

# Fort Dodge, IA Downtown Plan

September 2008



Developed for:

**The Fort Dodge Department  
of Business Affairs  
& Community Growth**



in conjunction with:

**The Self-Supported Municipal  
Improvement District,  
& the Development Corporation  
of Greater Fort Dodge**



Plan consultants:

**CAMIROS**

**& Real Estate Planning Group**

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### Introduction

The City of Fort Dodge is built upon a heritage of industry and commerce that has made it a prominent center in north central Iowa. Located on the banks of the Des Moines River, its rail and highway access, proximity to other regional centers, and unique topographic character create the context for a distinct and attractive place to live.

In order to revitalize a downtown area that once thrived as the center for trade, shipping and commerce, city leadership has commissioned this Downtown Plan aimed at identifying new and appropriate uses to compliment the ongoing activities in downtown, as well as physical development guidelines that respond to the historic character in the area and ensure that future development is sensitive to its context.

Downtown Fort Dodge is an eclectic blend of traditional commercial buildings, government facilities, community and cultural assets, auto-related service providers, peripheral residential areas, and vacant riverfront properties. The planning area for this Downtown Plan has been set to respond to specific issues in the downtown and areas immediately around it. To the north, it is drawn to generally abut residential areas north of downtown. To the east, it includes parcels fronting on the east side of 15 Street, capturing the transitional area between the commercial downtown and the industrial warehouse district. To the south, it extends roughly to 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, where it meets residential neighborhoods. However, the 8<sup>th</sup> Street and 12<sup>th</sup> Street corridors are included in the planning area down to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue South since they are the primary means of entry to the downtown area. The planning area extends all the way to the Des Moines River to the west, and captures the large vacant waterfront properties that are seen as a primary asset for the city for future development.

A context map for the downtown plan is provided as Figure 1.

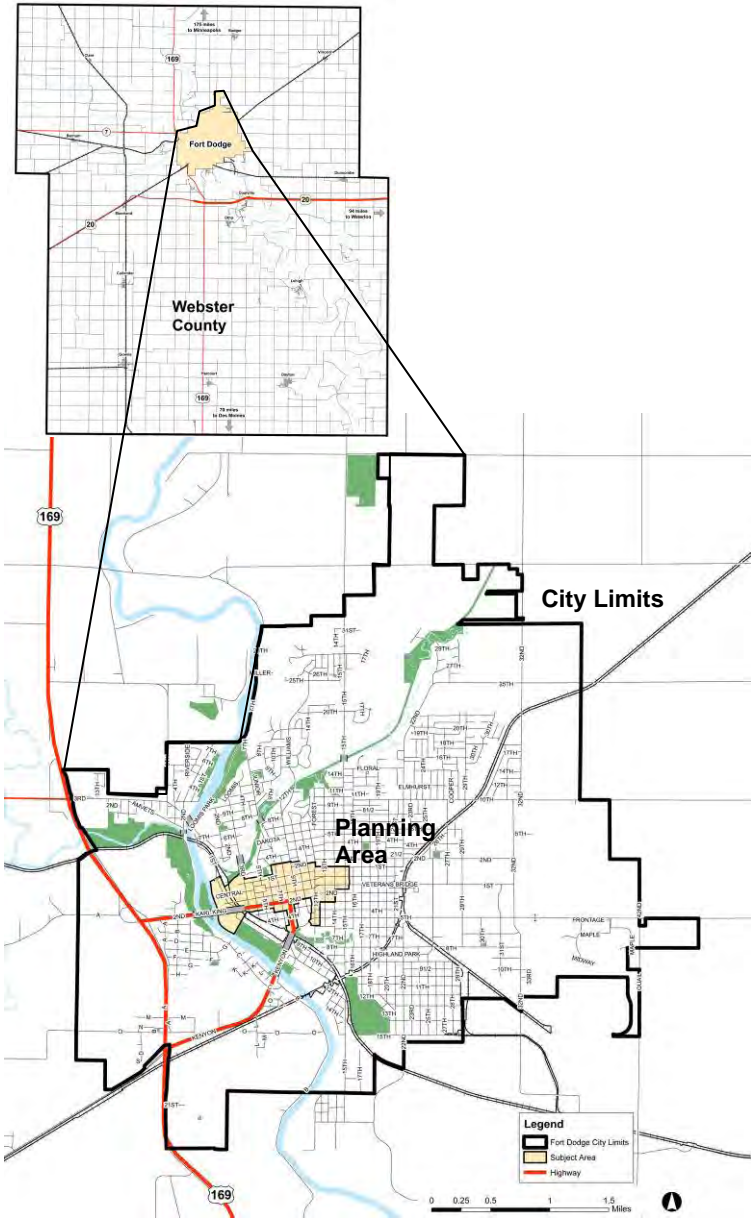


Figure 1. Downtown Fort Dodge context map

The planning area encompasses approximately 260 acres, including private properties, publicly held parcels, designated open space and dedicated rights-of-way. There are approximately 600 parcels, occupying 209 acres, or 80.3% of the planning area. (The remaining 19.7% of the area is public right-of-way.) This area includes several unique features and assets, including dramatic natural topography, the historic Central Avenue corridor, and large vacant waterfront properties along the Des Moines River. The downtown planning area can be described in terms of several distinct districts or functional areas, each with unique uses and physical characteristics.

- Heart of Downtown, including the parcels fronting on the Central Avenue corridor and City Square from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to 12<sup>th</sup> Street. This district hosts the densest collection of historic buildings and intact downtown fabric.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Commercial Gateway District, which serves as a primary means of entry into the downtown area from the west, via the Karl King Bridge. It hosts a number of vacant or obsolete auto-oriented commercial and service developments, and suffers aesthetically from a lack of maintenance and beautification.
- 8<sup>th</sup> Street Gateway Corridor, which is one of two primary entry corridors from the south off of the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue commercial corridor. As 8<sup>th</sup> Street approaches 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue S, the scale and intensity of development increases, marked notably by the vacant Federal Building on the southwest quadrant of the intersection.
- 12<sup>th</sup> Street Gateway Corridor, which provides direct access from 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the east end of downtown. The corridor is more residential in nature than 8<sup>th</sup> Street, and its development does not attain the same scale.
- 1st Avenue Gateway Corridor, which provides an alternative to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue as the primary means of entry from the east. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue serves the second ring of suburban retail development around the Crossroads Shopping Mall approximately 1 mile east of downtown, and provides connection over a rail yard via an above-grade bridge.
- The Waterfront District consists of parcels along the Des Moines River that have been cleared through city investment and are awaiting future development or reuse. Located west of 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Meriweiher, this area occupies land on both the north and south sides of the Karl King Bridge, and abuts the golf course that is southwest of downtown.
- Westside Transitional District, which lies between the Waterfront District and Central Avenue Corridor. This area hosts residential, industrial, and commercial uses. This is also where the most dramatic topographic change takes place, with 1<sup>st</sup> Street lying approximately seventy feet below 4<sup>th</sup> Street at Central Avenue.
- Northside Transitional District, which provides a very logical segue between the Central Avenue Corridor and the neighborhoods to the north of downtown. This area is home to a mix of uses, including small industrial warehouses, multi-family residential developments, and significant institutional and religious sites. At the northern boundary of the planning area, the district includes intact residential blocks that blend smoothly into the adjacent neighborhood.
- Southside Transitional District, which includes several parking areas that serve Central Avenue functions. Several significant buildings are located in this district, including the Municipal Building and the former Warden Hotel. Also, several small industrial, commercial or mixed-use buildings are located here.
- Eastside Transitional District, which includes several types of uses, from scattered industrial sites, to commercial services and residential areas that abut neighborhoods to the north and south. Generally, this area serves as a transition between the retail and office uses in downtown to larger active industrial properties east of 15<sup>th</sup> Street.

The locations of these existing areas of downtown are illustrated in Figure 2, and a comprehensive existing conditions analysis is provided in Appendix 1 of this document.

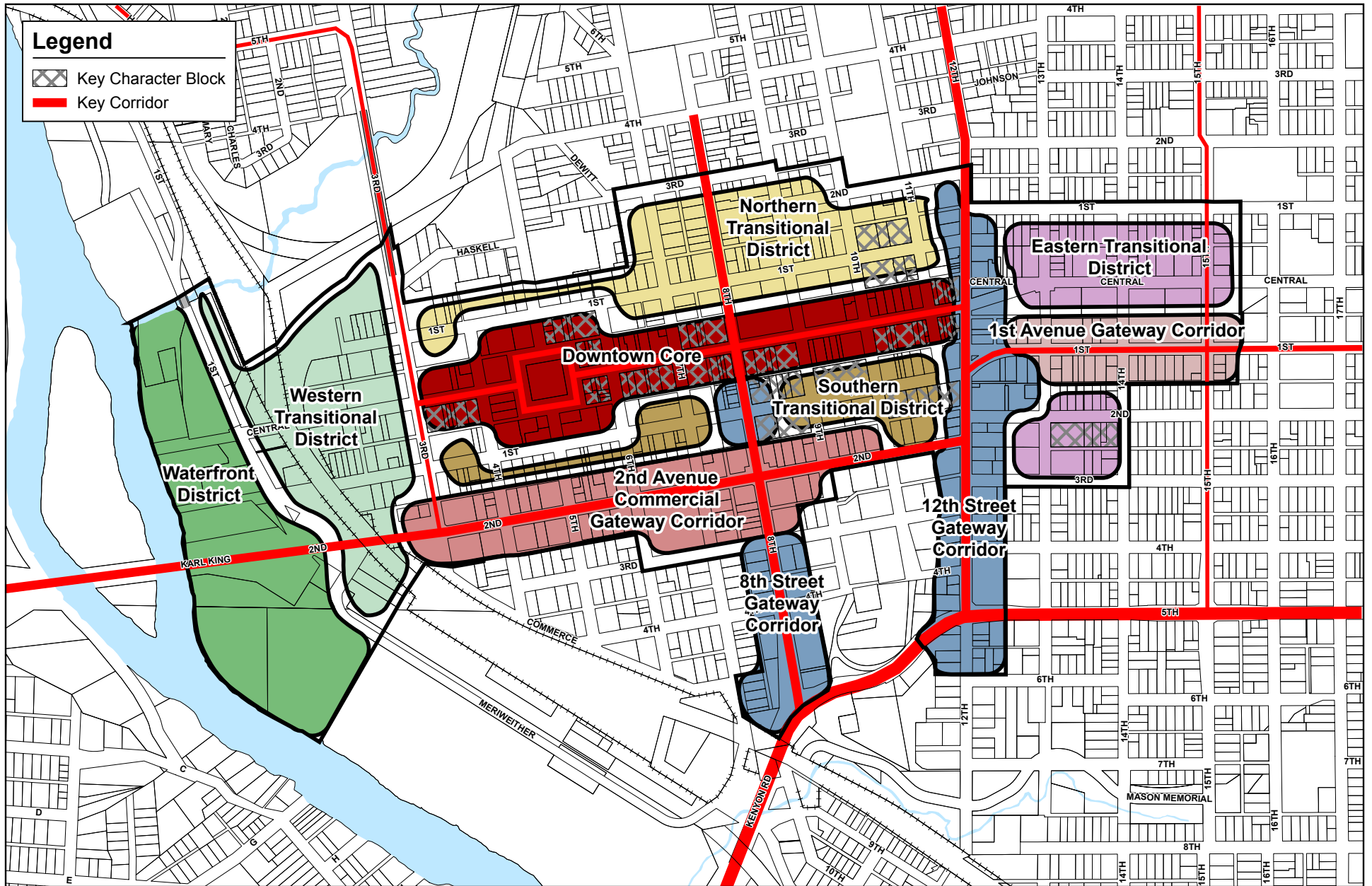
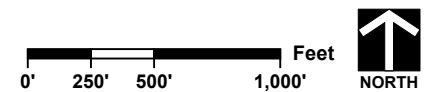


Figure 2  
**Functional Analysis Map**

Downtown Plan  
 Fort Dodge, Iowa

September 2008





## Downtown Market Analysis Summary

Fort Dodge has remained a strong and stable community for almost twenty years. With a countywide population estimated at 38,832 people (Scanus, 2007) living in 16,216 households with average household income of \$50,937. Fort Dodge serves a multi-county area for shopping, services, and as an employment center, and is anticipating a more prominent presence due to recent investment in the bio-fuels industry.

**Population Change 1900-2007 Ft. Dodge and Remainder County**

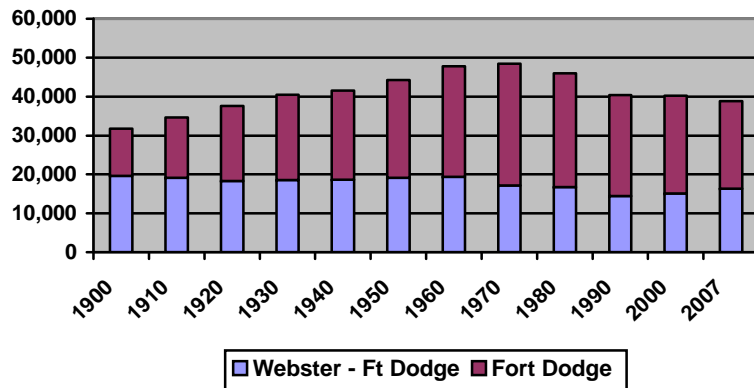


Figure 3. Population change in Fort Dodge

The population distribution has shifted toward the edges of the city as the older areas need contemporary replacement housing to help reestablish population in the core areas. Only a few projects have provided additional housing in downtown, and the outward trend will only be reversed when more housing choice is provided in the downtown area. This population shift trend is illustrated in Figure 4.

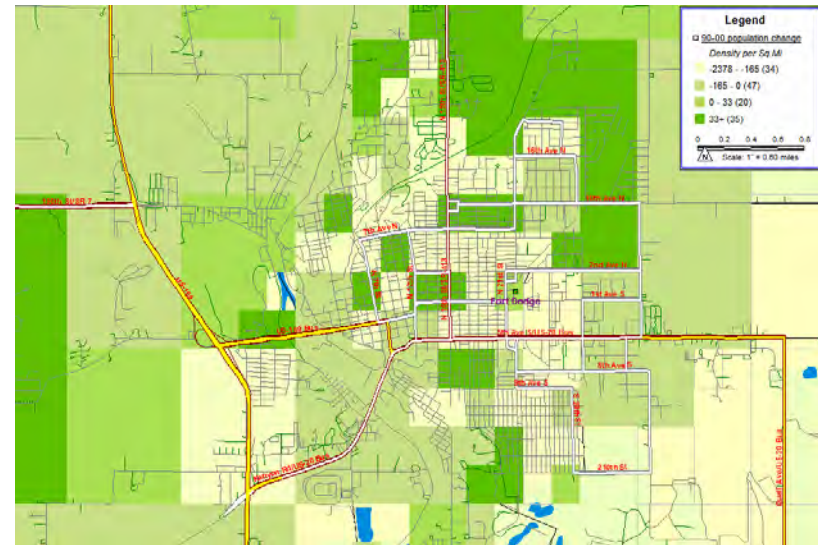


Figure 4. Spatial population change in Fort Dodge

The age of Fort Dodge residents is significantly older than the general United States population. In 2002, Fort Dodge had 53% higher concentration of residents 65 years or more than the U.S. and 17% fewer 25-44 year olds. The affect of this older population is that the demand for new housing is reduced.

**Fort Dodge Age Distribution**

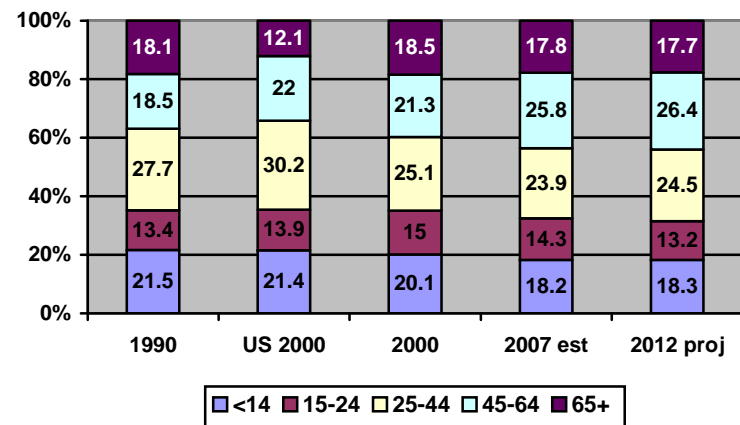


Figure 5 Fort Dodge age distribution

The annual average personal income (income from all sources by a person) for Fort Dodge (Webster County) is \$28,663, as shown in Table 1. Personal income is a measure of wealth. The average personal income for Fort Dodge is 17% below the average for the United States, which is significant, and 9% below the average for Iowa. Nearby counties like Calhoun and Pocahontas have lower personal incomes than Webster County. Humboldt County is almost the same as Webster and Hamilton is 4% higher than Webster County. When compared with peer counties, that is, those of similar size, Webster is similar in personal income with the most of these counties with the exception of the counties in which Mason City and Muscatine are the principal cities (Cerro Gordo and Muscatine Counties, respectively); there the residents have higher levels of wealth.

Table 1. Personal Income

	Personal Income (2005)	Index U.S. = 1.00	Index Iowa = 1.00
United States	\$34,471	1.00	--
Wright	\$33,635	.98	1.06
Iowa	\$31,670	.92	1.00
Hamilton	\$30,552	.89	.96
Humboldt	\$28,960	.84	.91
<b>Fort Dodge/Webster</b>	<b>\$28,663</b>	<b>.83</b>	<b>.91</b>
Greene	\$27,877	.81	.88
Pocahontas	\$27,006	.78	.85
Calhoun	\$26,957	.78	.85
Selected Peer Counties (Principal City)			
Muscatine	\$31,814	.92	1.00
Mason City	\$31,466	.91	.99
Marshalltown	\$30,466	.88	.96
Burlington	\$29,284	.85	.92
Newton	\$28,622	.83	.90
Ottumwa	\$26,994	.78	.85
Fort Madison	\$26,965	.78	.85

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and REPG

In addition to personal income, another statistic important to the pitch of the area is the number of households with annual incomes of \$100,000 or more, which some consider affluent. Another statistic that measures the pitch of an area is education and the ratio of college graduates to those that do not have a high school diploma to identify aspirational markets. Aspirational markets may spend more on certain items than what their incomes suggest. The ratio of college and graduate students that aspirational retailers like to see is at least two to four times more than those who just have high school diplomas.

Table 2 compares Fort Dodge with other geographic areas in Iowa in terms of affluent households and ratio of college vs. non-college education. With the exception of education centers like Ames and Iowa City, Davenport and Des Moines have the highest ratio of college educated residents with each above 5.5. The ratio in Fort Dodge is 1.5, and reflects a relatively low level of higher education attainment. Better housing choices will help Fort Dodge recruit new businesses to the area.

Table 2. Measures of Affluence

Cities with 10,000+ Population and Associated County	Number Affluent Households \$100,000+	Ratio of College + vs. non College
Des Moines, Polk	34,8592	5.50
Cedar Rapids, Linn	15,344	5.01
Davenport, Scott	10,874	5.75
Iowa City, Johnson	9,814	15.19
Waterloo, Black Hawk	7,264	3.33
Ames, Story	5,311	21.03
Sioux City, Woodbury	4,917	2.02
Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie	4,819	2.3
Dubuque, Dubuque	4,635	4.5
Indianola, Warren	3,084	2.84
Muscatine, Muscatine	2,155	1.22
Mason City, Cerro Gordo	2,063	2.18
Clinton, Clinton	1,908	1.39
Newton, Jasper	1,803	1.66
Burlington, Des Moines	1,795	1.55
Pella, Marion	1,661	1.66
<b>Fort Dodge, Webster</b>	<b>1,535</b>	<b>1.50</b>
Ft. Madison/ Keokuk, Lee	1,532	1.07
Boone, Boone	1,237	2.34
Ottumwa, Wapello	1,215	1.10
Carroll, Carroll	899	1.40
Oskaloosa, Mahaska	839	1.33
Marshalltown, Marshall	839	1.35
Spencer, Clay	703	1.85
Storm Lake, Buena Vista	674	1.61
State of Iowa		2.64

Source: Scanus and REPG

**Employment**

In Webster County, from 1990 to 2006 employment averaged 18,713, with a high of 19,838 in 2001 and a low of 17,312 in 1992. In 2006, employment is at 19,159. Table 3 shows the employment loss or growth in a number of industry sectors.

*Table 3. Employment Changes in Webster County, 1990, 2000, 2006*

	1990	2000	2006	1990-2000	% Change
Information	319	516	471	152	47.7%
Construction	582	746	814	232	39.9%
Public Administration	1,015	1,482	1,269	254	25.0%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	4,389	5,733	5,325	936	21.3%
Education & Health Services	3,970	4,468	4,669	699	17.6%
Professional & Business Services	1,090	1,043	1,230	140	12.8%
Natural Resources & Mining	144	123	143	-1	0.7%
Leisure & Hospitality	1,536	1,512	1,533	-3	0.2%
Financial Activities	622	606	608	-14	-2.3%
Manufacturing	2,811	2,724	2,529	-282	-10.0%
Other Services	795	620	568	-227	-28.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,273</b>	<b>19,573</b>	<b>19,159</b>	<b>1,886</b>	<b>10.9%</b>

Source: U.S. Bureau Labor Statistics and REPG

The biggest employment gains over the past sixteen years were in the trades (retail and wholesale), transportation & utilities. Education and Health Services followed this segment.

A shift-share analysis, summarized by Figure 6 and Table 4, has been conducted to decompose employment change into three sources that cause change: national growth, industry growth, and local competitive share. The industry mix component measures the net effects from business cycles in an industry after factoring out national growth. The industry growth identified those sectors that grew after stripping out national employment growth, which then left the local competitive share. This is the employment sectors where the local area is given credit for drawing employment beyond both national growth and national sector growth.

In the past six years, Webster County has lost only 417 jobs, but the Iowa State University forecast that this area will see employment increases for the near future. If Webster County followed national employment growth trends, it would have added 586 jobs, but the mix of industries in Webster were in slow growth industry sectors

and these sectors attributed to a loss of 68 jobs. Most of the county's job loss was associated with lack of "competitiveness" within Webster County. However, since 2006, bio-fuels related businesses have helped the area increase its business opportunities.

**Shift-Share Analysis 2000-2006**

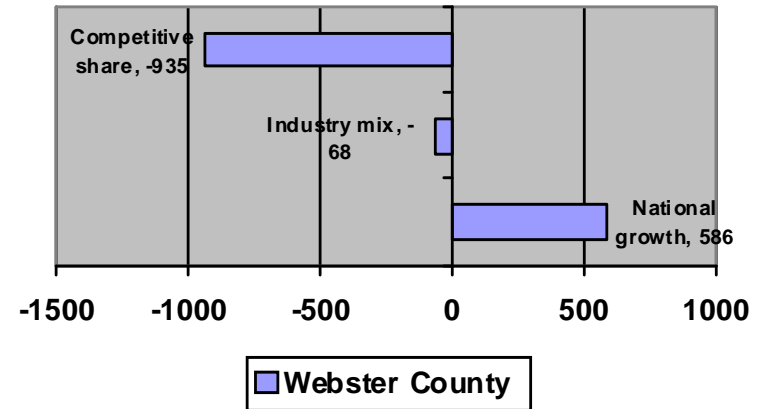


Figure 6. Shift-share analysis

*Table 4. Shift-Share Competitive Component 2000-2006*

Sector	Competitive Share Component Jobs
Manufacturing	308
Professional and Business Services	135
Information	33
Natural Resources and Mining	15
Construction	-35
Financial Activities	-44
Other Services	-84
Leisure and Hospitality	-147
Public Administration	-270
Education and Health Services	-416
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	-430
<b>Total</b>	<b>-935</b>

Source: BLS and REPG

However, Webster County in the past six years has shown a competitive advantage in an industry that nationally is losing jobs – manufacturing. In addition, Webster

County is showing strength in professional and business services and in the information industry. Webster County gained 930 jobs in the trades, transportation, and utilities sectors. Yet, to maintain its competitive balance, it would have had to gain 1,360 jobs. This results in a shift share shortage of 430 jobs, reflecting a relative local loss in employment opportunities.

In small counties like Webster, sometimes one or two companies can influence a sector. Over the past six years, three different sectors have led in employment growth: education and health care in 2001 (increase of 351 jobs), manufacturing in 2002, 2004 and 2006 with increases of 113, 90, and 100 respectively. The construction industry led in 2003 and 2005 with 113 and 108 jobs respectively.

The potential for downtown employment is in the professional and business services industry, the information industry, financial activities, public administration, and in health services. Some of these “white collar” industries have shown local strength and have grown nationally. Over the past sixteen years, with the exception of health care, these sectors added 532 jobs or about 33 jobs annually. In addition, the educational and health care sector alone added 699 jobs or about 44 jobs annually.

Webster County needs sustained growth. Jobs in the county grew from 1992 to 2001. The jobs dropped after September 11, 2001 and the County saw its first job recovery in 2005. A sustained employment recovery will help all sectors of the area’s economy. The expansion of Trinity Regional Medical Center should add a substantial number of new jobs and Fort Dodge needs to accommodate this new growth.

### Socio-Economic Profile

Demographic factors can be assimilated into psychographic profiles of the residents. ESRI’s Tapestry Segmentation classification has characterized a significant population of Fort Dodge into three psychographic segments.

*Home Town:* Working class community where few have bachelor or graduate degrees and only a few have attended college. Change is rare in these low-density neighborhoods. New construction is scarce and neighborhoods hardly grow.

Residents savor their quasi-county lifestyle by spending time outdoors, gardening, fishing, swimming, and walking, and when indoors, reading and playing cards. Many own pets. They make the most of their urban locations by enjoying visits to nightclubs, bars, movies, museums, and zoos. They use the internet primarily for email and games. They subscribe to local newspapers. Perhaps hindered by lack

of choice, they buy apparel at discount stores or small local malls. When eating out, their favorite family restaurants include Old Country Buffet and Ponderosa, their favorite fast-food restaurant is Hardee’s. Other Iowa cities with similar profiles include Burlington, Fort Madison, Marshalltown, and Ottumwa.

*Heartland Community:* This segment is similar to Home Town, but older and many are retired. Home prices are below average. Residents invest time and money in their cherished homes and communities and take pride in their gardening skills and growing their own vegetables. They shop at traditional hardware stores like True Value and order items from catalogs, QVC, and Avon sales representatives. They prefer to visit Wal-Mart. Their favorite restaurants include Ponderosa and Lone Star Steakhouse. They play bingo, do woodworking, and enjoy outdoor activities such as hunting and freshwater fishing. They read gardening, fishing, and hunting magazines as well as local newspapers. Other Iowa cities that have this psychographic profile include Fort Madison and Ottumwa.

*Rustbelt Tradition:* Relatively low median home value is partially due to the age of the homes in these communities. Favorite leisure activities include bowling and fishing, watching television. They subscribe to cable. They watch their pennies and look for bargains at Kmart, Wal-Mart, and Sears. Other Iowa cities include Burlington, Mason City, Newton, and Muscatine.

### Trade/Service Area

Cities have many different trade areas depending upon the offering. As an example, Fort Dodge has a political service area for city and county services. In health care, Trinity Regional Medical Center serves a multi-county area. In retail and entertainment uses, Fort Dodge pulls customers from different distances depending upon the retailer. In addition, Fort Dodge as an employment center pulls employees who live in other counties. A review of these different trade areas will provide a picture of the Fort Dodge’s potential based on various pull factors.

Trinity Regional Medical Center in 2006 recorded a 28,712 people served as either outpatient or inpatients in their Fort Dodge facility. The majority of their inpatient and outpatient services (74%) were to Webster County residents, 26% or 7,462 people came to Fort Dodge for medical services with vast majority coming from just two counties: Humboldt and Calhoun.

People that travel into Fort Dodge for work may also be more familiar with other offerings such as shopping and entertainment. Table 5 summarizes the geographic influence of Webster County based on the different surrounding counties from which employees travel.

**Table 5. Journey to Work (2000)**

County	Workers that Work in Webster County 19,936	% of County's Workers that Work in Webster County	% of Webster County's Workforce (19,936)
Webster	15,875	85%	80%
Calhoun	1,066	21%	5%
Humboldt	771	16%	4%
Hamilton	446	5%	2%
Wright	280	4%	1%
Pocahontas	180	5%	1%
Greene	111	2%	1%
Kossuth	99	1%	1%
Boone	90	1%	1%
Other (N=97)	1,018	(<1%)	4%

Source: U.S. Census 2000 and REPG

The Fort Dodge retail trade area can be estimated by measuring the straight-line distance between Fort Dodge and the next major retail centers in different directions and weighting the retail centers by the amount of their annual general merchandise sales. This analysis indicates that the Fort Dodge trade area is elliptical extending approximately 30 miles to the northwest, 35 miles to the east, just 15 miles to the southeast, and 45 miles to the west. This area includes Webster, Calhoun and Humboldt Counties and parts of other surrounding counties. This retail service area has an estimated 39,000 households with an average household income estimated at \$50,815 annually.

**Table 6. Gross Potential Expenditures from Fort Dodge Primary Area**

Selected Categories	Annual Expenditure Potential (in thousands)
Food at Home	\$122.8
Food Away from Home:	
Breakfast	\$6.7
Lunch	\$29.7
Dinner	\$50.3
Home Furnishings	\$62.0
Apparel & Services	\$68.1
Entertainment at home	\$65.0

Source: Scanus, Inc.

General merchandise sales are a good measure of the drawing power of a community. The State of Iowa collects data on sales tax, which can be adjusted for personal income differences. As summarized below in Table 7, Fort Dodge has outstanding pulling power with sales 88% above what would be expected based upon Webster County's population and personal income.

**Table 7. General Merchandise Sales of All Counties with Cities of 10,000+ Population**

Cities with 10,000+ Population and Associated County	2006 County Sales in General Merchandise	2006 County Population	Pull Factor
Des Moines, Polk	\$862,288	408,888	1.05
Cedar Rapids, Linn	\$404,094	201,853	1.11
Davenport, Scott	\$310,904	162,621	1.06
Waterloo Black Hawk	\$284,441	126,106	1.44
Iowa City, Johnson	\$233,432	118,038	1.11
Sioux City, Woodbury	\$228,368	102,972	1.50
Dubuque, Dubuque	\$195,198	92,384	1.34
Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie	\$190,271	90,218	1.35
Ames, Story	\$139,783	80,145	1.06
Mason City, Cerro Gordo	\$132,797	44,384	1.78
Burlington, Des Moines	\$109,925	40,885	1.73
<b>Fort Dodge, Webster</b>	<b>\$108,327</b>	<b>38,960</b>	<b>1.88</b>
Ottumwa, Wapello	\$87,387	36,010	1.75
Clinton, Clinton	\$86,205	49,782	1.19
Marshalltown, Marshall	\$86,108	39,555	1.39
Muscatine, Muscatine	\$60,770	42,883	.84
Ft. Madison/ Keokuk, Lee	\$58,836	36,338	1.13
Indianola, Warren	\$50,275	43,926	.69
Spencer, Clay	\$44,224	16,801	1.71
Pella, Marion	\$42,420	32,987	.86
Newton, Jasper	\$41,304	37,409	.75
Oskaloosa, Mahaska	\$40,743	22,290	1.25
Carroll, Carroll	\$39,965	20,963	1.22
Storm Lake, Buena Vista	\$39,425	20,091	1.42
Boone, Boone	\$25,977	26,584	.60
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,903,467,000</b>	<b>1,933,073</b>	

Source: Iowa Retail Sales and Use Tax Report, 2006, Population estimates U.S. Census 2006, Index estimated by REPG using 2006 Sales in General Merchandise / Projected Sales in County (\$1,627 per capita General Merchandise Expenditure x Index of Per Capita Personal Income of County (U.S. BEA 2005) with State (to adjust for spending power) x County population estimate)

The three counties that make up Fort Dodge's primary area – Webster, Calhoun, and Humboldt – account for approximately 74% of the sales potential in Fort Dodge, and people from outside these three counties generate about 26% of the general merchandise sales. Some of this "leakage", especially in the apparel and home furnishings category, is transferable to the general merchandise category. This leakage of sales to general merchandise stores may provide an opportunity for niche retailers to siphon sales away from these stores by providing better service and specialty merchandise that the general merchandiser does not offer.

The retail area where Fort Dodge may have the greatest potential to increase sales is in the food-away from home businesses, i.e. restaurants. The trade area expenditure potential in restaurant business is \$86.7 million; the sales tax reports from Webster, Calhoun, and Humboldt Counties indicate sales of \$51 million, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Retail Sales Analysis of Primary Area Counties

	Gen Merch.	Apparel	Home Furnishing	Eating Outside Home	Specialty	Total
<b>Iowa</b>						
Sales Per Capita	\$1,627	\$266	\$483	\$971	\$788	\$4,135
<b>Webster County (Pop Est. 38,960 (2006) Personal Income Index .91)</b>						
2006 Sales	\$108,328	\$8,051	\$13,693	\$42,619	\$27,059	\$199,749
Sales Per Capita	\$2,780	\$207	\$351	\$1,094	\$695	\$5,127
County Potential	\$57,683	\$9,430	\$17,124	\$34,425	\$27,937	\$146,599
Surplus/ (Leakage)	\$50,645	(\$1,379)	(\$3,431)	\$8,194	(\$878)	\$53,150
<b>Calhoun County (Pop est. 10,437 (2006) Personal Income Index .85)</b>						
2006 Sales	\$4,599	0	0	\$2,525	\$2,168	\$9,192
Sales Per Capita	\$441	0	0	\$232	\$207	\$881
County Potential	\$14,434	\$2,360	\$4,285	\$8,614	\$6,991	\$36,684
Surplus/ (Leakage)	(\$9,835)	(\$2,360)	(\$4,285)	(\$6,189)	(\$4,823)	(\$27,492)
<b>Humboldt County (Pop. Est. 9,975 (2006) Personal Income Index .95)</b>						
2006 Sales	\$4,665	\$958	0	\$5,890	\$8,518	\$20,031
Sales Per Capita	\$468	\$96	-	\$590	\$854	\$2,008
County Potential	\$15,418	\$2,521	\$4,577	\$9,201	\$7,467	\$39,184
Surplus/ (Leakage)	(\$10,753)	(\$1,563)	(\$4,577)	(\$3,311)	(\$1,051)	(\$21,255)
<b>Subtotal 3-Counties (Pop est. 59,373 (2006))</b>						
2006 Sales	\$117,592	\$9,009	\$13,693	\$51,034	\$37,745	\$228,972
Sales Per Capita	\$1,981	\$152	\$231	\$860	\$636	\$3,857
3-County Potential	\$87,535	\$14,311	\$25,986	\$52,240	\$42,395	\$222,467
Surplus/ (Leakage)	\$30,057	(\$5,302)	(\$12,293)	(\$1,306)	(\$6,752)	\$6,505

Source: Iowa Dept Revenue, US BEA, and Real Estate Planning Group

Besides retail, movie theaters provide a primary source of entertainment outside the home. Figure 7 illustrates the location of other regional theaters in the Fort Dodge area. Fort Dodge has a new eight-screen multiplex and is a major draw for the city. Many of the adjacent cities have single screen theaters and Fort Dodge becomes the center for those that want a broader offering. One needs to travel into Ames to find a better choice for entertainment.



Figure 7. Competitive movie theaters in the Fort Dodge area

**Housing**

One of the more striking statistics in Fort Dodge housing is the age of the housing stock. As illustrated in Figure 8, three-quarters of the homes in the Fort Dodge zip code are almost forty years old and almost two-thirds are more than fifty years old. Homes of this age typically have a substantial amount of physical depreciation and functional obsolescence. Much of the housing stock likely needs replacement.

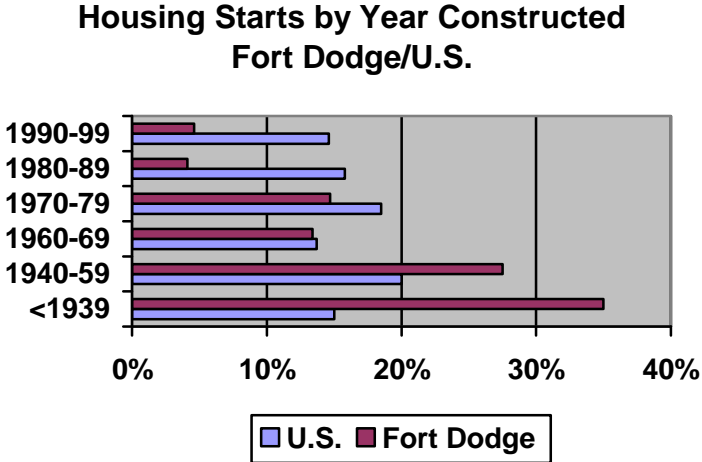


Figure 8. Age of Fort Dodge housing stock

The 2000 Census reported that Fort Dodge has 12,830 housing units with 6% of the units vacant. Table 9 provides a summary of housing type and vacancy in Fort Dodge. Most of the housing (73%) is single-family detached with only 2% of the housing in attached style.

Table 9. Profile of Fort Dodge Housing Stock Zip Code 50501

	Number of Units	Percent
Total Housing Units	12,830	
Occupied Units	12,000	94%
Owner-Occupied	8,280	69%
Renter-Occupied	3,720	31%
Vacant	830	6%
Building Size		
Single Family Detached	9,444	73%
Single Family Attached	281	2%
Buildings with 2-4 units	1,262	10%
Buildings with 5-19	738	6%
Buildings with 20+ units	635	5%
Mobile	470	4%

Source: U.S. Census 2000

Demand for new housing is unlikely to come from household growth. Between the 1990 and 2000 census, this Fort Dodge zip code lost 41 households and Scanus, Inc estimates that since the 2000 census, this zip code lost an addition 466 households and they project that this zip code will lose an additional 184 households in then next five years. Clearly, if new housing is to come, it will be from replacement housing.

The Census statistics estimated that from 1990 to 2000 that the City of Fort Dodge lost an estimated 59 housing units annually.

Table 10. Fort Dodge Housing Depletion between 1990-2000 by Age of Unit

	1990 Housing Units	2000 Housing Units	1990-2000 Housing Units Lost
1990-2000	--	580	
1980-1989	538	448	90
1970-1979	1,600	1,506	94
1960-1969	1,490	1,434	56
1940-1959	3,298	3,161	137
1939 or earlier	4,286	4,075	211
Total to 1989	11,212	10,624	588

Source: U.S. Census

**Table 11. Fort Dodge Residential Building Permits**

	Single family Units	Single Family Construction Cost	Multi-Family Units
2000	30	\$148,400	6
2001	34	\$139,300	15
2002	22	\$161,800	33
2003	19	\$158,500	9
2004	21	\$143,400	7
2005	36	\$132,800	8
2006	15	\$108,700	9
Total 2000-2006	177		87
Annual Average	25		12

Source: U.S. Census

Replacing this housing stock from existing homes is new construction. Since 2000, the Census reports that The City of Fort Dodge added 37 new units annually during this decade.

Housing in Fort Dodge is very affordable. In 2000, the Census reported that the ratio of median household income to median home value in Fort Dodge was 1.95. In comparison, large cities like Chicago had a ratio of 4.02. The State of Iowa's ratio was 2.11 and in Des Moines, it was 1.87. Some cities had higher ratios. Mason City's ratio was 2.29 and in Clinton, it was 2.58. In university towns like Ames it was 3.27 and Iowa City it was 3.37. However, since 2000 housing prices in most of the U.S. have substantially increased. In 2006, The American Community Survey estimates that the ratio of median household income to median home value increased in the past six years in the U.S. from 2.95 to 3.37. In places like Chicago, the ratio increased from 4.02 to 6.4. The State of Iowa's median home price increased to \$112,600 and the ratio rose from 2.11 to 2.53. In Waterloo, the median home price is \$92,600 with an affordability ratio of 2.49. While the American Community Survey has not yet covered Webster County or Fort Dodge, home values in Fort Dodge remained very low.

The Fort Dodge multiple listing service (MLS) reports that the median home value in 2006 on existing homes sold was approximately \$77,900. This is an increase of 12.8% from 2000, when the median home value in Fort Dodge was \$69,041. The median income to home value for Fort Dodge declined between 2000 and 2006 from 1.95 to 1.92. This means that there are even more affordable homes.

Current year to date (September 30, 2007) data on the sales price of homes from the Fort Dodge MLS shows that 286 homes have sold, which is at a rate of 32 homes a month, which except for 2006 is the typical number of homes sold in the

City of Fort Dodge. The most expensive home sold so far this year in Fort Dodge was \$295,000.

**Table 12. Home Sales Price for City of Fort Dodge 2007 to Date**

Sales Price	Number Sold to Date	Percent of 286 Units Sold to Date
<\$125,000	237	83%
\$125,000-\$150,000	26	9%
\$150,001-\$175,000	11	4%
\$175,001-\$200,000	6	2%
\$200,001-\$300,000	9	3%

Source: Fort Dodge MLS (September 30, 2007)

**Table 13. Fort Dodge Housing Affordability Range**

Household Income	Number of Households	Percent of Households	Affordable Home Range
\$40,000 - \$49,999	1,169	11.8%	\$100,000 - \$125,000
\$50,000 - \$59,999	1,056	10.7%	\$125,000 - \$150,000
\$60,000 - \$74,999	1,872	9.0%	\$150,000 - \$175,000
\$75,000 - \$99,999	985	9.9%	\$175,000 - \$250,000
\$100,000+	978	9.7%	\$250,000+

Source: Scanus and REPG

Housing in Fort Dodge is very affordable, but Fort Dodge residents can afford more expensive homes than what residential developers are currently offering.

Based on a traditional affordability standard where housing is affordable at 2.5 times the annual household income, about 4,891 current householders or 39.3% of City of Fort Dodge's householders could theoretically buy a new home priced between \$125,000 and \$150,000. With approximately 10% of Fort Dodge householders moving annually, a potential pool of 489 householders with incomes of \$50,000 or more seek housing annually. The challenge for developers is to find housing products to meet the markets needs.

The low home prices in Fort Dodge may help the city weather the housing crisis, since there was little speculation and values were not inflated. Fort Dodge will be in a good position to provide new housing when the credit markets improve.



## A Vision for Downtown

A vision is a comprehensive statement that describes the desired state of the community that will result through the application of considerable local efforts from today into the future to attain initiatives and strategies. A vision talks about what life will be like for residents once strategies and actions take hold.

A vision puts forth a message to the community, and those considering investing in the community, that states explicitly what the community sees itself becoming in the future. It is not a “blue sky” fairy tale. It has to be based on the realities of Fort Dodge’s position in the economic world, its assets, and resources. It must know and accept its threats and weaknesses to keep the vision elements achievable or they will simply be ignored.

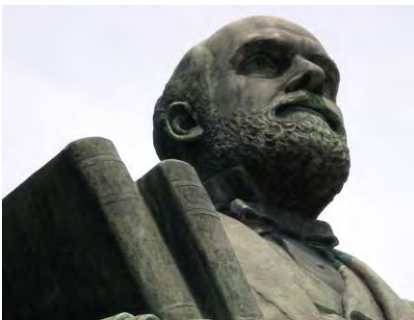
Finally, a vision provides a broader context for the specific plan recommendations. There are several factors that will impact plan implementation; the local industrial and employment profile, the residential and commercial redevelopment markets, local leadership, etc. As these factors change over time, some plan recommendations will become more immediate opportunities, while others will shift to long-term thinking. In either case, the vision allows those in charge of implementing the plan to assess progress based on the bigger picture rather than the incremental steps.

For this plan, the vision was developed in conjunction with city staff and the project steering committee through several meetings that identified the strengths and weaknesses of Downtown Fort Dodge, and highlighted the key characteristics of what it could look like in the future. The recommendations included in this plan respond directly to the sentiments, attitudes and desires expressed in the vision statement.

## *A Vision for Downtown Fort Dodge:*

*Downtown Fort Dodge will be a place built on its historic heritage that takes advantage of geographic and natural assets to create an attractive and desirable place for people to live, work, shop and experience local culture through recreation and arts activities. It will be a place where people from around the region come to support local entrepreneurs by seeking out a unique blend of goods and services.*

*Building on the historic past and unique topography is seen as a key component to the future of Downtown Fort Dodge as a local and regional destination.*



## Key Plan Strategies

Within the broad concepts represented in the vision, more specific key strategies can focus attention on particular aspects of how the downtown functions and where improvements may be necessary. These strategies can also provide a structure for implementing the plan's recommendations, since, by their nature, they address various technical areas of planning and development.

Each key strategy captures an important element of the role of downtown in Fort Dodge's overall quality of life for residents and visitors. Detailed plan recommendations will be identified within each key strategy in order to establish an action plan for implementation. When taken as a whole, these strategies and plan recommendations provide the individual tiles that make up a collective mosaic representing the future of Downtown Fort Dodge.

### *Key Plan Strategies:*

- 1. Enhance the image of Downtown Fort Dodge.*
- 2. Establish a downtown neighborhood made up of diverse housing types and necessary stores and services.*
- 3. Preserve and enhance the historic downtown features.*
- 4. Establish downtown as a destination for parks, recreation, entertainment, retail and sports activities.*
- 5. Establish a beautification program for vacant, underutilized or deteriorated lots and structures.*
- 6. Enhance accessibility to and throughout the downtown.*
- 7. Implement sustainable and "green" standards for new development.*

## Plan Recommendations

The recommendations included in this plan reflect an approach focused on 1) creating the most impact and value for the city, and 2) establishing an appropriate and attainable implementation program. Recommendations may fall within one or several of the following categories: policy actions, project initiatives, and action strategies.

*Policy actions* include the regulatory tools and incentives utilized by a municipal body to encourage specific types of development in focused areas of the community. Actions may be regulatory in nature, such as land use and zoning controls, or incentive-based, such as designated redevelopment areas or tax increment financing districts.

*Project initiatives* include physical improvements that lay the foundation for redevelopment (i.e. infrastructure upgrades and streetscaping), new facilities that provide public services (i.e. parks, fire departments, schools, etc.), or new growth on behalf of the private development sector (i.e. new housing or commercial development).

*Action strategies* include relationships or programs that aim to couple resources among two or more groups to achieve a symbiotic result. The results may vary from physical improvements in specific portions of downtown, to programs that create additional awareness of activities in Fort Dodge. Often, action strategies create an effective segue between project initiatives and plan implementation.

This chapter of the plan will describe a comprehensive set of recommendations for the downtown area, based on the key strategies previously described, and how each may contribute to an increased quality of life for the city's residents. In several cases, a recommendation may be closely linked to another. Where this happens, a reference will be provided to assist navigation of the plan and highlight opportunities to achieve multiple goals.



## Key Strategy #1. Enhance the image of downtown.

The way that the public perceives the downtown is a significant factor in whether or not they decide to use it. An attractive environment and “user-friendly” downtown can attract residents and visitors to uses and facilities based in and around amenities. While Fort Dodge has several significant buildings that embody its turn-of-the-century character, there are also many buildings or sites that detract from the aesthetic of the city center. The following recommendations represent ways to accentuate the positive aspects of Downtown Fort Dodge while mitigating the negative impacts of undesirable elements.

### 1-1. Design and install gateway elements at key downtown entry points.

Gateway elements can instill a sense of identity for Downtown Fort Dodge by clarifying the boundaries of the city center, provide an opportunity for directional or informational signage, and capture the aesthetic character of the area. The design concept, landscaping, and construction materials create a first impression that sets the stage for the more historic elements in downtown. Figure 9 identifies where gateways may be placed throughout the downtown area.

### 1-2. Create a round-about at 1st Avenue South and 12th Street.

The city has already been considering the realignment of US 20/169 from 2nd Avenue South to 1st Avenue South. (This concept is described in further detail in Recommendation 6-6.) This would make 1st Avenue South the primary corridor on the southern end of downtown, and a primary link to the commercial development on the east side of Fort Dodge. A round-about at 1st Avenue South and 12th Street would create a focal point for those entering the downtown from the east or south, and provide the opportunity for a prominent urban design feature, such as a sculpture, landscape design, or gateway signage. Figure 10 illustrates the proposed configuration of the round-about.

### 1-3. Establish standards for the treatment of property edges without building frontage.

Pedestrian-friendly urban environments typically rely on building frontage to delineate private areas from public ones, create a sense of street scale, and maintain a consistent aesthetic from the street. However, contemporary development often results in blank property edges, either because the building may be set back from the street, or because parking is a significant part of the site plan. In either case, it is important to consider the sidewalk aesthetic. Treating the property edge with landscaping or decorative fencing can restore continuity in the public realm. Recommendation 3-2 illustrates in more detail how this can be addressed within the context of design guidelines for downtown development.

### 1-4. Install streetscaping on priority corridors.

Treating important travel corridors with streetscaping has several benefits to the downtown. First, it beautifies the areas that most people, residents and visitors alike, are likely to travel. Secondly, it can encourage traffic flow on those corridors simply by making them attractive places to be. Finally, it can restore the pedestrian network throughout downtown and enhance access to goods and services. Recent streetscape improvements have been installed on Central Avenue between City Square and 13th Street. Additional improvements should be installed on the following priority corridors:

- 1st Ave. South and the realigned US 20/169 between 3rd St. and 15th St.
- 3rd St. between 1st Ave. South and 1st Ave. North
- 8th St. between 5th Ave. South and 1st Ave. North
- 12th St. between 5th Ave. South and 2nd Ave. North

These corridors represent the primary means of entry and movement through the downtown area.



*Recent streetscape enhancements can serve as a precedent for the rest of the downtown area.*

### 1-5. Create a rehabilitation/restoration program for historic structures.

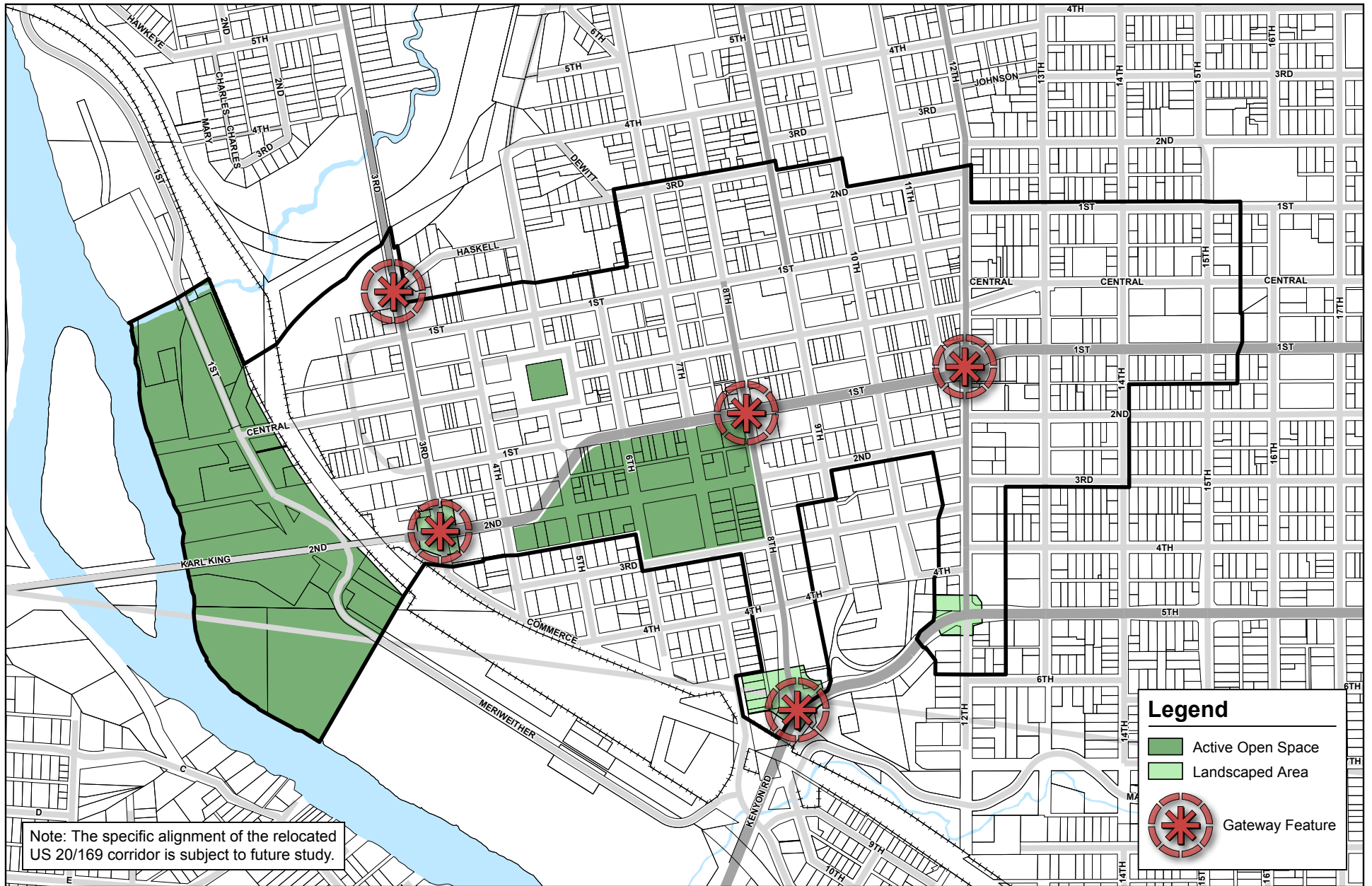
Several communities have established historic restoration programs to encourage preservation of highly-valued properties. These programs use grants, tax incentives, or low-interest loans from state or federal agencies, and may be subsidized further by local agencies. Such resources include:

- The National Trust Preservation Fund through the National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Historic Preservation Tax Incentives administered by the National Park Service
- Tax Credit Incentives Programs for Historic Properties in Iowa, administered by the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office

Links to these resources can be found in the Resources Reference section of this plan.

***1-6. Establish marketing and information partnerships with surrounding institutions and community areas to advertise downtown activities.***

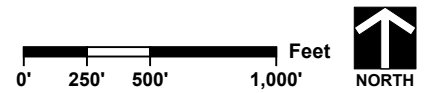
Establishing marketing relationships with surrounding entities can provide mutual benefit to downtown and institutional patrons. Computer kiosks funded by downtown business or attractions can be located at Trinity Regional Medical Center or Iowa Central Community College, for example. These kiosks can provide up-to-date information regarding downtown events, entertainment, dining, and businesses. Information medium is asset to both the downtown area and residents or visitors who may be looking to learn more about the Fort Dodge area.



**Figure 9**  
**Proposed Downtown Gateway Locations**

Downtown Plan  
 Fort Dodge, Iowa

September 2008



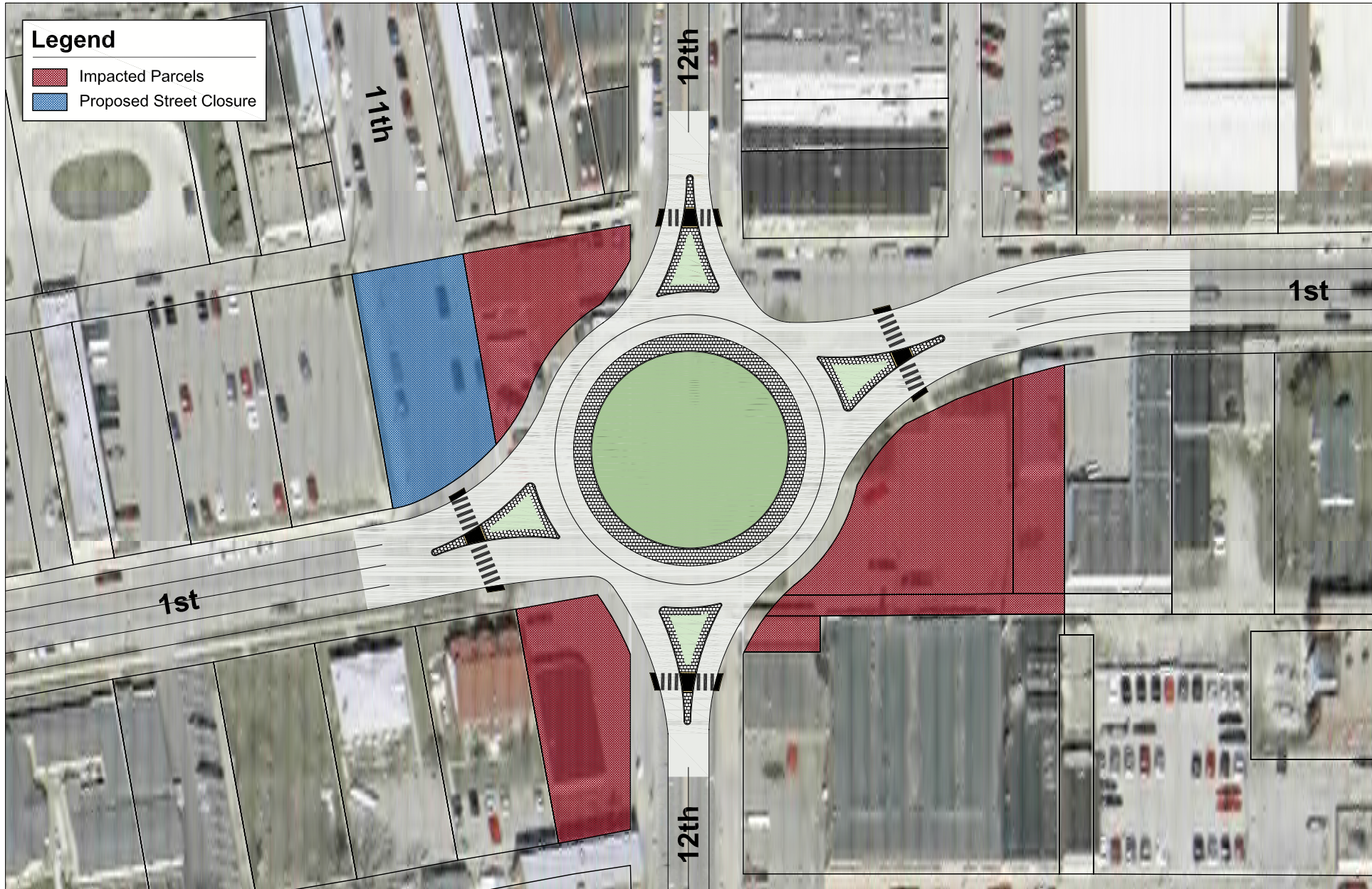


Figure 10  
**Proposed Round-about Configuration**

Downtown Plan  
 Fort Dodge, Iowa

September 2008



**Key Strategy #2. Establish a downtown neighborhood made up of diverse housing types and necessary stores and services.**

City centers are not often thought of as neighborhoods. However, the recipe for a successful downtown is not unlike that of a traditional neighborhood; a mix of housing choices, close access to basic goods and services, local employment opportunities, and comprehensive transportation options. In that respect, Fort Dodge must strive to strengthen certain pieces of this equation in order to create a viable and well-balanced downtown neighborhood.

**2-1. Assemble properties to create projects of a scale that attract developers from outside the Fort Dodge area.**

One significant challenge that came out of a primary industry sector survey conducted by the City of Fort Dodge is that the local development community, with a few exceptions, is not providing appropriate types of housing and commercial products that will attract new residents and investors. For example, as discussed in the Market Analysis, local employers such as Iowa Central Community College and Trinity Regional Hospital have difficulty recruiting new professional staff. One of the primary factors they cite is the lack of attractive housing. This shortage justifies the need for new housing development, and the downtown is a prime opportunity to provide modern urban housing that can attract high-income professionals who want to be close to the culture and major activity centers in Fort Dodge. In turn, this residential base may spur new commercial and service development. However, a housing model with the appropriate amenities is not being provided for this demographic.

In order to meet this need, Fort Dodge may likely have to turn to additional developers from other areas, such as Des Moines or Minneapolis, for example. However, few developers will be interested in traveling to Fort Dodge to develop projects of no more than a few units. Instead, developers must be presented with the opportunity to develop larger tracts of land that have greater capacities for residential and commercial development. There are several steps that the city can take to facilitate this:

- *Develop specific redevelopment plans for key portions of the downtown area.* This will articulate the city's vision and enable a developer to quantify the benefits in terms of number of housing units or commercial square footage.
- *Assist in the acquisition of properties to create large redevelopment sites.* The city may act as a land trust that sells the amassed land to the developer, or depending on the market, turn the land over to the developer through a mark down arrangement.

- *Establish Planned Development agreements that are tied to incentives or land acquisition agreements.* This will ensure that the city will receive the product it anticipates and provide opportunities for the developer to explore phasing based on the realized market potential for the downtown area.

**2-2. Establish partnerships between institutions and housing developers to provide high quality housing that attracts professionals to live downtown.**

As discussed previously, one significant barrier in recruiting new employees to Fort Dodge's major institutions and industries is the lack of quality housing options. Usually, communities face affordability issues in workforce housing; however, in Fort Dodge, where the median household income is estimated at \$42,400 and the average home price is around \$89,000, most housing falls within the affordable category. Interviews with large Fort Dodge employers suggest more new recruits desire more urban and upscale housing, and that Fort Dodge needs to enhance its recruitment and retention efforts in an increasingly competitive labor market.

Presently, the residential development community has demonstrated experience in low to moderate housing and with custom-built homes. However, local developers have little experience with better quality urban style housing like rowhouses that many young professionals desire.

The program suggested to provide better urban workforce housing is in the range of \$145,000 to \$200,000, requiring household incomes of \$58,000 or higher. This income bracket represents about 5,000 households in Webster County or approximately 30% of the householders.

To reduce development risk in producing new workforce housing is a plan that is a twist on traditional workforce housing initiatives targeted at low and moderate-income households. This new workforce program could include

- City provides free land to developers, abatement of property taxes to developer and to buyers.
- Companies can provide a portion of housing down payment to their workers or to a non-profit, which can fund housing in a targeted area.
- Companies can guarantee a portion of the development and then sell the homes to their employees without income limitations. This threshold provides developers the ability to fund their development loans.

The combination of some of these points can further reduce housing cost and make downtown housing affordable to more households. The intent of this program is to demonstrate that demand exists for better housing in the downtown area. The



purpose of downtown housing is to reinvigorate the downtown area and improve business recruitment to Fort Dodge by offering a wider type of housing stock than is currently available.

**2-3. Proactively enable the development of vital local services, such as convenience, grocery, etc.**

One characteristic of a downtown “neighborhood” is easy access to basic goods and services for its residents. In many cases, however, commercial activity in city centers tends to be oriented towards the business population; restaurants, work-related services, office supplies, etc, often without evening or weekend business hours. City leadership has recognized the value of such downtown amenities as the Fareway grocery store, for example, and is working to ensure that all basic services can be accommodated in the downtown area to meet the needs of its residents and those of the surrounding neighborhoods. Leadership should continue to make the attraction of essential services, such as convenience and prescription shopping, daycare, locally-owned restaurants, and local entertainment, a priority by providing land acquisition and rehabilitation incentives and encouraging them as a part of larger mixed-use redevelopment projects.

**2-4. Modify zoning policy to reflect appropriate patterns and balance of land uses.**

Many of the proposed land use concepts or redevelopment projects are not compatible with the existing zoning district boundaries in terms of geography and/or use. In order to remedy this, there are two fundamental approaches the city can take. The first is to create new district classifications that allow for the specific mix of uses desired in various portions of the downtown. The second is to work within the allowable uses in the existing district designations, but alter the boundaries indicated on the zoning map and create overlay areas to allow specific uses in specific areas of the downtown. The existing districts can be modified through geographically-specific overlay areas for specific development regulations. The recommendations identify appropriate approaches for addressing future zoning policy in the downtown area:

- When parcels are acquired and/or replatted for the proposed Central Park development, they should be designated as Conservation District lots. This will ensure their long-term dedication to public uses and allow for appropriate public recreational facilities.
- The riverfront area west of 1<sup>st</sup> Street, with the exception of a focal area at 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Central Avenue, should be designated as a Conservation District. Currently, the portion north of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South is Heavy Industrial. The focal point around 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Central Avenue should be

designated as Office Commercial with a special use overlay as described below.

- A new zoning district, “Entertainment/Mixed-use,” should be created that allows a mix of single-family and multi-family housing, commercial retail uses, restaurants and taverns. This district should encourage zero-setback commercial and mixed-use development, townhouse residential development, and minimal to no on-site parking allowances for commercial sites. The area identified in this plan as the West Library redevelopment area should be designated as an Entertainment/Mixed-use district.
- The 8<sup>th</sup> Street and 12<sup>th</sup> Street gateway corridors should be reclassified as Arterial Commercial districts, with the exception of parcels zoned as Residential Historical. This would allow existing residential and commercial uses to continue, but allow a broader mix of non-residential uses. The Arterial Commercial designation, however, requires a 25’ front yard setback. An overlay should be considered for these entry corridors (8<sup>th</sup> Street from 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue South to 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South, and 12<sup>th</sup> Street from 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue South to 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South not including Residential Historical lots) that allows for a minimum front yard setback of as little as 10’. A sample overlay district ordinance is provided in Appendix 2 of this document.

Figure 11 illustrates the proposed zoning for Downtown Fort Dodge.

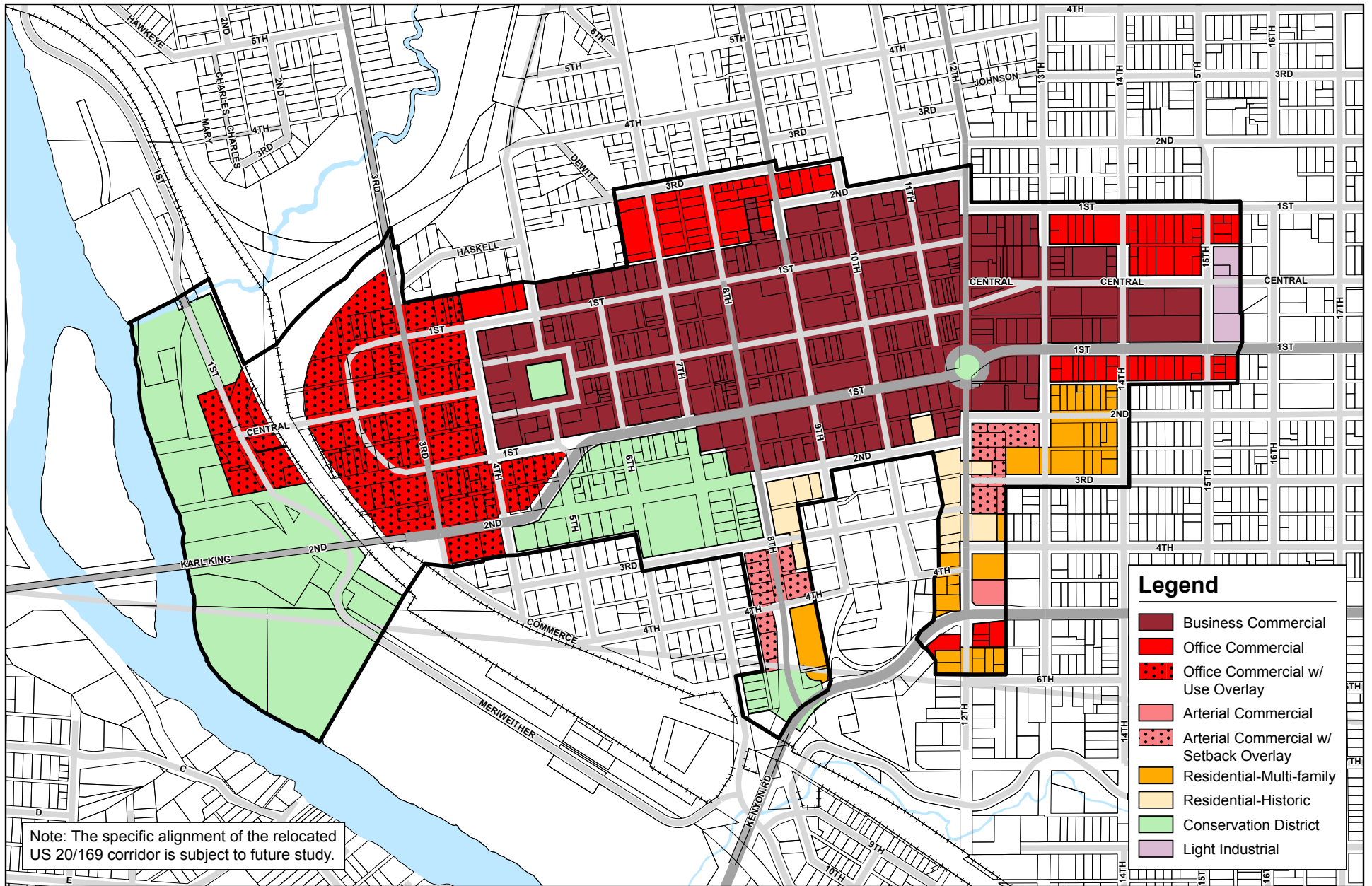
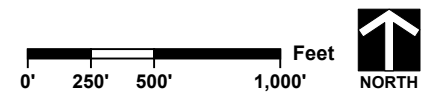


Figure 11  
**Proposed Zoning Map**

Downtown Plan  
 Fort Dodge, Iowa

September 2008



**Key Strategy #3. Preserve and enhance the historic downtown features.**

The historic character of Downtown Fort Dodge is an asset that the community would like to preserve and enhance through new investment and development. Central Avenue and several surrounding sites offer a unique opportunity to attract visitors from throughout the region. However, it is important to ensure that inappropriate rehabilitation of historic structures and the development of downtown parcels do not compromise the overall appeal of the downtown fabric.

**3-1. Establish a downtown historic district.**

A historic district designation can be attained from federal, state and local governments. Federal designation can encourage historic renovation and rehabilitation without placing restrictive regulations on owners unless they wish to take advantage of incentives. State historic districts can also carry this "honorary" status, or be more restrictive depending upon the types of incentives offered. Local historic district designation offers the greatest opportunity for control over historic properties. However, this entails two significant barriers. First, it may place involuntary compliance restrictions on property owners above and beyond the incentive-based state or federal programs. Additionally, it requires a local body to develop and administer renovation and rehabilitation standards, and review and approve modification to existing structures.



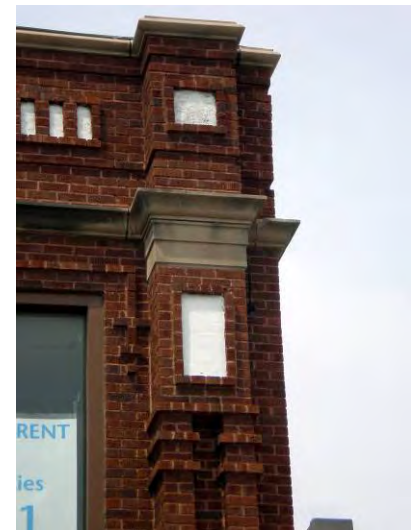
*Downtown's historic fabric is a major asset that can draw local and regional interest.*

In the short term, it is recommended that Fort Dodge attain federal or state "honorary" historic district designation. This would, at a minimum, provide a possible source for funding for property owners who wish to voluntarily take part in historic restoration according to outlined standards. In the long term, it may be possible to designate a local historic district, but local response to the voluntary participation should be measured first.

**3-2. Establish downtown design guidelines that compliment traditional downtown structures.**

Design guidelines are a tool that several municipalities are using to help shape the physical form of new development. Whether they are a regulatory policy tied directly to the zoning ordinance, or a suggestive tool implemented through incentives, they compliment conventional use-based zoning by providing guidelines for a desirable form and style of new development.

Downtown Fort Dodge is made up of several types of places. The Central Avenue corridor is the core of downtown, and is typically considered the place of highest value and identity. Several corridors, such as 8<sup>th</sup> Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Street, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, are expected to be important gateway corridors. While other streets serve a lower-profile role, residents and stakeholders believe it is important to improve their appearance. As a part of this plan, design guidelines have been developed that illustrate how new development may be planned to strengthen the built environment in Downtown Fort Dodge. Depending on the type of street on which a property fronts, the guidelines suggest specific concepts regarding site planning, parking location and access, building design, and property edge treatments. Figure 12 illustrates the following road classification related to the design guidelines:



*Existing structures should serve as a model for future development.*

- *Primary Character Corridor* – These corridors are the most important areas in the downtown due to their historic significance or visibility. The most stringent guidelines are provided on these corridors in order to compliment the historic fabric, maintain a strong pedestrian environment, and create the most attractive impression of the downtown area.
- *Secondary Character Corridor* – These corridors include the primary means of access to and circulation throughout downtown. Buildings on these corridors should incorporate urban site planning principles and appropriate building design elements.
- *Local Character Corridor* – These corridors typically serve as support corridors for uses throughout the downtown. They will likely include more parking frontage than the other character corridors, and development should be especially sensitive to the impact of property edge treatments.

Figures 13-15 illustrates the design guidelines for each of these character corridor types. These guidelines will likely be most effectively implemented when tied to public incentives for redevelopment. For example, land acquisition, TIF assistance, or tax incentives for site improvements can be triggers that require adherence to the design guidelines. When a comprehensive update of the zoning ordinance is considered, the city should assess the possibility of incorporating form-based elements of the design guidelines into the rewriting of zoning districts.

**3-3. Provide educational information on landmark preservation and appropriate renovation techniques.**

Many times, a lack of easy accessed information is the primary barrier to property owners participating in historically appropriate rehabilitation. A central resource for user-friendly information should be established that provides summaries on federal, state or local policies and resources that clarify historic preservation techniques and resources.

Architects who specialize in historic preservation can be another valuable resource for education and review. Establishing a list of pre-qualified designers can be a reference for property owners who are interested in historic rehabilitation, but are not versed in its principles or techniques.



*Innovative preservation is a key component of sustaining the vibrant texture of downtown*

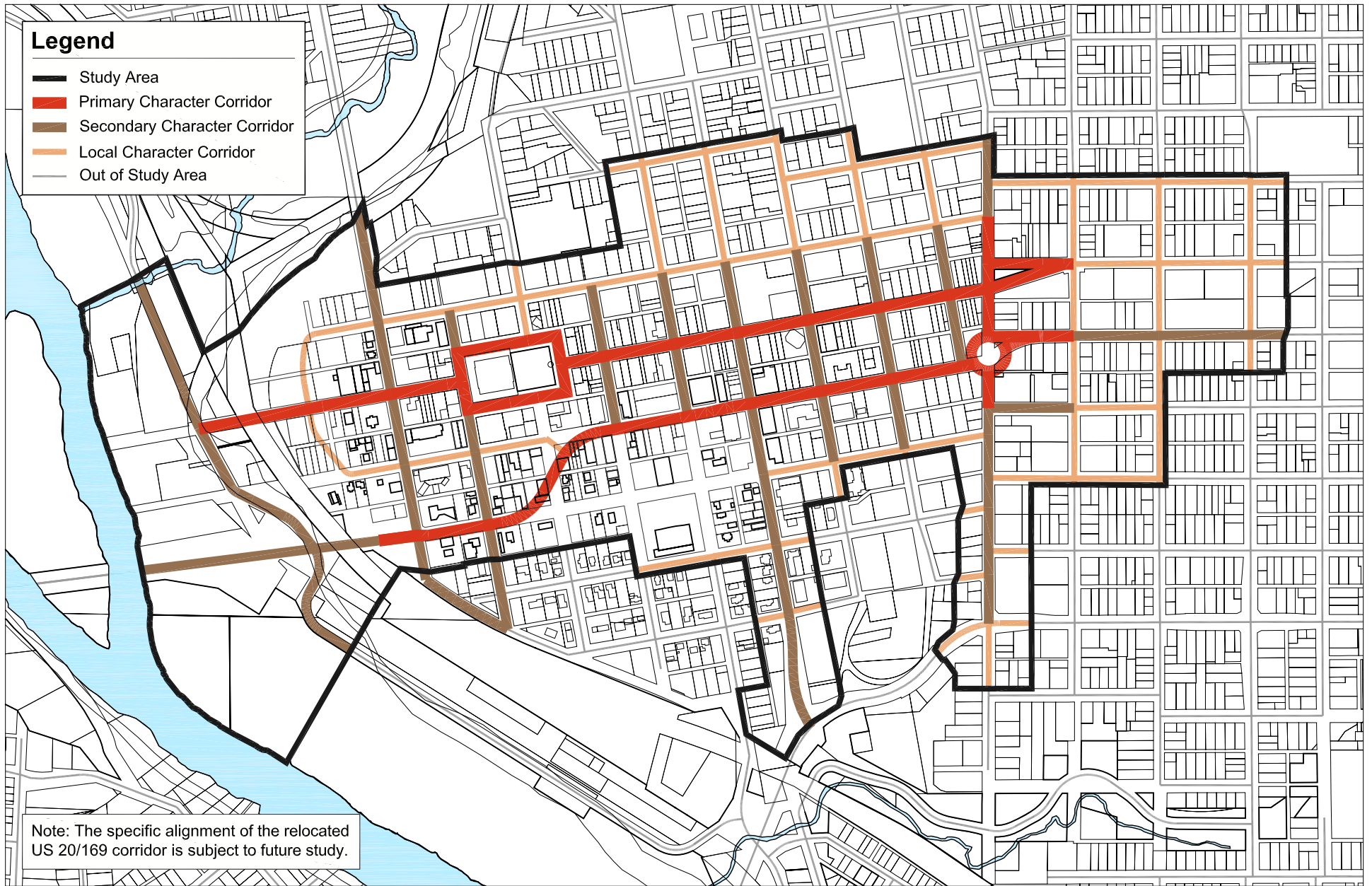


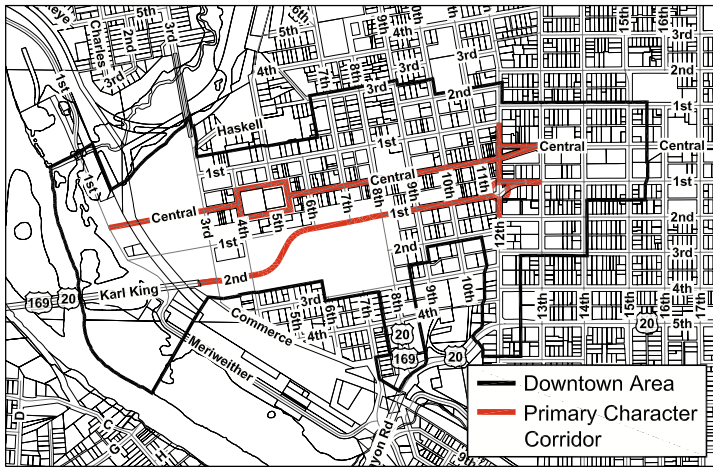
Figure 12  
**Proposed Character Corridor Map**

Downtown Plan  
 Fort Dodge, Iowa

September 2008



## PRIMARY CHARACTER CORRIDORS



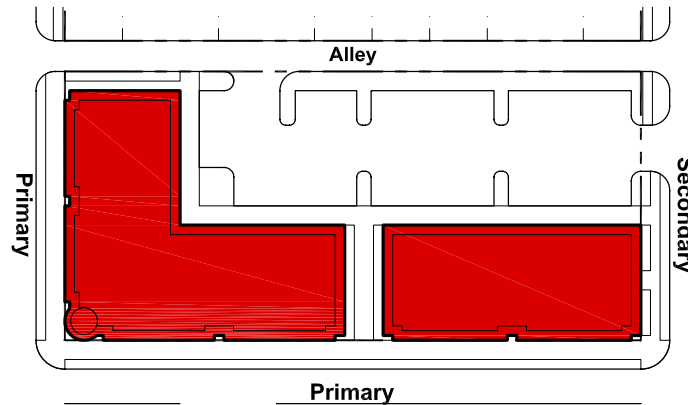
## SUMMARY OF INTENT

Development on the Primary Character Corridors should reflect the rich traditional character of Fort Dodge, and provide an impressive first impression of the downtown area. By maintaining the street wall, incorporating high-quality design, and minimizing unused frontage, these corridors will provide attractive automotive and pedestrian environment.

## SITE PLANNING

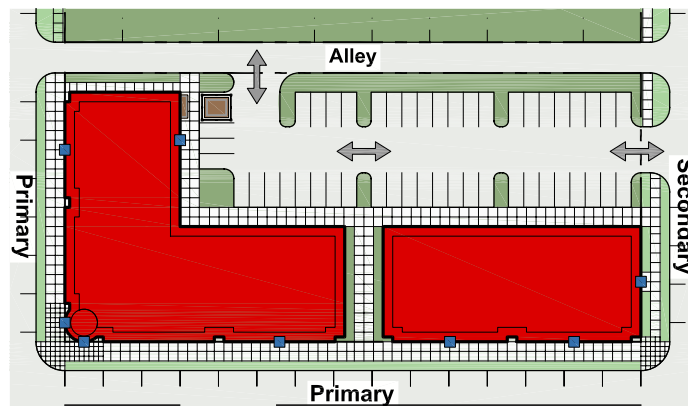
### Building Location:

- Maintain and enhance the commercial street wall with zero-setback design
- Provide appropriate setbacks of up to 10' for residential uses



### Parking Location & Access:

- Parking located to the rear of the site away from the primary frontage
- Cross-access easements provided between adjacent parking areas to reduce curb cuts on public streets



### Loading & Utilities:

- Loading areas and building utilities should not be visible from the primary frontage



Figure 13  
**Primary Character Corridor Design Guidelines**

# BUILDING DESIGN

## Mass & Scale:

- Orient the mass of the building towards the primary frontage
- Upper stories may be stepped back to reduce canyon effect
- Scale of buildings should be consistent with surrounding development
- Articulate prominent corner locations with turrets, rounded corners, recessed entries, or other architectural gestures
- Break up large facades with changes in materials, recessed areas, or vertical architectural elements

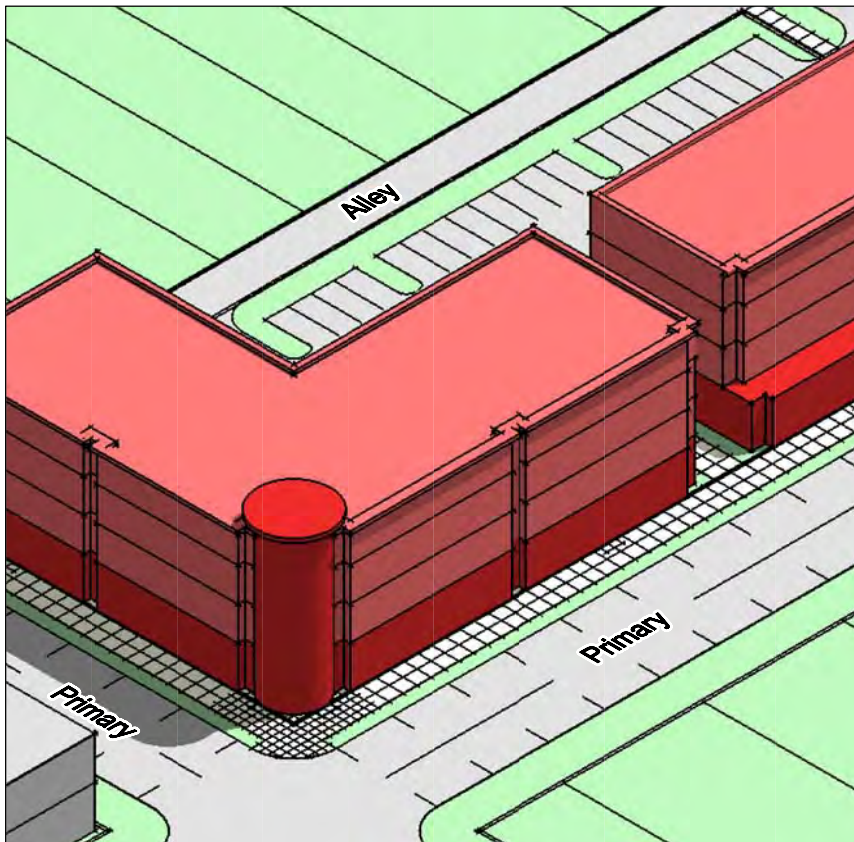


Figure 13  
**Primary Character Corridor Design Guidelines**

Downtown Plan  
Fort Dodge, Iowa

## Style:

- In the historic Central Avenue corridor, enhance the character of the corridor by reflecting traditional design elements and materials
- Throughout downtown, encourage a variety of design styles while maintaining a consistent architectural vocabulary of building elements (i.e. awnings, sign friezes, cornices, and window proportions)



## Details:

- Maintain appropriate level of transparency (55-60%) for commercial storefronts
- Incorporate building details that reflect traditional downtown design and provide a pedestrian scale



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## EDGE TREATMENTS & BUFFERS

### Parking Edges:

- Where parking frontage is necessary, provide a 7' setback from the property line in order to accommodate a landscaping buffer and decorative fencing that compliments the primary building in terms of materials and detailing



### Rear & Side Yards:

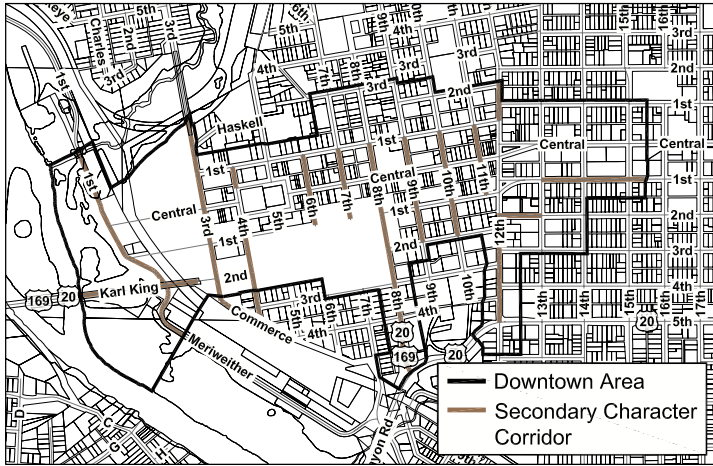
- Not applicable since primary character corridor frontage should not be a rear or side yard



Figure 13  
**Primary Character Corridor Design Guidelines**



## SECONDARY CHARACTER CORRIDORS



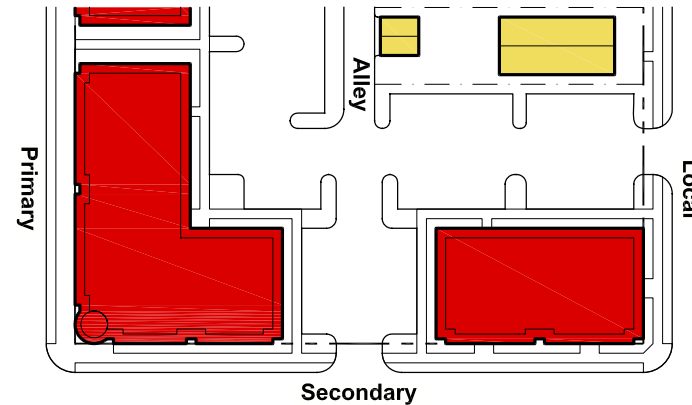
## SUMMARY OF INTENT

Development on the Primary Character Corridors should reflect the rich traditional character of Fort Dodge, and provide an impressive first impression of the downtown area. By maintaining the street wall, incorporating high-quality design, and minimizing unused frontage, these corridors will provide attractive automotive and pedestrian environment.

## SITE PLANNING

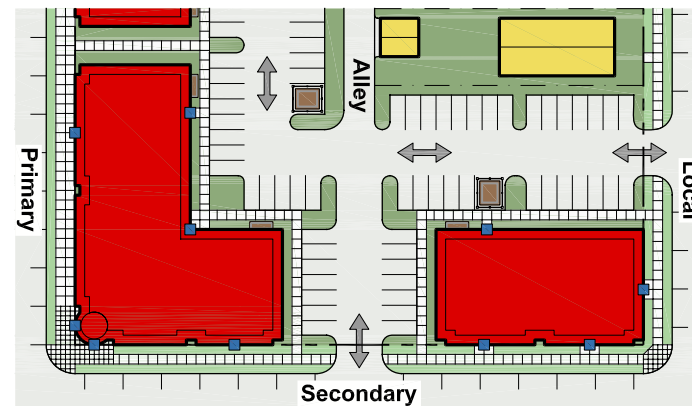
### Building Location:

- Maintain and enhance the commercial street wall with zero-setback design
- Provide appropriate setbacks of up to 15' for residential uses



### Parking Location & Access:

- Locate the parking away from the secondary frontage
- Parking access restricted to instances where local streets or alleys cannot provide access
- Curb cuts and parking lot visibility should be minimized on secondary frontages



### Loading & Utilities:

- Loading areas and building utilities should not be visible from the primary frontage



Figure 14  
**Secondary Character Corridor Design Guidelines**

## BUILDING DESIGN

### Mass & Scale:

- Orient the mass of the building towards the primary frontage
- Upper stories may be stepped back to reduce canyon effect
- Scale of buildings should be consistent with surrounding development
- Articulate prominent corner locations with turrets, rounded corners, recessed entries, or other architectural gestures
- Break up large facades with changes in materials, recessed areas, or vertical architectural elements

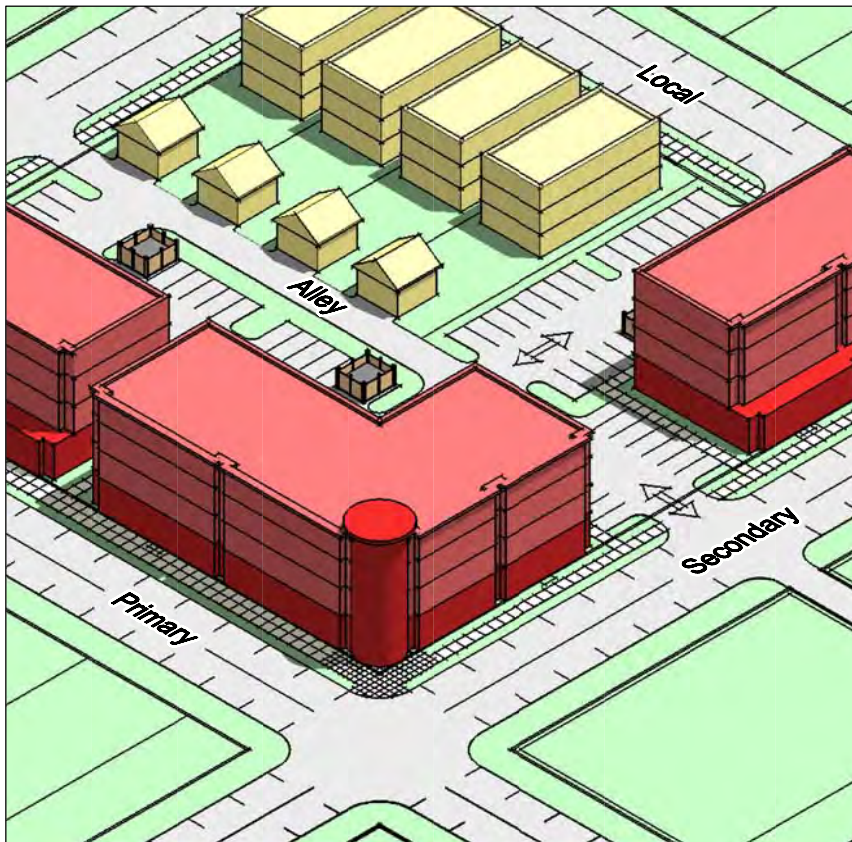


Figure 14

## Secondary Character Corridor Design Guidelines

Downtown Plan  
Fort Dodge, Iowa

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### Style:

- Facades should reflect the general character of the surrounding context
- Encourage a variety of design styles while maintaining a consistent architectural vocabulary of building elements (i.e. awnings, sign friezes, cornices, and window proportions)



### Details:

- Where a site has no primary character corridor frontage, maintain appropriate level of transparency (55-60%) for commercial storefronts
- Where a site has primary character corridor frontage, maintain transparency where possible
- Incorporate building details that reflect traditional downtown design and provide a pedestrian scale



## EDGE TREATMENTS & BUFFERS

### Parking Edges:

- Where parking frontage is necessary, lots should be set back from the sidewalk at least 7', and a landscaped buffer and decorative should be provided to maintain the street wall and screen the parking area



### Rear & Side Yards:

- On sites with a primary character corridor frontage and where a setback is provided on the secondary frontage, provide a decorative fence to maintain the property edge

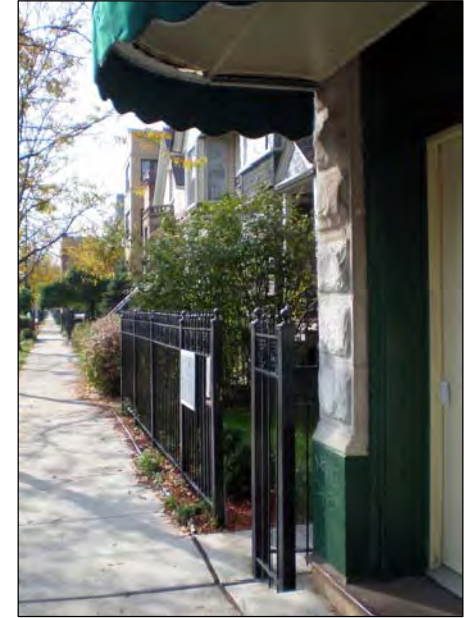


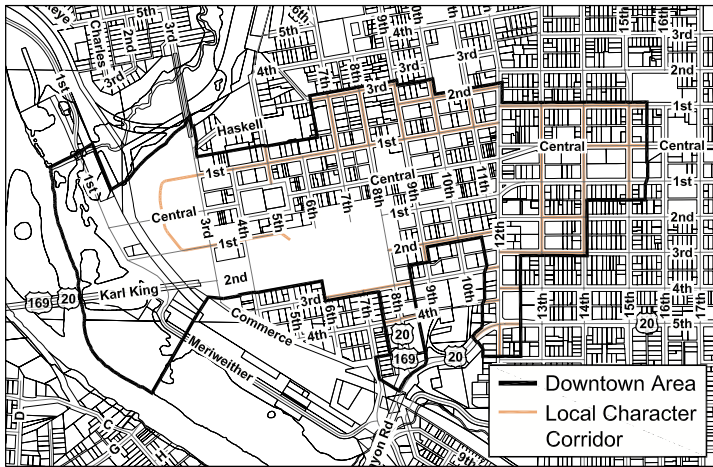
Figure 14

## Secondary Character Corridor Design Guidelines

Downtown Plan  
Fort Dodge, Iowa

September 2008

## LOCAL CHARACTER CORRIDORS



## SUMMARY OF INTENT

Development on the Local Character Corridors should ensure that no portion of the downtown is perceived as "forgotten." Though buildings and sites may see a lower level of investment in design and detailing, these corridors will use appropriate site planning and edge treatments to maintain a desirable character in the lower traffic areas of downtown.

## SITE PLANNING

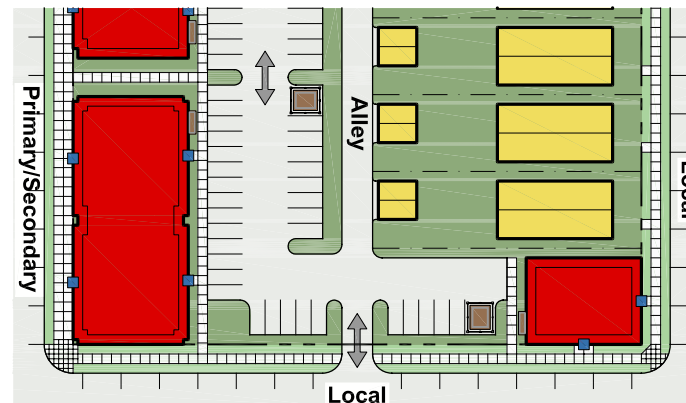
### Building Location:

- Where a site has a primary or secondary frontage, the local frontage may host the rear of the building, loading area, or parking
- Where a site has no primary or secondary frontage, the building should be built on the local frontage with parking on the alley frontage



### Parking Location & Access:

- Locate the parking away from the higher priority frontage, and towards local/alley frontages where possible
- Curb cuts and parking lot visibility should be minimized on secondary frontages and focused on local or alley frontages



### Loading & Utilities:

- Orient loading areas towards alleys whenever possible
- If loading, utility or dumpster area are visible, they should be screened by decorative fence



Figure 15  
**Local Character Corridor Design Guidelines**

## BUILDING DESIGN

### Mass & Scale:

- Orient the mass of the building towards the primary frontage
- Upper stories may be stepped back to reduce canyon effect
- Scale of buildings should be consistent with surrounding development
- Articulate prominent corner locations with turrets, rounded corners, recessed entries, or other architectural gestures
- Break up large facades with changes in materials, recessed areas, or vertical architectural elements



Figure 15  
**Local Character Corridor Design Guidelines**

Downtown Plan  
Fort Dodge, Iowa

September 2008

### Style:

- Facades should reflect the general character of the surrounding context
- Encourage a variety of design styles while maintaining a consistent architectural vocabulary of building elements (i.e. awnings, sign friezes, cornices, and window proportions)



### Details:

- Where a site has no primary character corridor frontage, maintain appropriate level of transparency (55-60%) for commercial storefronts
- Where a site has primary or secondary corridor frontage, maintain transparency where possible
- Incorporate building details that reflect traditional downtown design and provide a pedestrian scale



## EDGE TREATMENTS & BUFFERS

### Parking Edges:

- Where parking frontage is necessary, lots should be set back from the sidewalk at least 5', and a landscaped buffer and decorative fencing should be provided to maintain the street wall and screen the parking area
- A raised curb should be provided along the alley frontage



### Rear & Side Yards:

- On sites with a primary character corridor frontage and where a setback is provided on the secondary frontage, provide a decorative fence to maintain the property edge

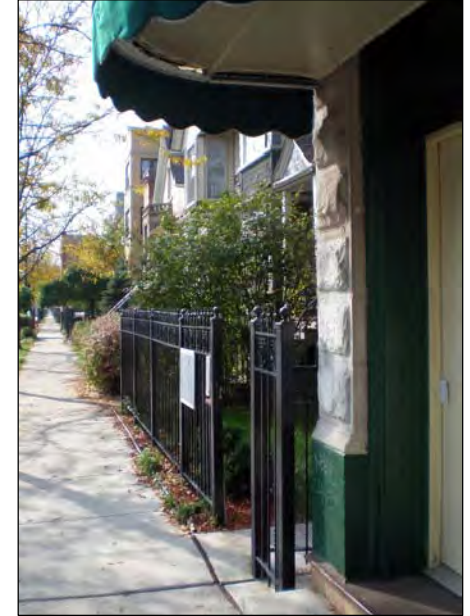


Figure 15  
**Local Character Corridor Design Guidelines**

**Key Strategy #4. Establish downtown as a destination for parks, recreation, entertainment, retail and sports activities.**

Many of the recommendations described in Key Strategies 1 through 3 are intended to set the stage for major redevelopment projects in Downtown Fort Dodge. Concepts such as land assembly, developer relationships, incentives and zoning policy represent incremental steps for achieving a specific development program. Key Strategy #4 illustrates the overall land use framework and specific redevelopment projects to which those steps should be applied.

Figure 16 shows the proposed land use plan for Downtown Fort Dodge. The major recommendations include:

- New opportunities for public open space (Central Park created as a result of the realignment of US 20/169, and a Riverfront Park located between 1<sup>st</sup> Street and the Des Moines River)
- New opportunities for retail and housing development that is linked to major downtown amenities
- The relocation of industrial, manufacturing, and auto service-related uses to the portion of downtown east of 13<sup>th</sup> Street in order to create more logical land use relationships as downtown redevelops

***4-1. Create Central Park and associated recreational uses.***

There are several challenges that Downtown Fort Dodge faces in creating a more vital and attractive environment. Large areas of vacant land, an unattractive 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South corridor, and a lack of downtown amenities make it difficult to encourage a variety of downtown activities. However, the proposed realignment of US 20/169 (see Recommendation 6-6) provides the opportunity for the development of Central Park. The proposed park occupies approximately 14 acres and hosts passive recreation facilities. It could also accommodate major city facilities such as a full-service recreation center. The introduction of Central Park should be considered a crucial element to the future development of Downtown Fort Dodge as it provides a new attraction that can stimulate entertainment, residential and commercial related growth. This Central Park concept is illustrated in Figure 17.

***4-2. Create appropriate amenities in the riverfront park, including rafting docks, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and nature preserve areas.***

The City of Fort Dodge has invested significant resources in cleaning up former industrial parcels between 1<sup>st</sup> Street and the Des Moines River at the west end of downtown. This area now offers the opportunity for significant amenities for residents in the city and throughout the region. The Army Corps of Engineers has recently completed a study assessing the opportunity for a bicycle path network along the riverfront that would include the area in the Downtown Plan planning area.

Figure 18 includes an illustrative redevelopment concept for a Riverfront Park that incorporates the Corps of Engineer's recommendations, restaurant/retail space, a marina for fishing and white water raft landing, public open space, and an ecological preserve.

During the planning process, concepts were explored for this area that included a significant amount of floodplain mitigation infrastructure in order to open up the area to the potential for large-scale redevelopment. However, without a major economic development engine to catalyze such growth, the concepts were deemed infeasible based on the probable cost of site preparation and the limited market potential for commercial development in Fort Dodge. In fact, such concepts would create market competition for development that may happen elsewhere and would be tied to other public investments.

***4-3. Create a downtown entertainment district that includes local restaurants, entertainment and retail activities.***

The project Steering Committee, city staff, and local stakeholders are striving to make downtown a more prominent destination for entertainment, retail, and attractive housing. At the same time, they also recognize the importance of stimulating activity between the library and Des Moines River. This area, currently made up primarily of light industrial and manufacturing uses, presents the opportunity for long-term redevelopment that achieves several goals. Figure 19 illustrates a redevelopment concept that includes a local retail mixed-use node at Central Avenue and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, a mix of multi-family and townhouse development, and streetscape improvements that relate the redevelopment to the historic portion of Central Avenue east of the library. One unique characteristic of this area is its topography. The streetscape design and location of townhouses atop the bluff are designed to take advantage of the dramatic views of the Des Moines River corridor.

***4-4. Redevelop vacant or obsolete properties on the re-aligned US 20/169.***

The proposed realignment of US 20/169 (see Recommendation 6-6) that would result in the creation of Central Park will also create opportunities for commercial or residential redevelopment. This arterial gateway will be a high-visibility corridor, making it ideal for commercial growth at key points. Intermittent blocks may host townhouse or multi-family housing that takes advantage of proximity to Central Park and the historic downtown. Figure 20 illustrates how this redevelopment may occur. This recommendation is related to Recommendations 6-6.

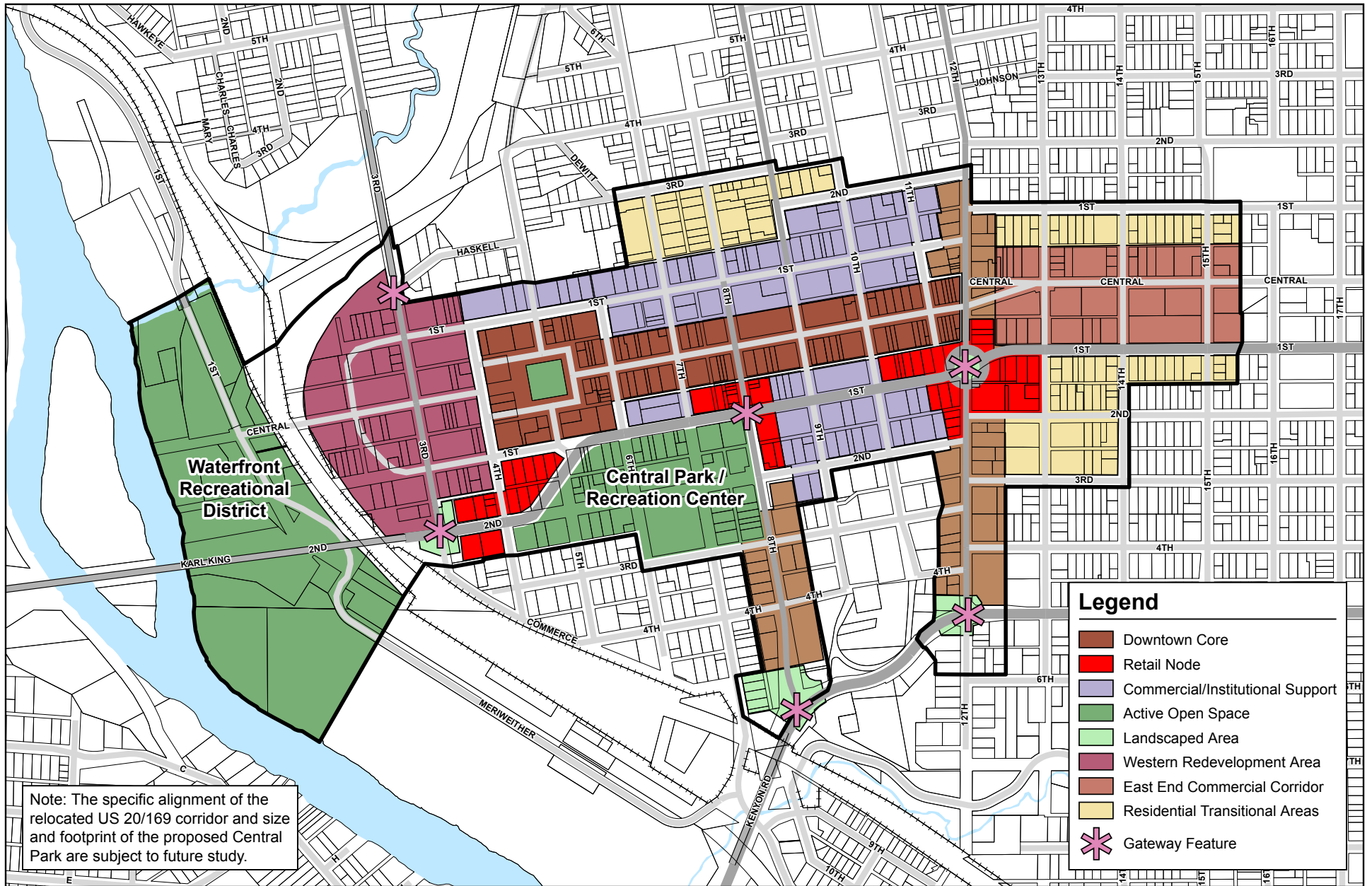


Figure 16  
**Proposed Downtown Land Use Plan**

Downtown Plan  
 Fort Dodge, Iowa

September 2008

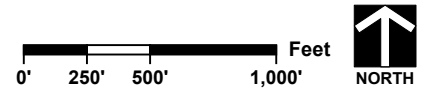


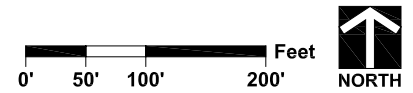




Figure 17  
**Central Park Concept Plan**

Downtown Plan  
 Fort Dodge, Iowa

September 2008



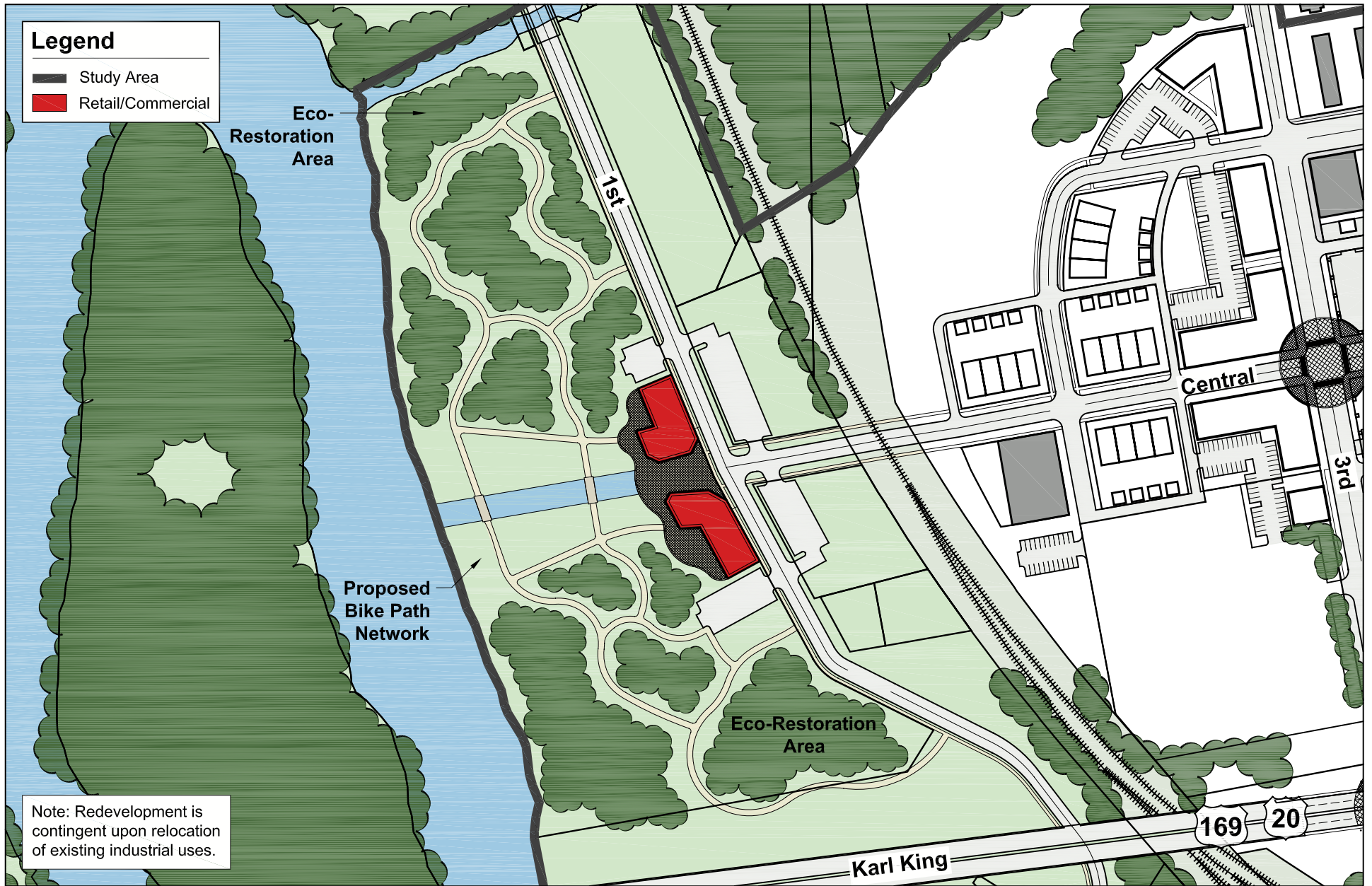
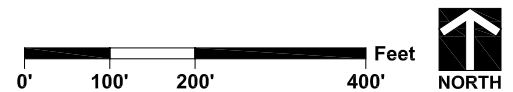


Figure 18  
**Riverfront Redevelopment Concept Plan**

Downtown Plan  
 Fort Dodge, Iowa

September 2008



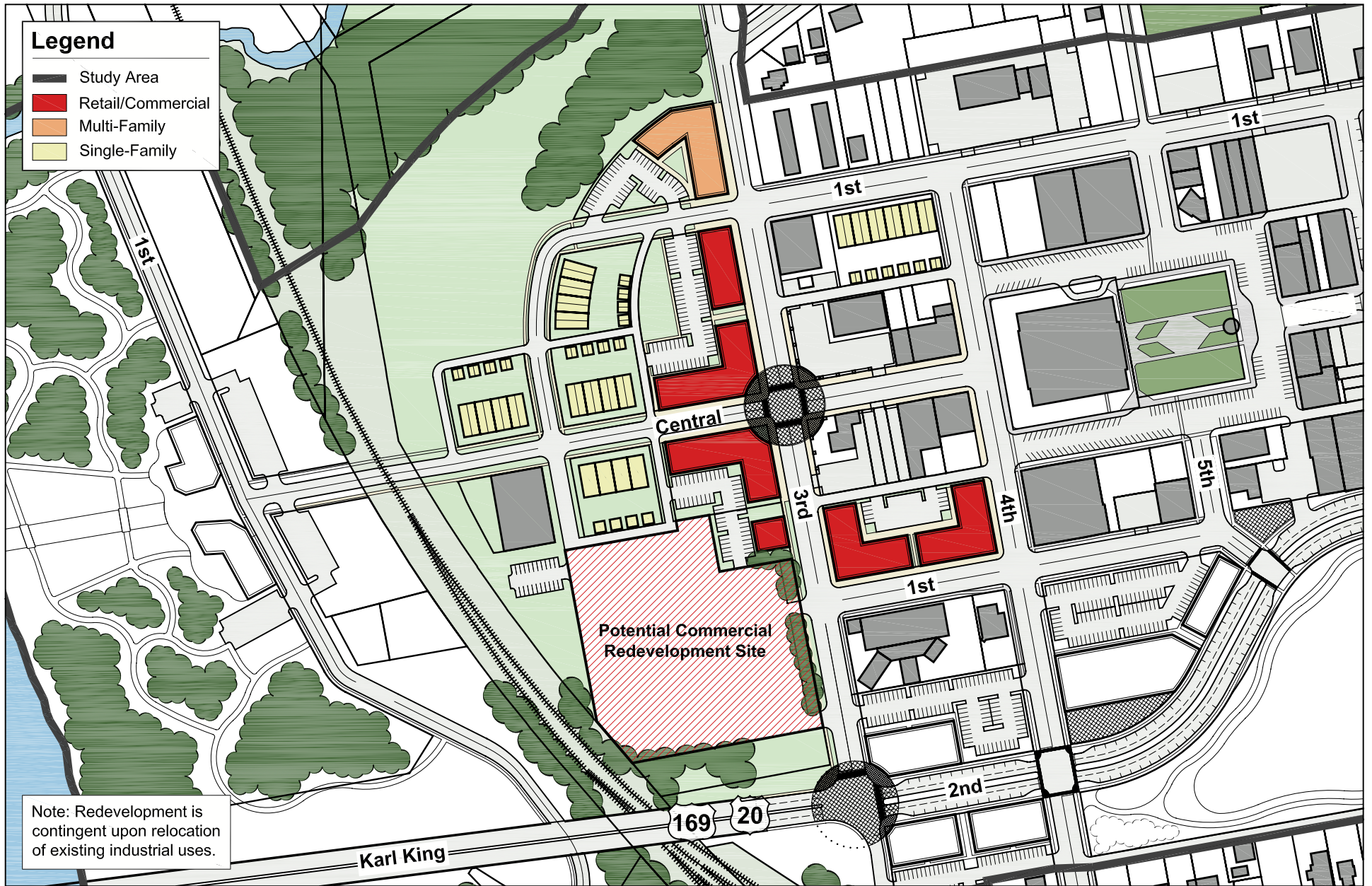


Figure 19  
**West Library Redevelopment Concept Plan**

Downtown Plan  
 Fort Dodge, Iowa

September 2008



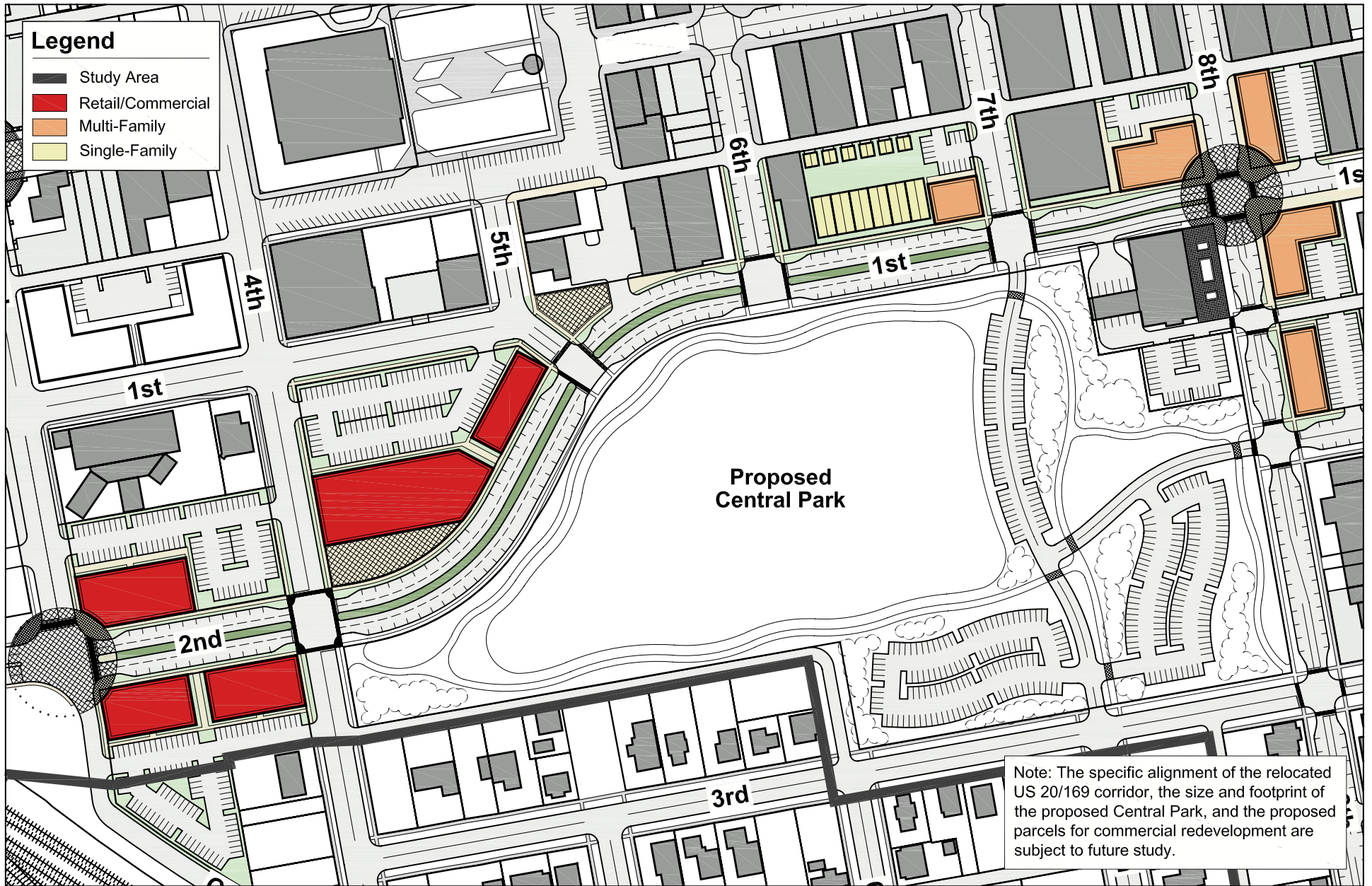
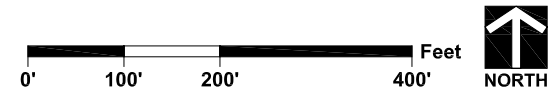


Figure 20  
**US 20/169 Redevelopment Concept Plan**

Downtown Plan  
 Fort Dodge, Iowa

September 2008



***4-5. Attract start-up businesses that diversify the goods and services available in downtown, such as technical training, satellite offices, and financial services.***

Given the nature of franchise goods and service providers to develop on open sites in less dense areas, downtown redevelopment is often dependent upon the ability local business operators or institutions to invest in the city center. There are several ways that this can be done to meet the needs of the downtown population and attain the goals of this plan.

Locally-owned start-up businesses can provide basic or specialty goods and services to downtown residents, workers and visitors. Based on the interest to provide new housing in the downtown area, there will be a shortage of such businesses, and local investors can fill the gap in several market sectors, including convenience, grocery or produce, specialty home furnishings, cafes and restaurants, and bakeries, among others.

Local institutions can be another asset in downtown redevelopment. Specifically, Trinity Regional Medical Center and Iowa Central Community College may be partners in the development of satellite facilities in downtown. For example, the Medical Center may explore the possibility of clinics or extended stay accommodations, while the College uses existing office space for lunch time or evening classes for part-time student/professionals. Opportunities for college-based housing in the downtown should also be explored. These institutions, as well as other major industry employers, should be approached to identify where such partnerships may be possible.

**4-6. Create a comprehensive program that provides year-round attractions and activities for employees, students, residents and visitors.**

Fort Dodge has a diverse population that includes professionals, students, industry leaders, and culturalists. Downtown can serve as a focal point for activities that tap into all of these groups. However, a comprehensive program should be developed to ensure that activities relate to specific attractions or assets. For example, residents and visitors interested in environmental aspects of the region may be drawn to the waterfront at various times of year for bird migration. Students can take advantage of festivals that celebrate academic events or school-sponsored activities. Art and architecture tours can be provided that highlight specific aspects of downtown's key cultural assets.

In order to create synergy among events, a central resource for information and event coordination should be established that maintains an inventory of event spaces, coordinates with the city regarding permitting and facilities, and provides outreach to local groups regarding on-going events and opportunities.

**Key Strategy #5. Establish a beautification program for vacant, underutilized or deteriorated lots and structures.**

Mitigating the impact of vacant lot and buildings is a key element in creating a more attractive downtown area in Fort Dodge. These lots and buildings often fall into disrepair and project a sense of disinvestment in the city center. There are several techniques for combating this issue and encouraging more appropriate property maintenance and utilization.

**5-1. Enforce vacant property maintenance standards.**

The city currently has a property maintenance code provides that outlines standards for the upkeep of existing properties. This code should be more effectively enforced, and may be strengthened to address comprehensive building and site maintenance, including on-site littering, exterior aesthetics, exterior lighting, and site security. Such standards can be enforced through fines for noncompliance.

**5-2. Develop property edge standards for fencing and/or screening.**

Downtown Fort Dodge has several parcels that are undeveloped. These parcels include dedicated parking lots, public parking lots, and vacant lots. These parcels tend to break up the fabric of downtown and have negative impacts on the character and image of the area.

Property edge treatments can be a relatively low-cost way to mitigate the aesthetic impacts of undeveloped properties. Recommendation 3-2 describes proposed design guidelines for Downtown Fort Dodge, and includes techniques for treating edges of properties in order to maintain an attractive pedestrian character. These concepts can be adopted for vacant properties in order to address decorative fencing and/or landscaping that delineates public and private property and mitigates the impacts of poorly maintained parcels.



*Treating the edge of undeveloped parcels can help sustain a comfortable pedestrian urban environment.*

**5-3. Institute a vacant neighbor program for adjacent property acquisitions.**

Often, vacant properties suffer because the owner has no local interest in maintaining the site. Therefore, one way to address this is to facilitate acquisition of the property to someone who will maintain it. A "Vacant Neighbor" program is a system under which vacant or neglected properties can be acquired by the city and turned over to a neighboring entity who wishes to utilize and maintain it. Where applicable, the city can use market rate acquisition, tax delinquency, maintenance fines, or condemnation to facilitate public acquisition of the vacant properties if a neighbor is interested in adoption of the parcel.

**5-4. Create a comprehensive parking management plan that utilizes vacant parcels as short-term parking reservoirs.**

Despite their negative impacts on the Downtown Fort Dodge, vacant parcels provide a unique opportunity in shaping the future of the city. In the long term, they provide an opportunity for redevelopment. However, in the mean time, they may be used as temporary reserves for parking capacity to help facilitate redevelopment on other key properties. There are several blocks in downtown that are used for dedicated parking for commercial or public uses. However, some of these will become targets for redevelopment should priority plan recommendations be carried out. As a result, replacement parking areas must be identified. Vacant parcels can be used for this use. As part of a growth strategy, key vacant parcels should be identified that can provide short-term parking capacity, and possibly be redeveloped in the long-term. In doing so, the parking lots must be designed to conform to the existing city ordinances relating to parking lot design and engineering. This recommendation is described in more detail in Recommendation 6-4.

**Key Strategy #6. Enhance accessibility to and throughout the downtown.**

Circulation throughout the existing downtown street network is relatively easy. However, there are several characteristics that can be enhanced to improve the visibility of and accessibility in Downtown Fort Dodge. Figure 21 on the following page illustrates the improvements described below.

***6-1. Designate bicycle lanes on roadways that link the areas of downtown to each other and to the waterfront.***

Automotive travel is the primary form of transportation in the downtown area. There are several barriers to multi-modal access in other areas. Public roadways should be retrofitted to accommodate bicycle lanes where possible. The city has already installed several bicycle lanes, and is planning to enhance access to the waterfront area. A comprehensive bicycle network in the downtown can enhance access to the river, local goods and services, jobs, and entertainment. It is also an essential component of community health and offers tangible lifestyle benefits for residents.

***6-2. Establish a way finding system for entry into downtown.***

Access to the Downtown Fort Dodge area is generally efficient given 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue South from the east, the Karl King Bridge from the west, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street from the north. However, all of these primary entry corridors create bypasses of the Central Avenue corridor. Additionally, existing directional signage fails to inform visitors upon entry. Gateway elements, realigned arterials that bring one closer to the heart of downtown, and improved directional signage can enhance the visibility of the historic downtown and make it a greater part of one's impression of the city.

***6-3. Where possible, dedicate bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in new park areas and large-site developments.***

Dedicated bicycle and pedestrian facilities that link to the public path network described in Recommendation 6-1 can enhance accessibility throughout downtown and mitigate the impacts of large developments. For example, a residential master plan development that occupies several blocks can include a bike way that facilitates mobility and enhances safety by encouraging activity. Planned Developments should be encouraged to provide such facilities, especially when they are adjacent to significant features or amenities, such as parks, environmental areas, or historic areas.

***6-4. Develop a parking plan that opens key parcels for redevelopment.***

Recommendation 5-4 describes a strategic parking plan that makes use of vacant or underutilized parcels. This not only provides a use for vacant properties, but it also allows for a long-term growth plan that balances parking and development. For

example, should US 20/169 be realigned as described in Recommendation 6-6, large parking areas on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South will suddenly be under pressure to be redeveloped as commercial or residential properties. In order to maintain existing activities, replacement parking must be identified. In that respect, the replacement parking facilitates the redevelopment of key parcels so that downtown residents and visitors can have access to the services and housing options they desire.

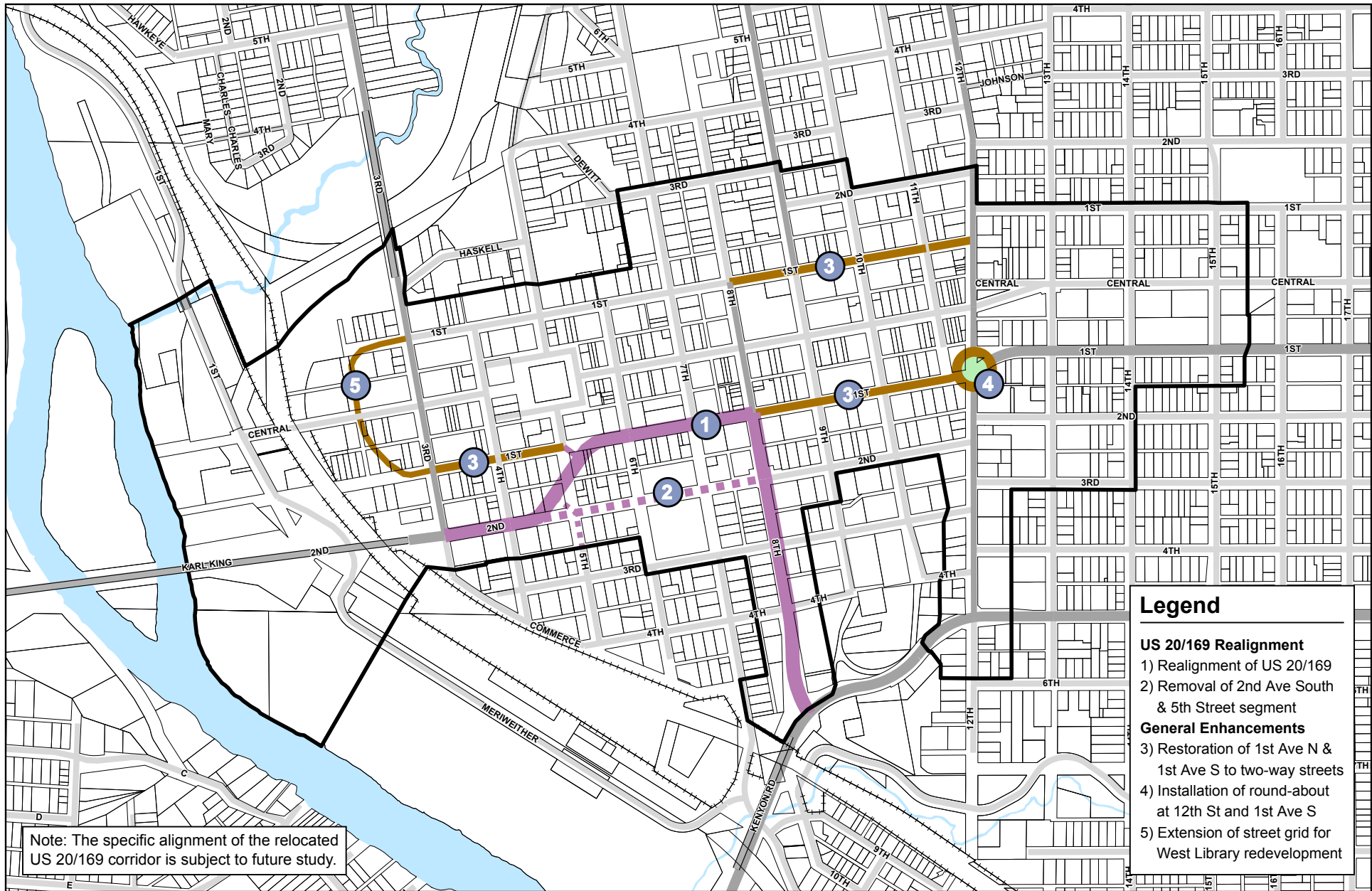
A strategic parking plan must account for the maintenance of existing and future parking supply based on where and when redevelopment occurs. Often times, large-scale redevelopment plans, especially those that rely on public subsidies or tax incentives, can include an off-premise parking program that replaces any lost capacity due to redevelopment, and allows for off-site parking that allows the development potential of the key site to be maximized.

***6-5. Establish a shuttle service partnership between local transit service provider and college.***

Dodge Area Rapid Transit (DART) operates six bus transit routes that serve Downtown Fort Dodge. However, the fixed-route system offers little flexibility to accommodate specific populations or activity centers. Establishing a shuttle service between Iowa Central Community College and the downtown area can enhance access for students to downtown events and activities. This service can be operated regularly to accommodate shopping or downtown classes, or on a special event basis to specific location in downtown. Such a service would be especially successful when coupled with the investment in permanent downtown facilities, such as housing, classrooms, or research centers. Interested partners may likely have to work with DART to establish routes, scheduling, and financing plans to subsidize the circulator service.

***6-6. Re-align US 20/169 to 1st Avenue South, and make 1st Avenue South and 1st Avenue North two-way traffic carriers for the length of downtown.***

US 20/169 serves as the primary corridor through the Downtown Fort Dodge area. However, it runs on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South, never nearing the Central Avenue corridor, encouraging traffic to bypass the heart of downtown. City staff has been exploring an alternative alignment for the corridor that would go northeast from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue/3<sup>rd</sup> Street intersection and merge with the existing 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets. This would not only bring traffic closer to the heart of downtown, but would also create more direct access to commercial development east of downtown via the 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South rail corridor overpass. This realignment would be the key catalyst for several other major downtown initiatives, including the proposed Central Park (see Recommendation 4-1) and new commercial or residential development on the park's fringe (see Recommendation 4-4).



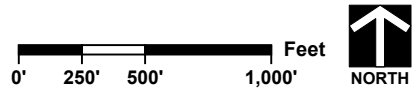
Note: The specific alignment of the relocated US 20/169 corridor is subject to future study.

- Legend**
- US 20/169 Realignment**
- 1) Realignment of US 20/169
  - 2) Removal of 2nd Ave South & 5th Street segment
- General Enhancements**
- 3) Restoration of 1st Ave N & 1st Ave S to two-way streets
  - 4) Installation of round-about at 12th St and 1st Ave S
  - 5) Extension of street grid for West Library redevelopment

**Figure 21**  
**Transportation Improvement Plan**

Downtown Plan  
 Fort Dodge, Iowa

September 2008





**Key Strategy #7. Explore sustainable and "green" standards for new development.**

Communities throughout the country are striving to grow in a more responsible and sustainable way. As this movement gains momentum, municipalities are finding that they have much to gain by adopting principles of "green" design and growth. Sustainable growth principles can strengthen Fort Dodge as a growth center by lowering incremental demand on public infrastructure, providing opportunities for partnerships with growing agribusiness industries, and establish a reputation and model as a leader in environmentally responsible development in Iowa and the Midwest.

***7-1. Reference LEED building and planning standards to assess incentive-based development proposals.***

As discussed in Key Strategy 2, there are several recommended redevelopment actions that will likely entail public subsidy or assistance in land acquisition. While the city is using resources to attract outside developers, this is also an opportunity to encourage innovative design and construction. Leaders in Energy Efficient Design (LEED) is a third party certification program administered by the US Green Building Council, and the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings. LEED's standards for design and construction can be used by local staff to assess redevelopment proposals that attempt to meet the goals of sustainable growth. Subsidy packages can be tied to such standards and awarded as additional incentives to "green" development.

***7-2. Maintain a close relationship with the Iowa Department of Economic Development regarding their green building pilot program.***

The Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) is currently developing a pilot program that will aim to facilitate environmentally responsible development throughout the state. Through the process of developing this downtown plan, city staff has made contact with key state staff in charge of developing the criteria and funding packages that may be made available to local municipalities. Fort Dodge has the opportunity to be proactive about marketing key demonstration projects in the downtown area that can take advantage of the new program and be a model for other communities to point to. Such projects include the Central Park redevelopment (Recommendation 4-1), the West Library redevelopment plan (Recommendation 4-2), a community recreation center, or new downtown housing. City staff must maintain a close relationship with staff at the state level to assist in the development of project standards, and market local development concepts as potential demonstration projects.

***7-3. Create an educational program that promotes sustainability and green technology.***

There are several resources for information pertaining to green design and sustainable development. However, the movement is relatively young, and a comprehensive and centralized body of knowledge has yet to be established. A local liaison should be identified who can provide information and distribute it to developers, designers, property owners, and city staff. This person or organization may also serve as the liaison to the Iowa Department of Economic Development. Such a position can be filled by an employee paid by the city, or by a volunteer with an interest in green design and sustainability, such as an architect, environmental designer, or landscape architect, for example.

***7-4. Market Downtown Fort Dodge as the "green" center for Iowa.***

As Downtown Fort Dodge redevelops to take greater advantage of its natural resources and implement principles of sustainable development, it may become a model of how small to mid-sized cities can ensure that growth achieves long-term environmental and economic goals. Few cities, even large ones, can boast an extensive portfolio of green design projects. With the potential for Fort Dodge to expand its agribusiness industries, public facilities, and waterfront amenities, the opportunity exists to create a comprehensive lifestyle model – live, work, play and shop – for responsible growth. Such growth should be marketed to potential developers and surrounding communities in the Midwest. In addition to development projects focused on sustainability, the local institutions in Fort Dodge, such as the medical center, college and local schools, may team up to create educational and lifestyle programs that encourage greater community health through initiatives such as bicycle commuting, professional and student health fairs, healthy eating based on local farm production, and neighborhood walking tours that use local trails and create awareness of the regions natural assets.

***7-5. Encourage high-profile public facilities and private development projects attain a determined minimum level of LEED standards.***

This Recommendation is closely related to Recommendation 7-1, but focuses on encouraging green design for public facilities or major non-subsidized projects. While this relies on voluntary cooperation from the developers of such facilities, the city should advocate for sustainable growth as a public mission in all development. Advertising the positive long-term benefits and marketability of green buildings can help convince the private development community to undertake such projects. Developments that may be focused on include public facilities, such as libraries, government buildings, and schools, and major private developments, such as recreation and athletic facilities, convention centers, hotels, and multi-family residential projects.

## Plan Implementation

This plan includes 34 recommendations. It is unreasonable to expect the City of Fort Dodge and its potential partners to address all of them in a short time period. Realistically, the concepts discussed in this plan could take up to ten years or more to fully implement. Successful implementation is dependent upon prioritizing the recommendations so that 1) short-term benefits can be realized, and 2) those short-term benefits set the stage for long-term redevelopment.

The city must assess what steps are within its immediate rights and resources, and address them as the building blocks of plan implementation. For example, modifying the zoning ordinance is a city function that requires relatively little capital investment, but it has a great impact on how and where future growth will occur. On the other hand, major site preparation or streetscaping will tie up large sums of capital funding, but may have little benefit if the redevelopment market is yet to be realized.

### Downtown Action Plan

As Table 14, the Downtown Action Plan, implies, the city should focus much of its initial effort on adopting public policies and establishing strategic relationships and programs that bring the right people to the table to facilitate future redevelopment projects. Significant investment in projects should only be made when the market is ready to support development, or when public infrastructure or facilities can be justified as a real catalyst for surrounding redevelopment. For example, the development of Central Park is a project that marries the realignment of a major arterial with the creation of a visible community amenity. Furthermore, it sets the stage for future redevelopment on the new alignment. These benefits, when taken as a whole, may justify public investment in the project.

One question communities often have is whether to encourage commercial development that will attract new residents, or attract new residents that justify commercial redevelopment. Given the dynamics of the anticipated market and the current opportunities in Downtown Fort Dodge, this plan recommends that residential development is the more realistic short-term possibility. By taking advantage of natural features and working with development entities to introduce new housing models in downtown, a market may be realized that encourages new commercial development that meets the goals of the city and Steering Committee.

Many of the recommendations in this plan are linked to one another in terms of long-term projects or the steps required to complete them. For example, the Central Park project described above actually entails three projects; the realignment of US

20/169, the creation of Central Park, and the redevelopment of frontage overlooking the park. Other recommendations are linked based on the process that must be undertaken. For example, completing the West Library redevelopment (recommendation 4-3) entails rezoning of the project area, property acquisition to market a sizeable project to developers, the adoption of design guidelines to be implemented through incentive packages, and the redevelopment itself. (In this case, and in the case of most redevelopment projects, one can see the importance of adopting public policy and establishing strategic relationships as the foundation for realizing a redevelopment project.) In each of these cases, it is clear to see that the recommendations build upon one another to liken the probability that the vision of downtown will be fulfilled.

The importance of implementation partnerships cannot be overlooked if the plan is to have staying power and long-term benefits. Individual entities often lack the staff or capital resources to make large projects happen. However, the proper alignment of funding, political will, and personal effort required to create change often is borne from groups identifying a common goal and collaborating to make it happen. As illustrated in the Downtown Action Plan matrix, very few of the recommendations in this plan can be carried out by a single entity. Collaboration and cooperation, much of which are already apparent in the Fort Dodge community, will be the best tools for carrying the plan forward.

Table 14. Downtown Action Plan

Plan Strategies	Recommendation Type			Time Frame				Responsible Parties
	Policy Action	Action Strategy	Project Initiatives	Immediate Action	0-2 years	2-5 years	5-10 years	
<p>Recommendations</p> <p><b>1. Enhance the image of downtown.</b></p>								
Design and install gateway elements at key downtown entry points			•		■	■		DBACG, FDACOC
Create a round-about at 1st Avenue South and 12th Street			•		■	■		DOT
Establish standards for the treatment of property edges without building frontage	•				■			DBACG
Install streetscaping on priority corridors			•		■	■	■	DOT, FDACOC
Create a rehabilitation/restoration program for historic structures	•				■			DBACG
Establish marketing and information partnerships with surrounding institutions and community areas to advertise downtown activities		•		■	■	■		DBACG, FDACOC
<p><b>2. Establish a downtown neighborhood made up of diverse housing types and necessary stores and services.</b></p>								
Assemble properties to create projects of a scale that attract developers from outside the Fort Dodge area		•	•		■	■		DBACG, DCGFD
Establish partnerships with between institutions and housing developers to provide high quality housing that that attracts professionals to live downtown		•	•	■	■	■	■	DBACG, DCGFD
Proactively enable the development of vital local services, such as convenience, grocery, restaurants, etc.	•	•			■	■	■	DBACG, DCGFD
Modify zoning policy to reflect appropriate patterns and balance of land uses	•			■	■			DBACG
<p><b>3. Preserve and enhance the historic downtown features.</b></p>								
Establish a downtown historic district	•				■			DBACG, HPC
Establish downtown design guidelines that compliment traditional downtown structures	•				■			DBACG, HPC
Provide educational information on landmark preservation and appropriate renovation techniques		•		■	■			DBACG, HPC

Table 14. Downtown Action Plan (continued)

Plan Strategies	Recommendation Type			Time Frame				Responsible Parties
	Policy Action	Action Strategy	Project Initiatives	Immediate Action	0-2 years	2-5 years	5-10 years	
Recommendations								<i>Key:</i> DBACG: Dep't. of Business Affairs and Community Growth FDACOC: Fort Dodge Area Chamber of Commerce DOE: Dep't. of Engineering DCGFD: Development Corporation of Greater Fort Dodge HPC: Historic Preservation DPR: Dep't. of Parks and Recreation DART: Dodge Area Rapid Transit
<b>4. Establish downtown as a destination for parks, recreation, entertainment, retail and sports activities.</b>								
Create Central Park and associated recreational uses			•		■	■	■	DBACG, DPR
Create appropriate amenities in the riverfront park, including rafting docks, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and nature preserve areas			•		■	■	■	DBACG, DPR
Create a downtown entertainment district that includes local restaurants, entertainment and retail activities			•			■	■	DBACG, DCGFD
Redevelop vacant or obsolete properties on the re-aligned US 20/169			•			■	■	DBACG, DCGFD
Attract start-up businesses that diversify the goods and services available in downtown, such as technical training, satellite offices, and financial services		•			■	■	■	DBACG, DCGFD, FDACOC
Create a comprehensive program that provides year-round attractions and activities for employees, students, residents and visitors		•			■	■	■	DBACG, FDACOC, DPR
<b>5. Establish a beautification program for vacant, underutilized or deteriorated lots and structures.</b>								
Establish and enforce vacant property maintenance standards	•	•			■	■	■	DBACG
Develop property edge standards for fencing and/or screening	•			■	■			DBACG
Institute a vacant neighbor program for adjacent property acquisitions	•	•			■			DBACG, DCGFD
Create a comprehensive parking management plan that utilizes vacant parcels as short-term parking reservoirs	•	•			■			DBACG

Table 14. Downtown Action Plan (continued)

Plan Strategies	Recommendation Type			Time Frame				Responsible Parties
	Policy Action	Action Strategy	Project Initiatives	Immediate Action	0-2 years	2-5 years	5-10 years	
Recommendations								
<b>6. Enhance accessibility to and throughout the downtown.</b>								
Designate bicycle lanes on roadways that link the areas of downtown to each other and to the waterfront	•				■	■		DBACG, DOE
Establish a wayfinding system for entry into downtown		•			■			DBACG, DOE
Where possible, dedicate bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in new park areas and large-site developments	•		•			■	■	DBACG, DPR
Develop a parking plan that opens key parcels for redevelopment		•			■			DBACG
Explore the establishment of a shuttle service partnership between local transit service provider and college		•	•		■			DBACG, DART
Re-align US 20/169 to 1st Avenue South, and make 1st Avenue South and 1st Avenue North two-way traffic carriers for the length of downtown	•		•		■			DBACG, DOE
<b>7. Explore sustainable and "green" standards for new development.</b>								
Reference LEED building and planning standards to assess incentive-based development proposals	•				■			DBACG
Maintain a close relationship with the Iowa Department of Economic Development regarding their green building pilot program		•		■				DBACG, DCGFD
Create an educational program that promotes sustainability and green technology		•			■			DBACG, DCGFD
Market Downtown Fort Dodge as the "green" center for Iowa		•			■	■		DBACG, FDACOC
Encourage high-profile public facilities and private development projects to attain a determined minimum level of LEED standards	•	•			■	■	■	DBACG

### Implementation Funding

In all, the Action Plan matrix includes 34 initiatives or projects with various degrees of capital investment required for implementation. It is unrealistic to expect that enough resources will be readily available to immediately implement all the recommendations, especially when considering the other planning and redevelopment efforts happening in Fort Dodge outside of the downtown area. Priority must be given to those actions that 1) provide great positive impacts with minimal investment, 2) afford the opportunity for private investors to contribute to creating change, 3) lay the foundation for future development and positive growth, and/or 4) may not happen on their own without public investment. In that respect, this plan represents a strategic process for accomplishing a few of the key projects as much as it is a comprehensive roster of improvements for the downtown area. For each potential opportunity for change, local staff and city leaders will have to assess the potential value of a project based on the factors described above in order to determine the appropriate level of public capital support.

The least costly actions are typically those that involve modifications to public policy. Zoning amendments, new design guidelines, and updated maintenance standards require little in terms of public capital, but are crucial in establishing the tools for elected officials to enforce the plan for the benefit of the downtown community. These types of recommendation should be addressed as soon as possible.

Private redevelopment projects can often require large amounts of investment in order to assemble parcels, prepare them for redevelopment, and ultimately introduce new buildings and uses to the downtown. Recognizing that new development may require some form of public support, the city should identify a system for measuring the value of a project against what it will require to get it done. Such a system should take into account the following factors:

- *The type of project* for which assistance may be needed is an important factor in determining the need for public subsidy. For example, projects that result in the introduction or retention of crucial services, such as grocery stores, locally-owned restaurants, or public amenities, should be strongly considered for public assistance. These types of uses have been identified in this plan as services that can create additional investment in peripheral amenities.
- *The type and amount of assistance* that is required will depend on the type of project and several variables, such as the location in downtown, the context of the development, and the end vision for the project. In each instance, the developer of the project must be required to illustrate a shortfall in the financial feasibility of the project, the potential public benefit, and the amount of assistance being sought. Given the history of

downtown and its broad legacy of industry, it is anticipated that several sites may require environmental remediation to transition them from brownfields to developable properties. This represents a significant expense to the development community, and a distinct disadvantage to downtown development compared to the cost of Greenfield development. Therefore, brownfield cleanup may be a primary focus of public assistance to encourage future downtown investment from the private development sector. The City of Fort Dodge and Development Corporation should consider all forms of assistance for each project. However, there are specific types of assistance that have relatively little impact on the public coffers. Perhaps the most effective form of subsidy is property assembly. By strategically acquiring properties throughout the downtown area, the city can use property transfer as a tool for administering design guidelines and demanding on-site amenities such as plazas, landscaping, or architectural design. The city may also consider expedited permit processing or waived permitting fees for projects that voluntarily conform to specific design criteria or minimize the impacts on public infrastructure through sustainable design practices. All of these approaches reduce the risk placed on the city while encouraging innovation and high-quality development from the private sector.

- *The anticipated benefit* of a project must be assessed to determine the appropriate level of assistance. For example, a significant project that provides easements for on-site bicycle paths or landscaping aligns directly with other initiatives outlined in this plan. These spin-off benefits are mutually beneficial to the city and the developer, as they tie into other investments and create a more vibrant downtown environment.

Investment in public projects should also be scrutinized based on the immediate and long-term benefits. For example, the proposed Central Park is a significant initiative that entails property acquisition, roadway realignment, open space development, and a short-term reduction in taxable property. Taken as a whole, it is an ambitious project that will require significant public investment. However, its creation is crucial to the long-term success of the downtown area due to its ability to attract new investment in commercial, entertainment, and residential development. In this way, it should be a priority for the city, especially given its relationship to the realignment of US 20/169, which may be supported with state or federal funding, and a comprehensive open space plan that will require large properties for complete implementation.

### Potential Outside Funding Sources

The City of Fort Dodge is well versed in taking advantage of local, state and federal resources to implement initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life for its residents. However, the recommendations in this plan present the opportunity for new resources. Should a federal, state or local historic district designation be granted (see recommendation 3-1), grants and/or tax incentives may be made available to business owners within the district for façade renovation, building rehabilitation, or adaptive reuse.

The state's program to encourage sustainable growth, described in recommendation 7-2, is an important resource to consider when marketing major private or public redevelopment. While it is currently unclear to what extent funding will be available, Fort Dodge has the opportunity to present several concepts as potential demonstration projects.

Finally, local private resources will likely play a major role in the initial success of residential redevelopment. Trinity Regional Medical Center or Iowa Central Community College may be looked to in order to insure the market for staff housing as described in recommendation 2-2. Many times, development pioneers are reluctant to invest in new areas, but once a market is proven to be stable, additional developers are less reluctant to expand the market.

### Resources and References for Additional Information

There are near endless resources available can provide information beyond what is provided in this plan pertaining to specific plan recommendations. Below is a list of on-line data resources and a brief description of their content.

#### *Historic district designation*

*Federal:* United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/hpg/HPF/>

- Information regarding the federal historic district designation process, the potential benefits to local communities, and standards for rehabilitation

*State:* State Historical Society of Iowa

<http://www.iowahistory.org/>

- Information regarding state-sponsored historic preservation programs and grant opportunities

*Local:* Certified Local Government Program

[http://www.iowahistory.org/preservation/clg\\_program/clg\\_overview.html](http://www.iowahistory.org/preservation/clg_program/clg_overview.html)

- Information regarding opportunities for local governments to partner with the state, the benefits of such a program, and the required local staff resources to review and submit applications for grant funding

#### *Green design/LEED*

<http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CategoryID=19>

- Information regarding the goals of LEED, rating standards for existing and proposed buildings, public infrastructure, and large-scale community development projects, and technologies encouraged in the development of green buildings and communities

#### *Iowa DED Green Communities 2008 Action Plan*

<http://www.iowalifechanging.com/community/>

- Information regarding the state's Green Communities 2008 program, including overall goals and objectives, anticipated milestones, and the GreeNetwork electronic newsletter

## APPENDIX 1

### Existing Conditions Analysis



Camiros conducted a survey of existing conditions to assess several characteristics of each parcel in the planning area. The following sections describe the findings of that survey.

**Existing Building Land Use**

Downtown Fort Dodge has almost 203 acres of developable land area on 618 parcels. Of these lots, approximately 93.2% host single uses. The remaining 6.8% are mixed-use and host some combination of commercial, residential, industrial, office, or community facilities tenant.

Of the single-use parcels, the most notable characteristic is the high quantity of vacant parcels. 10.2% of the total parcels occupying 15.6% of the developable downtown area lie unused. The highest percentage of actively used lots is occupied by commercial tenants, at 28.8% of the lots and 19.1% of the area.

Scattered throughout the downtown are community facilities that include government offices, religious facilities, local community service providers, and recreation centers. These account for over 11% of the parcels and land area.

The mixed-use parcels are predominantly commercial on the ground floor with residential units above. These account for 5.5% of the parcels in downtown.

Table A-1 and Figure A-1 illustrate the overall building land uses throughout the downtown area.

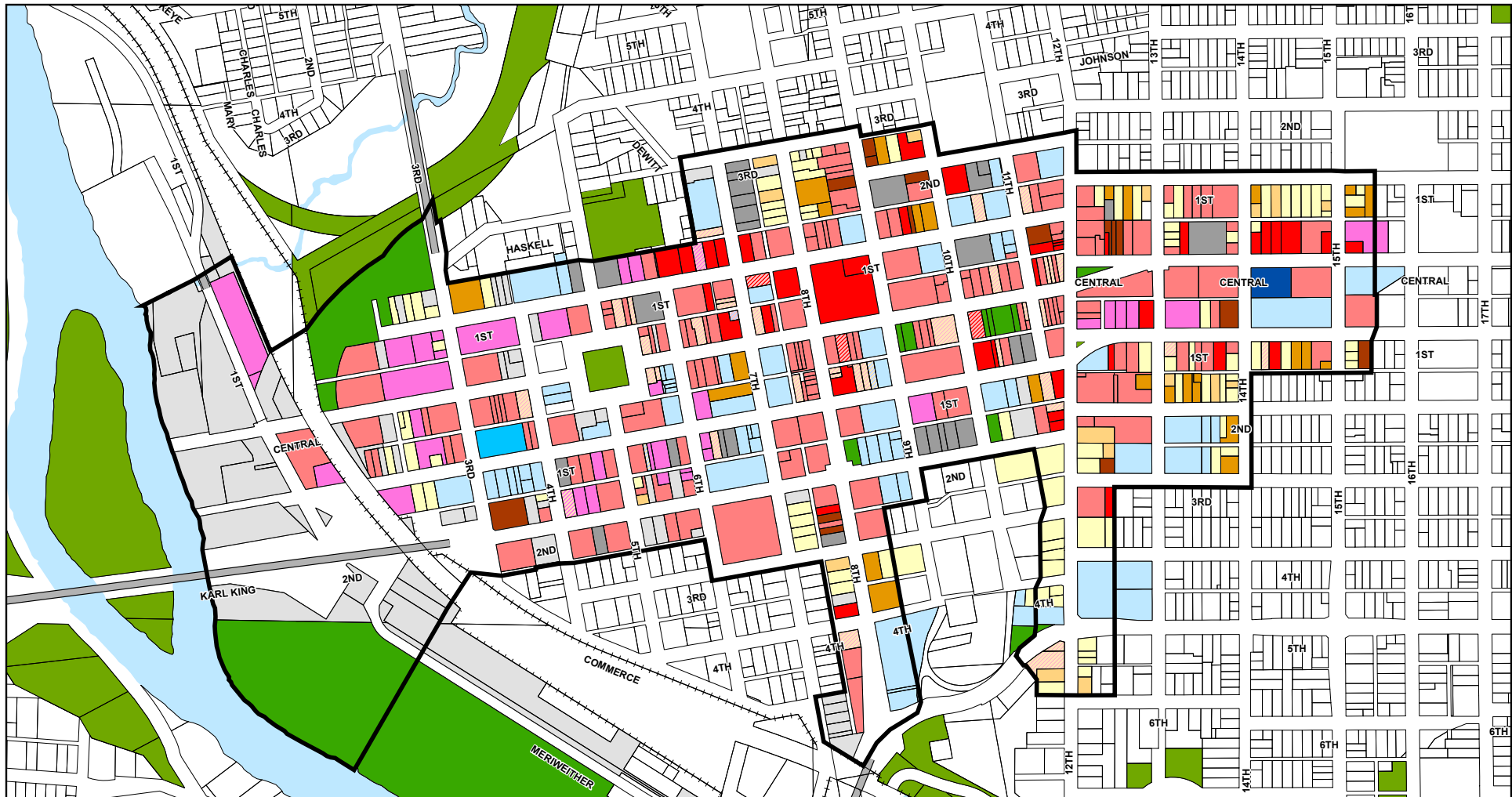
*Table A-1. Overall building land use summary*

	Total Lots	% of Total Lots	Total Area (acres)	% of Total Area
<b>Single Use Parcels</b>				
Single Family Residential	91	14.7%	13.88	6.8%
Duplex Residential	16	2.6%	2.14	1.1%
Multi-family Residential	27	4.4%	5.27	2.6%
Commercial	178	28.8%	38.72	19.1%
Office	40	6.5%	8.56	4.2%
Medical Office/Clinic	15	2.4%	2.58	1.3%
Community Facility	69	11.2%	23.16	11.4%
Hotel/Motel	1	0.2%	0.78	0.4%
Theater/Entertainment Complex	1	0.2%	0.70	0.3%
Designated Open Space	13	2.1%	17.98	10.7%
Industrial	34	5.5%	10.44	5.1%
Vacant Lot	63	10.2%	31.69	15.6%
Surface Parking Lot	28	4.5%	6.74	3.3%
<b>Mixed-Use Parcels</b>				
Commercial/Residential	34	5.5%	4.35	2.1%
Commercial/Industrial	1	0.2%	0.18	0.1%
Industrial/Residential	1	0.2%	0.19	0.1%
Community Facility/Commercial	1	0.2%	0.05	0.0%
Community Facility/Residential	2	0.3%	0.18	0.1%
Commercial/Office	3	0.5%	0.59	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>618</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>202.97</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Note: Parcel counts and acreage do not include transportation infrastructure or rail rights-of-way.*

*Downtown Fort Dodge hosts a broad range of land uses, including government, commercial mixed-use, industrial, residential, and public, among others*





**Legend**

**Single-Use Parcels**

- |               |                       |                               |                     |
|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Single Family | Office                | Theater/Entertainment Complex | Vacant Lots         |
| Duplex        | Medical Office/Clinic | Designated Open Space         | Surface Parking Lot |
| Multi-Family  | Community Facilities  | Industrial                    |                     |
| Commercial    | Hotel/Motel           |                               |                     |

**Mixed-Use Parcels**

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Commercial/Residential | Community/Commercial  |
| Commercial/Industrial  | Community/Residential |
| Industrial/Residential | Commercial/Office     |

**A-1 Existing Overall Building Land Use Map (Survey Date: 07.25-27.2007)**

Downtown Plan  
Fort Dodge, Iowa

September 2008

A-3



**CAMIROS**

Planning, Zoning, Economic Development, Landscape Architecture  
411 South Wells Street, Chicago, Illinois 60607 Phone: (312) 922-9211

Existing Ground Floor Land Use

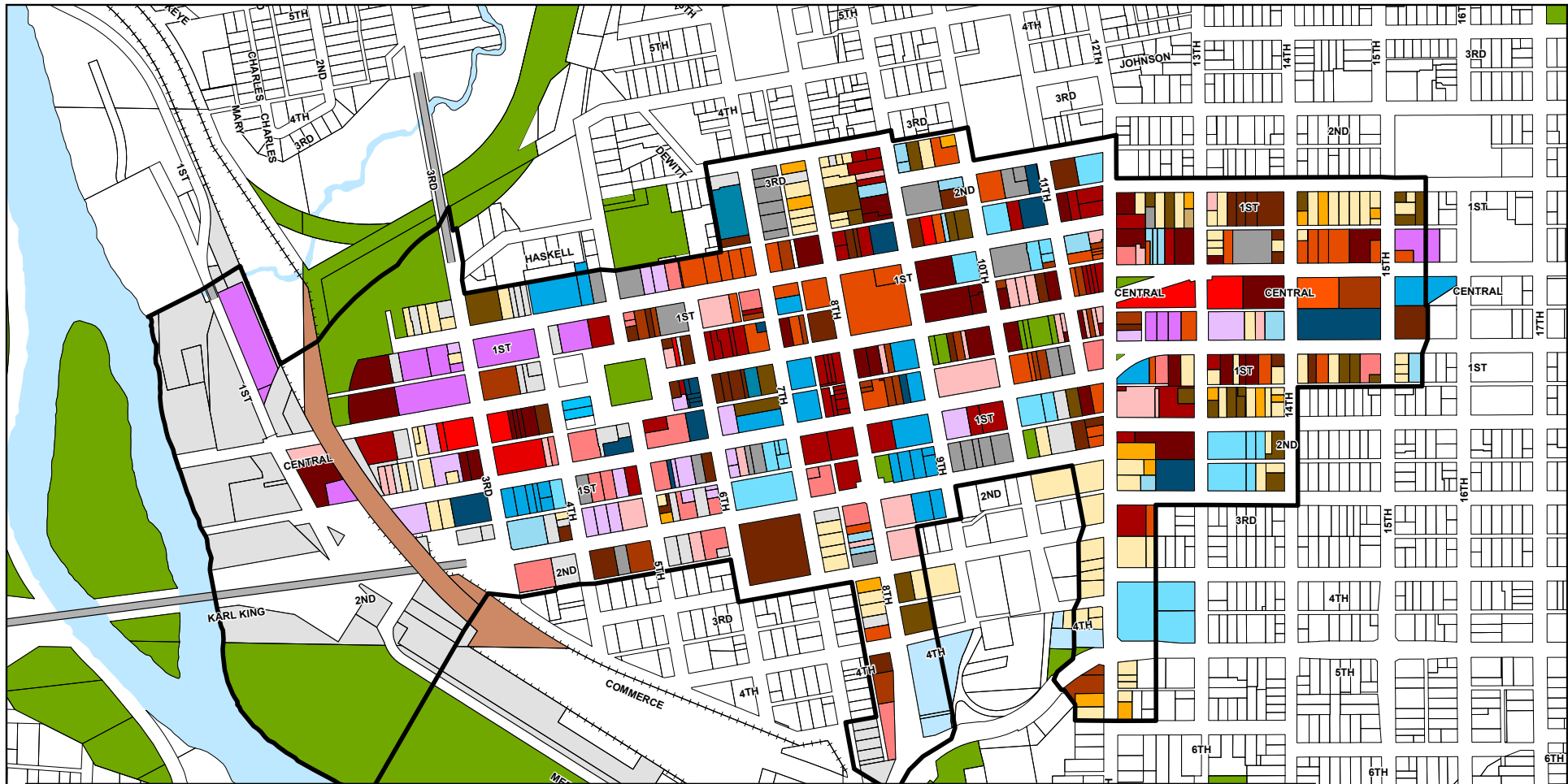
A more detailed picture of how downtown functions can be painted by examining the ground floor uses. While these findings reinforce the overall building land use analysis, specific commercial uses can be compared with one another to assess the balance of activities in the downtown. For example, commercial uses make up 41.5% of the parcels in the planning area. Among these, the most frequent uses are services, offices, multiple uses, and retail, occupying between 6.0% and 8.4% of the total parcels.

Other uses typically associated with downtowns have almost no presence in the planning area. Entertainment functions and hotels occupy only 2 parcels in downtown, with neither facility being located on the primary Central Avenue Corridor between the City Square and 12<sup>th</sup> Street.

Table A-2 and Figure A-2 illustrate the ground floor occupancy trends in downtown Fort Dodge.

Table A-2. Ground floor land use

	Total Lots	% of Total Lots	Total Area (acres)	% of Total Area
<b>Residential</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>21.6%</b>	<b>21.30</b>	<b>12.2%</b>
Single Family	91	14.7%	13.88	8.0%
Duplex	16	2.6%	2.14	1.2%
Multi-family	27	4.3%	5.27	3.0%
<b>Commercial</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>41.5%</b>	<b>53.87</b>	<b>31.0%</b>
Vacant Commercial	30	4.8%	5.15	3.0%
Auto Services	23	3.7%	5.12	2.9%
Theater/Entertainment	1	0.2%	0.70	0.4%
Financial Services	7	1.1%	2.53	1.5%
Office	42	6.8%	8.91	5.1%
Hotel/Motel	1	0.2%	0.78	0.4%
Restaurant/Bar	25	4.0%	4.27	2.5%
Service	52	8.4%	8.18	4.7%
Retail	37	6.0%	8.35	4.8%
Multiple Uses	40	6.4%	9.90	5.7%
<b>Medical</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>2.58</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
Private Medical Office	15	2.4%	2.58	1.5%
<b>Industrial</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>10.63</b>	<b>6.1%</b>
Light Industrial	22	3.5%	4.12	2.4%
Medium Industrial	13	2.1%	6.51	3.7%
<b>Community Facilities</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>11.6%</b>	<b>23.38</b>	<b>13.4%</b>
Elem or Middle School	6	1.0%	2.91	1.7%
Religious Office or Facility	21	3.4%	7.76	4.5%
Library	2	0.3%	0.30	0.2%
Government Office or Facility	24	3.9%	6.85	3.9%
Community or Recreation Center	2	0.3%	1.00	0.6%
Other	17	2.7%	4.56	2.6%
<b>Transportation/Infrastructure</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>5.79</b>	<b>3.3%</b>
Utility ROW	1	0.2%	0.10	0.1%
Rail ROW	2	0.3%	5.69	3.3%
<b>Undeveloped Lots</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>16.7%</b>	<b>56.40</b>	<b>32.4%</b>
Vacant Parcels	63	10.1%	31.69	18.2%
Surface Parking	28	4.5%	6.74	3.9%
Designated Open Space*	13	2.1%	17.98	10.3%



**Legend**

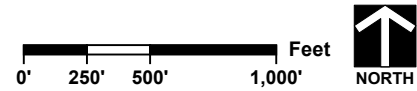
<b>Residential</b>	<b>Commercial</b>	<b>Medical</b>	<b>Community Facilities</b>	<b>Transportation/Infrastructure</b>
Single Family	Vacant Commercial	Hotel/Motel	Elem or Middle School	Utility ROW
Duplex	Auto Service	Private Medical Office	Religious Office or Facility	Rail ROW
Multi-Family	Theater	Light Industrial	Library	<b>Undeveloped Lots</b>
	Financial Services	Medium Industrial	Government Office or Facility	Vacant Parcel
	Office		Community or Recreation Center	Surface Parking
			Other	Designated Open Space

**A-2**  
**Existing Ground Floor Land Use Map (Survey Date: 07.25-27.2007)**

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**Undeveloped Parcels**

There are several areas in Downtown Fort Dodge where vacant or undeveloped parcels negatively impact the character of the city. These parcels can be described in three primary categories; vacant lots, general surface parking, and dedicated parking lots. Each type of undeveloped lots has specific implications for use and ability to be redeveloped.

Undeveloped vacant lots generally offer the greatest potential for redevelopment. However, because they provide no exiting utility, they often go unmaintained and have the greatest negative impact on the perceived continuity of the downtown fabric. General surface parking areas may provide redevelopment opportunities, depending upon the level of parking demand and to what adjacent uses they may be linked. They are basically maintained, but often lack any significant landscaping or buffer treatments since they are not owned by a larger adjacent development entity or tenant. Dedicated parking lots include those parcels that are used for parking by specific downtown tenants. In this respect, they are difficult to slate for redevelopment without providing replacement parking elsewhere. However, they generally receive more regular maintenance since they are tied to a specific tenant or property owner.

In the downtown planning area, there are 160 parcels on almost 44 acres that are either vacant, or serve as general or dedicated parking areas. That accounts for more than one quarter of the total property acreage in the planning area. Approximately 25 acres of the vacant parcels is west of 1<sup>st</sup> Street on the Waterfront District. The remaining vacant lots are scattered throughout the planning area, though some cluster together to form larger potential development properties.

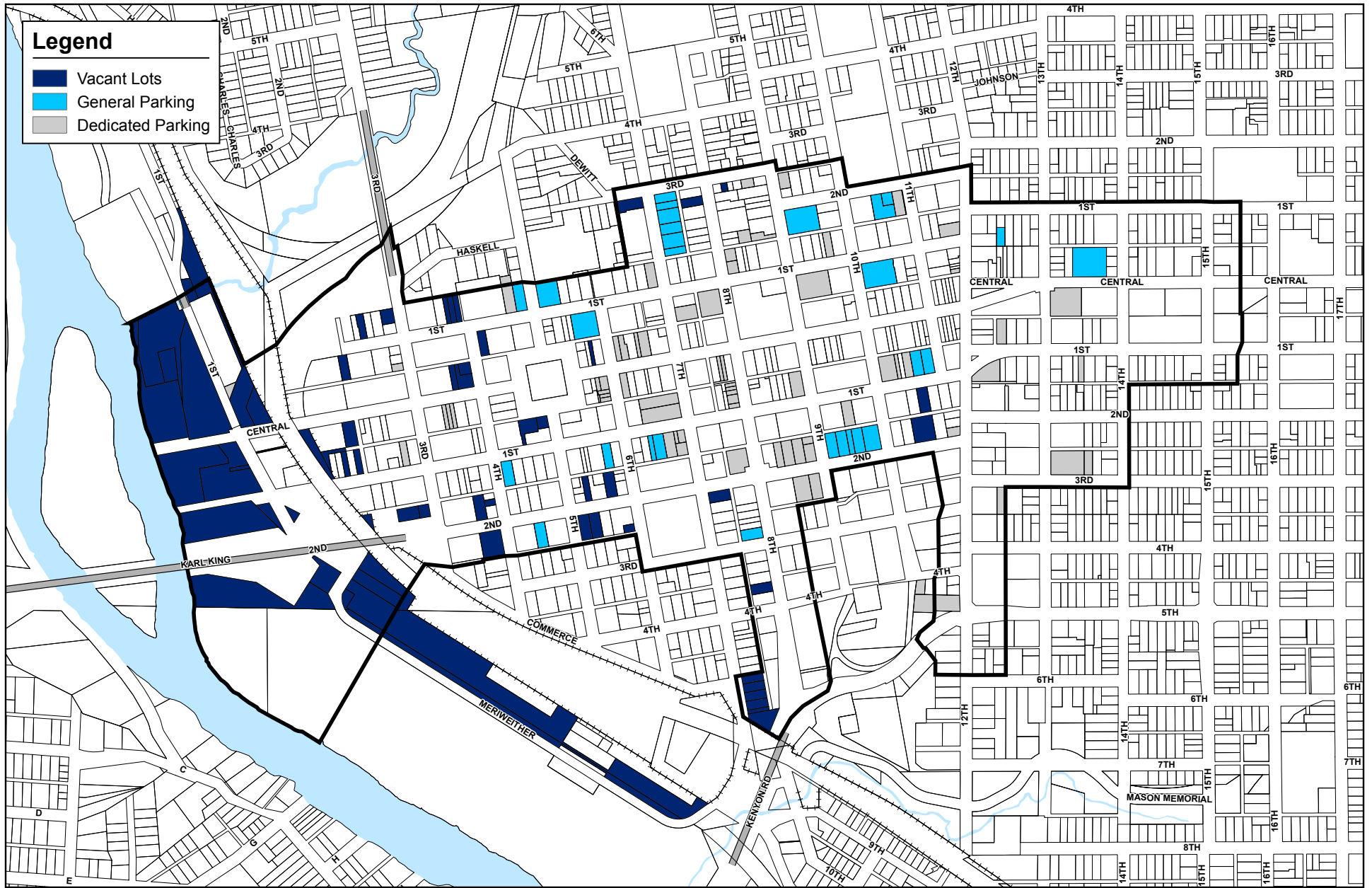
Table A-3 below and Figure A-3 on the following page illustrate the quantity and geographic distribution of undeveloped parcels throughout the downtown.

*Table A-3. Undeveloped parcels summary*

	# of Lots	Area (acres)	% of Total Area
Vacant Lots	63	26.69	15.34%
General Parking	28	6.74	3.87%
Dedicated Parking	69	10.54	6.06%
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>43.96</b>	<b>25.27%</b>



*Undeveloped parcels create opportunities for land assemblage and redevelopment.*

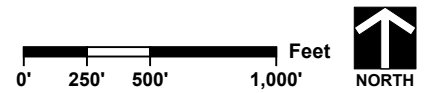


A-3  
**Undeveloped Parcels Map (Survey Date: 07.25-27.2007)**

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**Existing Building Conditions**

Of the 621 parcels surveyed for this analysis, 434 are occupied by a structure. Each parcel with a structure has been assessed for building condition based on the following scale:

- *Sound*-the structure is in good condition and needs no immediate repairs
- *Needs Minor Repair*-the structure of the building is in good overall condition, but minor investment may be needed for aesthetic maintenance
- *Deteriorated*-significant investment may be needed to address repairs related to a building's structure, fenestration, roof, foundation, and/or aesthetic maintenance, but the structure can be salvaged in a feasible manner
- *Dilapidated*-the structure requires excessive investment to return it to an occupiable state, and should be considered for replacement or demolition

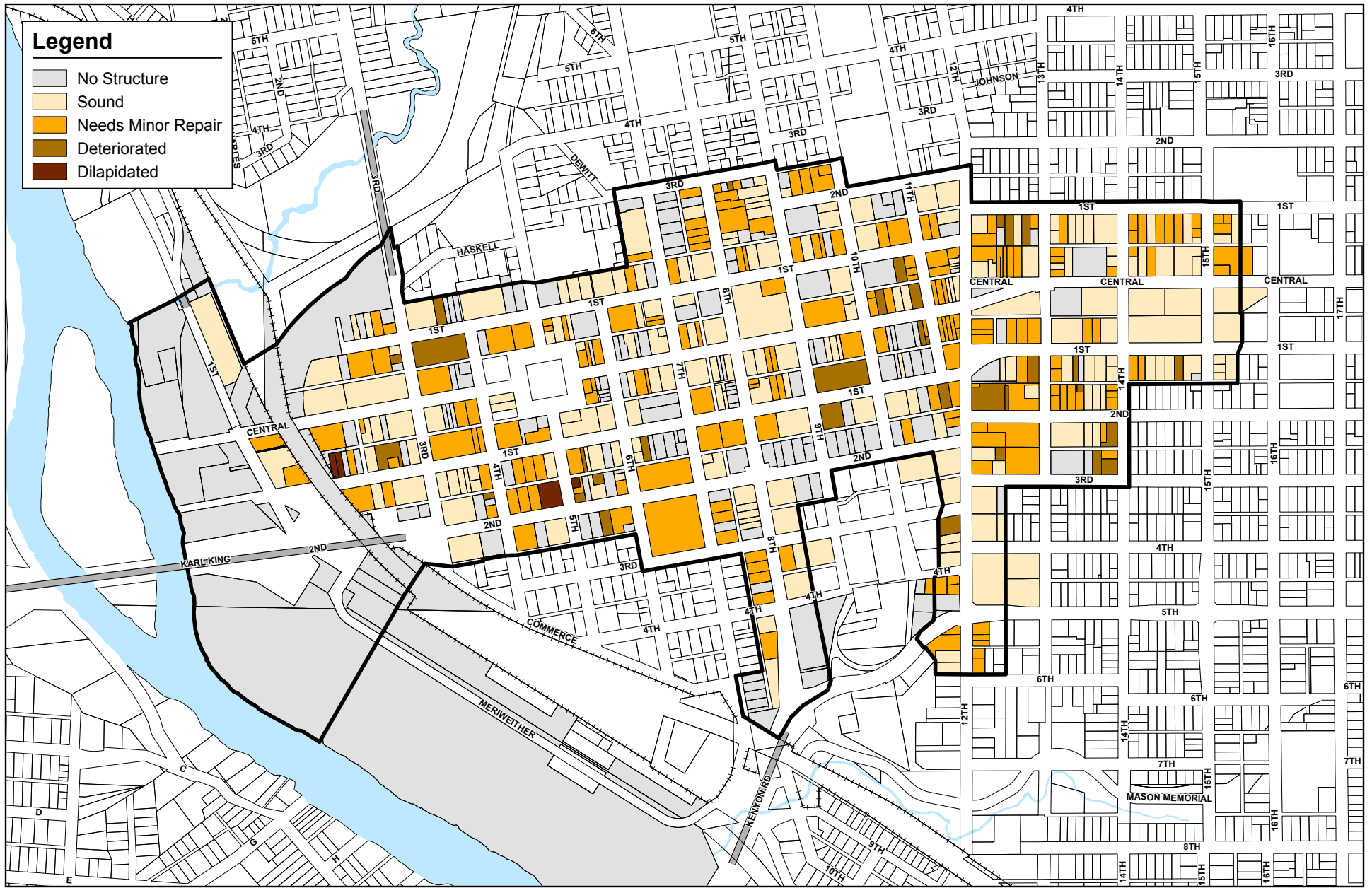
Where multiple structures exist on one parcel, an average building condition for the entire parcel has been assigned.

Overall, there is little dilapidation in the downtown planning area. Only four of the surveyed parcels were found to have dilapidated structures, while 33 were found to have deteriorated structures. These represent approximately 8.5% of the structures in downtown. The remaining 91.5% of the structures are either sound or in need of minor repair.

Table A-4 below and Figure A-4 on the following page illustrate the quantity and distribution of building conditions throughout the planning area.

*Table A-4. Building conditions summary*

	# of Lots	% of Lots with Structures
Sound	198	45.62%
Needs Minor Repair	199	45.85%
Deteriorated	33	7.60%
Dilapidated	4	0.92%
No Structure	187	N/A
<b>Total Lots with Structures</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



**Legend**

- No Structure
- Sound
- Needs Minor Repair
- Deteriorated
- Dilapidated

**A-4**  
**Existing Building Conditions (Survey Date: 07.25-27.2007)**

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**Building Occupancy**

Given the mixed-use nature of downtown development and functionality, building occupancy must be evaluated based on what is happening on the ground, as well as what is happening on upper floors. The survey that was conducted measured each of these factors independently based on the following scale:

- *75-100% Occupied*-the ground floor or upper floors of a building are vital and maintained
- *25-75% Occupied*-the ground floor or upper floors of a building are somewhat occupied, but enough vacancies exist to impact the vitality of the building
- *5-25% Occupied*-the ground floor or upper floors of a building is slightly occupied, but the vacancies overwhelm the perception of the building as a vital and safe place
- *Completely Unoccupied*-the ground floor or upper floors of a building are completely vacant and offer no signs of vitality or recent investment

*Ground Floor Occupancy*

On the whole, Downtown Fort Dodge has a relatively low level of vacancy compared to many downtowns that are struggling for investment and redevelopment. Of the 434 parcels with occupiable structures, 384, or over 88%, are 75-100% occupied. 37 structures, or approximately 8.5%, are completely unoccupied. Of these, the most prominent are the Warden Plaza Hotel, located on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets, the Carnegie Library, located on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue N between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets, and the Federal Building, located at the northwest quadrant of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue S and 8<sup>th</sup> Street.

Table A-5 and Figure A-5 illustrate the amount and distribution of ground floor occupancy.

*Table A-5 Ground floor occupancy summary*

	# of Lots	% of Lots with Structures
75-100% Occupied	384	88.48%
25-75% Occupied	11	2.53%
5-25% Occupied	2	0.46%
Completely Unoccupied	37	8.53%
No Structure	187	N/A
<b>Total Lots with Structures</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

*Upper Floor Occupancy*

The observed statistics for upper floor occupancy generally reflect those of the ground floor spaces, with 75-100% Occupancy and Completely Unoccupied spaces accounting for 83.5% and 11% of the total structures, respectively. While it is typical for downtowns similar to Fort Dodge to have higher levels of vacancy in the upper floors of buildings, this relatively small variance from the ground floor vacancies reflects a relatively high level of use of upper floors for residential or office functions.

In addition to the Warden Plaza Hotel, Carnegie Library and Federal Building, two historic warehouse buildings represent the significant structures with unoccupied upper floors. One of these buildings is located at 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Central Avenue, and the other is located at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue N.

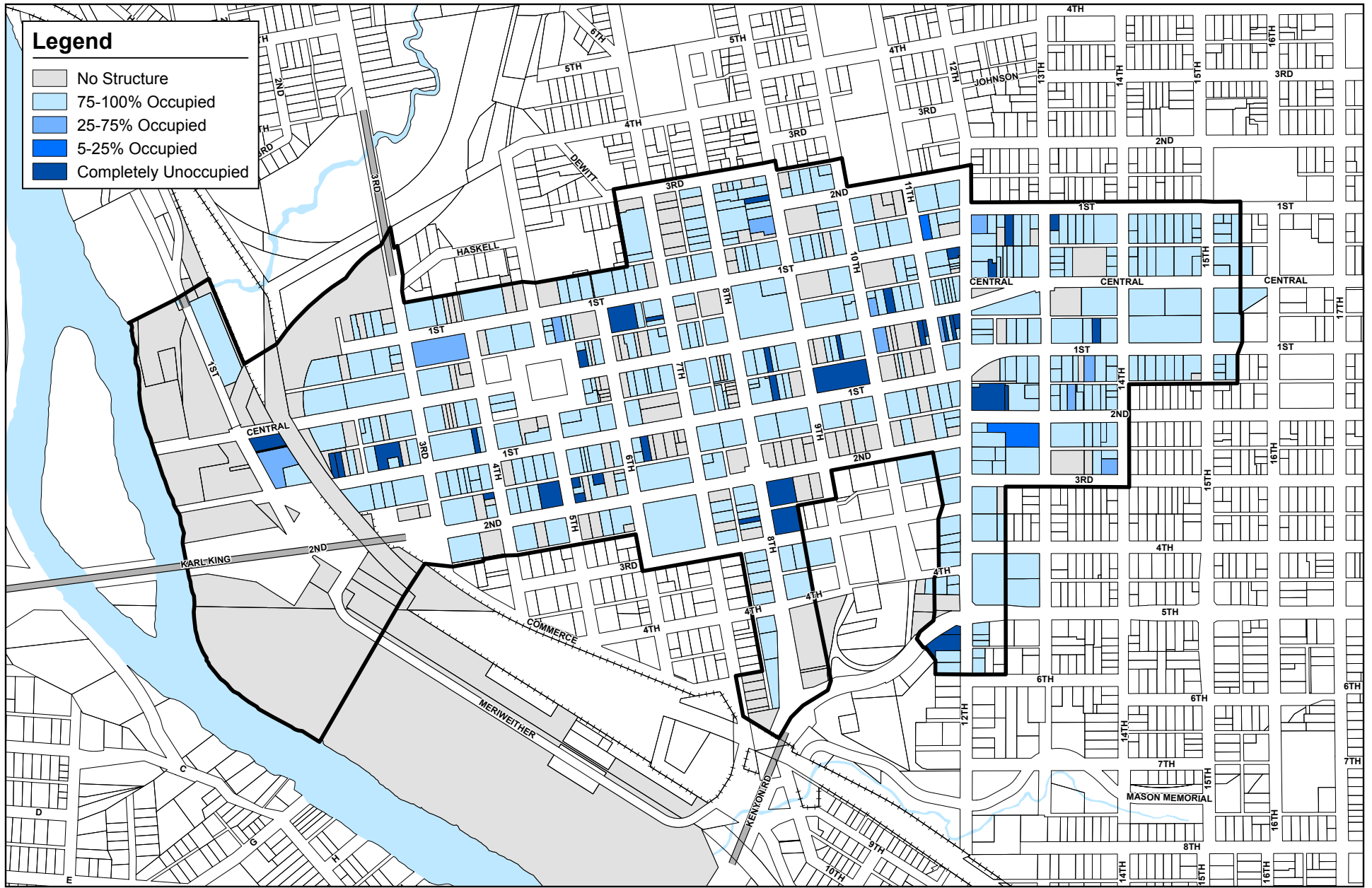
Table A-6 and Figure A-6 illustrate the amount and distribution of upper floor occupancy.

*Table A-6. Upper floor occupancy summary*

	# of Lots	% of Lots with Structures
75-100% Occupied	202	83.47%
25-75% Occupied	11	4.55%
5-25% Occupied	2	0.83%
Completely Unoccupied	27	11.16%
No Structure or Upper Floor	379	N/A
<b>Total Lots with Structures</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



*Vacant buildings can reflect negatively on the character of the downtown and present significant barriers to redevelopment.*



A-5  
**Ground Floor Occupancy Map (Survey Date: 07.25-27.2007)**

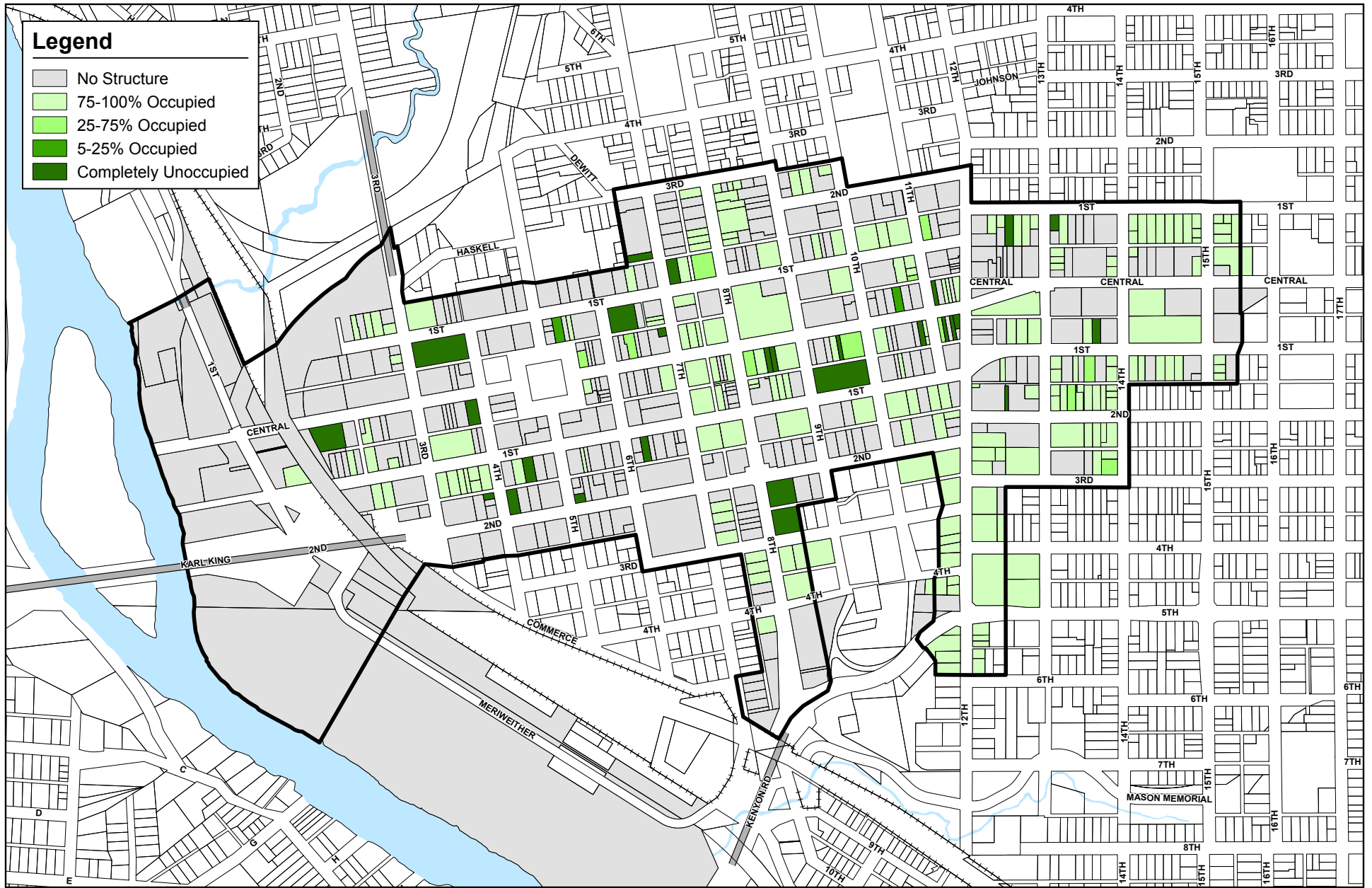
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**Legend**

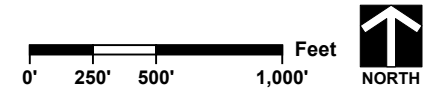
- No Structure
- 75-100% Occupied
- 25-75% Occupied
- 5-25% Occupied
- Completely Unoccupied

**A-6  
Upper Floor Occupancy Map (Survey Date: 07.25-27.2007)**

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Transportation

The traditional grid network of streets in Downtown Fort Dodge results in relative ease of travel from one portion of downtown to another. This grid extends to the north, south and east to adjacent neighborhoods until it is disrupted by natural elements or major transportation infrastructure. However, access to areas west of downtown is greatly limited due to the Des Moines River and the dramatic topography on both side of the river corridor.

*Traffic Flow*

Several streets act as primary corridors of entry to the downtown area. From the west, the Karl King Bridge connects the downtown to residential and recreational areas, as well as Highway 169, and carried approximately 7,800 vehicles in 2003. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street provides a connection to a greater number of residents, and carried approximately 8,000 vehicles in 2003. While the downtown is well-connected to neighborhoods to the north by the traditional and mostly uninterrupted grid, 9<sup>th</sup> Street is the preferred corridor for traffic entering the heart of downtown, while 15<sup>th</sup> Street provides an alternative on the east end of downtown and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue's commercial services to the east of downtown. The 9<sup>th</sup> Street and 15<sup>th</sup> Street corridors on the north side of downtown carried 5,300 and 11,200 vehicles in 2003, respectively.

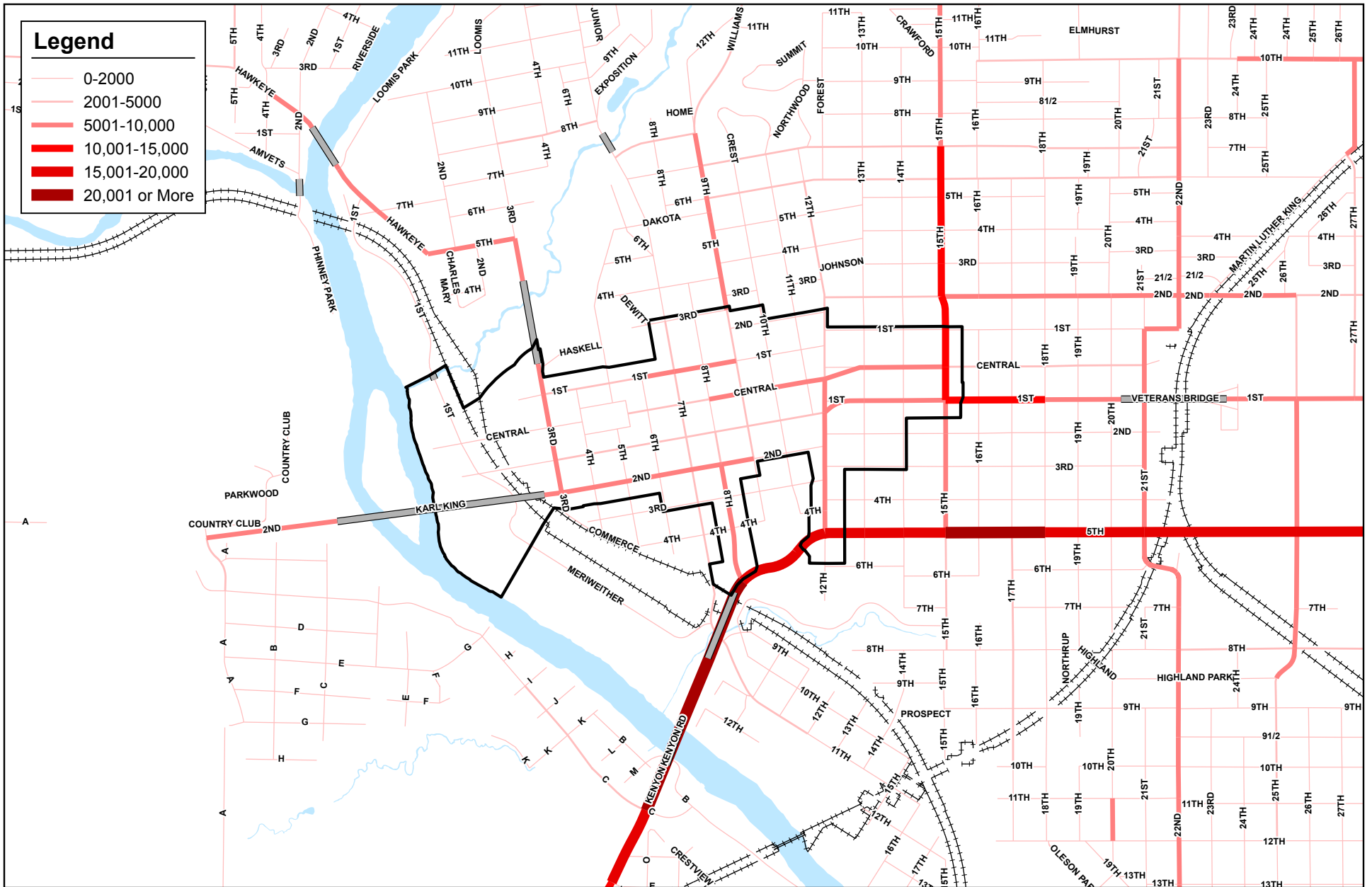
The Kenyon Road Bridge/5<sup>th</sup> Avenue S serve as the primary conduit for traffic traveling near downtown and accessing neighboring commercial goods and services. As the primary link to US 20 to the south, 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue is the gateway to the community, and carried almost 22,000 vehicles in 2003. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S provides another alternative to between the downtown and commercial area via the Veteran's Bridge, and carried 7,500 vehicles in 2003.

From 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 8<sup>th</sup> Street and 12<sup>th</sup> Street serve as the primary links to the central business district, carrying 7,500 and 9,000 vehicles in 2003, respectively.

Figure A-7 on the following page illustrates the 2003 average daily traffic volumes for the street network in and around the downtown planning area.



*Existing topography and natural features create dramatic entry points to Downtown Fort Dodge.*

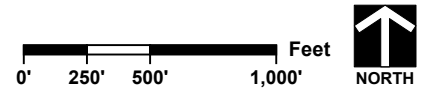


A-7  
**2003 Traffic Volumes Map**

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### *Downtown Gateways*

The primary entry corridors, by their nature, establish important gateway points into the downtown area. These points mark locations where the built environment has a direct impact on the image and perception of downtown. For example, coming from the west on the Karl King Bridge, the touchdown point and intersection at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street is clearly the beginning of downtown. Other points may be designated by major intersections, such as 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue S and 8<sup>th</sup> Street, significant changes in land use from neighborhood to downtown commercial functions, such as 15<sup>th</sup> Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue N, or significant urban design points, such as 15<sup>th</sup> Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S. The map on the following page illustrates the locations of several significant gateway points around the planning area.

### *One-way Street Network*

The system of one-way streets in Downtown Fort Dodge has a significant impact on the character and behavior of traffic on the fringes of Central Avenue. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue N and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S serve, through much of the central business district, as a one-way pair. While one-way streets increase the flow of traffic on these corridors, they also result in relatively high-speed conduits that create uncomfortable on-street parking, limited landscaping opportunities, and difficult pedestrian links to adjacent blocks.

### *Parking*

Parking is a very visible component of transportation infrastructure in the downtown area. Several parking lots front on the north side of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S and serve uses on Central Avenue. This is a natural and logical traffic management and urban design characteristic. However, several front on Central Avenue and occupy the majority of a block. As a result, the downtown fabric is disrupted and the image of a traditional and pedestrian-friendly area suffers.

### *Transit*

The Dodge Area Rapid Transit System (DART) manages six bus transit lines that serve Downtown Fort Dodge. Routes 1 and 6, serving the Trinity Hospital/ICCC and Crossroads Mall areas, respectively, operate with 30 to 60 minute headways throughout the service day (Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.). The remaining lines provide morning and evening rush hour service every half hour, but operate less frequently or not at all during the business day.

Dart also provides paratransit service for residents with disabilities. This service is provided between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, on a demand response basis with at least 24 hours notice. In 2005, the DART service served 230, 584rides at an operating cost of just over \$1 million.

### *Bicycle/Pedestrian*

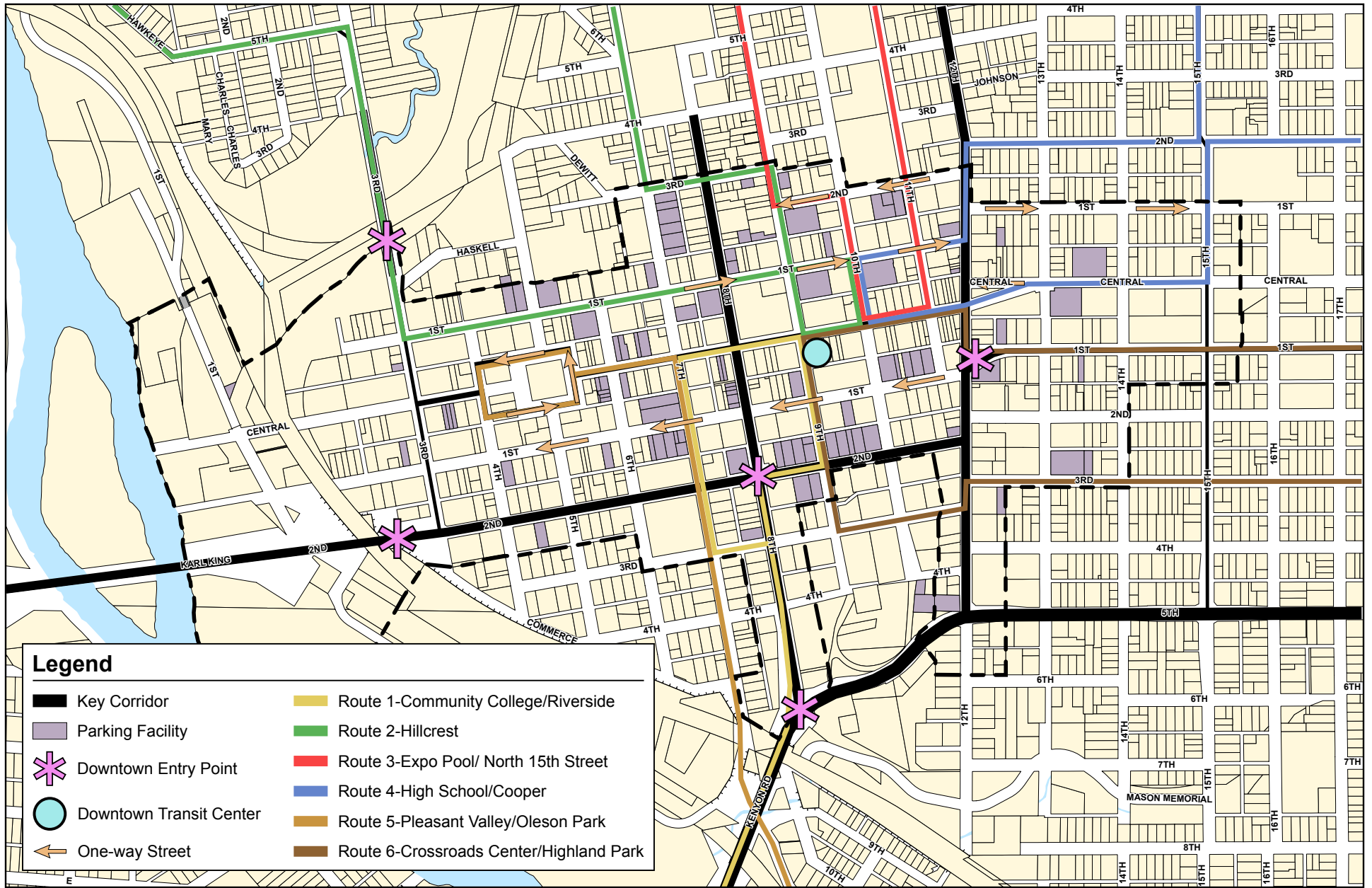
The heart of downtown is extremely pedestrian friendly, given the traditional downtown block sizes, intact fabric of buildings, and recent investment in streetscaping and pedestrian infrastructure on Central Avenue. However, elsewhere, despite the presence of sidewalks, the pedestrian environment is less attractive. This is a result of auto-oriented development types, vacant properties or vast parking lots, less frequent traffic controls, and one-way traffic operations.

Adequate bicycle infrastructure is also limited in the downtown area. While recent investments have been made in bike paths along 1<sup>st</sup> Street, there are no formal connections to the central business district or primary destinations in the planning area.












Figure A-8 on the following page illustrates these transportation components in the downtown area.



*Existing traffic flows and inadequate signage make the downtown difficult to find for visitors.*



**Legend**

-  Key Corridor
-  Parking Facility
-  Downtown Entry Point
-  Downtown Transit Center
-  One-way Street
-  Route 1-Community College/Riverside
-  Route 2-Hillcrest
-  Route 3-Expo Pool/ North 15th Street
-  Route 4-High School/Cooper
-  Route 5-Pleasant Valley/Oleson Park
-  Route 6-Crossroads Center/Highland Park

**A-8  
Transportation Analysis Map**

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**Downtown Character**

The image and perception of downtown has to do with a number of factors, from the scale and design of buildings, to public realm enhancements and the type of transportation infrastructure that exists. As part of the existing conditions analysis, each block face was observed and assigned a subjective character rating. Characteristics that generally result in a high level of character include a constant street wall, appropriate building scale, traditional architecture or modern development that relates to it, and adequate maintenance. Others result in a low level of character, such as large parking areas that disrupt the built fabric, vacant parcels that are overgrown or unmaintained, building vacancy or neglect that has resulted in visible stress, and new development that is not compatible with traditional downtown design characteristics. The following scale has been used to assess each block face in the downtown planning area:

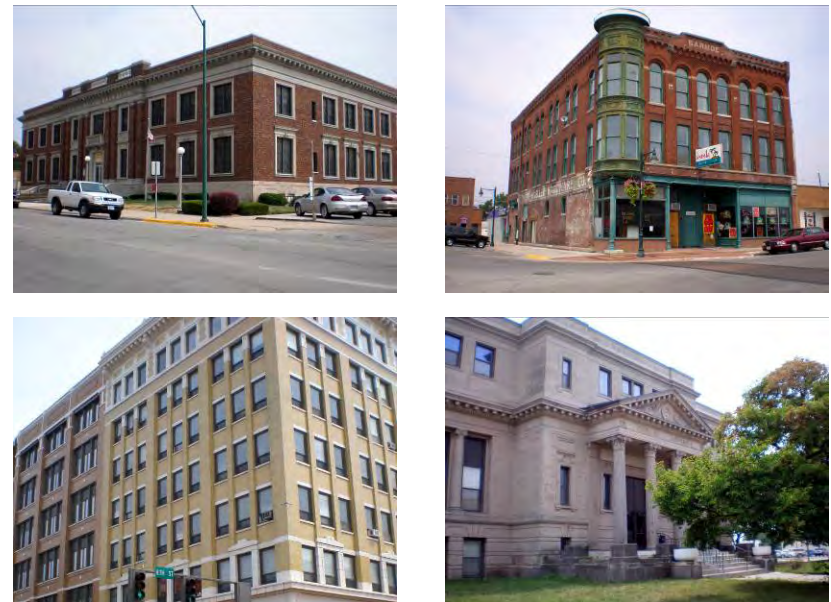
- *Highly Positive Impact*-the block face evokes a strong positive impression of Downtown Fort Dodge and its history
- *Positive Impact*-the block face contribute to the overall positive impression of the downtown area
- *Neutral Character*-the block face neither adds to nor detracts from the perceived character of downtown
- *Negative Impact*-the block face somewhat taints the image of downtown due to building and site design, maintenance, or lack of sensitivity to its context
- *Highly Negative Impact*-the block face greatly detracts from the image of downtown based on building and site design, deteriorated or vacant parcels, and unattractive public realm

Based on this analysis, specific areas within the planning area can be identified as those which may serve as models for future development, or those that can be slated for redevelopment or site improvements to strengthen the overall character of downtown. The map on the following page illustrates the results of the character analysis.

The highest level of character exists in the heart of downtown on Central Avenue. Beginning with the City Square, several blocks contain well-preserved historic structures that create a comfortable and attractive street environment. While other blocks have suffered from building demolition and the development of parking lots, there is enough traditional fabric in place to maintain the relationship to other structures on Central Avenue. The decorative street lights and pavers between the City Square and 13<sup>th</sup> Street reinforce the impact established by the historic buildings.

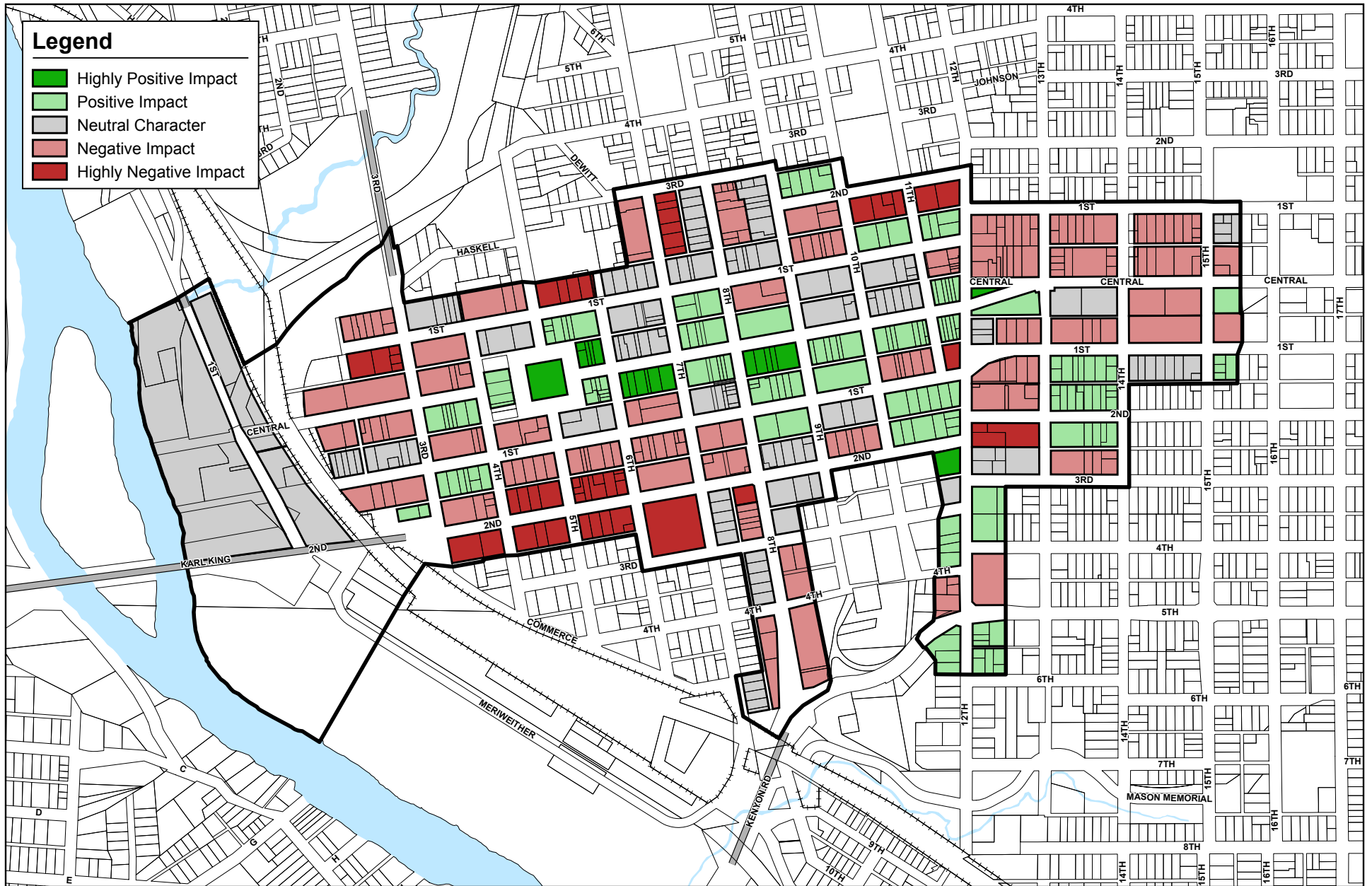
The peripheral areas around the heart of downtown convey a far less impressive image of Fort Dodge. On 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue S, several obsolete or vacated commercial parcels create an unattractive corridor from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to 8<sup>th</sup> Street. This is especially detrimental since 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue is such an important gateway to the downtown area via the Karl King Bridge. Several other blocks suffer from large parking areas whose edges are not treated with landscaping or fencing treatments. This results in an environment with little sense of enclosure or scale, where the automobile is the most visible element. However, in several instances, historic structures provide the foundation for character improvements. The Warden Plaza Hotel, the Municipal Building and the Carnegie Library, among others, are all examples of buildings located in the peripheral areas that reflect the traditional character found on Central Avenue and provide clues for how future development may enhance the downtown.

Figure A-9 on the following page illustrates the distribution of blocks of various levels of character throughout the downtown.



*Downtown Fort Dodge is home to a rich collection of historic downtown buildings that provide a context for future development.*





**Legend**

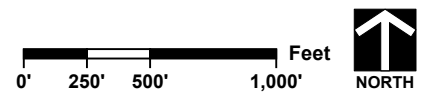
- Highly Positive Impact
- Positive Impact
- Neutral Character
- Negative Impact
- Highly Negative Impact

**A-9 Existing Block Character Map (Survey Date: 07.25-27.2007)**

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## APPENDIX 2

### Sample Overlay Ordinance

The following excerpts are taken from the City of St. Cloud, MN zoning ordinance in order to illustrate the regulations and processes associated with a zoning overlay district. An overlay district is a regulatory tool used to tie more stringent use or physical regulations to a specific geographic area in order to preserve certain desirable characteristics, such as architectural character, mix of uses, or development types. The overlay district does not nullify the underlying zoning classification of the effected parcels. Instead, it reinforces certain aspects of the regulations to create a more unified district.

This sample ordinance is structured to include three distinct sections that reference one another; a section establishing the overlay districts, a section identifying detailed design guidelines within each district, and a section outlining the sign standards for each district. The structure of an overlay district ordinance may vary depending on the number of districts, the specific regulations, and the relationship to other sections of the code.

It should be noted that this sample overlay ordinance outlines regulations appropriate for St. Cloud's commercial gateway corridors as dictated by the vision of the community and the administrative process within which the ordinance is enforced. To implement an overlay district, the City of Fort Dodge will need to identify regulations that achieve specific goals within its key areas, and ensure that appropriate processes and personnel are in place to administer the zoning review process.

12.5 GATEWAY OVERLAY DISTRICT

A. Purpose

The St. Cloud Gateway Overlay District is intended to positively influence the visual and environmental quality of St. Cloud, in particular as related to a sense of entry into the City. To coordinate private development with the public improvements as envisioned by the Comprehensive Plan, the City has established the following regulations applicable to these gateway nodes and corridors within the Land Development Code in a manner consistent with the established planning policies. As a result of the overlay district, development in these nodes and corridors will be designed with greater design sensitivity than would occur in the absence of these guidelines. The purpose of these standards is to:

1. Create a high quality visual environment at each node and through each corridor that identifies entry into St. Cloud.
2. Promote high-quality design through improved development standards, in particular landscaping standards, throughout the Gateway Overlay District.
3. Foster a distinct and positive image for the City.
4. Protect and enhance natural resources located throughout the Gateway Overlay District.
5. Conserve natural resources found on each site, including minimal removal of trees and enhancement of natural wetlands.
6. Create a suitable balance between the amount and arrangement of open space, landscaping and view protection with the design and function of man-made features, including screening, buffering, size and orientation of open space, and environmental effects such as wind and sun.
7. Provide safe and adequate access to the site, where interior drives, parking areas, pedestrian and bike paths must be able to handle anticipated needs and safely buffer pedestrians and cyclists from motor vehicles where necessary.
8. Establish a harmonious physical and visual relationship between existing and new buildings, natural features and site development standards, but not to exclude unique proposals which provide innovative and high quality development within the City.
9. Create a unified site development with a sense of internal and interrelated order, which provides a desirable environment for site users and the community.

B. Gateway Overlay District Sub-Districts

The Gateway Overlay District is divided into the following two (2) sub-districts:

1. Gateway Node District
2. Gateway Corridor District

Unless specifically noted, references to the Gateway Overlay District apply to both Gateway Node District and Gateway Corridor District.

C. Relationship to Zoning Districts

All provisions of the Land Development Code, to the extent that they do not conflict with this section, remain in full force and effect for all properties subject to these provisions. The standards found in this overlay district are to be used by property owners, developers, City staff, City Council, and all boards, commissions and officials during the design and review of development or redevelopment proposals within the gateways.

**D. Permitted and Conditional Uses**

Permitted and conditional uses within the Gateway Overlay District are those of the underlying zoning district.

**E. Bulk and Setback Regulations**

**1. Gateway Node District**

- 1. Bulk and setback regulations must comply with those of the underlying district, except as described in Paragraph 2 below.
- 2. A landscape yard of a minimum of thirty (30) feet in width is required in any yard abutting a public right-of-way. These landscape yards may be located within the required setbacks of the underlying district. Parking lot screening may also be located within this landscape yard.
- 3. Development within the Gateway Node District must comply with Paragraph H (Gateway Node District Design Guidelines) below.

**2. Gateway Corridor District**

- 1. The bulk and setback regulations within the Gateway Corridor District are those of the underlying zoning district.
- 2. Development within the Gateway Corridor District must comply with Paragraph I (Gateway Corridor District Design Guidelines) below.

**F. Gateway Node District Design Guidelines**

Development within the Gateway Node District must comply with the design guidelines of Section 13.6 (Gateway Overlay District Design Guidelines).

**G. Gateway Corridor District Design Guidelines**

**1. Design Guidelines**

Development within the Gateway Node District must comply with the design guidelines of Section 13.6 (Gateway Overlay District Design Guidelines).

**2. Gateway Corridor Character Districts**

Each Gateway Corridor District is comprised of one (1) or more character districts. The intent of each of the four (4) character districts is as follows:

**a. Natural Open Space Character District**

The Natural Open Space Character District is characterized by significant natural features, such as wetlands, wooded areas and rock outcroppings, as well as areas of agriculture. The intent of this character district is to preserve and enhance such natural features and farmland. Landscaping must screen uses other than open space located within the character district in order to maintain this natural character.

**b. Highway Commercial Character District**

The Highway Commercial Character District is characterized by large-scale users who require significant parking and loading facilities, and significant outdoor storage, and auto-oriented commercial uses such as drive-through restaurants and service stations. The intent of this character district is to accommodate such users but require proper landscaping and screening to improve the appearance from the roadway and to adequately buffer the impacts of such uses from adjacent, lower intensity users. In addition, building design standards will help to minimize the impact of large buildings with blank façades.

**c. Residential and Open Space Character District**

The Residential and Open Space Character District consolidates three (3) character districts from the Comprehensive Plan: the Urban Residential Character District, the Public/Residential Character District and the Open Space/Residential Character District. This character district is characterized by a mix of residential land uses, of different densities, and open space. The intent is to maintain and strengthen the character of the residential neighborhoods, and reinforce their connection, both physically and visually, to open space areas, including a multi-use trail, preserved natural features, and agricultural areas.

**d. Downtown Character District**

The Downtown Character District is characterized by more compact urban development, with some suburban-type development along the edges of the character district. The intent of this character district is to improve the appearance of downtown through proper design of infill development, and landscaping and screening standards to improve the appearance of parking areas from the roadway and ensure proper buffering for adjacent uses.

**H. Landscaping**

All landscaping must comply with requirements of Article 17 (Landscaping, Buffering and Screening) and the design standards of Section 17.13 (Landscaping Requirements For Gateways).

**I. Signs**

All signs must comply with requirements of Article 18 (Signs) and the design guidelines of Section 18.15.I (Gateway Overlay District).

**J. Utilities**

1. All new utilities must be located underground. When necessary to serve new development, a new pole set in line with the existing overhead system used to serve new development is not considered a new utility.
2. Upgrades and reinforcements of existing overhead facilities are permitted to the extent that the total number of electrical circuits or communication cables is not increased.
3. Where an existing development is expanded in floor area or land area to any degree, new and existing utilities to all portions of the development must be located underground. Single-family dwelling units are exempt from this requirement.

13.6 GATEWAY OVERLAY DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

**A. Applicability**

The following design guidelines apply within the Gateway Overlay District.

**B. Intent of the Gateway Overlay District Design Guidelines**

1. Site orientation and building design should give a sense of arriving in the City, and result in a high quality and attractive gateway to the city.
2. Buildings must be sited to create an interesting and attractive appearance at the streetscape.
3. A coordinated entry theme should be created through the use of physical improvements containing similar elements at gateway nodes, such as the use of granite.
4. Landscaping and plantings must buffer incompatible land uses.
5. Planting and/or architectural features to minimize the visual impact of less desirable structures, such as large blank walls and large areas of pavement, must be provided.

**C. Gateway Node District Design Guidelines**

Development within the Gateway Node District must comply the following design guidelines:

**1. Commercial Design Guidelines**

**a. Façade Articulation and Reduction of Mass and Scale**

The following guidelines for façade articulation and reduction of mass and scale apply to all façades that face a public street and, in those cases where the building is oriented toward the interior of the site, the façade where the building entrance is located. A variance from these façade design guidelines may be granted by the Zoning Administrator as an administrative variance.

- i. Architectural features, such as arcades, display windows, entryways or awnings, must be provided along at least fifty percent (50%) of each façade.
- ii. Windows must be set back into or projected out from the façade to provide depth and shadow.
- iii. Façades must have at least two (2) of the following architectural features to avoid the appearance of blank walls facing the street: change in wall plane of at least two (2) feet, change in wall texture or masonry patterns, transparent windows, colonnade, columns or pilasters.
- iv. All strip center and retail store frontage within commercial developments less than thirty-thousand (30,000) square feet must comply with the following façade transparency requirement: the street level must be transparent between a height of eighteen (18) inches to a minimum of seven (7) feet above the walkway grade for no less than sixty percent (60%) of the horizontal length of all facades, and must contain a public entrance. Windows must be constructed of clear or lightly tinted glass (no tinting above twenty percent (20%) or reflective glass), set back into or projected from the wall plane to create shadow and visual interest, and must include visually prominent sills or other appropriate forms of framing. Awnings or shutters may be used to accentuate window openings and add interest to the design of the building.

- v. Building facades in excess of one-hundred (100) feet must include a repeating pattern with no less than two (2) of the following elements: color change, texture change, material module change, or a wall articulation change of no less than one (1) foot such as an offset, reveal, pilaster or projecting rib. All elements must repeat at intervals of no more than thirty (30) feet.
  - vi. Predominant façade colors must be subtle, neutral or earth-tone colors. Primary colors, high-intensity colors, metallic or fluorescent colors, and black are prohibited as predominant façade colors. Building trim and accent areas may be brighter and include primary colors.
- b. Roof Design**
- i. Roof lines must either be varied with a change in height or with the incorporation of a major focal point feature, such as a dormer, gable or projected wall feature, every one-hundred (100) linear feet in building length.
  - ii. Parapets must feature three-dimensional cornice treatments or other shadow-creating detail elements along their tops.
  - iii. “Green roof” designs are encouraged.
- c. Building Entrances and Pedestrian Walkways**
- i. All buildings must have a public entrance on any façade located with frontage on a public sidewalk. Buildings that face more than one (1) street must have at least one (1) public entrance on the primary street frontage.
  - ii. All public entrances must be articulated from the building mass. Examples of such articulation include: canopies or porticos, overhangs, arcades, raised corniced parapets over the door, peaked roof forms, arches, outdoor patio or seating areas, colonnades, display windows, details such as tile work and moldings integrated into the building design, and integral planters or wing walls that include landscaping or seating.
  - iii. Façades which abut parking areas and contain a public entrance must make provision for abutting pedestrian walkways and foundation landscape areas. Sidewalks in this area must have a minimum width of five (5) feet, excluding any bumper overhang.
  - iv. Large retail developments and shopping centers must define the street frontage by placing outlot buildings near the street with showcase windows and entrances oriented toward the street, as well as to the interior parking lot.
- d. Building Materials**

A list of permitted and prohibited building materials is included as follows.

**i. Exterior Material**

In order to adapt to changing technology, the development of new materials and so as not to limit the designer, additional materials other than those specified below may be permitted. The right to use alternate materials may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, in the context of each individual project. The following materials are permitted for use on exterior elevations:

- (1) Brick (non-utility)



- (2) Wood
- (3) Natural or cast stone
- (4) Stucco

Other materials may be considered by the Zoning Administrator, provided that they are not expressly prohibited below.

**ii. Prohibited Materials**

The following building materials are prohibited as the predominant surface finish material in the construction of new buildings. However, such materials may be used as part of decorative or detail elements, or as part of the exterior construction that is not used as a surface finish material.

- (1) Plain concrete masonry units (CMU)
- (2) Utility brick
- (3) Aluminum, steel or other metal sidings
- (4) Metal wall panels
- (5) Exposed aggregate (rough finish) concrete wall panels
- (6) Exterior insulating finish systems (EIFS) on the ground floor
- (7) Rustic shingles and shakes
- (8) Plastic

The use of the above prohibited materials as a predominant surface finish material may be considered by the Planning Commission. Once the Zoning Administrator has rendered a decision that a prohibited material is used as a predominant surface finish, the applicant may submit their proposal to the Planning Commission for consideration of the use of a prohibited building material at their next regularly scheduled meeting. The Planning Commission may approve or deny the use of such material.

- e. Figure 13-4: Commercial Design Guidelines illustrates the design guidelines for commercial developments presented in this section.

FIGURE 13-4: COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES



Façades should incorporate articulation features such as projections or recesses along the building length.



At least 50% of the façade must be transparent from the street level.

FIGURE 13-4: COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES



Different materials, textures and or colors should be utilized to add visual interest to the façade.



Arcades help to articulate building mass and public entrances. In addition, varied roof lines help break up building frontages.



Roof lines should be varied with the incorporation of a major focal point feature, such as a gable or projected wall feature, every 100 linear feet of building length.

FIGURE 13-4: COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES



Public entrances should be articulated from the building mass using such means as a raised parapet and distinct tile work.



Public plazas help to minimize the effect of large parking areas and distinguish the path to building entrances.



Public entrances should be clearly delineated for pedestrians.



Buildings near the street should maintain facades and entrances oriented toward the street as well as to the interior parking lot.

2. Office Park and Industrial Design Guidelines  
(OMITTED FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS APPENDIX)

3. Townhouse and Multi-Family Design Guidelines

- a. The mass and scale of a townhouse or multi-family development must be similar, or not appear out of character, to buildings typical of a residential neighborhood. Windows and doors must reflect the scale and patterns found in a traditional residential neighborhood. However, this guideline is not intended to prevent development of a size and type permitted by underlying zoning district regulations.
- b. Large, flat facades must be avoided, which can be accomplished by articulating the building mass to create substantial shadows and visual interest. Windows, projected entrances and overhangs must be included on the street facing façade to add variety and maintain a pedestrian-scale. When the sidewalls of multi-family or townhouse development face a street, building facades must be designed with elements of a front façade, including doors and/or windows.
- c. Façades must be designed to be viewed from multiple directions and, therefore, designed with consistent materials and treatment that wraps around all façades
- d. Windows and doors must have raised elements to create shadow and articulation. In addition, three-dimensional elements, such as balconies and bay windows, must be incorporated to provide dimensional elements on a façade. Windows must be set back into or projected out from the façade to provide depth and shadow, vertical in orientation and of a consistent style.
- e. Roof forms must be articulated so that varied planes and massing within the overall roof are provided. Large, monotonous, simple pitched roofs, without breaks in the expanse of the roof, must be avoided. Dormers and gables can be used to break up large expanses of roof area. For flat roofs, cornices and parapets can be used to add variety and break up the roofline. Rooflines must be modulated, at minimum, every seventy-five (75) feet through the use of varied roof heights.
- f. There must be a minimum separation of ten (10) feet between sidewalls among rows of townhouses or multi-family developments. Where a front or rear wall faces the opposing front or rear wall, the minimum required separation between such buildings must be a minimum of thirty (30) feet. Driveways and parking areas may be located within this minimum separation area. The minimum separation at the ground-floor may be reduced to twenty (20) feet for interior drives with garage doors facing garage doors that are not visible from the public right-of-way, provided that the upper-story living spaces comply with the separation requirements
- g. Private yards a minimum of two hundred (200) square feet in area and ten (10) feet in width are required for each townhouse dwelling unit. This private yard may be located adjacent to a front wall, rear wall or side wall, provided that it is immediately adjacent to the townhouse unit it serves and directly accessible from the townhouse unit by way of a door or stair. Required private yards must be at-grade or, if located on a terrace or patio, within four (4) feet of grade. All private yards must be landscaped with turf, groundcover, shrubs, trees or other landscape or hardscape improvements, such as walkways and patios.
- h. See illustrations in [Figure 13-3](#).

D. Gateway Corridor District Design Guidelines

Development within the Gateway Corridor District must comply with the following design guidelines of the applicable character district.

**1. All Character Districts**

- a. Monotony must be avoided within a project, and between a project and surrounding existing developments. Site characteristics that should be evaluated for this purpose including building and landscaping material, color, texture, massing, rhythm of building facades, building height, roof design, and setback.
- b. Facades must incorporate design features such as changes in building material, color, fenestration coordination, or other significant visual relief.
- c. The following materials must not be used on any front façade and/or any façade facing the corridor:
  - i. Unfinished pre-cast concrete or unfinished poured-in-place concrete
  - ii. Fabricated metal covering for more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the visible wall area
  - iii. Plain concrete block
- d. Building designs and configurations that tend to catch and accumulate trash, leaves and dirt must be avoided. To this end, provisions for washing and cleaning buildings should be considered in the development approval process.

**2. Natural Open Space Character District**

In order to preserve the natural features located throughout the Natural Open Space Character District, the following standards apply to new development.

- a. The development will result in the minimum disruption of any natural feature in order to allow reasonable development under the regulations of the underlying district.
- b. To the maximum extent possible, existing trees and vegetation must be preserved. The City may require vegetation that cannot be saved as a result of development to be replaced.
- c. Any modification of topography must have a minimal impact on the existing natural topography. Any site modification, including the removal of top soil, must not disturb the drainage pattern and soil conditions in the area.
- d. The City may authorize the alteration of a rock outcrop, provided that the development is not feasible without such alteration or such alteration is necessary to protect public health and safety.

**3. Highway Commercial Character District**

- a. Development within the Highway Commercial Character District must comply with the design guidelines for commercial uses, office parks and industrial uses required in Paragraphs B.1 (Commercial Uses) and B.2 (Office Park and Industrial Uses) above for the Gateway Node District.
- b. Provisions regarding permitted and prohibited building materials from Paragraphs B.1 (Commercial Uses) and B.2 (Office Park and Industrial Uses) above do not apply in the Highway Commercial Character District.
- c. See illustrations in Figures 13-4 and 13-5.

**4. Residential and Open Space Character District**

**a. Open Space Design Guidelines**

- i. Development within open space areas are subject to the requirements of Paragraph 2 above for the Natural Open Space Character District.
- ii. Site planning and design must be sensitive to views of open space. Because viewsheds are directly related to the topographic conditions and roadway alignments of a site, the impact of grades on views should be considered to and from rights-of-way, as well as adjacent properties. The preservation and enhancement of desirable views must be realized through sensitive and creative placement of all elements on the site.

**b. Single-Family and Two-Family Design Guidelines**

- i. Large, flat facades must be avoided. Building mass must be articulated to create substantial shadows and visual interest. Windows or other significant architectural features must be used to avoid the appearance of blank walls facing the street.
- ii. All windows and doors must have raised elements to create shadow and articulation. Windows must be set back into or projected out from the façade to provide depth and shadow.
- iii. Sloping roof forms, such as gable, hip and gambrel roofs, are preferred over mansard or flat roofs. Roof pitches of accessory buildings, especially detached garages, must complement that of the principal building.
- iv. The massing of roofs must be articulated. For example, one and two-story roofs can be combined with eave height variations, roof offsets, dormers, vents, and breaks in roof planes.
- v. Roofs must be designed with overhanging eaves or detailed gutters of sufficient width to create shadowing on the building.
- vi. See illustrations in [Figures 13-1 and 13-2](#).

**c. Townhouse and Multi-Family Design Guidelines**

- i. Large, flat facades must be avoided by articulating the building mass to create substantial shadows and visual interest. When the sidewalls of multi-family or townhouse developments face a street, building facades must be designed with elements of a front façade, including doors and/or windows, to avoid the appearance of blank walls facing the street.
- ii. Façades must be designed to be viewed from multiple directions and, therefore, designed with consistent materials and treatment that wraps around all façades.
- iii. Windows and doors must have raised elements to create shadow and articulation. In addition, three-dimensional elements, such as balconies and bay windows, must be incorporated to provide dimensional elements on a façade.
- iv. Windows must be set back into or projected out from the façade to provide depth and shadow, vertical in orientation and of a consistent style.
- v. Large, monotonous, simple pitched roofs, without breaks in the expanse of the roof, are prohibited.
- vi. There must be a minimum separation of ten (10) feet between sidewalls among rows of townhouses or multi-family developments. Where a front or rear wall faces the front or rear wall, the minimum required separation between such buildings must be a minimum of thirty (30) feet. Driveways and parking areas may be located within this minimum separation area. The minimum separation at the ground-floor may be reduced to twenty (20) feet for interior drives with garage doors facing garage doors that are not visible from the public right-of-way, provided that the upper-story living spaces comply with the separation requirements.
- vii. Private yards a minimum of two hundred (200) square feet in area and ten (10) feet in width are required for each townhouse dwelling unit. This private yard may be located adjacent to a front wall, rear wall or side wall, provided that it is immediately adjacent to the townhouse unit it serves and directly accessible from the townhouse unit by way of a door or stair. Required private yards must be at-grade or, if located on a terrace or patio, within four (4) feet of grade. All private yards must be landscaped with turf, groundcover, shrubs, trees or other landscape or hardscape improvements, such as walkways and patios.
- viii. See illustrations in [Figure 13-3](#).

**5. Downtown Character District**

- i. Development within the Gateway Corridor District where the underlying district is either the C-3 and C-4 District, are subject to the requirements of Section 13.4 (C-4 District Design Guidelines) and Section 13.8 (Commercial Historic District Design Guidelines), as applicable.
- ii. Facades of large buildings must be visually broken into bays to avoid the appearance of large, blank walls. Visual breaks in the façade must be accomplished by alterations in the plane of the façade, height of the façade, changes in materials, color, texture or pattern, and/or the addition of columns, pilasters and/or windows.
- iii. Multi-story buildings must be designed with a definable base, middle and top. Rooflines, cornice treatments, window design and parapets are encouraged to divide larger buildings. Arcades may be used provided that the upper levels of the building line up with the streetwall and the columns are aligned with the façade of the building.
- iv. Windows must be set back into or projected out from the façade to provide depth and shadow.
- v. All public entrances must be articulated from the building mass. Examples of such articulation include: recessed entries, overhangs, arcades, raised corniced parapet walls over the door, peaked roof forms, arches, outdoor patio or seating areas, colonnades, display windows, details such as tile work and moldings integrated into the building design, and integral planters or wing walls that include landscaping or seating.
- vi. Sixty percent (60%) of the first floor façade must be display-type windows. A minimum eighteen (18) inch and maximum of thirty (30) inch high knee-wall is required beneath the glazing so as to allow pedestrians to see into the windows.
- vii. For retail developments, windows must be constructed of clear or lightly tinted glass (no tinting above twenty percent (20%) or reflective glass). For office developments, tinted glass is permitted. Large expanses of highly reflective wall surface material and mirror glass on exterior walls are prohibited to prevent heat and glare impacts on the adjacent public streets and properties.
- viii. Roof lines must vary with either a change in height or the incorporation of a major focal point feature, such as a dormer or projected wall feature. Parapet walls are encouraged and must feature three-dimensional cornice treatments or other shadow-creating detail elements along their tops.
- ix. "Green roof" designs are encouraged.

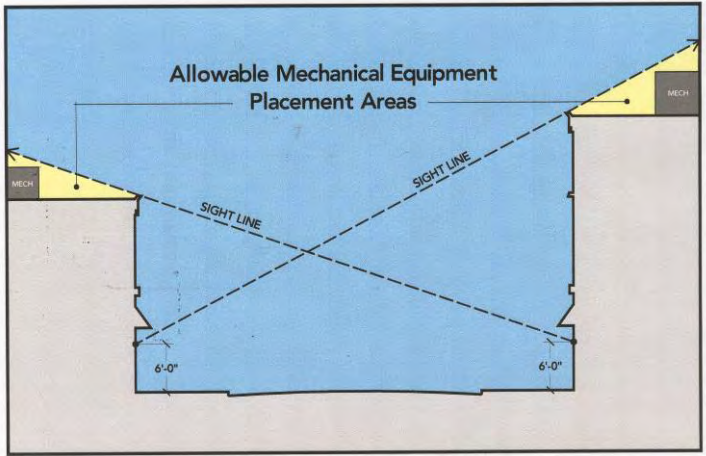
**E. Gateway Overlay District Roof-Mounted Mechanical Equipment**

In the Gateway Overlay District, all roof-mounted mechanical equipment must comply with the following:

1. Roof-mounted mechanical equipment, vents and stacks must be minimized or eliminated where possible. Equipment should be consolidated to be located within a single screened area.
2. Exposed ductwork, pipes, conduit, fans, vents or other similar building elements must be screened from the view from all public roadways and vehicular access ways.
3. Roof-mounted mechanical equipment must be located and screened so it is not visible from any point six (6) feet above ground level or from any public right-of-way. The appurtenances must be grouped and enclosed by screens that are designed to be compatible with building architecture. The screens must be set back from the roof edge a minimum distance of one and one-half (1.5) times their height. See [Figure 13-6: Roof-Mounted Equipment](#).
4. All rooftop equipment and penetrations must be pre-finished and designed to be compatible with the building architecture.
5. Rooftop solar collectors, skylights and any other potentially reflective rooftop building elements must be designed and installed in a manner which prevents glare and obstruction of views of other sites and structures.



FIGURE 13-6: ROOF-MOUNTED EQUIPMENT



I. Gateway Overlay District

The sign regulations of the underlying district apply in the Gateway Overlay District, unless modified by this section. In addition, the following sign design standards apply:

1. General Design Standards

- a. Where a business has more than one (1) sign, all signs must be designed to be compatible with each other in terms of materials, color, lettering style and logo usage. All new commercial construction must submit a Master Sign Plan in accordance with Section 18.5 (Master Sign Plan).
- b. Sign design must take into consideration adjacent storefronts and flanking buildings, particularly if those structures are similar in style, are of comparable height, and compatible type and scale.

2. Scale

- a. The scale of a sign must be appropriate for the building on which it is installed and proportional to the scale of the structure. For example, small storefronts will have smaller signs than larger storefronts.
- b. The proportion of the lettered and graphic area must be designed relative to the overall size of the sign background. The text and graphic elements should not appear to occupy more than two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) of the sign panel area.
- c. Letters must not occupy more than seventy-five percent (75%) of sign area.

3. Lettering and Colors

- a. Logos should be used in place of words whenever appropriate.

- b. A limited number of lettering styles will increase legibility. The number of different letter types is limited to no more three (3) fonts.
- c. Colors must be selected that enhance sign legibility for both day and nighttime viewing. Contrast can be used effectively to increase clarity. Generally, light letters on a dark background work best for both day and night.
- d. A substantial contrast must be provided between the color and material of the background and the letters or symbols to make the sign easier to read, whether a sign panel or the building façade itself.
- e. Building colors must be considered when selecting sign colors, which should be compatible with the color of the building or development.

**4. Sign Materials**

- a. Signs must be constructed using high-quality, durable and low maintenance materials. If wood is used, it must be properly sealed to prevent damage from moisture.
- b. Paper signs are prohibited for exterior use.
- c. Sign materials must be compatible with the design of the building and façade on which they are placed.
- d. Recommended sign materials include, but are not limited to:
  - i. Wood: carved, sandblasted and etched, and properly sealed, primed and painted, or stained
  - ii. Metal: formed, etched, cast and engraved, and properly primed and painted or factory-coated to protect against corrosion
  - iii. High density pre-formed foam or similar material

**5. Illumination**

**a. Internal Illumination**

- i. When signs are internally lit, only the sign copy must be illuminated. The sign background or field must be opaque and non-reflective.
- ii. The preferred forms of internally lit signs are those using push-through graphics and text, standard back-lit letters, or reverse back-lit letters with a halo effect.
- iii. Electrical components must be concealed from public view.

**b. External Illumination**

- i. External lighting fixtures that project light on a sign from above or below are encouraged. Light fixtures supported on the front of the building cast light on the sign and a portion of the façade immediately around the sign to create shadow and depth on the façade.
- ii. Light fixtures should be simple and unobtrusive in appearance and size. Light fixtures must not obscure the sign's message and graphics. The use of oversized fixtures out of scale with the sign and structure are prohibited.
- iii. Signs must be lighted only to the minimum level required for readability at night.
- iv. Light sources must be shielded so that light does not shine onto adjacent property or cause glare for motorists and pedestrians.
- v. The use of internally illuminated cabinet box signs is prohibited, except as projecting or ground signs. Contoured cabinet signs, such as those contoured to the shape of letters or a logo, are permitted.

**6. Ground Signs**

- a. Ground pole signs are discouraged in gateways. Ground monument signs are preferred.
- b. All ground signs, whether pole or monument signs, must be landscaped around the base of the sign.
- c. A ground sign structure must be designed to incorporate design details, materials, and colors of the associated buildings.

**7. Wall Signs**

- a. For wall signs, the architectural design of the building must dictate the appropriate placement location. Signs should be positioned to respect and complement the design of a building, including the arrangement of bays and openings.
- b. Wall-mounted signs on fascias above storefront windows must be sized to fit within existing friezes, lintels, spandrels and other such features, and must not extend above, below or beyond such features.
- c. A wall sign must be centered horizontally on the vertical surface to which it is affixed. The length of a wall-mounted sign should not exceed seventy-percent (70%) of the frontage of the establishment.
- d. Wall signs must be placed to establish facade rhythm, scale and proportion. On buildings that have a monolithic or plain facade, signs can be placed to establish or continue appropriate design rhythm, scale and proportion.

17.13 LANDSCAPING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE GATEWAY OVERLAY DISTRICT

The following landscaping requirements apply to the Gateway Overlay District.

A. Landscape Yard

1. In the Gateway Node District, a thirty (30) foot landscape yard along any property line abutting a public right-of-way is required. In instances where the landscape yard is, essentially, the parking lot perimeter landscape yard, these regulations must control.
2. Four (4) plant unit options are presented in Table 17-2: Plant Unit Options. Any one (1) alternative or a combination of alternatives may be used. Plantings may be spaced at various intervals and/or clustered based on specific site requirements or design scheme.
3. For landscape yards within the Gateway Node District, one (1) plant unit per one-hundred (100) linear feet must be provided.
4. Shrubs may be substituted for trees as permitted in Table 17-3: Shrub Substitution Rate.
5. Upon landscape plan approval, native landscaping using prairie plants or other natural communities may be substituted for the standard plant unit, subject to Paragraph B (Native Landscaping) below.
6. When figuring the number of plant units or quantity of plant material required, the number must be rounded up. For example, three and one-tenths (3.1) canopy trees is rounded up to four (4) canopy trees.

7.

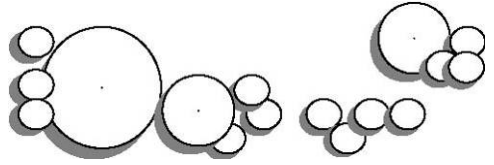
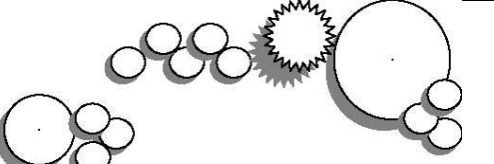
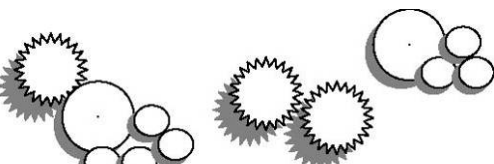
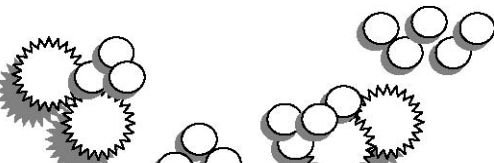
TABLE 17-2: PLANT UNIT OPTIONS		
PLANT UNIT OPTIONS	QUANTITY & TYPE OF PLANTS	ILLUSTRATION
STANDARD PLANT UNIT	1 Shade Tree 2 Ornamental Trees 20 Shrubs	
ALTERNATIVE UNIT A	1 Shade Tree 1 Ornamental Tree 1 Evergreen Tree 17 Shrubs	
ALTERNATIVE UNIT B	2 Ornamental Trees 3 Evergreen Trees 17 Shrubs	
ALTERNATIVE UNIT C	4 Evergreen Trees 22 Shrubs	

TABLE 17-3: SHRUB SUBSTITUTION RATE	
TREE	EQUIVALENT SHRUBS
1 Shade Tree	32 Shrubs
1 Evergreen Tree	13 Shrubs
1 Ornamental Tree	11 Shrubs

**B. Native Landscaping**

To identify gateways as unique to the City, native landscaping must be deemed an appropriate landscaping scheme throughout the Gateway Overlay District. However, native landscaping is subject to approval of the landscape plan and must comply with the following maintenance requirements. No plants identified as prohibited in *Appendix E* may be included in any native landscaping areas.

1. During the first growing season, native landscaping must be mowed frequently. The cutting height must be four (4) to five (5) inches and should occur each time the weed growth is six (6) to ten (10) inches in height. Mowing must be frequent so that cuttings do not grow large enough to smother native seedlings. Before winter, the last mowing should occur after weeds have grown to eight (8) inches to protect young seedlings from frost heaving.
2. During the second growing season, one (1) mowing may occur in late spring or early summer if weeds are thick. This should be the last mowing needed for weed control unless a serious problem occurs. Cutting height must be six (6) to twelve (12) inches if mowing during the second year.
3. Hand weeding should not be conducted during the first growing season. Hand weeding is permitted during the second and third growing seasons. Care must be used when weeding to avoid disruption of the soil, which can dislodge native seedlings and bring new weed seed to the surface. Another option is to clip weeds near the ground with pruning shears, or carefully spot-applying sprays to individual weeds. Weeds should be removed before they mature and spread seed.
4. In small, designed spaces, hand weeding will be necessary to maintain the integrity of the design. Herbicides should be used with extreme caution.
5. Larger plantings where native plants become a part of the total dynamic landscape, set management practices are required (timed cutting, flooding or drawing down water levels in wetland plantings, carefully controlled burning). For sites larger than two (2) acres, it is recommended that a management schedule be developed to define suggested procedures and the timing for each.
6. Fire safety should be included in any landscape plan with native landscaping. Fire intentionally or accidentally set during fall or spring dormancy can burn very rapidly. Existing features, such as roads, driveways, streams, lakes, and mowed lawns, must be incorporated as firebreaks. A mowed lawn buffer twenty (20) or more feet in width between buildings and prairie is advised.

*C. Building Foundation Landscaping*

Building foundation landscaping is required for multi-family residential (does not include townhouse developments) or non-residential development within the Gateway Overlay District.

1. Foundation plantings work to frame important views, while visually softening long expanses of walls, particularly those that lack windows and/or other architectural details. Foundation plantings respond to the materials and the form of a building. The approval of the landscape plan determines compliance with this intent as part of the review.
2. The minimum width of the planting area provided to accommodate foundation plantings is as follows:
  - a. Five (5) feet of planting area (width) adjacent to building walls having an eave height of up to twenty (20) feet.
  - b. Ten (10) feet of planting area (width) adjacent to building walls having an eave height of twenty (20) feet or more.
3. Foundation plantings must be planted in accord with the requirements below:
  - a. Foundation plantings must be installed across seventy-five percent (75%) of the length of the front façade of a multi-family building and across fifty percent (50%) of the length of the front façade of a non-residential building, except where walkways and driveways are located. (See [Figure 17-3: Foundation Planting](#)) Foundation plantings may consist of a mix of trees, shrubs and perennials.
  - b. Foundation plantings may consist of a mix of trees, shrubs and perennials. Shade, evergreen or ornamental trees must be spaced one (1) tree for every twenty-five (25) feet. These trees may be grouped within wider foundation planting areas, but the total number of trees planted must be no less than the amount required by a linear planting spaced twenty-five (25) feet apart.

- c. Shrubs must be spaced one (1) shrub for every three (3) feet, measuring a minimum of two (2) feet at planting and reaching a minimum of three (3) feet in height at maturity. As part of the landscape plan approval, shrubs may be spaced at various intervals based on specific site requirements or design scheme, but the total number of shrubs planted must be no less than the amount required by a linear planting spaced three (3) feet apart.
- d. Landscaped areas outside of shrub and tree masses must be planted in turf or other live groundcover, perennial or ornamental grass plantings.

FIGURE 17-3: FOUNDATION PLANTING

