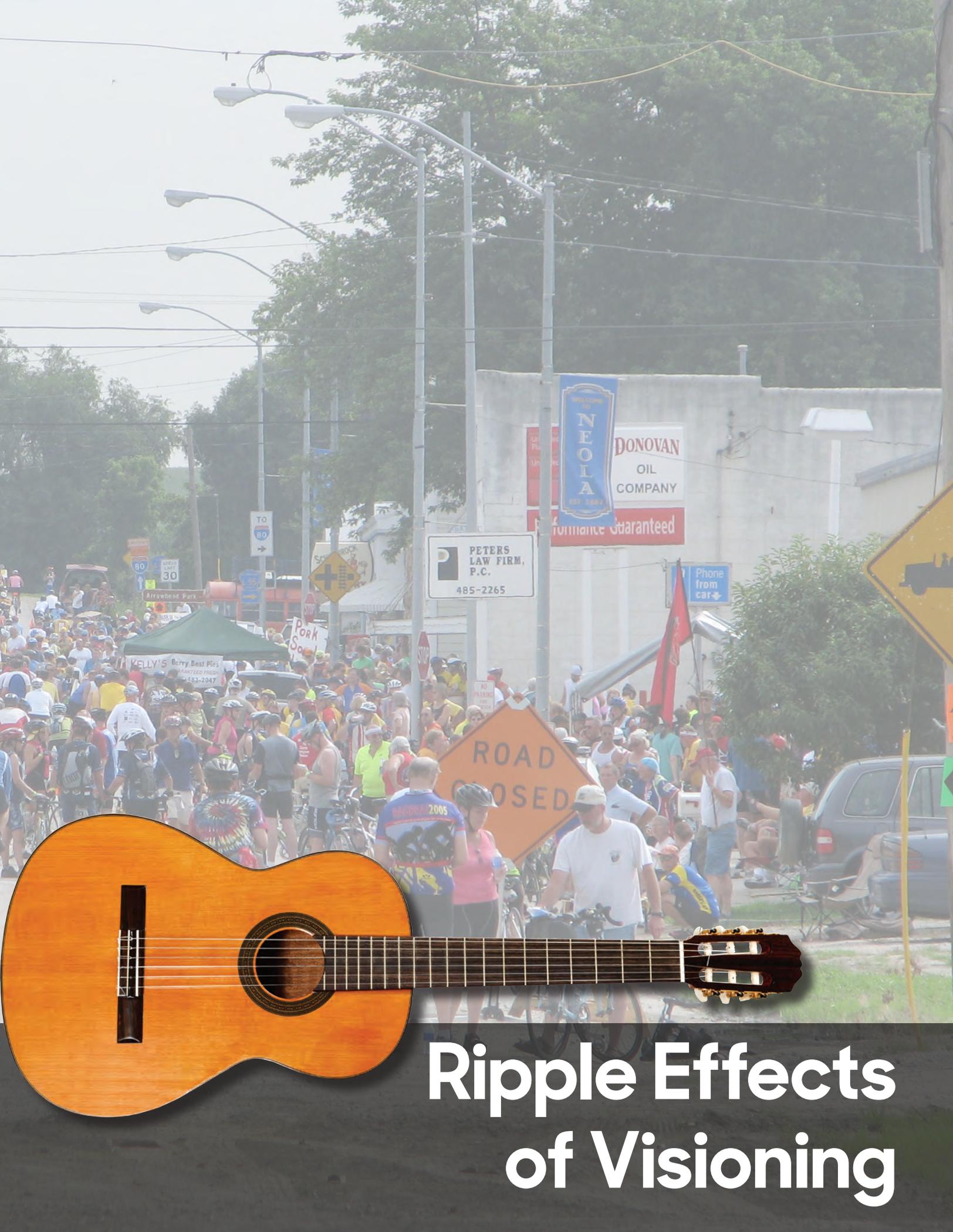


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FROM THE ROAD



# Ripple Effects of Visioning

# Introduction

Since its inception in 1996, the Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning program has made visible impacts in small Iowa communities, ranging from entrance signage and corridor enhancements to recreation trails and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes.

Program staff have documented these impacts over the years through site visits, surveys, and one-on-one interviews. However, little has been done to understand the impacts of the program beyond physical changes to the landscape.

To identify the learning outcomes of participation in Community Visioning, program director and Iowa State University professor of landscape architecture Julia Badenhope decided to employ a relatively new research technique called "ripple effects mapping" in past visioning communities.

## Methodology

Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) is defined as "a group participatory evaluation method that engages program and community stakeholders to retrospectively and visually map the chain of effects resulting from a program or complex collaboration" (*A Field Guide to Ripple Effects Mapping*, p. xi).

REM engages participants to reflect on and visually map intended and unintended changes through four techniques:

1. Appreciative inquiry – participants pair up and interview each other about peak experiences
2. Participatory approach



*Research associate Hatvany Gomez-Concepcion explains the ripple effects mapping process to participants in Tripoli.*

3. Interactive group interviewing and reflecting
4. "Radiant thinking" (mind mapping)

In July 2018, a research team of two staff people and two students conducted a pilot study in which they facilitated REM workshops in four target communities: Tripoli (program year 2012), Mapleton (program year 2013), Preston (program year 2014), and Manning (program years 2012 and 2016). These communities were selected because they represent different program years, they represent different parts of the state, and all have either completed projects or are in the process of completing projects.

Visioning committee members, stakeholders, and residents from each community participated in the two-hour REM workshops. The Trees Forever field coordinators who worked with each of the communities were also invited to attend. Each workshop started with participants



# Projects

Three of the study communities—Manning, Mapleton, and Tripoli—have completed all the projects proposed through the visioning program, while Preston is still in the project implementation phase. The following summarizes the accomplishments discussed at the workshops in each community.

## Manning

- Downtown improvements
- Creation of a green space at the entrance to Main Street
- Signage and monuments along Highway 141
- Great Western Park improvements
- Creation of Trestle Park



*After completing community visioning in 2012, Manning residents planted roadside vegetation along Highway 141.*

## Mapleton

- Complete streets
- Pedestrian crossing nodes
- Integrated green infrastructure
- Street tree restoration



*Volunteers planted a bioswale along a roadside in Mapleton in summer 2018.*



*Residents of all ages helped build and landscape the Tripoli welcome center.*

## **Tripoli**

- Sweet Water Trail
- Welcome center and trailhead
- Sidewalk extension along Highway 93
- New park space along Sweet Water Creek
- Sweet Water Creek bank restoration



*This play equipment in Two Good Park in Preston was constructed completely by volunteers.*

## **Preston**

- Basketball court
- Two Good Park play equipment
- Community grocery store
- Accessible sidewalks

# Ripple Effects

After sharing their stories, participants reflected on them and considered the activities that they should keep doing, those they should stop doing, and some new ideas that could be beneficial to their community.

*"Accomplishments promote conversation—nothing is done alone. Partnerships and having a plan are why we are where we are today!"*

—Manning

*"The community realized the value of applying for grants, understanding that not all would be awarded."*

—Preston

*"We learned an outstanding process for community involvement. We received great feedback from community member of all ages. Many community members of all ages participated in the implementation as well as costs. We learned how to raise funds, wrote letter of support to Sumner."*

—Tripoli

*"You get the resources when you have managed money."*

—Mapleton



*"The community, as a whole, is open to new ideas."*

—Preston

*"Once people saw that the projects were real, more people started to donate."*

—Tripoli

*"Understanding differing perspectives from the age groups; community improvements should appeal to all age groups."*

—Manning

Although the projects completed or in process in each study community are unique to that community, the learning outcomes across the four communities are similar. Examples of what residents in all four communities discovered through the visioning process include:

- The need for expanding the volunteer base, whether that means more youth, families, or simply more residents.
- The need to have patience when working on projects. Things may not happen as fast as anticipated.
- The importance of understanding the perspectives of different age groups and user types.
- The ability to raise funds through writing grants, soliciting donations, and increasing local buy in through communication.
- The importance of partnerships with local organizations, such as businesses, schools, and clubs.

Through shared experiences and stories of residents, the REM workshops illustrated the "ripple effects" of the Community Visioning process on participating communities. Specifically, the workshops were designed to reveal new ways of thinking and new habits among residents, as well as new community practices that emerged through the planning and project implementation processes. In addition, the workshops explored lessons learned and addressed future goals and plans for action.

One of the "ripple effects" of Community Visioning on all four study communities is increased volunteerism, as demonstrated by residents' willingness to help with planting in Mapleton and Manning, to build the playground equipment in Preston, and to build and landscape the welcome center in Tripoli.

Another outcome of the visioning process is that the communities learned to do strategic planning before undertaking projects. As a result, workshop participants said they feel "more organized." Other impacts include more environmental stewardship and increased buy in among local businesses.

In terms of future goals for the four communities, themes that emerged from the REM workshops include improving communication, revitalizing downtown, improving connectivity and accessibility in the community, engaging with local businesses, and engaging younger residents and youth.

# Next Steps

*Using the Community Visioning Program process and focus groups in town to get different insights.*  
—Tripoli

*Use food to unify the community at events and volunteering.*  
—Preston

**New  
Ideas**

*Partnering with Economic Development Crew, universities, more communities, interns, students, and the county.*  
—Tripoli

*Increase teacher involvement.*  
—Manning

*Communicate within the community!*  
—Mapleton

*Create a network among schools, the library, and craftswomen and men.*  
—Mapleton

**New Ideas**

*Show people concrete benefits of our community projects.*  
—Preston

*Conduct competitions for kids on design proposals; integrate community projects into classwork.*  
—Manning

## Research Team

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Landscape Architecture Interns

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Community Visioning Program Manager and Field Coordinator, Trees Forever



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FIRST AID

Proton



People

# Community Visioning

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Iowa's Living Roadways  
**community**  
**visioning**