

2023 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, 258 communities have participated in Community Visioning, 40 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.

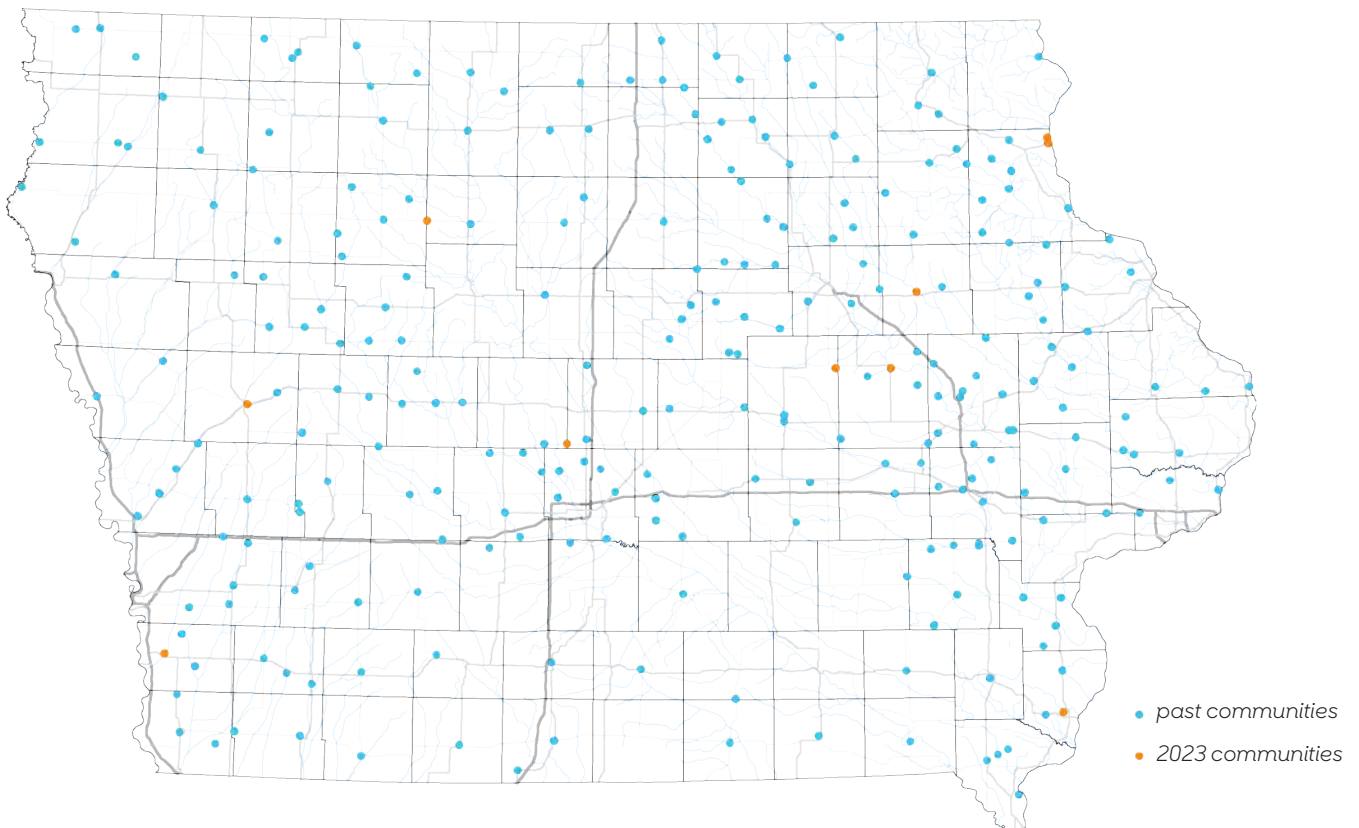
"This was a unique opportunity to live in another location in Iowa as well as experience the professional lifestyle of a landscape architect."

—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, 1996-2023



2023 Community Visioning Program

The 2023 visioning communities are Denison, Dysart, Gilmore City, Glenwood, Independence, Marquette, McGregor, Slater, Vinton, and West Burlington. The annual report summarizes the essence of the year-long 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 five 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.

The population in the community of Denison is nearly 50% Hispanic. To capture insights from this unique demographic group, ISU conducted a Spanish-language focus group with Hispanic parents in the community.

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 Denison, Glenwood, Independence, Slater, and West Burlington. 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 22.8% to 37.3%. (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 Challenged: 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 West Branch 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.

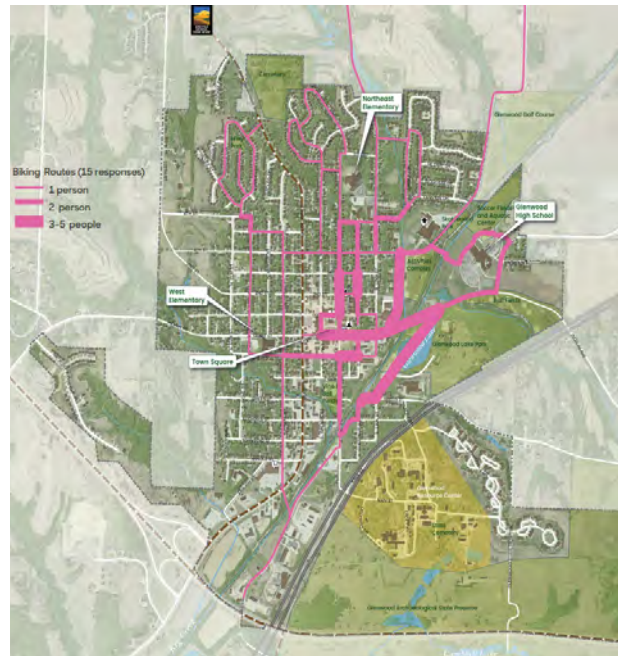
Bioregional Assessment & StoryMaps

In addition to facilitating public input through focus groups and the survey, visioning program staff provide visioning committees with an opportunity to explore their community and the surrounding region through a landscape architecture lens. Bioregional maps created by ISU program staff showcase relevant regional and localized features, both hidden and visible. Trees Forever field coordinators guide their committees through an exploratory process that provides a framework for discovering how landscape, transportation, and cultural patterns interact. This process focuses on how water, vegetation, and the shape of the landscape have influenced where and why people have settled here, how communities grew, and the correlative impacts between natural and built systems.

In 2020, the bioregional assessment became an online tool that could be shared with the broader community through StoryMaps. This tool also allows for a narrative to accompany the maps, which provides insight into what the maps reveal, but still allows the viewer to explore the content through the lens of their own experiences.

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.



Glenwood biking routes map.



Examples of an elevation map (top) and historical vegetation map (bottom) for Vinton.





Communities

Denison

Denison, a community of nearly 8,400 people, is nestled on a ridge between the forks of the Boyer River. Its strategic location at the intersection of US Highways 30 and 59 ensures high-quality connections to the surrounding region. Denison's landscape, shaped by the Loess Hills formed during the last ice age, adds unique character to the area. The city is known for its multicultural community, with a significant Hispanic population, and its thriving local economy supported by agriculture and manufacturing.

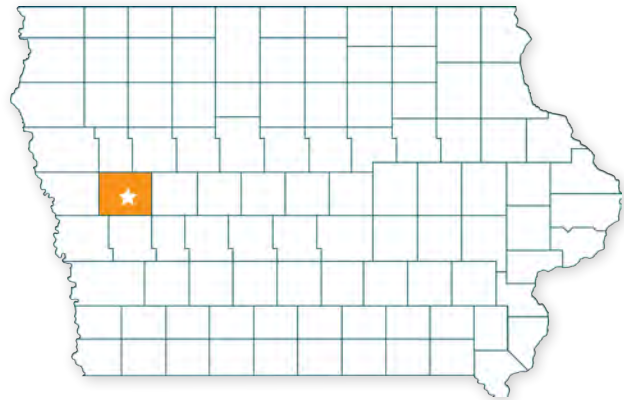
Community Assessments

Focus groups and a random-sample survey revealed that residents appreciate the outdoor recreation opportunities available to them, but would like better pedestrian and cyclist connections to those spaces and throughout town. Poor-quality sidewalk infrastructure and traffic along Highway 30 and Avenue C are considered barriers to cyclist and pedestrian movement. The ability to walk and bike to destinations is particularly important to Hispanic residents, many of whom do not drive or own a vehicle.

Planning and Design Summary

The Denison steering committee set priorities that addressed the concerns of residents. A concept plan was developed by the design team consisting of the following components:

- Safety and Accessibility – Provide safer access to local destinations by slowing traffic, improving intersection crossings, repairing or replacing sidewalk infrastructure, and adding pedestrian amenities such as lighting.
- Community Connections – Create opportunities for physical activity and social interaction through trail and pedestrian network improvements; provide safe routes for those without access to a vehicle.
- Way-finding – Improve navigation for visitors and residents while creating an authentic and cohesive sense of place.
- Community Amenities – Provide more opportunities for outdoor recreation by expanding the Northside Recreation Complex and extending the existing trail system.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Brad Riphagen*

Landscape Architect: *Alison Ingunza, HDR Inc.*

Intern: *Caeley Reade*



Spanish-speaking parents focus group.

Steering Committee:

Clay Adams

Bill Bruce

Jessica Garcia

Erin Muck

Mike Pardun

Alma Puga

Pam Soseman

Mike Vogt

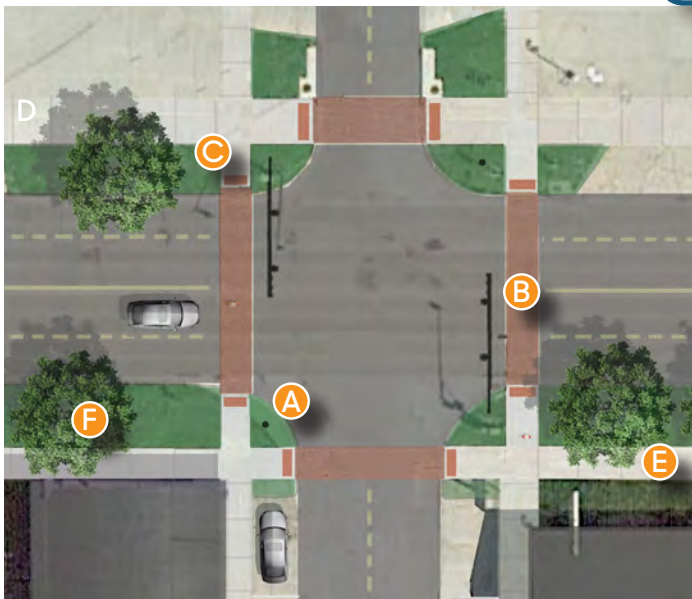
1

Results of the random-sample survey and the focus groups indicate that walkers and bikers frequently experience issues crossing Highway 30 because of inaccessible sidewalks paired with speeding traffic. The design team’s proposal uses the intersection of Highway 30 and South 11th Street as a template for intersection redesign in the city. The template calls for replacing existing sidewalks, adding ADA-accessible curb ramps with associated detectable warning plates, and installing signalized pedestrian crossing buttons. To differentiate the pedestrian crosswalk from the street, the team advised installing a decorative textured crosswalk.

Legend

- A. Pedestrian Crossing Button and Signal
- B. Decorative Textured Crosswalk
- C. Updated ADA Curb Ramp
- D. 10-FT Trail/Sidewalk - At intersections along Hwy 30
- E. Improved Sidewalk
- F. Overstory Street Tree

"...in general...there are many sidewalks that are not very accessible...there are no ramps to go up or down...You can't get up with [a wheelchair]...or walk with the babies in the strollers."



Proposed intersection template (showing US 30 and S 11th Street).



"...there is a crossing signal [at S 12th Street and Highway 30], but it is not very well marked and...I don't feel like the light is very long, so we really have to rush across the street..."



Proposed intersection improvements at Highway 30 and S 11th Street looking north.

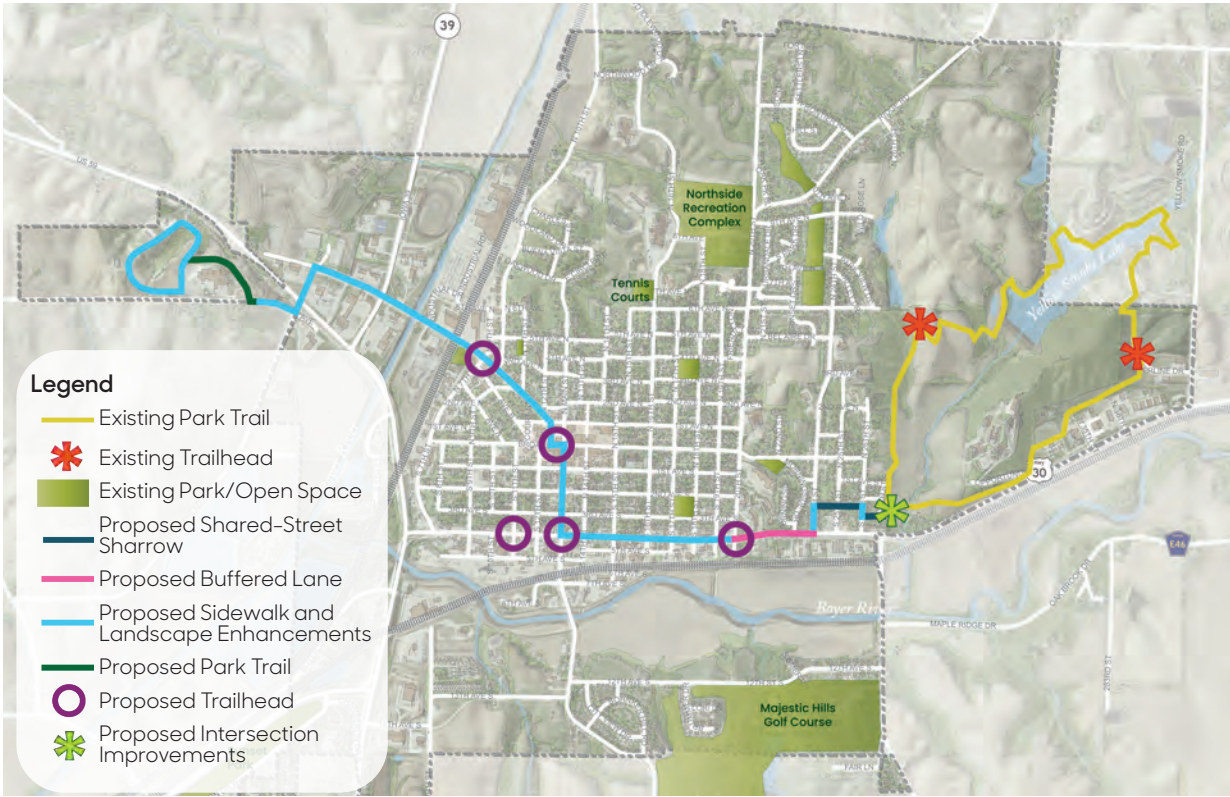
2

Focus-group participants identified heavy traffic on Highway 30 and C Avenue, along with the presence of incomplete, narrow, and challenging-to-navigate sidewalks throughout town, as problematic. The survey data highlight the disparity between high vehicular traffic on Highway 30 and low pedestrian and cyclist usage, which can indicate poor pedestrian infrastructure. Good sidewalks were also identified as an important element in a desirable walking route. The design team created a "Community Connection" map that outlines a strategy to address these challenges by incorporating sharrows, buffered bike lanes, and sidewalk improvements. This approach aims to transform the city into a more pedestrian-friendly and inclusive environment.

"[Highway] 30's really grown over the last five years as far as businesses...but [it doesn't feel safe] to be down there [on foot or a bike] because the sidewalks are so thin..."

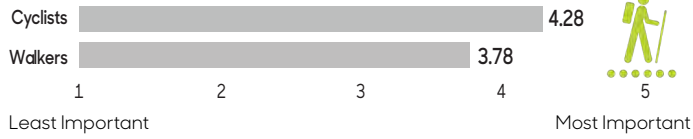


"I do want to get back into walking and adding easier access trails or sidewalks through town would be nice."



Proposed community connection map.

Importance of trail access



Proposed trailhead to Yellow Smoke Park Trail.

"It would be a very good benefit for the community if there [were bike lanes]...and the one who does not have a car, you grab the bicycle and go to the store."



Spanish-speaking Parents



Proposed sharrow marking on 3rd Ave S.

"...my mom says I can't really go anywhere by myself because I live near a highway. There [are] not a lot of sidewalks."



Proposed buffered bike lane along Highway 30 at S 24th Street.

Dysart

Dysart, with a population of approximately 1,300 people, is located along State Highways 21/8 in Eastern Iowa, positioned conveniently 25 miles south of Waterloo. The Old Creamery Trail passes through the north end of town and links it to the communities of Garrison and Vinton to the east. Dysart was one of the earliest visioning communities, participating in the program in 1997–98. As a result, the community implemented new entrance signage and a trailhead along the C.R. Roberts Trail. From the lively Spring on Main festival and the nostalgic Old Iron Days, to the Fall Festival and the heartwarming Christmas on Main, the community offers a tapestry of celebrations that reflect its cultural heritage.

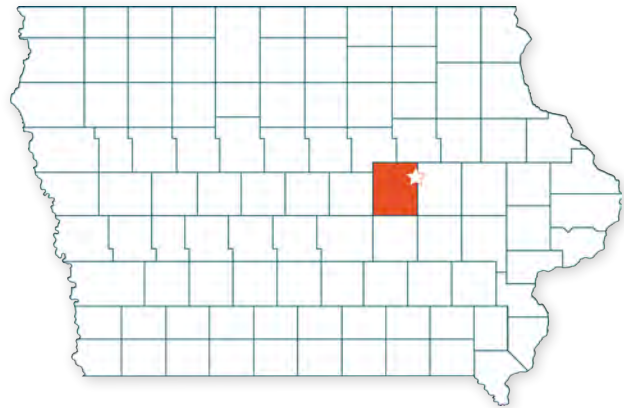
Community Assessments

Residents value the recreation opportunities provided by the C.R. Roberts/Old Creamery Trail and Dysart Park, but would like to see these areas enhanced and connected by good quality trails. Of particular interest among residents are trail connections to important community destinations, better sidewalk conditions, and easier and safer access to existing trails.

Planning and Design Summary

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

- Sidewalks and Connectivity – Create safer routes for pedestrians to popular destinations in town.
- Signage and Way-finding – Update way-finding signage to create a modern, straightforward, and cohesive brand for the community.
- Dysart City Park – Enhance the park by incorporating inclusive playground equipment, trail connections to existing and proposed amenities, pickleball courts, and a splash pad.
- Community Trail – Develop an intracity trail that connects to the C. R. Roberts Trail and links destinations such as downtown, Dysart Park, the Heritage Arboretum, and the schools.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Nick McGrath*

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

Intern: *Andrea Fager*



Design workshop open house.

Steering Committee:

Daniel Hartwig, chair

Deborah Aldrich

Jenn Alpers

Will Brandt

Sarah Carter

Bob Elliott

Debi Miller

Hayden Spore

Eric Taylor

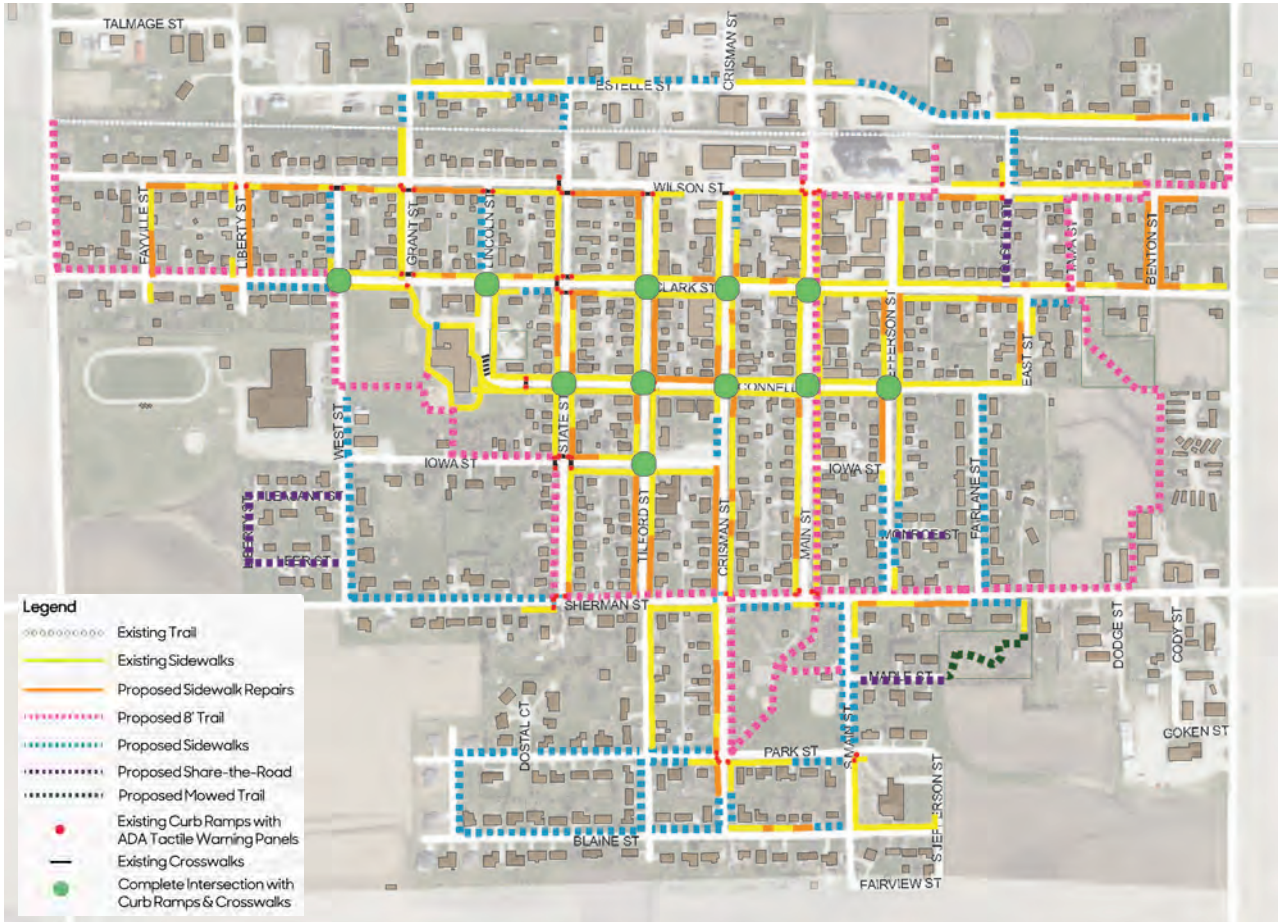
Catharine Wieck

1

Results of the focus groups illustrate that poor sidewalk conditions are an issue throughout Dysart. The older part of town has beautiful, tree-lined streets, but the sidewalks have been pushed up by tree roots and are uneven, so many people choose to walk in the roadway. Kids going to and from school also walk in the road because of the inconsistency of sidewalks along their route. In response, the design team performed a sidewalk inventory that detailed the quality of Dysart's sidewalks. Using this inventory, the designers identified where new sidewalks could be laid and where sidewalk repairs are needed. They also evaluated where an eight-foot trail could be located within the right-of-way and where share-the-road routes could be utilized.

"We have been blessed with a lot of trees, and the big trees beside the sidewalks have heaved the sidewalks up."

"...sidewalks are inconsistent [all over town]... There are some places where the sidewalk will stop and then you have to go over grass and then get to the sidewalk."



An assessment of existing sidewalk conditions and proposed sidewalk locations in Dysart.

2

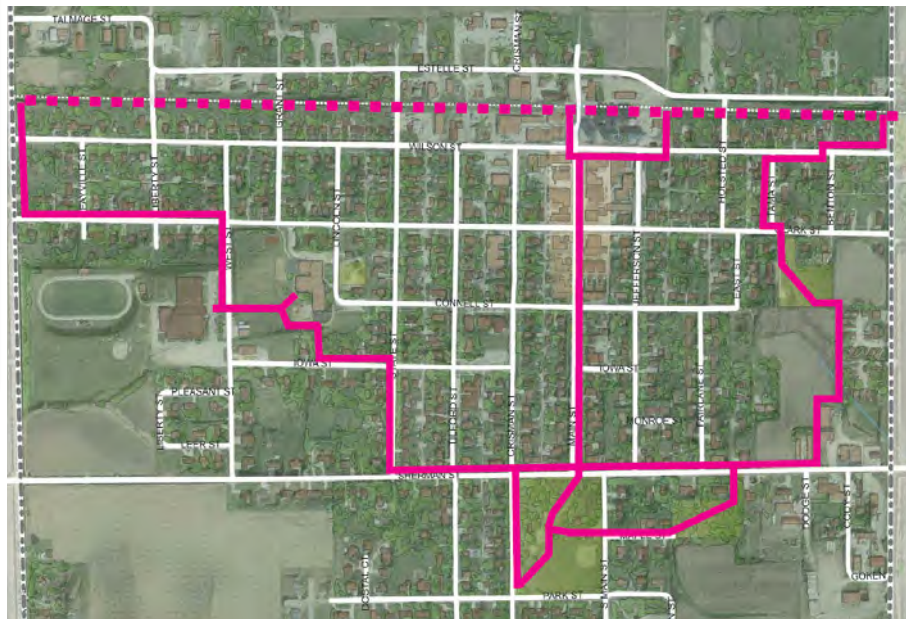
The C.R. Roberts Trail and community walkability are important to residents and were mentioned by all user types at the focus groups. Residents want more connectivity among popular destinations within the community and safe pedestrian access to the trail. The design team proposed rerouting the C.R. Roberts Trail around the co-op instead of through it to alleviate safety issues and create a direct connection to Main Street. The team used residents' ideal trail routes identified during the design workshop to pinpoint areas where an eight-foot trail could be built.

"In the past we've talked about hooking the bike trail up to the school so children could ride their bikes safely to school."

"...if your kids get a certain age and you want to start logging some miles on the bike, options are...not great for Dysart."



"I loved walking the trail, but that one mile gets pretty boring...so I would like to see more variety in walking areas, maybe even a trail through the arboretum...that gives you some...just scenery, and then...mileage markers..."



Layout of the proposed eight-foot citywide trail.



Proposed connection from the trail to Main Street.



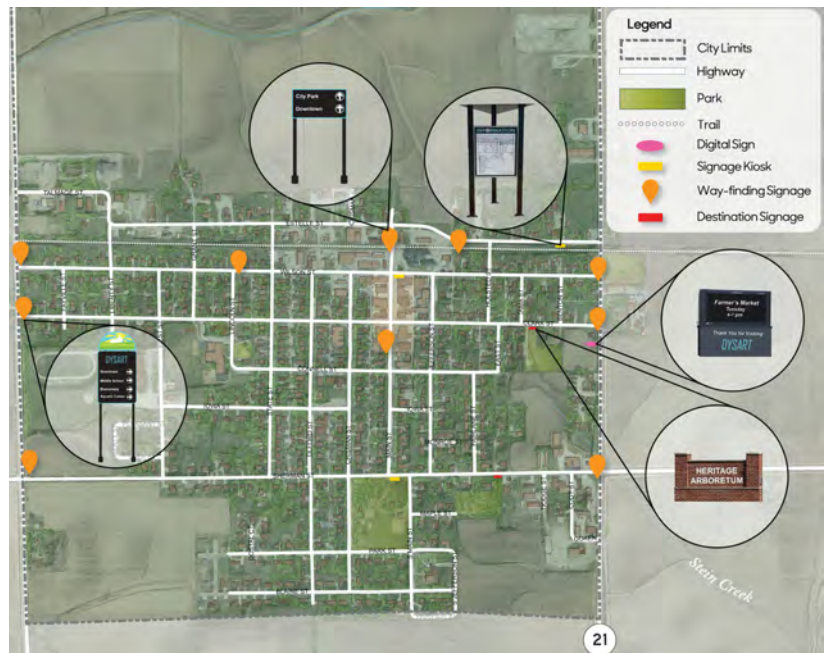
Proposed trail through Heritage Arboretum.



Proposed way-finding signage for pedestrian and vehicular use.

3

Older-adult focus-group participants and the steering committee brought up the need for a cohesive set of way-finding signage. The city's existing signage uses a variety of colors and materials without a consistent design. During the design workshop, residents discussed various ideas for signage and a community logo. The design team created a family of way-finding signage that the community can use to direct people to various destinations such as Dysart City Park, the trailhead, and the aquatic center. Dysart's prominent grain bins are featured in the design.



Proposed locations for signage.

"I think signage at the edge of town to tell which road to take [to] different areas would be good."



Proposed signage kiosk at C.R. Roberts trailhead.

Gilmore City

Gilmore City is known as the Limestone Capital of Iowa because of the two quarries that were opened just north of town in the late 1800s. The city straddles the Humboldt/Pocahontas County line and is bisected by Iowa Highway 3, which runs on the north side of town. Gilmore City participated in Community Visioning in 2013, resulting in the establishment of a rain garden and development of Sunset Park. The community applied for the 2023 program with the goals of creating a safer crossing along Highway 3 and making the community more pedestrian and cyclist friendly.

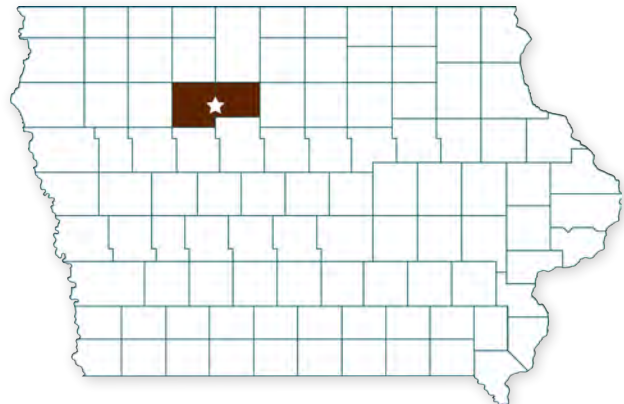
Community Assessments

Analysis of focus-group data indicates that walkability is important to residents, who enjoy walking throughout town and at surrounding natural areas such as the Moore Recreation Area. However, participants said that the poor quality sidewalks and lack of trail connections make it difficult to safely walk. Safety and accessibility updates to the sidewalk infrastructure and connecting the city to Three Rivers Trail are priorities among residents.

Planning and Design Summary

Based on the results of the assessments and feedback from the steering committee, the design team created a concept plan that addresses the following priorities:

- Pedestrian Amenities – Promote healthy and active lifestyles for residents by providing safe alternative transportation options within town.
- Trails – Develop a trail network that connects and creates safe routes to important destinations and recreational opportunities such as Sunset Park, Three Rivers Trail, and Moore Recreation Area; create a trail through town.
- Community Amenities – Promote healthy living by offering more opportunities for recreation and provide places for social interaction in Gilmore City’s downtown.
- Safety and Accessibility – Create accessible and equitable spaces by improving the quality of sidewalks, adding street lighting, and employing traffic calming methods.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Gina Buelow*
Landscape Architect: *Jen Cross, HDR Inc.*
Intern: *Alex Aranas*



Public presentation of the concept plan.

Steering Committee:

Melissa Ubben, chair
Landon Bailey
Brittany Dickey
LaVonne Hoover
Angie Kritzer
Lorna Naeve
Russ Naeve
Angie Peters

1

Focus groups revealed that residents want to make better use of the downtown. Currently, many of the curbs are too high for people with mobility issues to navigate. The steering committee's top priority was addressing downtown vacant lots. To address both needs, the design team proposed reducing the existing curb to a standard 6" height and adding bump-outs to provide accessible access to the downtown space. Landscaping will link from the streetscape improvements into the park space. The park features a flexible plaza, stone outcroppings, seating, and a walking loop among other things to draw the community to this important area.



Legend

- A. Streetscape Improvements
- B. Accessible Curb Ramp
- C. Stormwater Plantings
- D. Vendor Court
- E. Flexible Plaza
- F. Lawn Games
- G. Limestone Outcroppings/Seating
- H. Pedestrian Walk
- I. Open Lawn
- J. Shelter/Stage

"They have updated some of the corners where instead of having [the curb] high, it's a ramp. And it's nicely done."



Plan view of the enhancements to the downtown vacant lot.

"Those ramps to get up onto the sidewalk will kill you because they're so steep. I've almost fallen out of my wheelchair several times."



Proposed social space in the vacant lot east of Gilmore Street.

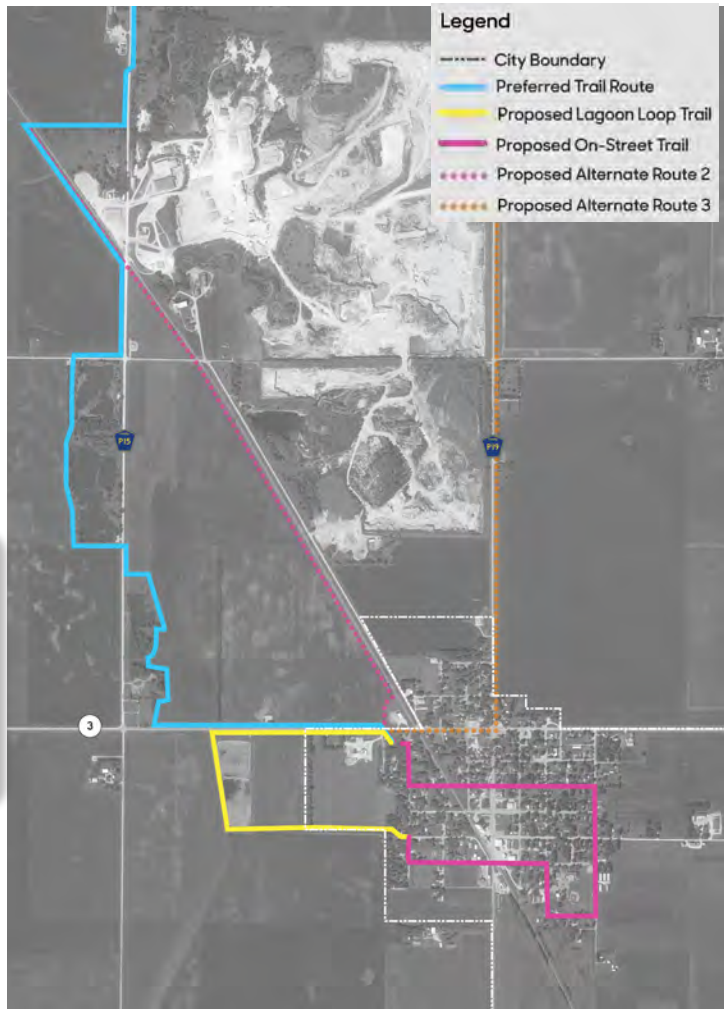
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Trail connections were a priority for focus-group participants in every demographic group. Residents mentioned Sunset Park, Three Rivers Trail, and Moore Recreation Area as popular destinations for trail users. The design team proposed a trail plan that would connect all the destinations discussed and create looped walking trails throughout town. The preferred trail route includes a trail along Hwy 3 and highlights the scenic beauty of the existing county park then connects north around the quarry to Three Rivers Trail. The In-town consists of a combination of on-street painted bike lanes, a cycle track, and sharrows.

"Everybody wants a trail. That's our main priority...I think the goal is to get up to the Three Rivers Trail..."



"If there was a trail, we would ride our bikes. We would walk. I would run. But...I [would] feel safest if it was a separate trail... not just a shoulder."



Map of the proposed trail network.



Proposed trailhead along County Road P15.

"They just recently built a path [in Sunset Park], but it goes nowhere..."



"I would like to see a bike trail and a walking trail beside [the roads]...where we don't have to walk or ride with the traffic."



"A trail would be nice to get out to the quarry area too...you could...[even] expand it to the Three Rivers Trail and go all the way north..."



Proposed on-street bike lane with a bioswale buffer along SW B Avenue.



Proposed multi-use trail with a buffer of pollinator mix along Highway 3.

Glenwood

Glenwood, the county seat of Mills County, is well-connected to nearby cities Council Bluffs and Omaha by US Highway 34, making it easily accessible for commuters and travelers. The Loess Hills Scenic Byway runs north-south through the heart of the community, serving as another main thoroughfare. The city's landscape, shaped by the Loess Hills, adds unique character to the area. Glenwood's previous participation in Community Visioning in 2009 resulted in a paved trail at Glenwood Lake Park.

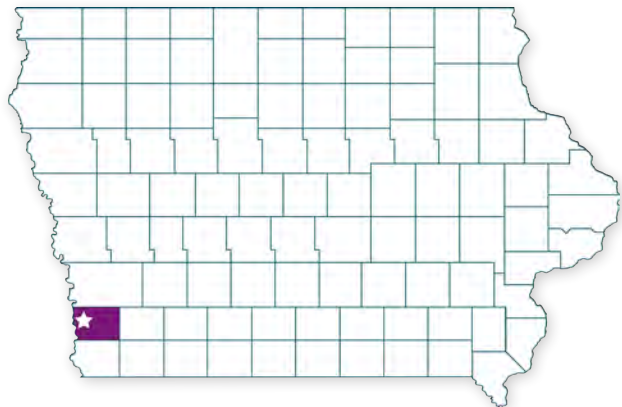
Community Assessments

Results of community focus groups and a random-sample survey show that transportation enhancements that address pedestrian/cyclist mobility, safety, and health are important to Glenwood residents. People value the recreation opportunities provided by Glenwood Lake Park, but would like more pedestrian access to the area. Of particular interest among residents is improved sidewalk infrastructure, additional trail development, and safe routes to school.

Planning and Design Summary

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

- Pedestrian Amenities— Make intersections easier to cross by adding refuge islands to the median along Locust Street and installing signals and crosswalks at busy intersections; repair existing sidewalks and add shared-use, buffered paths along roadways.
- Gathering Spaces – Convert a portion of 1st Street downtown into a shared-space street; create a pedestrian plaza at the intersection of Locust and Sharp Streets.
- Safety and Accessibility—Provide ease of access to public amenities by upgrading lighting and creating a safe and accessible sidewalk network; designate a safe route to school.
- Way-finding – Create a cohesive family of signage to create a sense of community identity and provide navigation to visitors.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Brad Riphagen*

Landscape Architect: *Alex Robinson, HDR Inc.*

Interns: *Caeley Reade, Alex Aranas*



Design workshop.

Steering Committee:

Joe George, chair

Jennie Davis

Amber Farnan

Audra Krueger

Chris McQueen

Rachel Reis

Randy Romens

Ben Smithers

Jen Wilson

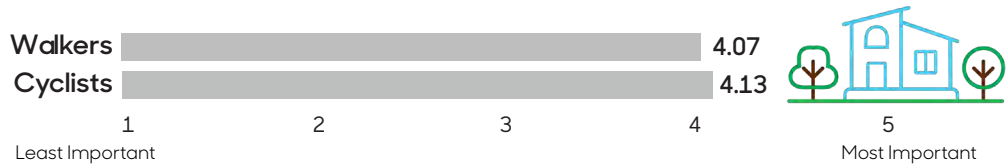
Sandi Winton

"...[the] stoplight [at the intersection of Locust and Sharp Streets] is just congested with school traffic because you've got West [Elementary] right there."



"...[The] Locust [Street] corridor all the way from [Highway] 34... [north] out of town... should be... very inviting...so when you come in, you're like, 'Oh, wow, there's a square over there? I should go check that out.'"

Importance of Well-kept Surroundings



1

The intersection of Locust and Sharp Streets marks the convergence of two major roadways through town. It is a major link between schools and a route to the town square that residents and visitors pass through daily. However, focus-group participants indicated that this intersection isn't the most pedestrian friendly. Residents also said that beautifying the Locust Street streetscape would create a more welcoming environment. To address these concerns, the design team proposed bump-outs, improved sidewalks, and crosswalks to create a better pedestrian experience. For a vacant property at the intersection, the team designed a flexible plaza with seating, shaded spaces, plantings, and nighttime lighting.



Intersection of Sharp and Locust Streets with bump-outs, crosswalks, and a flexible plaza.



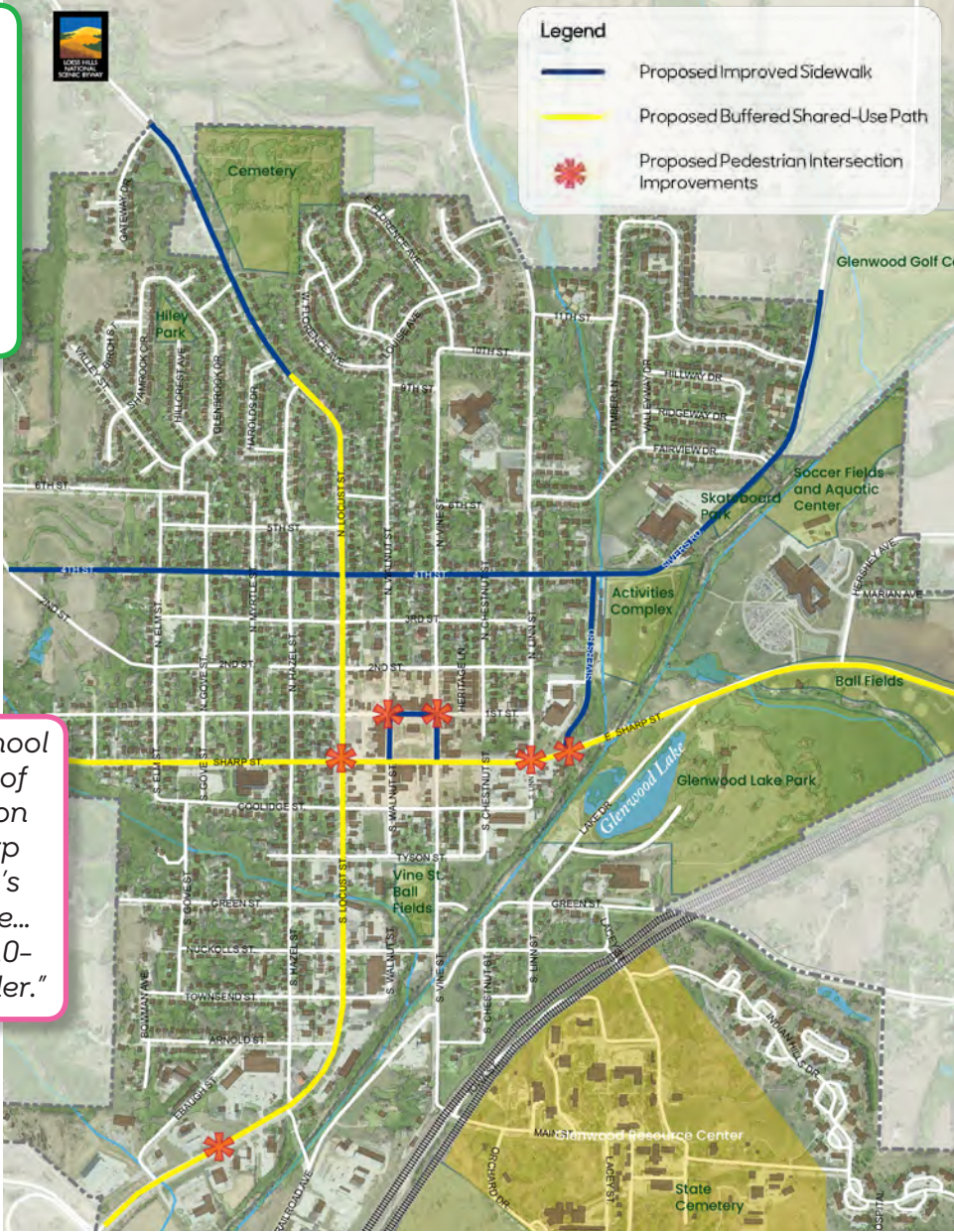
2

Community walkability is a priority for residents. The topic was mentioned by all user types at the focus groups and deemed important by survey respondents. People want more connectivity among popular destinations in town and safe pedestrian access to the trail. The design team proposed a series of sidewalk improvements in vital pedestrian areas. During the design workshop, the design team asked people to identify their ideal trail routes on a map in order to pinpoint areas where a trail could be built. Based on the public input, the design team developed a network of shared-use bike trails to provide a connection through town both east to west via Sharp Street and north to south via Locust Street. Pedestrian safety features, including painted crosswalks, HAWK beacon signal and improved sidewalks, would be implemented at five integral intersections.

"... anywhere I go in Glenwood, I walk. It's less than a mile [or] two...I think a lot more people would [walk] if they had [safe] places to do it."



"...when I leave school there [are] a ton of people walking on the side of [Sharp Street] but there's no sidewalk there... There's [just]...a 10-foot gravel shoulder."



Map of the proposed pedestrian connection plan.

3

Downtown is an area of concern among residents because of the confusing traffic pattern and troubling pedestrian spaces. Focus-group participants said that they don't feel safe crossing the street. The design team proposed that the portion of 1st Street between Walnut and Vine Streets to be converted into a zone for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists to share. The street has the potential to be closed to vehicular traffic for special events with temporary bollards or fencing, converting it into a plaza space, as shown in the bottom right image. The daytime view shows the space in its typical use with vehicles and pedestrians sharing the street. The design features planting beds, trees, and festival string lights to create a welcoming atmosphere. The emphasis on pedestrians would support businesses and bring life to the space year-round.



Existing town square on 1st Street between Walnut and Vine Streets.



Daytime view of the proposed town square shared-space street.

"The square is kind of chaotic too because there [are] no stop signs for anybody... [at] the two northern corners, [which] are kind of unsafe...if you're out of town, you don't know that, so it's kind of scary your first time."



Nighttime use of the proposed town square shared space.

Independence

The city of Independence is nestled in Buchanan County in northeast Iowa along the scenic Wapsipinicon River, a treasured Protected Waters Area known for its natural beauty. Its location along US 20 provides easy access to the metro areas of Waterloo and Cedar Falls. Highway 150 runs north south directly through town and causes high traffic levels in the downtown area. Independence is heavily rooted in its history and boasts many properties listed on the historic registry. The town is known for its historic Independence Day celebration that brings visitors far and wide. The Riverwalk Trail is a product of Independence's participation in Community Visioning in 2010.

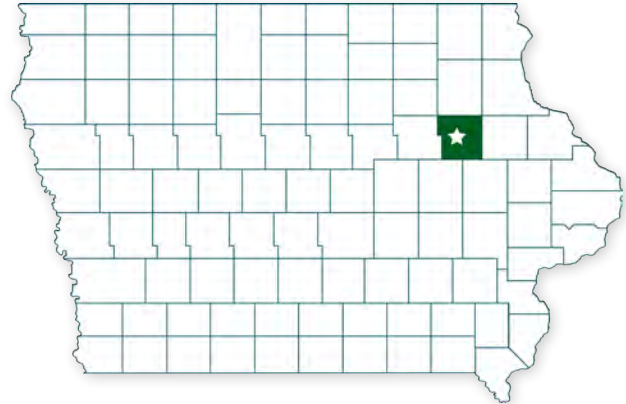
Community Assessments

Residents provided input through a random-sample mail survey and focus groups. These assessments confirmed the need for a better pedestrian network—specifically, a safe route to school and connections among the existing trails. First Avenue proved to be a point of contention for many participants because of high levels of traffic congestion, lack of pedestrian access, and flooding.

Planning and Design Summary

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

- Signage and Way-finding – Create a consistent family of signage using the Independence city logo and establish a community-wide way-finding system to help residents and visitors find destinations.
- 1st Street W Improvements – Improve the aesthetics of this prominent community corridor with street trees and green space; address the drainage issues using bioretention cells; enhance safety with additional sidewalks.
- Trail Connections – Expand the existing trail and sidewalk network to connect to priority locations within the community. Increase signage and available amenities on the existing trails.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Nick McGrath*

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

Intern: *Andrea Fager*

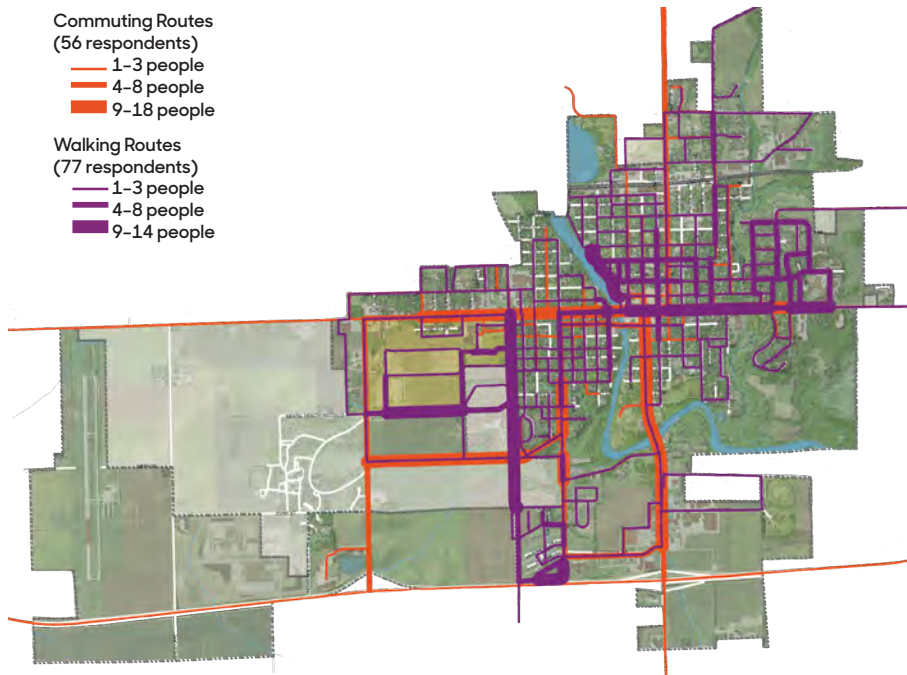


Independence design workshop.

Steering Committee:

*Kim Hansen, chair
Brad Bleichner
Michele Grinnell
Kathryn Jensen
John Kurtz
Susi Lampe*

*Brian Prusator
Matt Mayner
Stephanie Sailer
Matthew Schmitz
Todd Sherrets*



Commuting and walking routes identified by survey respondents.



1st Street W corridor plan.

1

Focus-group participants in every demographic group were vocal about the issues they face along the 1st Street corridor. From flooding and a lack of a safe route to school to traffic backups at school pickup and drop-off times, this street causes many problems for travelers. The design team proposed the addition of a sidewalk on the north side of the street, benches, street trees, and a green space. Bioretention cells along the corridor would alleviate the flooding that frequently occurs.

"...it's kind of difficult getting out of school [onto 1st Street] because it's just so...cramped..."

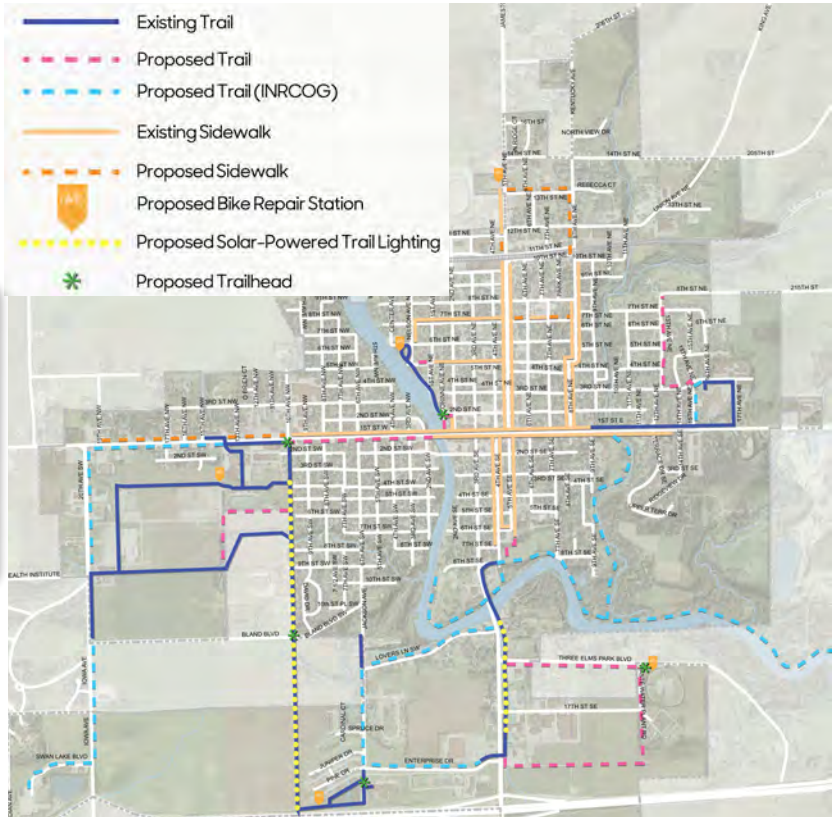


Proposed green space with plantings, bioretention cells, sidewalk, benches, and lawn and 1st Street W.

2

The existing trails and sidewalks in Independence are not connected, which is an issue for many residents. Liberty Trail currently links the west side of town to the schools, but there are no trail connections to the east side of town. The design team recommended the addition of sidewalks and trails throughout town to better connect the pedestrian systems. Proposed trailheads throughout the trail system would provide trail users with much needed trail amenities, including a rest stop, a bike repair station, dog waste stations, trash receptacles, and directional way-finding signage.

"...when [my family goes] biking, we usually look for a trail...but there [are none] that we know of...so we go on the sidewalks [on the east side of town], but then we have to stop because there's a lot of traffic."

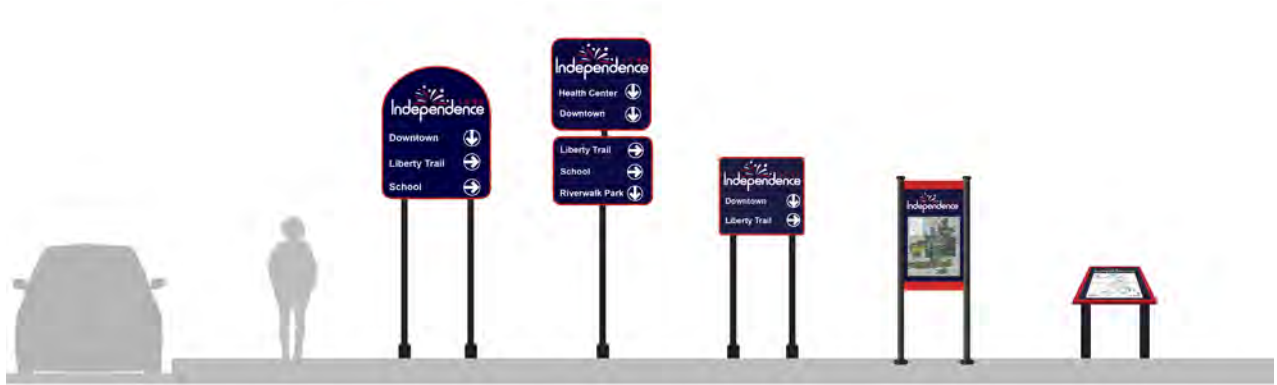


Map of existing and proposed sidewalk and trails.

"It'd be nice...to have benches or someplace where you can sit [throughout town]."



Proposed solar lighting, benches, trash receptacles, and signage along Liberty Trail.



Proposed way-finding signage for pedestrian and vehicular use.

3

Participants in the community focus groups talked about how confusing it can be to get around town. Several groups mentioned that visitors have a hard time finding places in town and even residents have struggled in some areas. The steering committee wants a cohesive set of way-finding signage to direct both residents and visitors to local destinations. The design team created a set of way-finding signage that incorporates the existing community logo, and suggested showcasing various destinations throughout Independence, such as Liberty Trail, downtown, and Riverwalk Park.

| | Undesirable Feature Absence of Way-finding Signage | Desired Improvement Improved Way-finding System |
|---|---|--|
| User Types Actives | ● | ● |
| Mobility Challenged | ● | |
| Older Adults | ● | ● |
| Youth | | |
| Parents | | |
| Steering Committee | ● | ● |

"...signage...is an issue [because] we do have visitors coming, and a lot of times they're confused as to where they can go get food, where they can get lodging...just where to go."



Focus-group outcomes showing the need for a way-finding system.

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

Marquette

Marquette is situated on the west bank of the Mississippi River in Clayton County in Northeast Iowa and is bisected by the Great River Road National Scenic Byway and the Iowa River Bluffs Scenic Byway. The town is known for its picturesque riverfront setting, with beautiful views of the river and surrounding bluffs. Marquette is a popular destination for tourists, offering recreational activities such as boating, fishing, and hiking. It is also home to the Lady Luck Casino and the Driftless Area Wetland Centre.

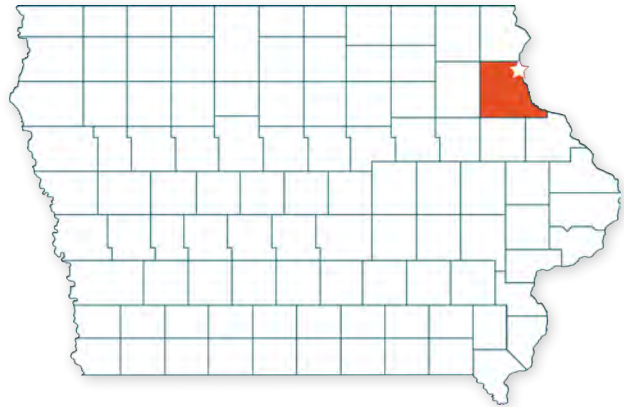
Community Assessments

During community focus groups, residents described how trains parked on the tracks for long periods back up traffic and cut off certain areas, especially for people who live in The Bench neighborhood at the south end of town. Ear-splitting train horns at all hours are also a nuisance. Residents want better pedestrian connectivity in Marquette as well as to neighboring McGregor, including safer ways to cross Highways 18 and 76.

Planning and Design Summary

Resident input played an important role in the goal-setting process, through which the visioning committee set the following performance objectives:

- Parking – Provide additional parking spaces to support local events and encourage visitors to spend time in Downtown Marquette.
- Walkability and Connectivity— Provide better pedestrian/cyclist connections between The Bench, downtown, and the wetland center; add pedestrian bridges across the railroad tracks to the riverfront.
- Safety – Create a safer pedestrian environment by slowing traffic through town with pedestrian-activated crossing signals and highly visible crosswalks and adding pedestrian lighting and shade trees.
- Identity and Branding – Create an attractive and cohesive signage scheme tied to Marquette's river town identity; promote Marquette as an Iowa Welcome Center.



Trees Forever Facilitators: Andrew Rust
Landscape Architects: David Stokes, Lara Guldenpfennig, Rachel Cross; JBC
Interns: Susan Pegg, Joseph Jennings



Design workshop community tour.

Steering Committee:
Bonnie Basemann
Dan Keyes
Dennis Mason
Laurie Mason
Alicia Mullarkey

1

Focus-group participants reported several challenges when trying to walk from The Bench neighborhood to both downtown Marquette and the riverfront, including an inadequate sidewalk infrastructure, traffic on Highway 76, and parked trains. The design team proposed repurposing the existing casino pedestrian bridge and adding bike lanes to address these concerns. The casino bridge would be reconfigured with an outside elevator and stairs. People exiting the pedestrian bridge would be able to get to Riverfront Park or go south on the Ports of Discovery Trail to McGregor. Bike lanes would be added along the wide streets in The Bench so cyclists, especially youth, would benefit from increased awareness by drivers. These bike lanes would connect to both downtown and the riverfront.

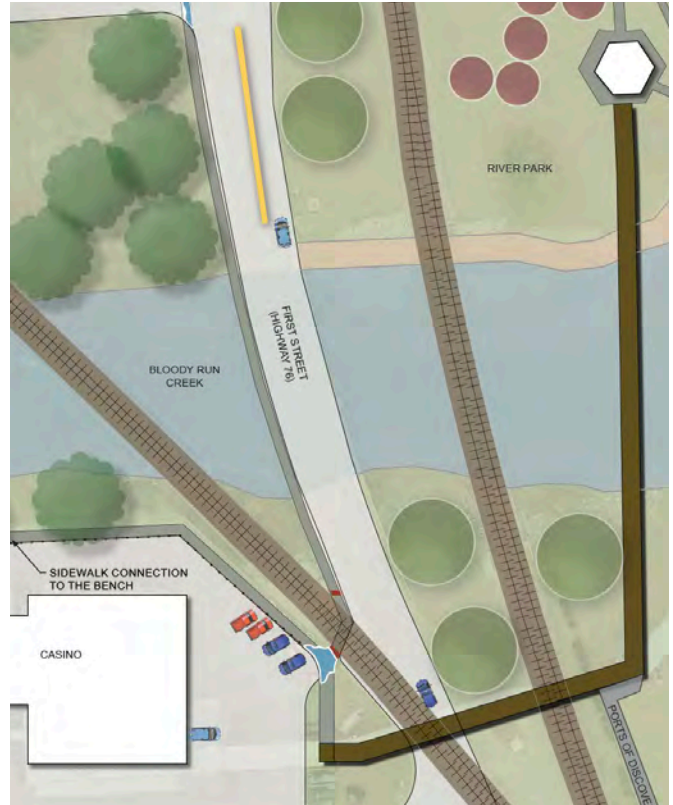


Image edit of a bike lane added to a wide street in The Bench neighborhood.

"There's no sidewalk [along Highway 76 from Anti Monopoly to the bridge]...you [have] to walk either through the parking lot of the casino or...cross the street."



"...there [are] no sidewalks...[so] I walk the streets all the way around The Bench, come down [Anti Monopoly Street], and I'm out in the street crossing the railroad tracks before I get on the sidewalk."



Plan view of the pedestrian bridge over Highway 76 and the railroad tracks.

2

Residents would like to be able to access the Driftless Area Wetland Centre safely on foot or a bike from anywhere in town. However, many are uncomfortable walking or biking along Highway 18 because there is no trail and no controlled crossing at the intersection. The design team proposed trail connections to the wetlands center from downtown Marquette as well as from The Bench. The plan utilizes a rescued historic bridge to cross the rail yard, and features two alternatives for crossing Highway 18: on-street crosswalks and a pedestrian underpass through an existing culvert.



Image edit showing the existing culvert converted to a pedestrian underpass.

"I want a box culvert under [Highway 18] so we can walk from [the wetlands center] to...downtown, to the riverfront."



A series of trail connections for pedestrians/cyclists to safely cross over Highway 18 to the Driftless Area Wetland Centre.

"We're not going to walk...or ride our bike on [Highway 18]...It's just...really busy... so we just don't even [want] to cross..."



Plan view of the trail network from The Bench to the Driftless Area Wetland Centre.

McGregor

McGregor is a historic river town in the Upper Mississippi River Valley in Northeast Iowa, along the Great River Road National Scenic Byway. It is brought to life in the summer months with tourists interested in the vibrant downtown, scenic natural beauty, and historic architecture. McGregor is surrounded by a plethora of natural beauty, with Pikes Peak State Park bordering the community on the south and Effigy Mounds National Monument five miles to the north.

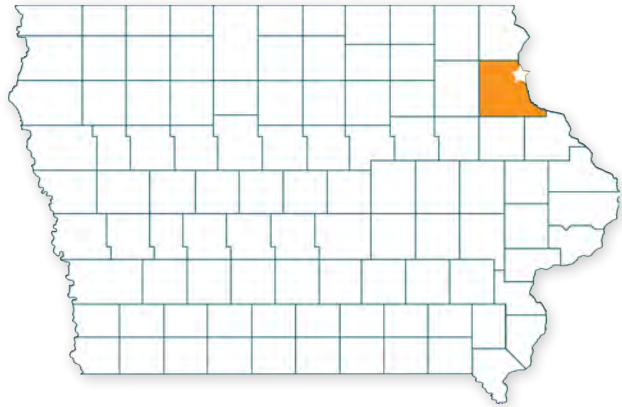
Community Assessments

McGregor residents enjoy the nearby natural areas and their access to outdoor recreation amenities, including the Mississippi River, area trails, and various parks throughout town. However, focus-group participants pointed to the railroad as a major barrier to accessing these assets, especially the riverfront located just east of the railroad. They also acknowledged that the city's sidewalk infrastructure is in poor condition and said they would like an upgraded pedestrian network, including trails.

Planning and Design Summary

Based on public input from the focus groups and the design workshop, and priorities of the McGregor visioning committee, the design team proposed the following concepts:

- Gathering Space – Convert Triangle Park into a plaza with an extended green space to accommodate performances, public art installations, better lighting, and seating.
- Walkability and Connectivity - Provide a pedestrian network of sidewalks and trails that connect to existing trail systems and to all neighborhoods throughout the community.
- Public Art and Beautification - Develop an interactive art installation at Triangle Park; revitalize Peace Park; repair streets and sidewalks; open up views to the river.
- Safety and Accessibility - Increase downtown parking by adding a parking ramp and improving the existing parking lot; repair the brick streets; incorporate way-finding signage; build a pedestrian bridge across the railroad tracks to the riverfront.



Trees Forever Facilitator: Andrew Rust
Landscape Architects: David Stokes, Lara Guldenpfennig, Rachel Cross; JBC
Interns: Susan Pegg, Joseph Jennings



Marquette-McGregor design workshop.

Steering Committee:

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Brandi Crozier | Dan Keyes |
| Megan Beisker | Ruby Koeller |
| Duane Boelman | Lynette McManus |
| Maria Brummel | Audrey Posten |
| Eric Grady | Kenny Slocum |
| Janet Hallberg | |

1

McGregor's downtown was a popular topic of discussion in the community focus groups. Residents talked about tourist traffic, inadequate parking, business access issues, and problems with parked trains cutting off the riverfront from downtown. The design team put together a proposal that aims to solve each of those issues. Improvements to downtown would include additional parking in multiple spots adjacent to Main Street, traffic calming measures, and signaled crosswalks, and ADA-compliant sidewalks to downtown businesses. The final proposal was the construction of a pedestrian bridge to get people safely over the railroad tracks to the riverfront.

"I would like to see an overpass—at least a foot bridge—across the tracks so that you can get in and out of [the riverfront area] if a train is there."



"...we get so many tourists, and then there's no place for them to park [on Main Street] and they say, 'Forget it. Let's go.' It's always been a problem."



Image edit of the pedestrian bridge and high-visibility crosswalk on Main Street.



Bird's-eye view of downtown McGregor showing the proposed pedestrian bridge, the reconfigured parking lot, and the Triangle Park plaza and green space.

2

Pedestrian and cyclist safety also emerged as a priority among focus-group participants. All user types commented on the inadequate sidewalk system, as well as the need for more amenities for pedestrians such as benches and restrooms. Many elements of the concept plan address the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. For example, the revitalized Peace Park would feature crosswalks where it is bisected by W Main Street and public restrooms. A new sidewalk along W Main Street to Turner Park, crosswalks and signaled pedestrian signs, and a bike lane provide safer access to both the park and the Mar-Mac Middle School.

"I think bike lanes would be nice, because our family likes riding bikes, but...I don't even know where we would safely go with kids. There's no safe way to get out of town."



"They just put random signs for crosswalks [on Main Street], but there's no actual... crosswalk."



| User Types | Undesirable Feature | Desired Improvement |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| | Inadequate Sidewalk Infrastructure | Pedestrian Safety Features & Amenities |
| Actives | ● | ● |
| Mobility Challenged | ● | |
| Older Adults | ● | ● |
| Youth | ● | ● |
| Parents | ● | ● |
| Steering Committee | ● | ● |

Focus-group outcomes showing the need to address pedestrian safety.



Image edit showing the proposed sidewalk, crosswalk, and pedestrian signage the middle school and the bike lane on W Main Street.



Image edit showing the proposed sidewalk, crosswalk, and pedestrian signage at Turner Park.

Ports of Discovery Trail

The Ports of Discovery Trail is a long-sought-after riverside connection between Marquette and McGregor that builds on work completed in previous studies. Residents in both towns highly interested in a connecting trail between the two towns. Because of the geography of the region, a trail connecting the two communities was long thought to be impossible. Using information gathered during a series of community input and design sessions, the landscape architects created a trail that would link the two towns, provide a scenic walk, and attract tourists and visitors to the area.

Proposed improvements in both towns include a trail system that connects Marquette's downtown to McGregor and extends farther south to Pikes Peak State Park. The Driftless Area Wetland Centre and Bloody Run County Park are linked using rescued historic bridges, an existing culvert, and the relocated casino pedestrian bridge. These changes would enable people to safely cross the railroad tracks, highways, and Bloody Run Creek. A network of trails, trailheads, bike lanes and signage crisscrosses wooded areas surrounding both towns, enhancing the active transportation and recreation opportunities for residents and visitors.

"...a tremendous thing to achieve [would be] a very nice trail between McGregor and Marquette..."



Example of a trail alongside an existing gravel road.

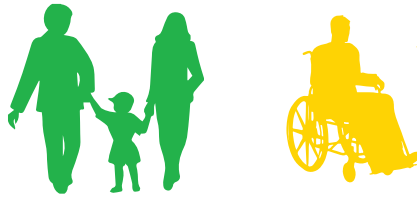


Image edit of a trail cantilevered over the riverbank.

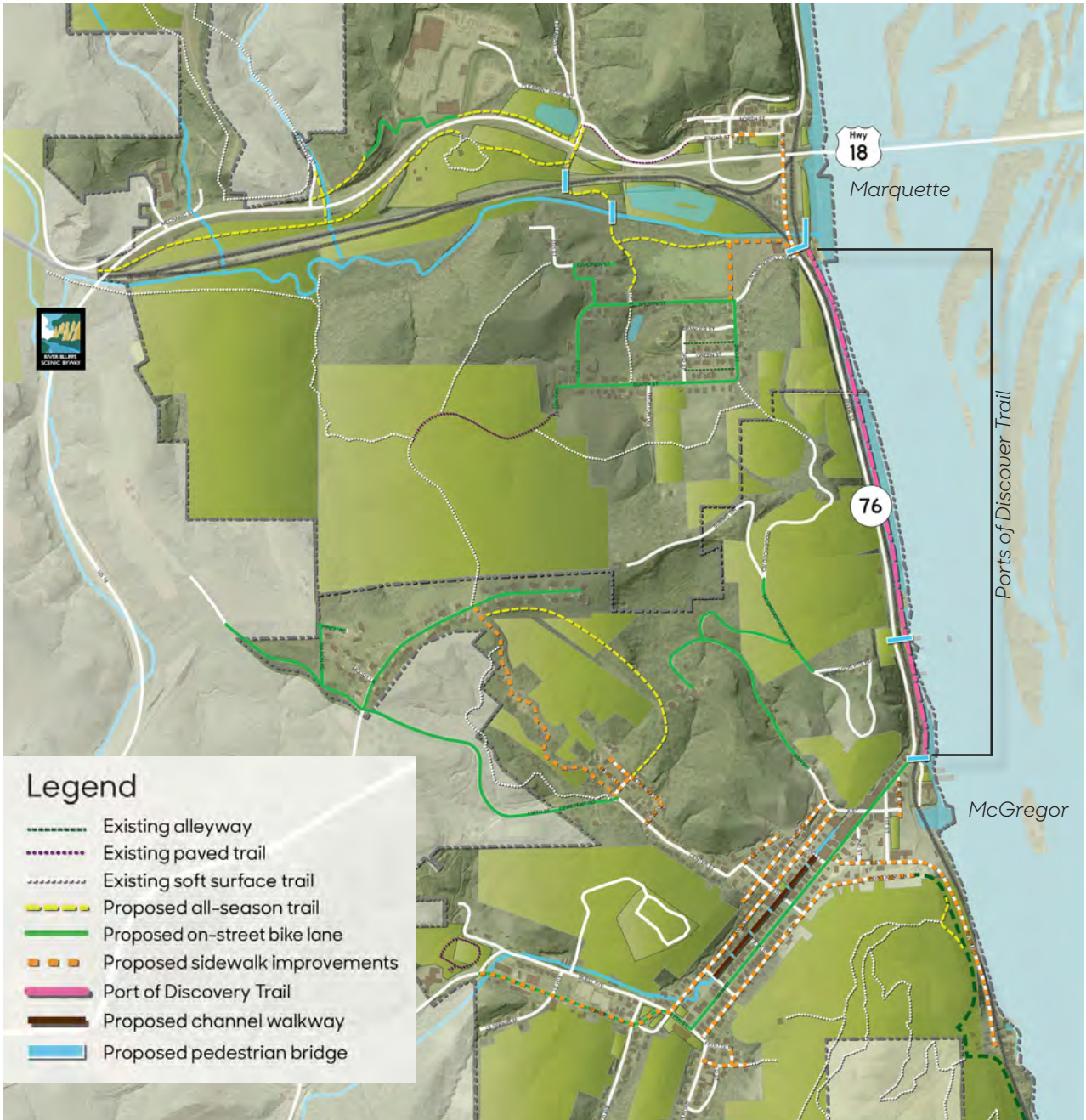


Image edit of a historic bridge converted to a pedestrian bridge from the wetland center over the railroad tracks.

"I would love [a walking path] all the way along the river...one all the way to Marquette would be great."



"...I think the Mississippi River is the greatest asset we have, and we could do lots more there to improve recreational [opportunities]."



A map of proposed trails connecting Marquette and McGregor and the Ports of Discovery Trail.

Slater

Slater is a small community in the southeast corner of Story County. State Highway 210 connects the community with Interstate 35 to the east and Madrid to the west. Two major regional trails intersect in Slater—the High Trestle Trail and the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail host tens of thousands of riders per month during the summer. Slater was an early participant in Community Visioning, and the entrance signage and community trail proposed in the 1997–98 program year have been completed.

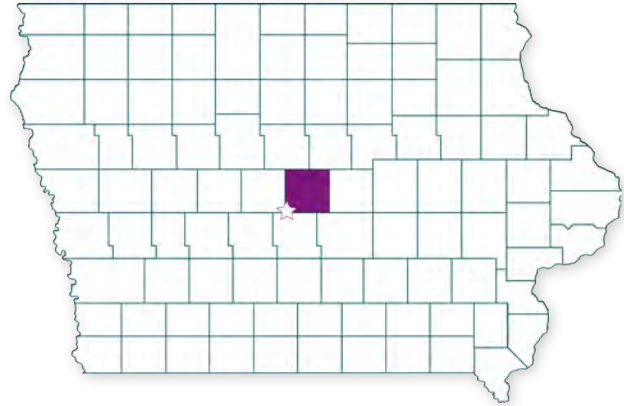
Community Assessments

Community focus groups and random-sample survey results show that people value the recreation opportunities provided by the High Trestle and Heart of Iowa trails and city parks but would like more amenities along and better access from town to the trails. Highway 210 is considered a significant barrier to pedestrians and cyclists because of the absence of walkways and bike lanes paired with steep ditches. This highway is also intimidating to cross because of fast, heavy traffic and no crosswalks.

Planning and Design Summary

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

- Safety – Install marked/signaled crosswalks where Hwy 210 intersects with the High Trestle Trail, to Earl Grimm Park, and on Marshall Street; add a speed-enforcement system on Linn Street on the south side of town.
- Walkability and Connectivity – Develop an inner-city trail loop that gives access to all parts of town and connects to the trails, parks, and other destinations; add bike lanes on Marshall Street; widen sidewalks on Linn Street.
- Beautification – Develop a trailhead at the junction of the two regional trails; improve the existing trailhead at Arboretum Park with restrooms, additional parking, and a connection to the elementary school.
- Way-finding and Branding – Draw trail users into Slater by creating uniform way-finding for the city.



Trees Forever Facilitators: *Gina Buelow*

Landscape Architects: *David Stokes, Lara Guldenpfennig; JBC*

Interns: *Susan Pegg, Joseph Jennings*



What, Where, & Why meeting.

Steering Committee:

Evy Raes

DeDee Birdsall

Taylor Christensen

Jennifer Davies

Kevin Holmes

Kyle Howard

Suzy Sernett

1

Both survey respondents and focus-group participants mentioned the difficulty pedestrians and cyclists experience when trying to cross Highway 210 because of the heavy, fast traffic and the absence of crosswalks. Traveling along the corridor is also problematic because it has no sidewalks or designated bike lanes. The design team proposed designated crossings along the highway at Linn Street, Marshall Street, Earl Grimm Park, and the High Trestle Trail crossing.

"There's a four-way stop [at Highway 210 and Linn St]...it's really busy...always."



Commuting routes identified by survey respondents showing high vehicular traffic on Highway 210.

"We don't let our kids cross [Highway] 210 without an adult... because it's that [unsafe]. I had the stroller one time and I about got hit and I was looking both ways. That's how fast they go."



Image edit of proposed Highway 210 crossing at the High Trestle Trail.

"...when bicyclists come into town, they'll try to get to Casey's...on [Highway] 210, and there's no shoulder for them to be on."



"I wish there was some way you could safely cross [Highway] 210... [at Marshall St]."



Image edit of proposed bike lanes, sidewalks, and crosswalks along Highway 210 at Marshall Street.

2

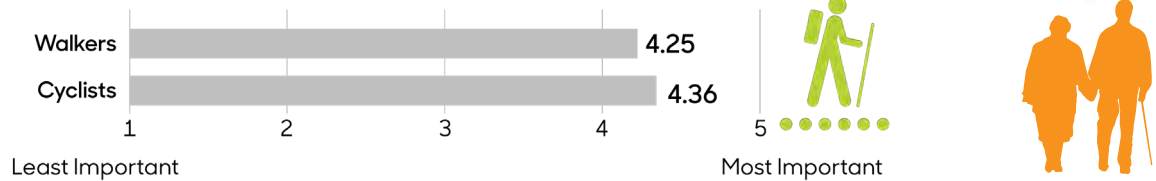
Residents want better sidewalks, trails, and safer road crossings to easily access Slater's many outdoor amenities. The design team developed a connectivity plan to increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists, including the Highway 210 crossings discussed on the previous page, as well as a trail along Linn Street to connect the residential area south of the highway to the rest of town, bike lanes on Marshall and Main Streets, crosswalks on Main Street at Marshall and Linn Streets, and new and wider sidewalks. The plan will make it easier for residents to get to the High Trestle and Heart of Iowa Trails and for trail users to get to destinations in town.

"We stroller a lot with littles...[in the older part of town]...[where] there's not a sidewalk... we'll go on the street. And then if there [are] cars parked, you're essentially in the middle of the road. Or [there are] sidewalks that don't have a...ramp to get to the road. Or there is a sidewalk, but it's broken..."



"North of [Highway] 210 in the older part of Slater...every block probably has a bad sidewalk or no sidewalk."

Importance of Trail Access



Connectivity plan showing locations for bike lanes, new and wider sidewalks, and new pedestrian crossings.

3

Slater residents appreciate the well-maintained downtown with wide ADA-compliant sidewalks and good lighting, but don't see it as a pedestrian space because of visibility issues and vehicular traffic. The design team proposed a series of traffic-calming design interventions to help slow traffic and make the space more pedestrian friendly. The team suggested seasonally planted roundabouts with a compass insignia of masonry to encourage slower movement, crosswalks and bike lanes painted in bright colors to call attention to pedestrians, and bump-outs are extended to improve visibility.

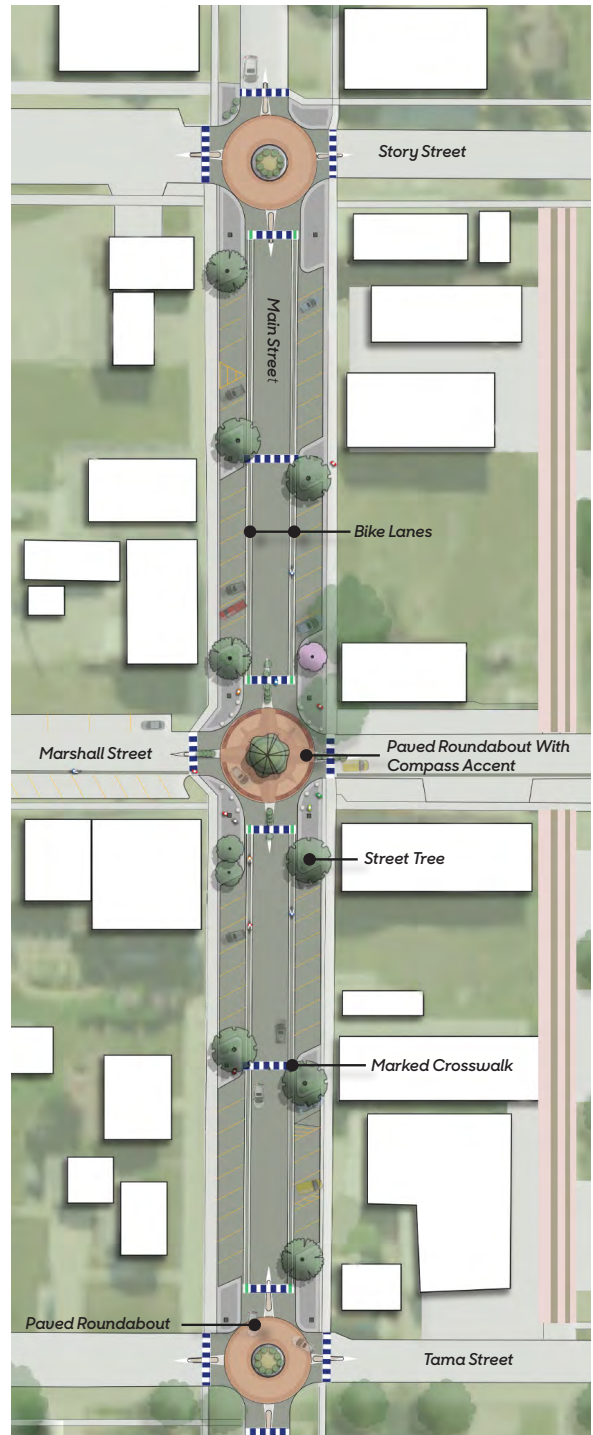
"...when I come off [the sidewalk] from the museum to cross Main Street...you can't see around the [parked cars]. You have to get halfway into the intersection before you can see if anybody is coming. I've had some close calls."



"...Main Street is an asphalt street [so it's not built for heavy truck traffic, but] you get a lot of [that] here. There's not a single stop sign on this entire stretch. You stop when you approach [County Road] R38."



View of proposed Main Street enhancements looking west.



Proposed Main Street streetscape improvements.

Vinton

The east central Iowa community of Vinton is known as “The city of light” and hosts the annual Vinton Boomtown, the best pyrotechnic show in the Midwest. An active rail line, the Cedar River, The Old Creamery Trail, and Highways 218 and 150 connect Vinton to surrounding communities. Vinton is home to Nathan’s Miles Glow Trail, the longest glow-in-the-dark trail in the United States. The community’s entrance signage and the Old Creamery trailhead near the co-op are based on proposals from Vinton’s participation in the 1999–2000 Community Visioning Program.

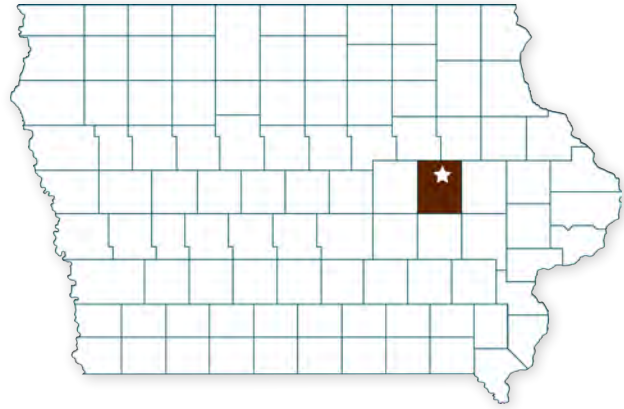
Community Assessments

Nathan’s Miles Glow Trail is popular among all demographic groups in Vinton. However, accessing the trail and other destinations throughout town is challenging because of the inadequate sidewalk infrastructure. People in several focus groups identified heavy and speeding traffic, especially on Highway 150, as a concern. Focus-group participants identified complete, ADA-compliant sidewalks, trail connectivity, and safe highway crossings as priorities.

Planning and Design Summary

Based on input from focus groups and feedback during the design workshop, the visioning committee identified four priority areas:

- **Connectivity & Accessibility** – Improve pedestrian connectivity and accessibility by providing safe and accessible routes to community destinations, businesses, and public buildings.
- **Community Identity** – Implement branded way-finding to enhance the community’s identity, user experience and streetscape aesthetics.
- **Safety & Traffic-Calming** – Utilize traffic-calming/control methods to assist in improving both vehicular and pedestrian safety and circulation.
- **Trail Extension & Enhancements** – Extend the existing trail system to connect to both local and regional trails and add site amenities such as benches and shade trees to improve the user experience.



Trees Forever Facilitator: *Peter Lundgren*

Landscape Architect: *Meg Flenker, PLA, CPESC, CPSWQ; Flenker Land Architects Consultants, LLC*

Interns: *Trevor Smith, Mikky Ojha*



Design Workshop: Community members use chalk to express what they believe makes Vinton great.

Steering Committee:

Matt Boggess, chair

Aric Chuala

Cindy Elwick

Mike Elwick

Kaitlin Emrich

Erika Hodgson

Ann Jorgensen

Kyle Koeppen

Bud Maynard

Rylie Pflughaupt

Audra Piotti

Melissa Schwan

Melody Snow

Eric Upmeyer

"I walk home from the middle school every day, and I have to walk in the road because we don't have any sidewalks [on W 15th St]."

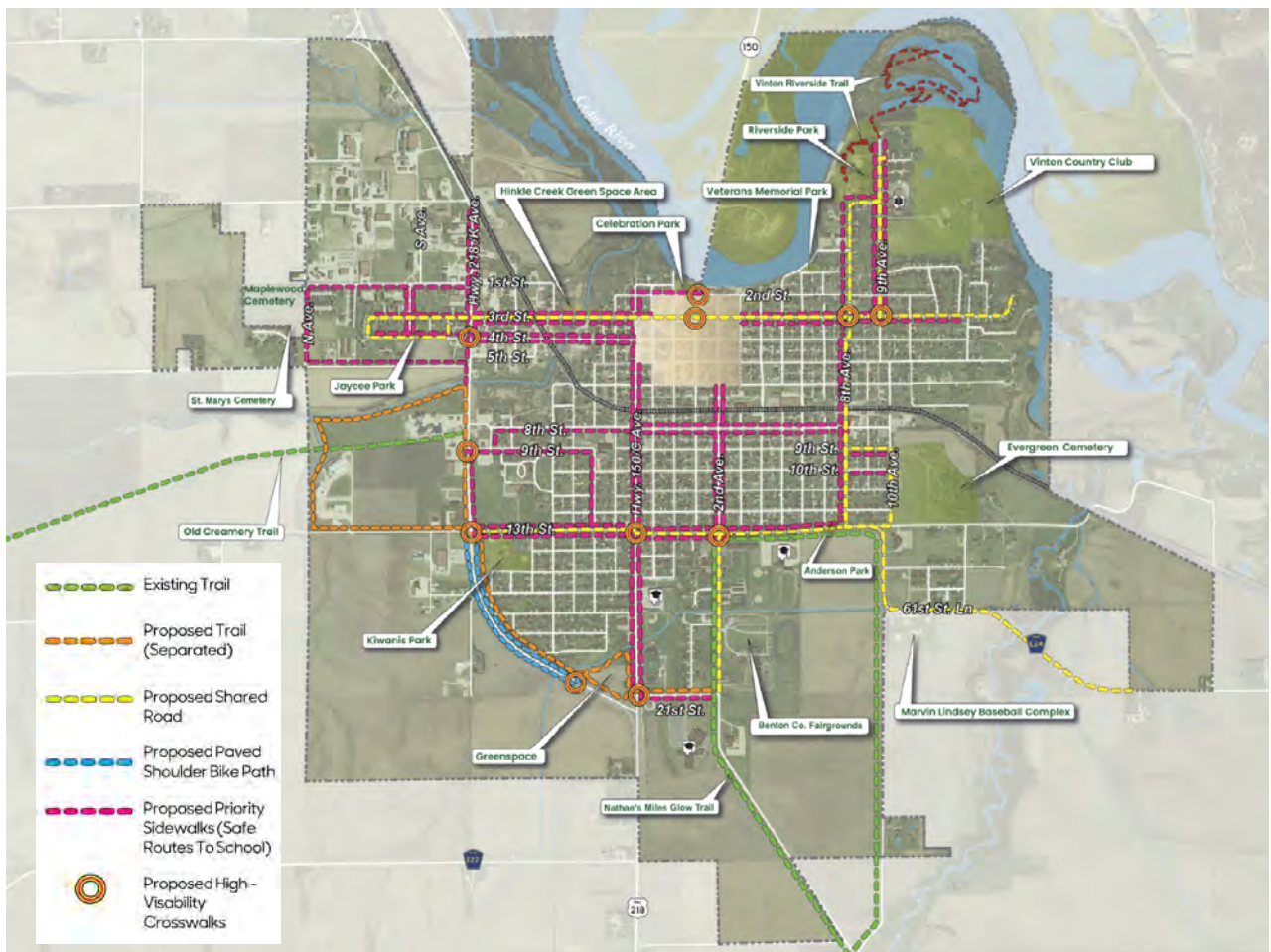
"[When] I moved here, I [thought], 'Oh, this is how they wrote the book Where the Sidewalk Ends,' because you'd be walking...on the sidewalk, and then...it just ends."

"[The] sidewalks are horrible...all over... That's why a lot of people walk in the street... That's the only place you can walk."



1

All transportation user types identified the need for wide, complete, ADA-compliant sidewalks that connect key destinations throughout town. Residents also provided input during the public design workshop as to where they would like to have trails and sidewalks. The pedestrian circulation plan shown below is based on feedback from residents and features trail extensions (separated, shared road, and shoulder) and priority sidewalk additions, including a safe route to school.



Pedestrian circulation concept plan.

2

Creating a looped trail system that connects to the Old Creamery Trail, the Glow Trail, and regional trail systems such as the Cedar Valley Nature Trail was identified by residents at the focus groups as one of their most desired improvements. The design team proposed three main segment types for Vinton’s looped trail system, including shared-road and separated trails, as well as paved road shoulder bike lanes. Incorporating a variety of trail types allows users of all abilities and comfort levels to find a trail they enjoy. The team used important destinations and routes gathered at the design workshop to create an integrated trail system that will serve the whole community.

"I would like...[a] biking path for kids to be able to ride their bikes on for a significant amount of time and be safe the entire time..."

"I love the idea of connecting the Old Creamery [Trail] to the Glow Trail..."



Section view of trail option 1 for the Highway 218 corridor.



Image edit showing trail option 1—a paved road-shoulder bike lane—for the Highway 218 corridor.



Section view of trail option 2 for the Highway 218 corridor.



Image edit showing trail option 2—a separated trail—for the Highway 218 corridor.

3

Highway 218 poses a significant barrier to pedestrians, especially along Hinkle Creek, where they are forced to walk along the side of the highway to get across. This corridor is difficult for people to cross because it is one of the main arterial routes for residents and visitors and carries a high volume of vehicular traffic. The design team's proposed "complete streets" transportation improvements for Highway 218 include the creation of a safe crossing, sidewalks along the corridor, and a pedestrian bridge crossing Hinkle Creek.



"We need an overpass over [US] 218 so the school kids on [the west] side don't have to walk across a busy highway."

"A few days ago when I was coming home from school...there [were] two women and then a baby in a stroller. They had to run across [the intersection of US 218 and W 16th St because]...there's really not a good way for them to safely get across."



Proposed pedestrian enhancements to the intersection of Highway 218 and 4th St.



"There's a bridge [on Hwy 218], but there [are] no sidewalks... people [are] walking in the bridge as people are driving over it. I've almost hit people there."

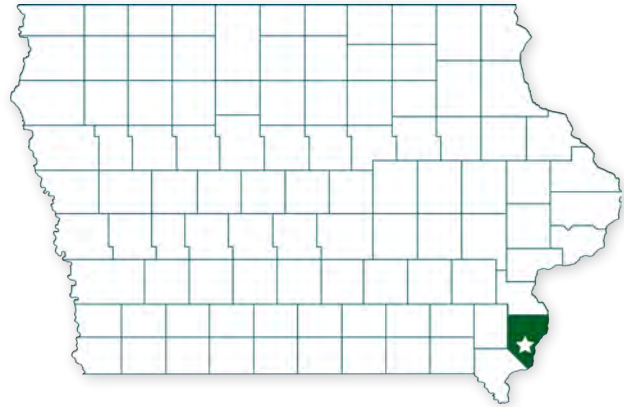


Proposed sidewalk on the Highway 218 bridge over Hinkle Creek.



West Burlington

The Southeast Iowa community of West Burlington sits adjacent to the Mississippi River city of Burlington, Iowa. The city benefits from its proximity to major transportation routes, including US Highway 34 running east-west through town and US Highway 61 running north-south to the east of town. West Burlington is home to the Southeastern Community College, which has an enrollment that is nearly equivalent to the town's population. Just southwest of town is the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant, which was a major producer of weapons for World War II and the Korean War.



Community Assessments

Public input from focus groups and a random-sample survey revealed that residents want more trails and trail amenities in town, as well as regional trail connections to the Flint River Trail and into Burlington. Heavy traffic throughout town is a barrier to walkers, cyclists, and drivers alike. Pedestrians are also inhibited by the lack of ADA-accessible sidewalks.

Planning and Design Summary

Based on the results of the assessments and feedback from the steering committee, the design team created a concept plan that addresses the following priorities:

- **Connectivity and Accessibility** – Improve pedestrian connectivity and accessibility through the addition of ADA-compliant sidewalks, safe road crossings, and separated recreational trails.
- **Community Identity & Entryways** – Implement branded way-finding to enhance the community's identity, user experience, and streetscape aesthetics.
- **Trail Extension and Enhancements** – Create a connected trail system both within the community and regionally. Provide site amenities such as benches and shade trees to improve user comfort.
- **Safety** – Create a safer environment for all user types by adopting a "complete streets" approach to planning, building, and maintaining streets.

Trees Forever Facilitators: *Peter Lundgren*

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

Interns: *Mikky Ojha, Trevor Smith*



West Burlington design workshop.

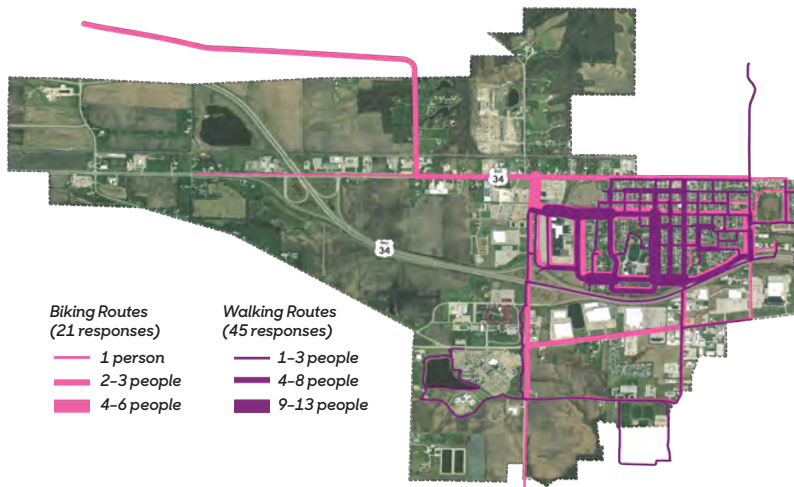
Steering Committee:

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Gregg Mandsager, chair</i> | <i>John Johnson</i> |
| <i>Mike Brissey</i> | <i>Mollie Krell</i> |
| <i>Mike Davis</i> | <i>Tobin Krell</i> |
| <i>Jordan Frahm</i> | <i>Kathy Newberry</i> |
| <i>Kelly Fry</i> | <i>Ron Teater</i> |
| <i>Amanda Hancock</i> | <i>Steve Young</i> |

1

Focus-group participants and survey respondents cited the same concerns about pedestrian accessibility and safety along many of the main corridors. Issues include the lack of curb ramps, sidewalks that are too narrow and/or in disrepair, safe pedestrian crossings, poor lighting, and absence of shade trees. The design team proposed a "complete streets" plan for Gear Avenue. Complete streets are designed to meet the needs of all users, regardless of their age and ability. The plan features amenities such as lighting, shade trees, and seating areas. This plan could be incorporated on streets throughout town.

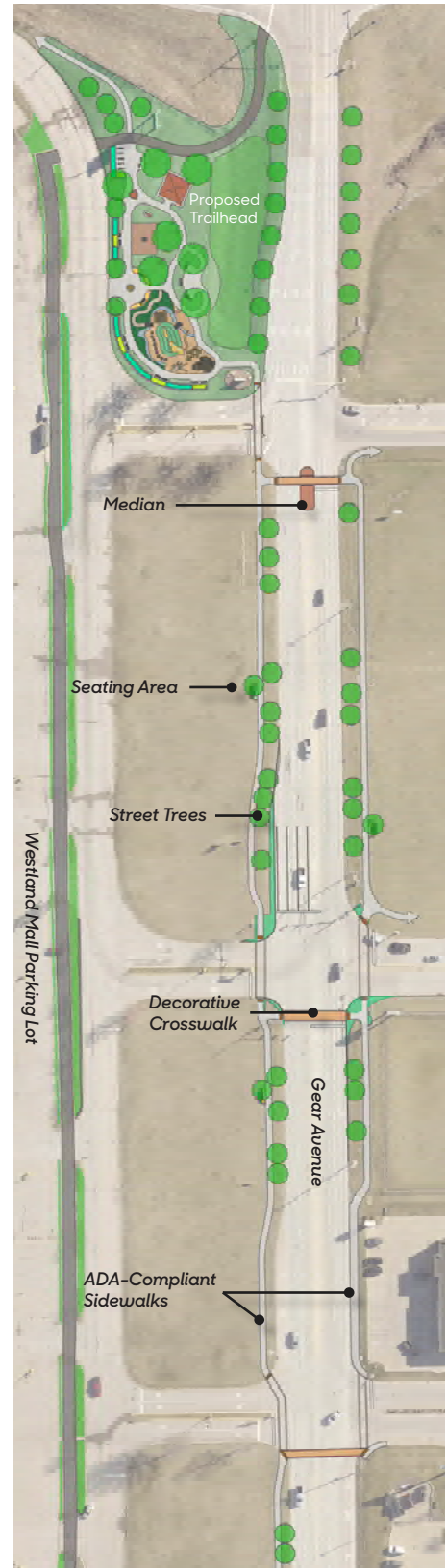
"Truthfully, they need to get a pedestrian bridge [across S Gear Avenue from the mall to Target]... [and] the bigger picture would be connecting to the bike path."



Walking and biking routes identified by survey respondents showing that Gear Avenue is popular among both cyclists and walkers.



Proposed typical section for Gear Avenue.

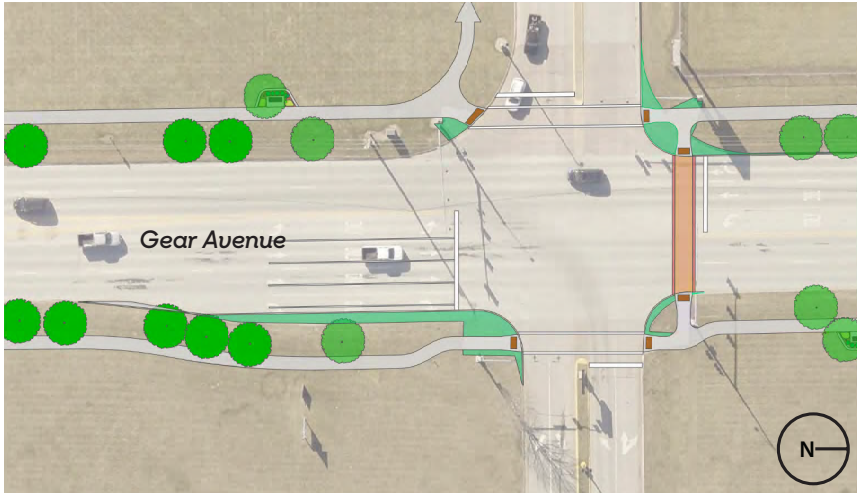


Concept plan for Gear Avenue from Hwy 34 to Huston Street.

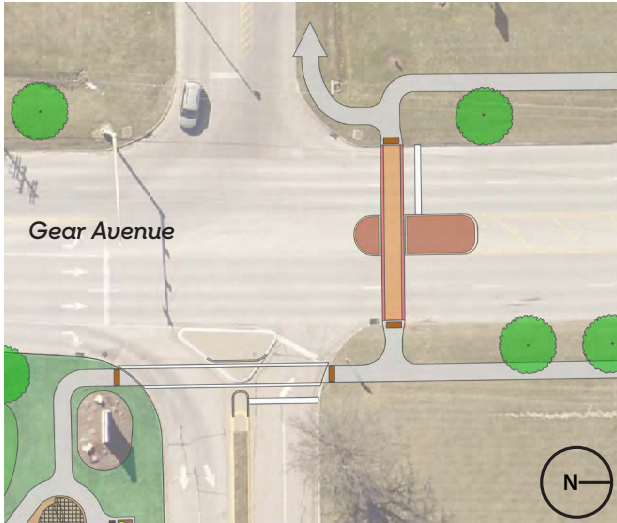
2

Participants in every focus group demographic described heavy, high-speed traffic as an issue for walkers and cyclists, especially on primary corridors such as Gear Avenue. The design team developed three traffic-calming options specifically for Gear Avenue but that could be applied throughout the community to slow traffic. Option 1 shows a raised median with a crosswalk cut-through, which slows traffic and increases pedestrian safety by providing a center refuge. Option 2 employs a road diet, which reduces speeds and minimizes accidents by making drivers more cognizant of traffic and other users, and radii reduction, which decreases vehicle turning speeds and pedestrian crossing distances. Option 3 consists of a crosswalk with pedestrian-activated signals to alert approaching vehicles of pedestrian use.

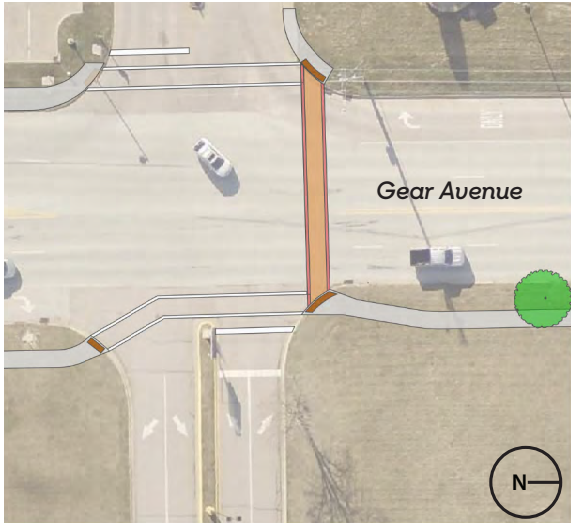
"A lot of people don't follow the 20 miles per hour limit [around the schools], and they speed past it..."



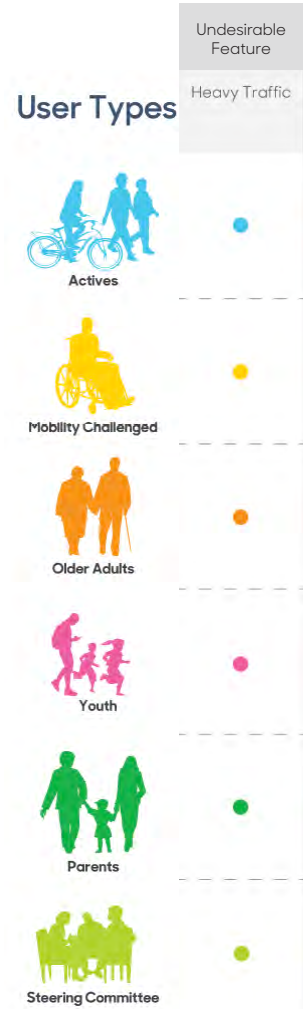
Traffic-calming option 3.



Traffic-calming option 1.



Traffic-calming option 2.



Focus-group outcomes showing the need for traffic calming.

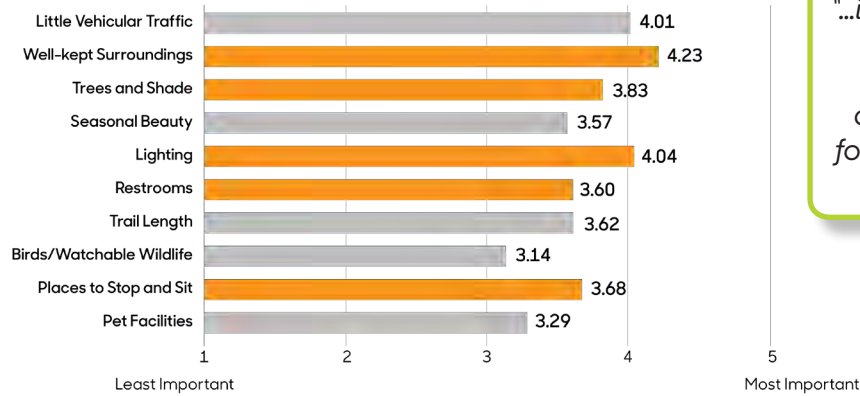
3

Survey and focus-group participants called out several important trail features including trees and shade, lighting, and places to stop and sit. The Gear Avenue trail extension will be constructed in 2024 and the design team and steering committee saw this as a great opportunity to design a trailhead on the newly acquired property near the intersection of Highway 34 and Gear Avenue. The design team proposed plantings, trees, and native prairie to make the space comfortable for all users. A nature-themed playground and shade structure make this a usable space for families and blend nicely with the surrounding landscape. Seating, shade trees, a water station, a bike repair station, and other amenities are also included.

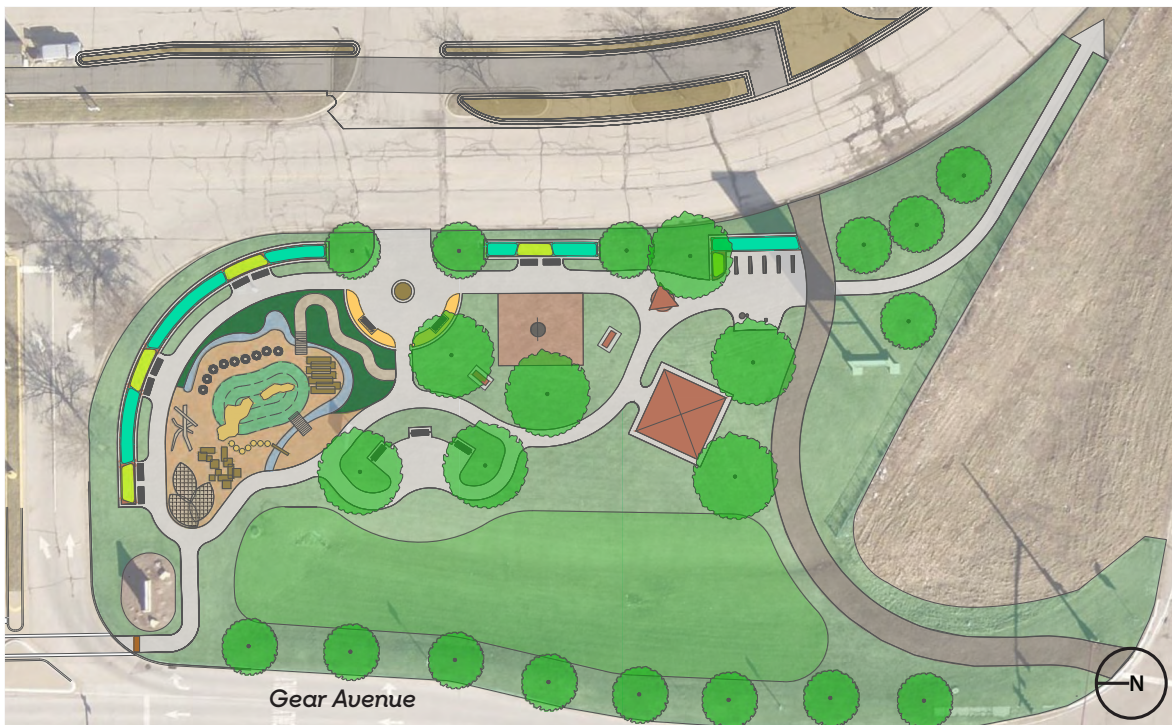
"I would like to see some benches. People walk and they need a rest...one place would be by the mall, because that's going to be a trail through there."



Desired Trail Features



"...in regard to transportation, I'm looking more for accessibility. I'm looking at the benches, the water fountain[s], some shade...an oasis along the way."



Plan view of the proposed trailhead Gear Avenue and Highway 34.



How It's Made: Project Funding

How It's Made: Getting Projects Funded

Introduction

Communities that participate in the Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program get projects built. A 2015 evaluation of follow-up interviews with representatives of visioning communities showed that 98% of these towns finish at least one project, and more than 65% complete four to six projects.¹

A critical component of how these projects are made is funding. The purpose of this study is to identify the types of grants awarded to towns that participated in the Community Visioning Program and to compare the funding amounts awarded to these communities to amounts given to similar towns that did not engage in the visioning process.



Top: Clarksville received a \$2,500 grant from the Butler County Community Foundation in 2011 for a sign along Highway 3. Bottom: In 2014, high school seniors requested that their class picture be taken at the entrance sign.

Methodology

Iowa State University program staff compiled data on competitive grants awarded by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), Iowa Great Places, the Wellmark Foundation, AARP, and the County Endowment Fund Program from 1995 through 2022. Funding information was obtained from each organization's website. Specifically, the study looks at funding from the following grant programs:

- IDNR Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Program
- IDNR Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- IEDA Enhance Iowa Grants (CAT, RECAT)
- The Iowa Great Places Program
- Wellmark Large and Small MATCH Grants
- AARP Challenge Grants
- Grants awarded by the community foundations in Iowa's 99 counties through the County Endowment Fund Program

Matches by the community, federal funding, private donations, and self-funded projects are not included in this analysis.

Funding comparisons between visioning and non-visioning communities were limited to fit the scope of the program. That is, only non-visioning communities with populations under 10,000 were included in the analysis. Additionally, we focused on funding awarded to the types of projects within the scope of the Community Visioning Program, including downtown enhancements, streetscapes, historic preservation, signage, roadside planting/landscaping, natural areas and parks adjacent to roadways, and trails. Some projects fit into more than one category; for instance, a streetscape project might include landscaping and planting. However, for the purposes of this study, each project has been assigned one category. (Table 1 lists the definitions for each project category.)

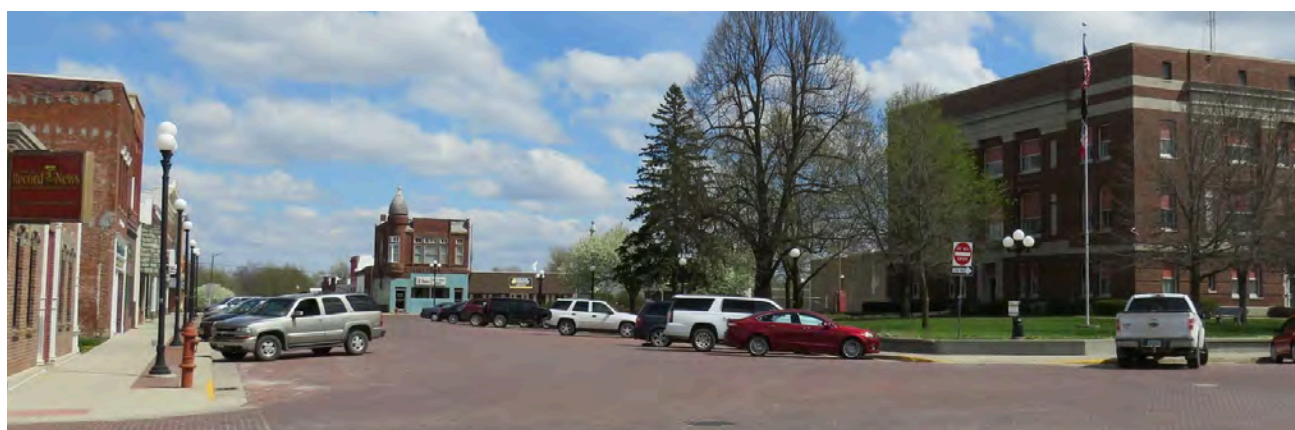
1. Badenhop, Julia, and Sandra Oberbroeckling, *Summary of Follow-up Interviews: Community Visioning Program* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, 2015).

Table 1. Definitions of project categories included in the study

| Project Type | Definition |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Downtown Enhancements | Downtown enhancements range from amenities such as banners, planters, street trees, and benches; to substantive changes to the transportation infrastructure, such as intersection bump-outs, curb ramps, and sidewalk connections; to a combination of both types of improvement. |
| Historic Preservation | The projects classified as historic preservation include the restoration of a downtown square, a commercial district, a depot, and an arboretum. |
| Natural Areas | Natural areas include prairies, wetlands, creeks, and riverfront development. |
| Parks (adjacent to roadways) | Park projects range from land acquisition for new park development to improvements to existing parks such as inclusive play equipment, accessible walkways, lighting, recreational programming, and public art, to renovations of existing park facilities. |
| Roadside Planting/Landscaping | The planting/landscaping category encompasses tree plantings, roadside vegetation, landscaping along entry corridors and of public green spaces, and planters. |
| Signage | These projects consist of entrance, way-finding, and park signage. |
| Streetscapes | Streetscape projects are similar to downtown enhancements with the exception that they are not limited to the downtown area. |
| Trails | The trails category includes land acquisition for new trail and/or trailhead construction; trail expansion; trailhead projects; trail amenities such as lighting, vegetation, benches, and signage; and safety features such as crossing signals and signage. |

After categorizing awards by project type for visioning communities and other communities with populations under 10,000, we looked at the percentage of funds within each project type awarded to visioning projects in comparison to non-visioning projects for the identified funding sources, with the exception of the County Endowment Fund Program. The reason for excluding this program is that a broad range of

projects are funded by community foundations. In addition, in some cases, the community foundation reports did not provide enough information to determine whether or not the funded project resulted from Community Visioning. Occasionally, visioning communities were awarded funding for projects that did not result from Community Visioning; these project awards were included with the awards to non-visioning communities.



Mount Ayr received a \$90,000 CAT grant in 2004 to fund its historic square revitalization project.

Findings

Funds Awarded

From 1995 to 2022, 141 communities that participated in the Community Visioning Program (including 1994–95 pilot communities) received 338 grants totaling \$27,994,497 from the seven funding sources to complete projects that resulted from the visioning process—that is, projects appearing in some form in the conceptual design plan developed for the community.

Visioning communities received the highest number of grants from community foundations (81), followed by REAP (56), Wellmark (34), Enhance Iowa (15), Iowa Great Places (11), AARP (8), and LWCF (7). Although fewer grants were awarded through Enhance Iowa, the dollar amount is more than half of the total funds awarded across all funding sources (see table 2).

The 141 communities that received grants are located throughout the state; however, more than 40% of the grants and 59% of the total funds awarded went to communities in the northwest quadrant of the state. Although communities in the southeast corner of the state were awarded 16% of the grants, they received only 4% of the total funds (see table 3). The geographic distribution of grant funds is shown on the map in figure 1.

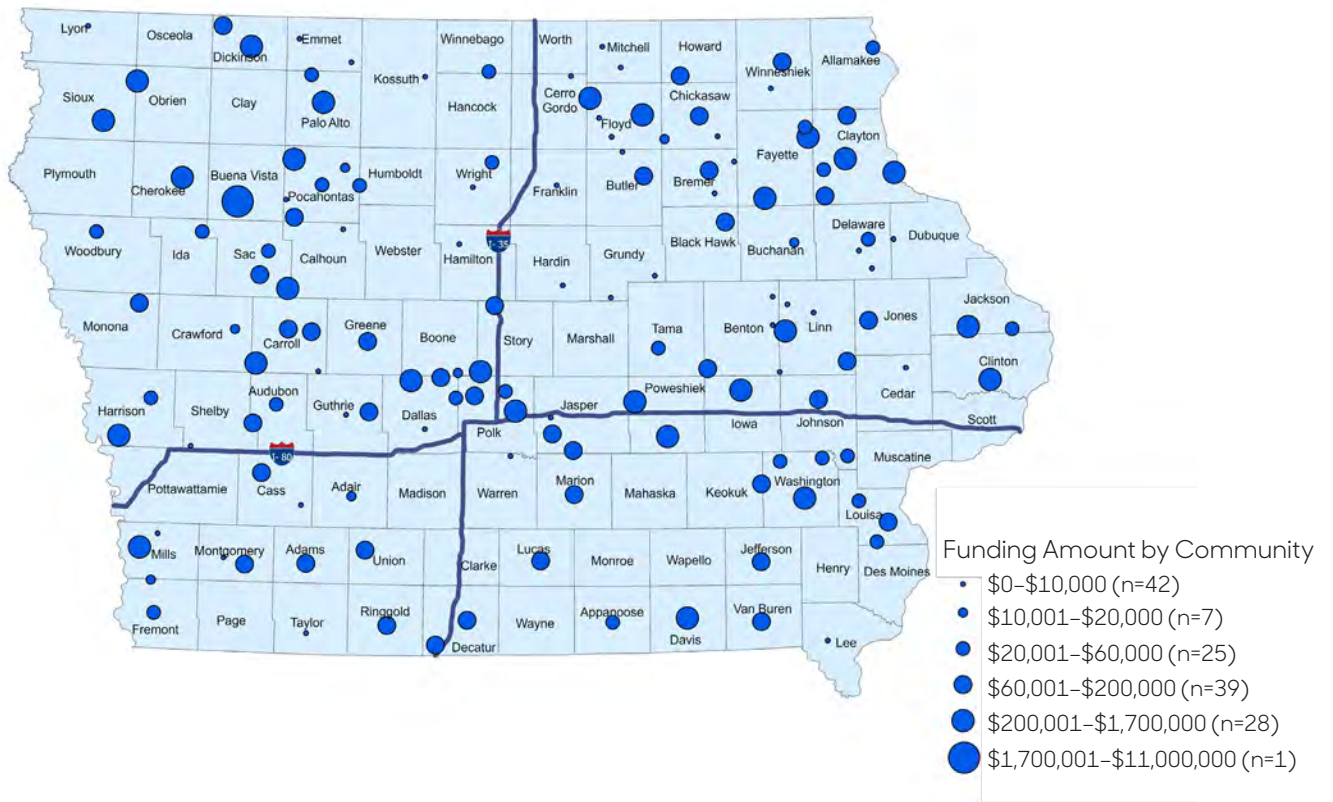
Table 2. Funds awarded to visioning projects by funding source

| Funding Source | Total Funds | Percent of Total |
|--|---------------------|------------------|
| Enhance Iowa (2001–2020) | \$15,243,493 | 54.5% |
| REAP (1995–2022) | \$5,597,023 | 20.0% |
| Iowa Great Places (2007–2022) | \$3,054,130 | 10.9% |
| Wellmark MATCH Grants (2015–2022) | \$2,493,602 | 8.9% |
| Community Foundations (2006–2022) | \$827,785 | 3.0% |
| Land & Water Conservation Fund (2017–2022) | \$685,874 | 2.4% |
| AARP Challenge Grant | \$92,590 | 0.3% |
| TOTAL: | \$27,994,497 | 100.0% |

Table 3. Grant funding by geographic region

| Region of Iowa | Number of Grants | Percent of Grants Awarded | Sum/Total Grant Awards | Percent of Total Funds Awarded |
|----------------|------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Northwest | 138 | 41% | \$16,448,942 | 59% |
| Northeast | 111 | 33% | \$7,368,150 | 26% |
| Southwest | 34 | 10% | \$1,104,249 | 11% |
| Southeast | 55 | 16% | \$3,073,156 | 4% |
| TOTAL: | 338 | 100% | \$27,994,497 | 100% |

Figure 1. Geographic distribution of funding for visioning projects, 1995–2022



In 2015, Mapleton received a \$74,927 REAP grant to develop the Carhart Recreation Trail.

Project Types

Of the 338 grants awarded, nearly half (44%) were allocated to trail projects and nearly 25% to projects for parks adjacent to roadways. Downtown enhancements and signage received approximately 10% of the grants (11% and 9%, respectively). Figure 2 shows the distribution of grants by project type, and table 4 shows the total number of grants awarded to projects in each category and the distribution across the seven funding sources included in this study.

Of those funding sources, community foundations awarded the highest number of grants (163) to the widest variety of projects. Wellmark MATCH grants were awarded exclusively for trails and parks. Trail and park projects received grants from all seven funding sources, while—with the exception of one project—signage projects were funded by community foundations. Roadside planting/landscaping projects also received funding from only two sources.

The distribution of grant dollars to different project types is similar to that of the number of grants, although park projects received the highest dollar amount at \$14,109,945, followed by trails at \$9,720,082. The primary funding source for park projects was Enhance Iowa Grants (CAT, RECAT); trail projects received the most funding from REAP. Although historic preservation projects make up only 1% of the grants awarded, those projects received more funds than roadside planting/landscaping projects. Figure 3 shows the distribution of funding for each project type.

Figure 2. Types of visioning projects funded, 1995–2022

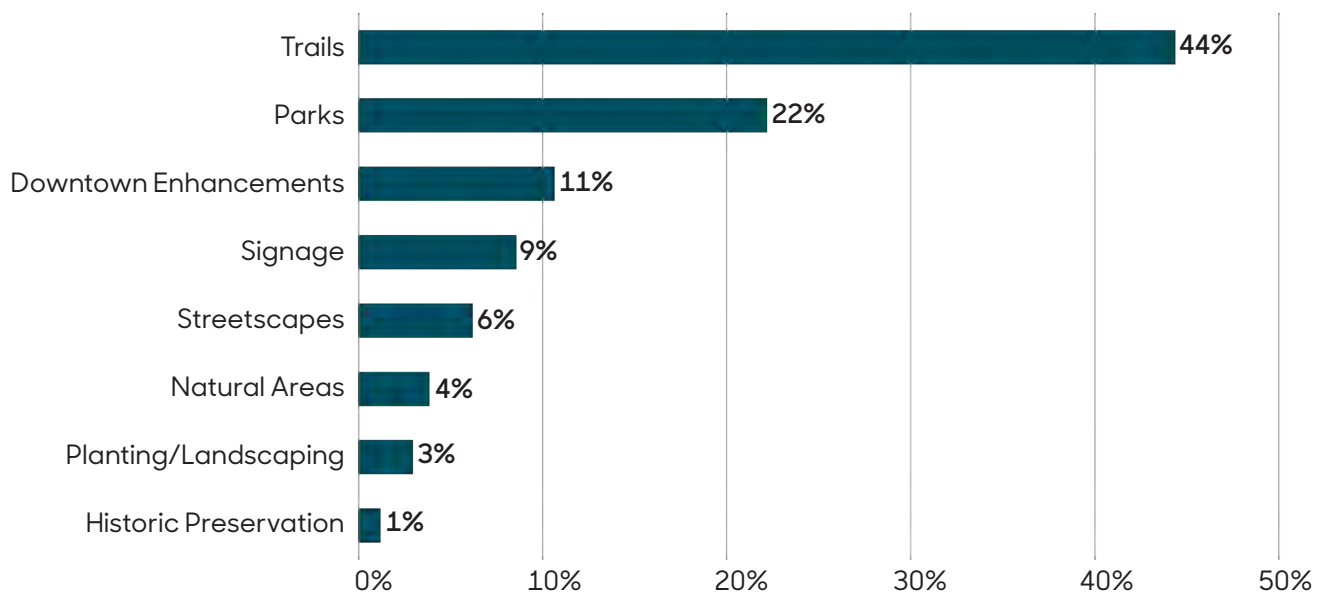
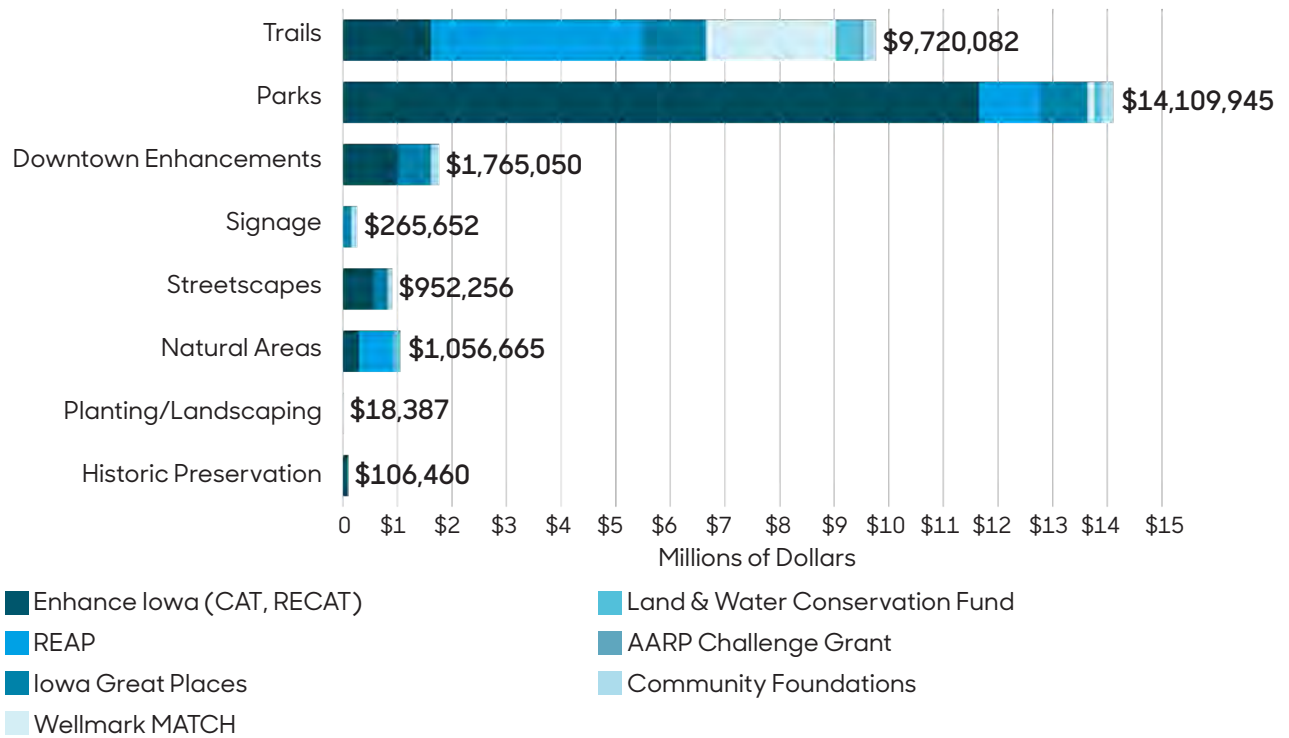


Table 4. Distribution of project types across funding sources

| Project Type | Funding Source | | | | | | | Total |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------|-------------------|----------------|----------|----------|--------------------|------------|
| | Enhance Iowa | REAP | Iowa Great Places | Wellmark MATCH | LWCF | AARP | County Foundations | |
| Trails | 5 | 55 | 8 | 36 | 6 | 2 | 38 | 150 |
| Parks | 3 | 18 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 42 | 75 |
| Downtown Enhancements | 3 | | 2 | | | | 31 | 36 |
| Natural Areas | 1 | 10 | | | 1 | | 1 | 13 |
| Streetscapes | 3 | | 1 | | | 4 | 13 | 21 |
| Roadside Planting/Landscaping | 2 | | | | | | 8 | 10 |
| Historic Preservation | 1 | 1 | | | | | 2 | 4 |
| Signage | | | 1 | | | | 28 | 29 |
| TOTAL: | 16 | 86 | 18 | 39 | 8 | 8 | 163 | 338 |

Figure 3. Distribution of funds by project type



Grants for Visioning and Non-visioning Projects

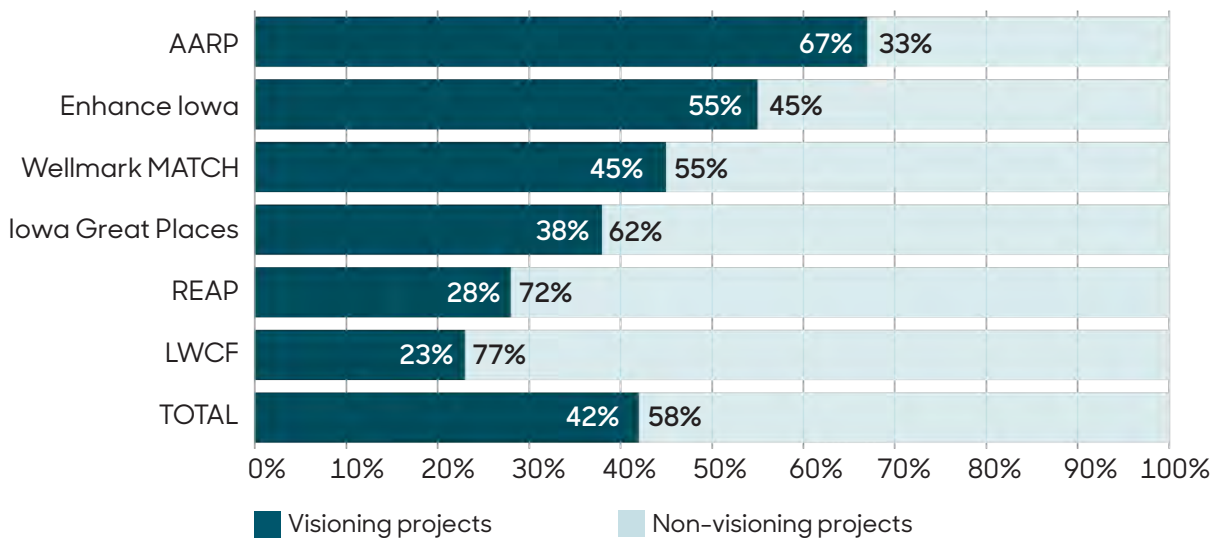
As noted in the methodology, when comparing grant funding awarded to visioning projects with non-visioning projects, we limited the analysis to non-visioning projects in communities with populations under 10,000. Additionally, the grants reflected here do not include those from community foundations.

Of the total funds awarded by AARP, Enhance Iowa, Wellmark, Iowa Great Places, REAP, and LWCF, 42% were awarded to visioning projects. Visioning communities received the highest percentage of grant dollars from the AARP Challenge Grant program (67%). More than half (55%) of Enhance Iowa (CAT, RECAT) and 45% of Wellmark MATCH funds also went to visioning projects. Figure 4 shows how visioning communities compare to non-visioning communities across the six funding sources. Table 5 shows dollars awarded to visioning communities compared to total dollars awarded from each source.

Table 5. Grant funds awarded to visioning project by funding source

| Funding Source | Funds to Visioning Communities | Total Funds Awarded |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| AARP | \$92,590 | \$137,490 |
| Enhance Iowa | \$15,243,493 | \$27,954,181 |
| Wellmark MATCH | \$2,493,602 | \$5,504,527 |
| Iowa Great Places | \$3,054,130 | \$8,007,431 |
| REAP | \$5,597,023 | \$19,944,388 |
| LWCF | \$685,874 | \$2,478,925 |
| TOTAL: | \$27,166,712 | \$64,026,942 |

Figure 4. Percentage of grant funds awarded to visioning & non-visioning projects

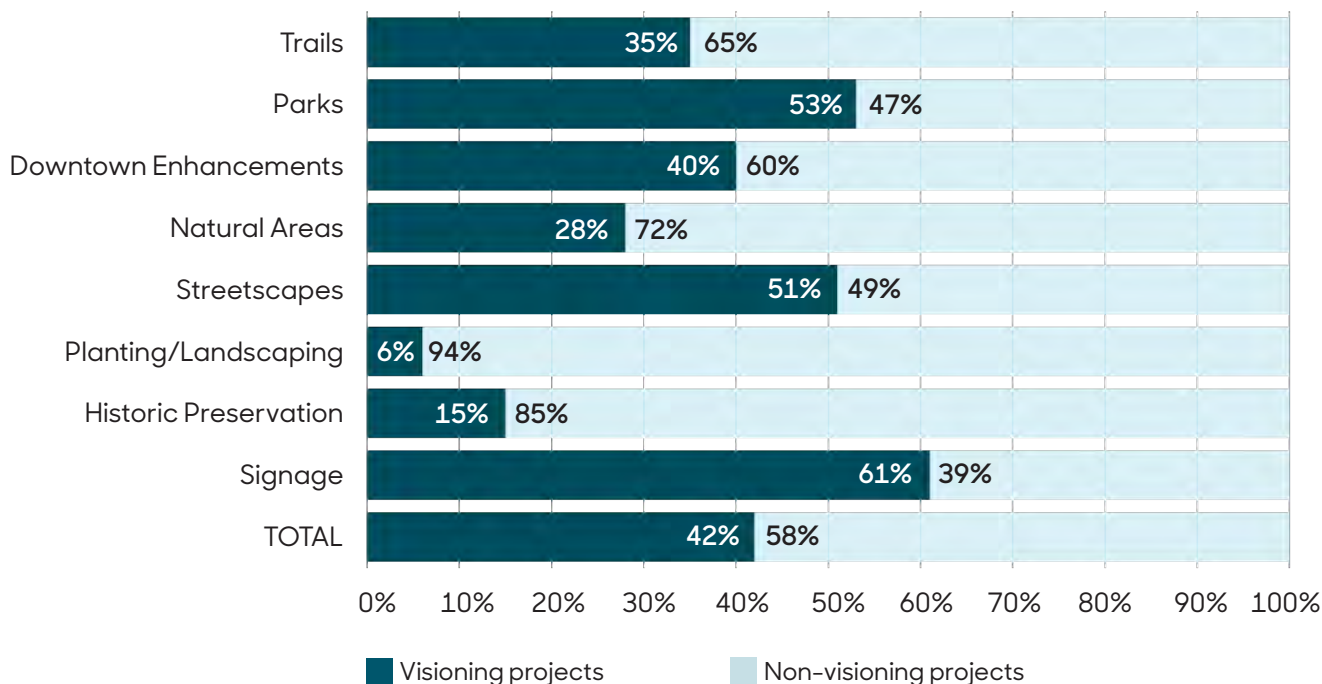


Visioning projects made up 42% of funds awarded for implementing projects that fall in the eight categories included in this study. More than half of grant funds awarded for park projects, and more than one-third of trail project funds went to visioning communities. Forty percent of the funds allocated to downtown enhancements were awarded to visioning communities, along with 51% of streetscape project funds. Visioning communities also received 61% of grant funds for signage projects. Figure 5 compares visioning projects to non-visioning projects by project type. Table 6 shows dollars awarded to visioning communities compared to total dollars awarded in each project category.

Table 6. Grant funds awarded to visioning projects by project type

| Project Type | Funds to Visioning Communities | Total Funds Awarded |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Trails | \$9,490,476 | \$27,250,140 |
| Parks | \$13,879,867 | \$26,363,180 |
| Downtown Enhancements | \$1,615,000 | \$4,022,000 |
| Natural Areas | \$1,045,315 | \$3,708,836 |
| Streetscapes | \$879,590 | \$1,680,865 |
| Roadside Planting/Landscaping | \$5,004 | \$81,421 |
| Historic Preservation | \$96,460 | \$664,500 |
| Signage | \$155,000 | \$256,000 |
| TOTAL: | \$27,611,712 | \$64,026,942 |

Figure 5. Percentage of grant funds awarded to visioning & non-visioning communities by project type



Summary

The results of this study provide insight into the impact that the Community Visioning Program has had on Iowa communities, as well as the nature of the enhancements that are funded. From 1995 through 2022, Enhance Iowa Grants, Iowa Great Places, REAP, Wellmark, AARP, and LWCF, as well as community foundations, have awarded 338 grants to 141 communities that had participated in the Community Visioning Program, distributing more than \$27 million dollars throughout the state.

Most of the grant funds were used to implement trail projects and projects for parks adjacent to roadways, with significant amounts also funding downtown enhancements, natural areas adjacent to roadways, and streetscape projects. The fact that more than 40% of grant dollars (excluding county foundation grants) awarded to communities with populations under 10,000 went to visioning communities to build these types of projects is significant.

Implications

This study presents tangible evidence of the positive impacts of the Community Visioning Program on Iowa's small, primarily rural communities. However, the data presented here only scratch the surface in terms of how much financial capital has been invested in implementing projects proposed through the visioning process. For example, any matching funds contributed by grant recipients was not included in this analysis. Furthermore, private donations, local fundraisers, federal funding, and budget allocations by municipalities were beyond the scope of this study.

Anecdotally, we have discovered that projects are funded in a variety of ways outside of grant programs, from baked potato sales in Clarksville and pop-can drives in Alleman to the annual Glow Run fundraiser in Graettinger, visioning communities continue to find creative ways to get projects made. Additional research into local funding sources needs to be undertaken to fully understand the extent of Community Visioning Program's impact on Iowa's small communities.



Belle Plaine received a \$75,000 REAP grant in 2011 to create the Beautiful Plains Prairie Park along Highway 21.



People

Community Visioning

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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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