

2021 Annual Report



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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, more than 250 communities have participated in Community Visioning, two 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.

In addition to offering assistance to Iowa's small towns, the Community Visioning Program gives landscape architecture students the opportunity to work for a professional landscape architecture firm and to interact with real clients through our internship program. Since 1996, more than 250 students have interned with the program, and a number of them have gone on to work with the program as practitioners.

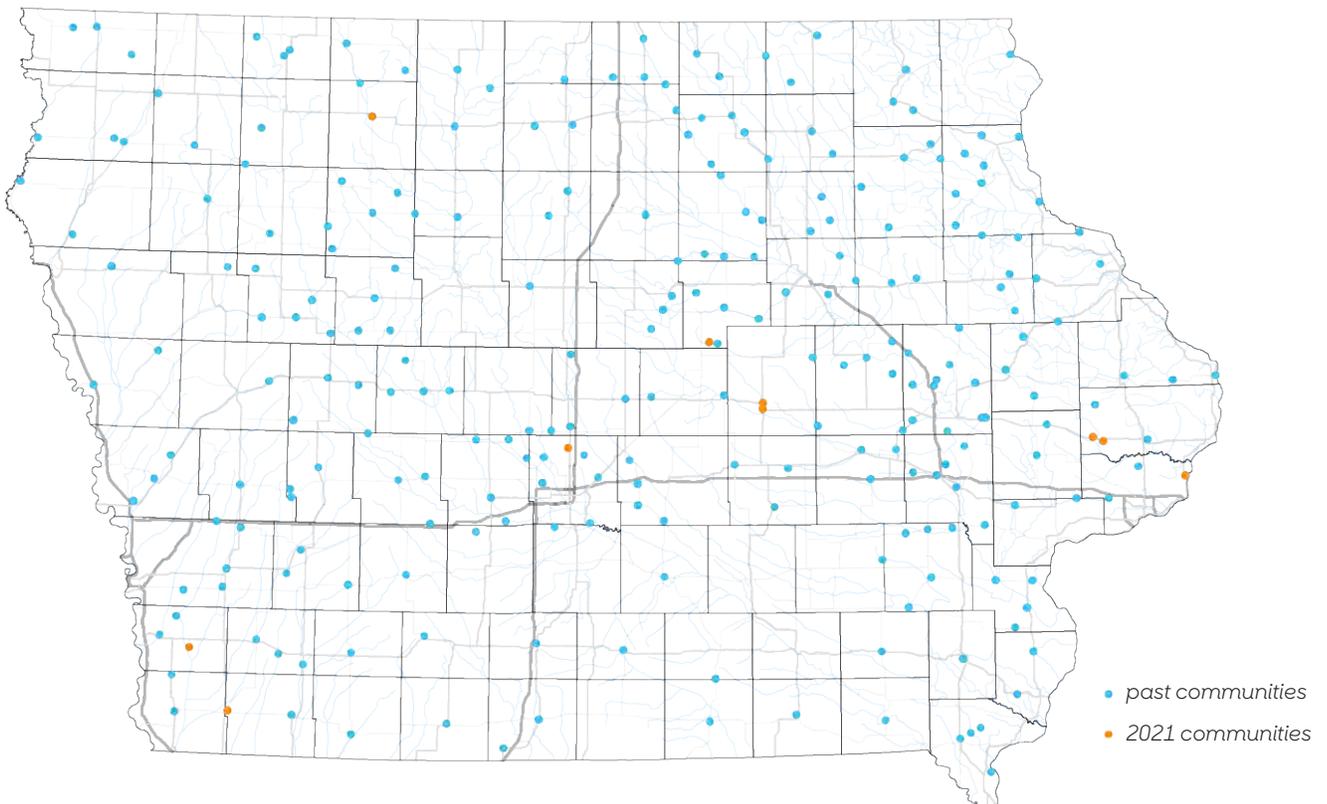
"This was a unique opportunity to live in another location in Iowa as well as experience the professional lifestyle of a landscape architect."

—Intern

The internship program also introduces practicing landscape architects to the best and brightest future practitioners, whom they spend a summer mentoring. Firms have often hired their interns as full-time designers once they have graduated because of the experience interns gain through the visioning program.



Iowa's Living Roadways Visioning Communities, 1996–2021



2021 Community Visioning Program

The 2021 visioning communities are Alleman, Calamus, Conrad, Emmetsburg, Malvern, Princeton, Shenandoah, Tama, Toledo, and Wheatland. 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 the focus groups as part of the transportation assets and barriers assessment. For eight communities 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. Because of COVID-19, we conducted focus groups virtually using the software platforms Zoom and Miro.

Survey

With assistance from ISU's Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology, ISU visioning program staff conducted surveys to better understand the transportation patterns, behaviors, needs, and desires of residents in the communities of Alleman, Calamus, Emmetsburg, Princeton, Shenandoah, Tama, Toledo, and Wheatland. These towns were selected for surveys because of their population and/or unique transportation issues and needs.

Surveys were mailed to randomly selected residents living in and around each town. Response rates ranged from 26.6% to 60.4%. (A response rate of 20% is considered valid.)

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.

The survey gives the visioning steering committee objective, representative information about residents' transportation behaviors and needs, such as the preferred biking routes for Emmetsburg shown here. In addition to their preferred routes, respondents also provided information on what qualities and features of routes and trails are important to them. The quantitative data collected from survey responses complements the qualitative information gathered from the focus groups at the transportation assets and barriers workshop.

High School Surveys

In 2021, the ISU research team also conducted a census-style transportation survey with 9th- and 12th-grade students to better understand how this unique user type perceives and navigates the local transportation system. Surveys were mailed to students of North Polk (Alleman), Emmetsburg, Shenandoah, and Calamus-Wheatland High Schools.

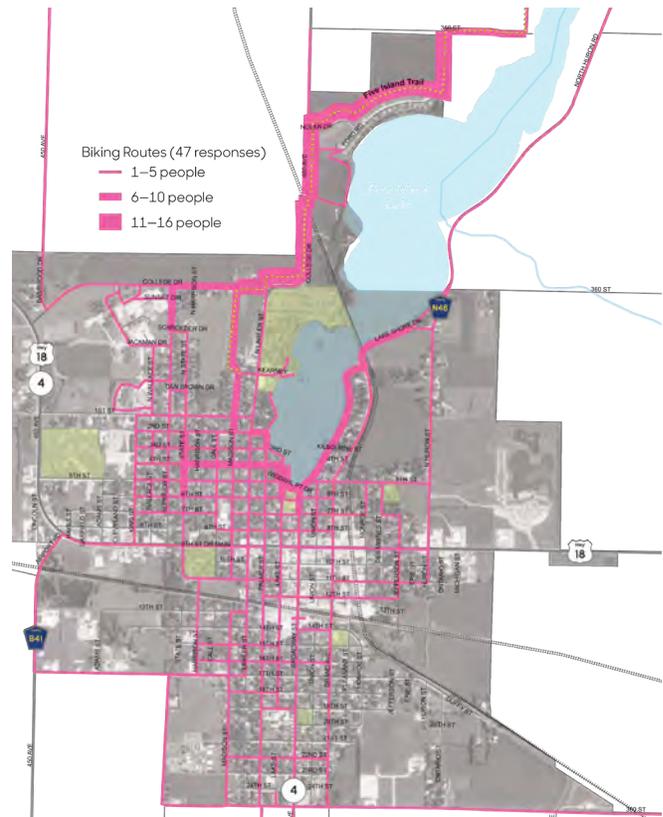
Interview with Hispanic Residents

In Tama and Toledo, 34.6% and 14.2%, respectively, of the populations are Hispanic. The Tama and Toledo visioning committees recognized the importance of engaging with this substantial group of residents. To capture the transportation behaviors, needs, and desires of this demographic group, the ISU research team conducted an interview with two members of the Hispanic community, one from Tama and the other from Toledo. The interview was conducted via Zoom, and, like with the focus groups, the team annotated interviewees' comments on an aerial map.

Design Proposals

Based on information gathered from the focus groups, a transportation inventory, an assessment of the local bioregion, and survey results (in seven 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.



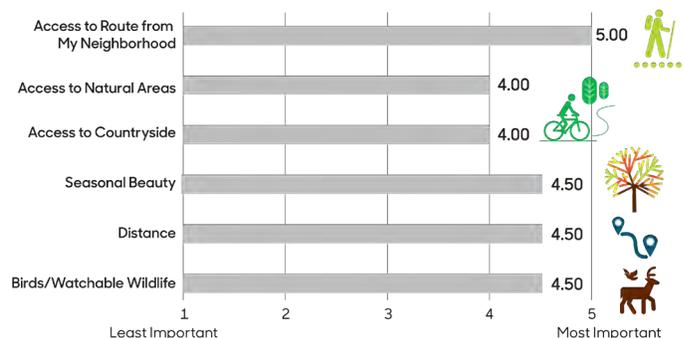
Emmetsburg biking routes map.

"...my youngest [child] likes to ride bikes, so I can see him riding his bike all along the trail [in Toledo Heights Park]...it's just one big circle so I can see exactly where he's at and it's just safer."

"I [like] the scenery [at Cherry Lake]. I love to see the lake and the birds and trees and all of that."



Comments from the interview with Hispanic residents.



Desired regional biking routes among Calamus-Wheatland high school students.





Communities

Alleman

Alleman is located in central Iowa between the cities of Ankeny and Ames in the Des Moines metropolitan area. It is home to the North Polk School District administration as well as Central Elementary and the middle and high schools. The Heartland Co-op in town makes it an agricultural hub, and residents are proud of Alleman's agricultural heritage. This rapidly growing community reached out to ISU planning students for help with a comprehensive plan in 2020, and the final plan recommended that Alleman apply for Community Visioning.

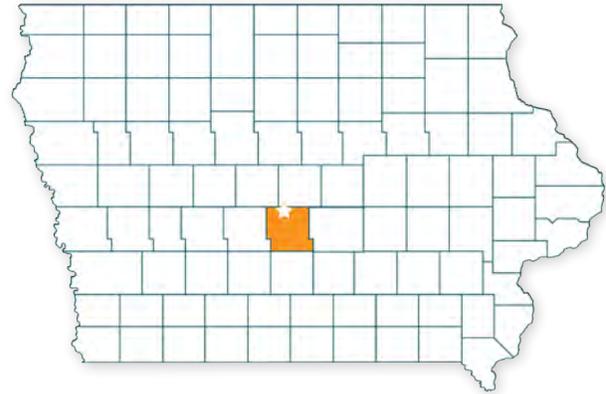
Community Assessments

The absence of connectivity within Alleman was a major issue among both survey respondents and focus-group participants. Residents desire a local trail system, as well as connections to regional trails. They are also interested in having more venues for outdoor recreation.

Planning and Design Summary

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

- Identity & Signage – Develop a family of entrance and way-finding signage that incorporate existing identity elements of the community.
- Community Connection – Create pedestrian connections among important destinations such as the schools, Alleman Estates, and Fourmile Creek; develop a pedestrian/cyclist route along NE 6th Street to connect Alleman Estates to the rest of town.
- Beautification – Add street trees, decorative lighting with banners, vegetation, and signage along NE 6th Street and NE 142nd Avenue.
- Parks & Recreation – Develop a system of parks that include green spaces and recreation venues for each neighborhood in Alleman.
- Green Community – Install riparian buffer plantings along Fourmile Creek, employ stormwater management best practices throughout the community, develop local agriculture and gardens.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Jeff Jensen*
Landscape Architect: *David Stokes, Jeffrey L. Bruce & Company*
Intern: *Mallory Sage*



Design workshop.

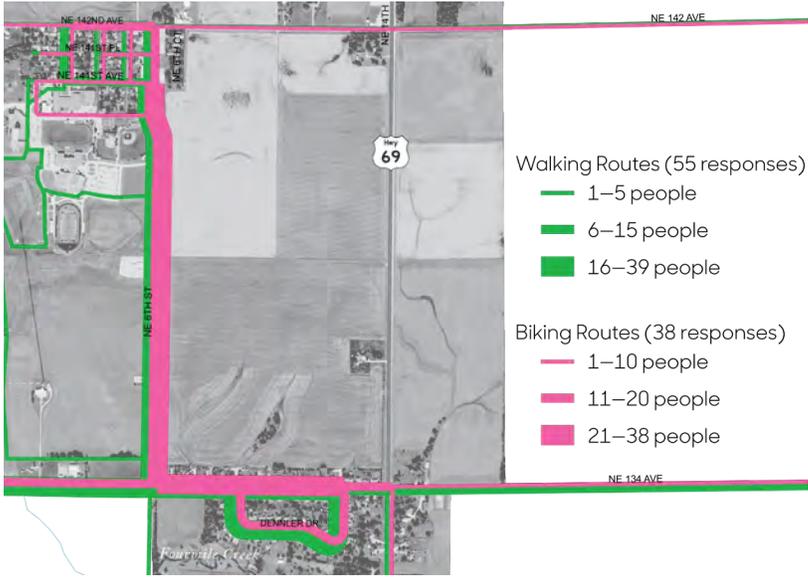
Steering Committee:

Shari Buehler, chair
Marla Heeren
Carmella Jones
Bob Kramme
Tammi McClain
Bonnie Murphy
Tyler Perry
Mary Reece
Scott Rozenboom
Arlene Sampson
Sarah Sepich

1

Both survey and focus-group participants mentioned that NE 6th Street, which is heavily traveled by vehicles, walkers, and cyclists, needs a pedestrian/cyclist connection between Alleman proper and the Alleman Estates. The design team proposed a 10-foot-wide paved trail on the east side of NE 6th from NE 141st Place to NE 134th Avenue. A crosswalk with Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons would cross NE6th Street at NE 141st Place and the corridor would be lit with pedestrian-scale lighting.

"I like [the] idea of a sidewalk connecting Alleman down to Alleman Estates. I think that would be helpful, especially for the kids who live in Alleman Estates. They could more easily get back and forth to the schools."



Walking and biking routes identified by survey respondents.



NE 6th Street proposed paved 10-foot-wide trail connection and streetscape enhancements.

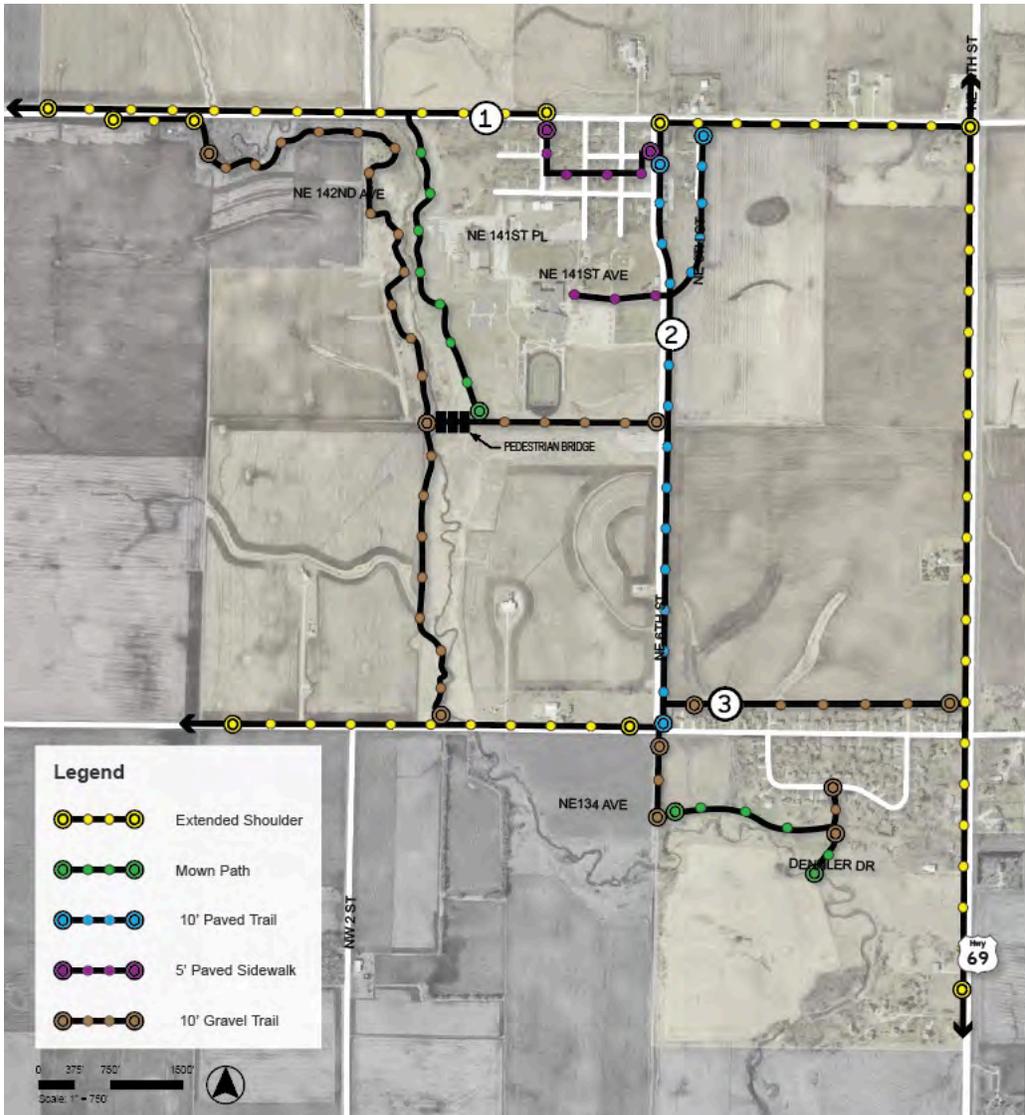
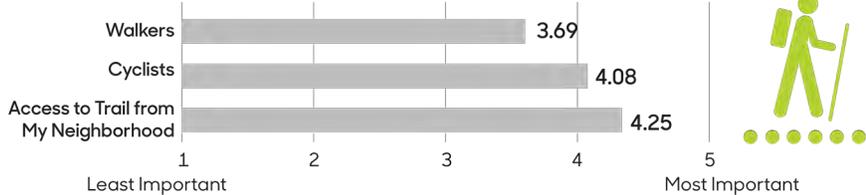
2

Trail access and connectivity are important to residents who participated in virtual focus groups and those who completed the survey. The design team addressed the absence of connectivity within Alleman using several strategies, including extended shoulders along Highway 69 and 142nd and 134th Avenues; a separate, paved trail to the Alleman Estates, five-foot-wide paved sidewalks in Alleman proper; and gravel trails and mown paths in other areas.

"...[It's] really challenging to find any paths or any place safe for walking and biking where you're not worried about other drivers all the time."



Importance of trail access



Proposed local trail connections.

"To have a recreational park area to hang out at would be nice."



3

Survey respondents ranked transportation enhancements that create more opportunities for physical activity as important, and focus-group participants said that they want some type of gathering space in town. The design team responded with a park and recreation plan that includes five new parks. One park has already been designated for the new Timber Creek development just west of Fourmile Creek, in the northern part of Alleman. The design team's plan for this park includes walking paths, a play space, an amphitheater with seating and a stage, a public restroom and shelter, and a 7v7, U9 and U10 soccer field.



Concept plan for Timber Creek Park.

Calamus

Calamus is a small railroad town in eastern Iowa located along Highway 30 and the Historic Lincoln Highway. The town is part of a rural pocket of small towns, but is not far from many large cities, including Davenport, Iowa City, and Cedar Rapids. Calamus and its closest neighbor, Wheatland, share a school district, with the elementary school located in Calamus and the junior high and high school in Wheatland.

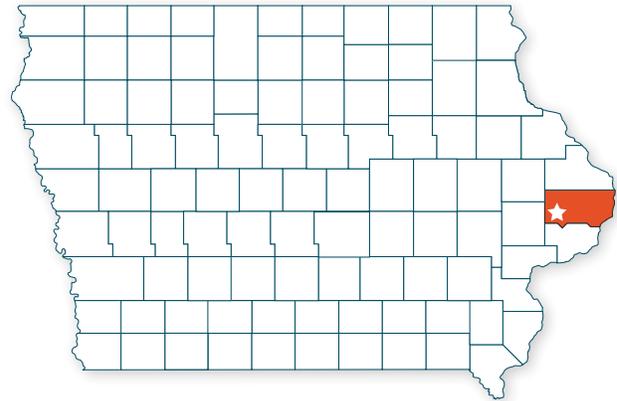
Community Assessments

Public input from focus groups, a survey, and a high-school survey revealed that residents want a recreation trail in town, as well as between Calamus and Wheatland. Walking is a popular activity among residents; however, the sidewalk system is incomplete and in poor condition. The railroad creates several problems, including trains stopping at the crossings and loud train horns.

Planning and Design Summary

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

- Railroad Crossings – Upgrade the two railroad crossings in town and create a train quiet zone within the city limits.
- Trail Loop – Create a trail system throughout Calamus and a multi-use trail to neighboring Wheatland.
- Streetscapes – Upgrade the downtown streetscape to attract businesses and improve accessibility, add pedestrian amenities such as lighting, crosswalks, and street furnishings.
- Community Identity & Connectivity – Expand and upgrade the sidewalk system, implement way-finding and entrance signage.
- Outdoor Recreation – Expand the sports field offerings to include a football field with a track and add more parking at the sport fields.
- Residential Development – Identify opportunities for new residential expansions.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Emily Swihart*

Landscape Architect: *Meg Flenker, Flenker Land Architecture Consultants*

Interns: *T.J. Hillberry, Paola Monllor-Torres, and Ethan Morrow*



Design workshop.

Steering Committee:

Lance Goettsch, chair
Sharyl Banowetz
Joyce Boedeker
Francis Boggus, Home Town Pride coach
Melanie Buckner
Janet Donelson
Jeff Griebel

Rita Hart
Jessie Jacobi
Mike Lacey
Grace Oldsen
Kelly Olson
Autumn Reiling
Karragan Whitman

"[I would like] a loop all the way around the entire town with bridges that get you over the train tracks and Highway 30 so then you've got a three-mile loop that's paved."



Focus group

"As a senior, I would love a walking path...I think it would be a great addition to the Calamus community and hope you would consider the needs of the senior population as well as the more active citizens."



Random-sample survey

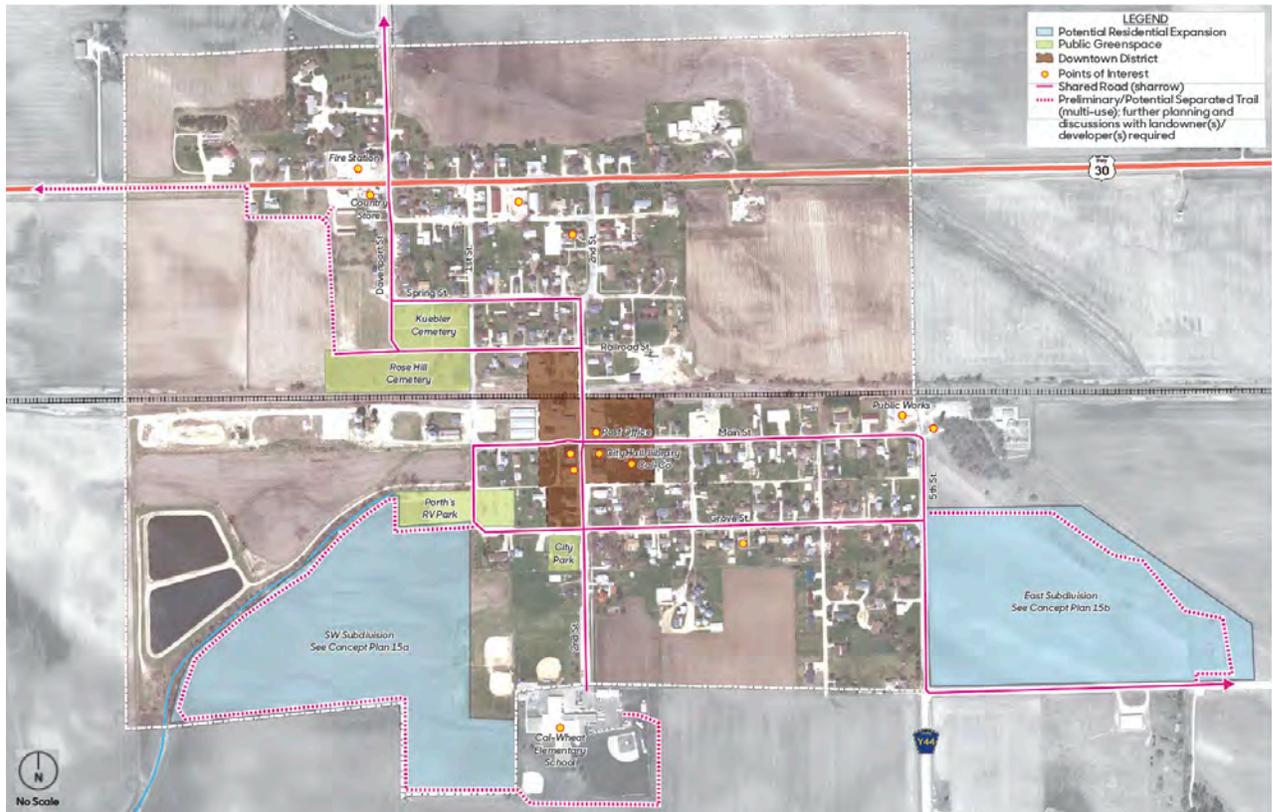
"[I would like] a path for walking and that would be wide enough for bikes also...[and a] safe path for people with [vision] problems."



High-school survey

1

Even though many residents feel safe walking in the streets of Calamus, focus-group participants and both adult and high-school survey respondents expressed the desire for a trail loop. The design team developed a trail master plan that includes a local trail loop that connects to a regional trail between Calamus and Wheatland (see pages 50–51 for the regional trail design concepts).

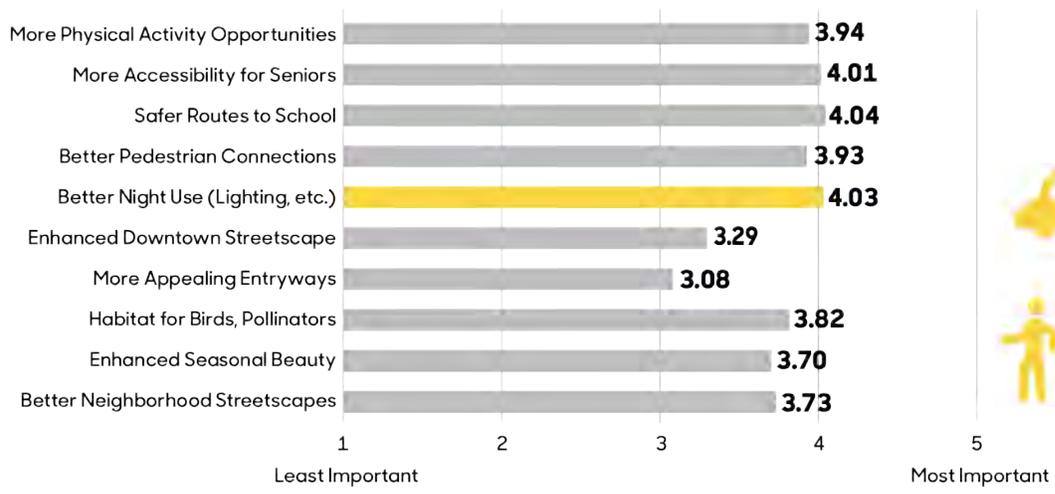


The proposed loop trail incorporates already popular walking routes, as well as routes in proposed subdivisions.

2

Poor lighting throughout town emerged as an issue among focus-group participants. Survey respondents identified transportation enhancements that improve night use as one of their top priorities, ranking it 4.03 on a scale of 1 to 5. The design team created a streetscape enhancement plan that calls for decorative, pedestrian-scale lighting along several streets, including 2nd Street, which is the main route to the school.

Transportation Enhancement Priorities



"...from the park to the school, I don't think there are any streetlights that I can think of. So, when you have a night softball...or...baseball game, or a concert...you would be walking in the dark..."



"[First Street] is extremely dark at night when you're trying to run through there, plus those railroad tracks are really steep, so when you come off there running in the dark, it's very treacherous."



Top: Existing 2nd Street corridor. Bottom: Proposed 2nd Street enhancements include pedestrian-scale lighting, sidewalks, and crosswalks.

3

Results of the survey and focus groups show that poor sidewalk conditions are an issue in Calamus, especially for people with mobility issues. The design team's streetscape plan features new, ADA-compliant sidewalks, curb ramps, decorative crosswalks, and street furniture, as well as decorative lighting with banners and flower baskets.

"My husband is in a wheelchair and I am in a walker. If there are holes or cracks in the sidewalk, that makes it difficult to walk with a walker."



Intersection of Main and 2nd Streets with proposed streetscape enhancements.



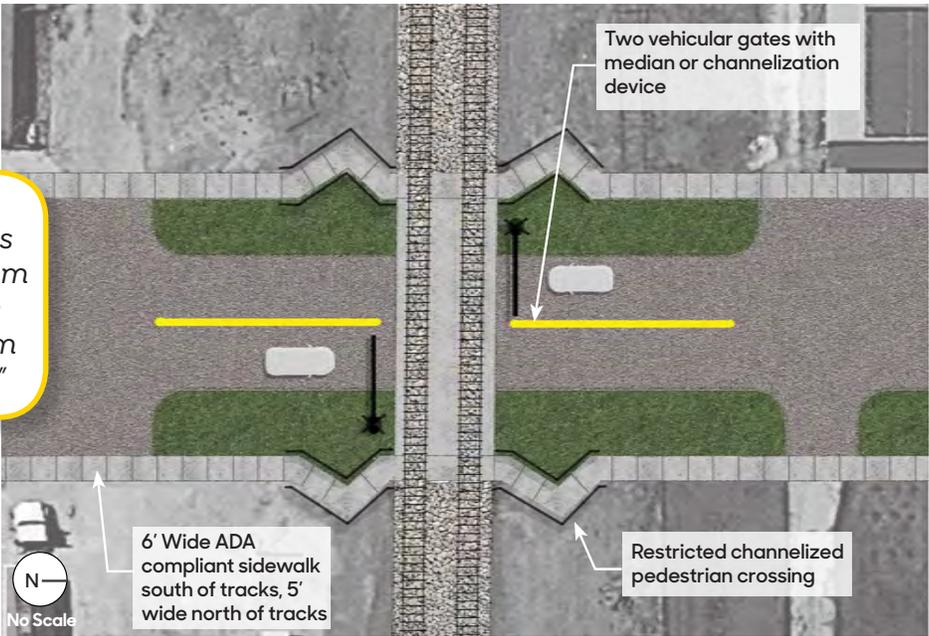
"[Both railroad crossings] need improving, but the one by the cemetery is the worst one."



4

Focus-group participants identified one or more issues with the railroad, most of which had to do with trains stopping and blocking traffic and also with the loudness of their horn(s). Youth and individuals with mobility issues also said that the crossings were in poor condition. The design team proposed upgrades for the railroad crossings that include vehicular gates, gates or channelized crossings for pedestrians, and ADA-compliant sidewalks. According to representatives from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Iowa DOT railway division, it is up to the railroad to decide which measures are to be put in place.

"Our railroad track crossings are always horrific... They just seem to split out to where they get holes in them and they're terrible."



Proposed railroad crossing with two gates with medians and channelization devices.

Conrad

Conrad is a small community along County Road D65 in rural Grundy County. Town assets include several parks and the seven-mile Comet Trail that starts in Conrad and runs southeast through Beaman to Gladbrook. However, the trail is not paved, making it inaccessible to some. A recent comprehensive plan completed by Iowa State University planning students recommended expanding the sidewalk network and accommodating older adults and those with mobility issues.

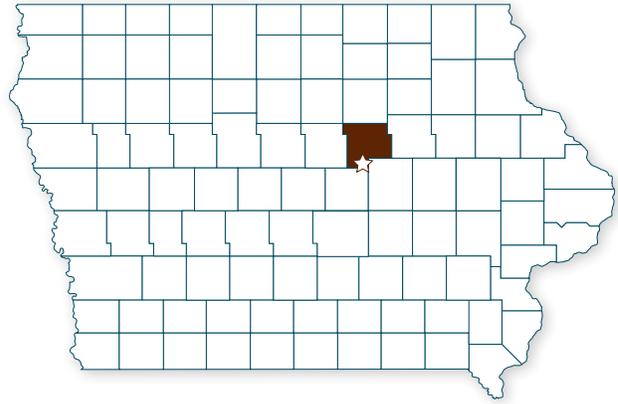
Community Assessments

Focus-group participants enjoy the outdoor recreation venues in town, including the trail and the Wolf Creek overlook. However, they pointed out that portions of the trail wash out with heavy rain or melting snow. Youth noted that they would use the trail more if it was a loop. Residents also said that a better pedestrian connection is needed from town south to the golf course and residential areas. All groups would like a complete sidewalk network.

Planning and Design Summary

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

- Sidewalks – Expand existing sidewalks to create wide areas that are inviting to pedestrians/cyclists, install intersection bump-outs, plant street trees, add pedestrian-scale lighting, seating, and bike racks.
- Safety, Walkability, & Accessibility – Improve the safety along streets and trails using creative methods to improve accessibility, and provide safe routes to destinations identified by the community.
- Trail Extension & Trailhead – Create a trailhead at the west entry to town and create a trail loop featuring amenities such as fitness stations, rest areas, and a bike repair station.
- Trail – Employ stormwater mitigation strategies such as bioswales and a channel drain and pave portions of the trail that wash out.
- Parks & Recreation – Reconfigure existing parks to add activity venues such as a skate park, pickle ball, and bike racks.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Patty Reisinger*

Landscape Architect: *Dave Stokes, Jeffrey L. Bruce & Company*

Intern: *Mallory Sage*



Design workshop.

Steering Committee:

Lori Stansberry, chair

John Dinsmore

Sharon Dolphin

Rick Eckerman

Nick Kitzman

Brian Ladehoff

Keisha Lockhart

Angie Paxson

Julie Towne

1

Focus-group participants of all ages enjoy the Comet Trail. However, the existing trail does not have a loop and leads out of town. The proposed trail extension and optional trail route on the east side of town will bring closure to the Comet. An additional optional trail route provides an alternative location if the proposed perimeter route is interrupted in any way. The new loop would feature fitness equipment, rest areas, and native vegetation.



Proposed trail amenities include seating, lighting, and vegetation.

"...one of the main issues about the trail also is that it doesn't go around town. You have to go out of town and walk back in. If we had a loop around town, that'd be nice."



"The Comet Trail is certainly an asset. I mean, many, many people use that and are happy to have that."



Proposed Comet Trail loop plan.

2

Seasonal trail conditions emerged as a significant barrier during the focus groups. Heavy rain washes out the trail in some places, making it difficult to use. The design plan for Oakland Park Trailhead mitigates and manages stormwater within the floodplain designations with an area of resilient native plantings and a strategically placed channel drain across the Comet Trail. The Comet Trail is paved through this area, minimizing the frequency of trail grooming. Other amenities at the trailhead include a mown inter-loop trail, a defined parking lot, a park shelter, a trail map kiosk, a bike repair station, and park signage.

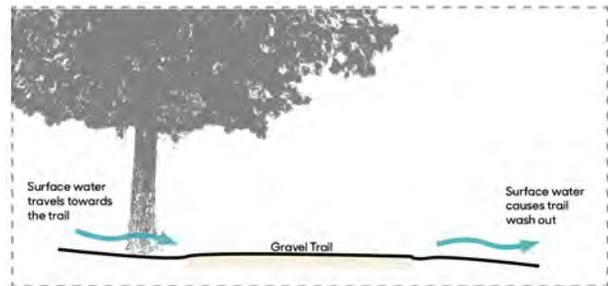
"And a lot of times when it rains, some of the trail will wash out and you'll get big ruts in it that make it harder to ride bikes."



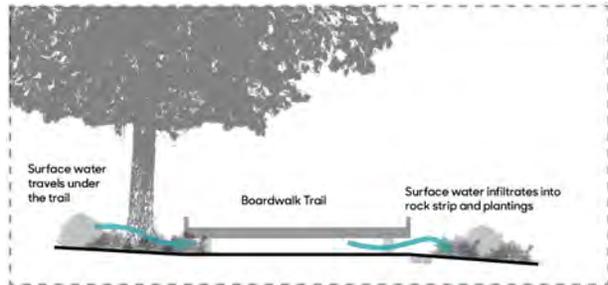
"[In] spring we tend to have a lot of runoff rain...[and] Wolf Creek will fill very quickly...[the water] will get high...so it covers...the trail [in] multiple places."



"We're always having to put down new trail mix every time there's a big rain to smooth things out..."



Existing Comet Trail section.



Proposed Comet Trail section.



3

Lillian Avenue runs east-west on the north side of town, allowing access to the elementary school, Dreamland Park, and the ball diamonds. It is designated by the community as an essential route. Residents expressed concern about the absence of complete sidewalks and safe places for kids to walk.

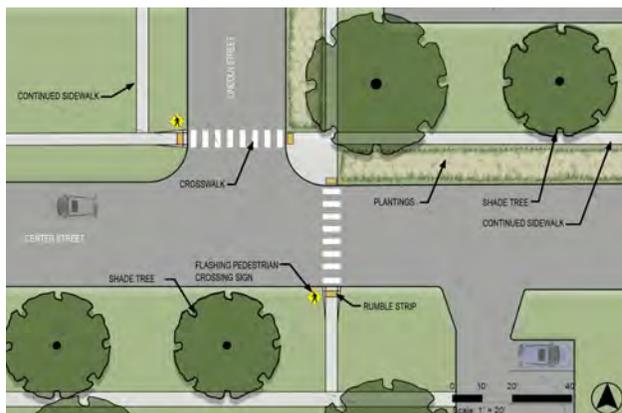


Existing and proposed Lillian Street corridor.

"I know the sidewalks on Center Street are not good. Usually that's kind of a slow go in there because they're really uneven or they're really skinny. There's a lot of growth up through the cracks."

"There's not a sidewalk...along [Lillian Avenue] and...that's the main road to and from the elementary. When kids are...getting picked up...you also have kids walking along Lillian trying to get home...So that's a little concerning..."

The design team proposed intersection concepts that create safer pedestrian crossings for students. Shade trees are planted to slow traffic and ornamental plantings along the roadway help create a sense of place. Rumble strips, crosswalk lines, and flashing pedestrian walk signs are included to facilitate a safe crossing for students.



Plan for the intersection of Center and Lincoln Streets.



Plan for W. Grundy Avenue and Wilhelm Street.

Emmetsburg

Emmetsburg is the county seat of Palo Alto County, situated at the junction of Highways 18 and 4. The community is proud of its Irish heritage, which it celebrates every March with a St. Patrick's Day parade. Emmetsburg was a visioning community in 2001, which resulted in the completion of entrance signage that proclaims "Cead Mile Failte"—a Gaelic phrase meaning "a hundred thousand welcomes." Residents enjoy outdoor recreation venues such as Five Island Lake and Five Island Trail.

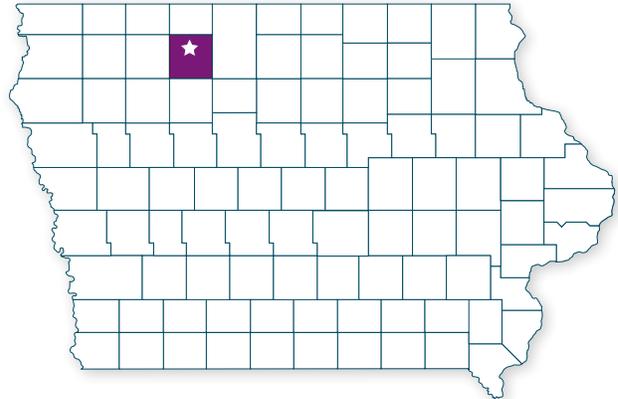
Community Assessments

Focus groups, a random-sample survey, and a high-school survey revealed that residents appreciate the outdoor recreation opportunities available to them but would like better pedestrian and cyclist connections. Safe routes to school and more pedestrian friendly highway crossings are seen as priorities. The bioregional assessment shows that flooding can be an issue in some areas.

Planning and Design Summary

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

- Connectivity – At the city scale, add dedicated pedestrian and bicycle facilities to connect a majority of Emmetsburg's community spaces and civic building sites that includes mobility enhancements at intersections and overall pedestrian and cyclist safety throughout the city.
- Broadway Street – Transform the three-block section between Main Street and the Five Island Lake into a boulevard with streetscape amenities, stormwater features, and pedestrian-use areas that will invite activity along the community corridor.
- Mural Park – Create a public pocket park downtown focused on visual and performance art elements and that builds upon and adds to the character of the existing murals.
- Harlan Park – Re-image the under-utilized public park with a prominent natural playscape, multi-purpose lawn space, native rain garden plantings, a boardwalk, new monument signage, and a nature walk.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Jeff Jensen*

Landscape Architects: *Andrew Gorham, Jen Cross, HDR, Inc.*

Intern: *Suzanne Sharp*



Design review meeting.

Steering Committee:

Gretchen Reichter, chair

Dan Cooper

Patrick Degen

Darren Hanna

Deb Hite

Greg Hoyman

Kim Kibbie

Terry M. Luiken

Jamie Neff

Anna Schulte

Jane Whitmore

1

Both focus-group and survey participants identified safer routes to school as a priority, along with general improvement of sidewalk connectivity. Residents also noted that it is difficult to cross the highways in town. The design team proposed a connectivity plan that addresses these issues with new sidewalks, shared roadways, off-street trail connections, and controlled intersection crossings.

"...from Lawler going west on 1st Street out to the hospital, people are on the street all the time...the ambulance comes along, they're still in the street. It's a problem in my opinion..."

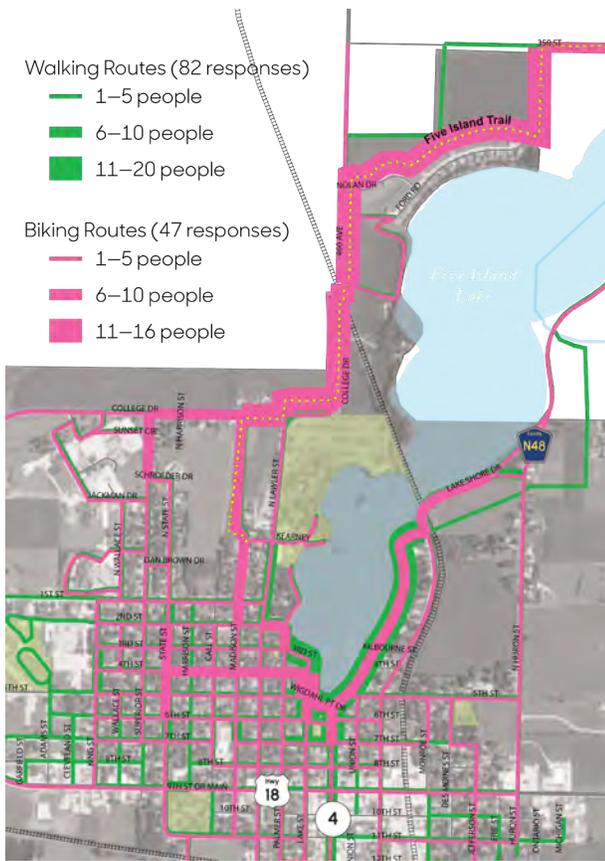


"When [we] go to school [on 7th Street] there's a sidewalk, then it ends, and then there's a sidewalk again, and it gets really bumpy."



"...King Street from the high school down to the main road [has] no sidewalk...so when the kids are walking home, they're walking on the street...and you've got high schoolers [who] are driving past, so that's a little bit of a concern."

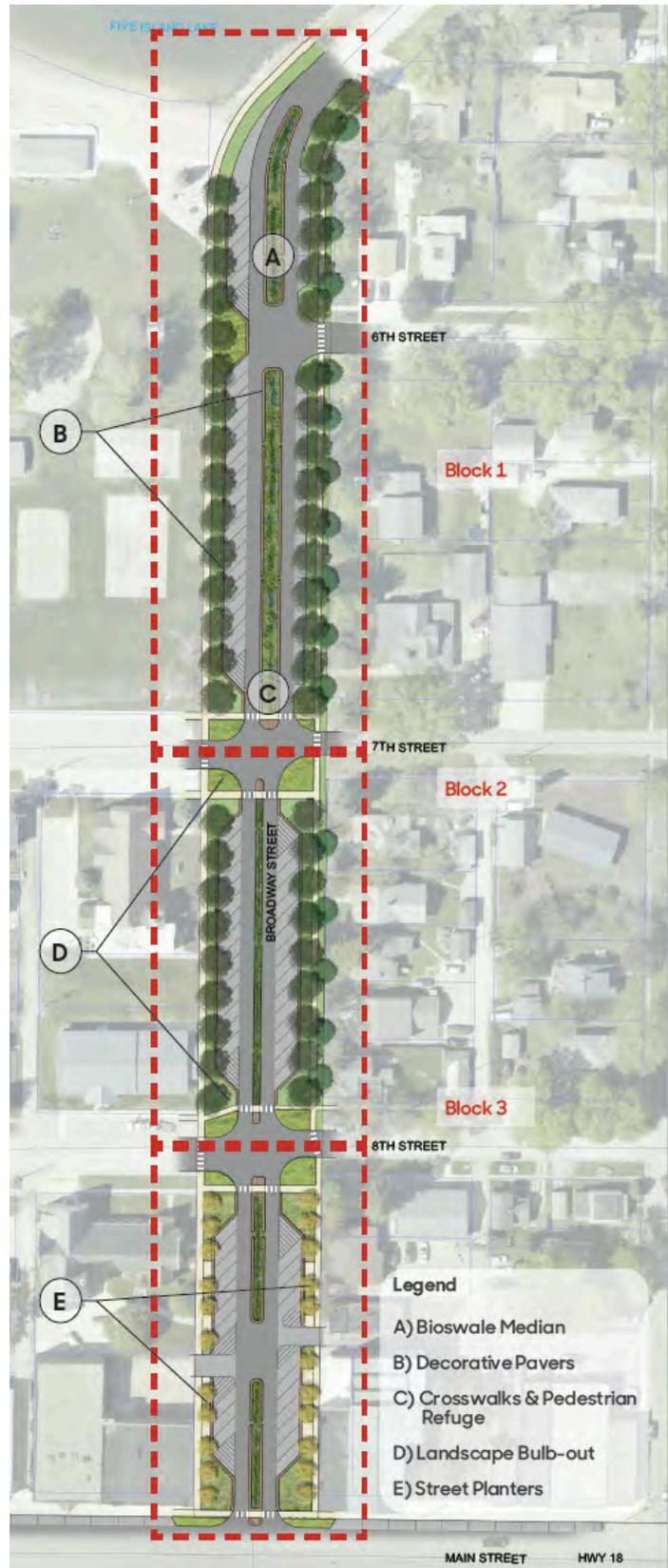




Walking and biking routes identified by survey respondents.

2

Results of the random-sample and high-school surveys indicate that walkers and bikers frequently use the Broadway Street corridor north of Highway 18, presumably to access attractions such as Five Island Lake, Soper Park, and the Five Island Trail. However, in its current condition, this corridor is not pedestrian or cyclist friendly. The design team’s proposal for this corridor would shorten pedestrian crossing distances with bump-outs at intersections and a median that also serves as a bioswale. Decorative paving, ornamental light fixtures, benches, bike racks, and street trees would make the area more comfortable and visually appealing to users.



Streetscape plan for Broadway Street.

3

Survey respondents indicated that creating more opportunities for physical activity is an important transportation enhancement priority, and the active recreationists focus group identified Harlan Park as an under-utilized open space because of flooding and old play equipment. The proposed park concept imagines a transformed public green space, with a prominent natural playscape and climbing features, a new monument sign and focal landscape bed, a shelter with shaded seating for park users, and a set of five game tables. The plan also has a pathway that loops around the park that features a boardwalk over a large rain garden. The gardens and bioswale along 5th Street would help alleviate flooding issues, while creating an attractive amenity for interpretive or educational opportunities.

"[Harlan Park] does flood pretty much all summer, if we do get a good amount of rain...I don't know if I've seen a soul there in the last 15 years just because the equipment is...old...and [the park is] just a mosquito trap because when it does flood..."



Existing Harlan Park.



Perspective of the enhanced Harlan Park looking southeast toward the monument sign and natural play areas.

Malvern

Malvern is located just north of the midway point of the 63-mile long Wabash Trace Nature Trail, a converted rail trail that extends from Council Bluffs to the Missouri border at Blanchard. The trail is a tremendous asset that brings many visitors to town; however, connections between the trail and local attractions are absent. Pedestrian connections throughout town are also lacking.

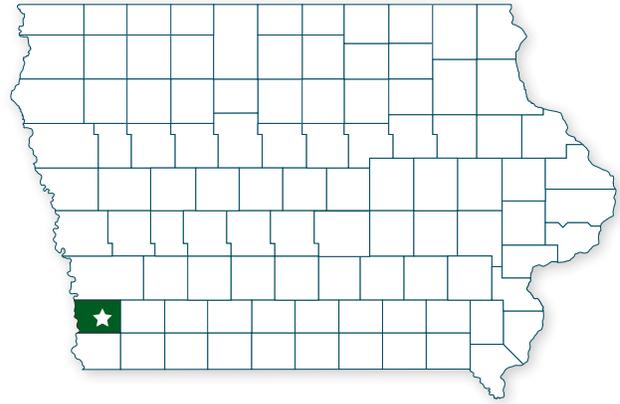
Community Assessments

Focus-group participants appreciate downtown Malvern for the tree cover, public art, and the consistent and well-kept streets, sidewalks, and curb ramps. Residents also value Boehner Park as a natural retreat for the community, but would like more park amenities. They would also like more trails in town and better sidewalk connections. A particular area of concern is the absence of a safe route to the high school.

Planning and Design Summary

After the Malvern visioning committee identified goals, the design team led a workshop during which design concepts were created, including the following:

- Boehner Park – Add ADA-compliant facilities, improve RV campsites, remediate sedimentation in the pond, plant native vegetation, and upgrade play spaces.
- Downtown – Enhance the district using pedestrian-scale lighting with banners, plantings, and a sculptural archway.
- Safe Route to School – Upgrade the Main Street corridor and bridge with a paved sidewalk, railings, a four-foot buffer between the sidewalk and the road, and a decorative fence.
- Fairgrounds Trail Extension— Establish a new trailhead and trail connection in southern Malvern near the fairgrounds, the Fairview Golf Course, and a new neighborhood development.
- T&N Park – Transform the existing park into a dog park with sidewalks, shelters, and native plantings. The design should be flexible enough to be used for multiple purposes as community needs change.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Brad Riphagen*
Landscape Architects: *Alison Ingunza, Jen Cross, HDR, Inc.*

Intern: *Suzanne Sharp*



Review of assessments meeting.

Steering Committee:
Natalie Lancial, chair
Jeannie Barney
Becky Bell
Rebecca Castle
Lance Dalton
Bev Dashner
Cheryl Jones
Ryan Ossell
Jack Sayers
Jill Smith
Abby Sorenson

"[Walking] from the high school down on Main Street is really hard to do with all the passing cars... When I'm driving, I see other kids walking on the side of the road by the ditch because... there are no sidewalks..."



"...the route to school up from East Mills, to be able to connect to the downtown, it's not safe right now if students are walking. They're basically walking on a highway to get to the western side of town, so that's not safe."



"We have a lot of after-school traffic on [Main Street/L63] with kids walking...the big rock quarry, truck traffic that goes through...it's literally just a step and you're in the street... There's nothing...that keeps you protected."



1

Focus-group participants from several demographic groups raised the absence of a safe route to the high school as an issue, describing how students have to walk along the highway to get to and from school. For the east side of Main Street, the design team proposed a paved, five-foot sidewalk, a four-foot buffer of grass and native plants, and a fence as an additional protection from the traffic. On the west side of the street a significant grade change exists; the design team proposed a retaining wall with barrier railing. Railings decorated with metallic leaf sculptures would be added to both sides of the bridge for safety.



Existing Main Street bridge

"...from the high school on Main Street across the viaduct... There's not a sidewalk there for kids walking from the school to downtown."



Proposed Main Street bridge improvements.

2

Residents identified the lack of a connection from town to the fairgrounds, Fairview Hills Golf Course, and a new neighborhood development as a barrier. The design proposals for this area include improving the sidewalk and bridge that extend south along Main Street, as well as a new trail behind the fairgrounds and the golf course that would connect to a new trailhead in the neighborhood development and the Wabash Trace.

The bridge north of the fairgrounds is currently not ADA accessible and does not provide safe protection from traffic. The new bridge design includes updating the railings along the bridge and widening the sidewalks and making them accessible. Native grasses and trees will be added along the sidewalk and trail to enhance the user experience.

"...when we have the fair going on, there [are] a lot of times that my kiddos want to go home...and I don't feel like I can send them because there's no real sidewalk for them to...get to downtown or to C&M's..."



"...The fairgrounds and the golf course and the new subdivision, there's no real way to get there walking or riding a bike. You basically have to drive or you're walking on the highway, so it would be nice to have some type of a trail to connect all of that [to downtown]."



Existing Main Street bridge.



Proposed Main Street bridge improvements.

3

Boehner Park was identified as a local asset during several focus groups. At the same time, participants pointed out that the park is underutilized because it is not easy to get to and is not accessible to all user types. To meet ADA standards, accessible parking, sidewalks to the shelters, and a compliant railing on the existing fishing jetty are needed. To accommodate fishing, the pond needs to be dredged to remove sedimentation and will require a liner to maintain a consistent water level. New park shelters, a restroom, and a bathhouse are desired. Creating a diverse plant habitat along the pond edge with native plantings and a multi-tiered fishing overlook would aid in stabilizing the pond's edge and create habitat for fish and other wildlife. New entry signage, way-finding signage, wifi and park security are also included in the design proposal to ensure the safety of all park visitors.

LEGEND

- A. Boehner Pond
- B. RV Campground
- C. Primitive Camping
- D. Shelter
- E. Showers and Restrooms
- F. Playground
- G. Southern Wetlands
- H. New Entry Sign
- I. Parking Drive and Loop
- J. Trailhead Plaza
- K. Northern Wetlands
- L. Boardwalk
- M. Dock
- N. Accessible Fishing

"It would be nice if they fixed the path that went from [Boehner] Pond to the Trace because then you could park at the pond..."



"It's kind of an underused amenity in town, the Boehner Pond and Boehner Pond campground...I think part of the reason it's not used by residents is because it's not very easy to get there."



Proposed plan for Boehner Park.

Princeton

The town of Princeton rises up quickly from the river valley into the bluffs to the west. These two landscape features help define the shape and regional identity of the community. Prior to taking part in the 2021 Community Visioning Program, Princeton collaborated with the National Park Service and ISU's Community Design Lab to create recreation opportunities that connect people to parks and places in town and along the Mississippi River.

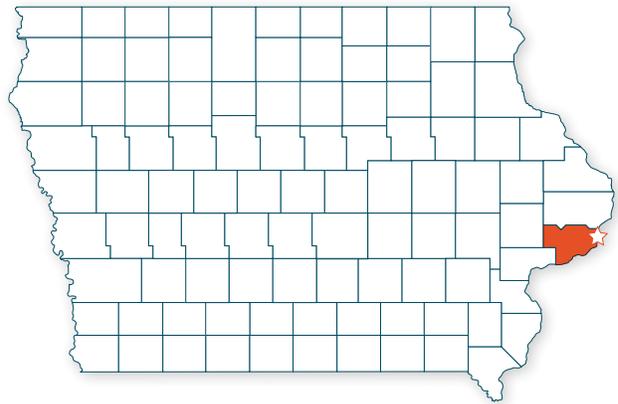
Community Assessments

A random-sample survey and focus groups with active recreationists and visioning committee members show the importance of pedestrian connectivity and trails to residents. People value the river and other natural areas such as the Princeton Wildlife Management Area, as well as community parks, and would like better access to these local assets.

Planning and Design Summary

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

- Highway 67 – Designate pedestrian crossings at Lost Grove Road, Clay Street, and Chestnut Street to improve accessibility and connectivity to River Drive and the riverfront.
- River Drive – Upgrade the streetscape to enhance aesthetics, improve the quality of life for residents, and stimulate economic growth.
- Signage – Strengthen community identity, improve safety and connectivity through implementation of a unified way-finding signage system.
- Pedestrian Connectivity – Create a complete sidewalk system that is in good condition, accessible, safe, and is well lit along primary walking corridors.
- Water Quality – Clean up Whiskey Creek and its tributaries and remove invasive and dead vegetation and trees from the corridor; integrate native vegetation and grass-grid parking on River Drive.
- Expand recreational opportunities by creating a trail system throughout Princeton and as part of the Mississippi River Trail.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Molly Walkner*

Landscape Architect: *Meg Flenker, Flenker Land Architecture Consultants*

Interns: *T.J. Hillberry, Paola Monllor-Torres, and Ethan Morrow*



Design workshop.

Steering Committee:

Gina Wolfe, chair

Terri Applegate

Jason Balinski

Ethan Bettis

Callie Carter

Tim Hobkirk

Christina McDonough

Rachel Sullivan

Jami Stutting

Jim Walsh

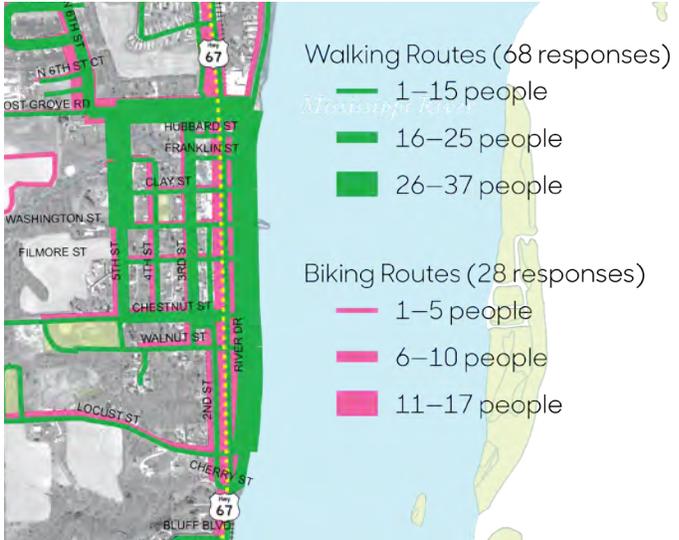
Betsy Wolfe

Karen Woomert

1

Survey results and focus-group comments indicate that River Drive is an extremely popular route for walkers and cyclists. However, the street is not conducive to pedestrian and bike traffic. The design team developed several design concepts for River Drive, including the one pictured here that features a green parking solution consisting of a permeable grass grid system.

"I was out doing a walk/run the other day and I went down River [Drive]; you have to run in the streets because the sidewalks are kind of chewed up...running in the middle of that road, that road is kind of chopped up and messy too."



The random-sample survey shows that River Drive is the most frequently used route among walkers and cyclists.



"I...like the views...I like running down on River Drive, especially early, when the sun rises, [you can] get good pictures."



Top: Existing River Drive corridor. Bottom: River Drive with proposed enhancements.

2

Both focus-group participants and survey respondents consider better pedestrian connections throughout Princeton to be a priority. Among survey respondents, it was ranked most important, with a mean value of 3.95 on a scale of 1 to 5. Residents want to make it easier for youth to get to popular destinations such as school and local parks. The design team’s concept plan includes a complete, accessible sidewalk system that specifically addresses a safe route to the elementary school and Woomert Park with an eight-foot-wide sidewalk along 5th Street, as well as a pedestrian bridge or extended roadway culvert to allow people to cross the creek without entering the roadway.

Transportation Enhancement Priorities



"As a parent with a son [who] likes to walk to elementary school, on Fifth Street, there [are] no sidewalks, and there's a hill that makes it hard for drivers to see anybody [who]'s walking or biking."



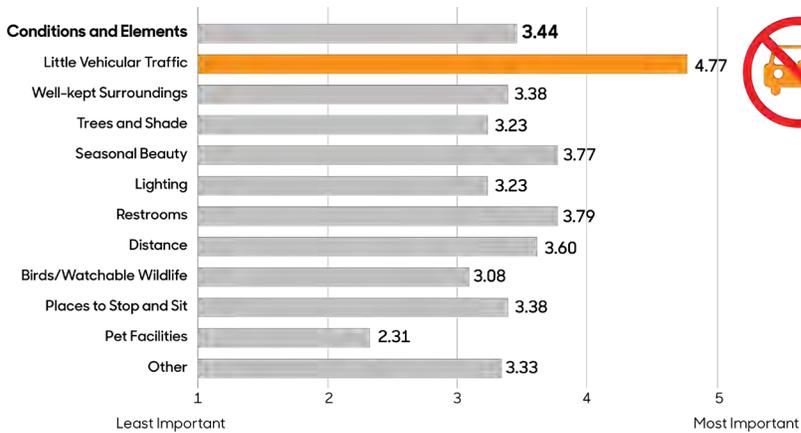
Right: Existing 5th Street corridor. Above: An eight-foot-wide sidewalk along the west side of 5th Street would provide pedestrian access to Virgil Grissom Elementary School and Woomert Park.



3

The Great River Road Scenic Byway that follows Highway 67 through town brings many travelers through Princeton, which, while positive in terms of tourism and economic development, creates problems for walkers and cyclists in the community. Survey respondents want to bike where less vehicular traffic is present, preferably on a trail, and both pedestrians and cyclists need to have access to well marked, safe crossings. The design team created a concept for the Highway 67 corridor that includes a trail separated from the roadway, ADA-compliant intersection crossings, pedestrian-scale lighting, and way-finding signage.

Desired Bike Route Features



"We have the most difficulty crossing at Lost Grove Road just because... Highway 67 and Lost Grove Road are probably our most popular [routes] for in and out of town..."



"I'd love a running path, so I don't have to run on the highway. Being passed by a semi at 60 miles an hour is really awesome... and driving 15, 20 minutes to the bike path in Bettendorf is not very convenient."



Left: Existing Whiskey Run Creek crossing at Highway 67. Above: Enhancements include an ADA-compliant sidewalk and a crosswalk; creek restoration; decorative, protective fencing; and interpretive and way-finding signage.

Shenandoah

Shenandoah straddles Highways 59 and 2 in southwest Iowa. The Wabash Trace Nature Trail passes through the northeast corner of town and is a popular recreation venue for residents. In the early 2000s, the downtown streetscape was redone to make the area more visually appealing as well as more universally accessible. More recently, a safe route to school that connects the high school, elementary school, and day-care center was constructed.

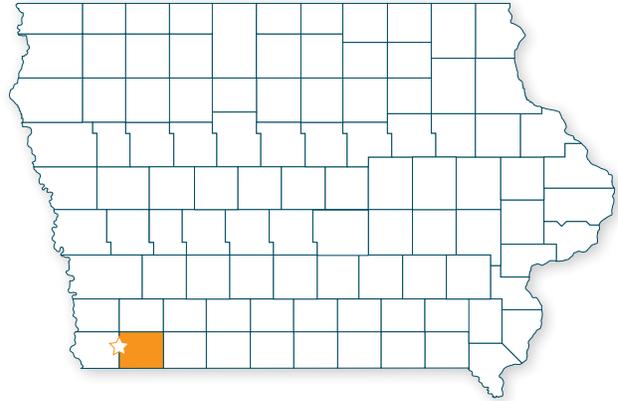
Community Assessments

Residents provided input through a random-sample mail survey and virtual focus groups. These assessments revealed that connectivity, better pedestrian and cyclist access, good sidewalks, and improvement of major corridors are important. People appreciate the safe route to school and would like it to be expanded.

Planning and Design Summary

The concept plan for Shenandoah is based on priorities identified by residents, as well as guidance from the visioning steering committee, and includes the following proposals:

- Pedestrian Safety & Connectivity – Improve pedestrian crossings and demarcation along Highway 59 and create a new connection along the Wabash Trace Trail.
- Highway 59 & West Sheridan Avenue – Bring new life to the historical gazebo at this intersection with a new public plaza and monument signage with an LED bulletin board featuring city events.
- Shenandoah River Park – Develop a new park along the East Nishnabotna River where children can play on a nature-themed playground or on the existing sandbars along the river.
- Entrance Signage – Establish new entrance signage that is large enough to be visible to vehicular traffic and that would create a cohesive theme for the city's signage.
- Downtown – Plant trees, update sidewalks, and create a pedestrian plaza and event space at the intersection of W Sheridan Avenue and S Blossom Street.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Brad Riphagen*
Landscape Architects: *Alison Ingunza, Jen Cross, HDR, Inc.*
Intern: *Suzanne Sharp*



Bioregional assessment meeting.

Steering Committee:

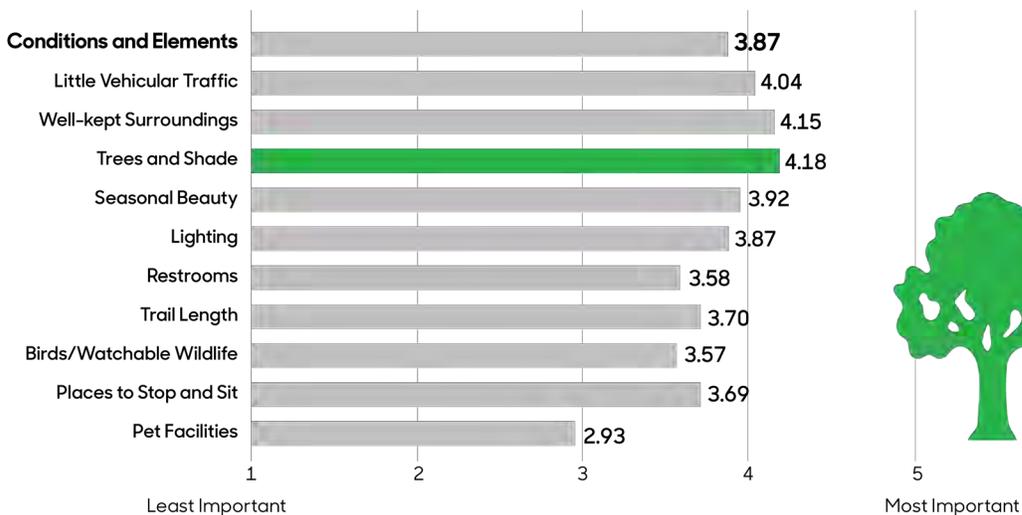
Rebecca Castle, chair
Cindy Arman
Jamie Burdorf
Lisa Connell
Shelley Davidson
Kim Gee
Margot Gee

Rita Gibson
Bill Hillman
A.J. Lyman
Lindsey McNew
Julie McQueen
Lisa Tiemeyer
Zac Zwickel

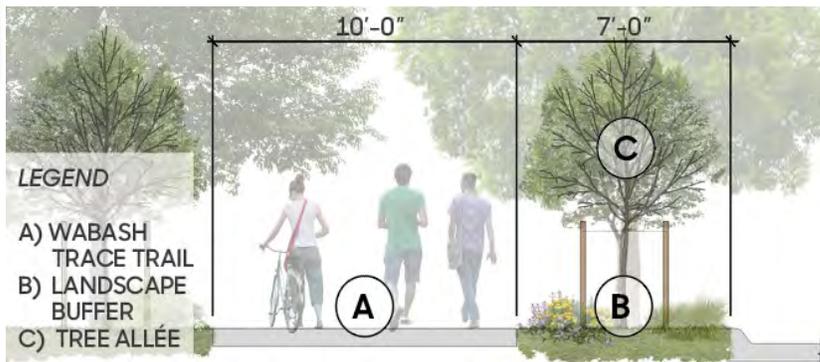
1

Focus-group participants expressed dissatisfaction with the Wabash Trace Nature Trail route through town. In addition, the random-sample survey results show that trail users place a high value on trees and shade and well-kept surroundings. The design team proposed rerouting the trail by constructing an off-street trail along Ferguson Road to Waubonsie Park. The segment would feature an allée of tree plantings on both the north and south sides of the sidewalk to act as a safety buffer between Trace users and vehicular traffic and to improve the aesthetics of the area.

Desired Trail Features



"A lot of us use the Wabash Trace Trail for exercise. It's very conveniently located just north of town, but the access point and how it runs through town is pretty terrible. So, if we could reroute that somehow, that would be fantastic."



Top: Proposed trail extension. Bottom: Section drawing of the new trail.

"Most of our basic utilities, services, conveniences, are located in the least walk[ing-] or biking-friendly areas...it is almost impossible to bike ride or walk to Hy-Vee, Fareway, Walmart [safely]."



Sidewalks are pretty inconsistent; [when] trying to cross on the busier streets there [are] no real designated points to cross."



"The sidewalks are old and...very uneven and they're very unsafe for some people to walk on, especially if you have mobility issues."



2

During focus groups, several user types raised the issue of poor pedestrian and cyclist access in certain areas of town, one of which is the Highway 59 corridor, where many businesses are located. The design team created a concept for the Highway 59 business corridor that includes a new six-foot sidewalk from West Sheridan Avenue to the end of the business district. At the traffic-signalized intersection of W Sheridan and Hy-Vee, pedestrian crosswalk striping and PED X-ING pavement markings would be added on the approach to the traffic signal. Each intersection node would be updated with ADA-accessible curb ramps, push-to-walk buttons, and brick pavers for an additional aesthetic.



This image edit shows the proposed enhancements to the intersection of Highway 59 and Hy-Vee.

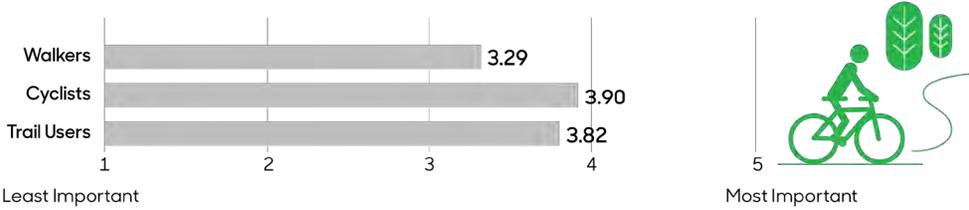
3

Results of the random-sample survey show that trail access and access to natural areas are important to Shenandoah walkers, cyclists, and trail users. The design team addressed these issues in the concept for the Shenandoah River Park. This park would be located west of Shenandoah along the East Nishnabotna River and incorporate the existing sandbars along the river. It would feature a playground, a winding trail throughout, prairie restoration walks, remote shelters, fishing access, a canoe launch, RV pads, and primitive campsites. There would also be a connection to the Farragut Admiral Trail, a trail under development that will connect Shenandoah to the small community of Farragut.

Importance of trail access



Importance of access to natural areas



Plan view of the proposed Shenandoah River Park.

Tama

Located along the route of the Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway, Tama is home to an original Lincoln Highway bridge. The town is part of a cluster of three interconnected communities, including Toledo to the north and the Meswaki Settlement, Iowa's only significant Native American community, to the east. Tama is named for Taimah, the 19th Century Meswaki leader. Because Tama and Toledo share many resources, residents would like better connections between the two towns.

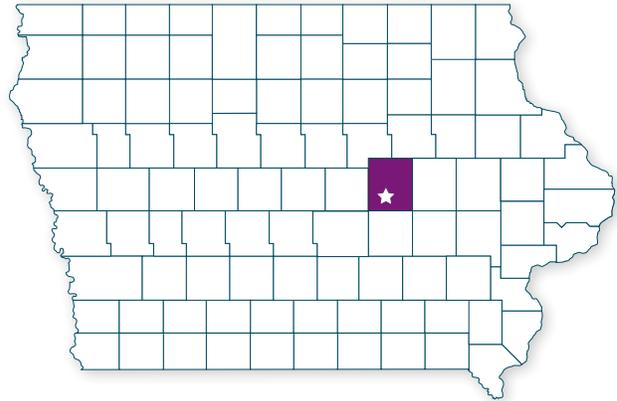
Community Assessments

Focus groups, a survey, and an interview with Hispanic residents revealed that pedestrian connectivity between Tama and neighboring Toledo is important to residents. Residents consider Highway 63 a barrier that impedes pedestrian and cyclist movement in town, and are concerned about the safety of their children.

Planning and Design Summary

The Tama and Toledo visioning committees worked together to develop goals for both communities, as well as for community-specific objectives:

- Trails – Connect the South Tama Rec Trail with the Cherry Lake Trail, add rest areas and fishing areas, and pave both trails.
- Safe Route to School – Provide a safe way for pedestrians and cyclists to cross Highway 63 to access the elementary and high schools by adding a controlled pedestrian crossing at 17th Street or building a pedestrian bridge over the highway.
- US 63 Intersection Safety and Placemaking – Create more pedestrian-friendly crossings at Harding and State Streets.
- Oak Park – Add sidewalks and crosswalks to allow safer pedestrian access to the park; update the playground and field house; add a splash pad, a dog park, and a skate park; and decrease traffic by converting 17th Street to one way.
- Downtown – Enhance crosswalks; add curb extensions with bump-outs, street trees, and murals; create a connection between the South Tama Rec Trail and Cherry Lake.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Patter Reisinger*

Landscape Architects: *Cassandra Rice, Hana Ishikawa, & Richard Meagher; site design group*

Intern: *Paul Hsu*



Tama and Toledo design workshop.

Steering Committee:

Matthew Beatty, chair

Emily Babinat

Dace Cantowine

Mike Carnahan

Sue Carnahan

Laura Galvez

Sue Harrington

Jerimi Kopsa

Karen Mixdorf

Jennifer Perez

Doug Ray

Shayna Zmolek

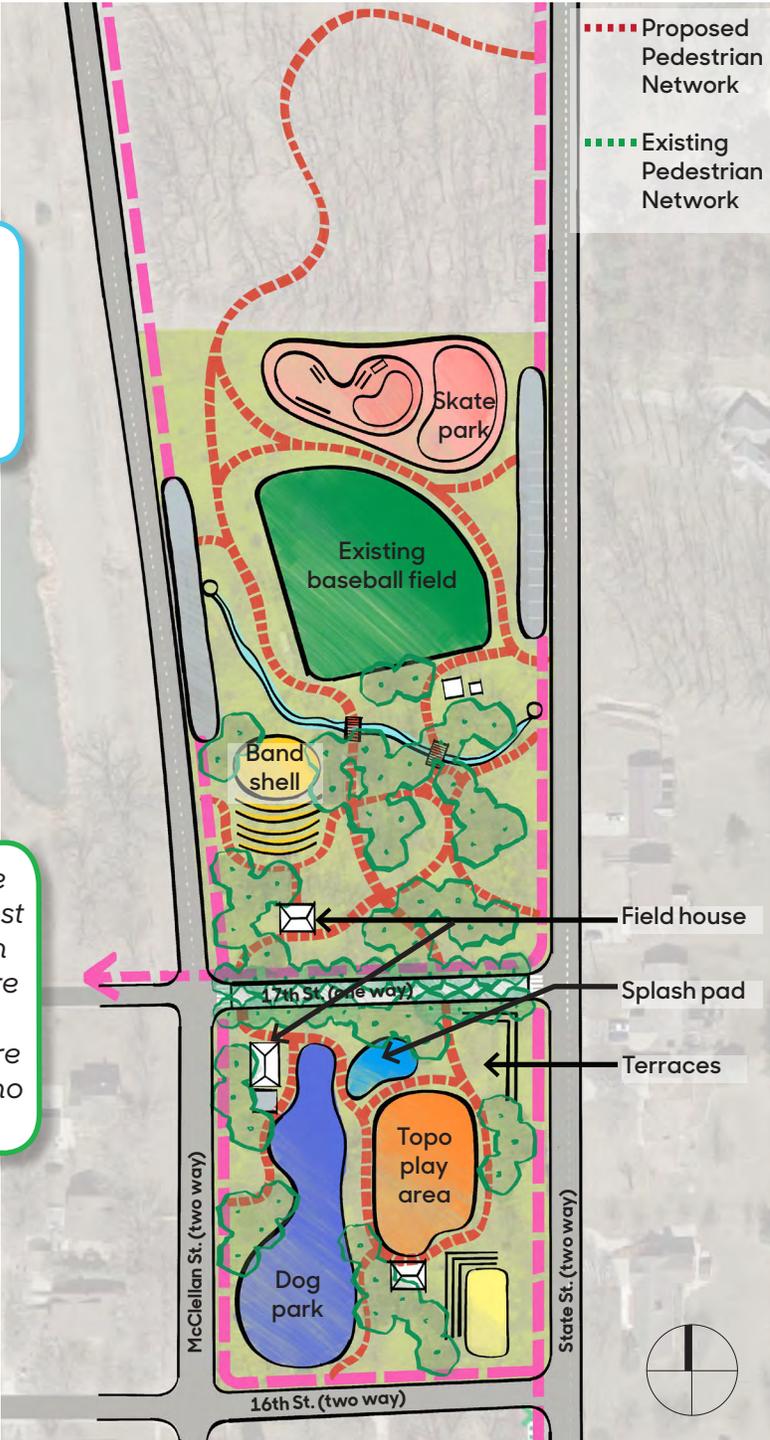
1

According to focus-group participants, Oak Park is a popular outdoor venue for both youth and adults. However, it is difficult to access because there are no sidewalks. The design team proposed creating a direct pedestrian route to the park from Tama and a create stronger connection to Aquatic Center, as well as imposing a "road diet"—that is, converting 17th Street into a one-way street to limit traffic. Other features of the plan are crosswalks; a new topography-based, nature-themed playground; a new field house with restrooms, storage, and a multipurpose space; a dog park; a skate park, and a band shell.

"From the city pool to my house, there is no sidewalk, and that's the portion between...Oak Park and the city pool and a lot of recreation for youth."



"[Oak Park] has always made me nervous...because there's just really not a whole lot between where the park ends and where the roads begin. I know there [are] a lot of kids who play there and a lot of different people who use that facility."



Proposed Oak Park upgrades and connections.

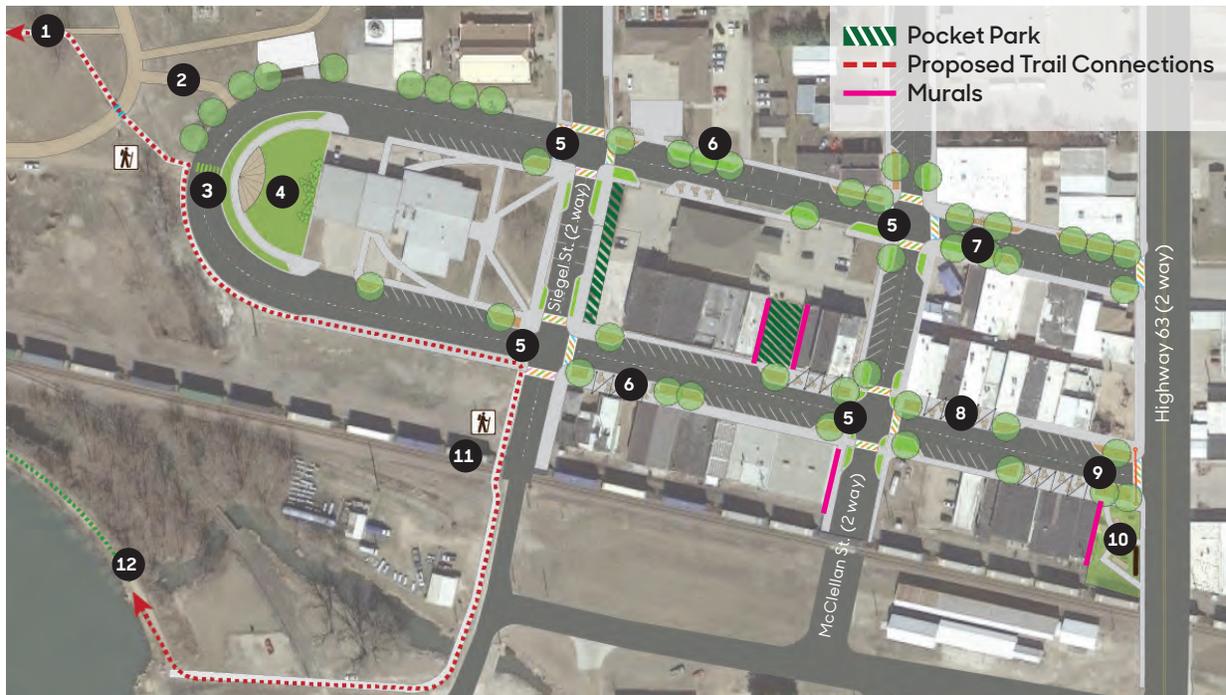
"I think our downtown area...is very good. That's where all of the action is, so to speak."

"I just understand that they've received some grant money to put the pocket park in [downtown], and now I think they're just trying to decide what...to add to it..."



2

Downtown Tama hosts many activities, including the Lincoln Highway Bridge Festival. Focus-group participants noted that the streets and sidewalks are in good condition, but additional improvements could be made. The proposed concept for downtown includes several elements to improve the pedestrian experience, such as enhanced crosswalks, curb extensions with bump-outs, street trees, and murals. The plan also creates a connection between the South Tama Rec Trail, which ends just west of downtown, and the Cherry Lake Trail.

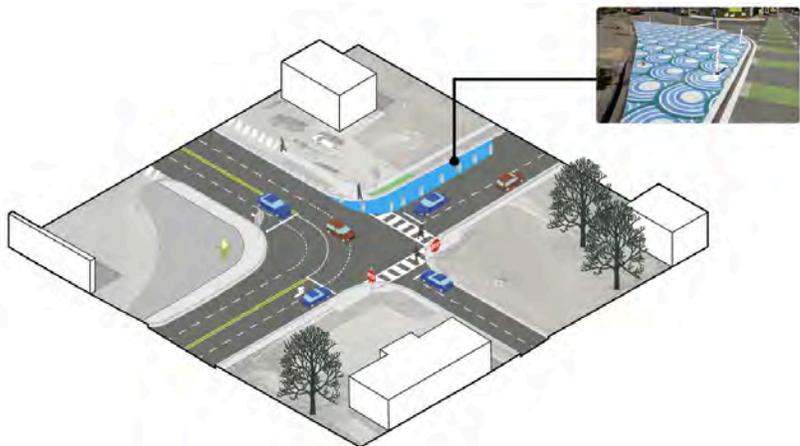


Legend

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Existing Tama Rec Trail 2. Roadway Improvements - Consolidate back-of-house access roads and connect to the Civic Drive once. Provide a clear and dedicated trail connection through access roads 3. Crosswalk - Enhanced pedestrian crosswalk connection to City Hall 4. Enhanced Civic Plaza/Trailhead 5. Enhanced Crosswalks | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Curb Extension- Permanent bump-out with pavers for outdoor dining, seating, public art 7. Enhanced Street Trees 8. Festoon Lights 9. Downtown Tama Entry Gate 10. Gateway Park and New City Sign 11. Signed Railroad Crossing and Yield Signage 12. Existing Cherry Lake Trail |
|--|---|

3

Highway 63 is a barrier to residents in several areas along the corridor, including where it intersects with State Street. The design team developed two concepts for this intersection. The first plan includes a flashing yield sign to slow Highway 63 traffic and alert drivers to potential pedestrians, a new sidewalk, a painted curb bump-out to shorten the crossing distance, and painted lane markings to guide turning movements. There would also be curb ramps and two crosswalks.



Intersection plan with yield sign and painted curb bump-out.

The second intersection plan is more elaborate, with a "Stop, Except Right Turn" sign so that eastbound traffic stops and southbound right turns do not stop. Instead of a painted bump-out, this plan features a parklet that could be used as a shaded rest area. Lane markings, curb ramps, and four crosswalks are also included.



Intersection plan with stop sign, parklet, and four crosswalks.

"There is lack of walkability... on [Highway] 63, even if there is a sidewalk, you fear that [a] car is going to come at you. There is no barrier, whether it be vegetative or some sort of or trash cans or something..."



"Crossing the four-lane highway, at times of day...can be difficult. There used to be a push button stoplight at the corner of...Ninth [and] State Street in Tama. Once the schools...in that area went away, that push button stoplight went away as well."



Toledo

Toledo is the county seat of Tama County and is situated just north of Tama and west of the Meswaki Settlement. It is home to the Wieting Theatre and Opera House, which was built in 1912. Toledo participated in Community Visioning in 1998–99, which resulted in tree plantings along the Highway 63 corridor. However, the community has changed significantly since then with the US 30 bypass. As with Tama, residents would like to be more connected with their neighbor to the south.

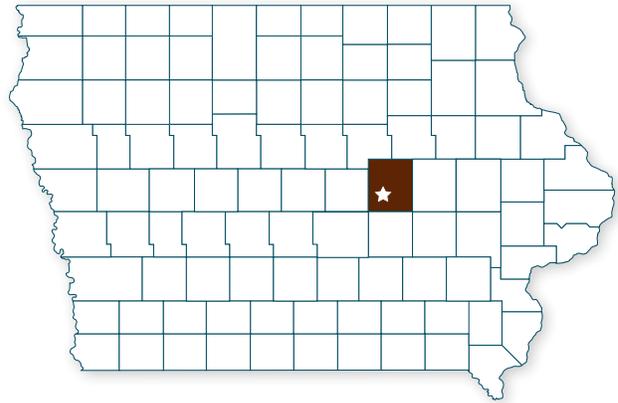
Community Assessments

Focus groups, a survey, and an interview with Hispanic residents revealed that pedestrian connectivity between Toledo and neighboring Tama is important to residents. Residents consider Highway 63 a barrier that impedes pedestrian and cyclist movement in town, and are concerned about the safety of their children.

Planning and Design Summary

The Tama and Toledo visioning committees worked together to develop goals for both communities, as well as for community-specific objectives:

- Trails – Connect the South Tama Rec Trail with the Cherry Lake Trail, add rest areas and fishing areas, and pave both trails.
- Safe Route to School – Provide a safe way for pedestrians and cyclists to cross Highway 63 to access the elementary and high schools by adding a controlled pedestrian crossing at 17th Street or building a pedestrian bridge over the highway.
- Broadway Street & Lincoln Highway – Create a more pedestrian-friendly environment by adding a flashing yield sign, accessible sidewalk, and a crosswalk.
- US 63 Intersection Safety and Placemaking – Create more pedestrian-friendly crossings at High, and 2nd Streets to allow access to Toledo Heights and the business district.
- Placemaking – Make aesthetic and pedestrian improvements to downtown Toledo including an entry gateway and “people spots” –replacement of parking spaces with outdoor dining, parklets, play pockets, dog parks, and other amenities.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Patter Reisinger*

Landscape Architects: *Cassandra Rice, Hana Ishikawa, & Richard Meagher; site design group*

Intern: *Paul Hsu*



Tama and Toledo design workshop.

Steering Committee:

Denise Fletcher, chair

Darvin Graham

Kendall Jordan

Sarah Kenkel

Trudy Koch

Mark McFate

Travis Mullen

Marilyn Rippy

Jeff Shaw

Bill Skow

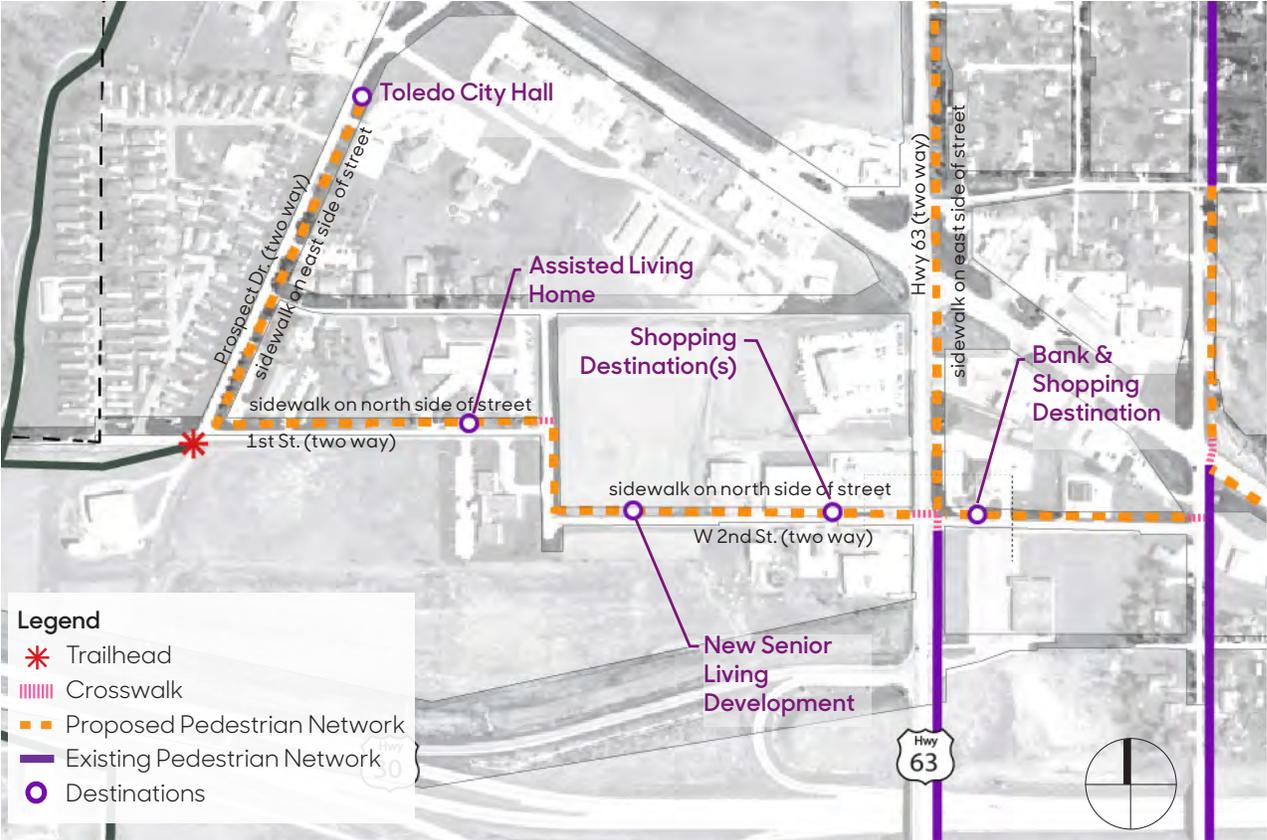
Dorothy Jo Zmolek

1

An interview with Hispanic residents and focus groups with other user types revealed a significant pedestrian access issue in the business district in Toledo. The absence of sidewalks in this area forces people to walk in the roadway along busy two-way streets and a four-lane highway corridor. The design team proposed new sidewalk connections to destinations in the area. At the intersection of Highway 63 and W 2nd Street, a flashing yield sign, crosswalks, curb ramps, and painted curb bump-outs are proposed to create a safer, more pedestrian-friendly crossing.

"Several years ago...we went out and tried to walk [from]...the convenience store in Tama to the grocery store in Toledo...there's no sidewalk for part of that area... They have to walk on a four-lane street to get there or walk on uneven ground to do it."

"I see a lot of people, especially ladies, they have to carry their kids in their strollers, so can you imagine...taking your kid on the stroller over the grass [because there are no sidewalks] and then coming back with some groceries from the store? Really hard."



Pedestrian connection plan for the Toledo business district.

2

Focus-group participants and Hispanic interviewees like Toledo Heights Park because it has a wide, smooth walking path, as well as space for their children to play. However, it is difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to access because of incomplete sidewalks and a busy intersection with Highway 63. The design team addresses this issue in a pedestrian connectivity plan that includes new sidewalks along W High Street, Prospect Drive, and W Ross Street to Toledo Heights. The plan also enhances the intersection of Highway 63 and W High Street with crosswalks, a yield sign, a constructed curb extension, curb ramps, and street trees.

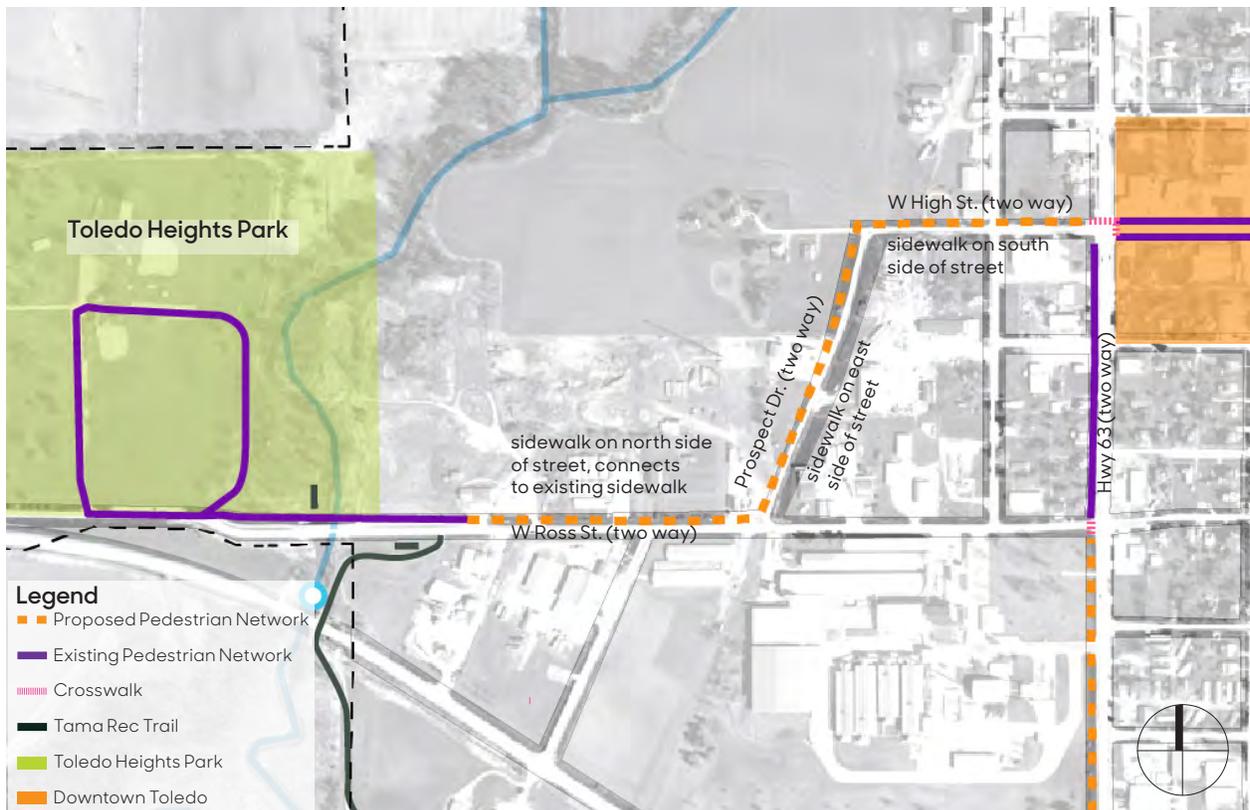
"When we walk out to Toledo Heights, we go on [Ross Street]... There's hardly a sidewalk, and there's quite a bit of traffic on that stretch."



"A lot of the children's recreation is out at Toledo Heights Park [on Ross Street] and there's no safe way to get out there."



"What I like about both Toledo Heights and the rec trail is [they are] wide enough for two people to walk side by side and have a conversation."



Pedestrian connection plan for the Toledo Height Park.

"Because at Broadway, there's actually a trail there, a hard surface trail, that really doesn't go anywhere. You probably also want to put in a pedestrian crossing across the highway."



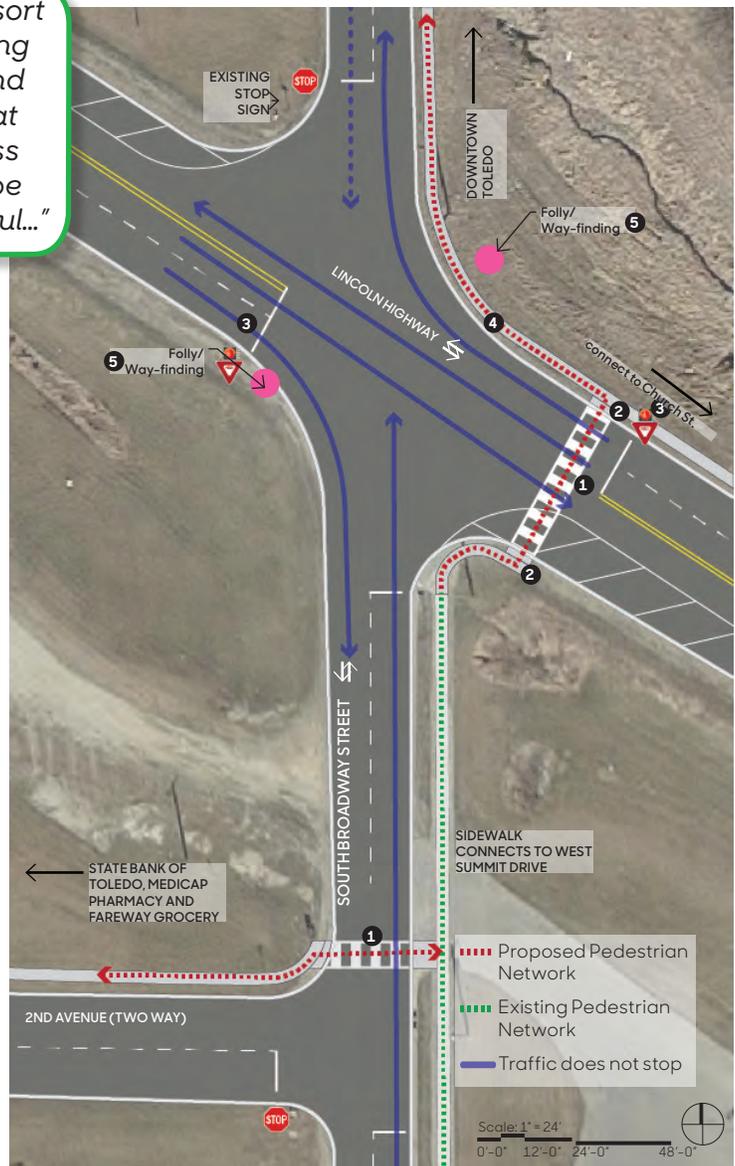
"If there was some sort of light or something [at Highway 30 and Broadway] so that people could cross over, that would be tremendously helpful..."



"...there are no sidewalks [on S Broadway]. I see a lot of kids walking in the summertime to the swimming pool. They have to go up over a hill with no sidewalks, and the visibility is not good for them."



3 The intersection of Broadway Street and the Lincoln Highway was identified by focus-group participants as difficult to cross because of fast-moving traffic along both corridors. To alleviate the problem, the design team proposed a new sidewalk with ADA-compliant curb ramps at the intersection, a blinking yield sign to alert drivers of potential pedestrians, a crosswalk, and way-finding signage.

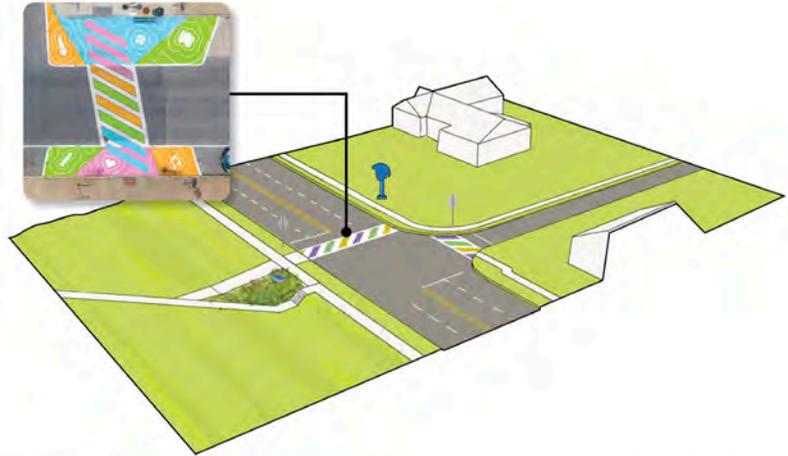


Tama & Toledo

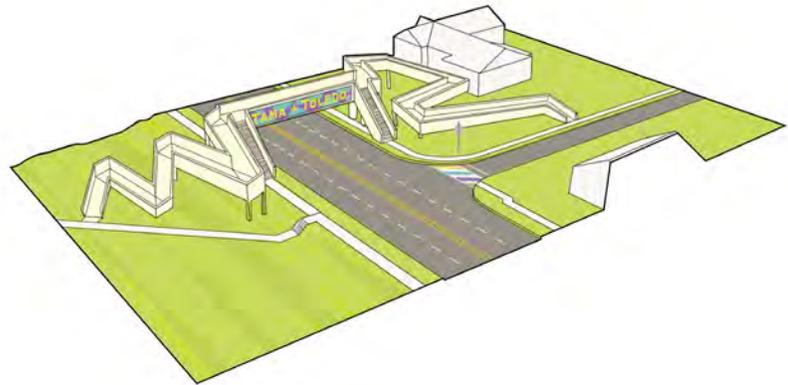
1

Hispanic interviewees and focus group participants from both Tama and Toledo are concerned about the safety of their children when they are going to and from school because they have to cross Highway 63. In addition, the routes to school do not have complete sidewalks. The survey results support this concern, with respondents ranking transportation enhancements that create safe routes to school as important.

The design team proposed two options for the intersection of Highway 63 and 17th Street to address the problem. The first option features a crosswalk over the highway with a push-button stop sign, accessible curb ramps, a planting area, a new sidewalk on 17th Street to Oak Park, and a new sidewalk along the highway to the Toledo business district. The second option is similar, with the exception of a pedestrian bridge over the highway instead of a crosswalk and stop sign.



Concept for a controlled pedestrian crossing at Hwy. 63 & 17th St.



Concept for a pedestrian bridge over Highway 63 at 17th Street.



"There [are] absolutely no sidewalks around the school, except for the one that runs on the highway... There [are] only a couple stop signs and a lot of traffic, and there [are] no sidewalks for the most part."

"...we have a lot of kids [who] are coming from [the east] to go to high school, elementary school, and the same way from the [west] side [of Highway 63] crossing to go to the Partnership Center, so we really need a couple of stoplights by the high school..."

Importance of Safe Routes To School to Survey Respondents



Most Important



2

"There's usually a lot of sticks and leaves on the trail [at Cherry Lake], so it's a little harder to walk."

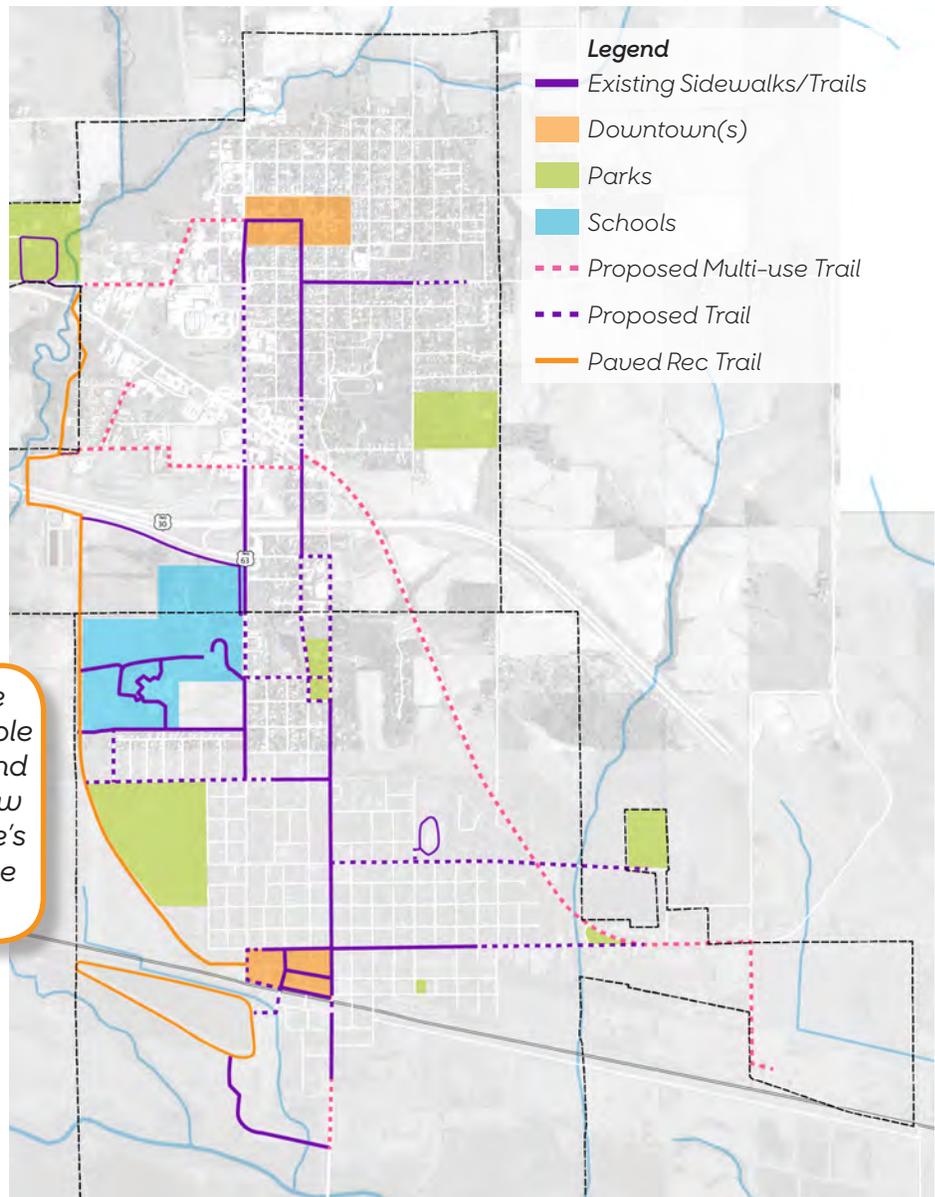


Focus-group participants from Tama and Toledo value the South Tama Rec Trail and the Cherry Lake Trail. However, different user types from both communities would like the trails to be paved to make them more accessible to parents with strollers, persons using wheelchairs, and cyclists. Residents from both towns also want more trail connections within and between their communities. To meet the needs of all user types, the design team proposed paving the South Tama Rec Trail and the Cherry Lake Trail and creating connections to the recreation trail from key locations in the two communities, such as the senior living facilities in Toledo, both downtowns, the country club, local parks, and Cherry Lake. The concept plan also calls for connecting existing sidewalks to create a more cohesive system.

"...our rec trails are a great place that we can go with kids. Only downfall...I have experienced there is just trying to get strollers through..."



"...there's no way to get [to the walking trail]...for all those people [who] live on Prospect Drive and the trailer court...and there's low income housing and then there's a nursing home...Many of these people don't have a car..."



Tama and Toledo trail connectivity plan.

Wheatland

Along with its nearest neighbor, Calamus, Wheatland began as a railroad town, which plays a big part of its identity. Calamus and Wheatland share a school district, with the elementary school located in Calamus and the junior high and high school in Wheatland. They are connected by Highway 30, which evolved from the historic Lincoln Highway.

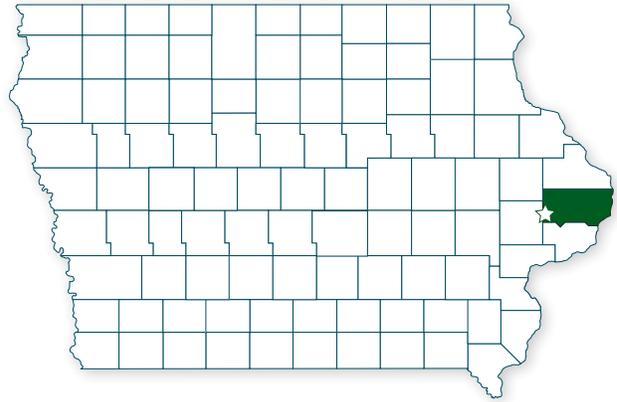
Community Assessments

Public input from focus groups, a survey, and a high-school survey revealed that residents want a recreation trail in town, as well as between Calamus and Wheatland. Walking is a popular activity among residents; however, the sidewalk system is incomplete and in poor condition. The need for way-finding signage and better lighting was also raised during these assessments.

Planning and Design Summary

Using the results of the focus groups and surveys, the design team created a concept plan that addresses the following priorities:

- Lighting – Improve the pedestrian experience by adequately lighting primary routes and providing site amenities such as benches.
- Connectivity & Accessibility – Enhance pedestrian accessibility, safety, and circulation by repairing, replacing, and building new ADA-compliant sidewalks to create a complete sidewalk system.
- Community Identity – Increase community identity and visual connectivity throughout Wheatland and to community assets by creating a way-finding system that integrates elements that strengthen Wheatland's identity.
- Trails – Create more outdoor recreational opportunities for residents by improving city parks and creating multi-use trails within Wheatland and to neighboring Calamus.
- Stormwater Management – Install permeable grass grids for parking and native vegetation along the creek corridor to reduce runoff in Lions Park and City Park; incorporate native vegetation in roadside ditches.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Emily Swihart*

Landscape Architect: *Meg Flenker, Flenker Land Architecture Consultants*

Interns: *T.J. Hillberry, Paola Monllor-Torres, and Ethan Morrow*



Design workshop.

Steering Committee:

April Carpenter, chair

Francis Boggus, Home Town Pride coach

Laurie Ganzer

Rita Hart

Derek Hendricksen

Kristen Hendricksen

Barb Jesse

Kim Kay

Steve Rohling

Jenna VanerHeiden

1

The focus groups, survey, and high school survey revealed that insufficient connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists is a problem throughout Wheatland, along with accessibility for people with mobility challenges. Part of the design team’s concept plan is dedicated to address accessibility and connectivity by upgrading and making connections between existing sidewalks and adding off-street trails. The image edits here show off-street trail concepts for three locations in Wheatland. Enhancements include curb ramps at intersections, site amenities such as benches and interpretive signage, decorative lighting, shade trees, and native vegetation.



"I don't think people can use the sidewalks very much just because [they are] not connected."



Existing and proposed north end of Lions Park.

"I would like to have sidewalks in order to safely make sure that I'm not going to hit a pothole with my daughter in a stroller and crash."



Existing and proposed south side of Lions Park.

"...when we go for runs or bike rides in town, we have to stay on the street because the sidewalk isn't wide enough or smooth enough for a double stroller."



Existing and proposed intersection of N Toronto and E Park Streets.

2

Toronto Street (130th Avenue) is the main north-south corridor in Wheatland and a major connector to the Calamus-Wheatland High School. However, the corridor lacks sidewalks and sufficient lighting and is too narrow for cyclists and runners. The concept plan for Wheatland addresses primary corridors such as Toronto Street and the Lincoln Highway. Enhancements include pedestrian and vehicular decorative lighting, way-finding signage, ADA-compliant sidewalks and crosswalks, and native vegetation.

"Toronto Street is really narrow as far as walking or running or bicycling."



"I think better signage on both Highway 30 and 130th Avenue would be better, because people coming from wherever...they're not always familiar with the road, and the blind spot, so better signage would be good too."

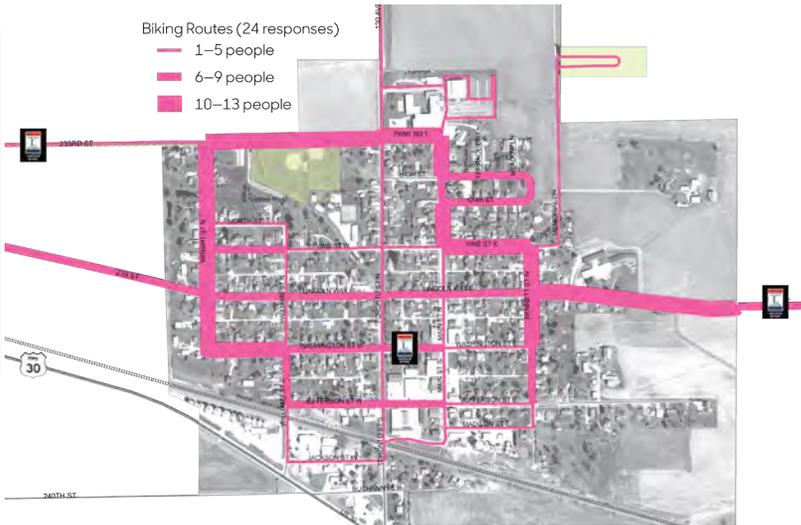


Top: Existing Toronto Street corridor. Bottom: Proposed enhancements to Toronto Street.

3

The Lincoln Highway Heritage Scenic Byway, which passes through Wheatland, is a popular biking route among Wheatland residents. However, parts of the corridor lack sidewalks or an off-street trail. Focus-group participants specifically noted the absence of a sidewalk to Wheatland Manor on the east side of town. The design team proposed enhancements for the Lincoln Highway corridor that include ADA-compliant sidewalks that are well lit with banners that highlight the importance of the historic corridor.

"It would be nice to be able to go out past the Wheatland Manor and...on that old highway [30]...It would be nice to have a path off the side of that so we could get some distance in and...look at the scenery rather than to go...continually around town, just for a little change of scenery."



Results of the random-sample survey of Wheatland residents show that the Lincoln Highway corridor is a popular biking route.

"[I would like to have accessible sidewalks to Wheatland Manor.]"

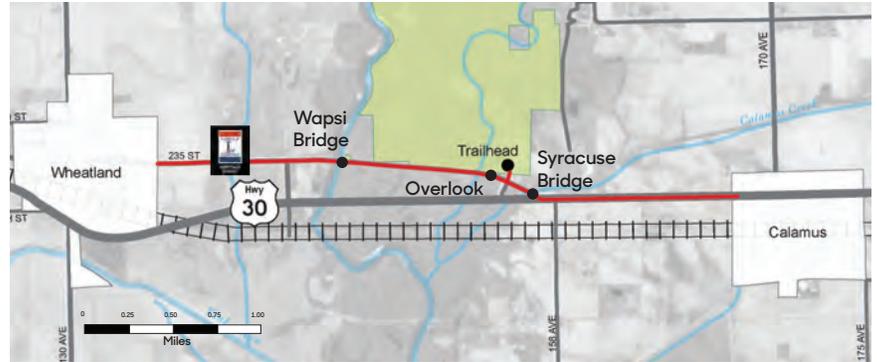


Left: Existing Lincoln Highway corridor and Wheatland Manor. Above: Proposed enhancements to the Lincoln Highway corridor.

Cal-Wheat Trail

Residents in both Calamus and Wheatland want a trail connecting their two communities, because while they are four miles apart, the two towns are closely connected through their shared school district, community celebrations, local organizations, and even the city clerk.

The design team created a concept for a regional trail named the Cal-Wheat Warrior Trail, after the Calamus-Wheatland School District mascot. The trail features a trailhead centered around a remnant of the original Lincoln Highway, a tourist area at the Syracuse Bridge, pedestrian and light vehicle access at the Wapsi Bridge, and an observation overlook with interpretive signage.



Proposed route for the Cal-Wheat Warrior Trail.

"I would love to see some kind of a trail between Calamus and Wheatland if we can utilize the Old Lincoln Highway that runs by the Wapsi..."



"...It would be awesome to have a walking or bike path between Calamus and Wheatland."



"It'd be super cool if somehow we could turn old [Highway] 30 into a walking path between Calamus and Wheatland."



Residents from both Calamus and Wheatland would like to see the Wapsi bridge kept open to allow for pedestrians and light recreational vehicles. To prevent use by passenger vehicles and farm equipment, a barrier is proposed for each end of the Wapsi bridge.



Above: Existing remnant of the original Lincoln Highway. Right: Bird's-eye plan view for trailhead.



"[I would like biking or walking paths to the schools and between Wheatland and Calamus.]"



Legend

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Ingress/egress drive | 9. Historical display of Lincoln Highway pavement remnant and vintage Model T |
| 2. Bike parking | 10. Existing native prairie/pollinator garden |
| 3. Maintained lawn with native tree mix for shade | 11. Bur oak tree (one) |
| 4. Maintained lawn area | 12. Native oak buffer to include bur oak, white oak, and chinkapin oak |
| 5. Native plant identification display garden | 13. Angled parking with ADA-compliant stalls |
| 6. Shelter with picnic tables and trash receptacles | 14. Tree buffer |
| 7. Maintained lawn area with native ornamental trees | 15. One-way drive to parking lot |
| 8. Formal landscape area utilizing native prairie plants | |



Existing Lincoln Highway corridor.



One of the trail amenities proposed is an observation overlook with interpretive signage and seating. Dead, dying, invasive, and otherwise undesirable vegetation along the trail is replaced with native vegetation.





Interactive Community Engagement

Introduction

Public engagement is one of the Community Visioning Program's primary focuses. Throughout the history of the program, our team has researched and experimented to develop innovative strategies for encouraging participation, leveling the field, and creating awareness around important issues facing our communities. We started by introducing a random-sample transportation survey with a mapping component in 2005, followed by the introduction of focus groups in 2009. More recently, we have engaged with high school students to better understand the needs of this unique user type. Our most current endeavor involves physical design installations based on a strategy known as *tactical urbanism*.

Introducing tactical urbanism

Tactical urbanism is strategy that creates awareness around an ongoing design process, helps to build support among residents, and provides opportunities for communities to engage with and experience an urban project before implementation. This community engagement method is characterized as short-term action for long term changes. "...citizens may use Tactical Urbanism as a tool to draw attention to perceived shortcomings in a policy and physical design, and municipal authorities, organizations and project developers may use it as a toll to widen the sphere of public engagement, test aspects of a plan early and often, and expedite implementation so that it's easier to build great places" (Lydon & Garcia, 2015).

In 2020, in response to COVID-19, our team began introducing new methods derived from tactical urbanism to allow residents to engage in the process while staying safe. We developed wooden kiosks branded with the Community Visioning Program logo, which the visioning design teams used to display design concepts, advertise events, and identify potential project areas.

In 2021, we expanded our tactical urbanism repertoire, using inexpensive materials to create temporary installations that test design

solutions, create awareness, and construct spaces for conversations about long-term goals related to the community's transportation system.

What we used

We built our tactical urbanism projects using simple materials, including

- Plywood
- Chalk paint
- Erosion-control logs
- Milk crates
- Vegetation

What we made

The team created kiosks, temporary curb bump-outs, crosswalks, streetscape furniture, signage, and parklets, just to name a few. These projects allowed communities to engage with and experience a portion of their design projects before implementation, creating short-term action toward long-term changes.



Quote bubble mock-up to identify community concerns in the landscape.



Testing streetscape concepts in Wheatland, IA.



Presenting design scenarios in Mingo, IA during a walking tour of the town.

The Community-Visioning-branded kiosks have been used in more than 10 of our communities to date to present design work, create awareness of the program, highlight events, and show design opportunities.

In Wheatland, Iowa, our team used straw wattle, spray chalk, and milk crates to create and test temporary streetscape enhancements. Safety features such as bump-outs and crosswalks were created using the straw wattle and spray chalk, to show scale and placement of these features and gather local input on the viability of these components as long-term improvements.

How we made them

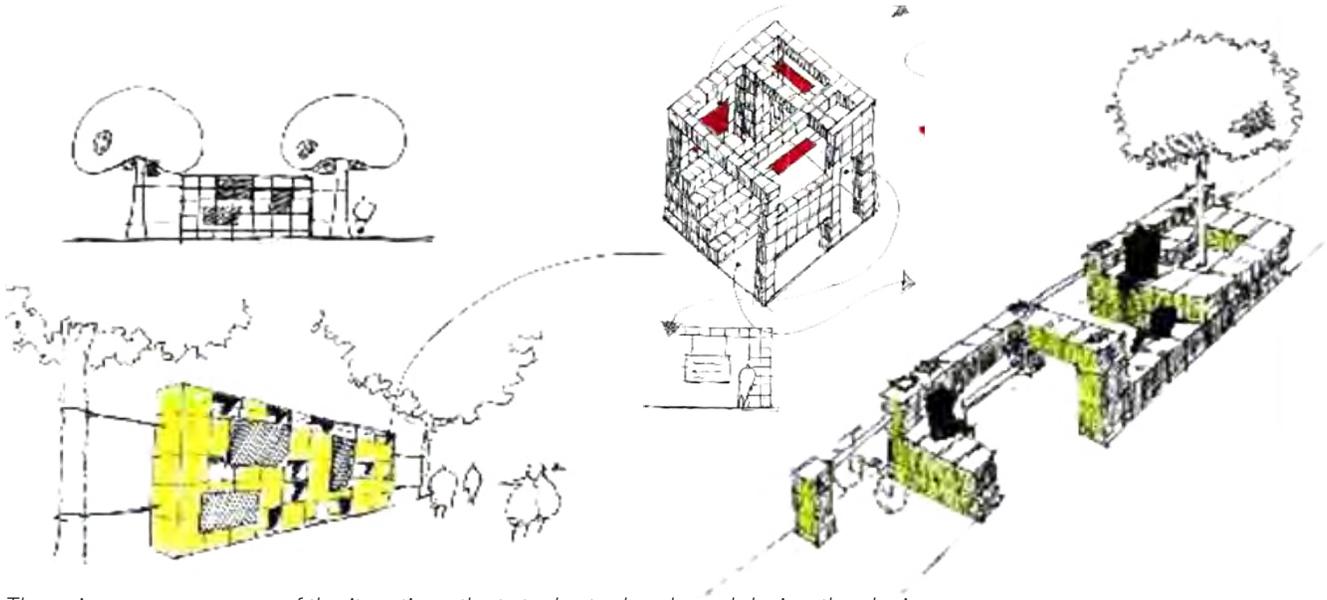
The tactics we employed in this process were all part of a student-led design exploration, for which the group was responsible for the research, planning, design, examination,

construction, and implementation of the work, as well as participation in the community engagement process.

To build a basis of design knowledge about tactical urbanism, the design process began by studying precedents. The team learned about easy-to-install materials, previously successful approaches, and innovative design ideas. This research helped us understand how similar projects have used inexpensive materials efficiently to shape the public spaces and meet public demands.

During the conceptual design phase, the team prepared designs to explore potential strategies for addressing desires and needs of our communities. The graphics also presented the architectural ideas, forms, materials, and installation. The group discussed and evaluated the primary ideas to assess their strengths and

Threshold: A Portal to Engaged Participation



These images are some of the iterations that students developed during the design process.

weaknesses. As part of that process our team built and examined models to test the function, stability, scale, and implementation method for various sculptural forms.

The power of the milk crate

The team's biggest endeavor involved creating installations with the milk crates. The crates provide a playful module that can be manipulated to suit multiple scenarios in a community. They are easy to set up and take down, while durable enough to remain in the landscape for a longer period, increasing interest.

How we used milk crates

Over the course of the summer the milk crates were utilized to test temporary streetscape site furnishings (benches, planters, trash receptacles) and create artful social spaces. Plans for the crates include the creation of presentation/gallery display spaces to showcase the designs created for this year's communities.

Where we used them

"Threshold: A Portal to Engaged Participation" was first designed for Calamus, Iowa, to be a landmark for the thousands of riders along the RAGBRAI route, which passed through Calamus's downtown. Threshold's seating, planters and overhead canopy provided a

welcoming space that encouraged visitors and residents to gather, socialize and capture a picture of their experience passing through town. The sculpture was also a gateway to a presentation of the design work being developed by the landscape architecture team as part of Community Visioning.

In Princeton, Iowa, we installed Threshold the riverfront park, creating a window out to the Mississippi River. The project was utilized as a beacon to attract participants to the design charrette during the town's Summer Fest. In this setting the sculpture became a park pavilion that celebrated the river, invited social interaction, and complemented the park's deep blue color scheme seen in their bench swings and signage.

At the end of the 2021 season Threshold was put on display in front of the College of Design at Iowa State University. The installation was intended to highlight the innovative and collaborative work being done by students, faculty, and staff in the College of Design with other campus departments and units, nonprofit organizations, and industry and community partners. The display coincided with the Mayor's Institute being hosted by the College of Design's Dean Luis Rico-Gutierrez and the Student Innovation Center dedication and ribbon-cutting.



"[The milk crate structure is] probably the most innovative thing I have ever seen. I am enjoying it very much."

– RAGBRAI participant in Calamus, IA



Top: Threshold became a popular gathering point in Calamus, IA during RAGBRAI.

Right: Threshold sculpture attracting community members down to the Mississippi River even prior to Princeton's SummerFest and design charrette.



Below: sculpture on display in front of the College of Design with the Student Innovation Center in view at ISU.

Our Team



The development of these community engagement projects has been a student-driven process. We really appreciate all the various voices and visions that come together to bring an idea to life, so we try to involve everyone in our office in the process. The teams have had a mix of students from diverse design and cultural backgrounds.

2021

Hossein Entezari
Giannis Koutsou
Jessica Svoboda
Lin Pizzo
Paola Monllor Torres
Parmiss Sazgar
Qiyamah Muhammad
T.J. Hillberry

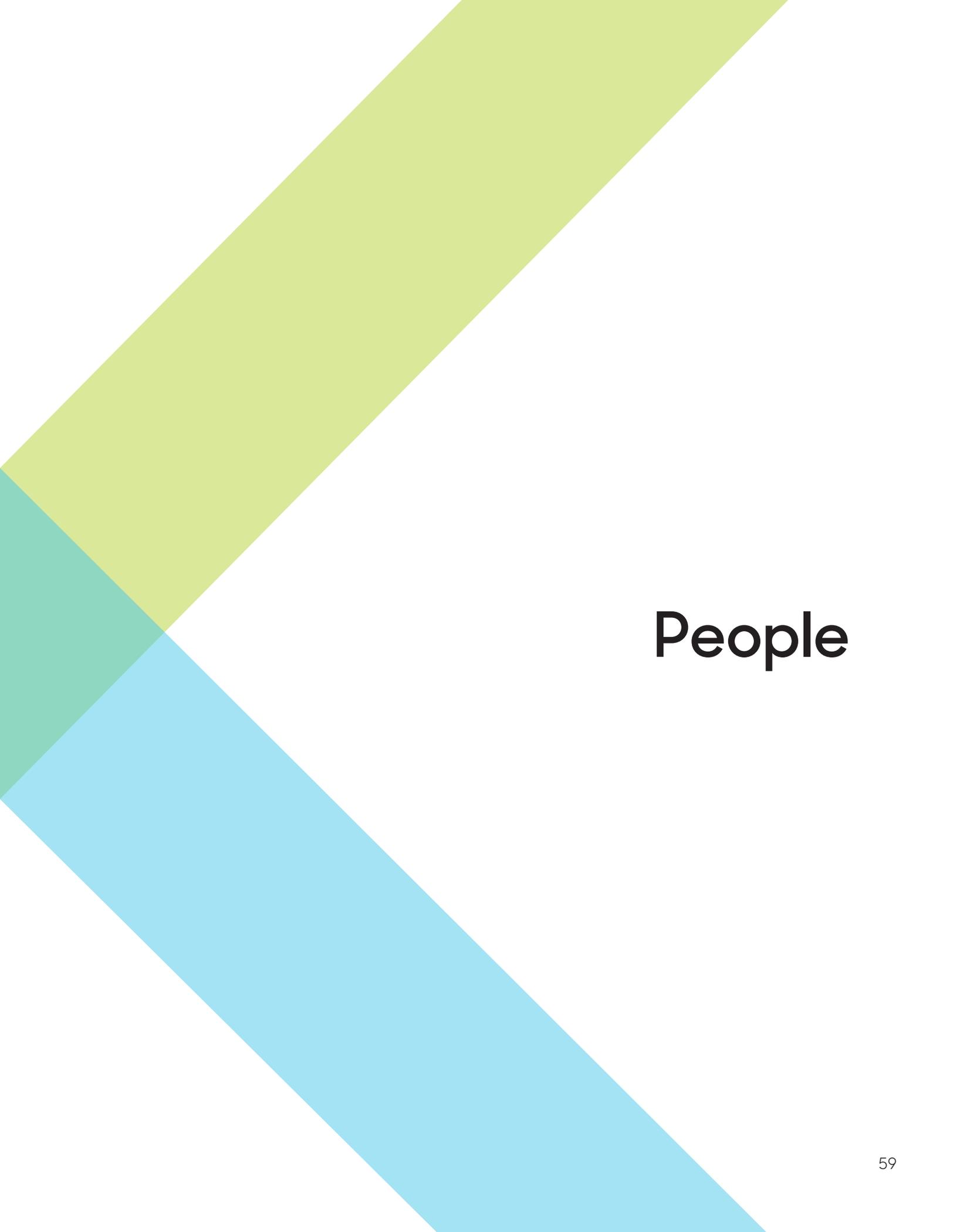
2020

Abby Schafer
Clare Kiboko
Minni Davis



"...as an international student, working with people with different cultures and backgrounds helped me widen my horizon and broaden my knowledge about their worldview and perspectives. In this regard, I learned how to be flexible and adaptable in a multicultural environment."

— Hossein Entezari
ISU Graduate Student Intern



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Professor of Landscape Architecture*

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Program Specialist, ISU Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development*

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Qiyamah Muhammad

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T.J. Hillberry

Lin Pizzo

Izabel Wilde

Britney Markhardt

Zach Rupprecht

Giannis Koutsou

Parmiss Sazgar

Trees Forever

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Kiley Miller, *President & CEO*

Leslie Berckes, *Director of Programs*

Brad Riphagen, *Community Visioning Program Manager*

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Patty Reisinger

Emily Swihart

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Partners

- Iowa Department of Transportation
- Trees Forever
- Living Roadway Trust Fund
- Iowa State University Department of Landscape Architecture

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