

# KEOKUK DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION



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# Acknowledgements

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# Executive Summary

This plan expands upon the work and goals of the *2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan* as a means of informing Keokuk city officials of ways in which existing resources can be used to realize the full potential of the Main Street corridor. After an extended period of decline, marked by a sizeable reduction in both population and economic base, this plan sets downtown Keokuk on course for a brighter future.

In preparation for that future, the present conditions of the study area needed to be assessed. To this end, a wide range of methods were employed including a Windshield Survey to visually assess, document, and evaluate readily observable conditions; a Case Study Review to identify communities with demographics similar to Keokuk that have undergone downtown revitalization efforts; a Right-of-Way Improvement Inventory to quantify gaps in the Main Street corridor transportation infrastructure; a Review of Existing Plans to summarize downtown-related goals and recommendations of three previously adopted Keokuk planning documents; a Vacancy Inventory to map vacant parcels and buildings using water records and team member observations; a City-Owned Property Assessment to define the current conditions for 13 developable, city-owned parcels within the study area; and finally, several Public Engagements to gather feedback from residents and city officials for plan content and priority advisement.

The final recommendations section built upon previously adopted goals of the city as well as the aforementioned methods and was organized into five categories; Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Economic Development Through Placemaking, and Catalytic Development Opportunities.

*Land Use* recommendations assist in streamlining current regulations and developing new laws that can provide additional structure and adherence protocols for both landowners and city administration.

*Transportation* recommendations provide options for accessibility improvements, including active transportation options and installing right-of-way amenities to improve the interconnectedness of the downtown.

*Housing* recommendations focus on promoting a mix of affordable and market value units within extant buildings in the study area. Options are also provided for policy implementation methods that can help to decrease future, additional vacancies, and the formation of a redevelopment authority is promoted.

*Economic Development Through Placemaking* recommendations draw on the unique and engaging features within the study area that can facilitate new investment. Options for integrating the Main Street corridor into a more modern economy are also provided.

*Catalytic Development Opportunities* prompt the usage of city-owned property within the study area to encourage additional investment and community development. Options provided work in conjunction with other progressive projects such as the Keokuk Public Library Foundation Park and a proposed green street treatment by the Keokuk Pathways Team.



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# Introduction

## Purpose of the Plan

Downtown revitalization plans seek to improve, renew, and reinvigorate traditional town centers, focusing on aesthetic and economic redevelopment while consciously maintaining the character of a city's core, unique existing assets. The primary objective is to elevate the vitality of a downtown to contemporary standards and improve upon aging assets and infrastructure to mend the social fabric of an, often times, fragmented Main Street corridor.

This plan seeks to inform Keokuk city officials and special interest groups of methods for creating an appealing downtown space that can serve as the lively epicenter of Keokuk's cultural, economic, and recreational activities. Implementation of this plan will help to achieve these objectives for the Main Street corridor by considering;

- economic and social trends within the community,
- novel and near-future downtown-specific obstacles,
- existing physical conditions,
- current policies, and
- community assets.

## Mission Statement

The Keokuk Downtown Revitalization Plan seeks to create a welcoming community for residents, businesses, and visitors. Providing direct linkages to surrounding residential neighborhoods and riverfront attractions will draw visitors to the business district, creating a renewed, cohesive identity that leverages existing assets and infrastructure. This plan promotes a resilient, livable downtown that is supported by smart growth principles; and, in the long-term it will operate as a guide for achieving the future vision of the downtown, while drawing on public input and city resources. Additionally, the objectives of this plan provide working mechanisms for completing the goals set forth in other Keokuk documents including the 2007 Main Street Keokuk Inc. Strategic Vision Plan, the 2009 Riverfront Master Plan, and the 2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan.



## Vision Statement

The year is 2030 and Keokuk boasts a lively Main Street corridor with rehabilitated storefronts, sustainably adapted historical buildings, and a family-friendly atmosphere. The streamlining of city ordinance provisions has transformed the downtown environment by promoting a mix of residential and commercial uses which has drastically increased activity within the area. A variety of small, locally owned businesses, flanked by green spaces and pedestrian seating areas, provides increased appeal and foot traffic to the heart of the city.

Providing a connection to the beautiful Mississippi riverfront, the enhanced recreational space at Riverview Park is an alluring, regional attraction. Contemporary design standards have created visual and spatial continuity of the Main Street corridor; and, the rehabilitation of existing structures into vibrant and livable spaces has furthered the city's objective of being a year-round, regional destination for arts, culture, shopping, and entertainment. Historical assets are promoted and well maintained, further attracting tourists to Keokuk's well-preserved downtown that is brimming with a cohesive and unique community identity.

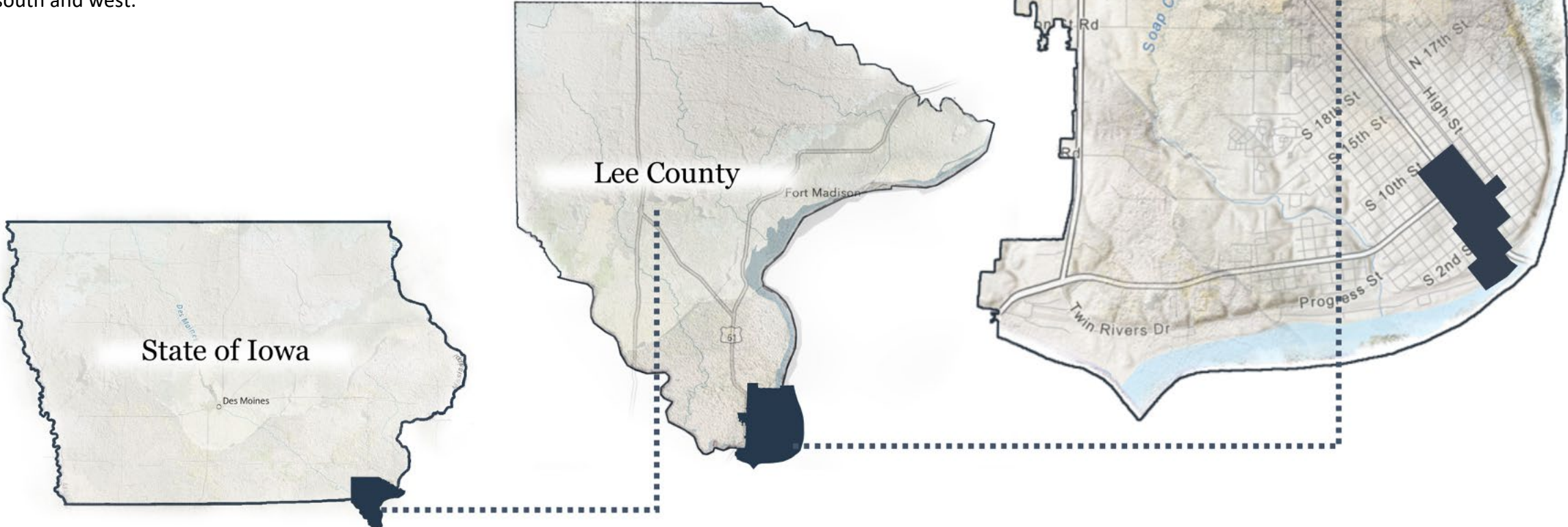
The people of Keokuk are united in contributing to community-wide projects and supporting one another. The vision of Chief Keokuk, that of a unified people, has become a reality that has created a warm and welcoming home that will prosper for generations to come.





# Defining the Study Area

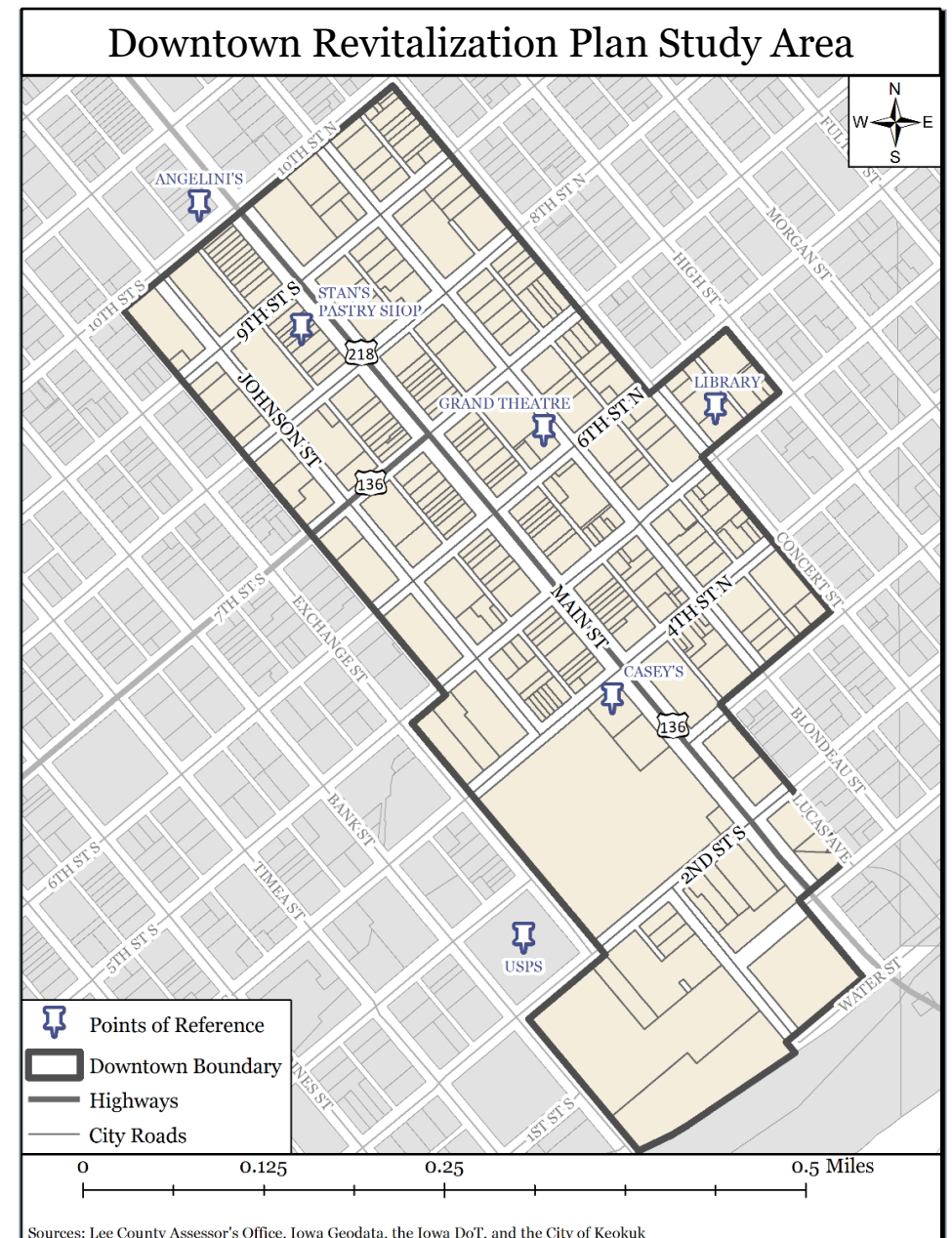
Located at the southeastern-most tip of the State of Iowa, Keokuk is a micropolitan city that serves as one of two county seats for Lee County. Encompassing approximately 9.13 square miles of land, this region of Iowa, once covered by a vast oak savanna, is still deeply carved by forested ravines and limestone bluffs. Bordered at the east by the Mississippi River, and the Des Moines River to the southwest, Keokuk has historically served as a strategic location for transportation, trade, and a wide variety of industries. The City is accessed by Highway 218 from the north and by Highway 136 from the south and west.



Traditionally, a downtown serves as centers for community interaction, recreation, commerce, and culture. Keokuk's 2018 Comprehensive Plan indicates that, in order to create an identifiable and cohesive downtown, a well-defined perimeter should be selected; therefore, identifying the area that constitutes Keokuk's Main Street corridor, in coordination with residents and city staff, was necessary for the application of improvement recommendations at the appropriate geographic scale. These recommendations are focused within the study area boundary although some zoning and city-wide policy improvements cross the perimeter for the benefit of surrounding parcels.

Informed by public input and city officials, the study area for this plan is similar to the downtown boundary identified in the 2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan. The study area contains approximately 29 square blocks of land just north of the Mississippi River. The boundary spans from 10<sup>th</sup> Street southeast to Water Street and extends roughly two blocks on each side of HWY136/Main Street. The eastern-most edge runs along Concert Street and briefly juts eastward at the 200 block of 5<sup>th</sup> Street to include the Keokuk Public Library and the developing Keokuk Public Library Foundation Park. The western-most edge of the study area runs along the alley between Johnson and Exchange Streets jogging westward one half block from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Streets before then jumping over one additional block to Bank Street to include the entirety of Riverview Park.

The environment within the boundary includes commercial and retail stores, historical structures, mixed residential and commercial uses, public and civic hot spots, and light industrial uses. The latter is predominantly located at the western edge of the boundary along Johnson Street.





## About Keokuk

As early as 1827, *Puck-e-she-tuck*, meaning, “the foot of the rapids,” was a growing city center. From the American Fur Company and first housing on ‘Rat Row,’ downtown Keokuk slowly expanded from a single row of buildings on the edge of the Mississippi to a myriad of stores and homes enveloping Main Street and the surrounding area. In 1837, efforts to fill an extremely steep ravine that separated northern and southern sections of Main Street were successful. This, along with the installation of infrastructure for potable water, furthered development. Expansion of shopping opportunities created an upswing in usage of the downtown district.

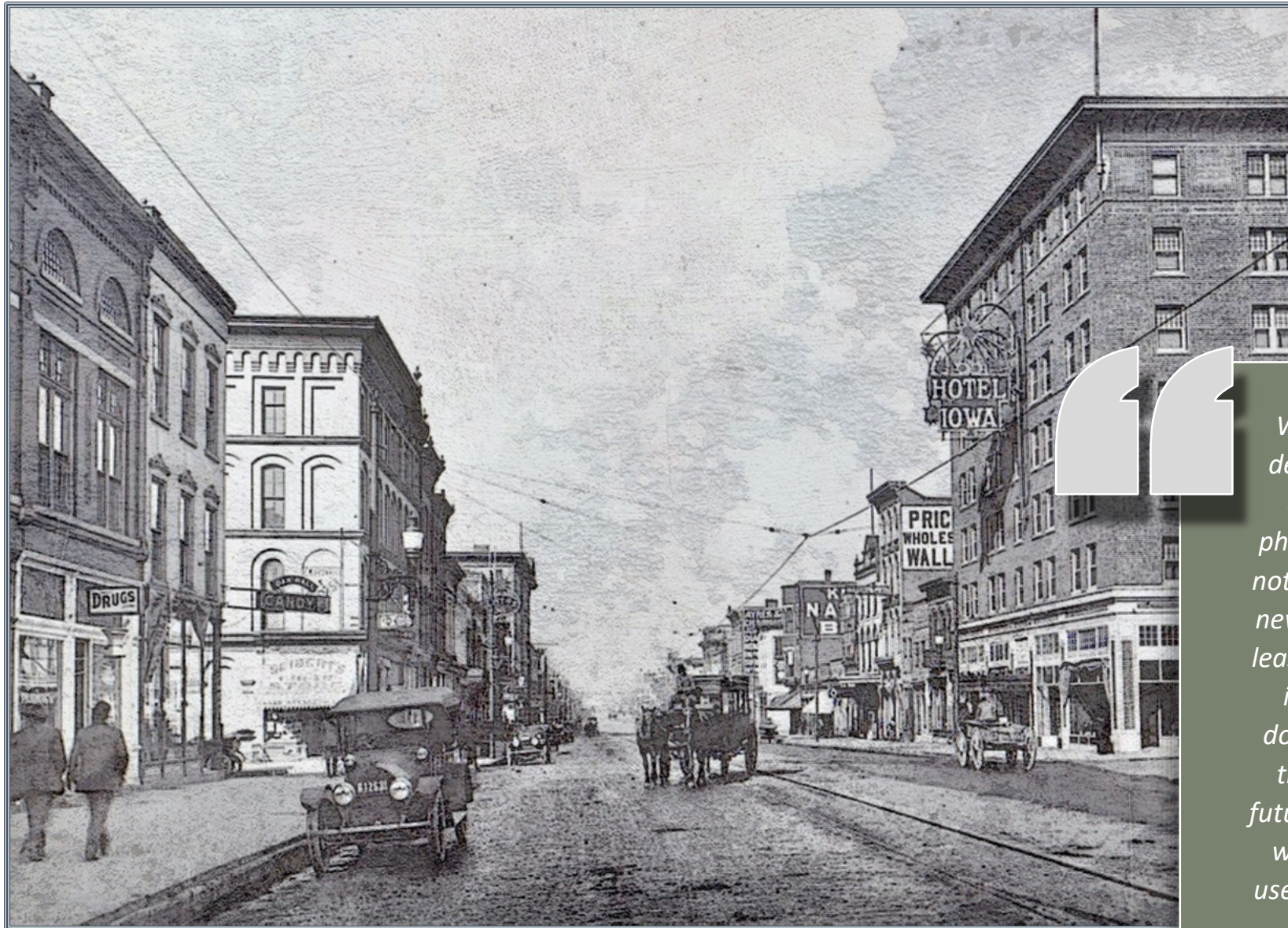
Based mainly in manufacturing and transport, Keokuk’s economy was thriving when the Panic of 1857 struck the United States. This first, worldwide economic crisis caused many businesses across the U.S. to collapse or merge with larger corporations. Only ten years after the City of Keokuk was incorporated, it saw the majority of its businesses either leave or turn to the banks for financing. Projects, such the Estes House Hotel, originally designed to house the influx of new arrivals and visitors to the booming downtown, were now delayed in mid-construction while the population and land values plummeted (Western Historical Company, 1879).

Four years had passed when the American Civil War abruptly redirected the focus of Keokuk once again. Prospective downtown structures intended for entrepreneurial endeavors were converted into military recruitment and medical treatment facilities. Thousands of soldiers would pass through the town either on their way to battle, on their way back home, or to be laid in their final resting place. After the war, Keokuk’s economy became more heavily centered around the practice and education of medicine.

After the conclusion of the war, the U.S. military left Keokuk and it became quickly apparent that the city was still in decline. Many businesses were unable to regain the momentum they had built prior to the onset of the Panic of 1857 (Western Historical Company, 1879). But 1913 would be a turning point for Keokuk. Lock and Dam No. 19 was completed, making Keokuk a frontrunner in hydroelectric power. Barges and large boats were now able to pass through the Des Moines River Rapids. Inexpensive power produced by the dam made the city ideal for factories and contributed to the ease of transferring supplies, which led to the revitalization of Keokuk’s economy (*A Brief History of Keokuk*, 1962).

In 1916, the double-decker Keokuk Municipal Bridge allowed train travel on its lower level and buggy traffic on the top. The newly constructed rail connection between the eastern and western halves of the United States had a huge impact on the City of Keokuk, which was thriving once again (Western Historical Company, 1879). Progress continued until the 1960’s when the city went into its most recent bout of decline. The closure of large steel mills and migration to larger cities adversely affected smaller towns, like Keokuk, across America. Adding to decline was the building of the Keokuk-Hamilton Bridge in 1985, which extended U.S. Highway 136 into Illinois. With four lanes of heavy traffic running through the heart of downtown Keokuk, the highway disincentivized pedestrian usage and instilled regulations that greatly limited community enjoyment of the sidewalks and Main Street corridor.

Today, downtown Keokuk is suffering the plight of small town America. A diminished population and deteriorating infrastructure are wearing away at the social fabric of the city. So, it is time for Keokuk to begin writing the next chapter of its story.



Main Street, Keokuk NW view from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. ca. 1916. Source: Keokuk Historians

*We must realize that after a place has deteriorated incrementally over time, it often reaches a point (economically, physically, and/or socially) where it's just not the same. It's changed into something new that we didn't plan for, expect, or, at least at the beginning, want... Our instinct is to retreat to what is familiar, what downtown was in the past. The reality is that downtown will be different in the future. It will be changed. That change will welcome new types of businesses, new uses for downtown spaces, and new faces as leaders (Wagler, 2018).*





# Existing Conditions

The downtown study area is approximately 124.06 acres in total land area and consists of:

- ~11.47 acres of R3 zoned Two-Family Dwelling District,
- ~17.1 acres of R4 zoned Multiple Dwelling space,
- ~11.07 acres for C2 zoned General Commercial business,
- ~61.96 acres of C3 zoned Central Business District space,
- ~8.54 acres for M1 zoned Light-Industrial business, and
- ~3.07 acres in M2 zoned Heavy Industrial space.

Areas of interest within the study area include the River City Mall, Riverview Park, and the Keokuk Public Library. Many historical structures exist in the downtown, seven of which are listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. Historic buildings located in the study area include the Grand Theatre and the Iowa Hotel.

Much of the study area falls within the Cultural & Entertainment District that has been defined by Main Street Keokuk, Inc., a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district, and the city's Urban Renewal District. The latter two districts aim to incentivize redevelopment within the downtown. Within the study area, 58 parcels are structureless or only contain a paved parking lot, 16 parcels are city owned, two parcels are owned by Lee County, and two parcels are state owned.

For nearly 60 years, Keokuk's population has been in decline while economic and demographic changes have led to high vacancies and aging structures thereby reducing the appeal and overall use of the Main Street corridor. Such conditions are not unique to communities like Keokuk as migration trends to larger cities and a reduction in working-class employment opportunities has occurred in historically industrial river towns across the country. Attempts have been made to incentivize and attract new industrial and commercial businesses to little avail.

Adding to the conundrum is U.S. HWY 136/218. This major thoroughfare directly affects automobile, cyclist, and pedestrian flows in different ways. The size and sterility of the road ushers vehicles through the downtown but does not invite them to stop and visit. A lack of bike lanes and extremely wide crosswalks deter foot-traffic and alternate forms of transportation which actively work against Keokuk's goal of sustainability. Additionally, aesthetic improvements have become lower priority in an effort to provide funding for the demolition of aging and dangerous structures, repairs to deteriorating hardscapes, and the DNR mandated sewer separation project.

These and other factors have created a repetitive cycle for downtown Keokuk that has threatened the integrity of the entire city, but hope is not lost. The city has the ability to change several components that are negatively contributing to its deterioration. By reviewing and actively altering existing, defunct conditions, Keokuk could spur renewed interest and investment in the downtown area.

# Community Profile

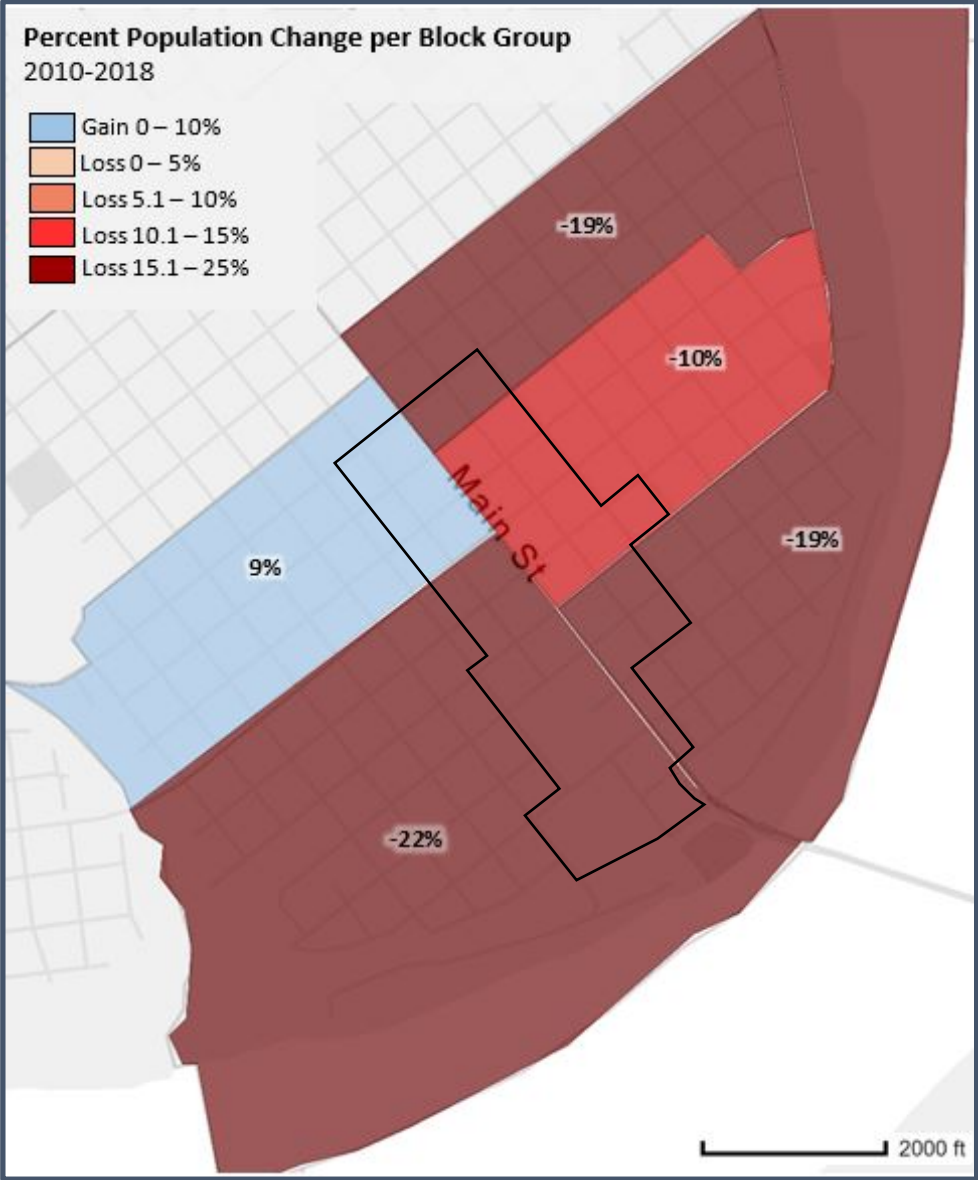
## Population

As was previously mentioned, Keokuk has experienced many of the challenges that have plagued small towns across America such as urban sprawl and the migration of younger residents to large cities for schooling and employment opportunities. In 1960, the total population of Keokuk peaked at just over 16,000 residents but, although it continues to decline, the loss has slowed, and the current estimated population of Keokuk is 10,274.

The rates of change for each census block group from 2010 to 2018 are shown on the map to the right. Those block groups within the study area have seen between a 9% and 22% decline with the greatest loss on the southwest side. Conversely, the northwest side of the study area has experienced between a 7% to 9% increase in population. Additionally, Keokuk has lost a greater portion of its population over time as compared to the County, State, and the Country.

Percent of Population Change Comparison, 1990-2018				
	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2018	1990-2018
City of Keokuk	-7.7	-5.7	-4.7	-18.1
Lee County	-1.5	-5.8	-5.0	-12.3
State of Iowa	+5.6	+4.1	+3.6	+13.3
United States	+14.4	+9.7	+6.0	+30.1

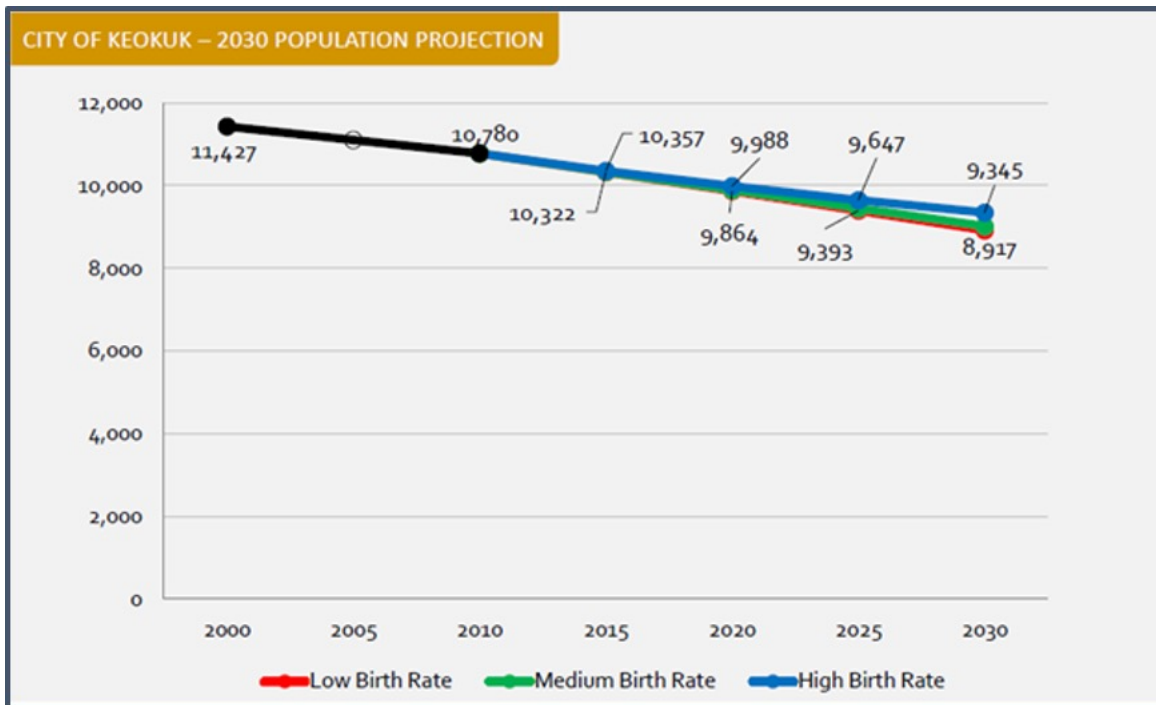
Over time, Keokuk has lost a greater proportion of its population than has the county, state, and the country.  
 Source: American Community Survey



The study area is outlined in black. Source: Social Explorer



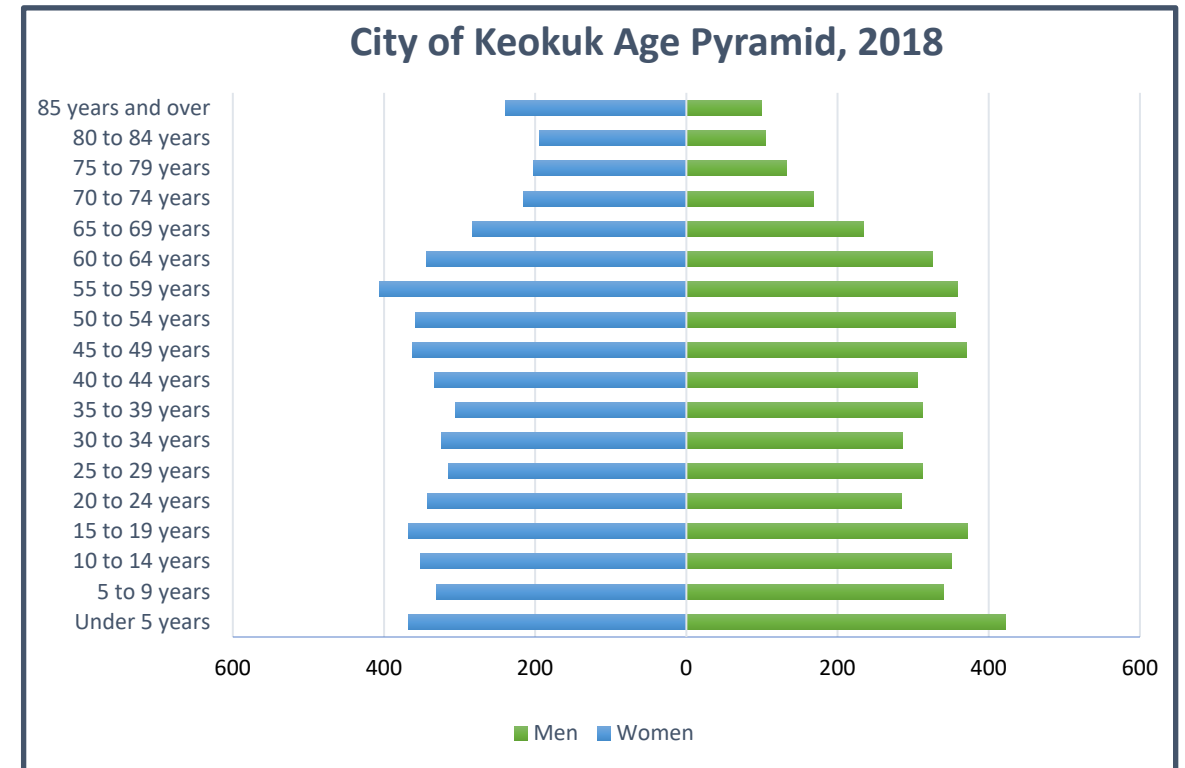
An analysis calculating the expected population of the city in five year increments, utilizing three calculations for low birth rate, medium birth rate, and high birth rate, was produced for the completion of the 2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan. This provided a range of possibilities for the near future, up to year 2030. All three projections result in a continuous decrease in population, putting the total population below 10,000.



Source: 2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan.

### Age

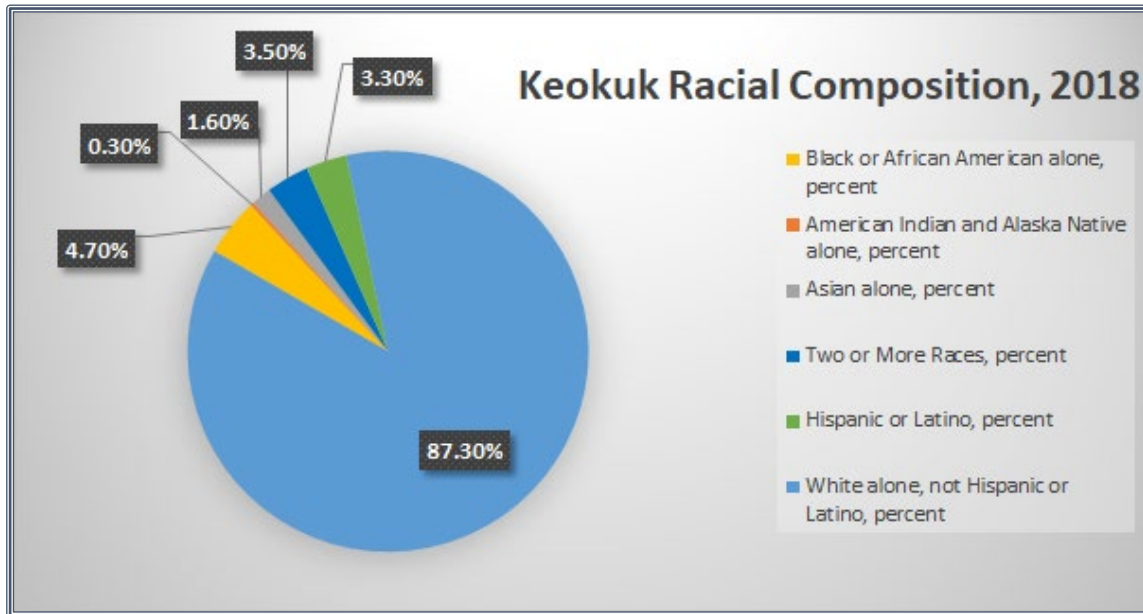
In recent years, the shift in median age has not been quite as significant as that of the population decline. According to American Community Survey (ACS) 2018 estimates, the current median age in Keokuk is 38.8 years of age which is 1.2 years younger than it was in 2010. Below is the age breakdown of Keokuk residents based on sex. The greatest population group is that of residents between 50 to 64 years of age and a higher population of children from infancy to 19 years of age.



Source: American Community Survey

### Race

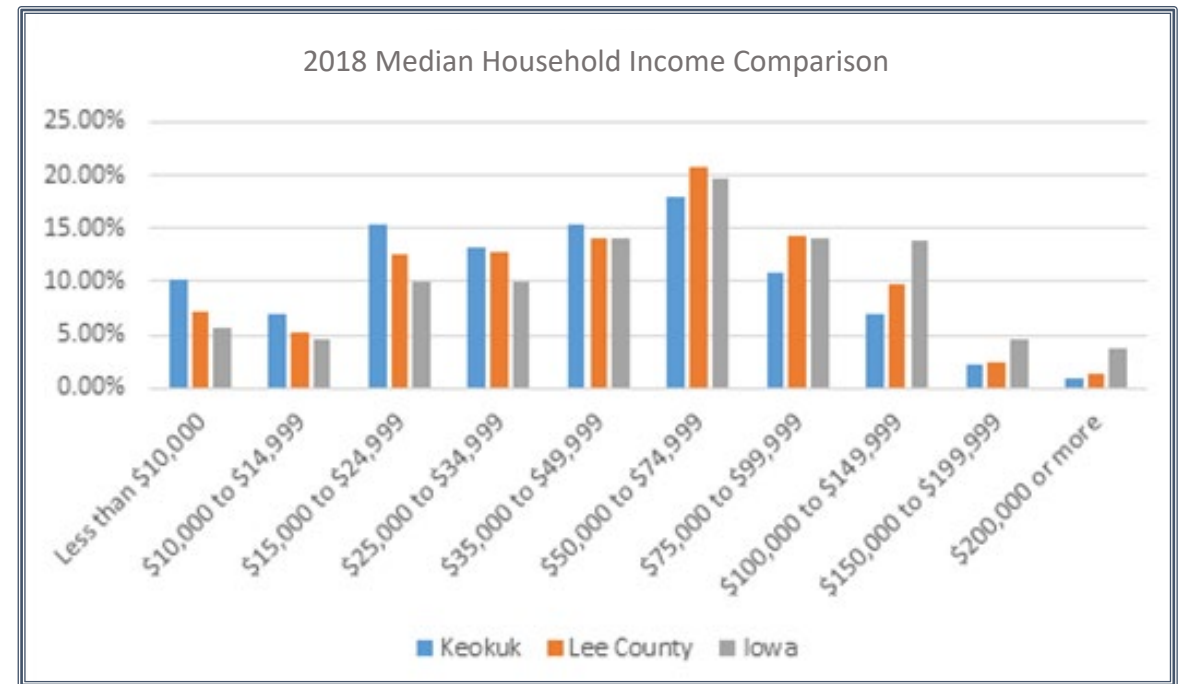
At its founding, Keokuk was predominantly inhabited by the Sac and Fox Nations, but Keokuk’s racial demographic is drastically different today. Estimates from the 2018 ACS show that Keokuk is 88.8% White. African Americans comprise the largest minority group, constituting 4.7% of Keokuk’s population. Individuals identifying as Hispanic or Latino make up 3.3%, followed by an Asian population of 1.6%. Native Americana are 0.3% of the population with the remaining 3.5% of individuals identifying as belonging to two or more races.



Source: American Community Survey

### Income

Keokuk has a wide range of income distribution with the greatest concentrations being households with an income of \$15,000 to \$24,999 and households with an income of \$50,000 to \$74,999. At \$38,750, Keokuk’s median household income for 2018 is less than the \$48,266 reported average for Lee County.

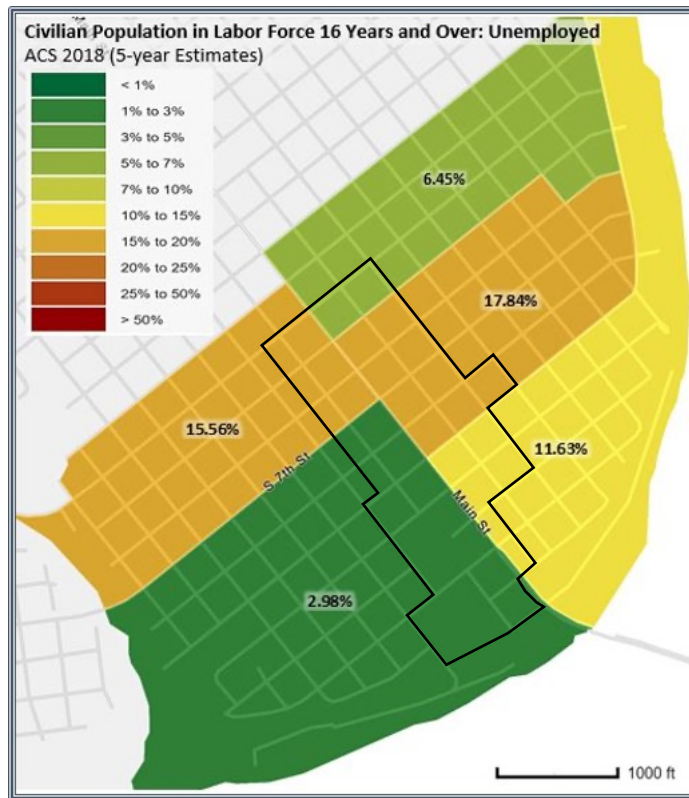


Source: American Community Survey

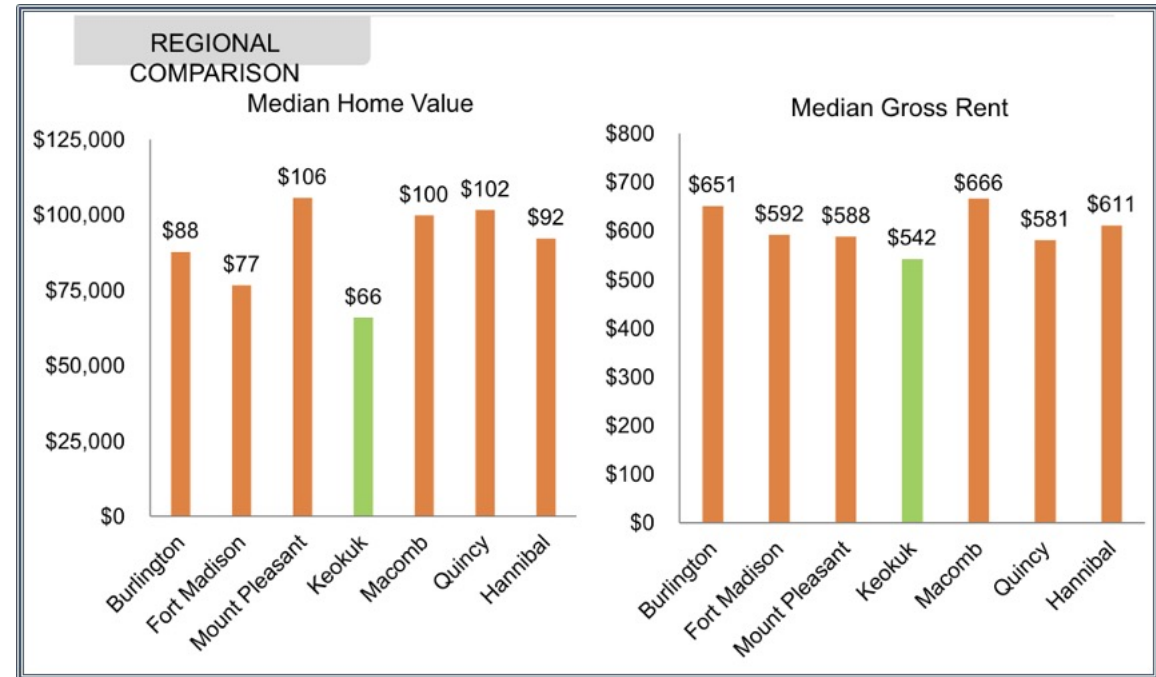


### Unemployment & Home Values

Keokuk has relatively low home values. The map below show the 2017 median home values within the census blocks of the downtown Keokuk study area. The highest values are on the northeast side of town but are similar to the city average of \$67,400. Interestingly, the block group with some of the highest home values is also an area where unemployment is the highest. Those unemployment rates, as seen in the map to the right, appear to be significantly greater than the overall city average of 6.3%.



The study area is outlined in black. Source: Social Explorer



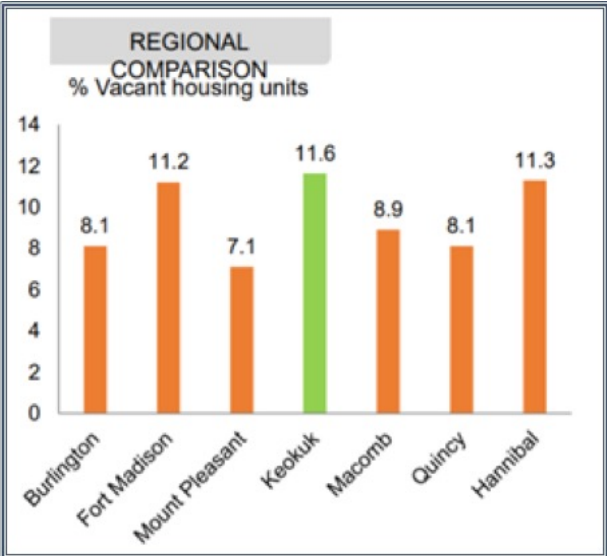
Keokuk has the lowest home values and the lowest rent compared to 6 nearby cities. Source: 2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan

**Housing Availability**

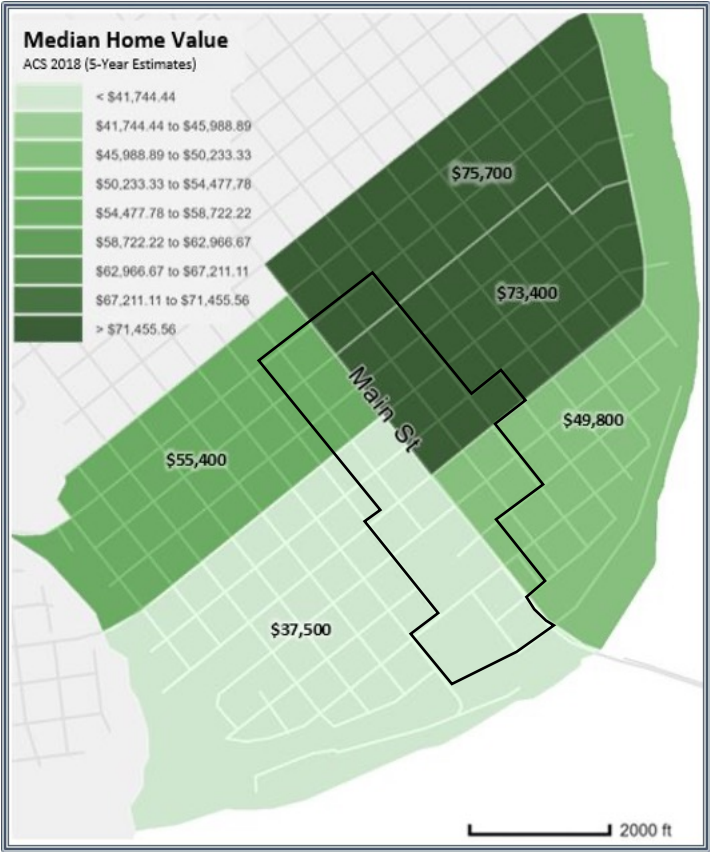
Providing housing within the downtown serves to increase options for residents and provides a local customer base for economic development activities. Downtown Keokuk is comprised of a mixture of residential, commercial, mixed-use and industrial structures. The windshield survey, which is further discussed in the Methodology chapter, found that approximately 23% of the study area is residential and an additional 15% is classified as mixed-use. Along Main Street, the majority of buildings have upper story units which have residential permitted uses.

In a regional comparison of six surrounding communities, the 2018 Comprehensive Plan points out that Keokuk has the lowest median home value, the lowest median gross rent, and the highest vacancy rate. “With such a high number of older dwellings present in the community, following several decades of economic decline, it is no surprise that Keokuk would have a sizable amount of vacant housing units present in the community. The 2010 Census counted 589 such units, 41% of which were for rent, and another 12% of which were for sale. Another 9% were rented or sold but not presently occupied, and 6% were for seasonal or recreational use” (SEIRPC, 2018).

“The remaining 33% (a total of 195 units) were unclassified. It is likely that these represent long-term vacancy, including dilapidated structures. The vacant units accounted for 12% of Keokuk’s total supply of housing. This is the highest value in the surrounding region, although Fort Madison and Hannibal have values that are nearly as high” (SEIRPC, 2018). Keokuk has demolished over 70 dwelling units in the last six years and removing these structures has made room for infill development and neighborhood improvements.



City-wide, Keokuk has the highest percentage of vacant housing compared to six other nearby cities. Source: 2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan, 2010 American Community Survey.



The study area is outlined in black. Source: Social Explorer



### Surpluses and Leakages

To better understand how surpluses and leakages affect the study area, a tally of retail gains (surpluses) and losses (leakages) was sourced. It examines how money flows in and out of the study area on an industry-specific basis. The tables on this page show the status of the transactions within the study area in 2017; notably, there are leakages in 14 different industry groups, only four of which lost more than \$100,000.

This is a stark contrast to the 24 industry groups that had a surplus for the same location and period, with six of those groups being over \$1million. This analysis agreed with previous findings that the downtown is a regional hub for retail trade, and that there is interest in having more food and drink options.

Industry Group(s)	NAICS	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Number of Businesses
Automobile Dealers	4411	\$789,389	\$0	-\$789,389	0
Gasoline Stations	447,4471	\$504,564	\$0	-\$504,564	0
Health & Personal Care Stores	446,4461	\$292,252	\$0	-\$292,252	0
Electronics & Appliance Stores	443	\$161,080	\$0	-\$161,080	0
Nonstore Retailers	454	\$96,412	\$0	-\$96,412	0
Furniture Stores	4421	\$86,763	\$0	-\$86,763	0
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	442	\$131,238	\$52,209	-\$79,029	1
Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	4541	\$63,486	\$0	-\$63,486	0
Specialty Food Stores	4452	\$41,096	\$0	-\$41,096	0
Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	4453	\$27,987	\$0	-\$27,987	0
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	4512	\$20,847	\$0	-\$20,847	0
Direct Selling Establishments	4543	\$17,715	\$0	-\$17,715	0
Vending Machine Operators	4542	\$15,212	\$0	-\$15,212	0
Food & Beverage Stores	445	\$941,854	\$929,027	-\$12,827	1
Special Food Services	7223	\$8,734	\$0	-\$8,734	0

Source: ESRI and Authors.

Industry Group(s)	NAICS	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Number of Businesses
General Merchandise Stores	452	\$826,836	6095896	\$5,269,060	2
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	4521	\$675,006	5520519	\$4,845,513	2
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	453	\$218,296	2023877	\$1,805,581	5
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	448	\$168,306	1813303	\$1,644,997	3
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	444	\$256,306	1618782	\$1,362,476	2
Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers	4441	\$230,307	1520019	\$1,289,712	1
Food Services & Drinking Places	722	\$467,293	1570145	\$1,102,852	8
Restaurants/Other Eating Places	7225	\$424,373	1396603	\$972,230	6
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	4483	\$38,221	974881	\$936,660	1
Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	4532	\$58,309	867064	\$808,755	1
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	4539	\$115,671	903828	\$788,157	3
Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	4413	\$104,063	815235	\$711,172	1
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	4412	\$111,992	642267	\$530,275	1
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	441	\$1,005,444	1457501	\$452,057	2
Other General Merchandise Stores	4529	\$151,830	575376	\$423,546	1
Shoe Stores	4482	\$21,726	420210	\$398,484	1
Clothing Stores	4481	\$108,359	418213	\$309,854	1
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores	4511	\$96,753	245563	\$148,810	3
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	7224	\$34,186	173542	\$139,356	3
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	451	\$117,600	245563	\$127,963	3
Florists	4531	\$11,173	123759	\$112,586	1
Used Merchandise Stores	4533	\$33,143	129226	\$96,083	1
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	4442	\$25,999	98764	\$72,765	1
Grocery Stores	4451	\$872,771	929027	\$56,256	1
Home Furnishings Stores	4422	\$44,475	52209	\$7,734	1

Source: ESRI and Authors.

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## Strengths and Weaknesses

Leveraging and expanding on a downtown’s existing strengths can be a key revitalization strategy (Nelson, 2015). To this end, an exploration of the unique assets and identification of areas for improvement was conducted. This assessment identified resources and liabilities that are related to transportation, housing, land use, and economic development as well as the cultural and social fabric of the community. Hereafter, these resources and liabilities are referred to as “strengths” and “weaknesses.”

The determination of specific strengths and weaknesses was predicated upon conversations with community members and project stakeholders as well as a review of the Keokuk Code of Ordinances, an investigation of case study communities, in-person assessments, and research of best practices for downtown revitalization. This section presents those findings along with a brief description of each.

### Strength One

#### Zoning Codes and Ordinances Are Supportive of Downtown Housing

Keokuk operates under cumulative zoning provisions which allow housing development in the downtown area. The 2002 Urban Renewal Ordinance allows residential units to be located above commercial spaces along the Main Street corridor. There are no restrictive zoning codes or ordinances that currently prevent housing from being located downtown.



*Eagles on Blondeau during construction in 2012. Source: Tri State Public Radio - <https://www.tspr.org/post/eagles-building-re-open-january>*

## **Strength Two**

### **Cumulative Zoning**

Keokuk's cumulative zoning ordinance is a strength which allows landowners more freedom to develop for a variety of uses adjacent to one another. Cumulative zoning allows low-intensity permitted uses to be developed within high-intensity zones while preventing high-intensity uses from infiltrating lower-intensity zones. Because they are a low-intensity use, residential units can be located anywhere. For example, according to Keokuk's zoning ordinance, a single-family residential home may be allowed in an existing industrial area (although this is not typically desirable), but an industrial use would not be allowed in an existing single-family residential area.

Typically, in Iowa, communities of Keokuk's size have Euclidean zoning regulations. These regulations are more restrictive and do not permit dissimilar uses of any intensity within the same zone. Cumulative zoning offers more flexibility in the ways a landowner may utilize his or her property development rights. A variety of permitted and conditional uses has been shown to support creative collaboration and increase walkability and downtown activity which attracts and tends to retain highly educated young people (Leinberger & Loh, 2018). Downtowns that are walkable and possess diversity in uses are commonly referred to as mixed-use areas. In many cities around the nation, mixed-use zones are designated to increase the usage and economic development of downtowns.

## **Strength Three**

### **Entrepreneurial Spirit**

Entrepreneurs who are seeking to start a small business have many options for commercial space downtown. Recently, prospective business owners have purchased city owned property for as low as one dollar. This is often in exchange for new owners carrying out expensive renovations. This can be a challenge when the extent of renovations and costs are not clear to the investor. In the right circumstances, small business owners could capitalize on low building costs and create available residential units on the second floor as an additional source of income or live above the shops themselves.

## **Strength Four**

### **Development Incentives**

A host of development and improvement incentives offered by the city should also aid in downtown development. Incentive programs and funding sources for development are explored in more detail throughout this document. Some of the incentives currently available from the city include an industrial construction tax exemption, a TIF rebate, opportunity zone funding, a residential urban revitalization program, revolving loan funds, and a new jobs withholding tax credit.



## **Strength Five**

### **Downtown Urban Renewal District, TIF District, & Opportunity Zones**

The Downtown Urban Renewal District, which encompasses much of the study area, may direct funds to finance public amenities, infrastructure improvements, business expansion, and historical preservation. If used sparingly and responsibly, the Downtown Urban Renewal District can be a useful tool to expand the city's employment opportunities and tax base over many years. Using Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to aid developers can be a contentious and risky venture for a city to engage in with hopes of potentially increasing economic development. TIF is best utilized for renewal and economic development projects which has been the primary focus for Keokuk's downtown TIF district.

An Opportunity Zone extends from 12<sup>th</sup> Street south to the riverfront. These zones are designated for low-income census tracts with the objective of increasing private development. Taxpayers within Keokuk's Opportunity Zone can invest unrealized capital gains into an Opportunity Fund that may be reinvested within the Opportunity Zone. Reinvestment within the zone may result in increased real estate values for the original investor as well as for other property owners within the zone.

## **Strength Six**

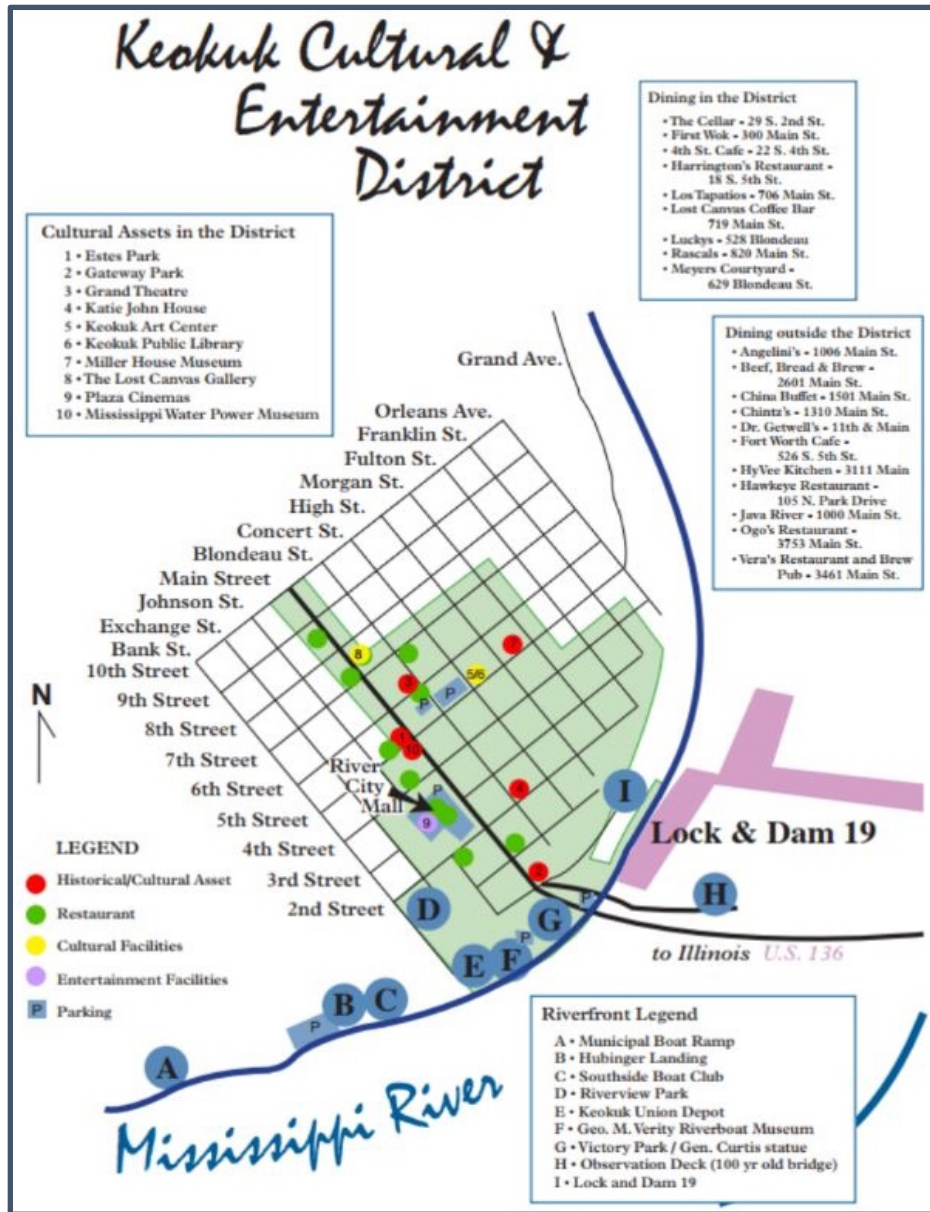
### **Culture & Entertainment District**

Culture, arts, and entertainment assets are proven to attract residents and tourists alike to a downtown. Main Street Keokuk has already identified and designated a Cultural and Entertainment District (CED) in the downtown with the mission of promoting Keokuk as a regional destination for public art, restaurants, and music.

## **Strength Seven**

### **Historic Charm and Character Preservation**

Keokuk is full of beautiful, historical homes and structures, many of which were built in or prior to the early 1900's. The historical charm and character of the downtown is an asset to the community which adds a sense of place and connects residents to their past. The historical structures in Keokuk are primary assets for its downtown. Additionally, a Historic Preservation Commission has existed in the past, and was tasked with the prioritization of historical asset management by Chapter 2.70 of Keokuk city code. On Keokuk's website, 23 boards and commissions are listed as active in the promotion of community interests. Other public-private partnerships, which are key to the success and implementation of a downtown plan, currently exist as well. Main Street Keokuk, Inc., a valuable nonprofit business in the community, recently completed the Eagles on Blondeau mixed-use historical structure renovation project, which provides an example of what can be done through community partnership to redevelop and reuse historical structures in the downtown.



Map of the Keokuk Cultural & Entertainment District. Source: Main Street Keokuk, Inc.

## Strength Eight

### Visitor Amenities

Keokuk has 17 sites that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, plus two additional federal listings. Although seven of these sites are located within the study area, they are by no means the only significant sites. Attractions such as Estes Park serve as a nice green resting oasis in a sea of two- and three-story, beautifully bricked structures. These historical and comforting buildings can be leveraged as grounds for developing other amenities that both compliment and connect them.

## Strength Nine

### Waterfront

Keokuk is bordered on the southeast by the Mississippi River and the southwest by the Des Moines River. A survey of 57 small towns reported that residents view the waterfront as one of a downtown's greatest assets. While Keokuk has used the rivers to great effect for placemaking and recreational uses, it has also leveraged the waterfront for business, as industries from manufacturing to transportation make use of it (Durrant, 2009).

## Strength Ten

### Invested Community Partnerships

Keokuk has many invested partners who want to see more housing in the downtown. The City and partners have piloted two projects, using TIF and other funding sources to provide examples of successful development, Eagles on Blondeau and the Senior Housing Lofts. Community partnerships include: The Keokuk Area Chamber of Commerce, Rural Housing 360, Main Street Keokuk, Inc., Roquette, Keokuk Neighborhood Initiative, and Keokuk Downtown Properties, LLC.



## Strength Eleven

### Main Street America Presence

Main Street America has long been seen as one of the best tools in revitalizing downtowns and Keokuk has built social capital through Main Street Keokuk, Inc. since 1985 (Robertson, 1999; Katz & Frey, 2017). The National Trust for Historic Preservation established the National Main Street Center in 1980 to help historical cities and their downtowns make the most of their resources through the organization of interests within the downtown area, coordinated urban design, marketing, and promotion of a diverse economic base.

## Strength Twelve

### Community Visioning

The process of envisioning an improved downtown relies on community support for redevelopment projects and determining objectives based on community input (Leinberger, 2005). This plan expands upon prior community surveys and public input included in the 2018 Comprehensive Plan, which concluded that there is a strong need for community cohesiveness, as well as the visioning and feedback sessions conducted by the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission, Main Street Keokuk, Inc., and the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities.

The 2007 *Strategic Vision Plan*, 2009 *Riverfront Master Plan*, and the 2018 *Keokuk Comprehensive Plan* each provide a downtown vision that is further reinforced by publicly informed design concepts and renderings. Additional strengths for the visioning process are the design standards of Keokuk's city code Chapter 19.16 and Chapter 20.86.



*An example of the historical homes in Keokuk. Fairly maintained, this home on Blondeau Street is located next door to a dilapidated home which impacts both property values. Source: Authors.*

### Strength Thirteen

#### Thoroughfares

Highway 136/218, also known as Main Street as it runs through Keokuk, is a primary roadway that runs through the heart of downtown Keokuk. This road is a critical link that connects Iowa to Illinois. According to the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT), Main Street experiences daily traffic volumes of almost 10,000 cars per day with approximately 6% of that total being truck traffic. It provides a 67-foot right-of-way with two travel lanes in both directions. Highway 136, which turns to become 7<sup>th</sup> Street, is a major truck route experiencing around 3,000 vehicles and 375 trucks per day. Northeast of and running parallel to Main Street is Blondeau Street which sees between 800 to 2,500 vehicles per day. Southwest of and also parallel to Main Street is Johnson Street which supports between 4,000 to 7,000 cars daily.

### Strength Fourteen

#### Ample Parking

Downtown Keokuk currently has free, on-street parking along Main Street as well as a majority of the surrounding streets- Johnson Street is the only exception. Parking along Main Street is limited to one hour, while side streets do not have a limit. Additionally, there are six public parking lots and multiple private parking lots which are largely underutilized throughout the day.

### Strength Fifteen

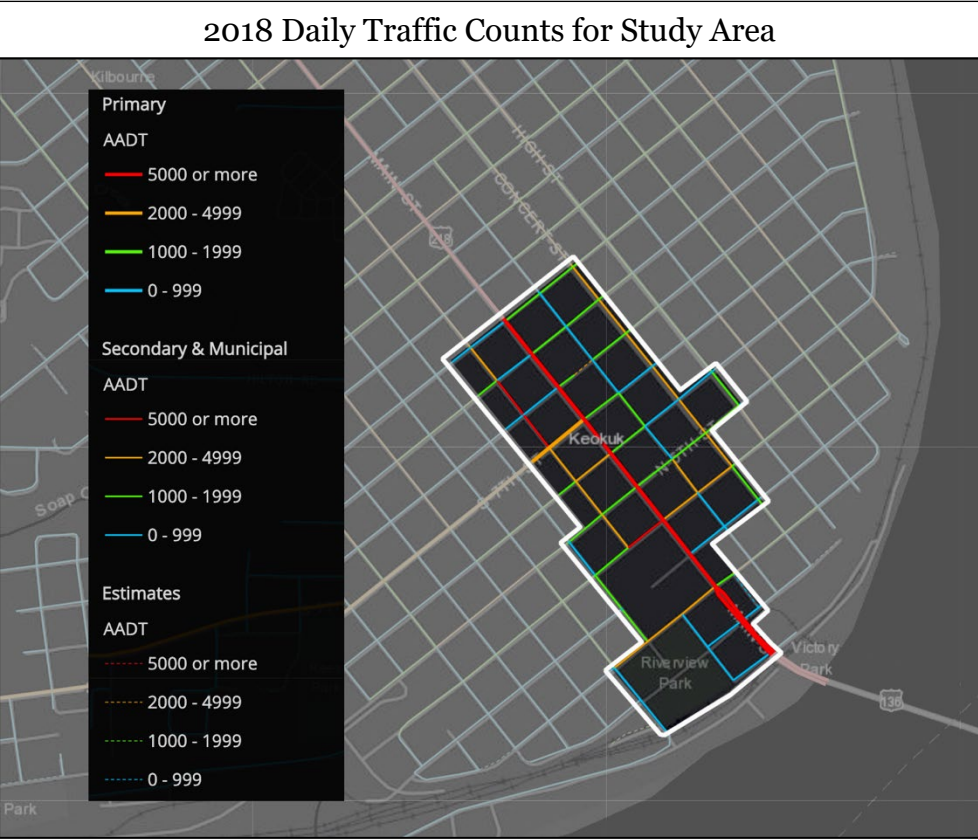
#### Sidewalks

Main Street offers 14- to 18-foot-wide sidewalks along both sides of the road in addition to crosswalks with pedestrian traffic signals at every corner except for the entrance to River City Mall. The surrounding streets have smaller sidewalks of 5- to 10-feet and, being outside of the business district, typically experience less pedestrian traffic,. Currently, downtown Keokuk does not have bicycle facilities and, according to the city’s ordinances, bikes cannot be ridden on the sidewalks within the business district.

### Strength Sixteen

#### Available Space

The undeveloped parcels in the area differ from other entries to this section. While everything has positive and negative attributes, those of the empty parcels are particularly divergent. Undeveloped parcels represent an opportunity to choose what will be done with the land, whether it is being developed for the first time, or it is being redeveloped. Public lots are of particular value since the city has greater control over how they are used.



Source: <https://iowadot.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=0cce99afb78e4d3b9b24f8263717f910>  
Study area outlined in white



## Weakness One

### High Vacancy Rates

The declining population of Keokuk over the last six decades has left many of Keokuk’s residential structures vacant or abandoned. The 2018 Comprehensive Plan estimates that, of all the vacant housing, approximately 33% represent long-term vacancy, including dilapidated structures. Long-term vacancy causes buildings to deteriorate at a higher rate than occupied structures. Once a building suffers from roof neglect, structural degradation will follow.

	% Change in Number of Occupied Units, 1960-2010	Total Change in Number of Occupied Units, 1990-2010	Median Home Value, 2015	Median Household Income, 2015
<b>Keokuk Commutershed Area</b>	+5.3%	-456	n/a	n/a
<b>City of Keokuk</b>	-14.1%	-582	\$66,000	\$33,608
<b>Remainder of Commutershed</b>	+33.1%	+126	n/a	n/a
<b>Jackson Township, Iowa</b>	+61.4%	+155	\$131,700	\$46,667
<b>Montebello Township, Illinois (includes City of Hamilton)</b>	+59.8%	-10	\$102,600	\$50,524
<b>City of Warsaw, Illinois</b>	+8.3%	-19	\$72,100	\$46,827

Population loss for the City of Keokuk compared to surrounding communities. Source: 2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan

Vacant structures deter investment and increase renovation budgets while driving down the market value of other buildings on the same block. Lacking the ability to realize a return on their investment, property owners are deterred from performing renovations and building maintenance, perpetuating the cycle of structures falling into disrepair and becoming abandoned. The 2019 windshield survey and evaluation of water records, discussed further in the Methodology chapter, verified that the vacancy rate within the study area is approximately 30%, meaning that one in every three structures in downtown Keokuk is vacant. This disincentivizes investment of time and money into maintaining these buildings.



Aging buildings with boarded, upper-level windows near the corner of 4th and Main Streets. Source: Authors.

## Weakness Two

### Unstable Housing Market

The 2018 Comprehensive Plan discusses the differences in housing stability between the north and south sides of Keokuk. “The results show an alarming disparity in several key variables. First, the south side’s population decreased five times faster than the north side between 1990 and 2010. Also, its percentage of renter occupied homes and vacant housing units is substantially higher than that of the north side. Taken as a whole, these statistics suggest that the population of the city’s older neighborhoods are much less stable than that of the newer, north side neighborhood. Thus, there is a strong case to be made for quality infill development on vacant lots in the older areas, to make an effort at stabilizing both its population and housing stock” (SEIPC, 2018).

According to Zillow, “the median home value in Keokuk is \$68,850. Keokuk home values have gone up 1.6% over the past year and Zillow predicts they will fall -1.3% within the next year. The median list price per square foot in Keokuk is \$65, which is lower than the Fort Madison-Keokuk Metro average of \$75. The median price of homes currently listed in Keokuk is \$82,200” (Zillow, 2020). The current price per square foot for new construction in the Midwest region is \$109 (National Association of Home Builders). Meaning new construction is \$44 more expensive per square foot than purchasing an existing home. While infill development could potentially stabilize the population and housing stock, new construction is not financially viable to real estate developers. Methods to stabilize the housing market will need to be geared toward maintaining and rehabilitating existing structures to improve housing quality.



*The City of Keokuk, shown as North and South, in a comparison of housing stability. Source: 2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan*



## **Weakness Three**

### **Lack of Regulatory Oversight**

Keokuk has few protections to ensure the maintenance of properties. Three methods that the City of Keokuk could implement to encourage more active ownership would be the development of a maintenance ordinance, building inspections, and a rental permit process. Increasing oversight would be one way to protect the investments of the entire community. When investors aren't equipped with information about the extent and cost of renovations, sales are more likely to fall through. Inspections could address this issue. When owners allow their buildings to fall into disrepair, costly demolitions fall on the shoulders of the city. A maintenance ordinance would create a stop gap.

City officials are unable to fully assess housing needs and rental unit safety without a permitting process. Allowing inspections not only protects tenants and reduces instances of squatting in vacant units, it also protects landlords from potential liability. Stakeholders and community members have noticed a recent increase in potential squatting; and, without rental or commercial permitting processes, it is difficult to determine which structures are being squatted or to inventory any increases or decreases in commercial or residential units within the downtown over time.

## **Weakness Four**

### **Insufficient Design Standards**

Although Keokuk has adopted broad design standards under city code Chapter 20.86, they are subjective, vague and unenforceable. The existing standards apply to the town as a whole and are not downtown-specific. Currently, city code Chapter 20.86.040 states that council may approve any architectural aspects of development proposals that "...contain sufficient architectural significance, and do not detract from the desired aesthetic character of the building and the surrounding area" (Ordinances, 2019). Ways to implement quality design and architectural integrity in the study area without adding

undue costs to property owners are explored in the Recommendations section of this document. Applying design standards will combat an existing lack of cohesiveness that denies Keokuk the sense of a downtown identity. Continuity in design promotes civic ownership and identity within a space and aids those unfamiliar with the downtown in exploring the area. An Architectural Design Review Commission is mentioned, but it has non-specific, vaguely defined responsibilities in Chapter 2.86 of city code.

## **Weakness Five**

### **Lack of a Downtown Historical District**

While the want for historic preservation is strong in the city, adopting a formal downtown historical district with design standards preserving historical character could strengthen efforts. In recent history, multiple historical structures have fallen into disrepair and were subsequently demolished within the study area. Receiving designation as a Historical District from the National Registry of Historic Places (NRHP) increases the availability of state and federal funding opportunities. According to the case study communities, examined further in the Methodology section of this plan, all preservation costs were covered by state and federal grant funding for properties designated within NRHP districts or as NRHP sites. The city also has the power to autonomously craft a downtown overlay which implements preservation strategies in whatever way it deems fit.

## **Weakness Six**

### **External Competition**

Since the 1950s, car accessibility has increased leading to fewer cities with concentrations of economic vitality and suburbanization of the populous (Robertson, 1999). Main Street America has since faced increasing competition from outside locations that provide alternative sites of services, such as retail outlets and professional offices. This issue has been made worse in the 21st century with the advent of internet retail services such as Amazon, which offer more savings and convenience than a local mom-and-pop store (Katz & Frey, 2017).

## **Weakness Seven**

### **Lack of Pedestrian Facilities**

Downtown Keokuk and the surrounding streets favor motor vehicles and create an unbalanced level of service for other means of transportation. Level of Service refers to the convenience, speed, security and comfort of transportation facilities, such as Main Street, for all users whether it be the driver of a motor vehicle, a pedestrian, or a cyclist. Main Street, like many other roads, was designed for the movement of vehicular traffic and to minimize the delay for motorists. In doing so, it has also created a disconnect to other uses. Alternate transportation methods are at a disadvantage on roads dominated by motor vehicles in terms of safety and convenience. Increasing the presence of adequate pedestrian facilities to accommodate a lively and aesthetically pleasing streetscape is an important aspect for any downtown environment.

## **Weakness Eight**

### **Lack of Landscaping**

Planters offer a touch of greenery at intersections along Main Street; however, Keokuk does not currently benefit from any trees along the corridor which are important for the pedestrian environment and to break up the monotony of a Main Street corridor.

## **Weakness Nine**

### **Limited Pedestrian Lighting**

There is inadequate pedestrian lighting in areas of the downtown decreasing the level of safety felt by pedestrians. This can, in turn, lead residents and visitors to utilize other forms of transportation which decreased the amount of foot traffic within the business district.

## **Weakness Ten**

### **Pedestrian Connectivity**

Keokuk has standard crosswalks at most intersections along Main Street. These are important for pedestrians to safely cross the road; yet, there is a lack of crosswalks along the rest of the roads within the downtown. This inhibits the functionality of the street for pedestrians and businesses.

## **Weakness Eleven**

### **Vacant and Underused Space**

A significant proportion of the storefronts and properties in the downtown area are presently unused, or dilapidated. Approximately 20% of the parcels downtown are empty and contribute to a lack of sense of place. Collectively known as blight, this combination of degradation and vacancy is causing further economic disinvestment and lowering the property value of surrounding parcels (HUD, n.d.). This in turn reduces the city's tax base and eventually leads to increased city expenditures when structures require demolition.

## **Weakness Twelve**

### **Attracting and Retaining Development**

As businesses and amenities leave, there is less to do downtown. This contributes to decreasing foot-traffic which leads to a lower volume of local business sales, and eventually the emigration of residents. Over time, more businesses leave, and fewer enter (Robertson, 1999). Eventually seen as the "new normal," this level of decline provides an open door for less than ideal investors to take over land ownership and furthers degradation the cycle (Robertson, 1999).



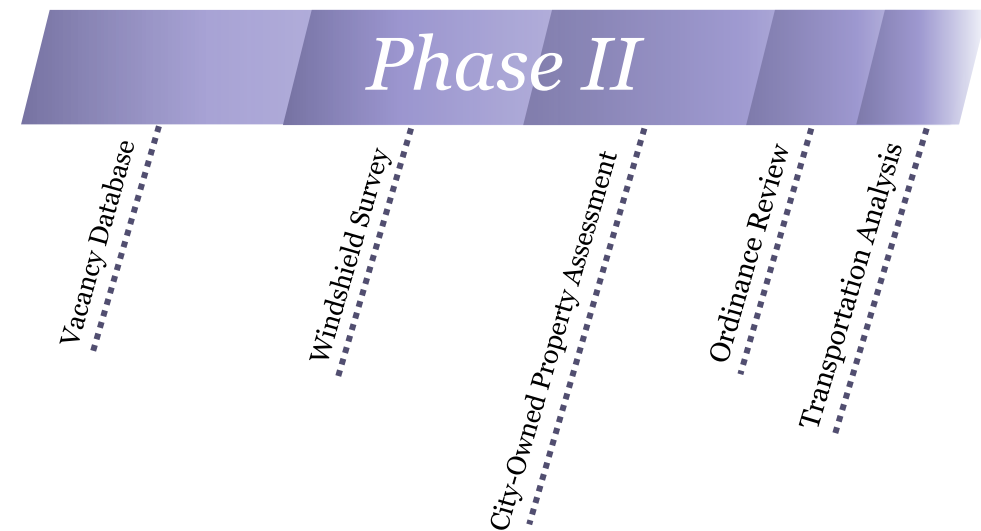
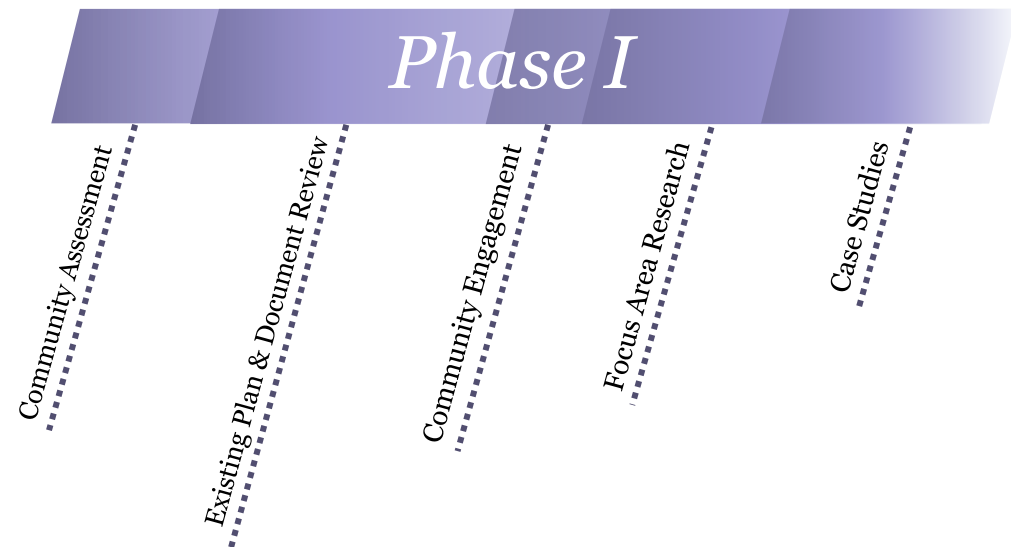


# Methodology

Downtown revitalization plans typically draw upon case studies and community engagements as primary sources of information. These resources, along with previously completed planning documents and additional assessments, helped to broaden the overall approach and methodology divided into two phases over the course of nine months.

In Phase One, community conditions were assessed and best practices from other downtown revitalization plans were researched. Case studies from communities of similar size and demographics were reviewed alongside many existing Keokuk planning documents. Public input surveys were collected at four community events to bolster the results of previous engagement surveys which determined respondent preferences for downtown amenities. Preliminary evaluations of specific focus areas including transportation, housing, economic development through placemaking, and land use were also researched to inform final downtown revitalization recommendations.

Phase Two of the project introduced metric-seeking methods to provide analytic data points. A database of vacant structures within the study area, informed by water usage records, along with a windshield survey, provided a foundational understanding of age, layout, and neighborhood qualities associated with the study area. Community officials from the previously mentioned case studies were interviewed to assess the success of catalyst projects within their respective downtown corridors. This led to an evaluation of 13 city-owned parcels that could potentially serve as catalytic development sites for downtown Keokuk. Market data was gathered to show commercial surpluses and leakages within downtown area and existing ordinances were analyzed. Funding and incentives were also reviewed along with the implementation status of previous Keokuk plans. This collective group of work in Phase Two informed decisions for catalyst project recommendations and revised focus area suggestions. An in-depth review of these processes is contained within this section.



## Windshield Survey

Completing a windshield survey of the downtown district provided measurable data to inform catalytic development recommendations. A first-hand assessment of buildings and surrounding neighborhoods allowed the team to witness current revitalization efforts and the lack thereof.

A block-by-block review of each parcel within the study area was conducted to capture basic building and property information. This windshield survey was conducted over a period of two days in February of 2020. The data points collected during this evaluation were derived from the Better Block Observation Survey, and two reports produced by the Minnesota Housing Partnership and the University of Minnesota which outlined the methodology of performing housing assessments and guidelines by which to create a rating system (University of Minnesota, n.d.). This custom-tailored Keokuk survey consisted of eighteen questions; approximately half of those were answered utilizing information obtained from the Lee County Assessor's Office through the Beacon Schneider on-line GIS Portal prior to the physical evaluation.

Parcel and structural Information collected from the website included:

- number of floors,
- extant business name,
- current property owner data,
- occupancy status [owner/rental unit],
- building status [vacant/demolished],
- age,
- building material, and
- class [C=commercial, I=industrial, R=residential, and so forth].

The remainder of the 18 questions were obtained during the site visits and included:

- presence of wayfinding,
- availability of seating, tables, and/or parks,
- food options on the block,
- spaces to eat outdoors,
- building condition rating [1=poor condition to 4=excellent condition],
- parcel condition rating [1=poor condition to 4=excellent condition],
- sidewalk condition rating [1=poor condition to 4=excellent condition],
- appearance of vacancy rating [1=obviously vacant 2=unsure of occupancy 3=obviously occupied], and
- feeling of safety when standing on the sidewalk rating [1=unsafe to 4=safe].



*Although the lawns are mowed, three pre-civil war homes on 7<sup>th</sup> Street show signs of negligence. Source: Authors.*

## Scoring Criteria

The following list provides the scoring criteria for the ranking sections.

- Building conditions were evaluated based on how well maintained the structure was and the level of damage to the visible portions of the roof, siding, and windows. Buildings with lower rankings appeared to need more repairs overall.
- Parcel conditions were evaluated based on how well the parcel seemed to be maintained, if there was paved parking, and the level of debris within the space.
- The conditions of sidewalks were based on the number and intensity of cracks, presence of buckling, missing segments, and overall level of deterioration.
- The rating of vacancy or occupancy was determined based on presence of items in windows, decorative window coverings, and active lighting or conversely, boarded up windows or windows that were completely blocked by objects. A rating of “2” means that the occupancy of the building was unclear due to a lack of indicating factors one way or the other.
- Sidewalk safety was evaluated on overall level of comfort for the pedestrian based upon amount of landscaping, presence of other people, and the intensity and speed of traffic on the bordering road. Sidewalks felt safer when there was a buffer between the sidewalk and traveling vehicles as well as feeling safer along smaller roads as opposed to sidewalks that were directly next to a large road with fast moving vehicles.



# Windshield Survey Results

**A majority of downtown does not have wayfinding signage**

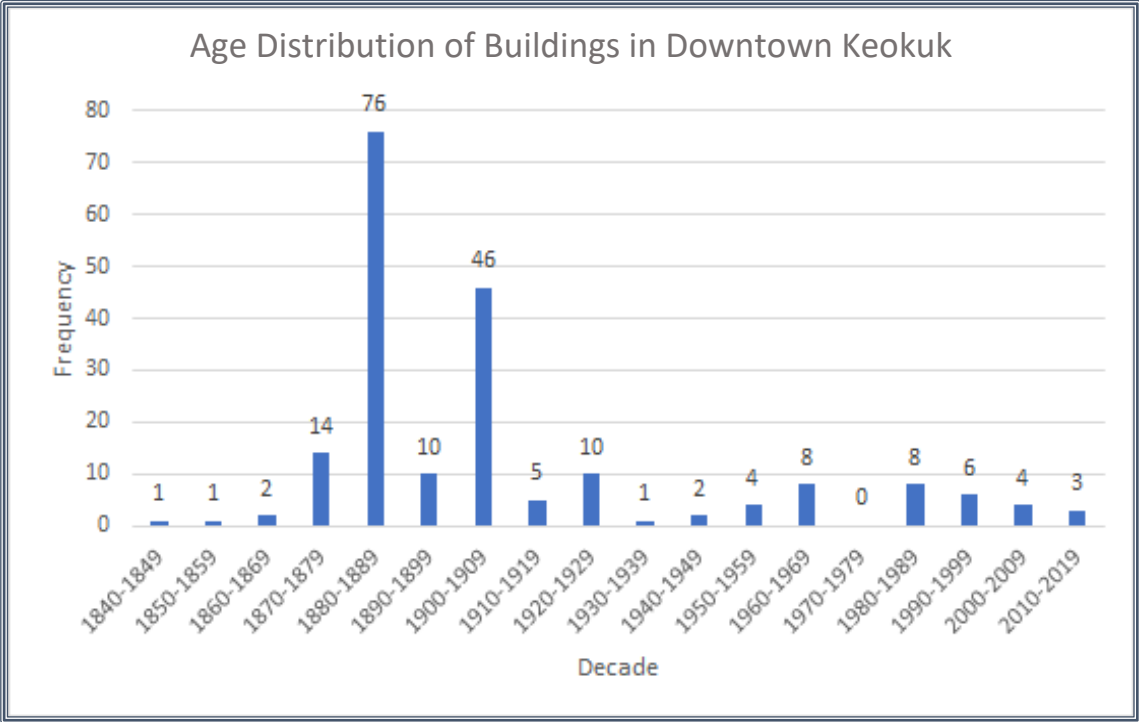
According to the Keokuk Wayfinding Signage Study done in 2010, visitors often have a hard time navigating the city. The existing study makes several recommendations about existing and potential signage that the city should work to implement.

**83%** of downtown does not have seating, tables or parks  
 Catalyst site recommendations, found later in this document, will create areas for seating, tables and a series of parks.

**There are currently five restaurants within the study area**

A 2016 Main Street Keokuk Inc. survey found that residents want additional food options in the downtown. Given that restaurants are a particularly difficult business to open, recommended catalyst sites could encourage the option of making space for food trucks or small food stands and creating outdoor eating spaces that nearby restaurants could utilize.

**62%** of the study area is devoted to commercial and retail uses  
 Promoting housing in the downtown, especially in the upper story of buildings along Main Street, could bring foot traffic back to the commercial and mixed-use spaces of the downtown. Catalyst suggestions should be geared toward increasing foot traffic in the downtown during business hours.



*Created from information obtained through the Lee county Assessor’s website, this graph shows the age of the buildings within the study area. Source: Authors.*

**Approximately 80% of the buildings in the study area were built before 1930**

Keokuk was found to have a wealth of historical structures which can benefit the community by preserving its history and community identity. Maintaining existing structures is also environmentally sustainable, prevents waste, and avoids costly new construction. With age comes the need for maintenance and upkeep so as mentioned in the previous section, the city should incorporate a maintenance ordinance and building inspections to properly care for aging structures in the downtown area.



*With a lack of accessible sidewalks, large pieces of construction debris, and the stench of a sewer, the corner of Johnson and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets presents as a scrapyard rather than a welcoming invitation to the Main Street corridor. Source: Authors.*

**52%** of buildings were rated in good condition  
While buildings appeared to be in good condition from the sidewalk, structural conditions of each building were unknown. This echoes a need for a maintenance ordinance and more frequent building inspections.

**A majority of parcels were rated in fair condition**

At 56%, this means that there was a presence of debris, unkempt or lack of landscaping, a majority pavement or concrete frontage, or the area generally needed maintenance. If the city were to implement streetscaping improvements, this could incentivize owners to perform exterior maintenance.

**57%** of the sidewalks in the downtown felt uncomfortable  
This would suggest that the city should move forward with streetscaping improvements to make the sidewalks, crossings, business frontages, and roadways more pedestrian-friendly and accessible.

**The appearance of vacancy in the downtown for the first floor was 20-41%, upper floors was 30-75%, and overall was 23-51%. Based on information from the assessor's website, total vacancy in the downtown is 31%**

Increasing density in the downtown by targeting the second-floor spaces above businesses would help to bring pedestrian traffic downtown. Given the high rate of vacancy in existing structures, Keokuk should focus on maintaining buildings instead of building new. The cost of new construction is higher than what the local market will bear.





## Vacancy Inventory

Determining the vacancy rate of the downtown district provided measurable data informing recommendations and catalytic development proposals later in this report. Anecdotal accounts placed the vacancy rate between 25% and 50% and according to an article titled *The Empty House Next Door*, vacancy rates that range from 20 to 30% are considered to be very high with rates higher than 30% being deemed extremely high. Both categories are termed “Hyper Vacant.” “When vacancy rates approach 20 percent or more— what we have previously defined as hyper vacancy— they indicate that market conditions have deteriorated to the point where properties that have become vacant are as likely or more likely to remain so and ultimately be abandoned rather than reused.” While the focus of this section is to discuss the vacancy inventory, methodology, and findings, it is also important to explain why this information matters. In the recommendation section different strategies are discussed to address high vacancy rates.

More generally, vacancy is an issue in revitalization projects because it’s important to know what buildings are available for rehabilitation and occupation. This enables the community and potential investors to make informed decisions. Creating a vacancy database, that also has the potential to double as a commercial real estate database, can satisfy two goals from the 2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan:

**Regional Hub Goal 3:** Action Items: Prepare a database of available downtown properties, and pursue building renovations as needed, to make them ready for reoccupation.

**Vibrant Economy Goal 4:** Keokuk will offer development-friendly conditions, to remain regionally competitive. Task 3: Create a commercial real estate database for assisting developers interested in Keokuk and the Tri-State area.

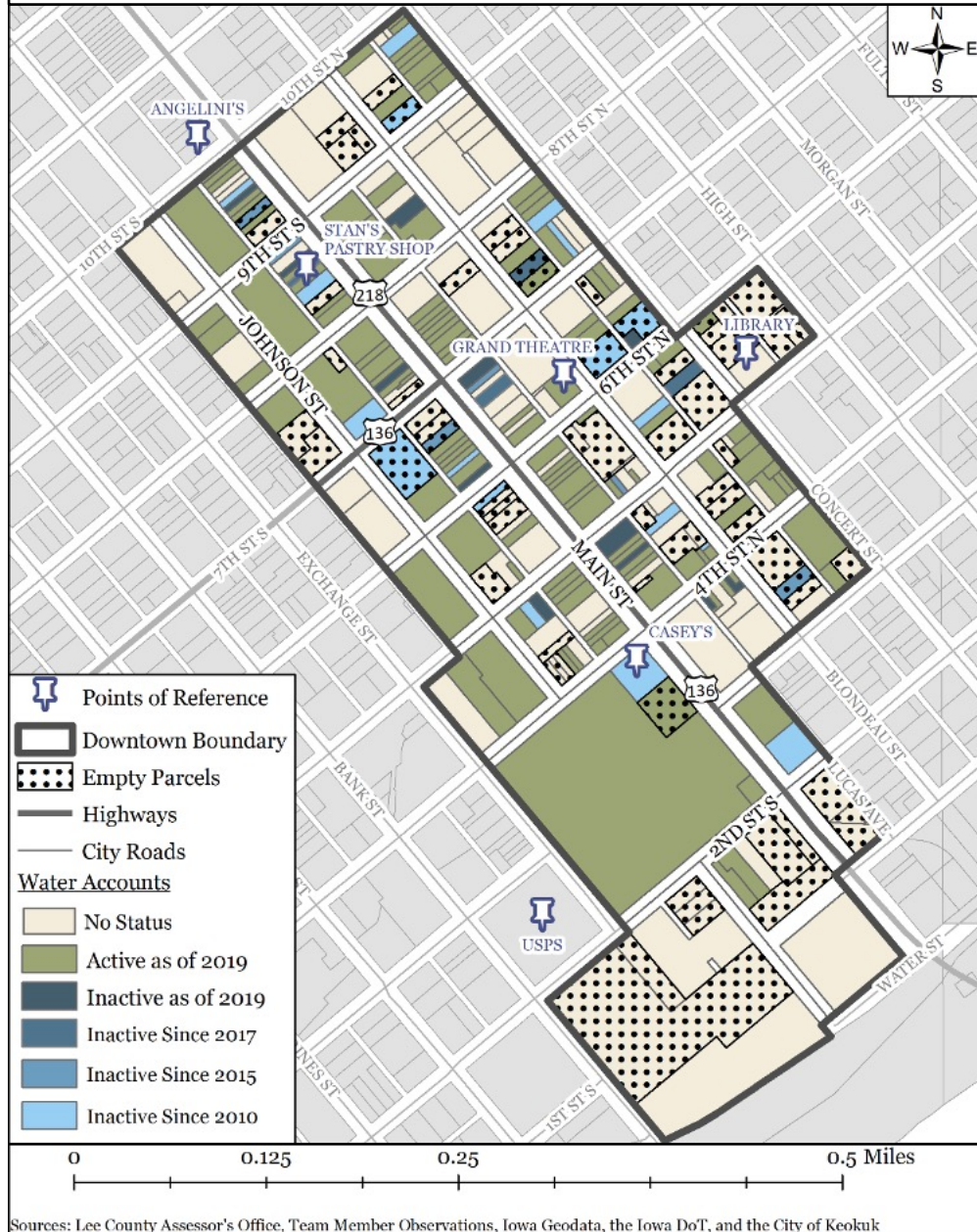


*Buildings such as the Fraternal Order of Eagles (top) show obvious signs of use and upkeep; whereas, the boarded façade and deteriorating brickwork of the building below indicate neglect and possibly abandonment. Source: Authors.*





## Water Accounts & Empty Parcels within the Study Area

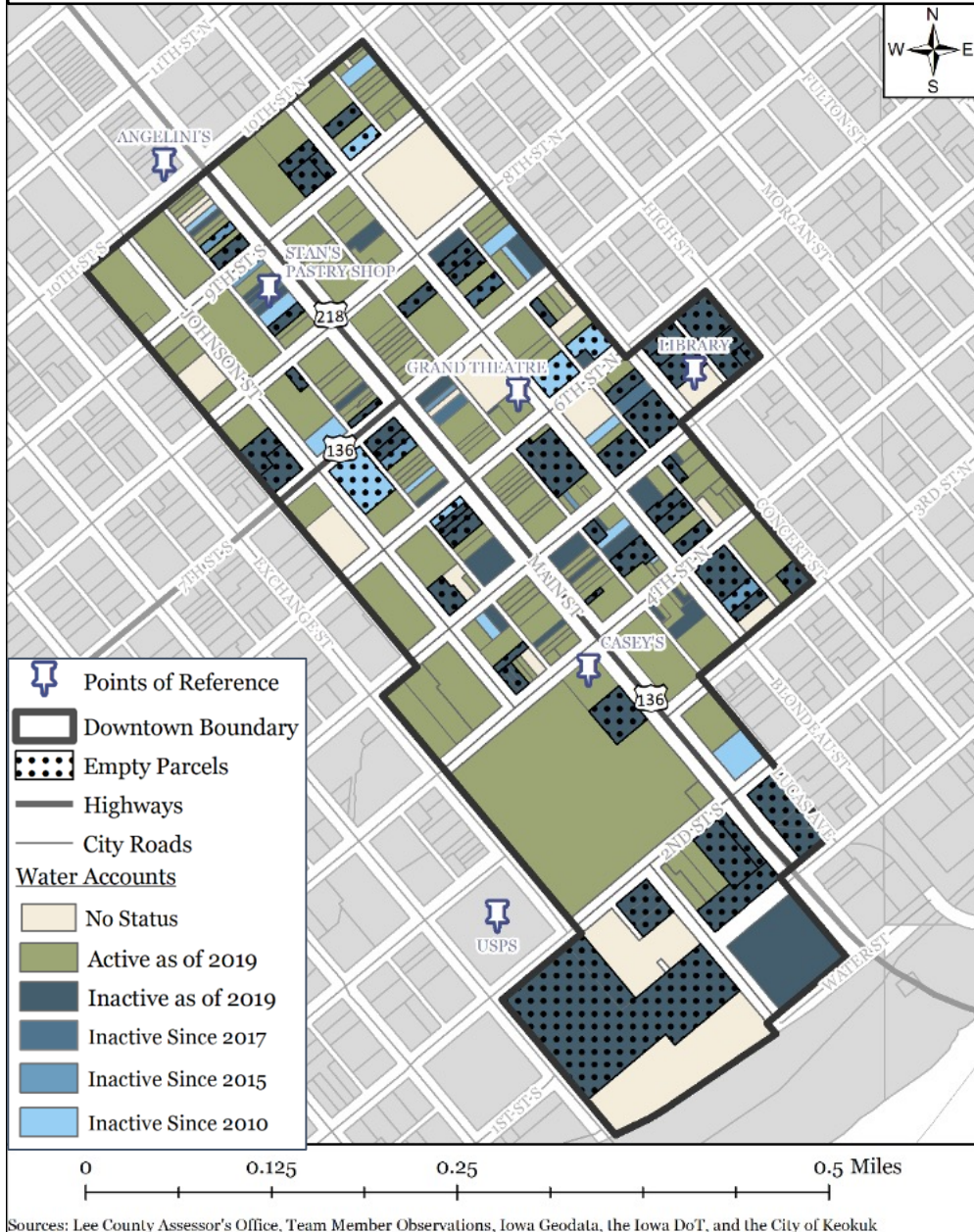


Public water records were obtained to determine which parcels had inactive water accounts as an indication of vacancy at that site. Andrea Rogers, General Manager at Keokuk Municipal Waterworks, facilitated a records search of the active and inactive accounts over a one month period, chosen at random, in 2019. The data provided was evaluated and then cleaned before being joined with GIS data features by individual addresses.

The map at left indicates 'active' water accounts in green, 'inactive' accounts in blue, and 'no-status' accounts in beige. Active water accounts suggest active use, whereas inactive water accounts suggest a vacancy. No-status accounts were most often municipally-owned properties such as George Washington Elementary School, the Keokuk Public Library, and Riverview Park. In some cases, no-status accounts indicated vacant lots or addresses that did not match. The dotted lots are vacant parcels, parking lots, or recently demolished buildings. Vacancy over time is also indicated in this map. Keokuk Water Works also provided past inactive water account information from 2010, 2015, 2017 and 2019, to indicate long term vacancy. Those parcels are indicated in lighter shades of blue with the darkest blue parcels representing vacancy as of 2019.

Initial findings indicated that 32% of the available water use accounts were inactive as of 2019, suggesting that this is the amount of vacancy within the downtown study area. However, the initial map produced some inconsistencies and an abundance of no-status accounts and it was determined that additional research would be required. This vacancy rate percentage mirrors the information obtained through the windshield survey the numbers obtained from the assessor's website.

## Water Accounts & Empty Parcels within the Study Area



Once the initial map was produced from the water records, further research went into validating the information. First, the City of Keokuk provided data on known vacant lots and vacant buildings within the study area. Second, the windshield survey verified the locations of demolished structures and vacant lots that had not been updated in the assessor's website or were inaccurately reflected in the water records. Finally, Water Works verified the status of 72 no-status lots.

The map at left is a product of consolidated and inferred data reflecting the most accurate information. Ultimately, it was found that, of the 307 parcels within the study area, 31 were reported to be vacant buildings and 61 were empty parcels without major development. This indicates that the downtown study area is 29.97% vacant and that 66.3% of this vacancy is due to undeveloped land.

Cities which have significantly higher vacancy may want to consider land pooling strategies since the issue is systemic and not an isolated event. Cities can also look at larger state or federal programs which contribute to a growth in population and could capitalize on the existing infrastructure and availability of homes. Strategies will be discussed in further detail in the recommendations section.

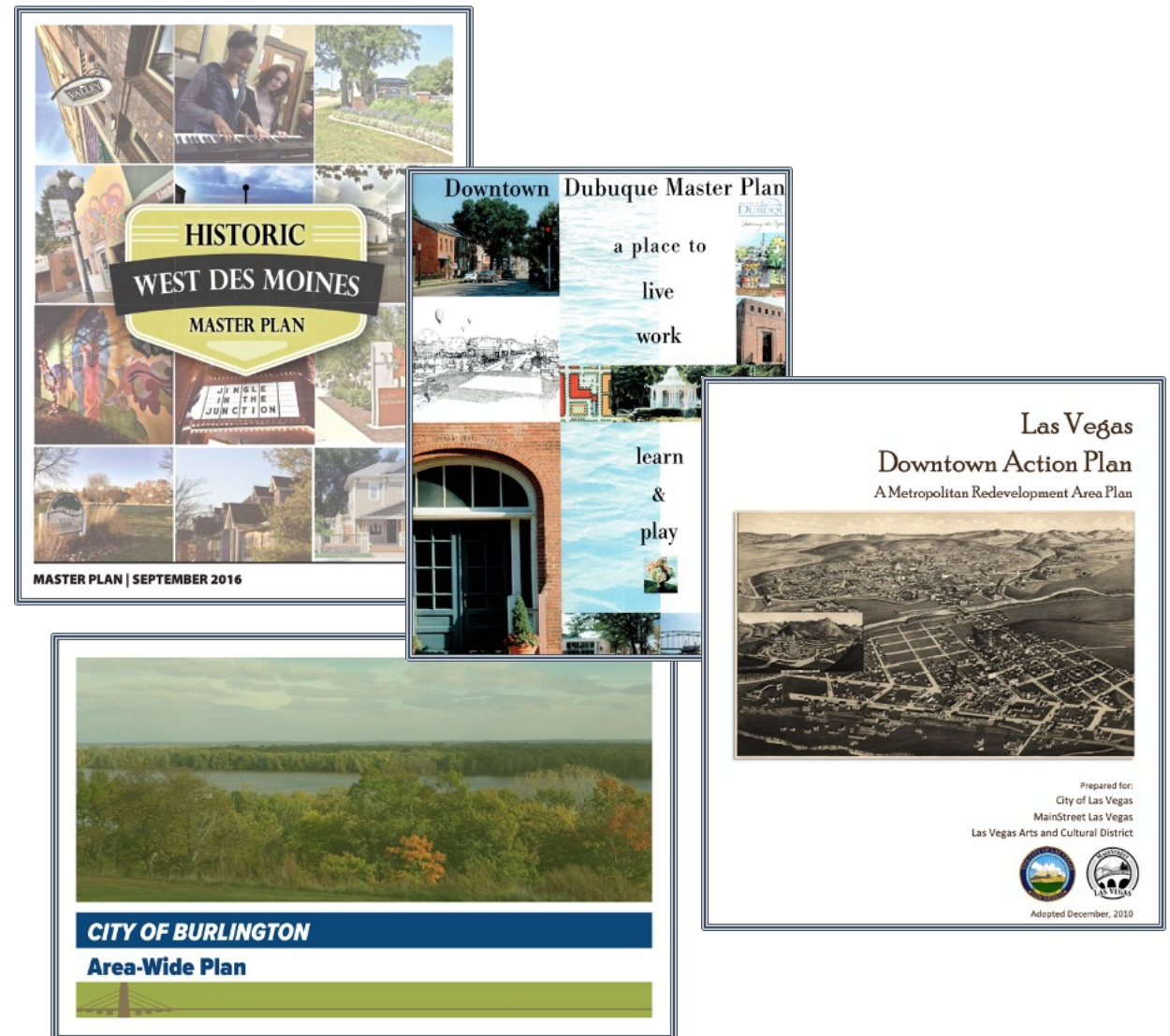




## Case Studies

Four cities, with similar demographics and revitalization objectives to that Keokuk, were evaluated for positive community outcomes, feasibility of implementation in Keokuk, and/or proven-effective redevelopment efforts. The findings from these evaluations were then used to inform which improvement strategies might best suit Keokuk's Main Street corridor. Selected case study communities received praise and recognition of their downtown improvement efforts from the American Planning Association (APA), Main Street America, Main Street Iowa, Iowa Economic Development, and the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO).

The primary case studies selected were from; Burlington, Iowa; Dubuque, Iowa; West Des Moines, Iowa; and Las Vegas, New Mexico. After thorough review of these downtown plans, community officials of Burlington, Dubuque, and West Des Moines were interviewed to glean further insights into the application of downtown improvements. Key findings from all case studies are identified in this section.



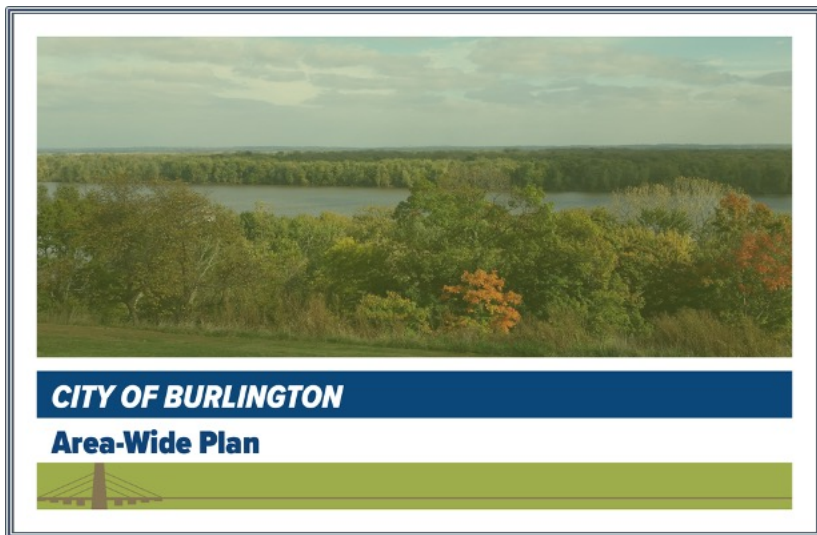
Four case studies provided beneficial insights into best practices for the Keokuk Downtown Revitalization Plan. Sources: Provided on the following pages.



## Burlington Area-Wide Plan [2018]

**Place:** City of Burlington, Iowa

**Population:** 25,022 [2017 estimate]



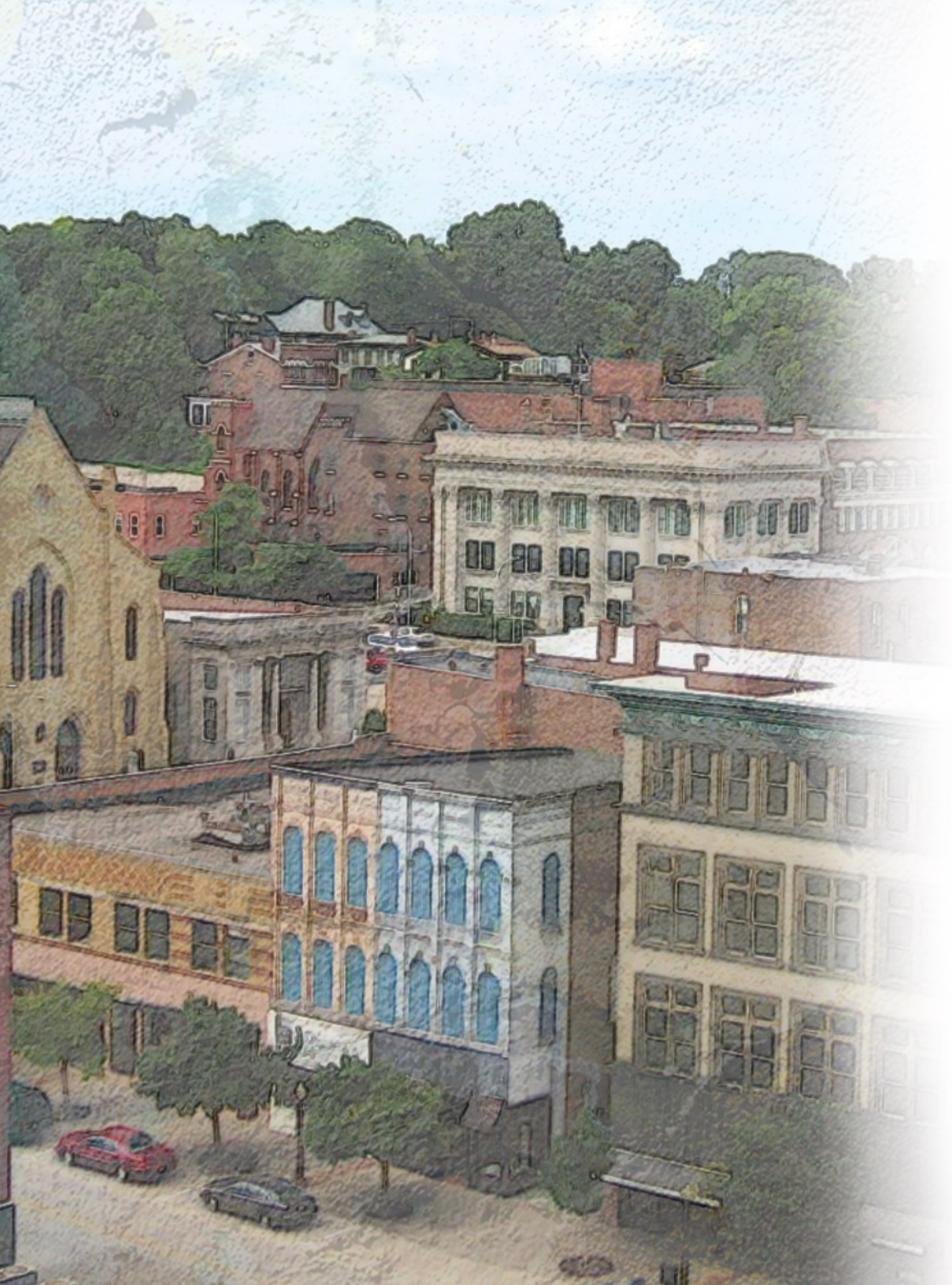
Source: <https://www.burlingtoniowa.org/DocumentCenter/View/2549/17096-Burlington-Area-Wide-Planning-Master-Plan>

## Summary & Findings

Burlington is located along the Mississippi River, just forty miles north of Keokuk and was a regional manufacturing center, as was Keokuk, until the mid-twentieth century. Burlington's downtown resembles that of Keokuk's, is facing some of the same challenges to development, and has focused its revitalization efforts on historic preservation and identifying catalytic development opportunities. The city has placed a greater emphasis on brownfield assessment and renovation in its Self-Supported Municipal Improvement District (SSMID) which spans 45 city blocks and five historical districts near its riverfront. *The Burlington Area-Wide Plan* provides detailed analysis of nearly every structure within its designated study area and, with the help of the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission (SEIRPC), the city has received several grants from the EPA and DNR to improve brownfield sites.

Although not heavily implemented yet, Burlington's plan provides an excellent example of ways to inventory downtown vacancies, assets, and opportunities for catalyst projects that encourage further development. Catalytic development proposed by the plan includes the development of a riverfront hotel/convention center, the removal of a large surface parking lot near the river, relocation of a few existing uses, the city acquisition of a vacant, historic type-writer shop, and the development of a large park on a former brownfield site near the edge of downtown.

The Greater Burlington Partnership (GBP) has produced measurable positive outcomes and been heavily active since 1986. It has greatly increased downtown revitalization with its incentive programs since its formation resulting in 335 business starts and expansions, over \$97 million in private property acquisition and rehabilitation, and 702 building renovation projects (The Greater Burlington Partnership, 2020). The partnership's website also states that over \$17 million in private investments are currently underway.



## Interview Findings

Burlington's head planner indicated that obtainment of a Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant is a primary driver of current plan implementation. There are increased tax abatement opportunities for upper-story development in the downtown, and the area is an identified "Opportunity Zone." Mixed-use zoning is a predominant base-zone in the area and creating a downtown overlay with design standards is on the community's to-do list. State and federal historic tax credits are the primary means of funding historical preservation in the downtown's National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) designated district.



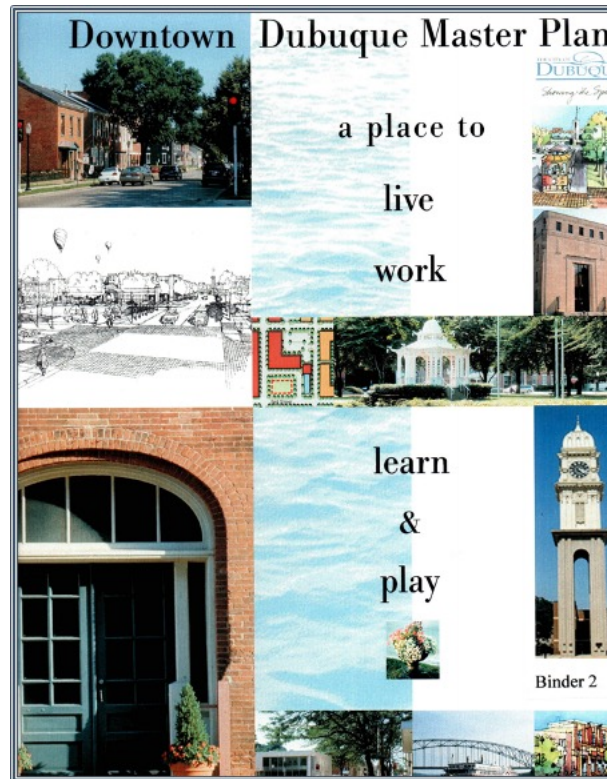
# Downtown Dubuque Master Plan [2003]

## Additional Downtown District Plans:

- Historic Millwork District Master Plan [2009]
- The Port of Dubuque Master Plan [2002]

**Place:** Dubuque, Iowa

**Population:** 57,941 [2018 estimate]



Source: <https://www.cityofdubuque.org/>

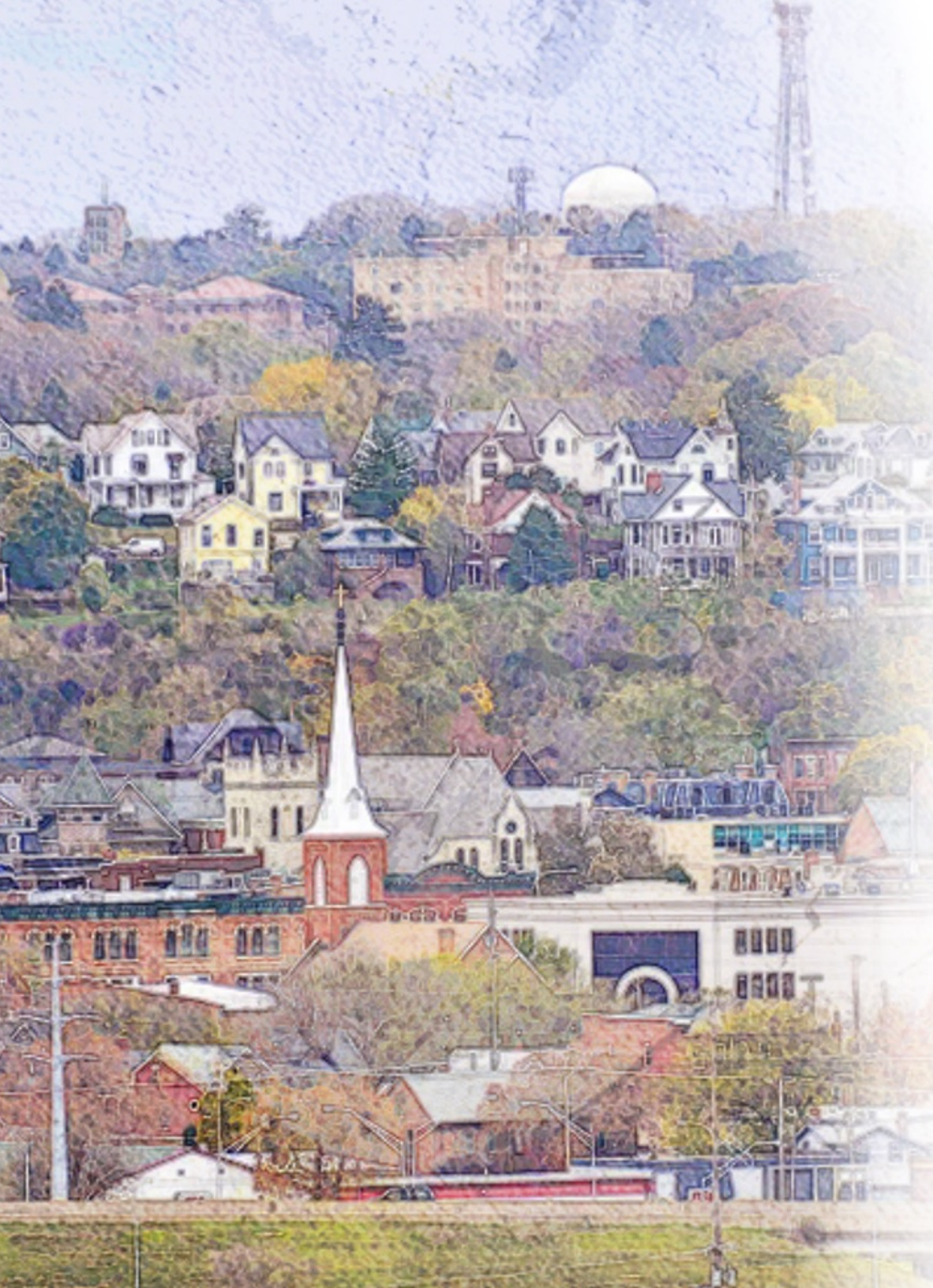
## Summary & Findings

The City of Dubuque, like Keokuk, is directly adjacent to the Mississippi River, has a history of manufacturing, and has many historical assets. The *Downtown Dubuque Master Plan* is a shining example of successful downtown revitalization in the state of Iowa as well as nationally. For the past 20 years, Dubuque has prioritized sustainability in its downtown, which has led to regrowth in social and economic prosperity throughout its seven downtown districts. Main Street Iowa has referred to Dubuque’s downtown revitalization outcomes as the best example of small-city, comprehensive, sustainable development in the country (Getting Results: The Economic Impact of Main Street Iowa, 1986-2012, 2013).

Infill development and catalyst projects, such as the renovation of the historic Roshek Building that used state and federal tax credits, have brought private investment and residents back to downtown Dubuque. Between 1985 and 2012, the value of average total annual building rehabilitation investment was \$14,708,365 and the average net gain of jobs per year was 124. Dubuque also created a downtown-specific five-year capital improvement plan and used TIF funds and other incentives to actively target businesses which would be suitable to relocate to the downtown. Mixed-use developments were also incentivized with density bonuses, transfer of development rights, and tax abatements.

In the 19-acre Millwork District, extensive preservation efforts and energy efficiency upgrades have increased historical preservation in the adjacent Washington neighborhood. The district has been adapted to host a mix of residential and commercial uses and a “complete streets” program, which improves pedestrian and bicycle transportation while maintaining the districts historical character (Dresdner, 2014). The Millwork District has received the EPA’s National Award for Smart Growth Achievement, based on its effectiveness in "creating a sustainable community, showcasing innovative planning, initiating vigorous public involvement, generating public/private/non-profit partnerships, and serving as a prototype to other communities" (Dresdner, 2014).





## Interview Findings

Dubuque officials stressed the importance of strong community engagement. One planner stated, “...engagement must meet people where they are.” She also stressed that several meetings were necessary to establish a trusting relationship with local business owners. Following these meetings, business owners were willing to enter into development agreements to improve their own building façades by a certain date if the city made streetscaping improvements first. If the agreement was not upheld by a business owner, a special assessment was placed on their property. This strategy was reportedly incredibly effective but was contingent upon the city making right-of-way and urban design improvements first. Interviewees stated that the real catalyst projects in the area were established through development agreements and related to city-initiated public space improvements.

The city is currently planning a Millwork District “refresh” which will engage local property owners to receive feedback and evaluate the Millwork District Plan’s implementation. City officials stressed that tracking and monitoring plan implementation at the time of implementation is vital to existing and future planning effectiveness and efficiency.

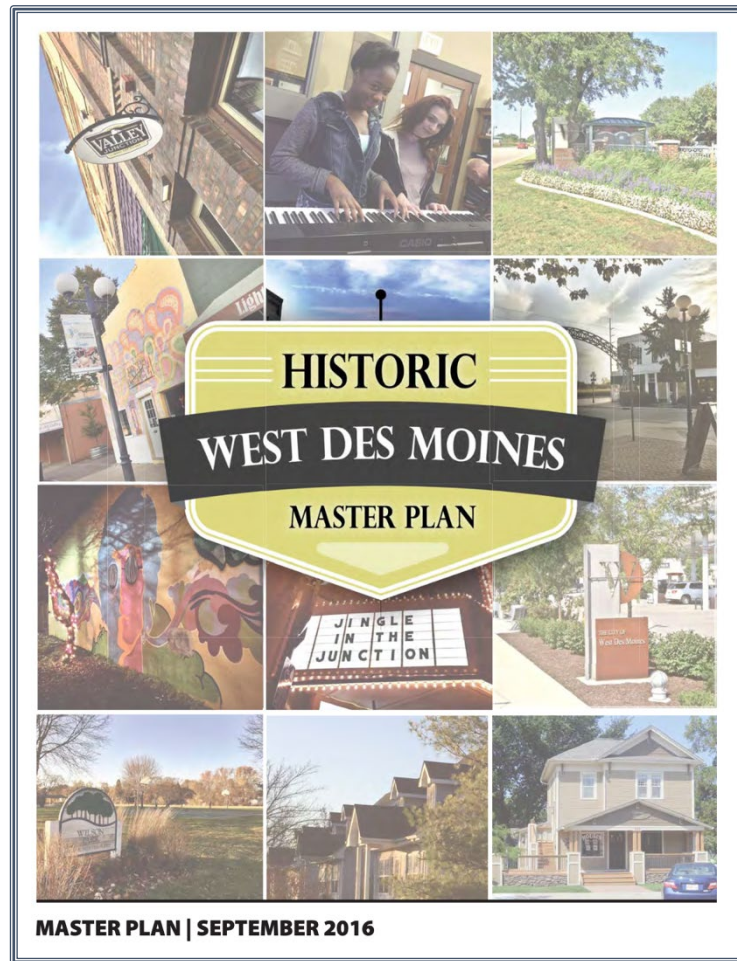
FTA funds, EPA funds, DOT funds (for a parking garage), DNR brownfields grants, BUILD/TIGER grants, CDBG funds, TIF, and façade improvement grants were all utilized to improve the Port of Dubuque and Millwork District areas. These spaces are also subject to adoption of overlay zones with design standards. Proposed designs are reviewed by a design committee and the historical preservation committee and do not require City Council approval. State and federal historic tax credits have covered all preservation costs in Dubuque’s NRHP districts, which have catalyzed reinvestment.



# Historic West Des Moines Master Plan [2016]

**Place:** West Des Moines, Iowa

**Population:** 66,641 [2018 estimate]



Source: <https://www.wdm.iowa.gov/home/showdocument?id=22202>

## Summary & Findings

A recent Main Street Iowa success story is that of Valley Junction, the historical downtown of West Des Moines, Iowa. West Des Moines' previous name was Valley Junction, a name derived from its adjacency to railroad facilities. The district received the 2012 Great American Main Street Award. In 2018, Historic Valley Junction was given the Signature Project of the Year Award by Main Street Iowa. In 2019, it was re-designated as an Iowa Great Place and as an Iowa Cultural & Entertainment District following implementation of elements of its 2016 master plan.

Since 1960, the population of West Des Moines has increased substantially, and the construction of sprawling suburban development and large shopping centers put its historical downtown at risk of collapse. The remedy was to expand public-private partnerships and focus on cultivating a diversity of unique boutique and specialty businesses in the area to enhance the district's image and identity. In doing so, downtown Valley Junction has become one of the premier destinations for the arts in the Des Moines metro and local events attract thousands of visitors annually (Getting Results: The Economic Impact of Main Street Iowa, 1986-2012). Each farmers market event held there draws upwards of 5,000 visitors (Pokora, 2015).

Rehabilitation of the 1905 City Hall saw it transformed into offices and community gathering space. This catalyst site serves as an example of building sustainability and redevelopment potential for the district. Elsewhere, upper-story apartment units have been renovated using an effective incentive program that promotes mixed-use redevelopment in historical structures (Johnson, 2018). Since the community joined Main Street Iowa, Valley Junction has averaged a net gain of 18 jobs, eight businesses, 10 building rehabilitations, and two buildings sold annually (Getting Results: The Economic Impact of Main Street Iowa, 1986-2012). The average building rehabilitation investment has been \$166,077 per year (Getting Results: The Economic Impact of Main Street Iowa, 1986-2012).





## Interview Findings

A committee of residents and business owners in Valley Junction, two West Des Moines City Council Members, and various city staff was formed to create a list of action items to improve the historic area of West Des Moines. The creation of these action items initiated the revitalization of Valley Junction. A private consultant was hired to develop the plan at a cost of \$150,000 and City staff were thoroughly impressed with the extensive level of public outreach that was performed.

During an interview, West Des Moines planning staff identified three key programs which have greatly contributed to the successful revitalization of Valley Junction.

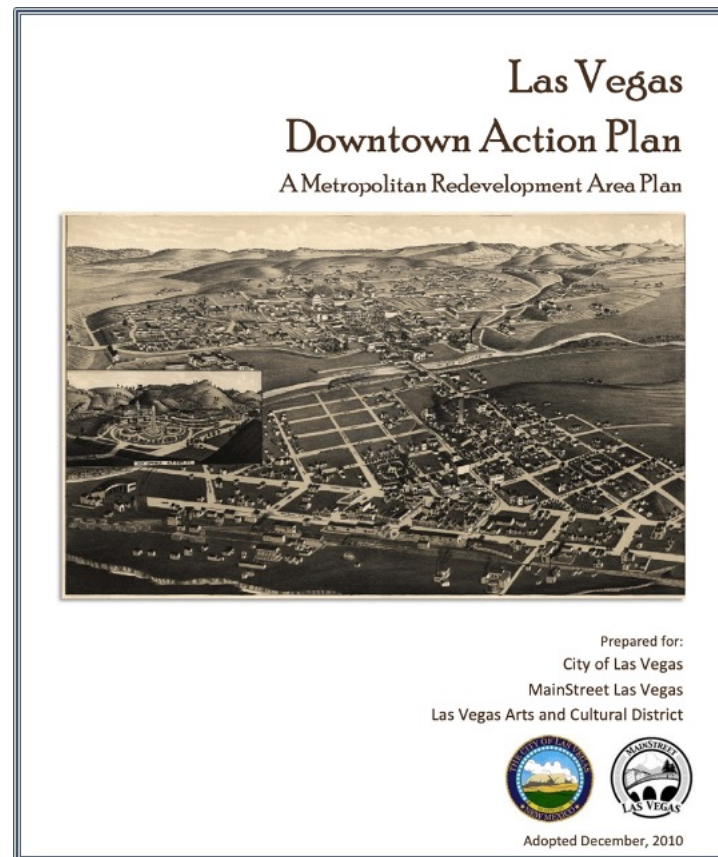
- An upper story housing program was adopted to incentivize revitalization of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> story spaces. Nearly \$2 million in city funds have been awarded through this program thus far. The intention of the program is to revitalize aging historical structures; however, developers have demolished some old non-historic structures to build brand new, mixed-use structures instead.
- A “regulatory compliance fund” grant has been adopted to help property owners make required plumbing, electrical, and fire code updates that are required by code. The funds are awarded contingent upon whether additional jobs are created by the grantee following award of funding.
- A similar general “improvement fund” was also created that can offset costs for projects such as façade improvements. It works as a 0% interest loan with the same job creation stipulation as the regulatory compliance fund. One dilemma is that a property lessee may be liable for fulfilling the jobs creation requirement, not the building owner.
- To evaluate plan implementation, the original committee gathers twice annually to determine the status of action item implementation. City officials consider city-initiated streetscaping improvements to be the primary catalytic driver in the area. Specific improvements were made as a result of an additional study and no specific design standards apply to the area.



## Las Vegas Downtown Action Plan [2010]

**Place:** Las Vegas, New Mexico

**Population:** 13,107 [2018 estimate]



Source: <https://www.mainstreetlasvegasm.net/downtown-action-plan/>

## Summary & Findings

Las Vegas, New Mexico shares similarities with Keokuk including population size, a similarly comprised downtown strip once lined with stores and small businesses, many historical two and three story structures and a historic railroad depot adjacent to its downtown. Through redevelopment and preservation efforts, a partnership with the New Mexico Main Street program, and support of artistic and cultural assets, the city was able to instill a sense of place in downtown using public funding sources which increased private investment.

From 2005 to 2011, the work of Main Street de Las Vegas resulted in the creation of 181 new jobs, 18 net new businesses, \$12,003,088 in private reinvestment, and over \$890,000 was received in public sector grants (Schwartz, 2013). Following the completion of its *2010 Downtown Action Plan*, Las Vegas received thousands of dollars in state and federal grants which were used to install downtown Wi-Fi, GIS resources for city staff, streetscaping, and placemaking strategies (Schwartz, 2013).

One effort to beautify the downtown was the result of a partnership with the local university. Thousands of hours were logged by student volunteers who, among other tasks, repainted the façades of 10 vacant structures (Schwartz, 2013). One vacant storefront became the location of a well-received community art gallery. The city has also found success in generating tourism through tours of its historical structures and the designation of a downtown arts district and Cultural/Historic Overlay Zone. The overlay requires adherence to prescribed design standards that maintain community character. Community support of local art has led to the formation of the city-sponsored People's Faire that attracts 60-80 vendors annually (Schwartz, 2013).

Catalytic development projects, such as the renovation of the historic Castaneda Hotel and the old train depot, were initiated by Main Street de Las Vegas (Schwartz, 2013). Such projects contained public art elements and created spaces conducive to community gatherings.

## Case Study Key Findings

Following the case study review, a few common practices and strategies were identified for downtown revitalization projects including:

### **Streetscaping, beautification, and placemaking in public rights-of-way**

[Dubuque, Valley Junction, and Burlington]

During interviews with case study communities, the importance of city-initiated streetscaping and beautification often encouraged adjacent private redevelopment. As indicated by officials working for the City of Dubuque, public infrastructure improvements should be prioritized.

### **Extensive community engagement and public buy-in**

[Dubuque and Valley Junction]

It is vital that the public is involved in envisioning their downtown.

### **Development agreements to ensure that developments were made in adherence to a community vision**

[Dubuque and Valley Junction]

Keokuk can have more input in future private development of its currently city-owned properties by utilizing development agreements.

### **Public-private partnerships**

[Dubuque, Valley Junction, Burlington, and Las Vegas]

All case study communities indicated that public-private partnerships with Main Street organizations, among others, greatly reinforced downtown improvement efforts.

### **Financial incentives**

[Dubuque, Valley Junction, Burlington, and Las Vegas]

All case study communities offered development incentives which contributed to private developments and small business owners. Main Street Keokuk and the City of Keokuk offer similar incentives, such as TIF and façade grants.

#### **▪ Incentives used by case study communities included:**

- tax increment financing,
- façade grants,
- business improvement grants, and
- various other improvement grants.

### **Historic preservation through state and federal historic tax credits**

[Dubuque, Valley Junction, Burlington, and Las Vegas]

All case study communities expressed the value of funding opportunities available within NRHP Historical Districts. Dubuque and Burlington stated that nearly all preservation costs within these districts were funded through state and federal historic tax credits.

### **Incentivized mixed-use development promoted through grants and/or tax abatement**

[Dubuque]

Mixed-use developments are vital to the success of downtown areas (Leinberger & Loh, 2018). This finding was supported by officials with the City of Dubuque who believe incentivized mixed-use developments contributed substantially to the success of businesses in its Millwork District.



## Catalyst projects

[Dubuque, Valley Junction, Burlington, and Las Vegas]

All case study communities utilized catalytic development projects to initiate nearby private development. According to the City of Portland, Oregon, “Catalyst projects are public or private projects that are planned and designed to cause a corresponding and complementary development reaction on surrounding properties. They are projects of sufficient magnitude to stimulate redevelopment of underdeveloped properties or major rehabilitation of underutilized buildings,” (n.d.). Catalyst projects may be completed through public or private partnerships using development agreements and financial incentives or primarily through use of public resources. Since the City of Keokuk possesses land in the downtown, it may be in the city’s best interest to develop lower cost catalytic development projects which are directed toward public use. Such projects aim to encourage gatherings and pedestrian activity.

- **Public-private partnership catalyst projects**
  - Grocery stores/markets
  - Hotels [Burlington]
  - Apartments [Dubuque]
  - Commercial uses [Valley Junction & Dubuque]
  - Office space [Dubuque]
- **Public catalyst projects**
  - Streetscaping and right-of-way improvements [Dubuque, Burlington, and Valley Junction]
  - Parks and recreation amenities [Burlington]
  - Community centers [Valley Junction]
  - Convention centers [Burlington]
  - Event stages
  - Indoor recreation centers
  - Farmers markets [Valley Junction]
  - Local art galleries [Las Vegas, NM]
  - Local museum
  - Libraries

## Redevelopment Projects

[Burlington, Dubuque, Valley Junction, Las Vegas]

In all four case study communities, downtown development was actually focused on *redevelopment*. Focusing on redevelopment is a cost effective, sustainable way to retain historical structures and reuse existing buildings. There are many grant funding opportunities available for redevelopment projects.

## Brownfields Assessment

[Burlington]

Catalytic development in *Burlington’s Area Wide Plan* is focused toward redevelopment of brownfield sites. It may be advantageous for Keokuk to assess potential downtown brownfield site effects on future development.

## Design standards

[Dubuque]

Design standards applied using zoning overlays have contributed to a complete revitalization of Dubuque’s Millwork District and Port of Dubuque District. The overlays apply a cohesive vision and design standards which increase property values and prevent private developers from making decisions which reduce the appeal and continuity within and between districts.

## Leveraging artistic and cultural assets

[Valley Junction & Las Vegas]

Some case study communities incorporated aspects of community history, local art, and culture into catalytic development and beautification projects. These assets can be incorporated in downtown branding campaigns, signage, street plaques, and public murals.



## Review of Existing Plans

The City of Keokuk has produced several documents pertinent to the study area, which are valuable resources for information about the city itself as well as records of policies and goals for the Main Street corridor over the past decade. This section will both summarize these documents and synthesize key takeaways.

### City of Keokuk Comprehensive Plan [2018]

#### Summary

Prepared by the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission (SEIRPC), *the 2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan* was cited by the American Planning Association Chapter of Iowa as the best comprehensive plan in Iowa and received the 2018 Daniel Burnham Award. It provides an overview of the city's history, followed by a thorough assessment of current conditions, and a review of the community engagement process which helped to inform the plan. Objectives are organized into the five categories of vibrant economy, regional hub, resilient infrastructure, quality housing, and lifestyle amenities. Within the five sections there are 19 goals, 35 objectives, and 84 tasks. Each task is associated with a timeline for completion and a responsible party, so that implementation can be easily tracked. Roughly 48 of those tasks are associated with the downtown.

**Highlighted items that are listed in the Comprehensive Plan pertaining to the downtown**  
**Regional Hub Goal 3: Keokuk's Downtown and Riverfront Will be Preserved and Enhanced as a Regional Center of Economic, Social, and Cultural Affairs.**

*Objective 1:* Make Downtown an inviting space for people to come for lengthy, leisurely visits.

*Task 2:* Encourage commercial businesses to consider downtown storefronts when choosing to invest in Keokuk.

*Action Items:* Prepare a database of available Downtown properties, and pursue building renovations as needed, to make them ready for reoccupation.

*Timeline:* Ongoing

*Responsible Party:* Main Street Keokuk, Chamber of Commerce, Keokuk Economic Development Commission

**Resilient Infrastructure Goal 1: Keokuk Will Have an Efficient, Quality Street Network.**

*Objective 2:* Pursue engineering adjustments where necessary to improve safety, traffic flow, and economic viability of the surrounding area.

*Task 2:* Identify opportunities to reduce the negative impact of through traffic on the Downtown social atmosphere.

*Action Items:* Consider a lane reduction, bump-outs, and other measures for MSKI within the Downtown core

*Timeline:* 1-3 years (2018-2020)

*Responsible Party:* Public Works

#### Key Takeaways

The downtown-oriented goals and objectives of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan aimed to strengthen commercial opportunities, accent historical amenities, incentivize landscaping, increase the housing stock, and improve riverfront accessibility for the Main Street corridor.



## Riverfront Master Plan [2009]

### Summary

The 2009 *Riverfront Master Plan* lists six goals, 16 long- and short-term focused projects for various sites along the Riverfront, and seven implementation strategies for moving forward on projects, organizing, and applying for funding. The *Riverfront Master Plan* was one of the tasks laid out in the 2007 *Strategic Plan*; “Review, modify and/or develop a master plan for riverfront development south of U.S. Lock and Dam #19.”

### Highlighted items that are listed in the Riverfront Master Plan pertaining to the downtown

#### Enhanced Parkway System along the Riverfront [Long-Term]

This concept, sees the area developed into a contiguous park system, “providing more green space and landscaping will enhance the overall aesthetic of the riverfront and, with the rail car storage yard relocated, could extend up to the Depot, reinventing the connection between Main Street, Riverview Park and the Riverfront.”

#### Mississippi Terrace Apartment Building Adaptive Reuse [Long-Term]

This proposal concerns repurposing the land currently used by the Keokuk Housing Authority’s largest complex (a six-story building with 145 units and covers 30% of the resident’s rent), once its 40-year lease comes to an end. Proposals made in the master plan include “market rate apartments, condos...”, and “a boutique hotel”.

#### Community Center [Long-Term]

The master plan also calls for “a community center capable of hosting banquets or meetings of 300 people”. A facility like this could unite the Riverfront, Riverview Park, the downtown, and Main Street.

As with the Strategic Plan, tracking implementation of these goals and projects is difficult due to the lack of a timeline and responsible party identification, but at the time of writing, the three downtown projects had not yet been implemented.

### Key Takeaways

The Riverfront Master Plan advocates for increasing the connection between the downtown, the riverfront, and the Union Depot through the creation of a new community center.

## Keokuk Strategic Plan with Vision Plan [2007]

The Keokuk Strategic Plan (KSP) provides the vision for a 2016 Keokuk as developed by residents of the city and the University of Northern Iowa. Often referred to as the *Keokuk Area Vision with Action Plan*, multiple tasks associated with the Main Street corridor focus on such efforts as revitalizing the local economy, improving upon city codes, and providing funding opportunities for local business entrepreneurship and job training programs. Special consideration for recreation and creative placemaking is also repeated throughout the plan.

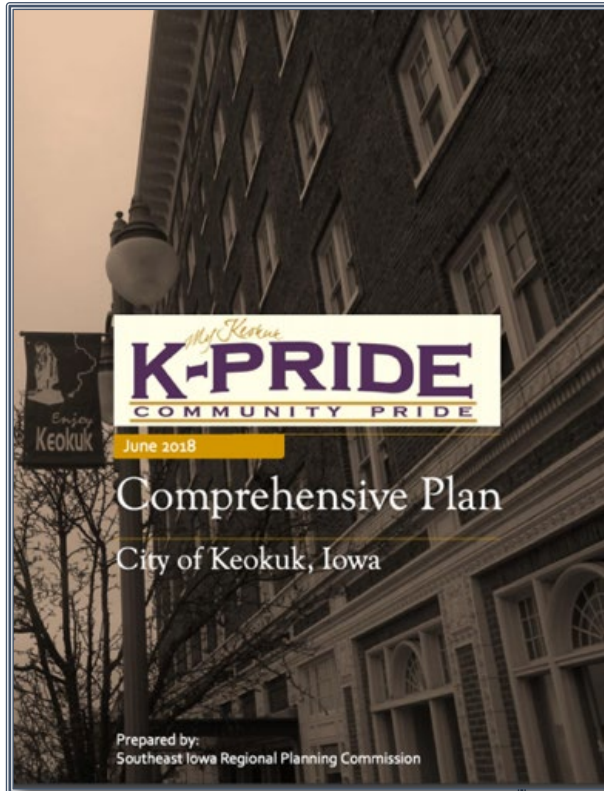
The KSP provides insight into the goals and priorities of stakeholders as well as a glimpse into the efforts that were already underway in 2007. Many of the KSP desired goals are mirrored in the recommendations presented in this revitalization plan, indicating that only a few of those aspirations have been realized. In addition to completion timeframes and often generalized measures of completion, the plan provides lead and secondary responsibility task groups. Although a majority of the commissions and councils listed in the document still technically exist in 2020, many of them no longer work on their assigned efforts. Upon further investigation, it was found that a few of the organizations had disbanded prior to the projected completion dates of their respective tasks. This knowledge was helpful in determining possible reasons for the noncompletion of certain goals.

### Highlighted items that are listed in the Strategic Plan pertaining to the downtown

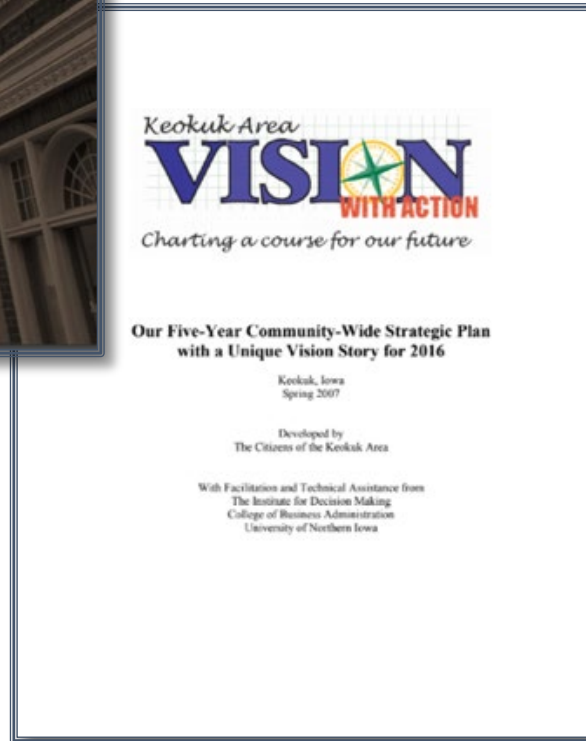
- Strengthen historic downtown retail district.
- Rehabilitate one block of Main Street as a demonstration project aimed at stimulating interest and commitment for additional rehabilitation projects.
- Promote and establish dependable access to Internet services, including a Wi-Fi cloud (wireless Internet connections) for the downtown and other community areas for businesses and residents.
- Identify and market the Main Street and downtown buildings that are structurally sound enough to be rehabilitated.
- Create a master plan for additional parking in the downtown with front landscaping, art, gardens, etc.
- Develop the 7th Street entrance to Main Street with a welcome sign, parks and green space.
- Improve connections between the river and downtown.

12 of the 44 downtown-related goals were verified as being finished. An inquiry was made to clarify reasons for a lack in implementation with the primary reason being limited funding. A complete list of goals, objectives, and tasks from the KSP is provided in Appendix A.





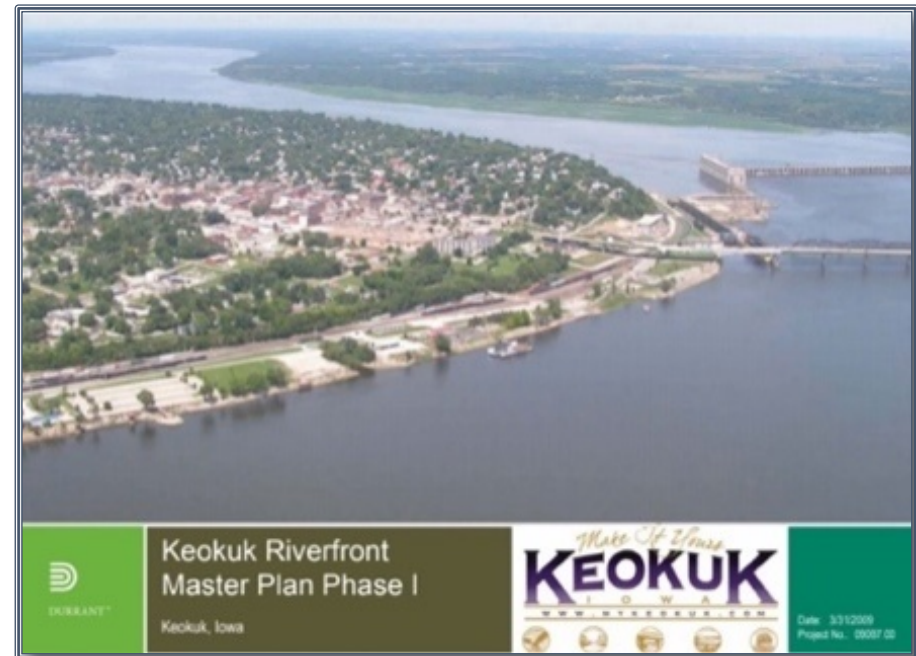
Source: <https://www.cityofkeokuk.org/>



Source: <https://www.cityofkeokuk.org/>

## Existing Plan Implementation Conclusion

The 2007 *Keokuk Strategic Plan* informed the 2009 *Keokuk Riverfront Master Plan*, which informed the 2018 *Keokuk Comprehensive Plan*; items from each pertaining to the study area of this revitalization plan have been implemented, and sometimes expanded on. Please see Appendix A for a complete list of downtown-related goals as this Downtown Revitalization Plan will mirror many objectives set forth in those plans. Amplifying and consolidating these goals establishes a clear path forward so that objectives can be achieved.



Source: <https://www.cityofkeokuk.org/>



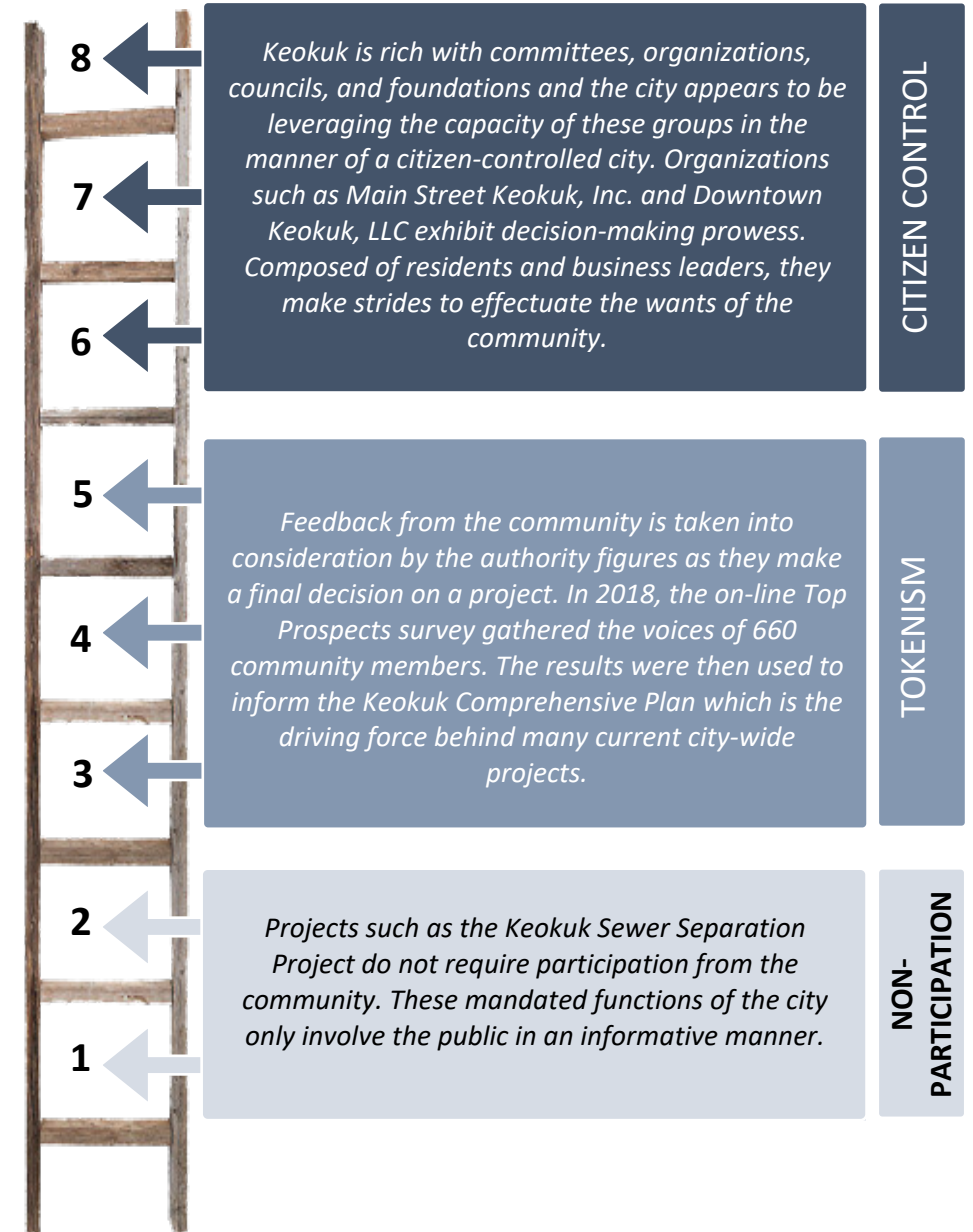
## Public Engagement

For over a decade, the City of Keokuk and its representative organizations have invested a substantial amount of time and resources to ensure the voices of residents, business owners, and visitors have been heard. Continuous input on city-led projects has been received at City Council meetings, public forums, and through collection of individual project surveys.

Although this is a small town, the response rate from community input requests appears to be substantial. Public engagement has been conducted multiple times by the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission (SEIRPC) through individual interviews, stakeholder meetings, special events, and surveys. Over a 3-month period at the beginning of 2016, SEIRPC distributed the *Comprehensive Plan Survey* in multiple formats, receiving close to 500 responses that directly informed the 2018 Comprehensive Plan. Being a city-wide plan, several sections directly pertained to the downtown but overall, feedback obtained related to the entire city.

In 2018, Main Street Keokuk, Inc. conducted the *Keokuk 2018 Top Prospects Survey*. This survey was directly focused on gathering feedback from the community to ascertain which specific amenities and businesses respondents would be most likely to visit if they were located in downtown Keokuk. Six options were presented including a bookstore, fine dining restaurants, furniture and home furnishings stores, an interactive family café, a specialty foods market, and a women’s clothing store (MSKI, 2). The conclusion from those responses is that the most sought-after amenity is an interactive family café followed by fine dining.

To determine how to effectively attract businesses and residents to the Main Street corridor, this previous feedback reviewed and combined with the results of four additional public engagements conducted between the fall of 2019 and the spring of 2020. This section describes and summarizes the results from those events.



Public control over projects within the downtown district typically falls between Tokenism and Citizen Control on Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation. More citizen control is ideal, provided all efforts are organized and communication among leadership is transparent and on-going. Source: Authors.



**Event #1**  
**Keokuk Chiefs vs Fairfield Trojans**  
Friday, October 11, 2019

Handed out at Calvert Stadium during Keokuk’s last home game of the season, a brief, 15-question survey was offered to game attendees to complete in exchange for small tchotchkes. The goal of this outreach was to introduce the Downtown Revitalization Plan efforts to the community and to make initial connections with local residents who may be interested in future meetings for the project. In two hours, the team had collected over 70 questionnaires and connected with over 100 game attendees.



*Despite the wind and chilly temperatures, Keokuk residents and visitors were eager to share their opinions with the IISC team. Source: Authors.*

**Event #2**  
**United Way 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Tri-States Oktoberfest by the River**  
Friday, October 11, 2019

The 2019 debut of this regionally sponsored German fest in the recently renovated Southside Boat Club. Identical questionnaires were offered to the festival’s participants in between a stein hoisting competition and the Beer Stein Olympics. Team members discussed details of the Downtown Revitalization Plan project over brats and sauerkraut and collected over 20 surveys from the attendees.



*Onlookers cheered and taunted stein hoist athletes as one by one their arm strength was diminished to only being able to hold a pen to complete surveys. Source: Authors.*

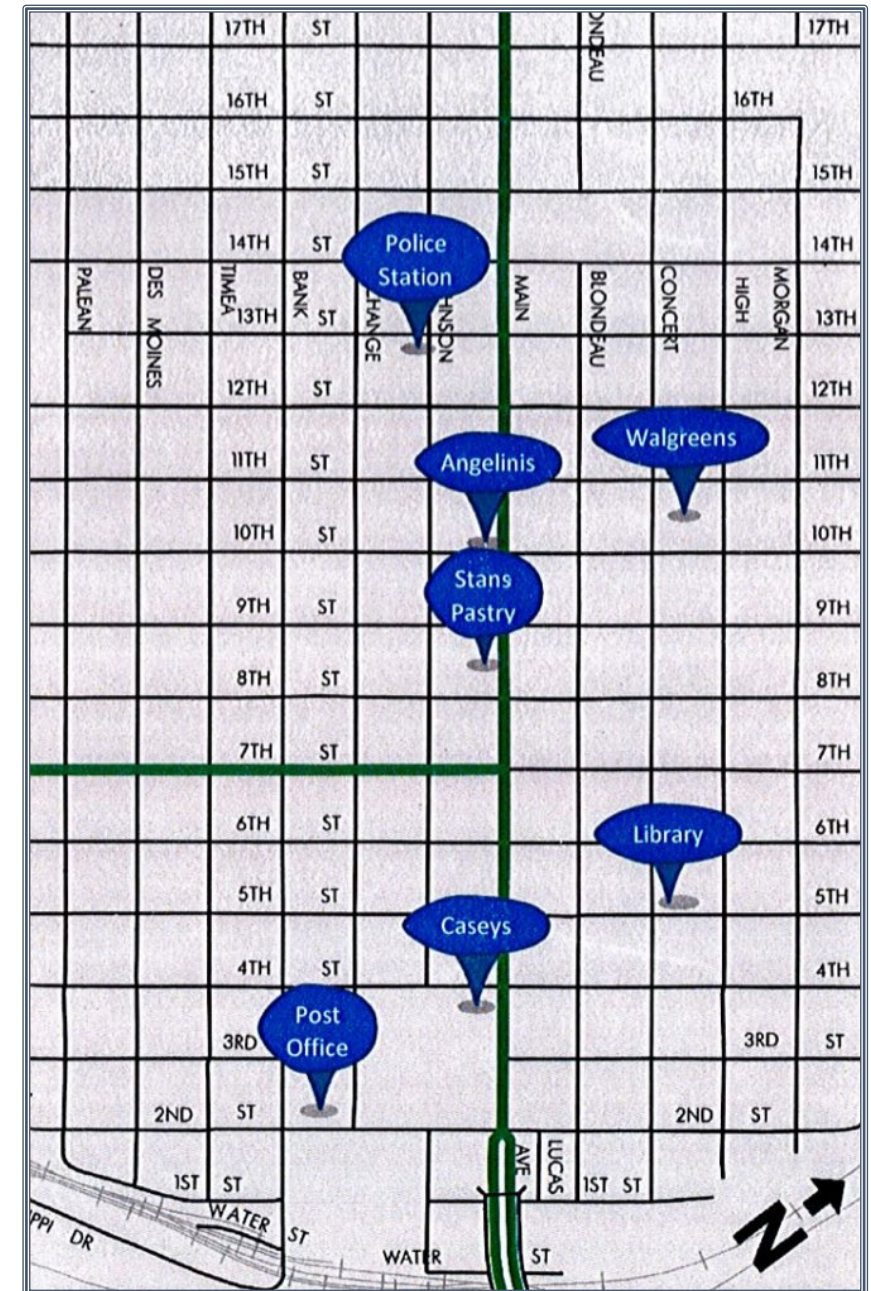


Four goals guided the survey questions distributed at these events:

- Determine where respondents consider the downtown district to be.
- Determine if the Main Street corridor is regularly visited by the respondents.
- Determine if those respondents would live in the downtown in its current state.
- Determine which amenities are most appealing to those respondents.

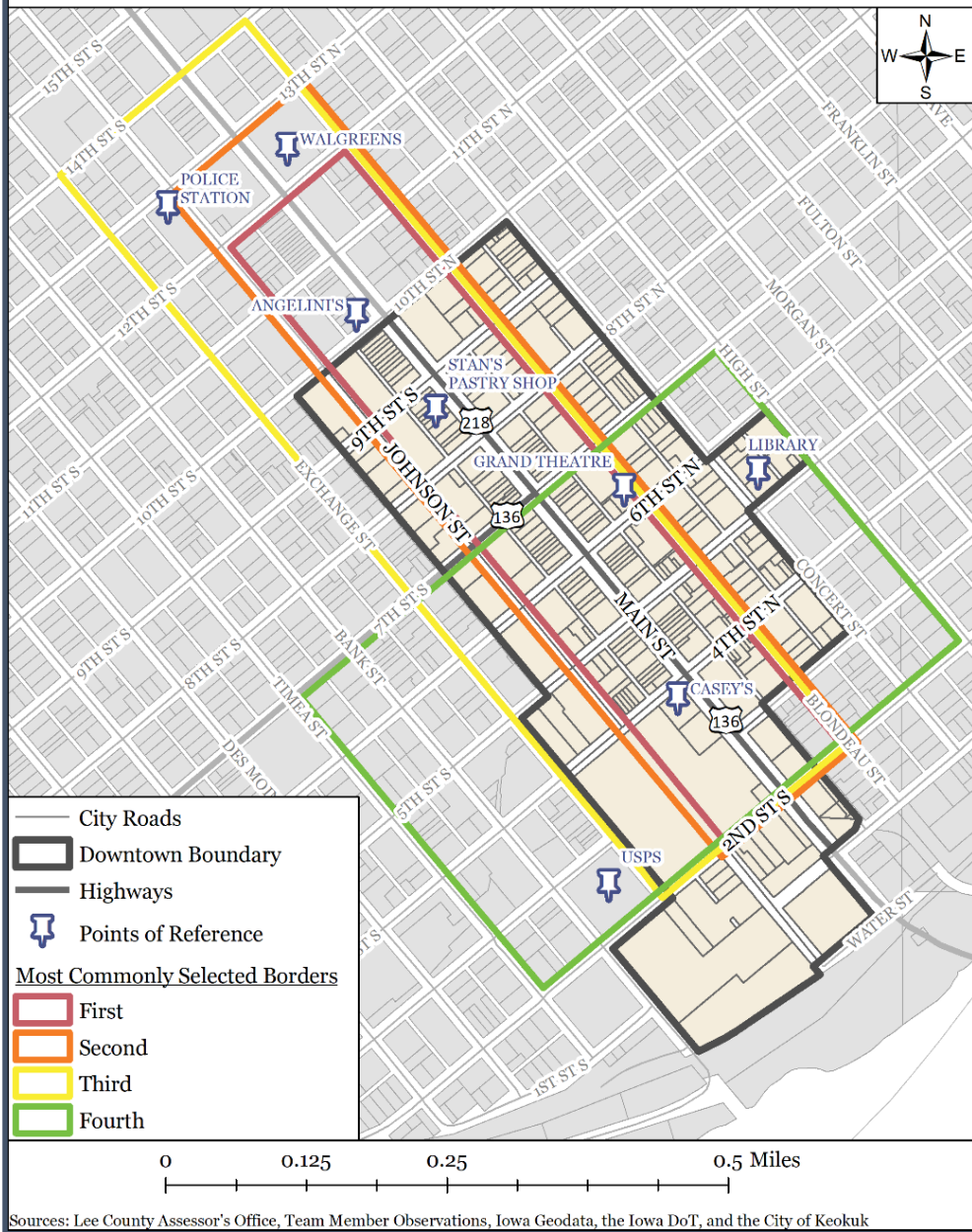
The survey distributed did not reach a truly representative sample of Keokuk. Per the US Census Bureau 2017 estimates, Keokuk's population is comprised of 50.5% female and 49.5% male (World, 2019). The questionnaire gathered responses from a demographic of 60% female, 39% male, and 1 respondent identifying as "other." Census statistics referenced only reflect this demographic for the City of Keokuk and do not take into consideration that attendees from both events were also comprised of regional residents *and* visitors. The purpose of this survey was not to obtain feedback from strictly Keokuk residents. The team was searching for internal *and* external points of view to provide a more robust view of the Main Street corridor, and those attributes that would make it more attractive to both residents *and* visitors. The results from this survey helped to guide the research that lead to the final recommendations.

The map to the right, was provided to respondents limiting their scope to an area that encompassed perimeters previously defined in other plans. It should be noted that the location of Walgreens was accidentally labeled incorrectly on this map- it is actually located in the center of the block contained within Main, Blondeau, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets. Respondents who did not immediately notice this on their own, were informed prior to providing their input.



Source: Authors with Google Maps

## Results from the Downtown District Survey



The areas which were most often considered to be "downtown" by the respondents are outlined here, with the most common in red at 2<sup>nd</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, Johnson, and Blondeau Streets.

## Goal One

Determine where respondents consider the downtown district to be.

An understanding of what area is defined by terms such as "downtown district" or "Main Street corridor" is vital to ensuring the correct issues in the correct locations are addressed. The study area was identified by project stakeholders in their initial Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities (IISC) project application and has been amended throughout the project to its current iteration. The study area defined by Keokuk project partners is slightly different than the area defined in the 2018 *Keokuk Comprehensive Plan* and neither of those is the same as the perimeter defined by Main Street Keokuk, Inc.

For this reason, the planning team felt it necessary to ask respondents within what perimeter they were referring to when asked questions about downtown Keokuk. 84 of the 92 respondents outlined the area which they considered to be the downtown on a map provided to them on the backside of the survey. Those outlined maps were then copied and layered on top of one another in Photoshop. Using decreased opacities, streets that were marked with the highest frequency appeared through the layers with greater intensity, thus providing a set of streets that respondents considered to be the area they envisioned when answering questions about the downtown.

## Goal Two

Determine if the Main Street corridor is regularly visited by respondents.

A successful plan is built around the input and support of the individuals and groups who are most affected by it. By determining the frequency with which a location is visited, an informed assumption as to whether the city could gather enough buy-in from the community can be made. To this end, respondents were asked how often they visited downtown Keokuk with response options being daily, weekly, or monthly. 57 of the 90 respondents said they are downtown daily and 25 are in the district weekly.



## Goal Three

Determine if respondents would live in downtown Keokuk in its current state.

One indication of a community's perception of the safety, physical conditions, and overall attractiveness of its Main Street corridor is whether or not residents would consider it to be a livable space for themselves and their families. When asked if they would consider living in downtown Keokuk as it is today, 56 of the 89 respondents replied 'no' and one was unsure.



## Goal Four

Determine which amenities and attractions are appealing to respondents.

The survey asked respondents to list amenities and attractions they would like to see in the downtown. Responses were then organized into "suggestion" groups that made repeat appearances such as Dog Park, Youth Focus, and Tourist Attractions. The three most desired amenities by respondents of this survey were retail and businesses, food option, and physical activity related. Specific suggestions were also supplied such as boutique shops, mom-and-pop stores, a small grocery store with fresh food, food trucks, and physical activity space for teens.



## Summary

### Defined the spatial perimeter that respondents define as the downtown.

Most often, respondents identified the downtown as being the 20 city blocks that immediately line Main Street from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Streets. This perception gives this project insight into the effectiveness of past efforts by the city to establish a defined Main Street corridor. As the project progressed, ways in which various Main Street organizations, as well as the city itself, can create a well-articulated space that every resident and visitor will clearly and consistently define as Keokuk's downtown were identified.

### Concluded that downtown is a location in which most respondents have a vested interest.

Support and promotion of a revitalization plan goes much further than city officials and local business owners. Local and regional residents, as well as passersby, play a vital role in assisting with the implementation and success of a downtown plan *provided* they feel it is a project that has some benefit for themselves and their families. Because 63% of respondents find themselves in downtown Keokuk on a daily basis, it can be reasonably assumed that the revitalization plan will attract a sufficient amount of buy-in to make the project worth the effort.

### Determined that respondents are not interested in living downtown in its current state.

In addition to learning that only a small portion of respondents consider downtown Keokuk livable, specific insights were gathered that will help us direct additional future public outreach surrounding this subject. Respondents who indicated that they would not live on the Main Street corridor were asked to give a brief reason why. This revealed that they feel the downtown is unattractive, "sketchy", loud, and that there is too much traffic to consider it as a livable space. This plan explores ways to change these perceptions and provide options for creating a downtown district that is worthy of residency.

### Assessed which amenities respondents would like to have downtown.

When asked what respondents would like to see in downtown Keokuk, the answers were remarkably humble and presented achievable and reasonable asks. Residents and visitors are not expecting extravagant or high-end businesses to appear downtown. They are simply asking for additional variety and increased quantities of amenities that are already there. Retail and business uses are sparse, but they do exist. Food options are extremely limited, but they are peppered throughout the downtown. Of the top three scoring suggestions, recreational and sporting activities is a new community desire for the Main Street corridor.

### Event #3 Riverview Park Area Consensus Workshop

Friday, January 17, 2020

Team members were invited to sit in on and participate in a workshop run by Keokuk Area Chamber of Commerce Director, Shelley Oltmans. The purpose of this meeting was to gain insights from participants about the structural and social history of the area around and including Riverview Park. Groups were asked to reimagine the space and to describe the amenities and experiences they felt would make the space more enjoyable. This was an opportunity for the team to hear residents speak candidly about their frustrations and concerns as they worked together to develop a vision plan for the area.

13 stakeholders from the Keokuk community shared knowledge and experiences from their past to help form a comprehensive understanding of the area. This information was helpful in providing a glimpse into why some past projects may have failed and why others were wildly successful. This information was used to help inform best practices and final recommendations for most effective catalytic development options for the Riverview Park parcel. Meeting minutes from that workshop are provided in Appendix E.



Groups discuss sample renderings and possible project roadblocks in a breakout session in the Art Center located in the basement of the Keokuk Public Library. Source: Authors.

### Event #4 Catalyst Feasibility Presentation and Survey

Monday, April 13, 2020

A brief presentation and follow-up survey to assess catalytic development feasibility for the City of Keokuk was presented to a select group of stakeholders in decision-making or influential roles. Feedback provided additional background into past development options and helped to bolster some project ideas while eliminating others.



*Consensus decision-making is a process that builds trust and creates ownership and commitment. An effective consensus process (consensus-building) is inclusive and engages all participants. Consensus decisions can lead to better quality outcomes that empower the group or community to move forward to create their future together (Hefte, 2020).*



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# Recommendations

Although specifically focused on the downtown study area, the recommendations provided hereafter reflect options that can be implemented throughout the city. As illustrated in the Methodology and Catalytic Development Options sections of this document, a wide variety of data was collected to ensure that the recommendations provided are evidence based and data-driven. Those efforts include an intensive internet research, a windshield survey, a city-owned parcel assessment, a case study review, public input, a transportation analysis, and an ordinance review.

This chapter is divided into five sections; Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Economic Development Through Placemaking, and Catalytic Development Options. A brief description of each, and indication of color coding for individual sections is provided at right.

## Land Use

Recommendations in the Land Use category encompass topics such as zoning and districting provisions and permitted uses.

## Transportation

Recommendations in the Transportation category address issues such as streetscaping, pedestrian lighting, and parking requirements.

## Housing

Recommendations in the Housing category include features such as rental permitting, vacancy fees, and maintenance inspections.

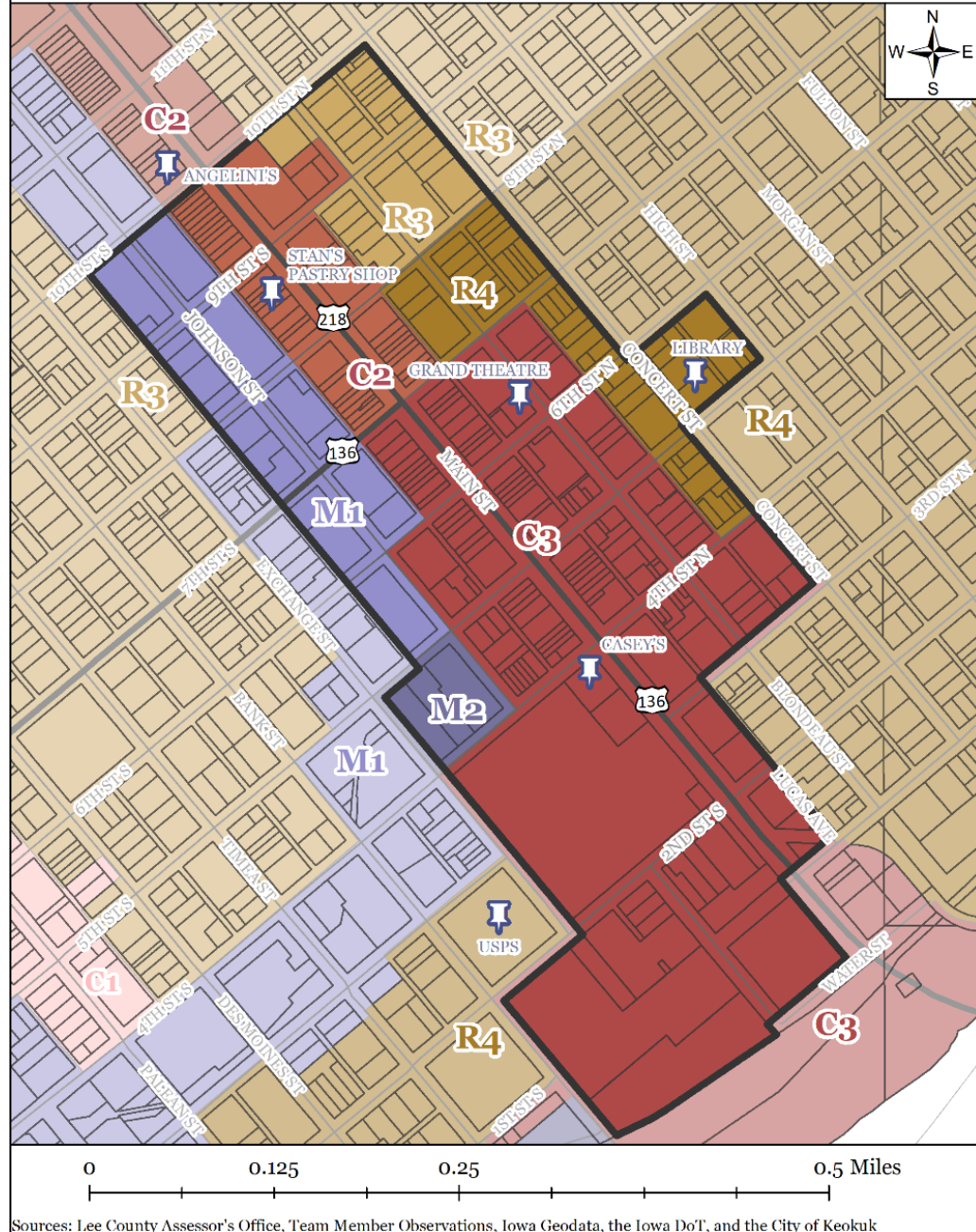
## Economic Development Through Placemaking

Recommendations in the Economic Development Through Placemaking category touch on such topics as tourism, recreation, and beautification.

## Catalytic Development Options

Recommendations in the Catalytic Development Options category provide city- and nonprofit-initiated development possibilities.

## Zoning in and Around the Downtown Study Area



This chapter presents a Land Use section which addresses objectives and recommendations specifically related to general ordinance and zoning policies as a way of managing, organizing, and tending to downtown assets, potential assets, liabilities, and weakness. Proposed improvement strategies are informed by best practices, case studies, public engagement, and community objectives prioritized in Keokuk's 2018 *Comprehensive Plan*. Additional implementation recommendations are found in the Transportation, Housing, and Economic Development through Placemaking sections. Policy amendments will provide officials with modern, adaptive tools that are considered best practice for enabling downtown improvement. All recommendations in this chapter list supporting objectives and tasks found in the comprehensive plan and can be found in Appendix C.

Economic and demographic changes in Keokuk have led to high vacancies of aging downtown storefronts and lots, as well as the deterioration of building facades which have reduced the appeal and overall use of the downtown area. Upper floors along the Main Street corridor are also underutilized. Presently, the city's ordinances lack the provision of authority to effectively hold these properties to a higher standard of livability and appeal to residents, tourists, pedestrians, and other potential sources of economic opportunity. The architectural design standards in Keokuk's Code of Ordinances serve as broad design preferences rather than a design template that reinforces an attractive downtown vision. It also lacks parameters for tracking the existence of commercial and rental properties, downtown-specific historic preservation, and occupancy standards. A lack of such provisions has led to the deterioration of some of the downtown's unique historical assets and a lack of tools to ensure quality and safe redevelopment.

## Land Use Recommendations

### Recommendation One

#### Allow first-floor residential housing as a special use

Amending the zoning ordinance to allow first-floor residential as a special use, that requires permit review and a public hearing before the board of adjustment, could be an excellent way for the City to encourage use of existing, vacant structures and store fronts along the Main Street corridor. Without a downtown-specific zoning overlay however, this special use could be administered within any zone specified anywhere in Keokuk. C-1, C-2, and C-3 zones may be conducive to first-floor residential uses. Although Keokuk has cumulative zoning, a policy with special provisions that apply to first floor residential uses may be desired. Preferably, first-floor residential use would not be permitted on the street-fronting side of a structure/store front. Living quarters should be structurally separated from other uses on the same floor and built in conformance to building code safety standards.

#### Plans of Reference

##### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Facilitate housing development in areas with existing streets and utility systems in place;  
Update local ordinances where necessary to better facilitate development.

### Recommendation Two

#### Create a new downtown mixed-use zoning district

One major finding of the best practices and case study research indicates that application of mixed-use zones within downtown districts increases usage, pedestrian activity, and economic development along Main Street corridors. Currently, Keokuk's cumulative zoning code, with the exception of F-1 and F-2 Districts, allows mixed-uses in all zones of higher intensity above R-4. This is a strength of Keokuk's zoning code; however, the creation of a downtown-specific, mixed-use zone may further support the Future Land Use Map's objectives of increasing mixed-use and multifamily residential uses near the downtown.

Applying this zone to the Main Street corridor allows the community to specifically tailor the district's allowed uses and other requirements to achieve the community's vision for the downtown. Various uses allowed in R-3, R-4, C-1, and C-2 Districts may be allowed on ground floors while the upper floors of structures may be used for residential dwellings.

#### Plans of Reference

##### **2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Strengthen historic downtown retail district; Increase upper floor development

##### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Facilitate housing development in areas with existing streets and utility systems in place;  
Address the housing needs of individual segments of the population, based on age, household type, and income; Ensure that a variety of housing types are available, in addition to traditional single-family dwellings and apartments.



**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan task(s) this recommendation supports:**

Aggressively pursue infill residential development in the City's older, Pre-World War II neighborhoods; Pursue housing developments that can accommodate the demands of young professionals and their families; Encourage and facilitate the development of additional downtown upper-story housing units; Update the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, to better reflect 21st Century best practices, and become compatible with the desired vision for future land use and development patterns

### **Recommendation Three**

#### **Amend various permitted uses in zones that exist in the downtown**

Keokuk's ordinances provide for cumulative zoning which allows less intense uses within higher intensity zones; therefore, a property may be zoned for a higher intensity use but only operate in a low intensity capacity. In some areas, for example, a small florist shop allowed in the C-1 (Local Commercial) zone may operate on a parcel within a much higher intensity, M-1 zone (Light Industrial). If adjacent to a C-1 zone, an M-1 property should be required to apply for rezoning to bring the parcel into conformance with the lower intensity vision for the downtown that is reflected in the Future Land Use Map and 2018 Comprehensive Plan. This would occur at the time development of a lower intensity use is proposed. Additionally, permitted uses in some zones may be amended to achieve the community's vision for the downtown. These include:

#### **C-2 (General Commercial) District:**

Remove milk distribution stations, frozen food lockers, used car sales and storage, and drive in theaters from permitted uses as a text amendment to the zoning ordinance. Creation of non-conforming uses should be avoided if possible, but if they are created, they should be allowed as until there is a proposed change of the use of the property. Most of these provisions are not modern and are more intense and dissimilar than

what is allowed in other researched Main Street corridors. Instead, allow these uses within C-3 zones and move uses such as small bakeries, from C-3 into C-2 zones. In addition, long-term, on-site storage containers and trailers should not be allowed in C-2 Districts, which is currently allowed by City Code Chapter 20.66.020. Instead, the short-term storage described in Chapter 20.66.030 should be observed. This provision provides more details regarding limitations and lengths of time on-site storage is allowed.

#### **C-3 (Central Business) District:**

For currently-zoned, C-3, downtown parcels, applicants should be required to undergo rezoning from C-3 to C-2 at the time of new development proposals. This process better reflects the objectives of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan & Future Land Use map as long as rezoning does not result in illegal spot zoning. Much of downtown is zoned C-3. Many C-3 uses are more intense than what is characteristic of a downtown. The Central Business District nomenclature for the C-3 zone seems inappropriate. Many uses allowed in this district are almost industrial intensity and not typical downtown small business, retail, or service-oriented uses.

#### **Plans of Reference**

#### **2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Strengthen the historic downtown retail district

#### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Update local ordinances where necessary to better facilitate development.

#### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan strategy this recommendation supports:**

Update the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, to better reflect 21st Century best practices, and streamline the desired vision for future land use and development patterns.

## Recommendation Four

### Adopt a Downtown PUD Overlay Zone

Applying Planned Unit Development (PUD) overlay zones are best practice for ensuring cohesive downtown development, as seen in the case study communities and across the nation. This would be an effective way to create spatial continuity, increase historic preservation, apply design standards, increase mixed-use, and allow first floor residential use within specified areas.

#### Plans of Reference

##### **2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Strengthen historic downtown retail district; Develop and adopt a plan for various city codes and for expansion of future retail/commercial development; Increase upper floor development

##### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Pursue strategies for improving the aesthetics and quality of life within neighborhoods; Ensure that a variety of housing types are available, in addition to traditional single-family dwellings and apartments; Focus on Keokuk's history as a tourism generator, as well as a marketing and community branding tool; Establish one or more National Historic Districts to aid in the preservation and reuse of downtown buildings.

##### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan task(s) this recommendation supports:**

Update the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, to better reflect 21st Century best practices, and become compatible with the desired vision for future land use and development patterns; Establish one or more National Historic Districts to aid in the preservation and reuse of downtown buildings; Embrace Historic Preservation as a ComDev resource.

## Recommendation Five

### Apply more specific and enforceable design standards with a Downtown PUD Overlay Zone & design packet/plan

A PUD floating zone would provide flexibility in usage of vacant store fronts if coupled with enforceable design standards for developers. The city's existing design standards are vague and unenforceable, lacking a promotion of cohesive community vision for the downtown. Design standards should protect and increase public and private investments as seen in the Dubuque, Iowa case study. Design templates and criteria should be included within an ordinance for a PUD overlay and supplementary design guide document. A PUD can be applied in such a way that guidelines and templates are adaptable, so undue cost is not placed upon developers in order to meet the standards for a community's cohesive aesthetic vision. This would be a long-term task for the community, and it may be more effective when there is higher demand for downtown commercial spaces.

#### Plans of Reference

##### **2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Strengthen historic downtown retail district; Develop and adopt a plan for various city codes and for expansion of future retail/commercial development; Increase upper floor development

##### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Pursue strategies for improving the aesthetics and quality of life within neighborhoods

##### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan task(s) this recommendation supports:**

Amend city ordinances to provide for aggressive, yet efficient enforcement of residential properties

## Recommendation Six

### Perform a historic asset survey

A distinct advantage that Keokuk possesses in its downtown is an abundance of historical structures. Visually, many of the buildings within the study area appear to have historical value. As a future project, the city could consider hiring a consultant to complete a full historic asset survey document for the downtown district to identify a downtown historic district boundary. Information determined by such a survey may be submitted to the U.S. Department of Interior's National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) with the objective of receiving a Historic District designation in the downtown. Obtaining such a designation would make certain properties eligible for tax credits that can help subsidize preservation projects and property maintenance. In this project's Iowa case study communities of Dubuque, Valley Junction, and Burlington, nearly all costs of preservation were covered by state and federal funding as a result of possessing NRHP district designations in their downtowns.

### Plans of Reference

**2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Strengthen historic downtown retail district; Increase upper floor development

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Focus on Keokuk's history as a tourism generator, as well as a marketing and community branding tool; Establish one or more National Historic Districts to aid in the preservation and reuse of downtown buildings

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan task(s) this recommendation supports:**

Establish one or more National Historic Districts to aid in the preservation and reuse of downtown buildings; Embrace Historic Preservation as a ComDev resource

## Recommendation Seven

### Apply for NRHP Historic District designation or Adopt a proprietary formal Historic District

The city must evaluate whether to register a district with the NRHP or to adopt a proprietary historic district boundary overlay within its ordinance. If an official downtown historic district is identified and assessed, management practices to prioritize preservation may be implemented within the district so that the character of Keokuk's unique historical assets may be protected in perpetuity. This should be done in such a way that, even if the district is not eligible for tax credits through an official NRHP District designation, preservation standards will not put undue financial stress on owners of historic properties due to overly stringent preservation standards. An analysis of historic district best practices would provide a basis for an effective historic preservation overlay district. Alternatively, if a PUD overlay is adopted, historic preservation standards could instead be prescribed within the PUD standards.

### Plans of Reference

**2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Strengthen historic downtown retail district; Increase upper floor development

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Focus on Keokuk's history as a tourism generator, as well as a marketing and community branding tool; Establish one or more National Historic Districts to aid in the preservation and reuse of downtown buildings

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan task(s) this recommendation supports:**

Establish one or more National Historic Districts to aid in the preservation and reuse of downtown buildings; Embrace Historic Preservation as a ComDev resource



## Recommendation Eight

### Create a historic preservation plan

Due to its wealth of historical assets, Keokuk could consider formulating a historic preservation plan for the downtown as well as the entire city. Such a plan would utilize community input to determine preservation priorities and project timelines for specific properties and historic districts throughout the town. The plan would consider long-term preservation goals and strategies that have not yet been identified. Among strategies that could be explored in a preservation plan, would be the formulation of a policy and procedure that would allow for city acquisition of derelict historic properties which are in danger of falling into complete disrepair. In conjunction with a historic asset survey, this task could be performed by a consultant that is well-versed in historic preservation policy.

### Plans of Reference

#### **2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Strengthen historic downtown retail district; Increase upper floor development

#### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Pursue strategies for improving the aesthetics and quality of life within neighborhoods; Focus on Keokuk's history as a tourism generator, as well as a marketing and community branding tool; Establish one or more National Historic Districts to aid in the preservation and reuse of downtown buildings

#### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan task(s) this recommendation supports:**

Establish one or more National Historic Districts to aid in the preservation and reuse of downtown buildings; Embrace Historic Preservation as a ComDev resource

## Recommendation Nine

### Hire a consulting firm to perform a major code of ordinance update

Officials with the City of Keokuk have expressed an interest in overhauling its zoning ordinance so that it requires modern development standards city-wide. This objective can help to improve the downtown and better facilitate health, safety, and economic development along the Main Street corridor. Planning consultant firms, which review modern best practices nation-wide to better inform ordinance amendments, often provide this service and reduce the labor burden that comprehensive code revisions have on existing city staff.

### Plans of Reference

#### **2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Develop and adopt a plan for various city codes and for expansion of future retail/commercial development

#### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Update local ordinances where necessary to better facilitate development; Pursue strategies for improving the aesthetics and quality of life within neighborhoods

#### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan task(s) this recommendation supports:**

Update the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, to better reflect 21st Century best practices, and become compatible with the desired vision for future land use and development patterns



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# Transportation

Many cities have been designed or altered to meet the mobility needs of cars more than pedestrians, and Keokuk is no exception. This is observable along the Main Street corridor and surrounding streets which lack adequate pedestrian facilities that provide a lively street experience for all users. Streetscaping is the process of incorporating natural features and built amenities to create a more hospitable and enjoyable space along city streets. Aesthetic and functional improvements go beyond storefronts and building facades to encompass sidewalks, crosswalks, furniture, lighting, and vegetation. These elements create an inviting atmosphere that is engaging, meaningful, and ultimately encourages economic growth which is vital for any downtown plan.

## Highway 218 Study

Created by the Sustainable Transportation Class at the University of Iowa in the fall of 2019, the Highway 218 study (<https://iisc.uiowa.edu/keokuk-main-street-state-highway-study>) looked into possible alternatives for the highway. The study recommended a new design for Main Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Street in to enhance the function of the road as the commercial and social district of the city. The main recommendations from the study include a 4- to 3-lane conversion, with a protected bike lane, and the creation of a designated truck route, with a conventional bike lane as a secondary option if a protected bike lane is determined to be too expensive. The treatments recommended in the study were developed with the goals of public safety and fostering connectivity within the community. Upon implementation, the 218 Study will directly benefit and elevate the pedestrian experience. This chapter provides recommendations for the streetscaping improvements touched upon in that study.



*Transportation needs for the City of Keokuk have drastically changed since the horse-drawn trolleys of the 1860's. Source: Keokuk Historians.*



# Transportation Recommendations

## Recommendation One

### Follow NACTO Sidewalk Guidelines

The main function of any sidewalk, especially those within an urban environment, is to serve as a safe pedestrian right-of-way that allows travel between destinations. When planning sidewalks to create better cities for people, sidewalks need to be viewed in three distinct roles:

- as part of the transportation infrastructure,
- as spaces for everyday life, and
- as leisure destinations (Ehrenfeucht & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2010).

Ultimately, the objective is to build quality infrastructure and provide adaptable spaces throughout the city while paying attention to the details that will impact community life but also improve how often and how far people are willing to walk.

With sidewalks being fundamental aspects of any urban area, there are standards that sidewalks should meet to accommodate the appropriate level of uses. NACTO (National Association of City Transportation Officials) has developed sidewalk guidelines that all cities should adhere to for effective usage and determining where improvements need to be made. Sidewalks are made up of zones which consist of the frontage, pedestrian through, street furniture/curb, and enhancement zones.

### Frontage zone:

A frontage zone is an extension of street-facing structures that consists of the entryways to the buildings and includes adjacent areas where sidewalk cafes and menu boards are often seen.

### Pedestrian through zones:

These are areas that are designed specifically for people to walk in. Sidewalks need to be at a minimum of 5 feet to provide a comfortable space as well as meeting ADA standards. Within a downtown commercial area, it is suggested that this zone be 8 to 12 feet depending on the volume of pedestrian traffic.

### Street furniture/curb zone:

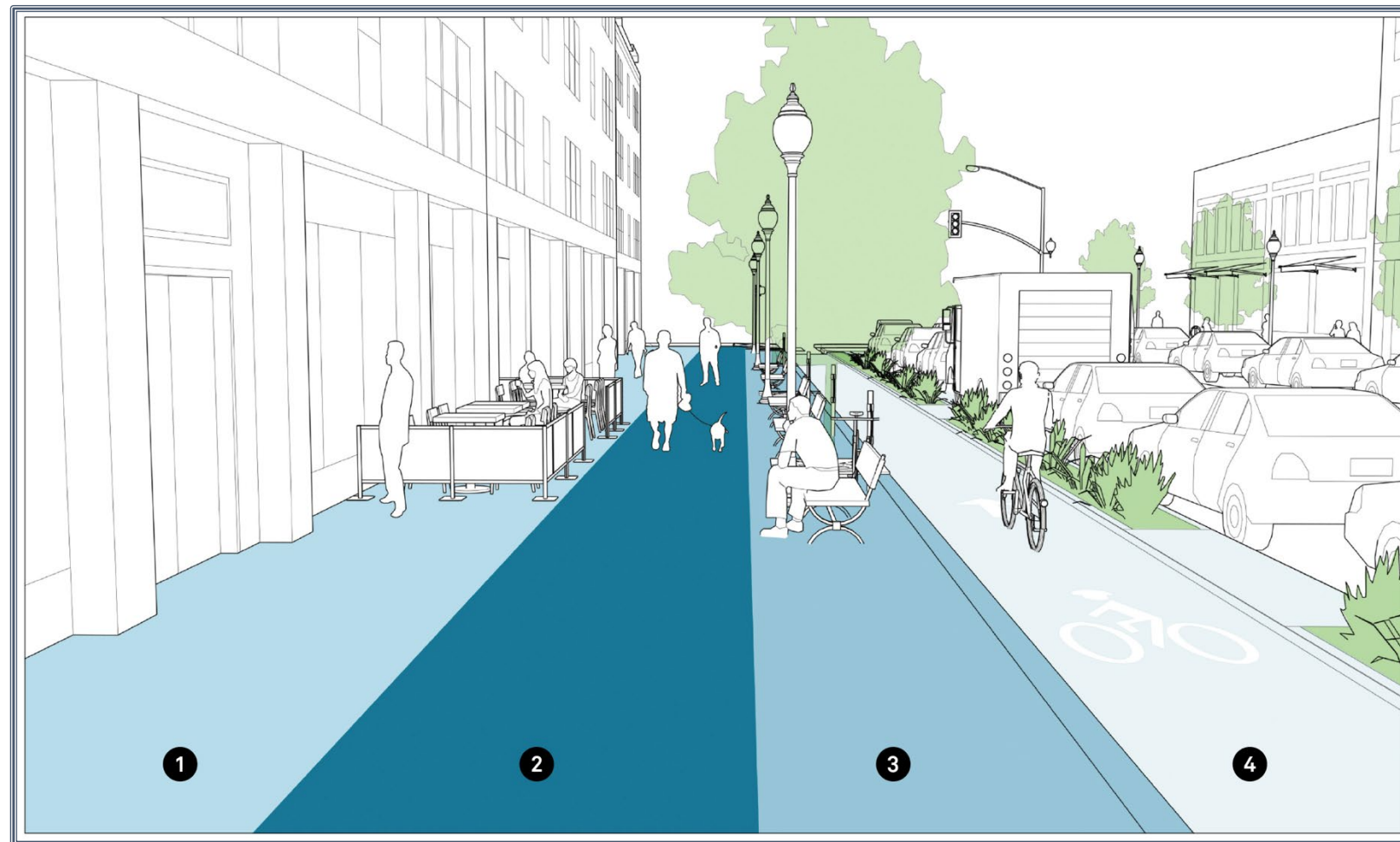
Sometimes referred to as a park strip, this is the area from the curb of the road up to the pedestrian through zone. Lighting, trees, and street furniture are often located within this section of the sidewalk.

### Enhancement zones:

Enhancement zones run immediately next to the sidewalk and include the curb, parking spaces, or a curbside bike lane.

Sidewalks should be scaled to pedestrian traffic just as roads are scaled for vehicles. Sidewalks need to be wide enough to provide a comfortable space for pedestrian traffic without overcrowding, yet small enough where they do not appear empty most of the time. Keokuk should reference these guidelines when making improvements to the streetscape and determining the location of artwork and furniture along the Main Street corridor. The guidelines provide for an uncluttered and consistent walking space for pedestrians while also developing a plan for streetscape maintenance and implementation.

In addition to following the sidewalk guidelines, Keokuk should utilize development agreements as seen in Dubuque, Iowa when making improvements to the streetscape. Benefitting both the city and business owners, this checks and balances approach leads to improved façades and better streetscapes that further economic development. Further discussion on these agreements is included in the Land Use chapter of this plan.



*This image represents the various zones that define an urban sidewalk. Source: NACTO*





*This portion of missing sidewalk on Concert Street is a direct access route for children walking to George Washington Elementary School. Source: Authors.*

## **Recommendation Two**

### **Provide Additional Landscaping**

Currently, there are no trees planted along the Main Street corridor in downtown Keokuk. The presence of trees in an urban environment is an important element for any revitalization and streetscape improvement strategy. Trees provide many benefits to the surrounding area such as improving the air quality, helping with storm water management, providing shade for pedestrians, and mitigating urban heat island effects. They also provide a sense of safety by creating a visually implied wall between the road and the sidewalk while also serving a subtle traffic calming technique that prevents tunnel vision.

Research has suggested that green streetscapes become an important component to business districts by contributing to a positive shopping experience. The University of Washington explored the role of trees in consumer environments with a focus on Main Streets. Results showed that consumer ratings of visual preference for places increased with the presence of trees. Results also indicated that, on average, consumers shopping in small cities claimed they were willing to pay 9% more for equivalent goods and services in business districts having trees. The presence of trees within an urban environment can be overlooked yet subconsciously have a great impact on the feel of an area and the choices people make. Properly maintained and thoughtfully placed trees add to the visual complexity of an environment.

Additional city ordinances should promote the presence of trees and additional landscaping. Street trees should be focused along the Main Street corridor and Blondeau Street and spaced between 15 to 50 feet apart dependent on the chosen species, fixed property lines, setback from the curb, and integration with streetlights. Landscaping should remain within the street furniture/curb zone adjacent to the curb which allows for a consistent pedestrian through zone and keeps tree canopies separated from buildings. Special consideration should be taken to determine the appropriate tree species to meet visual and maintenance requirements set by the city.



Concerns	Solutions
Trees blocking the view of signs and storefronts	Maintain and prune canopy to open views as trees grow.
Cost verses benefit	Higher up-front costs can be incurred, but as the tree grows it generates greater benefits every year.
Tree roots cracking sidewalks	Trees properly selected for root depth growth and adequate space keep roots from destroying pavement.
Upkeep is expensive	Picking the right tree for the right place and basic maintenance reduces future issues. Potentially, maintenance can be shared by the merchants within a district.

Source: Main Street News No. 263 August 2009 and Authors

### Plans of Reference

#### 2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:

Continue to address key efforts to improve the environment – air, water, and sound quality.

#### 2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:

Pursue strategies for improving the aesthetics and quality of life within neighborhoods

#### 2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan task(s) this recommendation supports:

Adopt a tree ordinance to encourage the use of attractive, yet easily manageable tree species in within the public right-of-way; Promote additional landscaping, public art and other beautification efforts in the downtown area.

Common Name	Genus Name	Minimum Spacing (feet)	Mature Height (feet)	Mature Spread (feet)
European Hornbeam**	Carpinus betulus	40	40	30
Hackberry	Celtis occidentalis	40	75	50
Ginkgo (male only)	Ginkgo biloba	50	60	35
Sycamore	Platanus occidentalis	40	100	50
Callery Pear	Pyrus calleryana	35	60	60
American Hophornbeam** (Ironwood)	Ostrya virginiana	25	40	20
<b>Maple</b>				
Freeman Maple	Acer X freemanii	30	50	45
Norway Maple	Acer platanoides	65	15	30
Black Maple	Acer nigrum	40	65	60
Sugar Maple	Acer saccharum	45	80	50
Greencolumn Maple	Acer nigrum 'Greencolumn'	25	50	20
<b>Honeylocust</b>				
Honeylocust, Thornless Skyline Honeylocust	Gleditsia triacanthos i. cv.	30	60	30
Moraine Honeylocust	Gleditsia triacanthos i. cv.		60	40
Imperial Honeylocust	Gleditsia Triacanthos var. inermis 'Imperial'	30	25	30
Shademaster Honeylocust	Gleditsia Triacanthos var. inermis 'Shademaster'	40	45	40
<b>Oak</b>				
Swamp White Oak** (High PH sensitive)	Quercus bicolor	50	75	60
Northern Red Oak	Quercus rubra	50	75	70
Burr Oak	Quercus macrocarpa	40	75	50
English Oak	Quercus robur	55	75	50
Scarlet Oak** (High PH sensitive)	Quercus coccinea	50	60	50
<b>Linden</b>				
American**	Tilia americana	35	70	45
Littleleaf**	Tilia cordata	30	50	35
Silver	Tilia tomentosa	50	50	40
American	Tilia americana 'Fastigiata'	30	50	30
Greenspire	Tilia cordata 'Greenspire'	30	45	30
Crimean	Tilia x euchlora	35	30	60
<b>Crabapple***</b>				
Adams	Malus 'Adams'	25	20	20
Adirondack	Malus Adirondack	20	18	10
Pink Spires	Malus 'Pink Spires'	15	12	10
Snowdrift	Malus 'Snow Drift'	20	20	15
Spring Snow	Malus 'Spring Snow'	20	20	15
White Candle	Malus 'White Candle'	12	18	8

\* Monoculture plantings may result in insect problems

\*\* Salt Sensitive

\*\*\*Dwarf species

List of optimal street tree species. Source: Iowa Statewide Urban Design and Specifications

## Recommendation Three

### Provide Functional Street Furniture

Properly scaled and well positioned street furniture can add to the comfort level of pedestrians and quaintness of an area. Serving as a welcoming invitation, they provide amenities for pedestrians while adding functionality. Furniture provides comfortable resting spaces that increase the opportunity for friendly eyes to linger longer on the street; in turn, this has the potential of decreasing crime. Street furniture should remain simple, utilizing cohesive color schemes for continuity across downtown. Grouping street furniture in intervals helps to avoid any visual clutter or obstructions to the pedestrian walkway.

The study area offers occasional benches outside of Joystix Rockade and along Blondeau Street near Meyers Courtyard, but this seating may be owned by adjacent property owners for use by customers. Publicly-owned seating options should be promoted along the Main Street corridor to provide abundant and consistent seating. Benches should also be harmonious in design and located within the street furniture/curb zone or the frontage zone of the sidewalk as well as oriented in a way which encourages comfortable socializing on each block.

### Plans of Reference

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Make Downtown an inviting space for people to come for lengthy, leisurely visits.

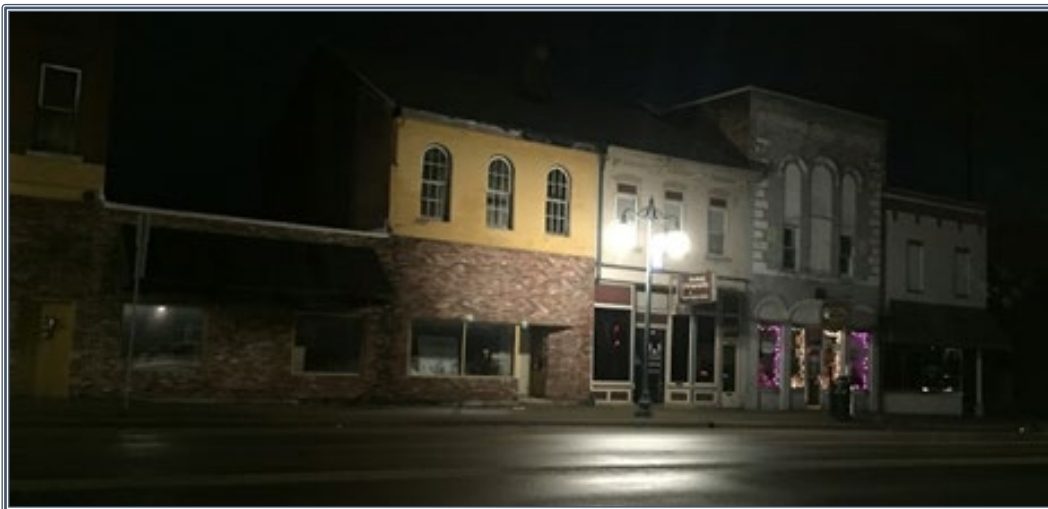


*Benches should be constructed of long-life materials such as composites or metal. Source: Wiscasset Downtown Project, MaineDOT.*

## Recommendation Four

### Provide Pedestrian Lighting

Lighting that focuses on the sidewalk allows pedestrians increased visibility which increases the sense of security and encourages people to use well-lit areas at night. Pedestrian-oriented street lighting is lower in height than standard street lighting at between 12 and 14 feet and spaced closer together at about 60 feet apart from each other (Ewing & Bartholomew, 2013). Lower and closer spaced lighting evenly distributes light along a sidewalk and avoids shadowed areas which contribute to a perception of danger. Thoughtfully placed street lighting can lead to reductions in fear and criminal activity and in turn, increase pedestrian street usage during evenings after dark (Farrington & Welsh, 2002). When it comes to street lighting, small details can make a big difference. The Federal Highway Administration recommends that white light should be used in pedestrian lighting as opposed to more traditional, visually distorting, yellow-tinted lighting. Additionally, streetlights can provide options for civic pride and add to the visual complexity of an area by providing a convenient place to hang signs and banners.



Main Street Keokuk after dark. Source: Authors.

Keokuk's current streetlights are staggered on both sides of Main Street at a distance of approximately 80 to 100 feet apart. This creates an alternating light and dark pattern along the sidewalk with the brightest areas being directly under the streetlights. Additional streetlights should be installed within the darkest spaces to ensure even and consistent pedestrian lighting throughout downtown. With the exception of a couple of intersections, Blondeau Street and Johnson Street lack the invitation and comforting effects of streetlamps. Johnson, which carries more industrial traffic, and Blondeau, which sees mostly residential flows, are not main roads that accommodate high volumes of pedestrian traffic; but they could provide spaces where people could pass through neighborhoods to reach the Main Street corridor. Increased lighting, with special attention given to intersections where conflicts between motorists and pedestrians are high, could add to the safety and usability of these roads.

### Plans of Reference

**2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Ensure the safety of our residents and visitors

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Make Downtown an inviting space for people to come for lengthy, leisurely visits; Enhance and expand the existing sidewalk network, to improve pedestrian mobility.

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan task(s) this recommendation supports:**

Promote additional landscaping, public art and other beautification efforts in the downtown area.



## Recommendation Four

### Reduce Dead Space

Dead space includes parking lots, long blank walls, vacant lots, reflective glass façades, and featureless, open spaces. These places are not ideal and considered “dead” because they give the impression that there is no one nearby. Dead streets make streetscapes less complex and ultimately less interesting. Blank walls in Keokuk are unavoidable but could be softened with plantings so their appearance will be less stark.

In addition to desolate walls, parking lots prevent an area from being actively used which leaves people with fewer reasons to visit the area. Therefore, parking lots along pedestrian-oriented streets should be separated with small walls or hedges to form a nice street edge. This is both complex and transparent for the comfort of the pedestrian. Landscape elements between parking lots and streets help to define the public realm, enhance the appearance of commercial districts, and diminish the visual impact parking lots have on pedestrian-oriented areas.

### Plans of Reference

#### **2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Increase the beauty and attractiveness of our business and residential areas; Ensure the safety of our residents and visitors.

#### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Make Downtown an inviting space for people to come for lengthy, leisurely visits.

#### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan task(s) this recommendation supports:**

Promote additional landscaping, public art and other beautification efforts in the downtown area.



*Image from Google Maps of the side of Riverview Mall along 4th Street.*



*Option for screening parking lots from sidewalks to enhance the public realm. Source: Landscape Design Guide for Parking Lots in the City of Milwaukee*

## Recommendation Five

### Encourage outdoor dining

Sidewalk cafes and outdoor dining are temporary dining or seating areas that occupy a portion of the sidewalk during an establishment's business hours. These contribute to a vibrant street environment and make an area more dynamic where people can walk, dine, and socialize. Outdoor dining and café spaces can be effective at any size and as simple as a couple of tables and chairs on the sidewalk. More complex spaces can incorporate seating areas with barriers, and provide more complexity to the streetscape. Sidewalk dining options are intended to be placed within the frontage zone (as mentioned under Sidewalk Guidelines) and act as a way to soften building edges and blur the distinction between the indoors and outdoors.

If sidewalk cafes are to be utilized by downtown establishments, they need to ensure compliance with Keokuk's ordinance 12.17.050 regarding pedestrian travel space requirements. The ordinance ensures that a minimum width of 5 feet must remain open and clear of obstacles so pedestrians can still comfortably walk through downtown. Additionally, Keokuk ordinance 12.20.30 indicates that currently, sidewalk cafes are only permitted within C-2, C-3 and C-4 and commercial districts, and all must abide by the Administrative Guide for Sidewalk Cafes and a Sidewalk Café Lease Agreement.

Because the portion of the Main Street corridor within the study area is zoned as C-2 or C-3, the city should promote the use of sidewalk cafés to enhance the public realm and encourage residents to patronize local restaurants. Restaurant and café owners who offer outdoor dining should comply with guidelines set by the city and allow for a minimum of 5 feet of unobstructed pedestrian passageway on the sidewalk.

While Keokuk does not prevent restaurants from having outdoor cafes, the restaurants do not utilize the opportunities. Currently, downtown Keokuk does not foster an enjoyable outdoor café environment with the loud traffic constantly going by and the lack of an enjoyable pedestrian environment.

In order to produce an outdoor environment that encourages outdoor dining, the city needs to first implement the recommendations that improve the streetscape as stated in this section as well as the recommendations from the Highway Study which reduces the lanes of traffic and trucks along Highway 218.

### Plans of Reference

**2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Offer a variety of options for entertainment, dining, the arts, and culture.

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Make Downtown an inviting space for people to come for lengthy, leisurely visits.



Sidewalk café. Source: Icons of Infrastructure.



Street café in Seattle, WA. Source: TheUrbanist

## Recommendation Six

### Ensure Sufficient Parking

Lively downtowns provide a balance between pedestrian space and convenient parking. A Main Street corridor that does not have parking in close proximity to local businesses has a decreased usage appeal; while, providing too much parking intrudes on pedestrian zones, increases dead zones, and negatively impacts the overall perception of the area. Downtown Keokuk aspires to be a regional center for year-round events for visitors, residents, and new businesses. Parking needs to be strategically located to allow for active pedestrian space while providing convenient parking options.

Parking options for a diverse group of users' needs to be provided and should utilize the space appropriately to ensure a consistent turnover. Downtown Keokuk currently has an overabundance of both on-street and off-street parking, leaving most spaces open during the day. Pedestrian counts decrease in small city settings as the amount of open parking increases. The oversupply of free parking makes driving less expensive than it should be and further skews travel choices among residents and visitors.

Parking needs to be considered comprehensively throughout downtown Keokuk. Short-term parking should be kept along Main Street for the flanking businesses, but time limits should be enforced to ensure rapid turnovers. Medium-term parking should be provided to allow parking for visitors or residents who wish to explore and experience the Main Street corridor at length.

Finally, long-term parking should be provided for employees and downtown residents. Keokuk should implement a hierarchy for downtown, on-street parking to ensure there is positive turnover for local businesses. Primary roads, such as Main Street, should be kept at the current 1-hour parking limit, but enforced to eliminate potential problems with low turnover for local businesses. Secondary streets; are connected to primary streets, are typically more heavily travelled than neighborhood (local) roads, and have a right-of-way large enough to accommodate on-street parking.

As Keokuk becomes more of a regional destination and the demand for parking increases, the city should look into options for paid parking. Too much free parking compacts the turnover rate with people who take spots and hold onto them for extended periods of time. Resistance to putting a price on previously free parking is strong but can be overcome via parking benefit districts. These districts, which would be mainly along the Main Street corridor, would use the funds generated by the parking fee for transportation and community improvements such as sidewalk cleaning, additional landscaping, and maintenance within the area. The establishment of these districts are more palatable to curbside shop owners and residents because there is a clear link between parking fees and the improvements within their district. Having a price on parking forces drivers to think about their choices of where to park and for how long. If people want to stay for longer periods of time downtown, they would utilize the off-street public parking options which would encourage more pedestrians in the downtown area as they walk to their desired location rather than only parking in front of it.



All on-street parking signage should clearly state the time limit for parking and timeframes when parking limits are enforced, both on primary and secondary streets. There should also be an increased level of wayfinding signage to lead drivers to public parking lots as well as signage outside the lot to inform drivers if it is a public or private lot. Parking needs will need to be reassessed as development and pedestrian traffic change over time.

#### Plans of Reference

**2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Improve Keokuk's streets, parking, utilities, airport, and other similar infrastructure.

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Pursue engineering adjustments where necessary to improve safety, traffic flow, and economic viability of the surrounding area; Bolster Keokuk's strength as a regional hub for retail and services.

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan task(s) this recommendation supports:**

Identify opportunities to reduce the negative impact of through traffic on the Downtown social atmosphere; Seek direct input from businesses and shoppers to gauge quantitative demand for presently missing resources and services.



*Parking meters were installed along Main Street in 1951 and were lucrative until the Keosippi Mall provided visitors with free parking spaces. Once the meters were removed in the late 1970's and the funds they produced ceased, so did the sidewalk and streetscaping repairs that benefitted local businesses and pedestrians. Source: Keokuk Historians.*

## Recommendation Seven

### Optimize Pedestrian Connectivity

Within a good walking environment, there is a relationship between the opposite sides of the street and between blocks as visitors participating in activities travel from one side of the street to the other from one block to the next. The easier a street is to cross, the better the street functions for both pedestrians and local businesses.

While there is no absolute rule for crosswalk spacing, NACTO dictates that crosswalks should be provided at a minimum of 200 feet from one other. All sides of a signalized intersection should have marked crosswalks, unless pedestrians are prohibited from crossing at that location, and intersections should include pedestrian signals with a countdown. Pedestrian countdown signals allow for a predictable crossing environment which provides an adequate warning to pedestrians crossing a roadway. Because they are more visible to vehicles and have been known to increase the yielding behavior of motorists, NACTO also recommends high visibility ladder, or zebra, crosswalk markings as opposed to the standard parallel or dashed pavement marking.

As traffic speed and volume increase, the level of protection demanded by pedestrians also increases. Keokuk's Main Street corridor supports high traffic volume and provides expected pedestrian access, with signalized crossings preserving a safe walking environment.

Highway 136/218 has traffic lights approximately every 300 feet from one another and are paired with standard parallel crosswalk markings and pedestrian crossing signals. When pedestrian traffic is low or intermittent and traffic volumes are lower, un-signalized treatments are just as safe as a marked crosswalk would be. However, while streets with low volume, low speeds, and few lanes are not required to have a marked crosswalk at intersections, crosswalks are beneficial around major public buildings, schools, and parks.

Due to its industrial nature, Johnson Street is not required to have marked crosswalks. On the other hand, Blondeau Street would benefit from additional crosswalks and pavement marking symbols especially around important buildings such as the Court House, Grand Theatre and George Washington Elementary School. Regardless of marked or unmarked crossings, increased street lighting should be provided at all intersections with additional emphasis taken at crosswalks.

### Plans of Reference

**2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

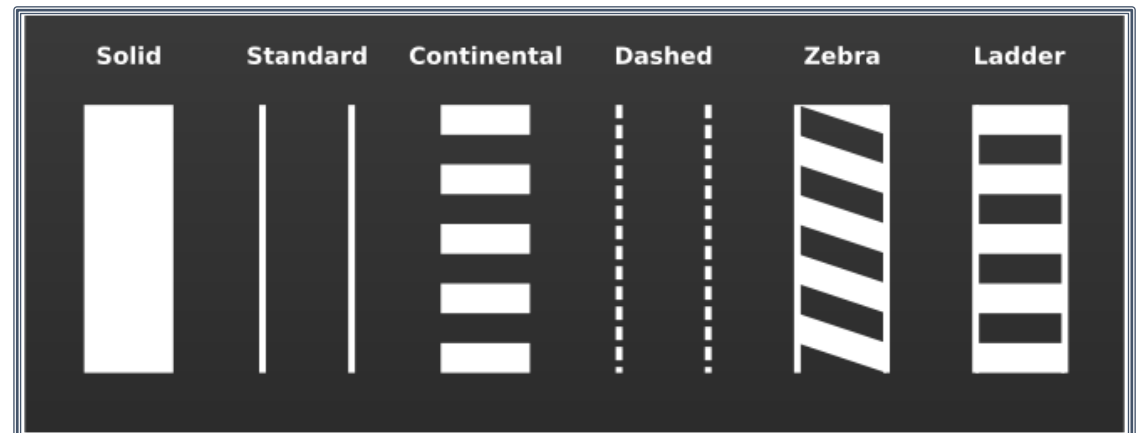
Improve connections between the river and downtown.

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Enhance and expand the existing sidewalk network, to improve pedestrian mobility.

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan task(s) this recommendation supports:**

Continue to incorporate sidewalk and pedestrian crossing improvements into sewer separation construction projects; Prioritize sidewalk and trail projects that connect residential neighborhoods with commercial retail districts, major employers, and civic destinations.



Source: SF Better Streets





# Right-of-Way Improvement Inventory

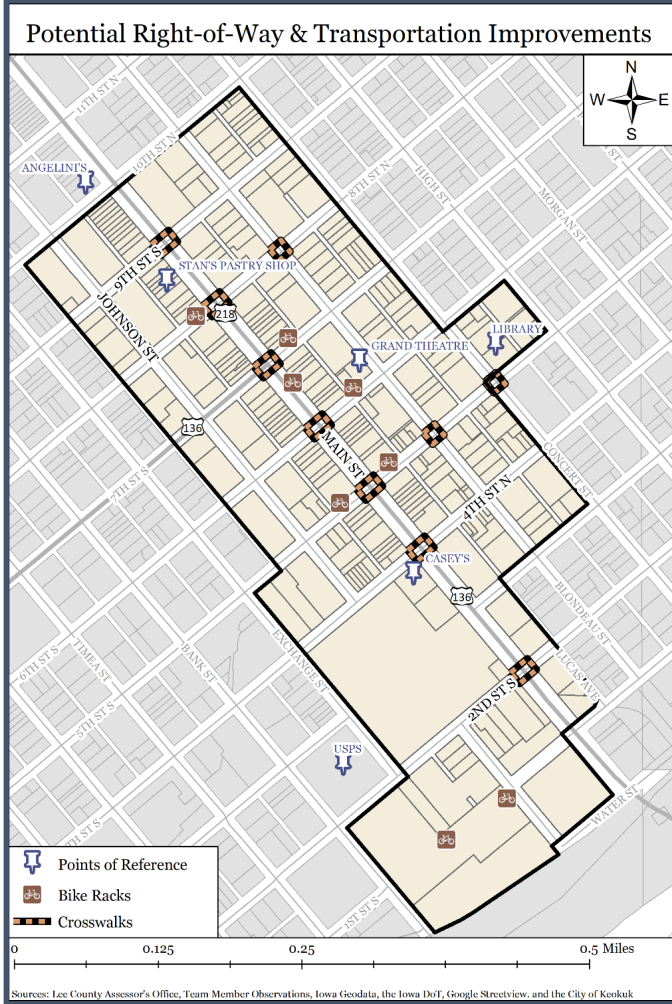
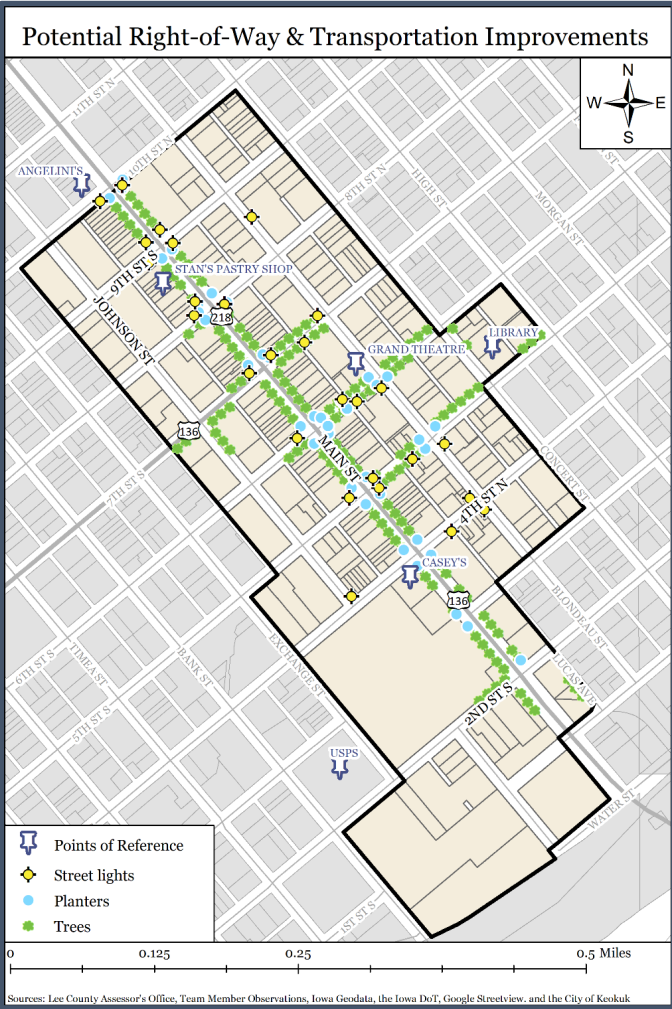
To identify possible improvements in the pedestrian spaces of the study area, a right-of-way improvement inventory was performed. As indicated by case study communities, improvements to the public right-of-way of a downtown are an effective way to raise adjacent property values and increase the appeal of a Main Street corridor. Such improvements address the visibility, identity, and continuity of the downtown for pedestrians, shoppers, and visitors.

Based on a walking assessment of the study area and, in accordance with SUDAS and NACTO standards, possible locations for new bike racks, planters, street trees, crosswalks, stop signs, and streetlights were identified.

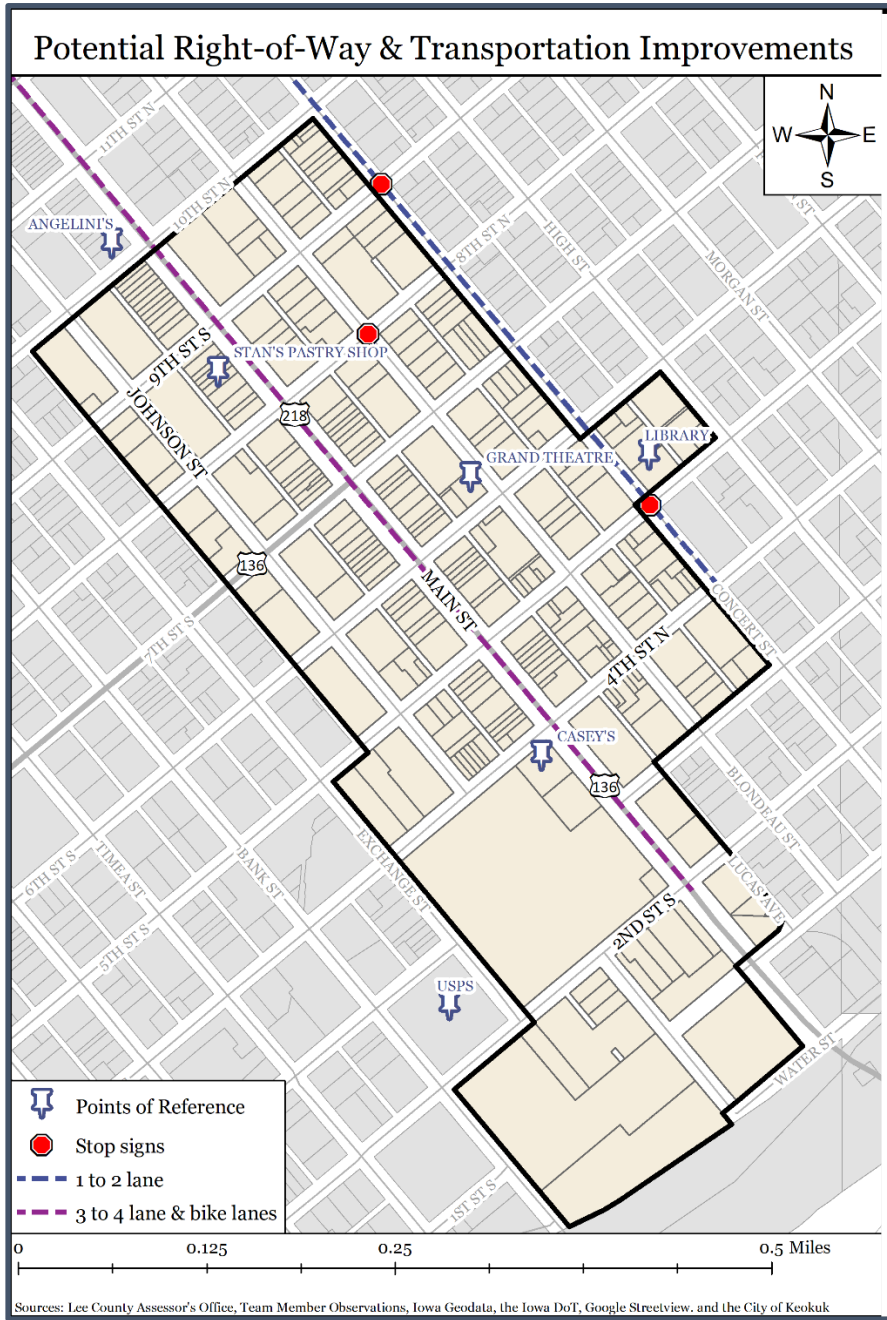
**Bike racks:**  
New bike racks should be placed near Riverview Park, close to operating businesses, and throughout the study area.

**Crosswalks:**  
Should be painted at every intersection with stoplights on Main Street and near attractions such as the library.

**Planters:**  
Improved planters may be placed at every corner along Main Street.







**Stop signs:**

Added stop signs are proposed at the intersections of Concert and 5th Streets, Concert and 9<sup>th</sup> Streets, and Blondeau and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets, to conform with the proposed additions in the 2018 Comprehensive Plan.

**Lane conversions:**

Also, in accordance with the comprehensive plan and the 2019 Keokuk Main Street State Highway 218 Study, a 1- to 2-way lane conversion is proposed along Concert Street, and a 4- to 3- lane conversion with added bike lanes is proposed along Main Street.

**Street trees:**

Planting street trees is also proposed along both sides of Main Street for the entirety of the study area as well as in locations along adjacent streets where trees and amenities are lacking. On average, approximately six trees could be placed along each block, but the city may elect to plant less.

**Streetlamps:**

Pedestrian lighting should be placed 60 feet apart and in currently unlit locations where pedestrian traffic could be expected and be 12-14 feet in height.



Ideal placement of pedestrian lighting from Decatur, Illinois. Source: <https://glencoetuneup.com/2016/02/19/urban-design-101/>



Simple yet decorative street planters can add to the allure of a Main Street corridor. Source: <https://www.terracastproducts.com/commercial-planters/>



Decorative bike racks can be functional, artistic, and reflect a piece of history. Source: <https://www.littlerock.gov/for-residents/bikeped-little-rock/projects/bike-parking/artistic-bike-racks-in-soma/>



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# Housing

Revitalization plans frequently include strategies to provide housing downtown. “Diversifying the types of activities in your downtown gives people many reasons to come to the neighborhood. Economic development professionals talk about creating an “18-hour” place—that is, a neighborhood bustling with activities in the morning, afternoon, and evening, seven days a week. To do that, focus on jobs, housing, and retail” (SmartGrowth, 2015).

According to Main Street Keokuk, there are approximately 315 residential units that are in various stages of renovation and code compliance in Downtown Keokuk. According to the windshield survey, 23% of the study area is strictly residential and an additional 15% is classified as mixed use. There is a mix of standalone single-family homes that are in residential neighborhoods on the edge of the downtown study area and second story residential units above commercial spaces along Main Street. Most of the buildings in the study area are historic two- and three-story buildings. Roughly a third of the buildings appear vacant, but vacancy rates are difficult to determine because of outdated property assessor information.

Based on water records and a windshield survey, it was verified that the overall vacancy of downtown structures in 2019 was at least 30%. According to an article titled *The Empty House Next Door*, vacancy rates higher than 30% are deemed extremely high. Vacancy above 20% is classified as hyper vacant. Hyper vacant areas signal that market conditions have degraded to the extent that vacant properties are as likely or more likely to remain vacant and be abandoned, instead of being reused. Most of the structures are made of brick and have ornate detailing and windows. Many were built in the early 1900’s with some modifications in the 1960’s and 1970’s. In the 1960’s several blocks of historic three- and four-story buildings were demolished along 3rd and Main Street to make way for what is now the River City Mall, parking lot and Mississippi Terrace. Mississippi Terrace is Keokuk’s only public housing building. It has 212 units; rent is set at 30% of tenant income. There is one other low-income housing building located within the study area. The Keokuk Senior Lofts are at 925 Main Street, see image. Completed in 2017, they are one of the few new construction projects in Keokuk. The building has 45 units and is income restricted. Rents range from \$415-\$750.



*A row of historical storefronts that could provide 2<sup>nd</sup> floor residential housing at 7<sup>th</sup> and Main Streets. Source: Authors.*



*Senior Housing Lofts, an example of new construction in the downtown area at 10<sup>th</sup> and Main Streets. Source: Authors.*

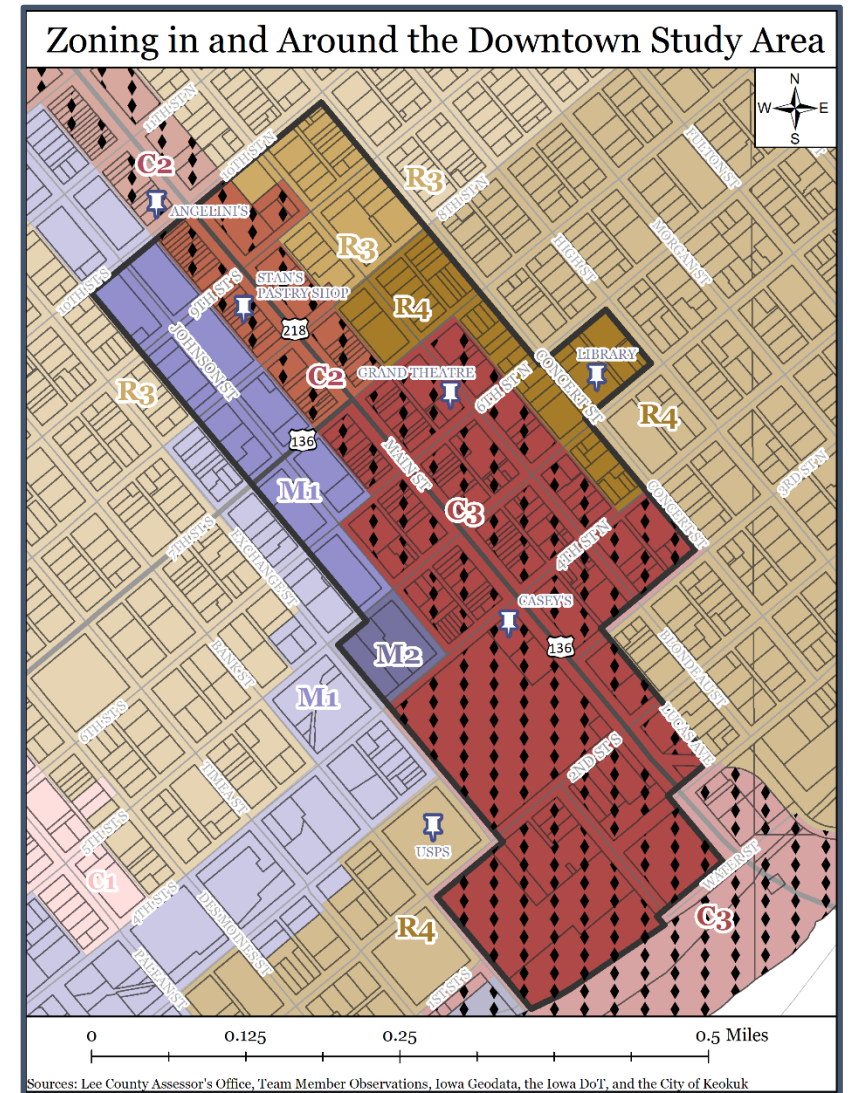
Downtown revitalization plans frequently cite the importance of providing housing options in the downtown area. This serves a dual purpose of increasing housing options for residents and providing a local customer base for economic development activities. Providing housing downtown also increases foot traffic, improves safety via an “eyes on the street” approach, creates a sense of vitality to the community, and utilizes infrastructure more efficiently.

Increasing housing availability in the downtown can be achieved through regulatory means of changing use designations discussed previously in the paper to allow housing in existing buildings and incentivizing new construction. Typically, increasing housing availability in the downtown is achieved by shifting new construction from the periphery of the city to the downtown using incentives, development bonuses, and loosening regulations. In cities with growing populations this formula is effective. Attractions such as bars and restaurants, parks, shops, better access to transportation, and an increase in community events are provided. This, coupled with development incentives, encourages developers to shift their focus to renovations and new construction downtown. But that is in a city where populations are growing and the market for development is strong.

The population in Keokuk is declining. Vacancy rates are high. Long term vacancy and lack of maintenance have created building safety issues. Rising maintenance costs have inflated renovation budgets. A lack of information has made speculation riskier. The cost of new construction is higher than what the housing market will bear. These are some of the issues that are holding back Keokuk’s downtown revitalization and specifically the success of their housing market. Realizing that Keokuk will need more than a standardized approach is an important first step. In *Downtown Revitalization in Small and Midsized Cities*, Michael Burayidi states that three conditions are necessary to make downtown living a reality:

- The downtown should be a place where people want to live.
- There should be an investment motive for home ownership within the downtown area.
- Downtown housing should be profitable to real estate developers (Burayidi, 2018).

Keokuk could make improvements to amenities to meet the first condition, but currently homeownership downtown is a questionable investment because the costs of renovations are too high or unknown. Similarly, real estate developers are not seeing a return on investment unless they are able to secure federal loans, grants, and financing opportunities. This following recommendations will address these concerns.



The Urban Renewal Boundary, which allows second-story residential, is marked by a diamond pattern. The zoning code allows first-floor residential in all other areas. Source: Authors.



## Housing Recommendations

### Recommendation One

#### Create a Vacancy and Commercial Real Estate Database

Many strategies can be taken to address high vacancy rates. The first incorporates work that has been produced by this plan. A database for vacant lots and vacant structures within the study area was created. It is suggested that the city or a partner organization advertise these vacant properties. As stated before in the vacancy section this will achieve two goals in the comprehensive and strategic plans. A secondary suggestion would be to list resources with the vacancy database, such as the Keokuk Neighborhood Initiative or nonprofits that can assist, facilitate and provide funding information to people looking at these vacant properties.

#### Plans of Reference

##### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Keokuk will offer development friendly conditions, to remain regionally competitive; Update local ordinances where necessary to better facilitate development; Create a commercial real estate database for assisting developers interested in Keokuk and the tri-State area.

##### **2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Identify and market the Main Street and downtown buildings that are structurally sound enough to be rehabilitated.



*Dilapidated and possibly abandoned housing on 10<sup>th</sup> Street. Source: Authors.*



## Recommendation Two

### Prioritize Second Floor Rehabilitation to Promote Housing

During the windshield survey it was observed that a majority of the second-floor units in buildings along Main Street were unoccupied. Residential infill should be directed to those units first as the cost of new construction can be prohibitive. Funds that might be dedicated to demolishing buildings could be put toward rehabbing second story residential units.

#### Plans of Reference

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Diverse housing options will be available to anyone desiring to live in Keokuk; Encourage and facilitate the development of additional downtown upper-story housing units.

**2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Economy Goal: Increase Upper Floor Development

## Recommendation Three

### Support the Creation of Nonprofits that Address Maintenance Issues and Tradespeople Training

Address hidden costs of historic structures by offering a program (public/private) that will perform a housing inspection and give potential renovation estimates based on other structural renovations in the area. This could be done in conjunction with an educational program, which might spur new business creation in renovating historic structures. The Non-for Profit 4 Mounds in Dubuque has a similar program which has provided job training for young adults and spurred new business opportunities that promote historic preservation goals. (Kringler, 2019)

Work with volunteer-based organizations, community colleges or create a Nonprofit that trains people as tradesmen and improves the quality of housing stock (fixing roofs, doing electrical, plumbing repair, bringing homes up to code) (Examples: Life Remodeled, Matthew 25, LifeBUILDERS).

#### Plans of Reference

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Engage local residents in promoting community beautification projects; Utilize the volunteer efforts of public school and community college students, to help build community pride at a young age; Encourage home improvement and supply businesses to actively promote and incentivize home renovation in the city's older neighborhoods.

**2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Create more opportunities in the fields of vocational and industrial technology by developing a stronger partnership between Southeastern Community College and area schools; Pilot a workforce training center program that would target vocational education, creating a skilled workforce (including home improvement trades and potential new industry trades).

## Recommendation Four

### Review Existing Funding and Incentive Programs offered by the City

Review existing incentive programs to identify gaps or ineffectiveness and make changes accordingly. Some of this information is included in the funding section. Information regarding the use of the program from Southeast Iowa Regional Planning, the City of Keokuk and Main Street are included. Incentives from other communities are listed to provide ideas for how incentives could be structured in other ways to make development and rehabilitation more enticing. An internal review, which would provide more insight into the effectiveness of these development incentives is recommended.

### Plans of Reference

#### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Provide incentives to encourage entrepreneurial activity at the local level.

#### **2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Increase economic development funding levels toward business expansion and growth; Attract and encourage local and out-of-town entrepreneurs to invest in downtown businesses and buildings through architectural, historical and financial assistance.

## Recommendation Five

### Support the creation of nonprofits and advertise Vacant Properties

Closely evaluate the other pilot projects such as Eagles on Blondeau, the Senior Housing Lofts, and Rural Housing 360 to create a renovation/construction model for other potential investors. Create an information package to give to interested developers that includes a best practice guide with a list of potential grant opportunities to help defray costs for first time home buyers, small scale investors, or nonprofits. Continue to work with and seek out partnerships with developers like Rural Housing 360 who offer

affordable workforce housing. And resources such as the Keokuk Neighborhood Initiative that will give residents \$15,000 to reduce the costs of construction, the ability to purchase one of two available lots for one dollar, and tax abatement for three years. The two available lots are located at 1100 Concert Street and the 700 block of North 9<sup>th</sup> Street, both properties are just outside of the downtown study area. These organizations have successfully utilized federal grant opportunities to create profitable and socially responsible models for Community Investment.

### Plans of Reference

#### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Keokuk will establish community and regional partnerships to improve and expand housing supply; Work directly with the private sector to facilitate new housing development in the community; Assist the non-profit Keokuk Neighborhood Initiative in its efforts to pursue infill development in the city's older neighborhoods.

#### **2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Market, publicize and utilize the state and federal programs that are available for retail and service businesses.

## Recommendation Six

### Create a maintenance ordinance and city rehabilitation program

Create an ordinance that all buildings and homes in the downtown district must be code compliant within 5 years. The City of Great Falls Montana created a Property Maintenance Code in 2011 to combat property neglect. Keokuk could model this to require property owners to maintain livable and safe conditions. It is important to note that the goal of this ordinance is not to punish residents who do not have the means to make repairs to their homes. The goal is to identify structures that need repair and to connect those individuals with the resources, funding and programming that would help to maintain buildings. In order for a maintenance ordinance to be effective, there would first need to be a

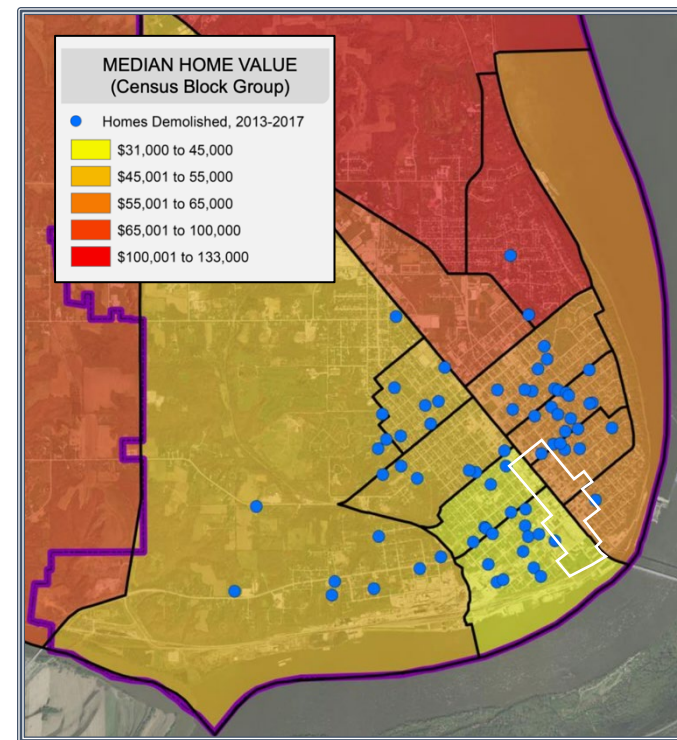
comprehensive list of resources and a City program in place that would aid homeowners in this way. One example is the Iowa City Housing Rehab program that provides zero interest loans or forgivable grants to assist homeowners in making necessary repairs. There are six types of rehabs (Energy Efficiency, Emergency repair, Accessibility, etc.) that qualify ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000. For most categories, homeowners need to meet income requirements, but City staff help them with inspections, creating work plans and obtaining bids.

Creating a Maintenance Ordinance would also address the problem of costly demolitions. Anecdotal accounts place the cost of city-initiated demolitions at \$70,000 per building; however, according to an article in the Daily Gate City, some demolitions of older structures can be much higher, such as the former Odd Fellow’s building located at 629 Main Street. The low bid for that project was \$247,000 to demolish the building according to Cole O’Donnell, City Administrator. (Benedict, 2018). Between 2013 and 2017 seventy structures were demolished to create space for infill development and neighborhood improvements.

In the case of South Bend, Indiana demolitions were both praised and critiqued. Praised because they removed safety hazards. Critiqued because demolishing structures instead of facilitating repair causes community dissent, the demolitions disproportionately impacted people of lower incomes and minorities who needed homes. There are individuals in need of housing in Keokuk, according to a study done by the University of Iowa, School of Social Work. The report states that community sources could identify between twenty and thirty people who were chronically homelessness, and there were roughly 100 squatters within the community. The report advocates for the creation of a homeless shelter. The city should prioritize funding to rehabilitation programs instead of demolitions to provide for community members who are in need of housing and create a maintenance ordinance to protect the current housing stock.

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Keokuk will offer Development friendly conditions to remain regionally competitive; Update local ordinances where necessary to better facilitate development; Enhance the enforcement provisions in the city’s building codes, to prevent the irreparable degradation of viable commercial buildings; Perform Regular and Comprehensive Housing and Building Inspections; Keokuk will provide stronger enforcement for the city’s residential properties; Use code enforcement and other incentives to eliminate property nuisances and poor aesthetics; Amend city ordinances to provide for aggressive, yet efficient enforcement of residential properties; Actively discourage disinvestment and substandard maintenance from rental property owners, particularly absentee landlords.



Location of demolished homes is shown over a map of Keokuk median home values. The map shows that demolitions had a fair distribution. The downtown study area is shown in white. Source: 2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan



## Recommendation Seven

### Adopt a Rental Permitting Process

Presently, the City has no oversight of non-owner-occupied residential properties. As a result, it's difficult for the city to identify housing needs. In conjunction with permitting, such a process could include a provision that would require a property to be inspected at soon after the signing of a lease agreement by a new lessee. This would allow city officials to inspect the exterior and interior spaces of a property. Allowing building officials to perform such inspections allows the city to identify and inventory potentially hazardous conditions in new and existing rental units with the purpose of protecting renters and gaining a clearer understanding of housing availability in the City of Keokuk. Having this tool to proactively address dangers that may disappointedly affect lower-income renters helps hold landlords accountable for maintaining the integrity and quality of aging structures in the downtown and in the city as a whole. City code section 15.16 could be amended to include such provisions.

The permit process might also include a historic preservation review, which could ensure that the city was maintaining its historic integrity. This could also be an opportunity for the city to communicate to builders and residents' best practices and the potential for funding sources.

### Plans of Reference

#### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Use code enforcement and other incentives to eliminate property nuisances and poor aesthetics; Actively discourage disinvestment and substandard maintenance from rental property owners, particularly absentee landlords

#### **2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Identify decrepit homes in the community, acquire and remove; Increase upper floor development



Image: Hotel Iowa, on the National Register of Historic Place. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hotel\\_Iowa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hotel_Iowa)



## Recommendation Eight

### Land Pooling Strategy or Redevelopment Authority

Provide an alternative to property owners who cannot afford to renovate their buildings and therefore leave them vacant until the City must condemn them. “Consider Land readjustment, an urban redevelopment strategy in which owners of contiguous land voluntarily consolidate their land under one redevelopment authority, usually a local government agency, for the purpose of redeveloping the neighborhood, and equitably share both the costs and the benefits of the project outcomes. Because property owners stand to benefit from the redevelopment of the neighborhood, they are more willing to participate in the project than if they are forced to sell their land to government.” (Burayidi, 2018). Reach out to organizations such as SEIRPC that could help to create and facilitate this program.

### Plans of Reference

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Keokuk will offer development-friendly conditions, to remain regionally competitive;  
Update local ordinances where necessary to better facilitate development.





# Economic Development Through Placemaking

Keokuk, like many manufacturing-based and non-populous communities, has had its share of economic struggles since the late 1950s; however, the region has partly stabilized over the past decade. A decrease in resources precipitated other issues such as increased vacancy rates and dilapidated storefronts within the downtown area. This presence of degradation not only reduces municipal assets, it also inhibits the ability of neighboring stores to conduct meaningful business. Furthermore, household income in Keokuk is considerably less than the state average and a combination of low home values and a lack of convenient, affordable amenities are not attracting new residents. Yet, Keokuk has many notable features that make downtown the ideal location for revitalization efforts.



*Once home to businesses such as car dealerships and grocery stores, this building at 318 Blondeau Street is an example of the degradation and abandonment that has befallen many downtown commercial structures. Source: Authors.*



## Economic Development Recommendations

### Recommendation One

#### Develop Keokuk's Workforce by Utilizing Downtown Assets and Resources

In recent years it has become increasingly popular to work “virtually” by either telecommuting or through independently selling goods and services, and smaller communities can take advantage of this (Hyman, 2017; Eisen & Weber, 2019). One option is to help current residents find these jobs. A program to enable this might expand broadband access throughout the city (Hyman, 2017). Another option would be to use public properties in the area, from the library to adapted storefronts, to serve as something similar to shared office spaces, simultaneously facilitating employment and foot traffic in the area. It has been estimated that as much as 42% of American jobs might be performable from home, making many potential future residents and occupations more attainable than ever before, so long as the circumstances are right (Economist, 2020).

Skill-building programs are another effective means of increasing the number of jobs in a region, but getting the “right mix” can be difficult (Lerman, 2008). Some skills, like math and writing, are necessary to some extent for most jobs (Lerman, 2008). Complex occupations require more specialized training, and while it tends to result in higher income for the trainee, the training is harder to design and is applicable for a smaller pool of people (Lerman, 2008). In the four-county regional report prepared by Iowa Workforce Development, it was found that 32% of workers in the region lack hard skills and that 23.7% are deficient in soft skills (IWD, 2019). Addressing this shortfall will also help to fulfill another of the comprehensive plan's objectives, “facilitate collaboration between individual public and non-profit institutions within Lee County and the surrounding region” (SEIRPC, 2019). The City should work to develop programs with Southeastern Community College and local employers to fill the gaps in the labor force's skillset (SEIRPC, 2019). SCC already has an impressive array of job-specific programming developed, but

discussion on the specific skills each program develops, and to what extent they address the region's deficient skills, is somewhat lacking. This can probably be mitigated by holding discussions and between stakeholders on what they want to see and what is currently available, and potentially, the development of some new courses. The downtown area is the ideal place to hold much of this programming, given the proximity of the library, educational resources of the Washington school, and cultural amenities.

**2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:** revitalize the Main Street district and develop area retail and commercial businesses; develop Keokuk's skilled and professional work-force; enhance the information technology opportunities of businesses, government, and individuals; expand entrepreneurship; increase access to a variety of resources that will enhance the Keokuk area quality of life

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:** expand the supply of quality, family supporting jobs in the community; grow the local workforce and diversify the talent pool through training and recruitment efforts; facilitate collaboration between individual public and non-profit institutions within Lee County and the surrounding region; develop a program to more efficiently share training resources between the three School Districts of Lee County and Southeastern Community College; work directly with the private sector in pursuing development opportunities; seek to diversify the local economy, with increased strength in manufacturing, education, and health care, as well as a more visible presence for additional sectors; provide incentives to encourage entrepreneurial activity at the local level; ensure that the local workforce is sufficiently qualified for the jobs that are already available.

## Recommendation Two

### Enable Longtime Business Owners in the Downtown to Succeed, and Encourage New Ones to Relocate to the Area

As previously discussed in the case study review, Dubuque's Millwork District utilized development agreements to incentivize adjacent property owners to repair their façades once the city agreed to invest in infrastructure and streetscaping improvements. If adjacent property owners failed to repair facades within a period following the street improvements, a special assessment was applied to their property. In Dubuque, all property owners that signed the development agreement met façade improvement deadlines, and all nearby property values increased as a result.

In Chicago, successful development was made possible in May 2012 by reviewing outdated business regulations and eliminating them as appropriate (Regulatory, 2015). The city reduced the number of license types from 117 to 49, in addition to increasing the number of resources available to them regarding the remaining regulations, and it has been estimated that it saved local businesses \$2 million annually (Regulatory, 2015). Keokuk should similarly consider if there is any restrictive regulations that could be cut from city ordinances.

#### Plans of Reference

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:** update local ordinances where necessary to better facilitate development, and work directly with the private sector in pursuing development opportunities; enhance the enforcement provisions in the city's building codes, to prevent the irreparable degradation of viable commercial buildings.

**2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:** expand entrepreneurship, and revitalize the Main Street district and develop area retail and commercial businesses.

## Recommendation Three

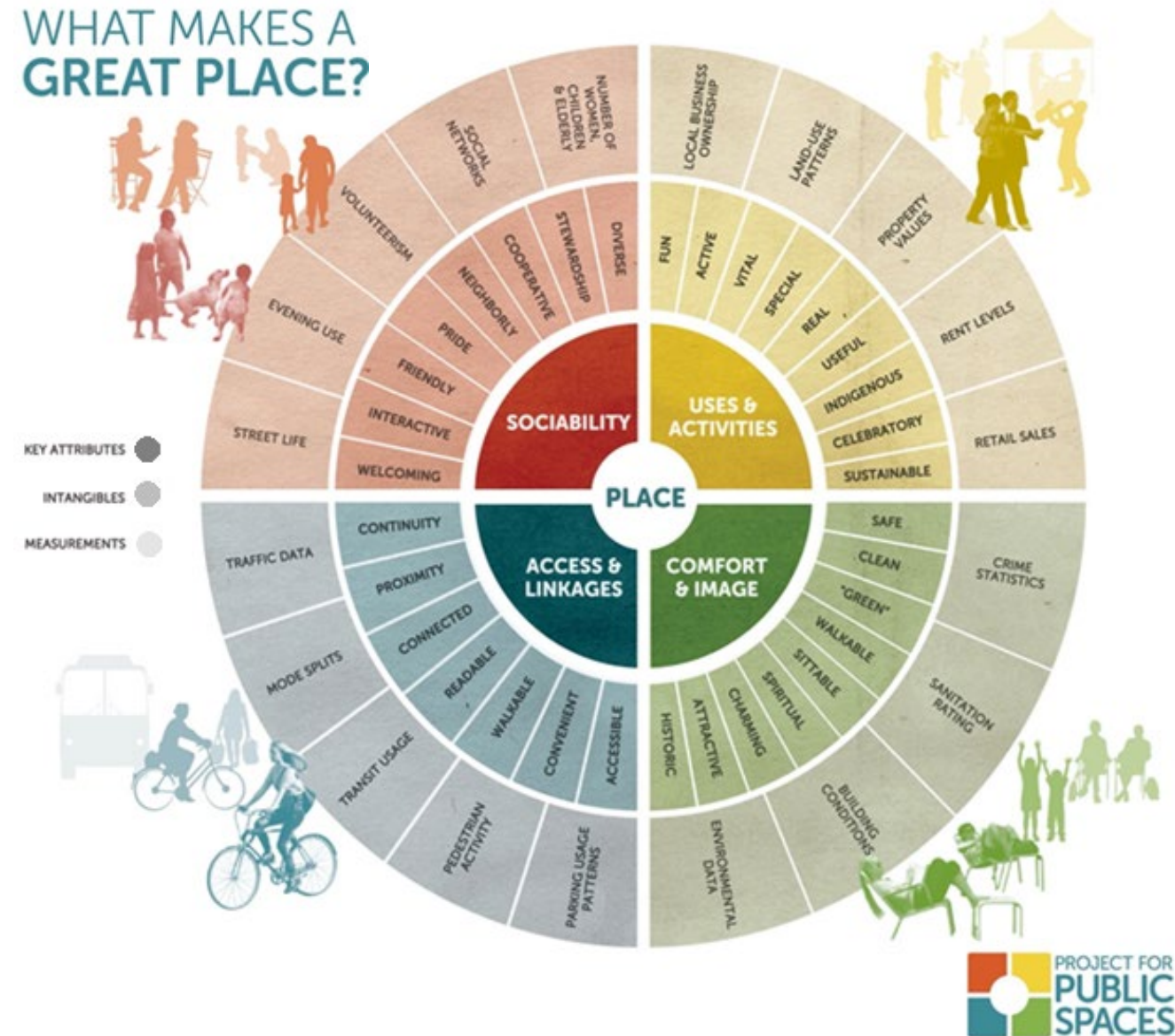
### Cultivate a Sense of Place in the Downtown

Utilization of assets specific to the area through placemaking efforts is a major component of revitalizing the economy in small towns (EPA, 2016; Robertson, 2016). Aesthetically appealing buildings, streetscaping, and a variety of amenities create a Main Street corridor that stands out from other cities (Robertson, 2016). The diagram to the right demonstrates how key attributes of a city provide tangible and intangible connectivity that, when collectively addressed, encourage the development of one another. Successful placemaking has wide-ranging effects outside of the success of the specific sub-elements, from improved nightlife to community development (Robertson, 2016).

### Plans of Reference

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:** embrace historic preservation as a community development resource; promote additional landscaping, public art and other beautification efforts in the downtown area

**2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:** develop new riverfront and other tourism-destination assets; offer a variety of options for entertainment, dining, the arts, and culture.



Source: Project for Public Spaces



## Recommendation Four

### Preserve The Keokuk Union Depot

The Keokuk Union Depot is one of Keokuk’s most striking assets, yet it is underutilized in its current, and original, location which isolates the historic building from other downtown amenities. Situated alongside multiple railcar storage tracks that run parallel to the rising waters of the Mississippi, the location of the Depot poses public safety and natural hazards to the structure and visitors. While assertions of the Riverfront Master Plan indicated that relocating the depot would not be worthwhile and limit renovation funding sources (Durant, 2009), it should be noted that excessive water absorption leading to a deteriorating sandstone foundation, the failing limestone bluff directly north of the structure, an increased threat of flooding in the face of climate change, and possible train car derailment are all indications that relocation of the Depot would better serve the structure and the investments that are pouring into saving it.

#### Plans of Reference

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:** embrace historic preservation as a community development resource, further pursue the development strategies outlined in the Keokuk ‘Riverfront Master Plan’

**2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:** develop new riverfront and other tourism-destination assets

**2009 Keokuk Riverfront Master Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:** union railroad depot renovation – long term – adaptive reuse



*No longer a depot proper, the Keokuk Union Depot is hidden to the south by three rows of railcar storage and to the north by a bluff. Photo by: Allen Consulting Group*

## Recommendation Five

### Evaluate moving the George M. Verity Steamboat

Since the writing of the Riverfront Master Plan, the Verity has flooded and been severely damaged on two separate occasions, causing thousands of dollars in repairs. Flooding events are only going to increase in frequency and intensity with projected climate change. Because moving the museum is a measure that is unanimously agreed upon, it would be wise to consider the option of lifting it away from the riverbank all together.

#### Plans of Reference

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:** further pursue the development strategies outlined in the Keokuk 'Riverfront Master Plan', make the Keokuk riverfront a year-round destination for events and activities

**2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:** develop new riverfront and other tourism-destination assets

**2009 Keokuk Riverfront Master Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:** George M. Verity Museum – short and long term.



The Verity on May 31, 2019, two days after the river peaked. Photo by Chris Mills

## Recommendation Six

### Support Public Art

Artwork serves not only to create a more unique and engaging area, it also increases property values and serves as “a key driver in economic and social regeneration” (Pollock, 2010). Public art and murals require appropriate maintenance to prevent the art from becoming an eyesore.

#### Plans of Reference

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:** make downtown an inviting space for people to come for lengthy, leisurely visits; promote additional landscaping, public art and other beautification efforts in the downtown area

**2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:** offer a variety of options for entertainment, dining, the arts, and culture.



Source: Patrick Commecy



## Recommendation Seven

### Make Course Corrections and Plan Updates

Like any informational document, plans must be updated periodically, and while this one has touched on aspects of what the Riverfront Master Plan Phase I described and suggested, much of its information is now out of date. The implied follow-up, Phase II, should be commissioned as resources permit.

### Plans of Reference

#### **2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Focus on Keokuk's history as a tourism generator, as well as a marketing and community branding tool; embrace historic preservation as a community development resource; make downtown an inviting space for people to come for lengthy, leisurely visits; make the Keokuk riverfront a year-round destination for events and activities promote additional landscaping, public art and other beautification efforts in the downtown area; further pursue the development strategies outlined in the Keokuk 'Riverfront Master Plan'; ensure that the riverfront is sufficiently connected to the rest of the city through trails, sidewalks, and wayfinding signage.

**2016 Keokuk Strategic Plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:** Develop new riverfront and other tourism-destination assets; offer a variety of options for entertainment, dining, the arts, and culture.

#### **2009 Keokuk Riverfront Master plan objective(s) this recommendation supports:**

Union railroad depot renovation – long-term, adaptive reuse; George M. Verity Museum – short- and long-term.



*Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.*

*-Thomas Edison*





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# Catalytic Development<sup>Options</sup>

A relatively new approach to overcoming a town's shortcomings is through Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). This process turns the focus from what a city needs and reframes it to consider all of the assets it has at its disposal to help confront the issues from within. "The appeal of ABCD lies in its premise that people in communities can organize to drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing (but often unrecognized) assets, thereby responding to and creating local economic opportunity. In particular, ABCD draws attention to social assets: the particular talents of individuals, as well as the social capital inherent in the relationships that fuel local associations and informal networks" (Mathie & Cunningham).

Asset-based community development utilizes catalytic development to redefine the identity, feel, and look of a town. "Although most often thought of as economic (investments beget investments), catalysts can also be social, legal, political, or architectural" (Cristo & Dhiamandi). A perfect example of how catalysts work is the up and coming Keokuk Library Foundation Park. Spatially, the park promises places to sit, things to do, and new ways to learn. More importantly however, it will be a place where the community can connect with each other and experience a feeling of safety and enjoyment. This will bring life back into a space whose identity had passed away years ago and allow a new generation of residents to remember the area fondly. It has the potential to give hope for rebirth to adjacent landowners and to breathe an air of positive change into the mindsets of neighbors. The foundation found a way to reuse a dilapidated space in a way that creates the want for more interaction.

Catalyst projects can be implemented by private members of the community as well as through the municipal government. By leveraging its ownership of spaces and structures within the downtown, the City of Keokuk can play a vital role in expanding the catalytic effects of the library park. City-owned spaces can be developed to support either permanent or temporary projects that draw residents and visitors to the area and provide opportunities for community building activities. Some projects are easier to fund and implement through the local government such as parks and playgrounds. The project and its effects depend greatly on the sites that are available. The first step in deciding which catalyst projects will be most beneficial for downtown Keokuk is to identify and analyze parcels that the city currently owns.

Revitalizing a small town is often accomplished by adopting any number of strategies that have been tested and tried in other communities. In Planning and Advisory Services (PAS) 590 Report, “the evidence from the literature shows that downtowns of smaller cities are different environments than those of large cities, face different challenges, have different assets, and proffer distinct attributes for their revitalization. This calls for redevelopment strategies that are tailored to the specific needs and conditions of these communities” (Burayidi, 2018).

Previously in this plan, the existing conditions, economic health and demographic profile of downtown Keokuk were evaluated through a windshield survey, a vacancy inventory, and statistical research. This provided an understanding of the city’s current strengths and weaknesses and laid the foundation on which an implementation structure can be built.

Based on this investigative work, the planning team determined that the fastest and most effective way for Keokuk to realize its downtown renaissance is through the reuse and redevelopment of public spaces that are *currently* owned by the city. In doing so, initial barriers such as private property owner disputes, land acquisition processes, and public-private partnership development can be addressed in later stages of the revitalization plan.

Although community input sessions and project plan development can take a few months to complete, results driven work can begin soon after plans are approved by city staff and funding is secured. To this end, an assessment was completed for each of the city owned parcels within the study area. Observable data was collected through Google Maps, Lee County Assessor’s data portal managed by Beacon Schneider, and finally through

performing an in-person site assessment of each parcel to both verify the results of the desktop analysis and provide further experiential incites. Data was gathered based on two general topics:

- parcel conditions, and
- immediate parcel surroundings.

The assessed qualities were based on the reliability of data and their potential to directly affect the value, attractiveness, and development potential of each parcel. Those categories, along with definitions, will be discussed in this section.

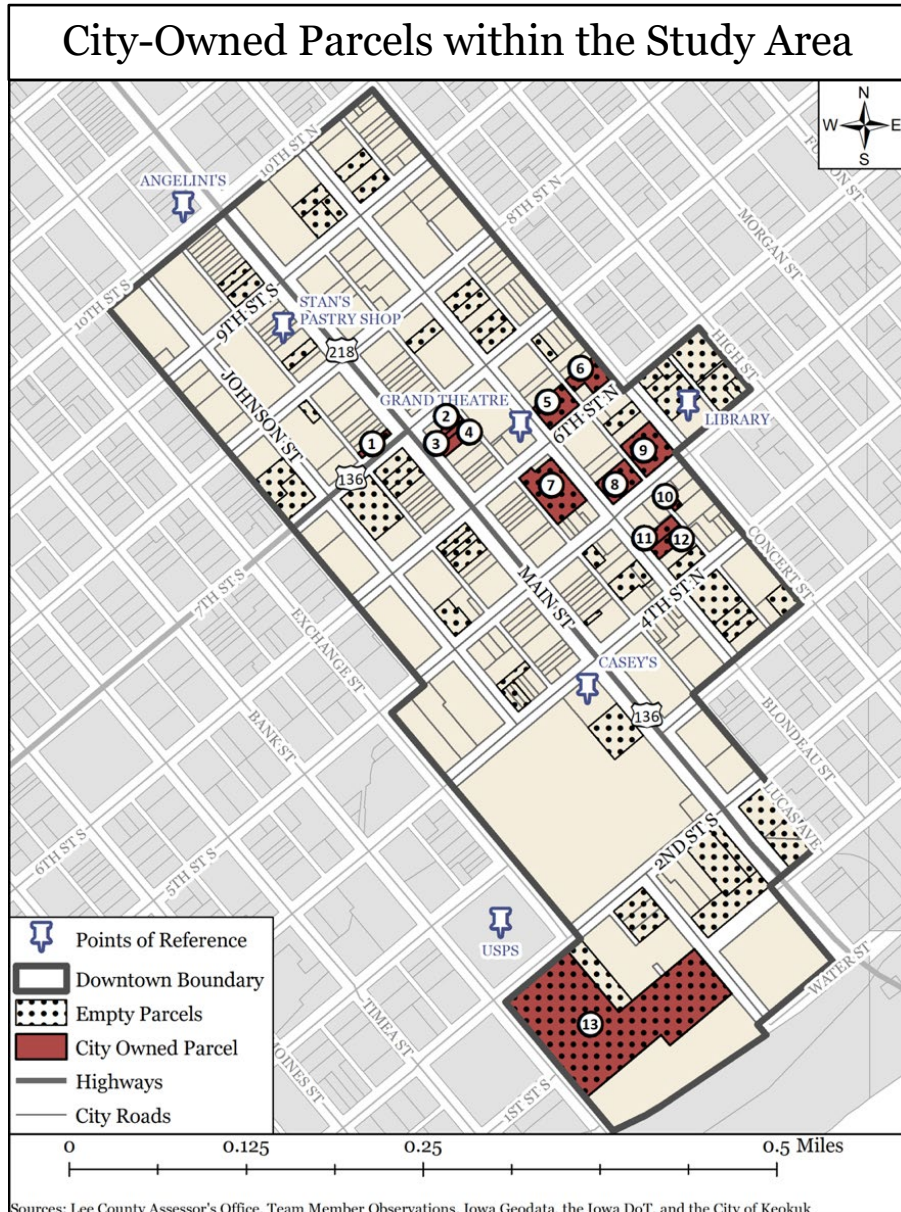
As parcels were assessed, it became clear that some sites could be bundled into one contiguous location to provide better development potential. Bundling can be found in three locations; the three buildings on Main Street referred together as ‘Parcels 2, 3 & 4,’ the two parcels on 6<sup>th</sup> Street at Blondeau and Concert Streets referred collectively as ‘Parcels 5 & 6,’ and the parcels of 411 & 415 Blondeau which are discussed in conjunction with one another as ‘Parcels 11 & 12.’ Site are evaluated in two, full page reviews each that will include:

- images taken to document current conditions during the course of the assessments,
- aerial maps for convenient visual reference of the location,
- a brief description of known facts about the history of each individual parcel, and
- a summary of the assessment results.

This section is dedicated to the citing of facts and information to give the reader a sense of each space. Parcels selected for redevelopment and possible project options will be discussed in later in this chapter.



# City-Owned Parcel Review



## Site Identification

## Site Location

Parcel 1	-----	700 Main Street
Parcels 2,3 & 4	-----	625, 623, & 619 Main Street
Parcels 5 & 6	-----	601 Blondeau Street & 602/606 Concert Street
Parcel 7	-----	500 Block of Blondeau Street
Parcel 8	-----	501 Blondeau Street
Parcel 9	-----	500 Concert Street
Parcel 10	-----	111 N 5th Street
Parcel 11 & 12	-----	411 & 415 Blondeau Street
Parcel 13	-----	117 S Water Street

The distance from each parcel to community amenities and essential services was also measured. Community amenities are locations that are either public or quasi-publicly owned and spaces that are enjoyable for all ages. Essential services are those that are necessary for the safety and welfare of the people and structures on the site. Riverview Park at 117 S Water Street, the Grand Theatre at 26 N 6<sup>th</sup> Street, and the Keokuk Public Library at 210 N 5<sup>th</sup> Street are all amenities within ~.6 miles of each parcel. All parcels were within ~1 mile of the Keokuk Fire Department and the Keokuk Police Department shared facility at 1222 Johnson Street.

Finally, the connectivity of each site to local services and amenities was assessed. The proximity of each parcel to the closest Keokuk Community School District educational facility is within ~.8 miles from George Washington Elementary School, ~2.1 miles from Keokuk Middle School, and ~2 miles from Keokuk High School. Southeastern Community College is within ~2.8 miles of each site.

## Site Conditions

### Current Quality Issues

These include conditions that could cause the owner, dweller, or visitor diminished enjoyment of the space.

- **Signs of Use or Neglect**

Are there indications of regular maintenance or upkeep on the property? Ways in which this was determined include the presence of litter and the appearance of unmanaged plant materials such as grass.

- **Conditions for Development**

This assessment includes barriers to development such as limited space or extant structures or hardscaping that would require some type of treatment. It also recognizes the site's proximity to potential nuisance issues and presence of assets such as original storefronts.

### Sidewalks and Accessibility

Every parcel in the study area has at least one sidewalk on the property. These were assessed for cracking and pitting, levelness/cross-slope, and presence of grading, curb cuts, and tactile pavers for handicapped accessibility.

### Site Zoning and Historically Restrictive Land Usage

Research was conducted to determine past uses of each parcel. Groundwater hazard statements were searched through Iowa Land Records to assess if there were any contamination issues that exist.

## Surrounding Site Conditions

### Potential Nuisance Issues

These refer to conditions such as the presence of vermin, excessive noise, and unappealing odors.

### Adjacent Zoning and Current Land Usage

Current zoning and visibly definable usage was identified for each of the parcels. All city owned lots assessed within the study area fell into one of three zoning categories: R-4, C-2, or C-3.

- *R-4 (Multi Dwelling District)*

R-4 districts include multi-residential structures such as apartments and nursing homes, dentist offices and medical facilities, and accessory structures such as garages.

- *C-2 (General Commercial District)*

C-2 districts include hotels, public garages, veterinarian clinics, and dancing studios. They also allows numerous uses that are conditionally permissible and include machine shops and research laboratories.

- *C-3 (Central Business District)*

C-3 districts allow uses such as bus, truck or train terminals, grain elevators, printing and warehouse facilities, bakeries, and building material storage.

### Parking Availability

The amount of vehicle parking space that is currently available within the immediate vicinity of the parcel and whether those spaces are public or private.

### Utility Connections

All parcels in the study area were presumed to have natural gas, potable water, and sewage lines connected to them, but activation was not assessed. The presence of utility poles, telephone demarcation boxes, and fire hydrants were also quantified.



# PARCEL #1

700 Main Street



Source: Google Maps 2020



Looking west, the narrow lot appears wider due to its visual continuity with grassed lot beside it. In fact, this grassy space was once one contiguous parcel. Source: Authors.



A one-foot high foundation for the none extant news stand is crumbling and unusable for new development. Source: Authors.



## Site Facts

Acquired by the city in 2009, parcel 1 is a small 3,290 ft<sup>2</sup> lot located at the northwest corner of the intersection of HWY 136 (7<sup>th</sup> Street) and HWY 218 (Main Street). Once home to businesses such as the Main Street Café, Liberty Loan Company, and a small local news stand, this parcel is currently considered to be an easement for HWY 136/7<sup>th</sup> Street. Originally, this lot was combined with the parcel to the north; but, now only 23' wide, it does not provide enough land for future structural development.



*The Main Street Café was demolished after the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor collapsed into the 1<sup>st</sup> and the building became unsafe to passersby (Keokuk Historians, 2020).*

CITY-OWNED PARCEL # 1   700 MAIN STREET	
Quality	Assessment
<b>Site Conditions</b>	
Current Quality Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A portion of a non-extant building foundation is still in tact at the west side of the parcel</li> </ul>
Sidewalk & Accessibility Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sidewalk along Main Street in very good condition</li> <li>Sidewalk along 7th Street is in poor condition with multiple cracks and pits</li> </ul>
Site Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently zoned C2</li> <li>Current use: None noted</li> </ul>
<b>Surrounding Site Conditions</b>	
Potential Nuisance Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possible noise issues from HWY 136 (Main Street and 7th Street) traffic</li> </ul>
Surrounding Parcel Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently zoned M1 (west, across alley), north adjacent parcel is also C2</li> <li>Current use: North adjacent building contains Chapparita Los Tapatios Mexican Restaurant and what appears to be a small residence, west adjacent property is an old warehouse currently being used for storage</li> </ul>
Parking Availability (Public & Private)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proximity to public lot: ~.1mi</li> <li>On-street parking locations: 2 on HWY 136 (Main Street)</li> <li>Handicapped accessible parking space: 1 on Main Street (no curb cut at space)</li> </ul>
Utility Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Power lines: Along alley behind parcel</li> <li>Utility poles: Located at northeast and southeast corners of parcels in alley</li> <li>Fire hydrants: Extant at southeast corner of parcel</li> <li>Lighting: None</li> <li>Traffic control: 1 traffic light serving Main and 7th extant at southeast corner</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Information</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alley behind parcel is moderately pitted and cracked</li> <li>Signage for HWY 136 on 7th Street is cemented into center of sidewalk rendering it impossible for handicapped pedestrians</li> </ul>	

CITY-OWNED PARCELS #2,3,4

625, 623, 619 Main Street



Source: Google Maps 2020



A 2016 fire caused brickwork in the rear of 625 Main Street to crumble. Repairs done in cinder blocks instead of the fallen bricks detracts from the aesthetic appeal of the façade. Source: Authors.

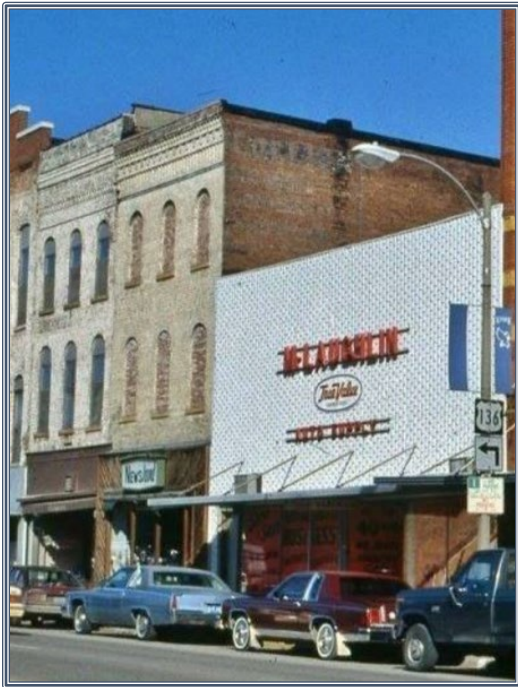


The metal casing on the front of 619 Main Street hides the original façade which appears to still be intact. Source: Google Maps.



### Site Facts

When combined, parcels 2, 3, and 4 cover just under 12,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of land. The building furthest to the left, 625 Main Street, has served as a billiard parlor, various small retail shops, additional meeting rooms for the non-extant Odd Fellows building, storage space, and until a recent fire in 2016, living space. It was acquired by the city through 657A in 2018. A little less can be found on the historical uses of 623. All windows in the upper two stories have been bricked up for at least the past 40 years, and aside from a few small businesses that have come and gone, this building has predominantly been used for storage. 619 Main Street has seen its fair share of uses, including an auto supply store, a furniture store, and a Dollar General. The city was able to take possession of the building in 2017.



The buildings do not look much different today than they did in this 1985 photo. Source: Keokuk Historians

CITY-OWNED PARCELS # 2, 3, & 4   625, 623, & 619 MAIN STREET	
Quality	Assessment
<b>Site Conditions</b>	
Current Quality Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exterior entranceway ceiling of 623 is in disrepair and is inhabited by pigeons</li> <li>Northern facade of 625 requires repair</li> </ul>
Sidewalk & Accessibility Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sidewalks are in very good condition</li> <li>None of the access doors for the buildings are handicapped accessible</li> </ul>
Site Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently zoned C3</li> <li>Current use: Vacant building</li> </ul>
<b>Surrounding Site Conditions</b>	
Potential Nuisance Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possible noise issues from HWY 136 (Main Street) traffic</li> </ul>
Surrounding Parcel Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently zoned C3</li> <li>Current use: North adjacent 629 has private redevelopment plans, south adjacent 613 is an active furniture retailer</li> </ul>
Parking Availability (Public & Private)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proximity to public lot: ~.1mi</li> <li>On-street parking locations: HWY 136 (Main Street)</li> <li>Handicapped accessible parking space: None</li> </ul>
Utility Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Power lines: Along alley behind parcels</li> <li>Utility poles: Located at northeast and southeast corners of parcels in alley</li> <li>Fire hydrants: None</li> <li>Lighting: One pedestrian light at northwest corner of 625</li> <li>Traffic control: None</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Information</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 concrete, yellow parking bumper posts protect a cistern cover behind 625</li> <li>Alley behind all 3 parcels is moderately pitted and cracked</li> </ul>	



CITY-OWNED  
**PARCELS #5 & 6**

**601 Blondeau & 602/608 Concert Streets**



Source: Google Maps 2020



602 & 606 Concert Street. Source: Authors.



The former Elks Lodge at 601 Blondeau Street circa 1930.  
Source: Keokuk Historians



601 Blondeau. Source: Authors.

### Site Facts

Parcels 5 and 6 together provide 26,848 ft<sup>2</sup> of open space at the intersections of 6<sup>th</sup>, Concert, and Blondeau Street. The combined site (referred to as Parcel 6) at 602 and 606 Concert Street were historically residential spaces that were acquired through 657A and razed by the city in 2018. Little is known about the history of those parcels. The Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks built their original lodge at 601 Blondeau Street in 1913 and had a very diverse life before it was demolished in 2017.

In 1918, just five years after construction, the lodge was transitioned into an emergency hospital for the victims of the Spanish Flu. When it resumed normal activities, the Great Depression hit, and the basement of the lodge became a soup kitchen for the poor. Once the Elks moved their business to another location in Keokuk, the building became The Palace Nightclub in 1976. Once the nightclub faded out of business and after years of sitting empty, The Endzone Sports Bar brought it back to life for a short time in 2003. In 2012, the building began to fall in on itself. The owner had passed away and because this parcel was officially abandoned, an emergency order was issued which transferred ownership to the City of Keokuk in 2017 (Lutzi, 2017).

CITY-OWNED PARCELS # 5 & 6   601 BLONDEAU STREET & 602/606 CONCERT STREET	
Quality	Assessment
<b>Site Conditions</b>	
Current Quality Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
Sidewalk & Accessibility Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No curb cut at southeast corner (6th and Concert Streets)</li> <li>• Curb along Concert Street is broken and missing in several places</li> <li>• Sidewalk along Blondeau and 6th Streets are in good condition</li> <li>• Sidewalk along Concert Street is overgrown, cracked, and pitted</li> </ul>
Site Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently 601 Blondeau is zoned C3 and 602/606 Concert is zoned R4</li> <li>• Current use: Razed lots with no formal use</li> </ul>
<b>Surrounding Site Conditions</b>	
Potential Nuisance Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South adjacent structure and parcel appears abandoned and feral cats have taken up residence in a small, dilapidated shed on the property</li> </ul>
Surrounding Parcel Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently north adjacent parcel to 601 Blondeau is zoned C3 and north adjacent parcel to 602/606 Concert is zoned R4</li> <li>• Current use: North adjacent Blondeau parcel is a private law office and the north adjacent Concert parcel is a private dwelling</li> <li>• South adjacent parcel, located between Blondeau and Concert Streets at the alley, is zoned R4, the extant dwelling appears to be vacant</li> </ul>
Parking Availability (Public & Private)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to public lot: Parcels are 1/2 block north of public parking lot on Blondeau Street</li> <li>• On-street parking locations: Available along the entirety of the south, east, and west sides of the parcels (6th, Concert, and Blondeau Streets respectively)</li> <li>• Handicapped accessible parking space: None</li> </ul>
Utility Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power lines: Along alley between parcels</li> <li>• Utility poles: Located at southeast corner of 602 Concert parcel and southwest corner of 601 Blondeau parcel</li> <li>• Fire hydrants: 1 located at southwest corner of 601 Blondeau</li> <li>• Lighting: Lamps are mounted on the aforementioned utility poles</li> <li>• Traffic control: 1 extant stop sign at southwest corner of 601 Blondeau parcel stopping west traveling traffic on 6th</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Information</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One 30' silver maple remains at the back of 606 Concert parcel; otherwise, all parcels have been razed and are grass covered</li> </ul>	



CITY-OWNED  
**PARCEL #7**

**500 Block of Blondeau Street**



Source: Google Maps 2020



The public parking lot in the 500 Block of Blondeau is heavily used by local businesses and downtown visitors. Source: Authors.

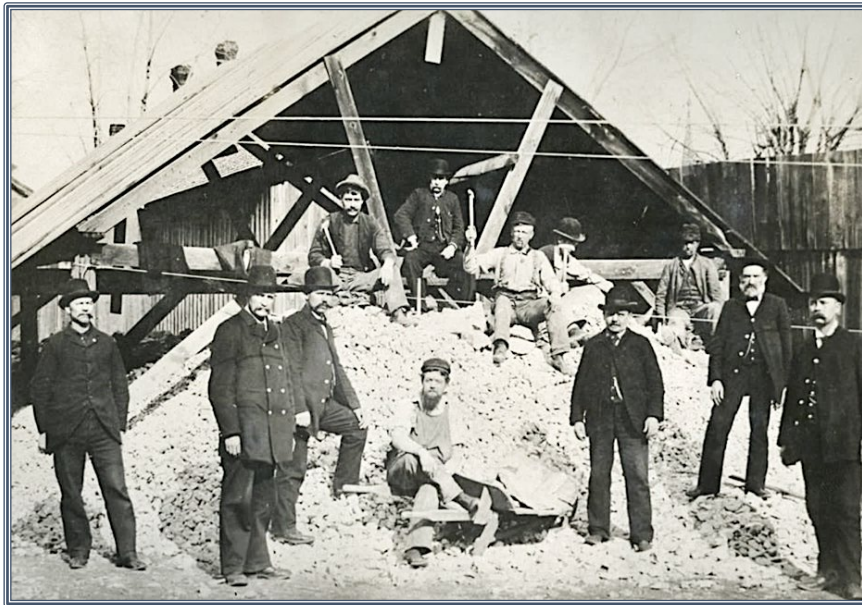


105 Parcel 7 looking north from the southern side of the site. Source: Authors.



## Site Facts

Parcel 7 encompasses just over 30,000 ft<sup>2</sup> and is located on the 500 block of Blondeau Street between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets. In 1897, “Keokuk’s Famous Rock Pile” was used as punishment for public intoxication. Offenders were required to break rocks to provide a valuable contribution to society. The rocks that were broken up were then used for construction projects throughout the city. The practice seems to have stopped prior to the 1930’s when this space was noted to be parking space on a 1931 fire insurance map, and has remained a parking lot ever since. For a short time in the 60’s, the city charged to park here and an attendant’s booth sat just west of Lucky’s Irish Pub and Grub on 6<sup>th</sup> Street. Today, the booth is gone, and parking is free.



1987 image showing Keokuk’s Rock Pile with city police and a few offenders. Source: Keokuk Historians

CITY-OWNED PARCEL # 7   500 BLOCK OF BLONDEAU STREET	
Quality	Assessment
<b>Site Conditions</b>	
Current Quality Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asphalt in severely cracked and pitted throughout</li> </ul>
Sidewalk & Accessibility Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sidewalks along east edge- Blondeau Street, have some cracking but are in good condition</li> <li>A small section of this parcel borders 6th Street on the north edge where it is mostly curb cut for vehicles and is in good condition with some cracking</li> </ul>
Site Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently zoned C3</li> <li>Current use: Public parking lot</li> </ul>
<b>Surrounding Site Conditions</b>	
Potential Nuisance Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None noted</li> </ul>
Surrounding Parcel Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently zoned C3</li> <li>Current use: This lot is north adjacent to private parking for 18-30 5th Street and south adjacent to Lucky's Bar</li> </ul>
Parking Availability (Public & Private)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proximity to public lot: This parcel is a public parking lot</li> <li>On-street parking locations: Available along east side- Blondeau Street</li> <li>Handicapped accessible parking space: 3 spaces are available</li> </ul>
Utility Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Power lines: Along alley between parcels</li> <li>Utility poles: Located at southeast corner of 602 Concert parcel and southwest corner of 601 Blondeau parcel</li> <li>Fire hydrants: 1 located at southwest corner of 601 Blondeau</li> <li>Lighting: Lamps are mounted on the aforementioned utility poles</li> <li>Traffic control: 1 extant stop sign at southwest corner of 601 Blondeau parcel stopping west traveling traffic on 6th Street</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Information</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None noted</li> </ul>	

CITY-OWNED  
**PARCEL #8**

501 Blondeau Street



Map accessed on Google Maps in March 2020.



The parking lot at 501 Blondeau Street is not actively contributing to the visual appeal of downtown. Source: Authors.



A temporary recycling center sees a lot of traffic in this location. Source: Authors.



## Site Facts

At 14,234 square feet, Parcel 8 is located at the northeast corner of Blondeau and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets. The Young Men’s Christian Academy (YMCA), built in 1899, completely covered the parcel. After years of abandonment, the facility was donated to the city in 1974 and demolished the following year. It has remained a parking lot ever since.



YMCA building at the corner of Blondeau and 5<sup>th</sup> Street circa 1970.

Source: Keokuk Historians

CITY-OWNED PARCEL # 8   501 BLONDEAU STREET	
Quality	Assessment
<b>Site Conditions</b>	
Current Quality Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy cracking and pitting throughout parcel</li> <li>• Large sunken areas create poor conditions for both driving through and parking in this lot</li> <li>• No painted lines</li> <li>• Current recycling center could create odor, pest, and unsightliness complaints</li> </ul>
Sidewalk & Accessibility Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sidewalk along south edge- 5th Street, is cracked and pitted in several places</li> <li>• Sidewalk along west edge- Blondeau Street, is in good condition with one vehicle curb cut for an entrance</li> <li>• Curb cuts with tactile pavers are extant at southwest corner of the parcel leading into 5th and Blondeau Streets</li> </ul>
Site Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently zoned C3</li> <li>• Current use: This parcel is a public parking lot that is currently being used as the site for a pop-up recycling center</li> </ul>
<b>Surrounding Site Conditions</b>	
Potential Nuisance Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None noted</li> </ul>
Surrounding Parcel Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently, the east adjacent parcel at 500 Concert is zoned R4 and the north adjacent parcel is zoned C3</li> <li>• Current use: North adjacent property is home to the Keokuk Area Chamber of Commerce and the east adjacent parcel is a public parking lot that was recently revitalized with permeable pavers</li> </ul>
Parking Availability (Public & Private)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to public lot: This parcel is a public parking lot</li> <li>• On-street parking locations: Parking is available along west edge- Blondeau Street and along the south edge- 5th Street</li> <li>• Handicapped accessible parking space: 1 space is currently marked as handicapped; however, it is inaccessible due to being located in a sunken portion of the lot</li> </ul>
Utility Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power lines: Along alley behind the parcel</li> <li>• Utility poles: 1 located at northeast and 1 located at southeast corners of the parcel (in alley)</li> <li>• Fire hydrants: 1 located at southwest corner of the parcel</li> <li>• Lighting: Lamps are attached to the aforementioned utility poles</li> <li>• Traffic control: 1 extant stop sign at southwest corner of parcel stopping west traveling traffic on 5th Street</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Information</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are estimated 11 spaces on north and 11 spaces on south sides of lot</li> <li>• Alley to the east of the parcel is in decent condition; however, graded entrance at 5th Street is severely pitted and cracked</li> </ul>	



CITY-OWNED  
**PARCEL #9**

500 Concert Street



Source: Google Maps 2020



*With a nice border of grass between the parking lot and sidewalk, this parcel both aesthetically pleasing as well as functional.  
Source: Authors.*



*Although this is an alley entrance, repairing the curbing and sidewalk segment would make a sizeable impact on how the entire parcel appears. Source: Authors.*

## Site Facts

Parcel 9 is a 21,000 ft<sup>2</sup> lot at the northwest corner of the 5<sup>th</sup> and Concert Street intersection. The parcel at 500 Concert Street was home to a medical school built in 1857. At three stories tall, it housed an anatomical museum, a dissection laboratory, a pharmacy, and classrooms. Then in 1859, the county purchased the building and it became the South Lee County Court House and jail. Once Lee County offices moved to the old YWCA building across 5<sup>th</sup> Street, the City of Keokuk offered to demolish the building for Lee County in exchange for the title to the land. The parcel remained barren until 2018 when the city installed permeable pavers to create a public-use parking lot.



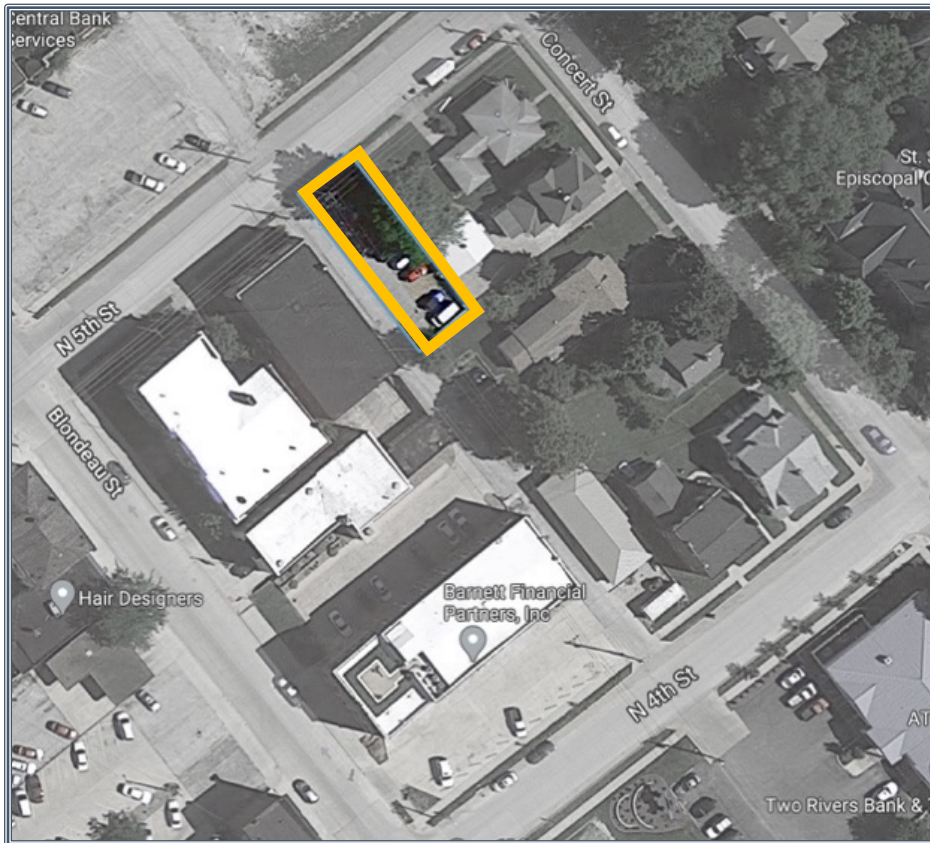
South Lee County Courthouse and jail circa 1920. Source: Keokuk Historians

CITY-OWNED PARCEL # 9   500 CONCERT STREET	
Quality	Assessment
<b>Site Conditions</b>	
Current Quality Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None noted</li> </ul>
Sidewalk & Accessibility Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sidewalks are in very good condition</li> <li>• Curb cuts with tactile pavers are extant at southeast corner of the parcel leading into 5th and Concert Streets</li> </ul>
Site Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently zoned R4</li> <li>• Current use: Public parking lot</li> </ul>
<b>Surrounding Site Conditions</b>	
Potential Nuisance Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None noted</li> </ul>
Surrounding Parcel Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently, the west adjacent parcel at 501 Blondeau is zoned C3 and the north adjacent parcel is zoned R4</li> <li>• Current use: North adjacent property is a private dwelling that is currently being renovated and the west adjacent parcel is a public parking lot</li> </ul>
Parking Availability (Public & Private)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to public lot: This parcel is a public parking lot</li> <li>• On-street parking locations: Available along Concert, 5th, and Blondeau Streets</li> <li>• Handicapped accessible parking space: 2 spaces at the southeast corner at 5th and Concert Streets</li> </ul>
Utility Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power lines: Along alley behind parcel</li> <li>• Utility poles: 1 located at northeast and 1 on the northwest corners of parcel</li> <li>• Fire hydrants: None</li> <li>• Lighting: Lamps are attached to the aforementioned utility poles</li> <li>• Traffic control: None</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Information</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This parcel was recently renovated with permeable pavers</li> <li>• Spaces marked for 30 vehicles</li> </ul>	



CITY-OWNED  
**PARCEL #10**

119 N 5<sup>th</sup> Street



Source: Google Maps 2020



This parcel is quite limited in its usage and ability to be converted into a meaningful project. Source: Authors.

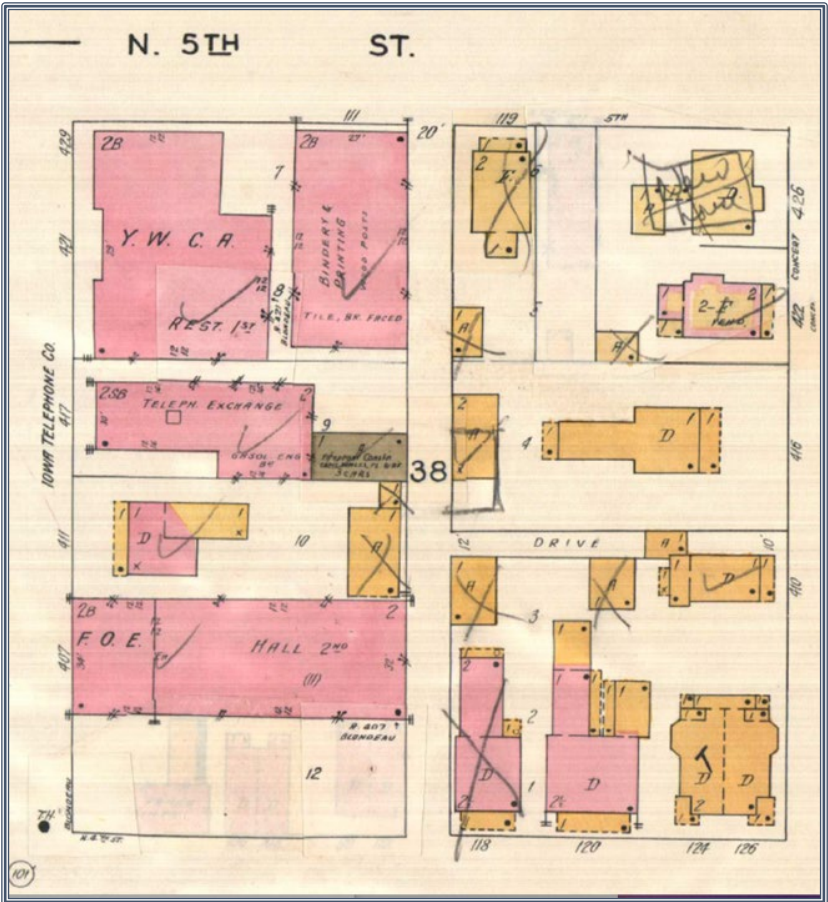


An underutilized and deteriorating space, this parking lot at 119 N 5<sup>th</sup> Street does not add much interest to the area. Source: Authors.



### Site Facts

The smallest parcel in the study area is Parcel 10 at just 3,500 square feet. Very little could be found regarding the history of the parcel. A 1931 Sanborn Map Company fire insurance map indicates the location of a home and garage, but no information was found for when these were demolished. This space was also used as parking for Keokuk City Hall, and presumably became a parking lot when City Hall took over the old Iowa Telephone Company building in 1962.

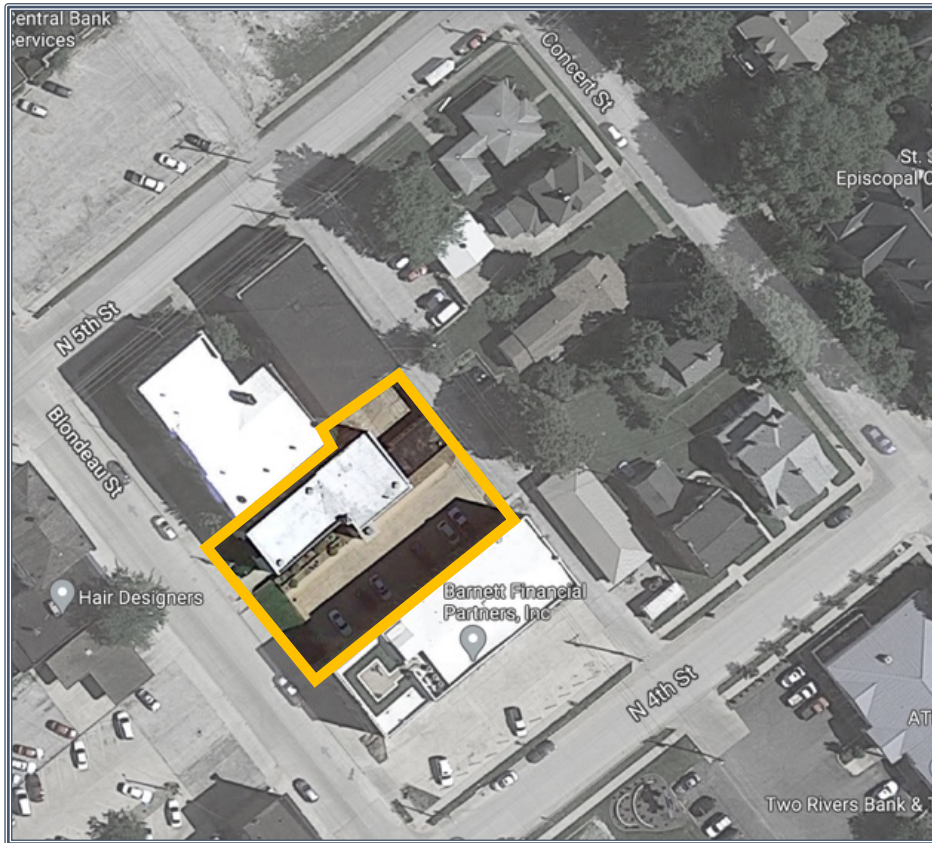


119 N 5<sup>th</sup> Street is located at the top middle of this image. Source: (1931) Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Keokuk, Lee County, Iowa. Sanborn Map Company, Nov.

CITY-OWNED PARCEL # 10   119 5th STREET	
Quality	Assessment
<b>Site Conditions</b>	
Current Quality Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parcel is incredibly small</li> </ul>
Sidewalk & Accessibility Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sidewalk along north edge of parcel is in poor condition</li> </ul>
Site Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently zoned R4</li> <li>Current use: This parcel is a public parking lot that is currently being used by neighbors for vehicle storage and storage of the city's cherry picker</li> </ul>
<b>Surrounding Site Conditions</b>	
Potential Nuisance Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None noted</li> </ul>
Surrounding Parcel Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently zoned R4</li> <li>Current use: West adjacent parcel across alley is the old printing building and 3 east adjacent parcels are private residences</li> </ul>
Parking Availability (Public & Private)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proximity to public lot: This parcel is a public parking lot</li> <li>On-street parking locations: 1 space on 5th Street</li> <li>Handicapped accessible parking space: None</li> </ul>
Utility Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Power lines: Along alley on west side of parcel</li> <li>Utility poles: Located at southwest and northwest corners of parcel</li> <li>Fire hydrants: None</li> <li>Lighting: None</li> <li>Traffic control: None</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Information</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Telephone demarcation box located at the northeast corner of the parking lot</li> </ul>	

CITY-OWNED PARCELS # 11 & 12

411 & 415 Blondeau Street



Source: Google Maps 2020



View of 415 from the NW corner of the parcel. Source: Authors.

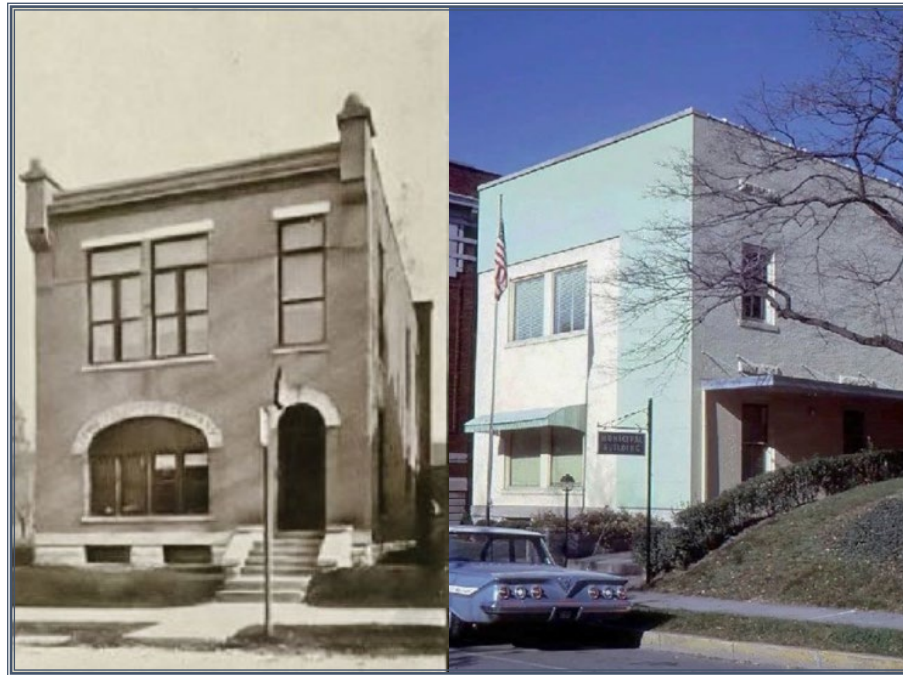


View of 411 and 415 from the east adjacent alley. Source: Authors.



## Site Facts

Parcels 11 and 12 cover just under 14,000 square feet of land on the east side of Blondeau Street between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets. The parcel at 415 Blondeau was once home to the Iowa Telephone Company before it moved to 6<sup>th</sup> Street. After moving, the company sold the building to the City of Keokuk and it became the first official Keokuk City Hall. For over 90 years prior to this, City Hall rented a space in the non-extant Independent Order of Odd Fellows building at the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Main Streets. The parcel at 411 Blondeau was a residential building that was briefly converted into an office space before being demolished in 1986. The city installed a parking lot for their offices shortly after.



Iowa Telephone Company building circa 1880 and Keokuk City Hall in 1962. Source: Keokuk Historians.

CITY-OWNED PARCELS # 11 & 12   411 & 415 BLONDEAU STREET	
Quality	Assessment
<b>Site Conditions</b>	
Current Quality Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small hill leading from 411 down to 415 is not adequately stabilized</li> </ul>
Sidewalk & Accessibility Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sidewalk along west edge- Blondeau Street, is in very good condition</li> <li>Extant 1 foot metal grated channel for water runoff from parking lot at 411 parcel runs across and flush with sidewalk at northwest corner</li> <li>Curb cut with tactile paver is extant in front of 415 parcel</li> </ul>
Site Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently zoned C3</li> <li>Current use: Parcel 415 is razed and currently unused, parcel 411 is an unused, public parking lot</li> </ul>
<b>Surrounding Site Conditions</b>	
Potential Nuisance Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None noted</li> </ul>
Surrounding Parcel Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently zoned C3</li> <li>Current use: North adjacent parcels are the former YWCA and old printing building, south adjacent parcel is the Eagles on Blondeau building</li> </ul>
Parking Availability (Public & Private)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proximity to public lot: Parcel 411 is a public parking lot</li> <li>On-street parking locations: Available on Blondeau Street</li> <li>Handicapped accessible parking space: 1 at the southeast corner of parcel 411</li> </ul>
Utility Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Power lines: Along alley on east side of parcel</li> <li>Utility poles: None</li> <li>Fire hydrants: None</li> <li>Lighting: None</li> <li>Traffic control: None</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Information</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These parcels were home to the Keokuk City Hall until it burnt down in 2019</li> </ul>	



CITY-OWNED **PARCEL # 13**

117 S Water Street [Riverview Park]



Source: Google Maps 2020



View of Riverview Park facing south from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. Source: Authors.



View of Riverview Park facing west from Johnson Street. Source: Authors.



## Site Facts

The Riverview Park parcel at 117 South Water Street is approximately 217,000 square feet in area and encompasses just over half of the city block bordered by Johnson and Bank Streets to the east and west respectively, and 2<sup>nd</sup> and Water Streets to the north and south. Located at the southwest corner of the study area, it was once the location of multiple residential structures, as well as two city streets: 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Exchange Street. The latter was the access road by which the electric trolley approached the Keokuk Union Depot from its downtown loop. Once the streetcar system was discontinued in 1928, the rail lines were removed and eventually the man made valley became overgrown. Until the 1970's, and the building of the Mississippi Terrace Apartments, this space consisting of 25 residential parcels, was still heavily shaded by native tree cover.



Riverview Park, outlined in orange, in 1963. Source: Keokuk Historians

CITY-OWNED PARCEL # 13   117 SOUTH WATER STREET	
Quality	Assessment
<b>Site Conditions</b>	
Current Quality Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excessive amounts of dog excrement throughout parcel</li> </ul>
Sidewalk & Accessibility Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sidewalks along west edge- Bank Street, and east edge- Johnson Street, are steeply declined toward the south as well as being fairly uneven, cracked, pitted, and heavily overgrown</li> <li>Sidewalk along north edge- 2nd Street, is in fair condition and also heavily overgrown, corners at Bank Street and Exchange Street/Housing Authority parking lot have not been updated with curb cuts or tactile pavers</li> <li>Extant sidewalk runs east to west through parcel where 1st Street was removed, this has accessibility onto Johnson Street (without curb cuts or pavers) but does not open onto Bank Street</li> <li>3 additional walking paths run through the park leading to small pavilions</li> </ul>
Site Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently zoned C3</li> <li>Current use: This parcel is a public park</li> </ul>
<b>Surrounding Site Conditions</b>	
Potential Nuisance Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None noted</li> </ul>
Surrounding Parcel Zoning & Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently zoned C3</li> <li>Current use: Northeast adjacent parcel belongs to the Keokuk Housing Authority (Mississippi Terrace Apartments) and the south adjacent parcel is</li> </ul>
Parking Availability (Public & Private)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proximity to public lot: Parcel is located 1/2 block west of public parking spaces located under the HWY 136 bridge</li> <li>On-street parking locations: Available along Johnson, Bank, and 2nd Streets</li> <li>Handicapped accessible parking space: None</li> </ul>
Utility Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Power lines: Run along center of parcel on the south side of east to west sidewalk, lines also run the length of the parcel north to south along both Johnson and Bank Streets</li> <li>Utility poles: 11 total poles are extant on this parcel</li> <li>Fire hydrants: 1 on west edge of parcel at Bank and 1st Streets</li> <li>Lighting: 1 pedestrian lamp extant in center of park atop one utility pole, 1 street lamp extant at Johnson and 1st Streets</li> <li>Traffic control: 1 extant stop sign at Exchange and 2nd Streets</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Information</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One small playground is extant on northeast corner of parcel; otherwise, this is a large swath of grass</li> </ul>	



## Catalytic Development Recommendations

Now that the city-owned parcels within the study area are defined, a set of recommendations can be unfurled. After careful review, five of the 13 parcels being evaluated for catalytic development were eliminated for consideration on the basis of size, condition, and/or current uses.

Parcel 1, at 700 Main Street, as well as Parcel 10, at 119 N 5<sup>th</sup> Street, are parcels owned by the city that are neither large enough for meaningful development nor located where catalyst projects could benefit the surrounding area. For these reasons, it is recommended that Parcels 1 and 10 be offered to the adjoining landowners to purchase at the \$1 price imposed on other, recently sold city-owned properties. This would not only alleviate the city from spending money on labor and materials for maintenance and upkeep, it would also return these pieces of land to the city property tax rolls.

Three additional parcels are not included in the catalytic development recommendations of this plan:

- Parcel 7 [currently a public parking lot on the 500 block of Blondeau Street],
- Parcel 8 [also a public parking lot at the corner of Blondeau and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets], and
- Parcel 9 [a third public parking lot at the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Concert Streets].

Although these parcels are in prime locations for development, the need for parking in this area prevents these spaces from contributing to the revitalization process more in any other capacity. It is recommended however, that Parcels 7, 8, and 9 be allowed to serve as more than simply parking space only utilized during business hours. Through adaptive uses, these locations can serve as community gathering event spaces such as an open-air cinema, alternative placement of the farmers market, or a weekend venue for food trucks. All three of these options provide an opportunity for additional foot traffic through the area and allow the parcels to become part of the social fabric of the city rather than a forgettable piece of paved land. (Further description of each of these options is provided in the table on the next page.)

Just as Parcel 9 has been improved with permeable pavers, such treatment should be considered for Parcels 7 and 8 as well. This will not only increase the usability of the sites, it will decrease the amount hardscape runoff into the storm sewers and lower the chances of flash flooding in the area. Additionally, neighboring buildings and passers-by will benefit from a decrease in urban heat island effects and a kempt appearance over the currently dilapidate and deteriorating conditions of the parking surfaces. As with any downtown revitalization effort, beautification is key. Any improvements to city-owned parcels should consider the aesthetic as well as functional qualities of the site and the following project options do just that.



CATALYST PROJECT OPTIONS	
Project Options	Definition
<b>NATURE FOCUSED</b>	
Urban Community Garden	Urban gardens are shared spaces within the city landscape that allow local residents an opportunity to work together to grow food or ornamental plants that can be utilized or enjoyed by the entire community.
Urban Forest	The term 'urban forest' describes a portion of land within the city that uses woody plants to provide greenspace. An urban forest can range from an area spanning several blocks with dense tree canopy all the way to a single city parcel with a small, single species orchard.
Rewilding	Rewilding is a conservation practice where the planting of native plant species and installation of natural features native to the area work to restore a portion of land to the conditions that were present when it belonged to the indigenous people.
Pocket Park	Pocket parks are small spaces generally located on vacant lots in between buildings within the city. These can be greenspaces, covered in hardscaping, landscaped, grassed, contain play equipment, or provide seating among a myriad of other options.
<b>ACTIVITY FOCUSED</b>	
Playground	Playgrounds are publicly accessible outdoor areas which generally contain equipment meant to be climbed on or played with by children. These can vary from elaborate, multi-station event spaces to a simple slide and swing set and be made from a variety of materials.
Multi-Sport Game Courts	Multi-Sport game courts are paved or concrete pads where multiple games can be played within the same space. Games typically played on these types of courts include basketball, volleyball, and tennis but the options vary dependent on the community's wants.
<b>VACANT BUILDING FOCUSED</b>	
Marketplace/Food Hall	A marketplace, sometimes referred to as a food hall, is very similar to a mall. Modern food halls are typically built in abandoned warehouses or old, renovated structures and provide multiple stations or kiosks where patrons can play games or purchase food and retail items.
Job Training Center	Job training centers are spaces where individuals are taught basic skills that are needed in the local economy. These can be privately run facilities or public-private partnerships that work with local colleges and universities and business to provide specific training for regional industries.
Public Art Gallery with Artist Studio Space	Public art galleries are spaces where the general public are able to view and experience artwork. Multiple display options are available for the artwork as well as gathering space for larger crowds of people. Some galleries also provide the option of a working space for local artists.

Catalyst project options for this plan were chosen based on case study reviews, literary research of best practices, community engagement feedback, stakeholder meetings, and on-site assessments. The Catalyst Project Options table presents project opportunities along with a brief definition of each that are recommended as possibilities for the city-owned parcels within the study area of this plan

As explained on the previous page, Parcels 1, 7, 8, 9, and 10 have been eliminated as sites selected for catalytic development; therefore, the adaptive use options previously mentioned are not included in the Location Options table at right. These location choices consider implementation costs, overall wellness benefit to the residents of Keokuk, potential to spur economic growth within the community, and impact on future land development on the parcel. The table indicates which parcel could potentially accommodate each of the project opportunities and from this list, final recommendations were formed based on the option(s) that is(are) best suited for each parcel site.

CATALYST PROJECT LOCATION OPTIONS	
Project Options	Project Location Options
<b>NATURE FOCUSED</b>	
Urban Community Garden	• Riverview Park [Parcel 13]
	• 411 & 415 Blondeau Street [Parcels 11 & 12]
	• 601 Blondeau/602 & 608 Concert Streets [Parcels 5 & 6]
Urban Forest	• Riverview Park [Parcel 13]
	• 601 Blondeau/602 & 606 Concert Streets [Parcels 5 & 6]
	• 619, 623, & 625 Main Street [Parcels 2, 3, & 4]
Rewilding	• Riverview Park [Parcel 13]
	• 411 & 415 Blondeau Street [Parcels 11 & 12]
	• 601 Blondeau/602 & 606 Concert Streets [Parcels 5 & 6]
	• 619, 623, & 625 Main Street [Parcels 2, 3, & 4]
Pocket Park	• 619, 623, & 625 Main Street [Parcels 2, 3, & 4]
	• 411 & 415 Blondeau Street [Parcels 11 & 12]
<b>ACTIVITY FOCUSED</b>	
Playground	• Riverview Park [Parcel 13]
	• 601 Blondeau/602 & 606 Concert Streets [Parcels 5 & 6]
Multi-Sport Game Courts	• Riverview Park [Parcel 13]
	• 601 Blondeau/602 & 606 Concert Streets [Parcels 5 & 6]
<b>VACANT BUILDING FOCUSED</b>	
Marketplace/Food Hall	• 619, 623, & 625 Main Street [Parcels 2, 3, & 4]
Job Training Center	• 619, 623, & 625 Main Street [Parcels 2, 3, & 4]
Public Art Gallery with Artist Studio Space	• 619, 623, & 625 Main Street [Parcels 2, 3, & 4]

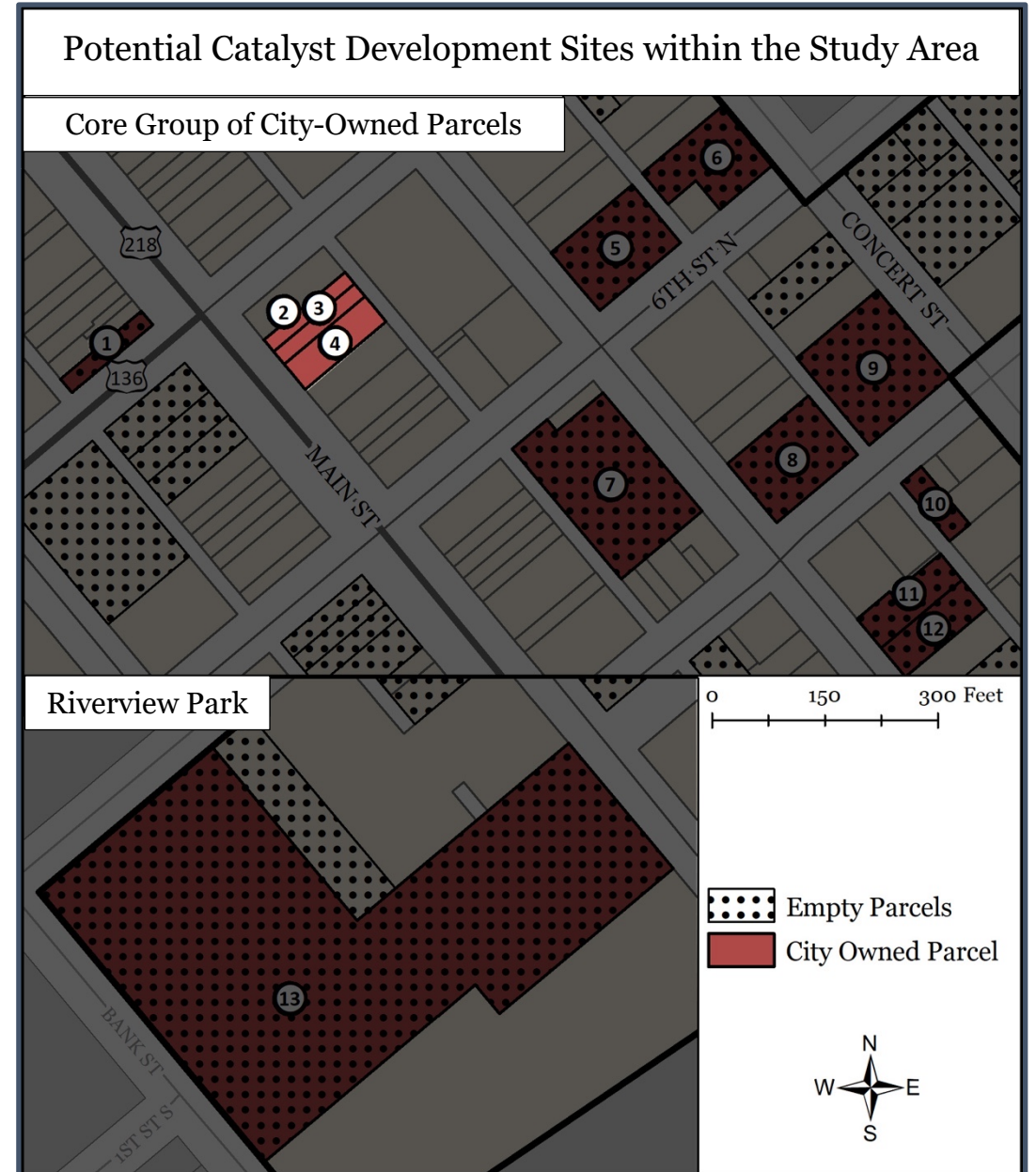
## Parcels 2, 3, and 4 [625, 623, and 619 Main Street]

The only city-owned parcels within the study area that have extant buildings are located at the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Main Street. Because these buildings are considered historical relics of the city, being built between 1880 and 1890, these structures are considered by several stakeholders to be the first priority for city-initiated catalytic development within the study area. Unfortunately, based on a recent structural analysis, the stability and future of these buildings is in question. To provide a complete recommendation for use of this space, the Team has determined a potential project for both of two scenarios; either the buildings will be saved and stabilized, or they will need to be demolished.

## Parcels 2, 3, and 4 Recommendation One [Extant Buildings]

### Create a Public Art Gallery with Working Artist Space

Being within the Cultural and Entertainment District, these three buildings could serve as a missing piece of the local art scene. Although there are several privately owned galleries and the Keokuk Art Center located in the basement of the Keokuk Public Library, the city lacks a formidable artistic presence along the Main Street corridor. The size and open floor plans of the entrance levels of each building could be effectively combined to create a regional gathering space for local artisans and collectors. Developing the space as a municipal structure that is rentable, much in the same capacity as the Grand Theatre, the buildings could draw visitors from the tri-state area as well as provide a platform for local artists to showcase their work.



Source: Authors



## Parcels 2, 3, and 4 Recommendation Two [Non-Extant Buildings]

### Utilize building façades as part of an attractive pocket park

Demolition of the site could be selective, leaving the façades and a few walls in place to create a unique public park with a storybook atmosphere. Although this option would still require stabilization of the outer walls, they would not require any additional reconstruction as they would no longer be load bearing. Using the structural remnants to frame the area, this park could provide an aesthetic draw for the Main Street corridor unlike anything that can be seen in the tri-state region.

With the inclusion of sparse tree-canopy, seating options, and sculptural elements, this option would provide an homage to the city's fallen historical structures while breathing life back into the space.



*The buildings at 625, 623, and 619 Main Street as they look in the spring of 2020. Source: Google Maps.*





Reusing the shells of demolished buildings is an inventive way of retaining the continuity of façades while repurposing the space for continued use. Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/149181806381383035/>

The buildings at 625, 623, and 619 Main Street as they could look by 2025. Source: Ursula Ferrier.



## Parcels 5 and 6 [601 Blondeau Street and 602/606 Concert Street]

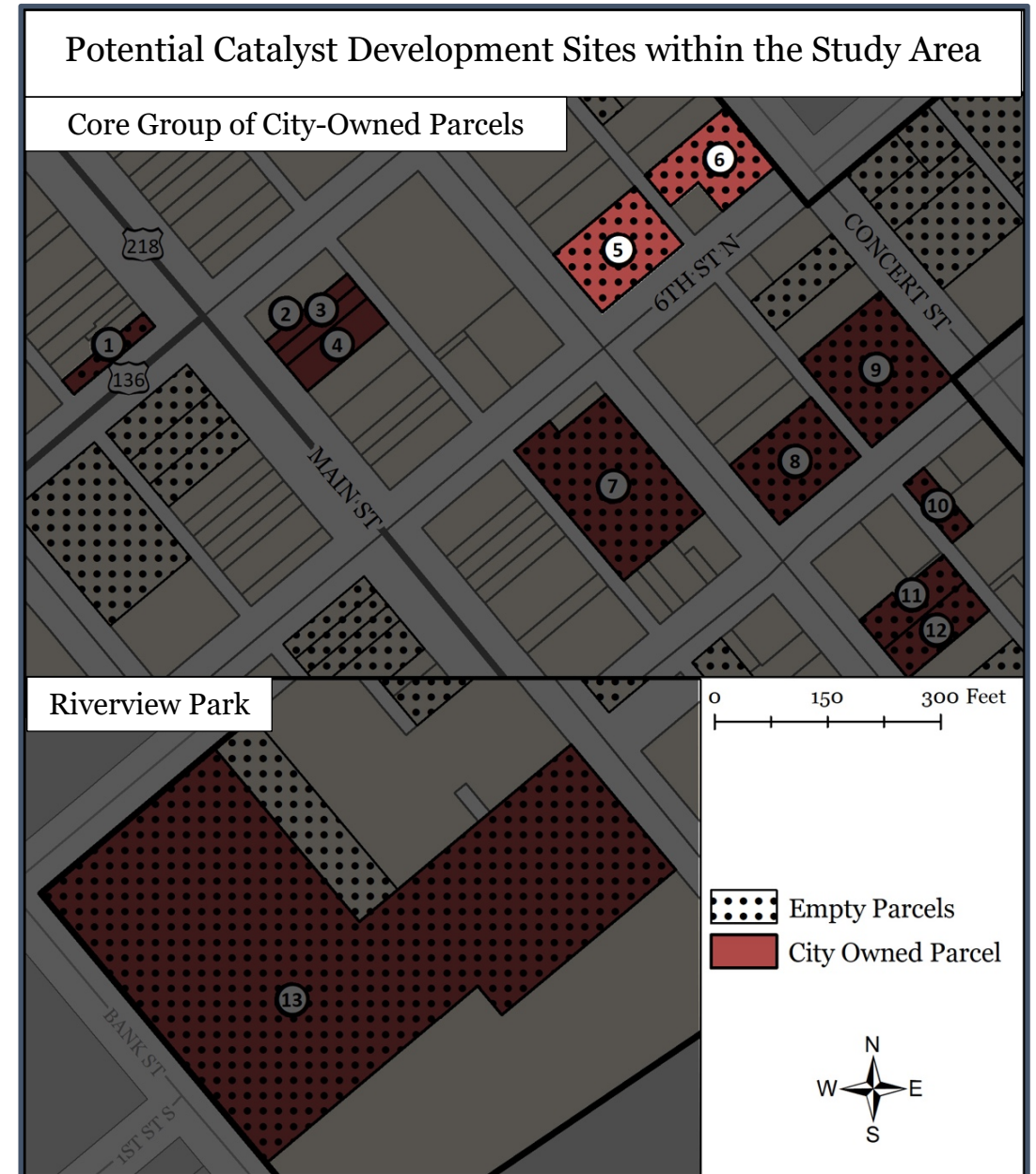
This site, comprised of Parcels 5 and 6, serves as a direct link in the anticipated connection between the up and coming Keokuk Public Library Foundation Park (KPLFP) and the Main Street corridor. When considering the development options for this site, it was important to factor in the amenities that will be provided by the KPLFP so as not to create competing functions or distracting uses. Additionally, the recommendations for these parcels needed to embrace and accentuate the creative culture and artistic emphasis of the area.

### Parcels 5 and 6 Recommendation One

#### Develop an attractive and easily maintained community garden

Form and function can be combined on Parcel 5, located at the corner of Blondeau and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets. The recommendation for this location is a non-traditional community garden with the provision of locally-sourced artwork on the adjoining building. Typically, gardens found within an urban setting follow a grid-like pattern of rectangular beds which mimic the look and feel of modern row crops. Because stakeholders have expressed the want to tie this space artistically into the adjoining lots, it is recommended that the garden be developed in spiral or semi-circular strips that provide a visual flow across the parcel. These forms would allow for compartmentalization as well as group gatherings within an attractive cradle of flowering plants.

The inclusion of a small, 10-15 tree orchard could serve as both shaded relaxation space as well as an additional food source. Using smaller trees and natural materials for the garden beds would allow for easy clearance in the event that this space would be under consideration for future housing development. As a means of decreasing maintenance costs for the city, white and purple clover seed could be spread every 2 to 3 years and allowed to 'take over' the lawn. This will not only promote beneficial insect migration, it would also provide additional aesthetic value to the space.



Source: Authors





Parcel 5 as it looked in spring of 2020. Source: Google Maps.

Collaborative rendering of the recommended project for Parcel 5 and a proposed street treatment from the Keokuk Pathways Plan team. Source: Ursula Ferrier and Nadia Silva.





Source: <https://www.earthscapeplay.com/project/ottawa-montessori-school-playground/>

## Parcels 5 and 6 Recommendation Two

### Provide an active play space for children

There is currently insufficient equipment within the study area which promotes active and imaginative use by children or youth. As an outlet for pent up energy, space for childhood relationship development, and increased exposure to the outdoors, it is recommended that Parcel 6, at the corner of Concert and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets be transitioned into a youth-focused playground. Equipment promoting free-play that is unprescribed, unguided, and unstructured is most beneficial for the emotional and social development of young children and conveniently, can require very little cost. Natural products such as log and natural fiber netting can be used to create a space that is enjoyable for all ages.



Source: <https://www.earthscapeplay.com/project/story-mill-community-park/>



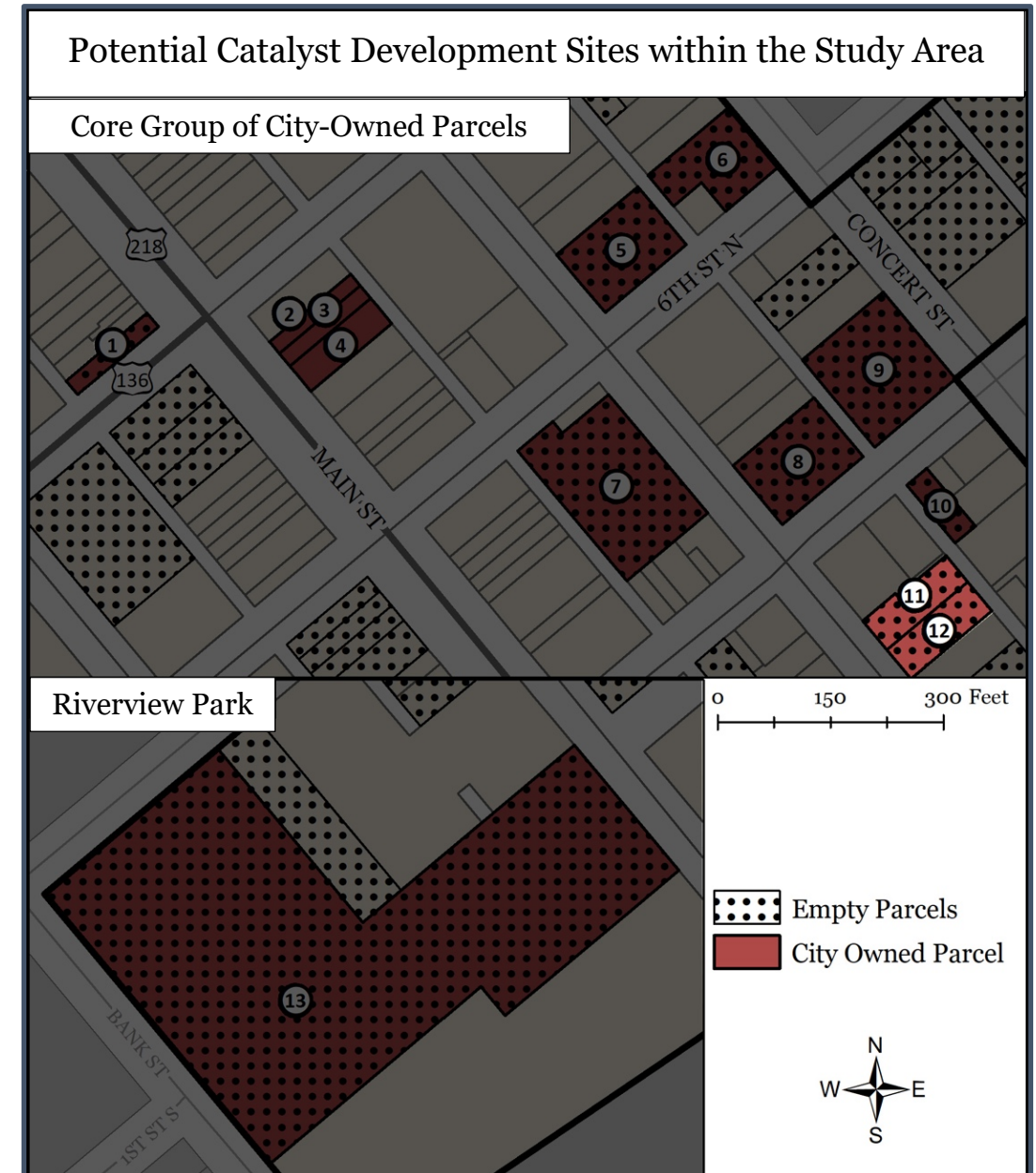
## Parcels 11 and 12 [411 and 415 Blondeau Street]

Parcels 11 and 12 present several complexities that limit the uses for this site. Situated immediately beside the living space windows of the lofts at the Eagles on Blondeau, Parcel 12 options need to be cognizant of noise and privacy issues. Being incredibly narrow, the two lots would work better as one combined space but with Parcel 12 being paved and at an elevation of approximately three feet higher than the grassed lot of Parcel 11, the options for low-cost catalytic options are limited.

## Parcels 11 and 12 Recommendation One

### Install a simple yet aesthetically pleasing pocket park.

Although the differences in elevation and texture create an obstacle for most development, they also provide a wonderful foundation for a two-tiered pocket park. It is recommended that the higher, paved Parcel 12 be kept as a paved space and utilized for table and chair sets with drawn on game boards for leisurely tic-tac-toe, checkers, or chess. This space could also serve as hardscape for toddler chalk exploration. Parcel 11 should remain primarily a grassed space with the inclusion of some simple, native plant landscaping for both ease of maintenance and so as not to compete with future amenities of the KPLFP.



Source: Authors





411 & 415 Blondeau Street as they looked in 2019. Source: Authors



An option for the parcels at 411 and 415 Blondeau Street is a dedication garden to Keokuk's Sister City in Kai, Japan. Source: Ursula Ferrier.



### Parcel 13 [117 South Water Street, Riverview Park]

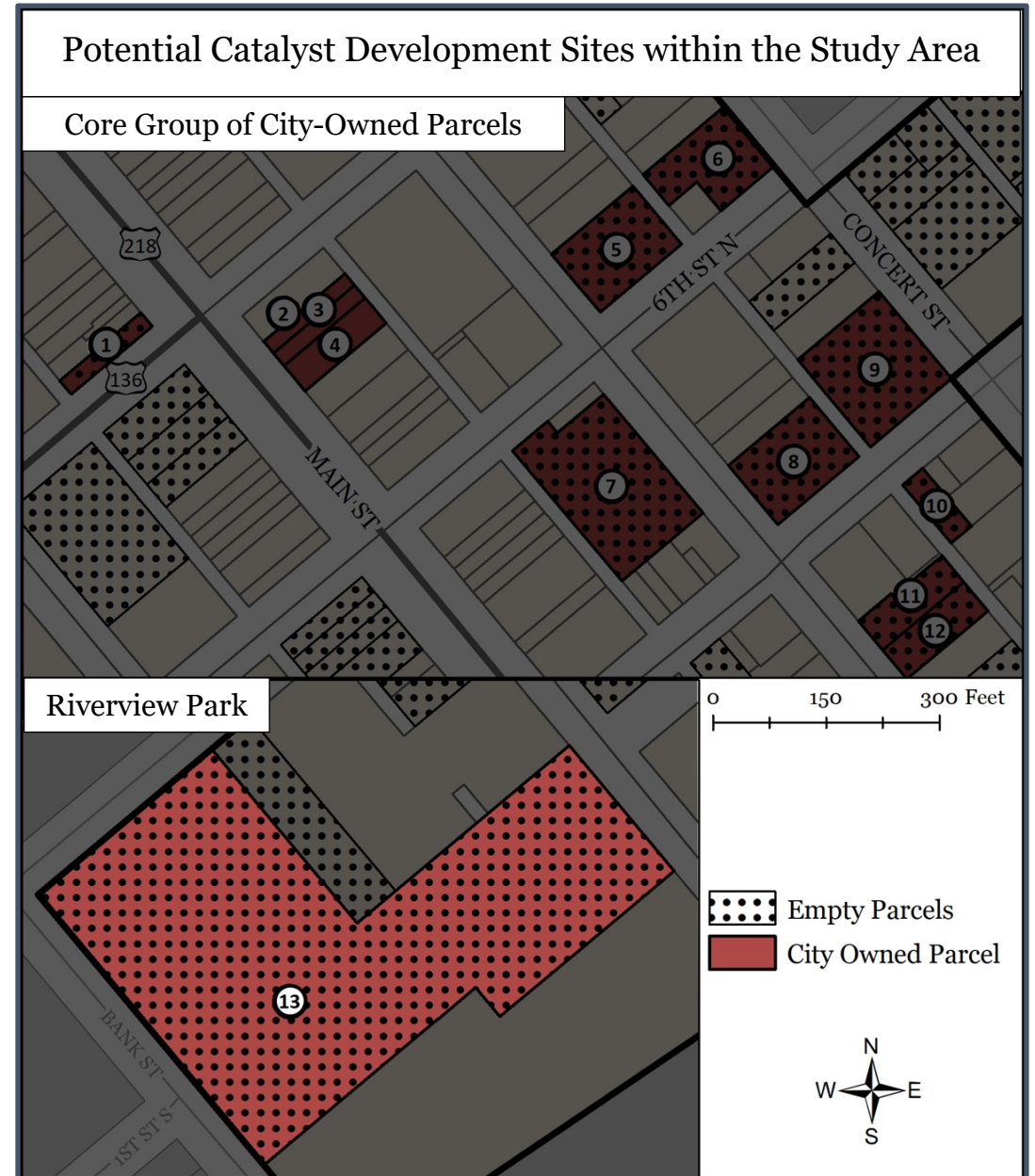
The city-owned parcel of Riverview Park provides a space for multiple project opportunities at one time. Because this space is already a park and the city is trying to expound on its park amenities, it is recommended that this parcel remain as park space; however, this space needs to have a focus and specific purpose to increase the utilization and enjoyment of the land. Based on stakeholder feedback, case study research, and city staff input, three options have been selected for this parcel:

- a playground, and/or
- multi-sport game courts.

### Parcel 13 Catalyst Option One

#### Provide adequate playground equipment

The city is in dire need of playground equipment for the younger members of the community. Currently, extant play equipment at Riverview Park can accommodate up to five children at any given time which drastically underserves the population of Keokuk youth and does not promote visitor or event usage. One focus area that the city has had for many years is the connection of the downtown to the riverfront. Riverview park could serve as a direct link and welcoming attraction for visitors that leads from the Main Street corridor the riverfront region of the city. Building an effective park in this location could also work to unify the residential neighborhood surrounding the park. In a 2002 APA City Parks Forum Briefing Paper, it is noted that “community residents and the city, working together on a neighborhood park project, can turn around a distressed residential area”(Planning.org, 2002).



Source: Authors



## Parcel 13 Catalyst Option Two

### Install permanent game courts that can be used to play multiple sports

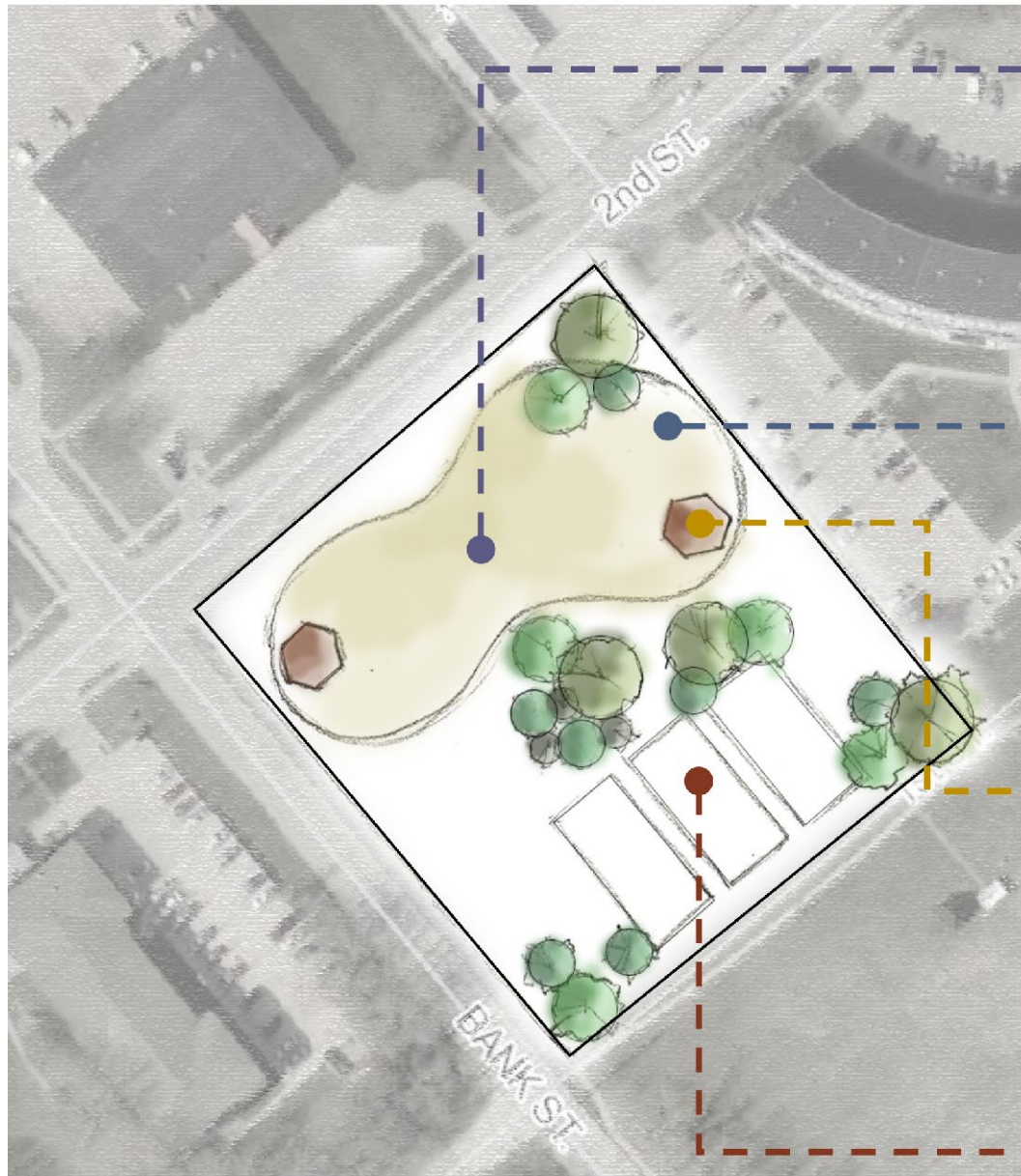
A 2005 briefing paper also indicated that “parks provide sites for sports tournaments, which can be major sources of tourism and economic benefits, especially for smaller cities” (Planning.org, 2005). This is an especially important opportunity for Keokuk as the home of the annual, Gil Sargent Memorial Hoopin’ on the River 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament. This event draws players and spectators from all over the region and is currently played in a make-shift fashion on the river-adjacent Hubinger Landing or in front of the United Presbyterian Church. With no specifically dedicated space for the event, it is played on temporarily painted courts and moveable backboards and hoops. This staple of Keokuk community entertainment is worthy of a permanent and more appropriate setting. Multi-sport game courts are a practical way of providing the space required for this event as well as a year-round activity option for the entire community. Whereas not required, small sets of bleachers along the perimeter of the courts can add to the ambiance that this is an event stage as well as providing additional seating for passersby.

## Parcel 13 Additional Consideration

### Provide space for an off-leash dog park

This option has proven contentious for this particular location in the past but should not be completely dismissed. Neighboring homes have cited noise, smell, and bite concerns with having a dog park in this location. Whereas these are all worries that are not unfounded, the chances of altercations or nuisance problems are statistically too minute to warrant taking this option off of the table for Riverview Park. But before one is installed, a few key factors should be explored, specifically, actual need for dog play amenities and lack of an alternate, less controversial location.

More data would need to be gathered prior to the installation of a dog park at such a pivotal location for the downtown to riverfront connection that is being sought by the city. This data should include actual versus perceived need for a dog play space. If the area will be used primarily by a small group of individuals, then the implementation of the dog park would not serve the overarching goal of utilizing this space to bring the community and visitors together. If there is a substantial want for a dog park in this area, an alternative location could accommodate both the concerns of neighbors and the wants of dog owners. Rees Park was designated as the approved location of a dog park in a 5-0 city council vote in 2016. This location, although outside of the study area for this plan, provides much more space, an impressive canopy cover, and ample parking space for park goers. It is therefore the recommendation of this plan that all efforts to locate a dog park at Rees Park be exhausted before Riverview Park becomes a viable option.



It should be noted that recommendations for this parcel are focused solely on the northwest corner of the park. This is because the southeastern portion of the parcel is adjacent to property owned by Keokuk Union Depot and is currently being evaluated for a separate project which could serve as a transition point from the park to the riverfront. Because that project would potentially involve tiering the bluff, that portion of the park should be left unaltered to avoid installing equipment that will then need to be removed in the near future.

Rendering of NW corner of Riverview Park. Source: Ursula Ferrier





There are two kinds of funding that will be discussed in this section, Existing Keokuk Incentives and Other Funding Opportunities. Existing Keokuk Incentives are funds that are offered by the City of Keokuk and other Community Partners and are directed to Keokuk residents, businesses and developers. These incentives are designed to attract and support business and residential improvements. Other Funding Opportunities are State, Federal, Local and Private funds that are directed to the City of Keokuk, Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission, nonprofits, Community Interest Groups, and Corporations. The goal of these grants is to support Municipalities and Communities by providing funds to transportation, housing, community and economic development projects.

## Existing Keokuk Incentives

### Incentive One

#### Industrial Construction Tax Exemption

This incentive is administered by the City of Keokuk and is available to Industrial manufacturers in Keokuk to support their efforts to make renovations to properties. According to city officials, this incentive has never been used, if it was, it predated available records.

#### Funding Specifics

Iowa law allows cities and counties to abate local property taxes for value-added to industrial real estate. The maximum amount of actual value-added at a new or expanded facility, which is eligible to be exempt from taxation, is: First Year: 75%, Second Year: 60%, Third Year: 45%, Fourth Year: 30%, Fifth Year: 15%.

[\[http://www.cityofkeokuk.org/government/development/development-incentives/\]](http://www.cityofkeokuk.org/government/development/development-incentives/)

### Incentive Two

#### Downtown Urban Renewal TIF Rebate

This incentive is administered by the City of Keokuk and is available to Downtown businesses in Keokuk to support their efforts to make renovations to properties.

#### Funding Specifics

The Keokuk Downtown Urban Renewal Plan Tax Increment Financing Rebate is for businesses that improve their property's assessed value by at least 15%. Qualified businesses receive a 90 percent rebate on the incremental difference in taxes. The plan is for a specific downtown area that includes the commercial district from Water Street to 14th Street.

[\[http://www.cityofkeokuk.org/government/development/development-incentives/\]](http://www.cityofkeokuk.org/government/development/development-incentives/)

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[<http://www.cityofkeokuk.org/government/development/development-incentives/>]

## Incentive Three

### New Jobs Withholding Tax Credit (Pilot City)

This incentive is administered by the City of Keokuk and is available to businesses coming from another state that are creating jobs in an urban renewal area or existing Iowa businesses that create 10 new jobs or invest \$500,000 within an urban renewal area. This incentive is being used by at least 3 companies: Keokuk Mills, LLC, Amsted Rails and Roquette America.

#### Funding Specifics

The Targeted Jobs Withholding Tax Credit Pilot Program is a new pilot program enacted in 2006 which allows the diversion of withholding funds paid by an employer to be matched by a designated "pilot" city to create economic incentives that can be directed toward the growth and expansion of targeted businesses located within Urban Renewal areas. The pilot city provides a \$1 match to every dollar received. Match can be provided by the city, the employer or a private donor. The withholding agreement allows an amount of up to three (3) percent of the gross wages paid by the business to be directed to the "pilot" city on a quarterly basis. All designated withholding funds and those pledged by the "pilot" city are required to be used for an urban renewal project related to the employer pursuant to the terms of the withholding agreement.

[<http://www.cityofkeokuk.org/government/development/development-incentives/>]

## Incentive Four

### Urban Revitalization Program (Residential)

This incentive is administered by the City of Keokuk but is approved by the Lee County assessor. It is available to Keokuk residents to support their efforts to make renovations to properties. This incentive is used regularly, the improvement is required to be an owner/occupied single family dwelling and cannot be located within any other TIF districts.

#### Funding Specifics

The Urban Revitalization Tax exemption program provides a three-year total exemption from property taxation for qualified real estate. Qualified residents who improve their qualified property's assessed value by 10% will receive 100% abatement on the incremental difference in taxes.

[<http://www.cityofkeokuk.org/government/development/development-incentives/>]



# Incentive Five

## Keokuk Revolving Loan Fund

This incentive is administered by the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission and is available to individuals and corporations to start a new business in Keokuk. The Keokuk fund has been available for lending since 2006. In that time 10 businesses have been assisted from that loan fund totaling \$247,000. According to Tracey Lamm from Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission, “All projects are considered gap financing and the applicant must be working with a bank or other lending institution. Keokuk and SEIRPC funds are used when the bank has reached its lending limit for the project and more funds are needed in order to make the project move forward. Some projects have received funds from both the Keokuk and SEIRPC regional loan pool. Total project costs include other financing, owner equity, grant funds, tax abatement.”

### Funding Specifics

The Keokuk Revolving Loan Fund is used to make low interest loans up to \$100,000 for gap financing to qualifying individuals, partnerships, or corporations that want to start a new business in Keokuk. The RLF is a community financing tool used to encourage small business development and entrepreneurship and is administered through the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission (SEIRPC). The Keokuk RLF was created by the City allocating \$100,000 and a USDA\_RD grant of \$99,000. Funds are used in conjunction with local lenders to serve as gap financing for proposals and the lender serves as the primary source of funding. As loan payments are made, and monies are repaid to the pool, the fund revolves back out to other candidates for the program.

[<http://www.cityofkeokuk.org/government/development/development-incentives/>]

Funding Source	Amount	Retained Jobs	Created Jobs	Total Project Cost	Number of Businesses Receiving Loan
Source A - Keokuk Revolving Loan Fund	\$147,400	24	22	\$1,224,700	7
Source B - Regional Revolving Loan Fund	\$478,000	56	71	\$1,087,050	6
Source A & B - Keokuk and Revolving Loan Funds	\$700,000	1	58	\$4,302,200	3

*Since 2006, Ten businesses have received Keokuk Funds totaling \$247,000. Nine businesses have received Regional Funds totaling \$1,078,000. As of February 2020, there were five active loans, seven closed loans, and four loans which were written off. Source: SEIRPC and Authors.*

## Incentive Six

### Regional Revolving Loan Fund

This incentive is administered by the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission and is available to individuals and corporations to start a new business in Lee County. 9 businesses have received Regional Loan funds totaling \$1,744,500. Reference the Table for specifics of participating businesses and Loan Amounts.

#### Funding Specifics

Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission administers a loan fund available to qualified businesses in Lee County. The Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) assists eligible businesses in retaining and creating private sector job opportunities. Approved applications may acquire funds for initial loans, or for loans to buy down the principal or interest on commercial loans. The maximum RLF loan is \$250,000 at lower than conventional interest rates.

[\[http://www.cityofkeokuk.org/government/development/development-incentives/\]](http://www.cityofkeokuk.org/government/development/development-incentives/)

## Incentive Seven

### Façade Grant Program

The program started in 1986. 105 grants have been awarded in that 34 years. Grants have ranged from as small as \$450 to as high as \$3,100. The banks funded programming for the first year when 11 applications were awarded. The program was funded by a variety of sources until 1991 when the City of Keokuk Partnered with Main Street.

#### Funding Specifics

The Façade Grant Program is one of the simplest and most effective ways for Main Street Keokuk, Inc. and the City of Keokuk to partner with local building owners to improve and preserve their historic buildings in downtown Keokuk. A one third/two third matching program, Main Street Keokuk, Inc. will award one dollar for every two dollars invested by building owners, with a maximum allocation of \$2,500 per project.

[\[http://www.cityofkeokuk.org/government/development/development-incentives/\]](http://www.cityofkeokuk.org/government/development/development-incentives/)

## Incentives from Other Communities to Model

### Downtown Redevelopment Program – Caledonia, Minnesota

Encourages property owners to redevelop underutilized or blighted properties in the central business district Provides funds for demolition, site cleanup, site preparation, and renovation. Forgivable loan of \$20,000 with matching requirement of 1:1 Work must be completed within 120 days from the day of approval Tax base on property must increase within two years (APA PAS Report 590,2014).

### Downtown Housing Incentive Program – Dubuque, Iowa

The project must involve the rehabilitation of an existing structure Assistance limited to \$10,000 per residential unit and no more than \$750,000 for a single project. Assists in the production of new market-rate downtown rental and/or owner-occupied residential units within the Greater Downtown Urban Renewal District (APA PAS Report 590,2014).

### Vacant Building Rehabilitation Program – Albany, New York

Provides gap financing of up to \$50,000 per building in the form of a grant/forgivable loan for construction rehab assistance for vacant properties in the city A project must include renovation of residential or commercial units that results in occupancy. Funds the rehabilitation of vacant residential properties (APA PAS Report 590,2014).



### **Blighted Properties Redevelopment Program – Knoxville, Tennessee**

Applicants must contribute 5 percent in cash toward the redevelopment costs. Proposals must be compatible with the goals and objectives of the Knoxville Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan. Program funds can be used only to finance the costs of developing one- to four-unit residential properties, including acquisition, new construction of residential housing units (including site preparation), rehabilitation of housing units, utility connections, and reasonable and necessary soft costs related to the development as approved by CD staff. Provides short-term development and construction financing through subsidized loans for the purpose of redeveloping and renovating unoccupied residential dwelling units or constructing new dwelling units on vacant properties for sale, rent, or owner occupation (APA PAS Report 590, 2014).

### **Redevelopment Financing Program – Elk River, Minnesota**

Eligible projects include building construction, land acquisition, and modernization of buildings. Provides redevelopment loans of up to \$75,000 at a fixed rate of 2 percent for building renovation and business development in the city's downtown (APA PAS Report 590, 2014).

### **Student Loan Forgiveness Fund for Living Downtown – Various Cities**

Residents in Detroit Can receive up to \$20,000 forgivable loan toward the purchase of primary residence. Or \$2,500 allowance of funding toward the cost of your apartment the first year and then \$1000 the next year.

Residents in Kansas Can receive student loan repayment of up to \$15,000. The program will pay 20% of your outstanding loan debt up to a max of \$3,000 per year for 5 years.

Residents in Niagara Falls, NY can receive \$3,500 per year for 2 years.

## **Focus Area-Specific Funding Opportunities**

### **Economic Development-Specific**

#### **Brownfield/Grayfield Tax Credit Program**

Iowa Economic Development

Website: <https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/regulatory/brownfield>

Due Dates: September 1st

The State of Iowa has \$10 Million in redevelopment tax credits for brownfield and grayfield sites in Iowa. The program goal is to aid redevelopment which would improve Iowa's economy and reduce environmental hazards. (Iowa Department of Revenue) Applicants can receive transferable investment tax credits which are good for 5 years from date of issue. They are based on the owner's equity investment. (Iowa Economic Development)

#### **State Historic Tax Credit**

Iowa Economic Development

Website: <https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/HistDistrict>

This program offers tax credits to developers who sensitively rehabilitate historic buildings to offer them new life. Iowa offers this tax credit program to ensure character-defining features and spaces of buildings are retained to help create distinct and vibrant communities. Buildings must be historically significant, projects must include substantial rehabilitation, and only eligible taxpayers may apply.

Benefits include: State income tax credit of up to 25% of the qualified rehabilitation expenditures associated with the project. Tax credits are transferable. Tax credits may be refunded or carried forward for five years or until depleted, whichever is earlier (Iowa Economic Development, 2020).

### **Historical Resource Development Program**

Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs

Website: <https://iowaculture.gov/about-us/about/grants/historical-resource-development-program>

Eligible to apply: nonprofits, Governments, Tribes, Individuals, For profits

Benefit: up to \$50,000 with a required match

Deadline: May 1, 2020 to June 1, 2020

Grant funding to help preserve, conserve, interpret, enhance, and educate the public about Iowa's historical assets. The Historical Resource Development Program provides funding for documentary collections, historic preservation and museums (Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, 2020).

### **Main Street Challenge Grants**

Main Street Iowa and Iowa Economic Development Authority

Website: <https://www.iowagrants.gov/insideLinkOpps.jsp?documentPk=1465245270610>

Deadline: September 21<sup>st</sup>

Eligible projects include rehabilitation and/or restoration of significant commercial properties within the designated Main street District. This can include but is not limited to façade improvements, upper floor interior rehabs, structural repairs, code compliance, first floor rehabs, energy efficiency/sustainability improvements. Grantee must invest a dollar for dollar cash match and complete projects within 24 months. Maximum awards for this grant round will be \$75,000. Minimum grants will be no less than \$15,000. No program shall receive more than one award per application round (IowaGrants.gov, 2020).

### **Community Catalyst Building Remediation**

Iowa Economic Development

Website: <https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/Catalyst>

The Community Catalyst Building Remediation Program assists communities with the redevelopment, rehabilitation or deconstruction of buildings to stimulate economic growth or reinvestment in the community.

Eligible projects include rehabilitation of one commercial building per community or two buildings with the same ownership that are adjacent. Maximum Grant amount is \$100,000 (Iowa Economic Development, 2020).

### **Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants**

United States Department of Agriculture

Website: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/distance-learning-telemedicine-grants>

Deadline: July 13, 2020

This initiative, backed by the USDA, was designed to help communities establish the necessary infrastructure to host distance learning sessions, with the potential of being put specifically to telemedicine work, or to be used more broadly (USDA, 2020). Awards levels range from \$50,000 - \$1,000,000 (USDA, 2020).



## Housing-Specific

### Workforce Housing Tax Credits

Iowa Economic Development

Website: <https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/WHTC>

The program provides tax benefits to developers to provide housing in Iowa communities, focusing especially on those projects using abandoned, empty or dilapidated properties. There is a small city set aside for this program which is available to eligible projects within the 88 least populous counties in the state. Projects must include one of the following: housing development on grayfields or brownfield sites, repair or rehab of dilapidated housing, upper story housing development, or new construction in a greenfield. The developer must build single or multifamily homes. Total project costs may not exceed \$200,000 per unit for new construction or \$250,000 for historic rehabilitation. Total project costs for projects under the small cities set aside may not exceed \$215,000 per unit. Housing project must be completed within three years from the date the project registers for benefits. (Iowa Economic Development)

### Federal Rural Housing Repair Loan - 402

US Department of Agriculture

Website: <https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/402>

The Rural Housing Repair Loans and Grants program provides loans and grants to very low-income homeowners to repair, improve, modernize, or to remove health and safety hazards in their rural dwellings. Available to individuals who live in rural areas and are aged 62 years or older. The benefit is a loan of up to \$20,000 and grants up to \$7,500. Loans are up to 20 years at 1% interest. (Benefits.gov)

## Transportation-Specific

### Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP)

Iowa Department of Transportation

Deadline: October 1<sup>st</sup>

Matching Requirement: 20%

Project must cost \$20,000

Website: <https://iowadot.gov/iowarail/financial-assistance/icaap>

This program funds highway/street, bicycle/pedestrians, transit or freight projects which assist in maintaining Iowa's clean air quality by reducing transportation related emissions. Eligible projects must be on the federal-aid system which includes all functional federal class routes except local and rural minor collectors. This program requires a 20 percent or more local match. In order to qualify, projects must either provide a direct benefit to air quality through reducing emissions with traffic flow improvements, reducing vehicle miles traveled, reducing single occupant trips or have another transportation improvement that will increase the air quality or reduce congestion.

Improving the streetscape, downtown connections and parking options encourages a walking environment and reduces the amount of people either driving to Downtown Keokuk or driving from one side to another, ultimately reducing vehicle use and emissions while improving the air quality. By improving the streetscape and adding additional vegetation which helps to mitigate the effects of carbon dioxide emissions by directly absorbing the emissions in the air (Nowak & Heisler, 2010).

### **Iowa's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)**

Iowa Department of Transportation

Deadline: October 1

Matching Requirement: 20%

Website: [https://iowadot.gov/systems\\_planning/Grant-Programs/Transportation-Alternatives](https://iowadot.gov/systems_planning/Grant-Programs/Transportation-Alternatives)

Iowa's TAP program provides funds for transportation alternatives such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, community improvement activities, enhanced mobility, improvement activities and safe routes to school. This program is a replacement to the federal grant program which allows for local government, regional transportation authorities, transit agencies, natural resource/public land agencies, tribal governments and any other regional government body with transportation or recreational trail oversight could apply for this grant funding. In order to qualify for TAP, there needs to be a local match of 20 percent or more and projects must have a direct relationship to existing or planned surface transportation facilities, as well as fitting into one or more of the listed categories.

This can help provide funding for recommendations in this plan by aiding in construction, planning and design of safety related infrastructure such as lighting, sidewalks, pedestrian signals etc. as well as providing funding for streetscaping and corridor landscaping.

### **Traffic Safety Improvement Program (TSIP)**

Iowa Department of Transportation

Deadline: August 15

Project cannot exceed \$500,000

Website: <https://iowadot.gov/traffic/traffic-and-safety-programs/tsip/tsip-program>

Iowa's TSIP program provides funds for traffic safety improvements or studies on public

roads which can include county roads, city streets, states highways or state park and institutional roads. Eligible projects fall into three categories which are: site-specific, traffic control devices or studies and outreach.

This can assist with funding of this plans recommendations by offsetting the cost for the purchase and installation of materials such as signs which increase overall safety for motorists and pedestrians within the downtown.

### **Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE)**

Iowa Department of Transportation

Deadline: February 1 and September 1

Matching Requirement: 50%

Website: [https://iowadot.gov/systems\\_planning/Grant-Programs/Revitalize-Iowas-Sound-Economy-RISE-Program](https://iowadot.gov/systems_planning/Grant-Programs/Revitalize-Iowas-Sound-Economy-RISE-Program)

RISE was established to promote economic development in Iowa through the improvement of existing streets. Funding can be received as a grant, loan or a combination of both. Funded projects fall under two categories which is Immediate Opportunities which is related to non-speculative opportunities for permanent job creation and/or retention and has a local match of 20 percent. The other category is Local Development which refers to projects that support local economic development but do not require immediate funding or do not meet the immediate opportunity criteria. This category incorporates development potential, economic impact, local commitment and initiatives, transportation needs and area economic needs. Local match for this category is typically 50 percent.

This relates to the recommendations from this report because improved streetscapes can greatly benefit economic development by bringing in new businesses and creating a better perception for residents and visitors alike.

### **DOT/DNR Fund**

Iowa Department of Transportation

Deadline: None

Maximum of \$100,000 per application per year

The intent of this funding is for beautify the roadside of primary system corridors with plants. Qualifications for funding is that the site for improvement must be on a primary highway right-of-way, including highway extensions.

The additional landscaping recommended within this plan is to beautify downtown Keokuk, and mainly be along Main Street which is a primary highway. This funding would be able to assist with the cost of materials and the installation of seeds or live plants.

### **Living Roadway Trust Fund**

The intent is to implement the Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management program (IRVM) on city, county or state rights-of-way or publicly owned areas near traveled roadways. Eligible projects include gateway enhancements, roadside enhancement, special equipment, education/training, research or roadside inventories. Items that can be funded through this fund are plant materials, various equipment from seeding to brush control as well as educational materials regarding IRVM.

Recommendations through this plan are aimed at enhancing the roadside which directly falls into suitable projects through this funding and would be a source to help Keokuk enhance its roadside through plant materials.

## **Community Development-Specific**

### **Keokuk Area Community Foundation**

**Website:** <http://keokukfoundation.org/>

**Due Dates:** 2019 due date was April 6. TBD for 2020

**Range of Award Amounts:** \$1,000-\$25,000

**Description:** This foundation collects donations from charitable individuals and disseminates that money to nonprofits with a wide variety of missions. Special interest for these grants go to programs that help address upcoming or existing issues, foster leadership, facilitate collaboration and cooperation among nonprofits and the community, capital expenditures, seed money for new nonprofits, and projects that have received grants but need matching funds.

### **Lee County Charitable Fund**

**Website:** <http://www.leecountycharitablefund.org/>

**Due Dates:** February-April. TBD for 2020

**Range of Award Amounts:** Varies depending on organization ask

**Description:** Nonprofits that promote the fields of arts and culture, community betterment, education, health and human services in Lee County, IA are preferred. Past recipients of this grant include DVIP, Community Action of Southeast Iowa Early/Head Start, Food Bank of Iowa, and Goodwill of the Heartland to name a few. Nonprofits that meet the 501 (c) (3) designation are invited to apply. This grant's application opens in February of 2020.



### **Washington County Riverboat Foundation**

**Website:** <https://www.washingtoncountyriverboatfoundation.org/>

**Due Dates:** Not provided

**Range of Award Amounts:** Varies depending on organization ask

**Description:** There are two types of grant funds offered to nonprofits through this foundation: competitive and mutual. Since Keokuk falls outside of Washington County, the library foundation would apply for the competitive fund. The grants are created through donations given to the Riverboat Foundation by the Riverside Hotel and Casino. Areas of special interest include community development and beautification, economic development, educations and arts, and human and social needs. Applicants are encouraged to have other sources of funding in order to leverage its grant awards.

### **Henry County Community Foundation (Affiliate of Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines)**

**Website:** <https://www.desmoinesfoundation.org/affiliates/henry-county>

**Due Dates:** Last business day of October (2019). Will reopen for the 2020 grant season, dates subject to change. Awards are given in December.

**Range of Award Amounts:** \$500-\$25,000

**Description:** Grants are available to 501 (c) (3) organizations serving Henry County. Special interest areas include arts & culture, community affairs and development, education, environmental protection, health, historic preservation, and human services.

### **Community Foundation of Van Buren County Grant (Affiliate of Quad Cities Community Foundation)**

**Website:**

<https://www.qccommunityfoundation.org/communityfoundationofvanburencounty>

**Due Dates:** Opened January 1<sup>st</sup>, closes March 15<sup>th</sup> of 2019. TBD for 2020

**Range of Award Amounts:** Not provided

**Description:** This foundation seeks grant applications from nonprofits with missions aimed at a variety of needs. Although they are open to viewing applications for all kinds of projects, special interests include health and human services, education, the arts, the environment, youth services, and social services. Each grant program targets a specific community goal, so each individual grant opportunity is listed on the website.

### **Community Foundation of Des Moines County (Affiliate of the Keokuk Area Community Foundation)**

**Website:** <http://www.communityfoundationofdmcia.org>

**Due Dates:** Currently unknown (site under construction)

**Range of Award Amounts:** Currently unknown (site under construction)

**Description:** Although there is no specific grant opportunities listed on the website, the main purpose of the Community Foundation of Des Moines County is to build community endowments, be a resource for a variety of community needs and assist donors by providing many giving opportunities.

**Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Foundation (BNSF)**

**Website:** <http://www.bnsffoundation.org/>

**Name of grant:** Civic Services Grant

**Due Dates:** None

**Range of Award Amounts:** \$1,000 - \$10,000

**Description:** This award is designed for organizations which are concerned with the environment and local community issues, such as crime prevention, parks and recreation, diversity, and community development.

**The Principal Financial Group Foundation**

**Website:** <https://www.principal.com/about-us/corporate-citizenship/get-started/request-grant>

**Name of grant:** Strong Communities Grants

**Due Dates:** Varies by size of grant requested

**Range of Award Amounts:** \$100 - \$1,000,000

**Description:** The Foundation supports organizations that provide arts, cultural, and recreational activities at a free or near-free cost to children and families, especially for individuals who otherwise would not have access to that type of programming. Our Community Grant Program primarily invests in work that promotes financial security, with an emphasis on serving youth ages 15 to 24 and historically disadvantaged communities.

**Union Pacific Foundation**

**Website:** <https://www.up.com/aboutup/community/foundation/>

**Name of grant:** Community Ties Giving Program- Community Spaces Grant

**Due Dates:** TBD for 2020

**Range of Award Amounts:** \$2,500 - \$25,000

**Description:** The vibrancy of a community is an essential ingredient in attracting businesses and tourism, and establishing a desirable place for skilled workers and their families to call home. Just as the railroad opened up avenues for sharing different cultures and experiences, we seek to ensure all citizens within our operating communities have access to special places in the community that celebrate cultural diversity, artistic expression, our natural environment, and the social interactions that enrich our lives. Ultimately, we are committed to **supporting the local economy by building and enhancing community spaces that contribute to the distinct identity of a city or town, creating destinations where families, businesses, and visitors want to be.**

**Wellmark Foundation****Website:** <https://www.wellmark.com/foundation/>**Name of grant:** Match Grant**Due Dates:** TBD for 2020**Range of Award Amounts:** \$1,000 - \$100,000

**Description:** The Foundation's areas of interest include safe and healthy environments in which to be active, including safe and accessible venues for physical activity, active transportation concepts, and trail development. The Large MATCH Grant Program provides challenge grants designed to bring other funders to the table to support larger community health projects needing potentially higher levels of funding or collaboration. Grants range up to \$100,000 and must be matched 100%.

**Telligen Community Initiative (TCI)****Website:** <http://telligenci.org/>**Name of grant:** Social Determinants of Health / Health Equity Grants**Due Dates:** TBD for 2020**Range of Award Amounts:** up to \$50,000

**Description:** The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. The social determinants of health can be most responsible for resulting health inequities. TCI believes in advancing health equity and achieving this requires novel approaches to positively address the social determinants of health. The range of personal, social, economic, and environmental factors that influence health status are known as determinants of health. It is the interrelationships among these factors that determine individual and population health. This interrelationship and connection to health is a connection we want to support with our resources. Please visit our 2019 Request for Proposals document to outline potential ways to approach.

**AARP Livable Communities Initiative****Website:** <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/about/info-2017/aarp-community-challenge.html>**Name of grant:** Community Challenge Grants**Due Dates:** TBD for 2020**Range of Award Amounts:** not stated (“hundreds to thousands”)

**Description:** Priority will be given to projects that aim to achieve the following outcome: Create vibrant public places in the community through permanent or temporary solutions that improve open spaces, parks, and access to other amenities.

**AARP Livable Communities Initiative****Website:** <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/about/info-2017/aarp-community-challenge.html>**Name of grant:** Community Challenge Grants**Due Dates:** TBD for 2020**Range of Award Amounts:** not stated (“hundreds to thousands”)

**Description:** Priority will be given to projects that aim to achieve the following outcome: Create vibrant public places in the community through permanent or temporary solutions that improve open spaces, parks, and access to other amenities.



### **The Aetna Foundation**

**Website:** <https://www.aetna-foundation.org/>

**Name of grant:** Cultivating Healthy Communities Grant

**Due Dates:** Applications are accepted when the new RFP is released

**Range of Award Amounts:** \$50,000 - \$100,000

**Description:** The Foundation's Cultivating Healthy Communities grant program is intended to help local communities in the contiguous United States to become healthier places to live, work, learn, play, and pray. The emphasis is on projects that benefit underserved, low-income, and minority communities.

This program supports projects that address the social determinants of health and participants' physical, mental, and social well-being.

### **Hydro Flask**

**Website:** [https://www.cybergrants.com/pls/cybergrants/quiz.display\\_question?x\\_gm\\_id=4494&x\\_quiz\\_id=8110&x\\_order\\_by=1](https://www.cybergrants.com/pls/cybergrants/quiz.display_question?x_gm_id=4494&x_quiz_id=8110&x_order_by=1)

**Name of grant:** Parks for All Grants

**Due Dates:** TBD for 2020

**Range of Award Amounts:** \$10,000 to \$50,000

**Description:** Parks for All, the charitable giving program of Hydro Flask, supports the development, maintenance, and accessibility of public green spaces so people everywhere can live healthier, happier, and more fulfilled lives.

### **Facebook**

**Website:** <https://facebookcommunityfund.fbreg.com/>

**Name of grant:** Facebook Community Fund

**Due Dates:** TBD for 2020

**Range of Award Amounts:** up to \$25,000

**Description:** The mission of the Facebook Community Fund is to deepen community impact through philanthropy and deepen philanthropy's impact through community. The Fund's initial pilot phase is offering grants of up to \$25,000 to place-based nonprofit organizations that are working toward positive change in their local communities. Place-based is described as, "intimate, active engagement in community change specific to a local community" with an emphasis on making a "long-term commitment to living and working in a community or neighborhood."

### **United States Environmental Protection Agency**

**Website:** <https://www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>  
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html?keywords=EPA>

**Name of grant:** Environmental Education (EE) Grants

**Due Dates:** October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019 through January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 11:59pm EST

**Range of Award Amounts:** Up to \$200,000 has been awarded in district #7 for various projects.

**Description:** "Under the Environmental Education Grants Program, EPA seeks grant applications from eligible applicants to support environmental education projects that promote environmental awareness and stewardship and help provide people with the skills to take responsible actions to protect the environment. This grant program provides financial support for projects that design, demonstrate, and/or disseminate environmental education practices, methods, or techniques."

### **National Park Service**

**Website:** <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/apply.htm>

**Name of grant:** Community Assistance in Conservation and Outdoor Recreation

**Due Dates:** The close of the yearly application process is June 30<sup>th</sup> of every year, with an intention of applying due abt. 30 days prior to the application deadline. "Please contact us as early as possible before the June 30 application deadline to discuss your proposed project and inform us of your intent to apply as this will help ensure the best possible request for assistance. We encourage applicants to consult with National Park Service staff about their proposal at least 30 days prior to the application deadline to ensure that our assistance is appropriate for your proposal and that your application is the best that it can be. Staff can help with application questions and assist with formulating an application. Remember - it's never too early to talk to us about your project for next year."

**Range of Award Amounts:** Not specified

### **The Carolyn Foundation**

**Website:** <https://carolynfoundation.org/>

**Name of grant:** Economically Disadvantaged Youth Focus

**Due Dates:** February 1<sup>st</sup> and August 1<sup>st</sup> of each year

**Range of Award Amounts:** \$5,000 - \$50,000

#### **Description:**

The Foundation seeks to empower economically disadvantaged children and youth by supporting their families and others to inspire, nurture, educate, and guide them to achieve long-term stability and well-being. Interests include healthy lifestyles, access to the arts, and positive relationships with adults.

### **Waste Management Charitable Giving**

**Website:** <https://www.wm.com/about/community/charitable-giving.jsp>

**Name of grant:** Environmental Education funding

**Due Dates:** Open

**Range of Award Amounts:** Open

**Description: Environmental Education** - The key to ensuring the preservation of the environment is learning about the importance of protecting it and acting in an environmentally responsible manner. To this end, Waste Management prefers to support environmental education programs targeted at middle and high school students. This includes environmental and science related projects, science fairs, Earth Day projects and others. The Waste Management Charitable Contributions program provides support to organizations that are duly certified by the state in which they operate and are in receipt of an IRS ruling that they are classified as a 501(c)(3) organization or public organizations where any donations requested will be used exclusively for public purposes. We target our support to specific projects or programs that enhance the scope of services offered by an organization. WM prefers not to financially support operating costs, capital campaigns, or multi-year requests. Preference is also given to organizations, which have a broad base of funders, community partners and volunteers.



# Implementation

## Evaluation

The City of Keokuk planning or public works staff should update this document as needed to better address any major changes in community conditions, downtown conditions, or community objectives. However, this document is a long-range plan and should be adhered to as closely as possible. Actions performed in accordance with the content presented in this document should avoid contradicting goals or objectives found within Keokuk's comprehensive plan.

Following five to ten years of implementation of this document, the city may measure the success of its downtown revitalization efforts by comparing changes in downtown property values within the study area over time. This may be measured at the parcel level or for the entire study area by measures of central tendency, such as the study area's median or mean property value. Furthermore, residential dwellings, commercial, and industrial uses may be re-inventoried to compare the number of units of each use exists within the study area. This effort will be aided greatly by the adoption of a city commercial and rental permitting process and database.

Another means of measuring the success of this document would be to track the amount of money spent on development permits and the total valuation of improvements to parcels over time. Finally, a follow-up survey may be performed to identify residents' satisfactions with downtown improvements following the implementation of this plan's recommendations.

The following tables are a projection of the priority level, likely timeframe, and necessary parties for each project. It is expected that the timing of projects and parties involved may change over time as well as the perceived importance of each task. This is natural and, even if projects take longer than expected, it should not be considered a negative setback. An implementation evaluation should be conducted in 5-10 years to allow for a course corrections and inclusion of new Keokuk residents to provide fresh input.



Category	Downtown Issue that is being addressed	2020 Downtown Plan Recommendation	Suggested Priority	Estimated Time Frame	Responsible Parties
Transportation	Increase Pedestrian Facilities	Follow Sidewalk Guidelines	High	Ongoing	CK
Transportation		Provide Functional Street Furniture	High	Medium	CK, KCC, MSKI
Transportation	Provide Attractive Streetscape	Provide Additional Landscaping	High	Medium	CK
Transportation		Provide Pedestrian Lighting	High	Medium	CK
Transportation		Reduce Dead Space	High	Ongoing	CK
Transportation		Encourage Outdoor Dining	Medium	Long	CK, KCC, MSKI
Transportation	Promote Connectivity	Ensure Sufficient Parking	Low	Ongoing	CK
Transportation		Optimize Pedestrian Connectivity	High	Ongoing	CK

Category	Downtown Issue that is being addressed	2020 Downtown Plan Recommendation	Suggested Priority	Estimated Time Frame	Responsible Parties
Economic Development through Placemaking	External Competition	Develop the city's workforce utilizing downtown assets and resources by creating a job training program in the downtown	High	Ongoing	CK, SCC
Economic Development through Placemaking		Enable Longtime Business Owners in the downtown to succeed, and encourage new ones to settle in the area	Medium	Medium	CK, KCC, MSKI
Economic Development through Placemaking		Cultivate a sense of place in the downtown	High	Long	CK, MSKI
Economic Development through Placemaking		Preserve the Keokuk Union Depot	Low	Medium	CK, DF
Economic Development through Placemaking		Move the George M. Verity Steamboat	Low	Medium	CK
Economic Development through Placemaking		Support Public Art	High	Ongoing	CK, MSKI
Economic Development through Placemaking		Make Course Corrections and Plan Updates	Medium	Ongoing	CK, KCC, MSKI, SEIRPC, LC

Category	Downtown Issue that is being addressed	2020 Downtown Plan Recommendation	Suggested Priority	Estimated Time Frame	Responsible Parties
Housing	Counteract Vacancy	Create a Vacancy and Commercial Real Estate database	High	Short	CK, KCC, SEIRPC, MSKI
Housing		Prioritize second floor rehabilitation to promote housing in the downtown	Medium	Ongoing	CK, MSKI
Housing		Support the Creation of non-profits that address residential maintenance and trades people training	High	Medium	CK, KCC, SEIRPC, MSKI
Housing	Promote and Improve Incentives for Development	Review Existing Funding and Incentive Programs offered by the City	Medium	Medium	CK
Housing		Advertise Resources and profitable investment models with Vacant Properties	High	Short	CK, KCC, SEIRPC, MSKI, LC
Housing	Regulatory Oversight	Create a Maintenance Ordinance and City Rehab Program	High	Medium	CK
Housing		Adopt a Rental Permitting Process	Low	Medium	CK
Housing		Land Pooling Strategy or Redevelopment Authority	Medium	Ongoing	CK, KCC, SEIRPC, MSKI, LC



Category	Downtown Issue that is being addressed	2020 Downtown Plan Recommendation	Suggested Priority	Estimated Time Frame	Responsible Parties
Land Use	Vacant and Underused Space	Allow first floor residential use as a special use	Low	Short	CK
Land Use		Create a new downtown mixed use zoning district	High	Short	CK
Land Use	Regulatory Oversight	Amend various permitted uses in zones that exist in the downtown	Medium	Short	CK
Land Use		Hire a consulting firm to perform a major code of ordinance update	High	Short	CK
Land Use	Insufficient Design Standards	Develop a Downtown PUD Overlay Zone & design packet/plan to apply more specific and enforceable design standards	Medium	Long	CK, KCC, SEIRPC, MSKI
Land Use	Lack of a Historic District	Perform a historic asset survey	Medium	Medium	CK, MSKI
Land Use		Apply for NRHP Historic District designation or adopt a proprietary formal Historic District	Medium	Medium	CK, KCC, MSKI
Land Use		Create a historic preservation plan	Medium	Medium	CK, SEIRPC
NOTE: "Ongoing" refers to a projected which will see some returns in the short and medium term, but that is expected to last for more than the long term					

# Appendices

# Appendix A

	Existing Plan or Doc	Year	Area	Task	Implemented (Y/N/U)	Associated Program Name	When
1	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	City Codes	■ Strengthen historic downtown retail district	U		
2	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	City Codes	■ Develop and adopt a plan for various city codes and for expansion of future retail/commercial development	U		
3	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	City Codes	■ Develop a commercial entertainment district building on Keokuk theme	U		
4	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Economy	■ Recruit support businesses for core existing industries	U		
5	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Economy	■ Develop and implement a marketing plan communicating to potential prospects and creating greater awareness of types of businesses desired in the community	U		
6	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Economy	■ Rehabilitate one block of Main Street as a demonstration project aimed at stimulating interest and commitment for additional rehabilitation projects	U		
7	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Economy	■ Coordinate with Lee County to develop a county-wide GIS system and make data sets free and Web accessible to everyone	Y	Beacon Schneider	
8	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Economy	■ Promote and establish dependable access to Internet services, including a Wi-Fi cloud (wireless Internet connections) for the downtown and other community areas for businesses and residents	U		
9	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Economy	■ Continue to recognize, support and spotlight entrepreneurial businesses in Keokuk	U		
10	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Economy	■ Attract and encourage local and out-of-town entrepreneurs to invest in downtown businesses and buildings through architectural, historical and financial assistance	U		
11	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Economy	■ Identify and market the Main Street and downtown buildings that are structurally sound enough to be rehabilitated	U		
12	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Economy	■ Coordinate efforts to actively bid for tournaments and/or various sporting activities and events	U		
13	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Funding	■ Increase economic development funding levels toward business expansion and growth	U		
14	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Funding	■ Market, publicize and utilize the state and federal programs that are available for retail and service businesses	U		
15	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Funding	■ Establish a tax incentive program for restoration and property improvements (for example, a sidewalk program)	Y	Keokuk Urban Revitalization Program (residential)	



	Existing Plan or Doc	Year	Area	Task	Implemented (Y/N/U)	Associated Program Name	When
16	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Housing	■ Increase upper floor development	U		
17	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Housing	■ Rejuvenate neighborhood watch groups	U		
18	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Housing	■ Utilize the results of the community housing study to develop an incentive program for new housing development and market to potential contractors and developers	Y	Keokuk Neighborhood Initiative (KNI)	2017
19	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Housing	■ Identify decrepit homes in the community, acquire and remove	Y	70 homes demolished 2013-2018	2013
20	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Infrastructure	■ Continue street improvement project plan on an annual basis	Y	Street Improvements with Sewer Improvements	
21	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Infrastructure	■ Create a master plan for additional parking in the downtown with front landscaping, art, gardens, etc.	U		
22	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Infrastructure	■ Evaluate, consolidate and coordinate community signage and entrances with community theme	Y	Wayfinding signage study 2010	2010
23	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Placemaking	■ Develop 7th Street entrance to Main Street with welcome sign, park and green space	U		
24	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Placemaking	■ Review, modify and/or develop a master plan for riverfront development south of U.S. Lock and Dam #19	Y	Keokuk Riverfront Master Plan	2009
25	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Placemaking	■ Acquire, restore and develop the depot into a community facility	Y	Keokuk Union Depot Foundation	2012
26	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Placemaking	■ Develop a convention / meeting hall	U		
27	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Placemaking	■ Build a facility for outdoor concerts or events on the riverfront	U		
28	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Placemaking	■ Create a Think Keokuk Area First campaign	U		
29	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Placemaking	■ Improve connections between the river and downtown	Y	Downtown Revitalization Plan and Gateway Park	
30	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Placemaking	■ Develop an activities/events plan that draws visitors to the riverfront	U		
31	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Placemaking	■ Expand a "Tour Keokuk Area" program that attracts group tours to the community	U		

	Existing Plan or Doc	Year	Area	Task	Implemented (Y/N/U)	Associated Program Name	When
32	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Placemaking	■ Re-establish Christmas in May project	U		
33	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Placemaking	■ Expand the city cleanup and park adoptions to a Make a Difference Day campaign	Y	Vouchers for Refuse	
34	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Placemaking	■ Promote, recognize and support effective volunteerism by serving as the resource and coordination center for volunteers and a builder of coalitions and community partnerships	U		
35	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Recreation	■ Provide abundant recreational opportunities	Y	Keokuk Area Event Calendar, Keokuk Concert FB	
36	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Recreation	■ Improve and develop hiking and biking trails, including signage and amenities (picnic, rest areas) in the Keokuk area, along the riverfront and along river road	Y	City of Keokuk Master Trail Plan	2010
37	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Training	■ Pilot a workforce training center program that would target vocational education, creating a skilled workforce (including home improvement trades and potential new industry trades)	U		
38	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Training	■ Expand business mentoring programs at the high school level	U		
39	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Training	■ Create more opportunities in the fields of vocational and industrial technology by developing a stronger partnership between Southeastern Community College and area schools	U		
40	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Training	■ Create an entrepreneur program involving the community and the Southeastern Community College to provide start-up business assistance	U		
41	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Training	■ Create a community based advisor/advisee program based on career aspirations	U		
42	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Training	■ Track the graduates of area schools, using exit interview results and other information, to find out ultimate career success Strategic Objective: Strengthen Keokuk's architectural character	U		
43	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Training	■ Establish and present a hospitality training program for retailers, police officers, taxi drivers and city workers that provides front-line personnel general information on business and historic and tourist attractions	U		
44	Strategic Plan - Main Street Inc.	2007-2016	Training	■ Create workforce development opportunities for area workers to utilize the high schools' industrial technology labs, media centers, and computer technologies	U		



# Appendix B

	Existing Plan or Doc	Year	Area	Task	Implemented (Y/N/U)
1	Riverfront Master Plan	2009	Connect Main Street Riverview Park and the Riverfront	Enhanced Parkway System along the Riverfront - Short Term A fairly extensive area along the riverfront extending from the dam to near Roquette should be developed into a contiguous park system. In order to create this parkway, properties such as the Keokuk Bridge, parks and Cemetery Maintenance building and the Coast Guard should be considered for relocation. Additional amenities such as public restrooms and showers, park pavilions and campsites should be developed. Vehicle parking should be moved away from the shoreline and be replaced by a pedestrian friendly hike/bike trail. <b>Providing more green space and landscaping will enhance the overall aesthetic of the riverfront and, with the rail car storage yard relocated, could extend up to the Depot, reinventing the connection between Main Street, Riverview Park and riverfront.</b>	U
2	Riverfront Master Plan	2009	Housing - Economic Development	Mississippi Terrace Apartment Building Adaptive Reuse – Long Term Through meetings with key stakeholders, the steering committee learned that the Mississippi River Terrace Apartment Building will revert to the control of the City of Keokuk in a few years when the original 40-year lease comes to an end. This opens up an opportunity for the city to reimagine this structure for a more compatible use and connect it to the redevelopment of the riverfronts. This structure has some of the greatest views of the river and that is enhanced by its shape as it curves along the northwest edge of Riverview Park. Reimagined as market rate apartments, condos or even a boutique hotel, this building could really add to the allure of the Keokuk riverfront for tourists and brides. This project is obviously one of the really big ideas of this master plan but, when taken into concert with the rest of the projects, it is just one more piece to the overall puzzle of success. Incorporating market rate housing right on the edge of the riverfront re-development could be just what is needed to make the riverfront a vibrant, 24/7 operation where any restaurants or retail components would have a built-in audience from which to draw.	U
3	Riverfront Master Plan	2009	Community Center	Community Center - Long Term One of the greatest needs identified during the Riverfront Master Plan process was a community center capable of hosting banquets or meetings of 300 people. Keokuk is lacking in space that can accommodate this size group without having multiple rooms or people sitting at tables in corridors. The Depot does not have enough space to handle a group of this size, so it is not a good candidate to serve this purpose. Ideally, a facility like this should have a strong connection to the Depot and the other riverfront amenities but also a strong connection to the downtown and Main Street. Therefore, the best location would be in Riverview Park. In this location, a community center can take advantage of its proximity to the downtown hotels, the green space that will remain in Riverview Park and the views over the bluff to the river. In fact, the community center should sit back from the edge of the bluff far enough to allow the creation of a grand plaza that would reach out to (and possibly slightly over) the edge of the bluff. The community center should include sufficient space for large and small meetings, kitchen facilities, restrooms, coat storage and pre-function space. There are plenty of great examples of such facilities to get the creative juices flowing.	U





# Appendix C

2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan - South Eastern Iowa Planning Commission							
	Area	Goal	Objective	Task	Note or Action Item	Status	Responsible
1	Housing	<b>GOAL 1: KEOKUK WILL ENCOURAGE AND PURSUE INFILL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND NEIGHBORHOOD ENHANCEMENTS</b>	Facilitate housing development in areas with existing streets and utility systems in place.	<b>Aggressively pursue infill residential development in the City's older, Pre-World War II neighborhoods.</b>		1-3 years	ComDev, KNI
2	Housing		Pursue strategies for improving the aesthetics and quality of life within neighborhoods	<b>Adopt a tree ordinance to encourage the use of attractive, yet easily manageable tree species in within the public right-of-way</b>		1-3 years	ComDev, Public Works
3	Housing	<b>GOAL 2: DIVERSE HOUSING OPTIONS WILL BE AVAILABLE TO ANYONE DESIRING TO LIVE IN KEOKUK.</b>	Address the housing needs of individual segments of the population, based on age, household type, and income.	<b>Pursue housing developments that can accommodate the demands of young professionals and their families</b>	Housing types typically desired by this demographic include townhomes, lofts, market rate apartments, and Downtown upper-story units. The 2017 Lee County Housing Study notes that apart from Downtown upper-story, no market rate rental units (outside of Downtown upper-story) have been built in Keokuk in the past four decades.	Ongoing	ComDev
4	Housing			<b>Respond to demographic trends by providing new, high-quality housing for senior citizens</b>	1) The 2017 Lee County Housing Study found that among all existing 'active adult' senior housing units in the Keokuk area, there is a sufficient supply of subsidized/affordable units. However, there is not enough market-rate or owner occupied units to meet projected demand in 2025; 2) Projections from the Housing Study suggest that there will be significant demand for new 'service-enhanced' senior housing units (including assisted living and memory care) in 2025.	Ongoing	ComDev
5	Housing			<b>Seek to develop additional affordable housing units for low-income residents, not restricted by age or family/household type</b>	The 2017 Lee County Housing Study notes that demand remains high for low-income units, among households that do not utilize Section 8 vouchers.	1 – 3 years	ComDev, Housing Authority

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	<b>Area</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Note or Action Item</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
<b>6</b>	Housing		Ensure that a variety of housing types are available, in addition to traditional single-family dwellings and apartments.	<b>Encourage and facilitate the development of additional downtown upper-story housing units.</b>	Action Item: Develop an advertising campaign that promotes the lifestyle benefits of living Downtown, and provides input from those already living there.	1 – 3 years	ComDev, MSKI
<b>7</b>	Housing			<b>Develop additional condominiums, townhomes, duplexes, as lower-maintenance options for prospective homeowners.</b>	Action Item: Prioritize sites that are in close proximity to employers, as well as the Downtown and Riverfront areas.	Ongoing	ComDev, MSKI, KNI, local realtors
<b>8</b>	Housing	<b>GOAL 3: KEOKUK WILL PROVIDE STRONGER ENFORCEMENT FOR THE CITY'S RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES</b>	Use code enforcement and other incentives to eliminate property nuisances and poor aesthetics..	<b>Amend city ordinances to provide for aggressive, yet efficient enforcement of residential properties.</b>		1 – 3 years	ComDev
<b>9</b>	Housing			<b>Actively discourage disinvestment and substandard maintenance from rental property owners, particularly absentee landlords</b>	Action Item: Establish an inventory of owners with a large number of rental properties, and carefully monitor the conditions of these properties over time.	1 – 3 years	ComDev
<b>10</b>	Housing			<b>Use positive reinforcement methods to reward homeowners for significant improvements that are made.</b>	Action Item: Develop a 'pride campaign' or competition for homeowners to participate in, with publicity and recognition given to those whose properties undergo significant improvement.	1 – 3 years	ComDev, Chamber
<b>11</b>	Housing			<b>Continue a program of targeted demolition for long-term problem properties to remove persistent, unavoidable blight.</b>	Action Items: 1) Seek alternatives to demolition wherever possible, particularly when the buildings involved have unique historical significance and reasonable viability of renovation; 2) When demolitions occur, target the newly vacant land for residential infill, or purchase by neighboring property owners for expansion.	Ongoing	ComDev

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	Area	Goal	Objective	Task	Note or Action Item	Status	Responsible
12	Housing	<b>GOAL 4: KEOKUK WILL ESTABLISH COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND THE HOUSING SUPPLY</b>	Work directly with the private sector to facilitate new housing development in the community	<b>Assist the non-profit Keokuk Neighborhood Initiative in its efforts to pursue infill development in the city's older neighborhoods.</b>		1 – 3 years	ComDev
13	Housing			<b>Encourage home improvement and supply businesses to actively promote and incentivize home renovation in the city's older neighborhoods.</b>		3 – 5 years	ComDev , Chamber
14	Housing		Engage the community's youth and volunteer groups to accomplish housing objectives.	<b>Continue to use home building as a hands-on training opportunity in high school and community college programs.</b>		Ongoing	City, SCC, KCSD
15	Housing			<b>Encourage volunteer groups to coordinate a community-wide home renovation campaign to assist low-income homeowners.</b>	Action Item: Recruit the participation of already established groups such as the local Habitat for Humanity chapter.	1 – 3 years	City, Chamber, volunteer groups
16	Economy	<b>GOAL 1: KEOKUK WILL HAVE A THRIVING BUSINESS CLIMATE AND WORKFORCE</b>	Expand the supply of quality, family-supporting jobs in the community	<b>Seek to diversify the local economy, with increased strength in manufacturing, education, and health care, as well as a more visible presence for additional sectors</b>	Action Item: In employer recruitment efforts, identify specific targeted industries that are compatible with those that are already present.	Ongoing	City, KEDC, LCEDG, SCC
17	Economy			<b>Provide incentives to encourage entrepreneurial activity at the local level.</b>	Action Item: Facilitate a business plan competition to promote creativity, networking, and skills development.	1 – 3 years	City, Chamber, MSKI



**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan - South Eastern Iowa Planning Commission**

	<b>Area</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Note or Action Item</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
<b>18</b>	Economy			<b>Ensure that Keokuk is a welcoming, desirable place for talented workers to relocate.</b>	Action Item: Prepare and distribute community orientation materials, for new residents to easily acclimate themselves	1 – 3 years	ComDev, Chamber
<b>19</b>	Economy	<b>GOAL 2: KEOKUK WILL LEVERAGE ITS EXISTING LOCAL ASSETS</b>	Focus on Keokuk's history as a tourism generator, as well as a marketing and community branding tool.	<b>Embrace Historic Preservation as a ComDev resource.</b>	Action Items: 1) Work to place additional properties on the National Historic Registry – in new Districts, or individually; 2) Consider developing the historic DuPont Powder Works site as a tourist destination; 3) Adapt and reuse existing structures with historic architectural character	1 – 3 years	MSKI, C&TB
<b>20</b>	Economy			<b>Improve and expand the supply of interpretative signage that highlights the history of Keokuk and associated individuals.</b>	Action Item: Focus on 20th century figures (i.e. Howard Hughes, John Wayne, and Roger Maris), in addition to earlier ones.	1 – 3 years	City, C&TB, Historical Society
<b>21</b>	Economy		Emphasize Keokuk's geographic advantages and plentiful natural resource amenities.	<b>Enhance Keokuk's reputation as a 'gateway city' to the State of Iowa, from Illinois and Missouri.</b>	Action Item: Establish an Iowa Welcome Center in Keokuk, with cultural, recreational, and other information provided for tourists visiting the state.	1 – 3 years	ComDev, C&TB
<b>22</b>	Economy			<b>Explore additional opportunities to utilize the Mississippi River as a recreation space, such as a public marina south of Lock and Dam No. 19</b>		3 – 5 years	City, Public Works, C&TB
<b>23</b>	Economy	<b>GOAL 4: KEOKUK WILL OFFER DEVELOPMENT FRIENDLY CONDITIONS, TO REMAIN REGIONALLY COMPETITIVE</b>	Update local ordinances where necessary to better facilitate development.	<b>Update the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, to better reflect 21st Century best practices, and become compatible with the desired vision for future land use and development patterns.</b>		1 – 3 years	ComDev

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	Area	Goal	Objective	Task	Note or Action Item	Status	Responsible
24	Economy			Enhance the enforcement provisions in the city's building codes, to prevent the irreparable degradation of viable commercial buildings.	Action Item: Modify Title 15 –Building and Construction chapter of the city’s municipal code to ensure consistency with the modern best practices.	1 – 3 years	ComDev
25	Economy			Create a commercial real estate database for assisting developers interested in Keokuk and the Tri-State area.		1 – 3 years	ComDev, KEDC, LCEDG, local realtors
26	Economy			Pursue brownfield remediation projects, to open up land for redevelopment, and enhance the community's aesthetics.	Action Item: Redevelop the Elkem Carbide site as a model for other possible brownfield projects.	1 – 3 years	City Administrator, ComDev, KEDC
27	Regional	<b>GOAL 1: KEOKUK WILL ENHANCE ITS REPUTATION AS A SHOPPING, SERVICE, AND EMPLOYMENT DESTINATION</b>	Bolster Keokuk's strength as a regional hub for retail and services	Create a commercial real estate database for assisting developers looking at Keokuk and the Tri-State area.		1- 3 years	ComDev, MSKI, LCEDG, KEDC
28	Regional			Seek direct input from businesses and shoppers to gauge quantitative demand for presently missing resources and services		3 – 5 years	ComDev, MSKI, KEDC
29	Regional			Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions on transportation and infrastructure priorities.	Action Items: Pursue capacity upgrades and engineering improvements for Highways 61, 218, and 136, To the greatest extent possible, work to keep all Mississippi River crossings open and functional during flood events.	3 – 5 years	Public Works, Iowa DOT, Illinois DOT, Missouri DOT, Tri State Summit

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	<b>Area</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Note or Action Item</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
<b>30</b>	Regional	<b>GOAL 3: KEOKUK'S DOWNTOWN AND RIVERFRONT WILL BE PRESERVED AND ENHANCED AS A REGIONAL CENTER OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS</b>	Make Downtown an inviting space for people to come for lengthy, leisurely visits.	<b>Promote revitalization of the River City Mall as a focal point for downtown civic and economic activity</b>	Action Item: 1) Assist the property owner as needed in planning and securing funding for building and site renovations. 2) Amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow for ground-floor residential in appropriate Downtown buildings.	1 – 3 years	City, MSKI, KEDC
<b>31</b>	Regional			<b>Encourage commercial businesses to consider downtown storefronts when choosing to invest in Keokuk.</b>	Action Items: Prepare a database of available Downtown properties, and pursue building renovations as needed, to make them ready for reoccupation.	Ongoing	MSKI, Chamber, KEDC
<b>32</b>	Regional			<b>Establish one or more National Historic Districts to aid in the preservation and reuse of downtown buildings.</b>	**Possible outlines are illustrated on the 'Downtown Focus Area' on pg. 166.	1 – 3 years	ComDev, MSKI
<b>33</b>	Regional			<b>Promote additional landscaping, public art and other beautification efforts in the downtown area.</b>	**Several possibilities are outlined on the 'Downtown Focus Area' on pg. 166.	Ongoing	Public Works, MSKI, Parks Foundation
<b>34</b>	Regional		Make the Keokuk riverfront a year-round destination for events and activities.	<b>Further pursue the development strategies outlined in the Keokuk 'Riverfront Master Plan'</b>	1) Such strategies include: extending the riverfront trail, adding a marina with slips at the public boat launch 2) implementing an improved wayfinding system, and minimizing the visual impact of railroad operations and utility lines	Ongoing	City, Public Works, Parks Foundation
<b>35</b>	Regional			<b>Facilitate the mixed-use redevelopment of the Keokuk Riverfront Barge, as a catalyst for the surrounding area.</b>	**See the 'South Riverfront Focus Area' map on pg. 168. The barge was purchased by the City in 2017, with a committee organized to plan for its future use.	1 – 3 years	ComDev, Barge Commission



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	Area	Goal	Objective	Task	Note or Action Item	Status	Responsible
36	Infrastructure			Identify opportunities to reduce the negative impact of through traffic on the Downtown social atmosphere.	Action Items: 1) Consider a lane reduction, bump-outs, and other measures for MSKI within the Downtown core **See the 'Road and Wayfinding Improvements' map on pg. 172. 2) Consider converting Blondeau Street from one-way to two-way traffic, and adding 4-way stop signs in the vicinity of the Keokuk Public Library and George Washington Elementary School **See the 'Downtown Focus Area' on pg. 166	1 – 3 years	Public Works
37	Infrastructure			Pursue safety and capacity improvements for the diagonal portion of US Highway 218 in Central Lee County.		3 – 5 years	City, Lee County, LCEDG, SEIRPC
38	Infrastructure	<b>GOAL 3: PLENTIFUL PEDESTRIAN OPPORTUNITIES WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THE CITY OF KEOKUK</b>	Enhance and expand the existing sidewalk network, to improve pedestrian mobility	Prioritize sidewalk and trail projects that connect residential neighborhoods with commercial retail districts, major employers, and civic destinations.	**See the 'Bike and Pedestrian Priorities' map on pg. 174.	Ongoing	Public Works, ComDev, Chamber
39	Infrastructure			Amend city ordinances as necessary, to ensure that sidewalks are always incorporated into new development.	Action Item: Amend the Streets and Sidewalks ordinance, so that sidewalks are required for all development, regardless of whether sidewalks already exist on the neighboring properties.	1 - 3 years	ComDev
40	Infrastructure			Assist the Keokuk Public Library in pursuing desired facility and technology upgrades.	Action Items: 1) Fully develop the property's outdoor space into the Keokuk Library Park; 2) Seek to offer laptop plug-ins for patrons, instead of desktop units alone; 3) Provide a dedicated activity space for teens and children during summer and after school hours; 4) Explore transportation options for community outreach, such as a bookmobile, or public transportation for children accessing the library.	1 – 3 years	City, Public Library Foundation

**2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan - South Eastern Iowa Planning Commission**

	<b>Area</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Note or Action Item</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
<b>41</b>	Infrastructure			<b>Provide support for the Heritage Center as it works to serve the needs of senior citizens</b>	Action Items: 1) Evaluate parking needs for the Heritage Center, along with the neighboring Hope Haven facility; 2) Assist Heritage Center staff in providing information and resources about housing for seniors; 3) Work with SEIRPC to provide additional opportunities for Keokuk seniors to access public transportation to medical appointments.	Ongoing	City, SEIRPC
<b>42</b>	Amenities	<b>GOAL 1: DYNAMIC PARKS AND RECREATION SPACES WILL BE AVAILABLE TO KEOKUK RESIDENTS AND VISITORS</b>	Enhance the existing quality of Keokuk's city parks to promote outdoor recreational opportunities for local residents and visitors alike.	<b>Provide additional recreational amenities within city parks and replace those that are outdated.</b>	Action Items: 1) Establish a dog park to serve the needs of Tri-State area dog owners; 2) Replace the existing skate park in Tolmie Park.	1 – 3 years	Public Works, Keokuk Parks Foundation
<b>43</b>	Amenities	<b>GOAL 2: A MULTITUDE OF PUBLIC EVENTS AND DESTINATIONS WILL BE AVAILABLE TO KEOKUK RESIDENTS AND VISITORS</b>	Facilitate additional themed public events and gatherings, and continue to provide support for those that are ongoing	<b>Provide support for public events that were historically popular in Keokuk but have been discontinued over time.</b>	Action Items: 1) Promote the annual recurrence of the Big Dam Street Festival (first staged in 2017), to continue the historic legacy of street fairs in Downtown Keokuk 2) Seek to revive the Civil War Reenactment ceremonies that previously occurred on a regular basis	1 – 3 years	MSKI, C&TB, Lake Cooper Foundation
<b>44</b>	Amenities			<b>Seek to establish a dedicated, stand-alone event space for the Tri-State area.</b>	Action Items: 1) Actively solicit private sector interest to generate momentum for such a facility; 2) Utilize a portion of the Keokuk Riverfront Barge (or the Country Club) for this purpose.	1 – 3 years	City, Chamber, KEDC
<b>45</b>	Amenities	<b>GOAL 3: KEOKUK WILL OFFER A WELL-CONNECTED NETWORK OF RECREATIONAL TRAILS AND BIKE ROUTES</b>	Expand the citywide network of off-road, multi-purpose trails.	<b>Focus on establishing 'park-to-park' trail corridors, and other strategic connections between community civic and recreational amenities.</b>	**See the 'Bike and Pedestrian Improvements' map on pg. 174.	3 – 5 years	City, Public Works, Parks Foundation, Chamber

2018 Keokuk Comprehensive Plan - South Eastern Iowa Planning Commission							
	Area	Goal	Objective	Task	Note or Action Item	Status	Responsible
46	Amenities		Expand the supply of on-road bike routes in Keokuk.	<b>Establish dedicated bike lanes along strategically significant corridors where space for off-road facilities is not available.</b>	**See the 'Bike and Pedestrian Improvements' map on pg. 174.	Beyond 5 years	Public Works
47	Amenities			<b>Complete a continuous, signed route for the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) within Keokuk city limits.</b>	Action Items: 1) Establish a signed route for the MRT from Downtown Keokuk to the Highway 136/61 bridge to Missouri 2) Reroute the portion of the current signed MRT that passes through a slide-prone area along the bluff 3) See the 'Bike and Pedestrian Improvements' map on pg. 174.	Beyond 5 years	City, Public Works
48	Amenities	<b>GOAL 4: KEOKUK WILL BE A COMMUNITY THAT VALUES VOLUNTEERISM AND SUPPORTS HEALTHY LIFESTYLES, AS MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE LOCAL QUALITY OF LIFE</b>	Engage local residents in promoting community beautification projects.	<b>Utilize the volunteer efforts of public school and community college students, to help build community pride at a young age.</b>		1 – 3 years	City, KCSD, United Way





# Appendix D

	Ordinance Provision	Details	Possible Amendment	Rationale	Strategic Plan Objective Amendment Supports	Comprehensive Plan Objective Amendment Supports	Comprehensive Plan Task Amendment Supports	Focus Area Recommendation Section
1	Title 4	Business Licenses & Regulations	Include a new section detailing a general business permitting	To inventory currently operating businesses	Strengthen historic downtown retail district	Use code enforcement and other incentives to eliminate property nuisances and poor aesthetics; Bolster Keokuk's strength as a regional hub for retail and services	Create a commercial real estate database for assisting developers interested in Keokuk and the Tri-State area; Encourage commercial businesses to consider downtown storefronts when choosing to invest in Keokuk.	Economic Development
2	4.52.a	Ice Cream Trucks & Food Vendors	Remove requirement that vendors have mounted signal lamps	Impractical, cost prohibitive, & not standard practice		Update local ordinances where necessary to better facilitate development.		Economic Development
3	9.68.020	Bicycles	Remove registration fee requirement	Seems unnecessary and creates barrier to those who may rely on bicycling for transportation				Transportation

	<b>Ordinance Provision</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Possible Amendment</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Strategic Plan Objective Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Comprehensive Plan Objective Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Comprehensive Plan Task Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Focus Area Recommendation Section</b>
<b>4</b>	9.68.020	Bicycles	Include a new section detailing bike lane dimension requirements for new subdivisions	Keokuk lacks bicycle facilities	Continue street improvement project plan on an annual basis		Prioritize sidewalk and trail projects that connect residential neighborhoods with commercial retail districts, major employers, and civic destinations	Transportation
<b>5</b>	12.04.050 (&12.04.080)	Streets & Sidewalks	Rather than leave it to council discretion, make sidewalks required during any subdivision of land or construction of any dwelling, commercial, industrial, or public building	Best practice, improves pedestrian safety & access to healthy, active transportation		Enhance and expand the existing sidewalk network, to improve pedestrian mobility	Prioritize sidewalk and trail projects that connect residential neighborhoods with commercial retail districts, major employers, and civic destinations.; Update the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, to better reflect 21st Century best practices, and become compatible with the desired vision for future land use and development patterns.	Transportation
<b>6</b>	15.16	Housing Code	Require administrative rental permitting process & unit inspection at the time new lessee signs a lease	To better protect renters and landowners and mitigate instances of squatting & long-term vacancy	identify decrepit homes in the community, acquire and remove; Increase upper floor development	Use code enforcement and other incentives to eliminate property nuisances and poor aesthetics.	Actively discourage disinvestment and substandard maintenance from rental property owners, particularly absentee landlords	Housing

	<b>Ordinance Provision</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Possible Amendment</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Strategic Plan Objective Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Comprehensive Plan Objective Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Comprehensive Plan Task Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Focus Area Recommendation Section</b>
<b>7</b>	15.22	Dangerous Buildings	Add provision mentioning right to utilize state code 657a to acquire long-term public nuisances	Adds transparency to city code regarding nuisance acquisition	Identify decrepit homes in the community, acquire and remove	Use code enforcement and other incentives to eliminate property nuisances and poor aesthetics.	Continue a program of targeted demolition for long-term problem properties to remove persistent, unavoidable blight; Enhance the enforcement provisions in the city's building codes, to prevent the irreparable degradation of viable commercial buildings.	Economic Development
<b>8</b>	19.20.040	Sidewalks	State required sidewalk widths; 4' SUDAS standard or 5' NACTO standard at the time of any new subdivision of land occurring in conjunction with the construction of any dwelling, commercial, industrial, or public building	Best practice, improved pedestrian safety & access to healthy, active transportation		Enhance and expand the existing sidewalk network, to improve pedestrian mobility	Prioritize sidewalk and trail projects that connect residential neighborhoods with commercial retail districts, major employers, and civic destinations.; Update the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, to better reflect 21st Century best practices, and become compatible with the desired vision for future land use and development patterns.	Transportation



	Ordinance Provision	Details	Possible Amendment	Rationale	Strategic Plan Objective Amendment Supports	Comprehensive Plan Objective Amendment Supports	Comprehensive Plan Task Amendment Supports	Focus Area Recommendation Section
9	19.24.010(7)	Sidewalks	Add provision that easements specifically used to be used for sidewalks be identified in plat documents/maps	Improved pedestrian safety & access to healthy, active transportation		Enhance and expand the existing sidewalk network, to improve pedestrian mobility	Prioritize sidewalk and trail projects that connect residential neighborhoods with commercial retail districts, major employers, and civic destinations.; Update the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, to better reflect 21st Century best practices, and become compatible with the desired vision for future land use and development patterns.	Transportation
10	20.4	C-2 District	Remove milk distribution station, frozen food locker, used car sales and storage, drive in theater from allowed uses as long as it doesn't create existing non-conforming uses - Allow these in C-3. Allow small bakeries from C-3 in C-2 instead.	These uses are not modern uses and are more intense and dissimilar from what is allowed in lively downtown areas		Update local ordinances where necessary to better facilitate development.	Update the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, to better reflect 21st Century best practices, and become compatible with the desired vision for future land use and development patterns.	Land Use

	<b>Ordinance Provision</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Possible Amendment</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Strategic Plan Objective Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Comprehensive Plan Objective Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Comprehensive Plan Task Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Focus Area Recommendation Section</b>
<b>11</b>	20.44	C-3 District	Require a rezoning to C-2 from C-3 at the time of new development proposal to better reflect the objectives of the comprehensive plan & Future Land Use map as long as rezoning doesn't result in illegal spot zoning. Many C-3 uses are more intense than what is characteristic of a downtown. The Central Business District nomenclature for this zone seems inappropriate.	Many uses allowed in this district are almost industrial intensity and not typical downtown small business, retail, or service-oriented uses. Much of downtown is zoned C-3.		Update local ordinances where necessary to better facilitate development.	Update the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, to better reflect 21st Century best practices, and become compatible with the desired vision for future land use and development patterns.	Land Use
<b>12</b>	20.52	M-1 District	This zone exists in some of the study area. Allow rezoning from M-1 to C-2 where possible	Intensity and nature of uses could attribute to negative health impacts from air, soil, and noise pollution that are undesirable in a thriving downtown	Strengthen historic downtown retail district	Update local ordinances where necessary to better facilitate development.	Update the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, to better reflect 21st Century best practices, and become compatible with the desired vision for future land use and development patterns.	Land Use
<b>13</b>	20.56	M-2 District	This zone exists in some of the study area. Allow rezoning from M-2 to C-2 or C-3 where possible	Intensity and nature of uses could attribute to negative health impacts from air, soil, and noise pollution that are undesirable in a thriving downtown	Strengthen historic downtown retail district	Update local ordinances where necessary to better facilitate development.	Update the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, to better reflect 21st Century best practices, and become compatible with the desired vision for future land use and development patterns.	Land Use

	<b>Ordinance Provision</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Possible Amendment</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Strategic Plan Objective Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Comprehensive Plan Objective Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Comprehensive Plan Task Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Focus Area Recommendation Section</b>
<b>14</b>	Title 20	Zoning	A new, downtown, mixed use zone should be designated. Uses allowed in R-3 to C-2 districts may be allowed on the first floor and possibly second floor in this district while preserving 2nd and 4rd floors for multifamily residential use.	In accordance with desired future land uses indicated in the Future Land Use Map and comprehensive plan. Higher housing densities create livelier, well-travelled downtowns. Such housing types have been found to be desirable to young professionals	Strengthen historic downtown retail district; Increase upper floor development	Facilitate housing development in areas with existing streets and utility systems in place; Address the housing needs of individual segments of the population, based on age, household type, and income; Ensure that a variety of housing types are available, in addition to traditional single-family dwellings and apartments.	Aggressively pursue infill residential development in the City's older, Pre-World War II neighborhoods; Pursue housing developments that can accommodate the demands of young professionals and their families; Encourage and facilitate the development of additional downtown upper-story housing units; Update the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, to better reflect 21st Century best practices, and become compatible with the desired vision for future land use and development patterns.	Land Use



	<b>Ordinance Provision</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Possible Amendment</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Strategic Plan Objective Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Comprehensive Plan Objective Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Comprehensive Plan Task Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Focus Area Recommendation Section</b>
<b>15</b>	20.68	Special Uses	Allow first floor residential as a special use in C-1, C-2, & C-3 districts, preferably not on the street fronting side of a structure/store front. Living quarters should be structurally separated from other uses on the same floor and built in conformance to building code safety standards.	With many vacancies in the downtown, there may be an opportunity to utilize some ground-level areas of commercial buildings for residential uses. Without an overlay zone allowing this use, it's impossible not to allow the use across entire districts as a special use		Update local ordinances where necessary to better facilitate development.		Land Use

	Ordinance Provision	Details	Possible Amendment	Rationale	Strategic Plan Objective Amendment Supports	Comprehensive Plan Objective Amendment Supports	Comprehensive Plan Task Amendment Supports	Focus Area Recommendation Section
16	Title 20	Zoning	Develop a downtown PUD Overlay	Overlays zones are the best practice for ensuring cohesive downtown development, as seen in case study communities and around the nation. This would be the best method of creating spatial continuity, increased historic preservation, applying design standards, increasing mixed use, and allowing first floor residential only in specified areas	Strengthen historic downtown retail district; Develop and adopt a plan for various city codes and for expansion of future retail/commercial development; Increase upper floor development	Pursue strategies for improving the aesthetics and quality of life within neighborhoods; Ensure that a variety of housing types are available, in addition to traditional single-family dwellings and apartments; Focus on Keokuk's history as a tourism generator, as well as a marketing and community branding tool; Establish one or more National Historic Districts to aid in the preservation and reuse of downtown buildings.	Update the City's zoning and subdivision ordinances, to better reflect 21st Century best practices, and become compatible with the desired vision for future land use and development patterns; Establish one or more National Historic Districts to aid in the preservation and reuse of downtown buildings; Embrace Historic Preservation as a ComDev resource.	Land Use

	<b>Ordinance Provision</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Possible Amendment</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Strategic Plan Objective Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Comprehensive Plan Objective Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Comprehensive Plan Task Amendment Supports</b>	<b>Focus Area Recommendation Section</b>
<b>17</b>	20.66.020	Onsite Storage Trailers & Storage Containers	Long-term on-site storage containers and trailers should not be allowed in C-2 Districts. Instead, it should be allowed as short-term storage in Chapter 20.66.030	Long-term storage in this district that is present in downtown reduces the appeal of the downtown, possibly reduces pedestrian safety, and seems to be allowed unnecessarily		Update local ordinances where necessary to better facilitate development.		Land Use
<b>18</b>	20.86	Architectural Design Standards	Develop a downtown PUD Overlay & overlay design packet/plan to apply more specific and enforceable design standards	Design standard adherence may not be applied or enforced currently. Existing standards are non-specific and do not convey a vision for a more beautiful downtown	Strengthen historic downtown retail district; Develop and adopt a plan for various city codes and for expansion of future retail/commercial development	Pursue strategies for improving the aesthetics and quality of life within neighborhoods	Amend city ordinances to provide for aggressive, yet efficient enforcement of residential properties.	Land Use

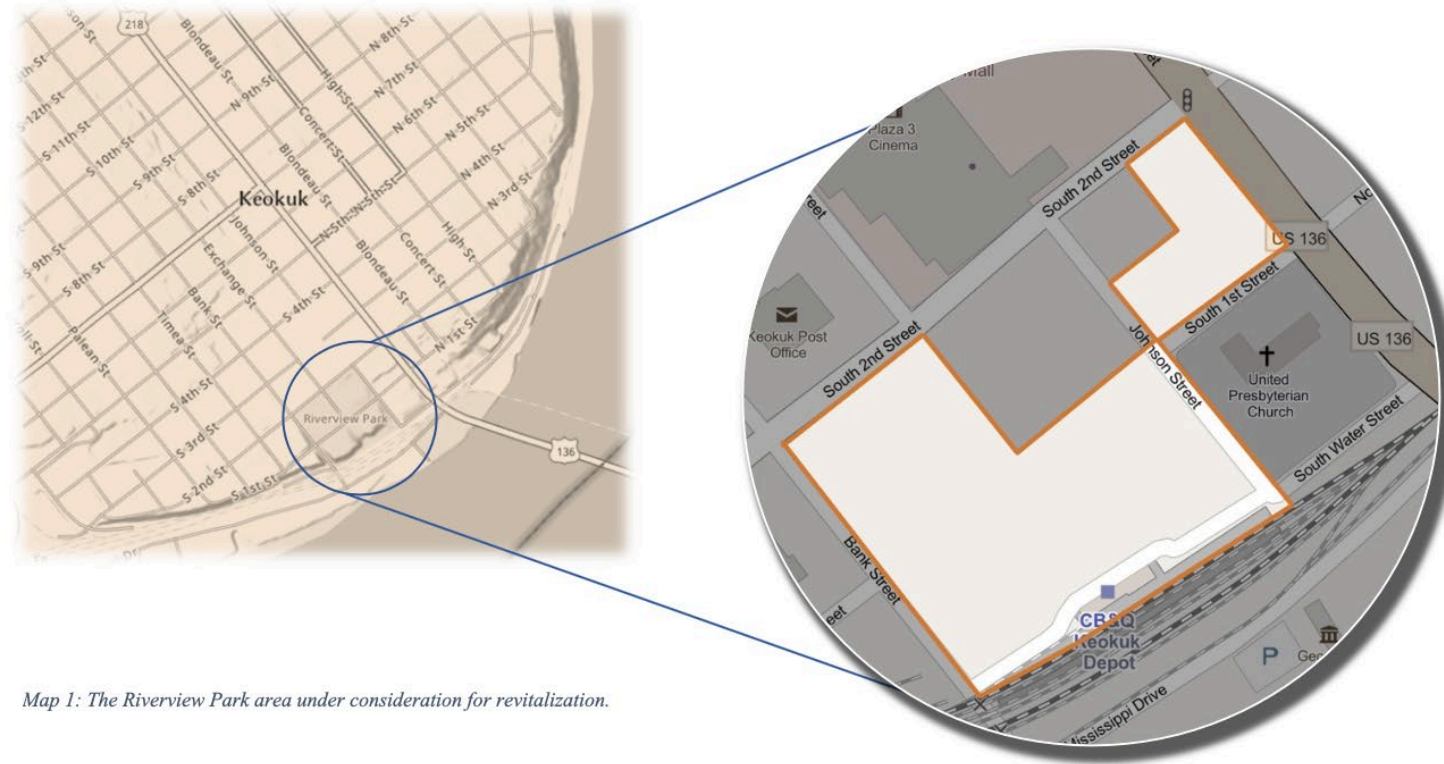




## Riverview Park Area Consensus Workshop | MINUTES

Meeting date | time 1.17.20 | 9:30-11:45am | Meeting location Keokuk Public Library

- Meeting Topic:** Stakeholder input into potential projects for the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities  
**Facilitator:** Shelley Oltmans, Director- Keokuk Area Chamber of Commerce  
**Note Taker:** Ursula Ferrier, University of Iowa- Keokuk Downtown Revitalization project team member  
**Attendees:** Kotch Belmonti, Carole Betts, Pam Broomhall, Norma Jobe, Joan Logan, Annette Peevler, Kaki Piper, Sandy Seabold, Tom Seabold, Karole Smith, Bob Weis, Monica Winkler, Jay Zetterlund



Map 1: The Riverview Park area under consideration for revitalization.







**OWNERSHIP CLARIFICATION 2:**

- **United Presbyterian Church**  
Currently, this space is being used for overflow parking for church functions and the annual Hoopin' on the River event. Participants noted that this parcel is very rarely used.

*Map 3: Parcel 044521254850050 is bordered by a thin, overgrown sidewalk along Johnson Street, several concrete blockade posts along 1<sup>st</sup> Street, a thin sidewalk and stair way that leads up to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street along the Main Street bridge, and an overgrown hill with a 12' pitch which separates the property from the north half of the block.*

**OWNERSHIP CLARIFICATION 3:**

- **State of Iowa**  
The parcel closest to Main Street is an easement for the highway.
- **Private Ownership**  
The inner parcel is currently privately owned with the possibility of sale.

*Map 4: Parcel 044521254850090 is owned by an out of state individual who may have ties to the owner of Radio Keokuk. Parcel 044521254850100 is state owned and would need State DOT approval on any improvements.*







## EVOLUTION OF THE STUDY AREA

Once stakeholders confirmed parcel ownership, the history of these properties was discussed through personal recollections, quick Google searches, and a trip down memory lane for some. Participants were asked to write a 3-5 word representation of three topics: the Community of Keokuk, Riverview Park and The Union Depot, and Individuals. Those were categorized by 20 year time frames starting in 1891 and ending at present day, 2020. Although an additional time slot was added for future visions, participants did not provide input for it. Table 1 on the next page is a snapshot of that work.



*Image 2: Stakeholders used the workshop as an opportunity to present thoughts and opinions. Respectful of one another's ideas, many participants left the meeting feeling energized and optimistic.*

1891	1910	1930	1950	1970	1990	2010	PRESENT	FUTURE
Huiskamp Shoe Factory	1911 Power House	Hotel and Homes	1940's or 50's Rat Row Demolition	Irwin Phillips	2000's Floods	2013 Depot Historic Register	2019 IISC University of Iowa	
General Mills Plant	1928 Trolley Discontinued	Button Factory	1950's Expanded Lock	Until 1985 Irwin Phillips Store	1993 Floods	2014 Dog Park Planning Began		
Awning Factory		Lots of River Boats	1964 Library Fire	Early 80's Constructed Bridge (Opened 1985)	1990's Restaurant in Depot			
Purity Oats		1940's Restaurant & Lunchroom	1964 Hotel Fire	1980's Post Office	2003 Gateway Park			
Prior to 1891 Lots of Depots			1960's Urban Revitalization	1970's Grocer Closed	2010? Southside Boat Club			
			1965 Presbyterian Church Built	1970's Housing Authority & Mississippi Terrace				
			Hawkeye Hotel					
			Late 1960's Passenger Train					
			1960's Wall					

*Table 1: This timeline gives a visual reminder that this area has served in many different capacities, has housed many different types of structures, and has seen its share of hardships and triumphs. c*



## CONCEPTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Moving forward, stakeholders worked individually, brainstorming structures, events, and amenities that would be ideal in the study area. Initially, each table presented their top 5 most unique ideas to be placed on the wall. Once all ideas had been presented and read aloud, participants began reorganizing the individual concepts into groups based on perceived similarities. All remaining ideas were then placed up on the wall according to these groupings. Stakeholders collectively named each group to give an overarching theme that could include these and future ideas. Table 2 on the next page is a snapshot of that work.

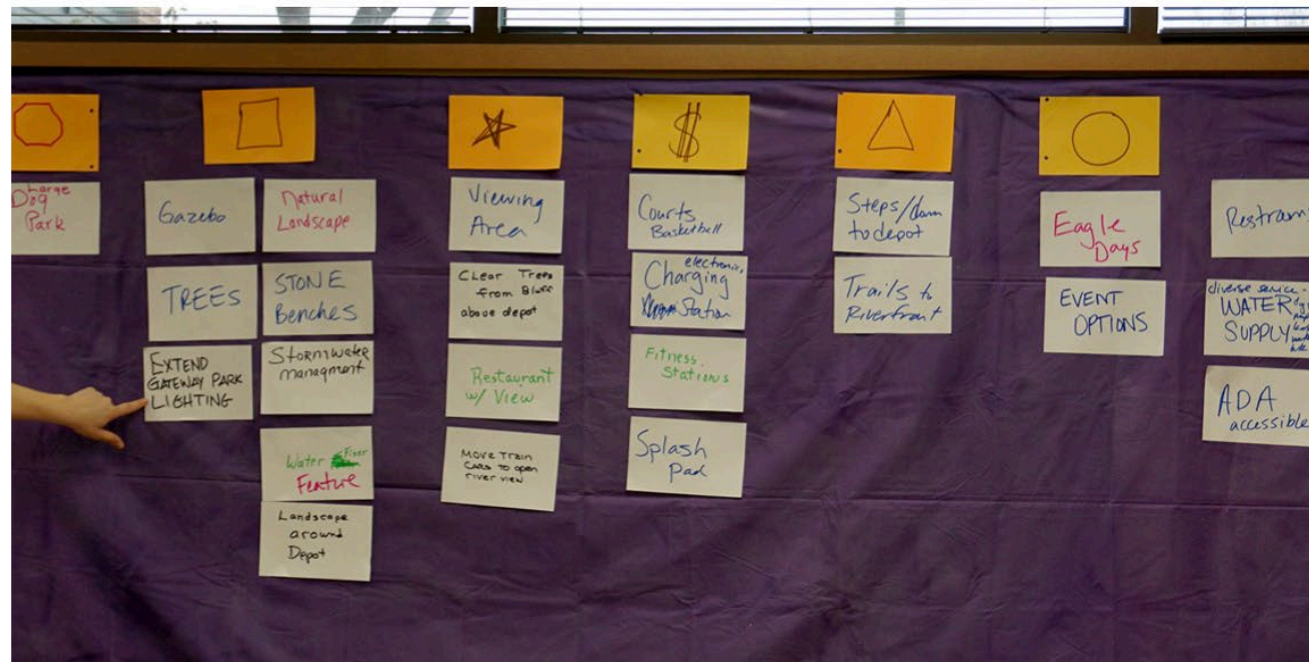


Image 3: Using symbols, to group initial thoughts, participants reviewed each idea presented, evaluating and reevaluating how it fit into the broader picture.

BEAUTIFICATION & ENHANCEMENT	COMMUNITY AMENITIES	CONNECTIONS	ATTRACTIONS	NECESSITIES
Gazebo	Courts (Basketball)	Steps/Down to Depot	Eagle Days	Restrooms
Trees	Electronics Charging Station	Trails to Riverfront	Even Options	Diverse Water Supply (People, Dogs, Landscaping, Water Bottles)
Extend Gateway Park Lighting	Fitness Stations		Large Sculpture (Corner of 2 <sup>nd</sup> and Main)	ADA Accessible
Clear Trees from Bluff Above Depot	Splash Pad		Lock and Dam	Parking Lot
Move Train Cars to Open River View	Restaurant with a View		History	All Ages
Natural Landscape	Viewing Area with Scopes		Depot	Signage
Stone Benches	Large Dog Park		Story Boards	Visibility
Stormwater Management	Playground			Marketing Technology
Water Fixer (Feature)	Picnic Tables			Wayfinding
Landscape Around Depot				
Benches				

Table 2: In the end, 5 themes emerged: Beautification & Enhancement, Community Amenities, Connections, Attractions, and Necessities. These will be the guiding themes for the students as they develop possibilities for revitalization.

## LIMITATION DISCUSSION

This workshop allowed stakeholders a way to think outside of what currently is and to freely imagine what could possibly be. No limitations were placed on ideas in an effort to get the creative juices flowing. To move the discussion to the next stage, participants voiced multiple concerns that could confront projects moving forward. The following is a listing of findings from that discussion:

### ALLIANT ENERGY LINE AND UTILITY CONCERNS

- Overhead power lines are present in this study area from Bank Street to the Main Street Bridge. These are located along the sidewalk through Riverview Park where 1<sup>st</sup> Street originally existed. Not only do these provide limitations for park usage, there is also an easement concern.

### PROPERTY OWNERSHIP CONCERNS

- As mentioned on pages 2 and 3 of this report, 3 key parcels are privately owned; Keokuk Union Depot lot, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street lot one parcel in from the Main Street bridge, and the graveled lot on 1<sup>st</sup> Street owned by United Presbyterian Church. The thin parcel just west of the Main Street bridge is owned by the State of Iowa and is an easement for the bridge. Usage of these locations will depend on the owners' willingness to sell or donate the parcel to the City of Keokuk for further development.

### DOG PARK NUISANCE CONCERNS

- Past efforts to locate the dog park on the northwest corner of Riverview Park were met with concerns from neighboring residents. Urine odors, loud barking, dog attacks, liability concerns, and abandoned feces were noted as being worrisome to the people living in the area as well as to residents who frequent the park. Although this is a publicly owned space for the enjoyment of *all* residents, it should be noted that projects moving forward should rationally consider these concerns and work to make the plans as inclusive and nondisruptive as possible.



### **ZONING AND DISTRICTING REGULATIONS LIMITATIONS**

- Several parcels are currently zoned as commercial which may present some initial roadblocks for beginning project work. The City of Keokuk is very open to considering zoning changes where enough of the community supports it.

### **RAIL LINES AND RAILROAD COMPANY**

- Due to restrictive usage policies designed to protect public safety and limited storage space options for train cars, railroad companies are limited in their capacity to condone excessive foot traffic on or across the rail lines or to be able to move cars from in front of the Depot building. Limitations on usage of the Depot property should be explored to inform feasible project ideas moving forward.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Shelley informed the group that the information gathered today would be handed over to the students and faculty working on this project area. She will narrow the scope of work based on this feedback to help guide the process. Other thoughts presented by participants were:

### **UNIVERSITY OF IOWA STUDENTS & IOWA INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES**

- Review stakeholder feedback
- Narrow project focus so that the City doesn't spin wheels on ideas that are not able to happen for one reason or another

### **KEOKUK COMMUNITY**

- Inform the whole community about the potential of this space to get more buy in and participation
- Prioritize ideas

## WORKSHOP CONCLUSION

The workshop ended at 11:50 am as snow came down outside in beautiful, fluffy drops. Participants commented on the usefulness of the meeting, saying that they felt more hopeful and inspired about the project area than they have before. Names and email addresses were collected for future correspondence. Thank you to all who attended for your time commitment and invaluable input.

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## REFERENCES

- All photos taken by Ursula Ferrier with expressed permission of each participant.
- Maps were pulled from ArcGIS <https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html> and manipulated in Photoshop by Ursula Ferrier.
- All tables are verbatim representations of participants' group work. Misspellings have been corrected.



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**Image One (cover page):** Building at the corner of N 4<sup>th</sup> and Blondeau Streets. Source: Ursula Ferrier

**Image Two (page 2):** Great Plains Indigenous Person statue marking the grave of Chief Keokuk. Source: Ursula Ferrier

**Image Three (page 35):** Burlington, Iowa. Source: <https://www.greaterburlington.com/downtown/downtown-partners-inc>

**Image Four (page 37):** Dubuque, Iowa. Source: <https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/iowa/articles/dubuque-s-top-10-restaurants-to-try-the-best-of-midwest-dining/>

**Image Five (page 39):** Historic West Des Moines Master Plan. Source: <https://www.wdm.iowa.gov/home/showdocument?id=22202>

**Image Six Page 86):** Mississippi Terrace Apartments at night. Source: Ursula Ferrier

