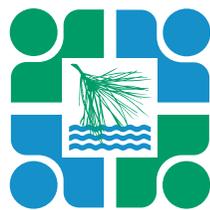


# IMAGINE DOWNTOWN!

Cedar Falls Downtown Vision Plan



Adopted November 18, 2019



**OUR CEDAR FALLS**

*Downtown*  
Imagine the possibilities!



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

City leadership, Community Main Street, and local business owners have worked together to revitalize Main Street and create a vibrant destination for boutique shopping, restaurants, and other entertainment opportunities. Following this success, Downtown Cedar Falls is currently experiencing development pressures, but the City’s aspirations for the scale and character of future growth have not been well-defined. Even with the recent refinement to the design review standards for the Central Business District overlay district, the development review and approval process remains subjective due to vague standards, with new projects often requiring unique “one-off” negotiations between the city and developers. This consumes substantial staff, planning commission, and city council time, and creates uncertainty for developers and neighbors alike. This process adds to overall project costs, (with much of the additional cost going into the approval process rather than into the project itself). This is reflected in the scale<sup>1</sup>—only larger developers and projects can afford the time and expense required for potential negotiation and project redesign—and price points of recent Downtown development, which have been well above average for Downtown and the City on the whole. The opportunities for small scale incremental infill, and the potential to reach a broader residential and commercial market segment, are greatly limited under the current scenario.

Recognizing the need, the City initiated a process for a Downtown vision plan and zoning code update to provide a road map for growth and development: *Imagine Downtown! Cedar Falls Downtown Vision Plan*. (Hereafter, *Imagine Downtown Project/Plan*.) The plan will provide a general framework for public policy decisions and investment, in tandem with clear aspirations for the scale and character of private development in Downtown and the adjacent neighborhoods, to be followed by new objective development standards.

Throughout the Downtown visioning process, the Cedar Falls community—elected officials, business and property owners, and residents—consistently indicated a desire for an economically viable, walkable, mixed-use Downtown, surrounded by neighborhoods that provide a range of housing options in close proximity to the goods and services of daily life.

The *Imagine Downtown Plan* includes: an overview of the planning process; a summary of input gathered from the community during kick-off events; consultant team analysis; the “Big Ideas” (the main concepts) from the Community Hands-On Visioning Workshop; prototypical redevelopment scenarios; and recommendations for implementing the community vision.

This plan is graphic intensive, aiming to help community members visualize change before it occurs. Many of the changes recommended in the plan are shown using “before-and-after” images, in the context of 2019 Cedar Falls.

As in many communities, a segment of the population is concerned about change, perhaps understandably, because the current policies and regulations do not produce predictable outcomes. However, development pressures exist, and in a healthy, dynamic city, change will occur; the City should make every effort to harness and guide that change in a positive direction. This plan envisions incremental growth within the current Downtown context, building on the success of the past while recognizing the importance of growth and development to maintaining a livable and economically vibrant city.

Although the plan report is organized around the visioning process, individual issues, prospective “what if” design scenarios, and approaches to implementation, all are interrelated and should be viewed holistically. Urban design and revitalization issues are multifaceted. Achieving the vision will take place over a number of years, or even decades, and require multiple tools and approaches, frequently used in conjunction with one another. The implementation tools used—whether policy, regulatory or financial—should be coordinated to support and reinforce the overarching vision.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: As the scale of development projects increase, the probability that the developers, architects, builders, and owners are from out-of-town increases as well, with related revenues also leaving the community.

## VISIONING PROCESS AND PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Prior to the Community Hands-On Visioning Workshop, the consultant team conducted stakeholder interviews, completed site analysis of the study area, reviewed the recent parking study, and studied the current demographics and market information for Cedar Falls. All of this information was used in conjunction with the community aspirations, to test different development scenarios against the market realities and within the Downtown context, and to establish a framework for future growth and development. The *Imagine Downtown Plan* anticipates the public and private sector working together—with the public sector “setting the table” for growth through investment in the public realm and establishing rules to provide certainty for the private sector to invest and (re)develop, fulfilling the community vision.

The Plan addresses several topics and includes recommendations for creating a vibrant, mixed-use, walkable district. These can broadly be identified as either matters of physical design and placemaking; or technical policy and management issues, to help implement or reinforce the community vision. Some topics fall into both categories and many are interrelated. These design concepts and policy recommendations include the following.

**Increase the “sense of place” throughout Downtown.** Build on the historic character and success of the Main Street Parkade.

**Define the public realm with active building facades and additional street trees.** Rules for new development should help to further define and enhance the public realm—typically the public streets and sidewalks (from building face to building face) as well as parks and squares. The uses inside the buildings can and will change over time; but if the buildings are well designed for an urban context and made of durable materials, they will continually be reused, just as those along the Main Street Parkade have been (many for more than a century).

**Recognize that Downtown (and nearby neighborhoods) are not the same as the rest of the City.** The rules and processes for development should reinforce placemaking concepts at the street and block level, rather than parcel-by-parcel, so that in the future, Downtown becomes much more than the sum of its parts. These areas are not just comprised of individual buildings on individual lots, but rather buildings that relate to one another, and to the streets, sidewalks and other public spaces throughout the district.

**Design Downtown Gateways to provide a sense of arrival.** Gateways are much stronger when the streetscape and built environment work together to narrow the perceived roadway width and slow traffic, signaling that people are entering a special place—one designed for people rather than cars. Much more than simple signage (*Welcome to Cedar Falls!*) a true gateway creates a welcoming environment for pedestrians and cyclists alike.

**Expand beyond the success of the Parkade as a destination environment.** Move beyond Main Street and provide more opportunities for living and working downtown for people of all ages and a range of socioeconomic levels. (This can help balance the parking management concerns through greater trip capture and the creation of a “park once” environment.)

**Implement the street and sidewalk rebuilding program to improve the pedestrian environment and enhance walkability.** This effort should include the planting of street trees throughout the district. The existing street and block network is a great framework for people to move in and around Downtown efficiently. The targeted public investment in the pedestrian realm will make walking a more viable transportation option and encourage more reinvestment by current property owners as well as new infill development. The importance of street trees cannot be overestimated. Not only do they provide shade and assist with stormwater runoff, they help to define the pedestrian realm, increase pedestrian comfort, and calm traffic. In addition, in a built-out condition such as Downtown Cedar Falls, with limited opportunity to create new public green space, streets should be celebrated as the preeminent public space that they are.

**Understand the market and use it to create more housing and employment options.** Cedar Falls continues to grow in a slow and consistent manner. Downtown provides a unique environment for living and working that cannot be replicated in the newer portions of the City. Emptynesters, millennials, and employers are looking for “sense of place” when choosing where to locate. There are opportunities to provide work spaces and a range of housing options for people who are looking for a “live-work-play” environment—whether millennials, young entrepreneurs, emptynesters, or snowbirds—that can support a walkable “car free” (or one car rather than two) environment. Many young people who currently work in the food and beverage sector in Downtown expressed an interest in living nearby, but cannot afford to. Reusing existing structures and enabling a broader range of development options will provide a wider range of prices and create a more diverse housing stock in close proximity to a range of job opportunities.

**Change the rules for development.** The context analysis included a review of the current zoning and development review process. The consensus during the public visioning process was that new development should respect the existing context. However, there is currently a mismatch between the existing built environment, the current zoning, and the community aspirations for the future. This plan illustrates ways for context-sensitive growth, while permitting infill development that can accommodate both more intensity and the variety of uses currently allowed.

**Create a consistent process for development review and approval.** Establish more objective design and development standards and use refined zoning requirements as one tool in a new approach to parking management.

**Manage and carefully increase the parking supply.** The Downtown parking study provides a wealth of information and approaches to parking management. This plan builds upon several of those through a lens of placemaking and walkability, and recommends updating the current requirements in order to achieve the desired outcomes. Parking supply should support the goals of the *Imagine Downtown Plan*—not be an end in-and-of itself.

**Update the current parking requirements.** The location, design, and quantity of parking are all important in the context of a walkable, mixed-use environment—and there are mechanisms for addressing all three. Downtown is different from the rest of the City, and parking should be managed accordingly. While an appropriate amount of parking is necessary to support residential development, requirements for parking over and above what the residential market demands will simply add to the per unit cost of the housing. At the same time, simply relying on the existing parking supply will not support additional Downtown growth. As growth occurs, some additional strategically located public parking will be necessary to create the supply needed to support a “park once” environment—one in which Downtown visitors and customers can undertake several activities on foot (without having to move their car). Multiple strategies will be needed to finance, develop, and manage new publicly-available parking. Requiring private, exclusive parking on each individual downtown lot will detract from the envisioned walkable environment and hinder the creation of a shared parking supply. (The existing patchwork of unattractive, underutilized private surface parking lots scattered throughout Downtown are evidence of this previous approach.)<sup>2</sup>

## CONCLUSION

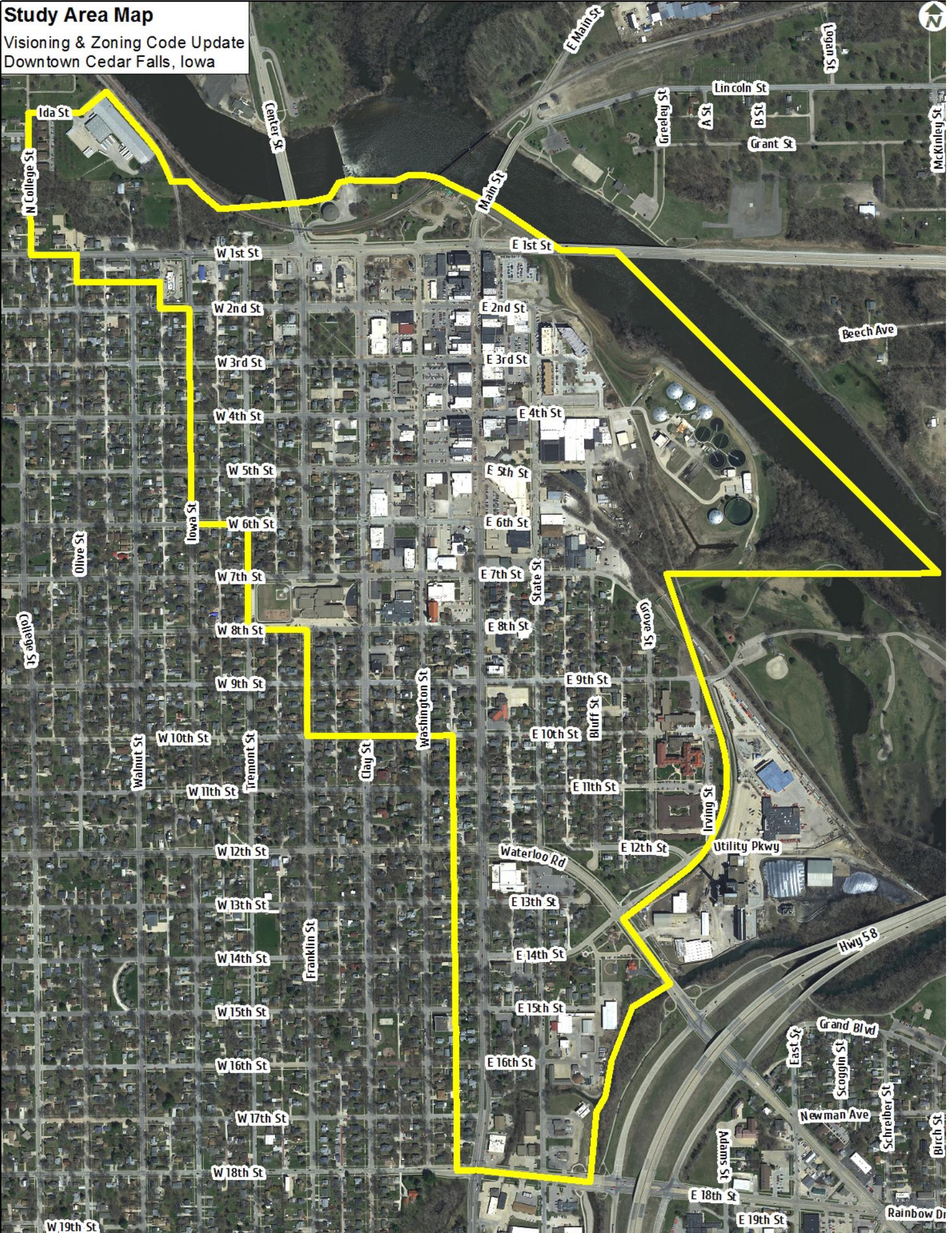
The City initiated the visioning and zoning code update process to provide a framework for future growth and development. The goal of the *Imagine Downtown Plan* is to define that framework—building on the community aspirations, and incorporating several urban design and placemaking principles—within the existing Cedar Falls context; not to prescribe specific building designs. This community vision will also lay the foundation for updating the zoning and other development regulations for Downtown. The plan provides illustrations of one or more ways in which development could occur, over time, on prototypical study area sites. Each example addresses one or more of the plan goals and recommendations to achieve the community vision for a compact, walkable, mixed-use district. These concepts (and more) are further defined, explored and illustrated through “before and after” computer visualizations, photo examples, and drawings in the *Imagine Downtown Plan* that follows.

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<sup>2</sup> Note: The development of a publicly-owned, single-use parking ramp is not a good option. Not only are they expensive, they damage the city fabric, creating a dead zone along the streets they abut. This plan envisions the development of a mixed-use ramp, as illustrated in the project prototypes on pages 46 - 59.

# Study Area Map

Visioning & Zoning Code Update  
Downtown Cedar Falls, Iowa



# PROJECT INTRODUCTION

*The **Imagine Downtown Project** is an interdisciplinary, multi-month public process to engage the community in the development of a vision for the future of Downtown, and update the city's development regulations to implement that vision.*

## BACKGROUND

Downtown Cedar Falls has seen a recent increase in development pressure. Without clear direction for future growth, the City has been operating under development standards and processes that were originally established approximately 50 years ago. These regulations have been refined over time, including the recently amended CBD overlay district, created to preserve and protect the character of the historic Downtown core. However, these efforts have only been partially successful. They have not provided the in-depth and holistic approach needed to direct future growth for a walkable, mixed-use district such as Downtown and the nearby neighborhoods. Recognizing this situation, the City initiated the *Imagine Downtown Project*, soliciting consultant teams to work with the City to complete a two-phase project: an extensive public visioning process and a zoning code update to implement the new vision plan.

As stated in the City's Request for Qualifications and Proposals:

*Historic Downtown Cedar Falls has a thriving main street with over 30 unique shops and boutiques, numerous restaurants and bars, hotels, offices, an active co-working/entrepreneurial center and a growing number of residential condominiums and apartments. Downtown is surrounded by older traditional neighborhoods laid out in a gridded street pattern. While the surrounding residential neighborhoods have a predominately single-family character, there is a large demand for student rental housing and many older homes have been divided into apartments. Demand is also high among more permanent residents for intact homes with historic character located within walking distance of Downtown and UNI.*

*Increased development pressure for new housing and business opportunities in the Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods has prompted the need for updated zoning to guide future development in a manner that is consistent with the community's vision.*

The Downtown Study Area includes all of the parcels that are adjacent to Main Street and south and west of the Cedar River, and currently zoned C-1, C-2, and C-3 (which permit retail, office, professional services, lodging, and several other commercial uses); or R-3 and R-4, (which permit "medium density" residential uses along with some office, professional service, and lodging), regardless of the current uses. (*See the map at left.*) The *Imagine Downtown Plan* is the result of the public process for envisioning the future of this area.

## THE PROCESS

Prior to a public kick-off event in April 2019, the City Council established project priorities (*highlighted on the next page*) to provide a guiding framework for the public outreach, design charrette workshop, and plan that follow.

The visioning process began in the early spring of 2019. The consultant team conducted a series of stakeholder interviews; analyzed the project study area to understand the historic and recent development patterns; and toured the entire City to gain greater appreciation of Downtown within the larger urban design, planning and economic context of Cedar Falls. The team also led a public kick-off event to engage the community on topics related to placemaking and gather input on local perceptions of Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Before and after the kick-off event, the team worked off-site by reviewing the existing zoning code, the recently completed parking study, and current economic, demographic, and traffic data.

The project has a website ([www.OurCedarFalls.com](http://www.OurCedarFalls.com)) to provide information and updates, including video of the public presentations, as well as to solicit additional community input from individuals who were unable to attend the various public events.

These activities laid the foundation for the *Imagine Downtown! Public Design Charrette* the first week in June. The charrette week included:

- a Saturday morning public hands-on design workshop in which community members literally drew their aspirations for the future of Downtown;
- an open design studio, where the team worked on those ideas, building on the community input, and the public was welcome to drop-in;
- a “brown bag lunch-and-learn” session on the topics of downtown mobility and parking; and
- technical meetings to verify that the workshop design ideas would work in the physical and economic context of Cedar Falls.

The week was capped by a public “work-in-progress” presentation, to make sure the team understood what the community had said and was on the right track before further developing and refining the *Imagine Downtown Plan*.

*The analysis and charrette week activities are described in greater detail in the next sections, with the full Imagine Downtown Plan beginning on p.29.*



Project webpage for Our Cedar Falls



## OUR CEDAR FALLS

*Downtown*  
Imagine the possibilities!

**Cedar Falls City Council  
Downtown Vision Plan Project Priorities  
Adopted April 1, 2019**

1. Create a thoughtful vision plan to manage change in the community over time.
  - Reflect on the past, consider the present, look to the future.
  - Respect the rich history and culture of Downtown Cedar Falls.
  - Maintain authenticity.
2. Vision will be based on broad community input, gathered through a robust community outreach process.
  - Re-affirm ongoing community efforts and explore new ideas.
3. Create a safe and welcoming process to explore new ideas.
  - Feedback is appreciated... and essential!
  - All ideas are welcome.
  - Think forward, what is your version of downtown?
  - What do you like about the past? Going forward?
4. Take into account market realities, changing demographics for all types of development, and diversity of uses.
  - Future Technology needs
  - Future Transportation needs
  - Future Housing needs
5. Build on our success! Maintain/foster a unique sense of place.
  - Historic main street character
  - Pedestrian-oriented Design
  - Explore the desired character of streets (State Street, Washington Street, Clay Street, etc.)
6. Encourage economic development based on the adapted vision.
  - Maintain/enhance existing properties
  - Encourage new development
  - Invest in public infrastructure to support the vision
  - Tailor financial incentives and economic development grants to support projects that further public goals, provide elements of community benefit, or demonstrate exceptional design.
7. Establish clear and objective zoning standards to achieve the adopted community vision.



# ANALYSIS

*Prior to the visioning effort, the team studied Downtown Cedar Falls, including: stakeholder interviews and general public engagement to gather local perspectives on the current activities, market, and development review processes in the City; on-site analysis of the built and natural environments; analysis of local market conditions and demographics; and review of existing policies, regulations, and recent studies.*

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: UNDERSTANDING CURRENT PERCEPTIONS AND ACTIVITIES**

Gathering public input and ideas was a priority for the *Imagine Downtown Project* and *Plan*. The engagement effort included a series of stakeholder interviews, several public events, and an interactive project website (both to provide general information and to communicate with, and provide an opportunity for participation to, an audience that may not have attended any of the public meetings.) This is a Community Vision—and its very foundation is the aspirations of the residents for the future of their city.

### **Stakeholder Interviews**

In the spring of 2019, the consultant team interviewed a broad cross-section of stakeholders, including: business and property owners; retail, restaurant, and bar owners; local developers, architects, and real estate professionals; Community Main Street board members; City planning and community development staff; City department directors; and the “parking study implementation staff”.

The consistent themes and concerns identified by the diverse groups included:

- the importance of maintaining the “small town feel” of Main Street while allowing for growth and change elsewhere in Downtown;
- the lack of significant office space in Downtown;
- a recognition that Downtown has thrived as a specialty destination for the past few decades, dependent on boutique shops and restaurants, but that the market dynamic is changing, with the demand for residences, offices, and related daily services;
- the need to better manage the existing parking;
- the need to increase the supply of publicly available parking in order to support growth; and
- a desire for the City to support both small scale reinvestment and revitalization and medium scale redevelopment within the Downtown context.

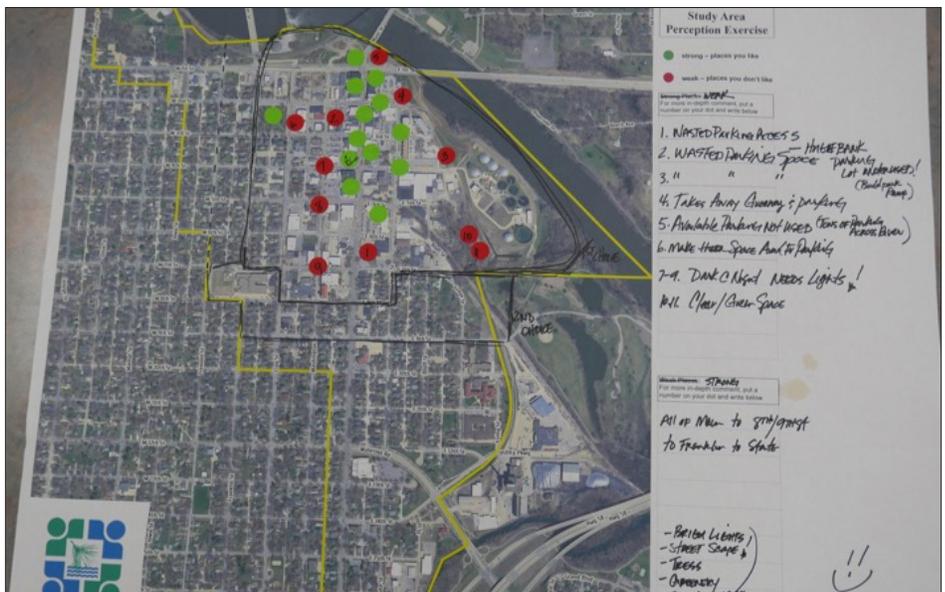
# Public Kick-Off Event

Close to 100 community members attended the *Imagine Downtown!* Kick-Off Event at the Community Center in April. Following a welcome by the mayor, the consultant team provided a project overview and a visual introduction to urban design concepts, such as placemaking, urban form and character, and walkability. (The Kick-Off slideshow is available for download from the Document Library in the project website ([www.ourcedarfalls.com](http://www.ourcedarfalls.com)) and a video of the presentation is available on YouTube here: <https://youtu.be/H2yRj3L0wLo>)



After the opening presentation, the team used several activities to engage participants, promote discussion and gather input—to get to know Cedar Falls and understand some of the issues and concerns that the *Imagine Downtown Vision Plan* needed to address. The engagement activities included:

- a small group mapping exercise with two components—first, people marked what they considered to be the edges of “downtown”; and second, they identified areas of “strength and weakness” in the Downtown study area (those locations that they liked or felt need improvement) by marking them with green and red stickers;
- a visual preference exercise, in which attendees could “vote” on images of buildings, streetscapes, and parking, to indicate whether they felt the character and scale were appropriate for future development in Downtown and nearby neighborhoods; and
- a survey about when, how, and why individuals come downtown.





**OUR CEDAR FALLS**  
*Downtown*  
Imagine the possibilities!

Cedar Falls, Iowa  
Public Kick-Off Meeting  
April 2, 2019  
Visual Preference Exercise  
**RESULTS**




common ground

**BOARD A**  
**Adjacent Neighborhoods – Small to Medium Scale Residential**

Although only a snapshot of opinions, the visual preference exercise revealed several consistent community “likes” and “dislikes.” Some highlights:

*Small and medium scale residential development in nearby neighborhoods*

- Preferred – small front yards, 2-3 stories, with architectural detailing
- Not preferred – no front yard, garages or parking in front, continuous repetitive designs

*Medium to large scale residential buildings in Downtown*

- Preferred – street-oriented buildings with fine-grained architectural details
- Not preferred – buildings oriented toward parking lots with minimal and monotonous detailing

*The street-space or public realm (the area between the building façade and the curbs)*

- Preferred – generous sidewalks with street trees and active ground floor spaces
- Not preferred – narrow sidewalks, lack of street trees, and inactive street frontage

*Downtown parking*

- Preferred – on street or in mixed-use parking structures
- Not preferred – exposed parking structures or surface lots

A tally of the visual preference exercise is provided in the *Appendix*.

The kick-off survey revealed two key things: that most participants come downtown frequently for destination shopping, eating, and special events; and that the majority who do not live Downtown arrive via private automobile, although a significant number also walk and ride their bicycles. The survey results and individual comments are provided in the *Appendix*.



Preferred Public Realm



3



Not Preferred Public Realm



22



Preferred Downtown Parking



6



Not Preferred Downtown Parking



24

# Studying the Context

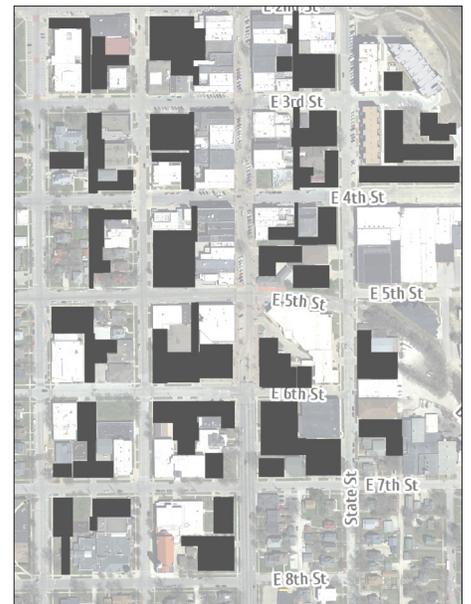
## Site Analysis: Understanding the Physical Context

The team drove and walked around the entire study area to experience the existing physical context, noting the character of historic and recent development, taking photographs and identifying potential (prototypical) redevelopment sites. Street widths, traffic patterns, parking locations and availability, public open spaces, and the existence and health of street trees were also documented.

The team examined the overall pedestrian experience based on details such as: interesting shopfronts and active building facades (or the lack thereof); available activities and potential destinations; sidewalk maintenance; street lights; and the visibility and clarity of wayfinding signage.

Several features of particular importance were identified:

- the interconnected street and block grid (with minimal interruption) throughout the study area;
- the vitality of the Parkade and its antithesis along the intersecting side streets, State Street and Washington Street;
- the historic buildings along with some more recent examples of “what not to do” when building in an urban or traditional neighborhood environment;
- the high ratio of surface parking lots to building; and
- the proximity to (yet disconnection from) the Cedar River, parks, and bike trails.



## Understanding Cedar Falls

The study area has a wide range of buildings, both historical and relatively new. The team found construction in progress in the Downtown area, a thriving Parkade, unique architecture, and new residential buildings just off Main Street. Activities ranged from religious to residential; from civic and institutional to recreation and entertainment.





## Economic and Demographic Context

The economic and market analysis was based on local demographic, tax base, and real estate data in combination with stakeholder interviews. Key findings included the following.

Cedar Falls is growing slowly but consistently. Similar to national trends, the market is calling for housing in mixed-use, walkable environments, particularly for millennial, empty nester, and snowbird demographic groups. The most logical location to fulfill this demand locally is in Downtown and the nearby neighborhoods.

Office demand typically follows the workforce to these walkable locations; and the greater intensity of residents and employees will generate more retail customers for daily goods and services and greater vitality throughout the day and week.

It will also be important to maintain the retail concentration along the Parkade and immediate side streets. With the current upheaval in the retail industry (and the over-supply of locations with retail zoning) expanding retail in Downtown should only be done very judiciously; it should be discouraged further south on Main or west on 1st Street, beyond a conventional walking distance.

Downtown parking requirements need to be “right-sized”—parking demand is declining in mixed-use environments with more people able to walk or bike to their destinations, many couples going from two cars to one, and ride-share services becoming more prevalent. Over-prescribing private off-street parking limits the re-use of existing structures and adds significantly to construction costs, wastes valuable downtown land, and will require higher rents and sales prices.

The City will need to facilitate the desired character of development to fulfill the community vision. Two important steps are to simplify the zoning with clear rules and accelerate the approval process. Predictability will be the key to private investment decisions. The zoning will also need to be updated to serve multiple markets, providing a range of housing options that are appropriate to the scale and context of Downtown and the nearby neighborhoods.

The full *Market Considerations* report is provided in the Appendix.

## DOWNTOWN MOBILITY

Downtowns are different. A mobility system for a successful downtown considers movement of people by a myriad of options: walking, bicycling, riding transit, and driving. The conventional metrics of roadway capacity, efficiency, vehicular level of service (LOS) and vehicular delays (and providing parking on every lot) as people move from Point A to Point B should not be the sole determinant of street design or size in urban contexts. In no other context is the City's Complete Streets policy more important than in Downtown; simply put, getting the design of the street "right" can mean the difference between a vibrant, walkable, and economically successful Downtown and a downtown that motorists "zip" through without any consideration of visiting. The overall goal is to move people, not just cars.

Downtowns are fundamentally different than conventional suburban development—the land use patterns provide a wide range of activities and services in very close proximity, which unlike suburban development, place trip origins and destinations in such proximity that active modes of transport such as walking or cycling can be more attractive than driving.

- Downtowns should give residents and visitors true choices about their mode of travel—walking, bicycling, ride-sharing, taking transit, and driving. Individuals can choose the mode that is best suited for their current trip or activity.
- Current trends show an increased interest for multi-modal places, across different age groups. Recent research has shown that millennials are less interested in car ownership than other age groups; in fact, nearly 40% of 16-year olds do not have a drivers' license. These groups desire places where they can live, work, and play without being hostage to the constant need for a personal motor vehicle.
- People are motivated to choose different travel options for a range of reasons, from efficiency or convenience, to economic (save money), health (get exercise), and environment (reduce carbon footprint).
- Downtown Cedar Falls and the adjacent neighborhoods are ideally suited to provide a multi-modal environment. The interconnected street and block network and the compact size of the district provide a great framework for walkability. It should be easy for people to move in and around Downtown safely and efficiently.
- Walkable environments get higher rents for office, retail, and residential spaces (and increase home values.)
- The existing Downtown core area is about the same size (walking distance) as the Cedar Falls Wal-Mart and Target parking lots. All three have destinations that are within a 5-minute walk of where someone might park their car. However, the suburban uses are bordered by roads that are hostile for pedestrians, where the Downtown is inviting to pedestrians and can be more so with careful consideration of street environments as articulated in this Plan.

Cedar Falls has a visible bicycling community (as evidenced by the downtown shops and the existing bicycling trails). If similar to other US cities, the City has a small group of "strong and fearless" bicyclists who will ride in almost any environment; however, almost 70% of people fall into the "enthused and confident" and "interested but concerned" groups that have been proven to increase usage with improved facilities and infrastructure. By better connecting facilities and making the street environment conducive to and safe for use by this 70%, bicycling can be a practical and efficient mode of transportation (rather than just for recreation).

From an economic development perspective, cities that invest in cycling infrastructure such as trails, greenways, and on-street cycling facilities see reinvestment in the community to tap the visitors using the newly available mode of transportation. Greenville, SC and Travelers Rest, SC have seen significant economic impacts as a result of the Swamp Rabbit Trail; the communities in Northwest Arkansas have seen significant returns on the investment made in the Razorback Regional Greenway touching multiple downtowns; and even urban areas such as Memphis have seen significant returns on the on-street infrastructure of facilities like the Hampline in Midtown Memphis, to the tune of over 30 new businesses and over \$30 million in redevelopment in a 5-year period.

Transit today is not a viable option for Downtown, but could become one if future development is planned and configured to be “transit-ready” with increased residential and employment intensity in key locations and improved walkability (as all transit-users are pedestrians at one or both ends of their trip). Creating streets that are walkable will also mean closing gaps in current modes and will create streets that are “transit-ready” for such time as when improved transit service could be implemented.

Slowing automobile speeds (through traffic calming measures such as narrowing lanes) in the Downtown will improve the walking, biking, and retail environments. Studies have shown that the likelihood of survival in a pedestrian crash with a motor vehicle decreases exponentially as speed goes up; likelihood of surviving a 20 mph crash is 85%, while survival of a 40 mph crash is only 15%. Benefits of reducing vehicle speed in a downtown district are as follows:

- Pedestrian and bicycle activity increases with improved safety.
- Easier street crossing increases the likelihood that people will shop on both sides of the street.
- Slower moving drivers (and passengers) are better able to see what is happening beyond the curbs, and therefore more likely to stop (or return) to shop or eat.

A more balanced approach to mobility should consider the following:

- the livability and balance of the district;
- “complete streets” that incorporate context sensitive design and solutions;
- the relationship between land use and transportation;
- compact growth and development; and
- “right-sized” parking (that addresses type, location, and quantity).

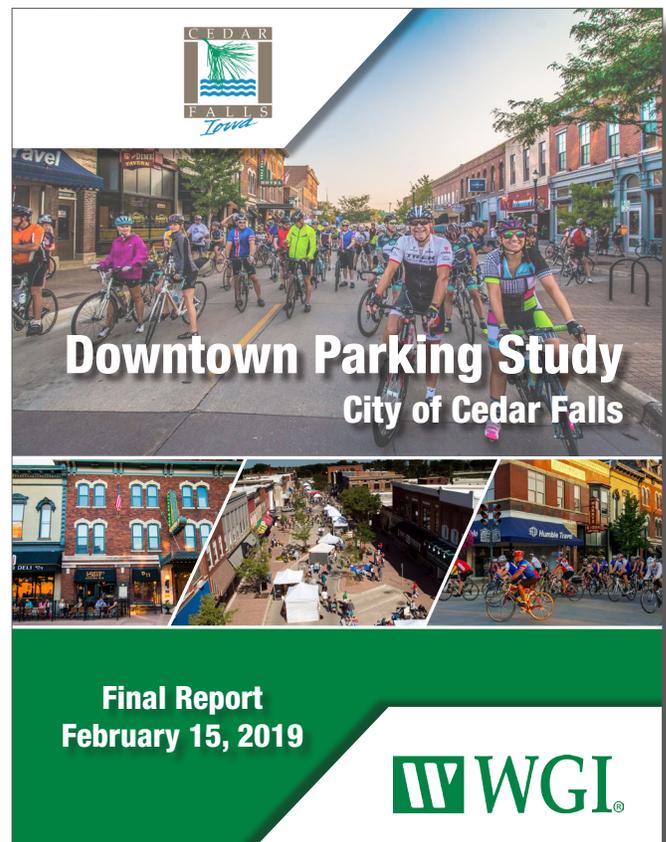
The result should contribute to the overall health of the community: personal (people exercise more through daily activities), economic (walkable places generate more economic returns), and ecological (less pavement equates to less heat and less runoff, which can mitigate flooding concerns).

## DOWNTOWN PARKING

The design team reviewed the recent *Downtown Parking Study* through the lens of urban design and placemaking with its on-site analysis and the community design charrette being especially influential. While generally in agreement with the proposed approach, the team recommends that a few of the strategies be revisited, with time lines accelerated and actions pursued more aggressively to better support the goals and vision of the *Imagine Downtown Plan*.

Currently, most people who visit Downtown arrive by private automobile. These numbers will shift with improved walkability and bicycle connectivity, as well as with continued development of new infill housing opportunities in the Downtown. However, in order to support the economic viability of Downtown, Cedar Falls will continue to need a supply of publicly-available, appropriately located and priced, short- and long-term parking for the immediate future.

One of the primary *Imagine Downtown Plan* recommendations is to establish Downtown as a “park once” environment. There are multiple tools and approaches to accomplish this, but the foundation will be a supply of publicly-available shared parking. An increased



emphasis on the pedestrian realm and improved walkability through careful complete street design is also important.

Within the context of the broader Downtown urban design and mobility analysis, and building on the parking management strategies in the *Downtown Parking Study*, the following should be key implementation priorities to produce the desired environment (and parking supply).

- **Revise the current parking standards as part of the zoning update.** (There are currently no parking standards for Downtown commercial development and 2-plus spaces are required per residential unit.) This does not mean requiring parking to be provided on every redevelopment parcel in Downtown, which would undermine the vision for downtown by eroding the building fabric (*see text box at right*), but rather the new parking requirements should be used as a mechanism for producing additional shared parking in appropriate locations.
- **Target parking supply and management for short- and long-term users.** The needs of short-term parkers, such as Downtown visitors and customers of retail and restaurants, should be addressed with on-street parking and strategically located shared parking. These spaces should be appropriately priced and managed to encourage regular turnover to ensure the constant availability of short-term parking. The needs of long-term parkers, such as Downtown service employees, office workers, and residents, will require different strategies, ranging from an appropriate level of on-site parking to shared off-street parking, depending on context. To encourage full utilization of upper floors in existing Main Street buildings, reduce or remove parking requirements or allow long-term parking to be accommodated through an off-site permit system, since on-site parking is typically not possible.
- **Establish a phased process for changing the approach to Downtown parking management and fees.** This process might include a combination of: education, branding/way-finding, an evening valet system, additional shared parking agreements, a validation system for remote public lots to provide the first two hours for free, discounted pricing for weekly or monthly users, etc. so that the public will gain a comfort level with the new approach to Downtown parking as it is phased in. Depending on the rate of redevelopment in Downtown, these tools may be needed sooner rather than later. Downtown streets may need to be monetized as part of a long-term plan to provide adequate public parking infrastructure. (The city is currently giving away the most valuable spaces for free, with the expectation that people will pay to park further away from their destination in city-controlled lots. In reality, the reverse is true; the on-street spaces are the most valuable for their convenience and proximity to the Downtown attractions. Once the walkability/pedestrian realm is improved as more streets are “completed” per the recommendations in this report, people will also be more willing to walk a block or two for free or less expensive parking.)
- **Identify potential sites for a public/private partnership parking ramp.** (And develop a funding strategy for public participation.) Any such ramp should be located adjacent to Downtown activity centers and use the mixed-use design parameters provided later in this Imagine Downtown Plan.

### Why Rethink Parking Requirements?

Requiring each future infill or redevelopment project to provide all of its parking on-site will work against the environment envisioned in the **Imagine Downtown Plan** for the following reasons.

- On-site parking reduces the redevelopment potential of individual lots.
- Surface lots limit the developable area and create “dead zones” on the street if poorly located.
- Structured parking, whether above grade or underground, dramatically increases the cost of redevelopment (and therefore the cost of new units).
- In addition, having exclusive (single-user) surface parking on each lot will increase the distance between different uses or activities, thereby decreasing the walkability of the overall district. This kind of parking typically sits empty during the 8-16 hours of the day when the designated “user” is elsewhere (work, home, shopping, etc.)

- **Consider a range of financing options for a parking ramp.** This could include the establishment of a “fee-in-lieu” system, tied to any new parking requirements in the zoning update, to fund the creation of shared off-site parking. In addition to parking fees, a mixed-use ramp should also create revenue by leasing active-use ground floor spaces—whether retail or office. Other potential financing streams include the dedication of all Downtown on-street parking revenues, the use of TIF, and SSMID funds.
- **Continue to implement the parking study strategies.** Set triggers for next steps in the overall strategy. Evaluate each step’s effectiveness, and adjust when appropriate, as each parking strategy is implemented.

There is currently a mismatch between the existing built environment of the Downtown study area, the current zoning code, and the community aspirations for the future of Downtown Cedar Falls. The core of the current zoning code, including the residential districts, dates to 1971. Just for context, Billboard's Top 40 for July 1971 included Gladys Knight and the Pips, Nixon was president, and All in the Family debuted on CBS. Zoning from that period was auto-oriented and focused on use separation. The City has been gradually updating the code over the past 48 years, but doing so in a specific problem-solving, piecemeal fashion. It will be important for Cedar Falls to undertake a more comprehensive and cohesive update of the current zoning code to both ensure that the *Imagine Downtown Plan* can be implemented and, equally important, to ensure that the current regulations will not act as a barrier to community's preferred development patterns that have been identified in the process of creating the *Imagine Downtown Plan*. Zoning code updates should include the following:

**1. Use All of the Zoning Tools Available.** A zoning code includes a range of tools that can be used to guide development, including: form standards, zone districts, use standards, site standards, and review processes. Each tool plays a specific role in establishing an overall development pattern. The current Cedar Falls zoning code, though, is heavily focused on regulating through one tool—the individual zone district. As planning and the community has changed over time, new stand-alone zone districts have been created to address the problems of the day. Potential use-related issues can better be addressed through other municipal regulations, such as hours of operation, noise ordinances, and health and building codes.

Because the new zone districts were “layered” on to the existing zoning code, the scope of the districts increased over time to include regulations that typically would have been addressed in another section of the code. When a new commercial district was created, for example, it would include landscaping and sign standards applicable only within that district. The more generally applicable landscaping and sign regulations, included in the code outside of the zone districts, have also been left to age in place. This approach created multiple “parallel” codes; allowing the “old” regulations to be applied in those locations with “old” zone districts while limiting application of the new (and presumably more relevant) standards to the districts in which they’ve been drafted. This “siloes” approach to zoning ensures spotty and inconsistent development patterns.

The City needs to create a set of modern, place-based zoning districts with an emphasis on scale, form, character, and intensity to apply to the Downtown plan area, including updates to the relevant residential districts. New general site development standards for Downtown (e.g., parking, landscaping, stormwater, signs) are also needed to bring the baseline standards into conformance with best practices. With these key pieces in place, the City can then determine if any of the new standards should be applicable city-wide or in other designated areas.

**2. Make Subjective Standards More Objective.** While the current code includes both design and development standards, they are fairly general and subjective. In a regulatory context, it is better for both the community and the applicant if development standards are as predictable and measurable as possible. The amended CBD overlay district is a significant improvement over some of the City's older regulations; however, it is still subject to a great deal of interpretation. For example, the CBD overlay district requires: “alternating solid surfaces and openings (wall surface versus door and windows) in the front façade, sides and rear of a building to create a rhythm observable to viewers.” Interpretation of this requirement is wide open, and one person's rhythm might be another's visual clash. To get to the acceptable level of design specificity, the City relies on a negotiated site plan process to achieve the final site and structure design. This approach can be challenging for both the applicant and the City. While most communities engage in some project negotiation, employing a fully negotiated design typically requires an applicant to guess about the City's priorities, can take an extended period of time to complete, and the city can end up approving a substandard project. This approach is expensive and time consuming for both the applicant and the City, not to mention that negotiated development is often an open invitation for NIMBY intervention (i.e., it allows an out-sized role for those opposed to new development in general to complain about a project that conforms to both the *Imagine Downtown Plan* and the zoning code). New baseline site and structure standards should be objective and measurable. This will provide predictability for applicants and limit the overall use of design negotiation.

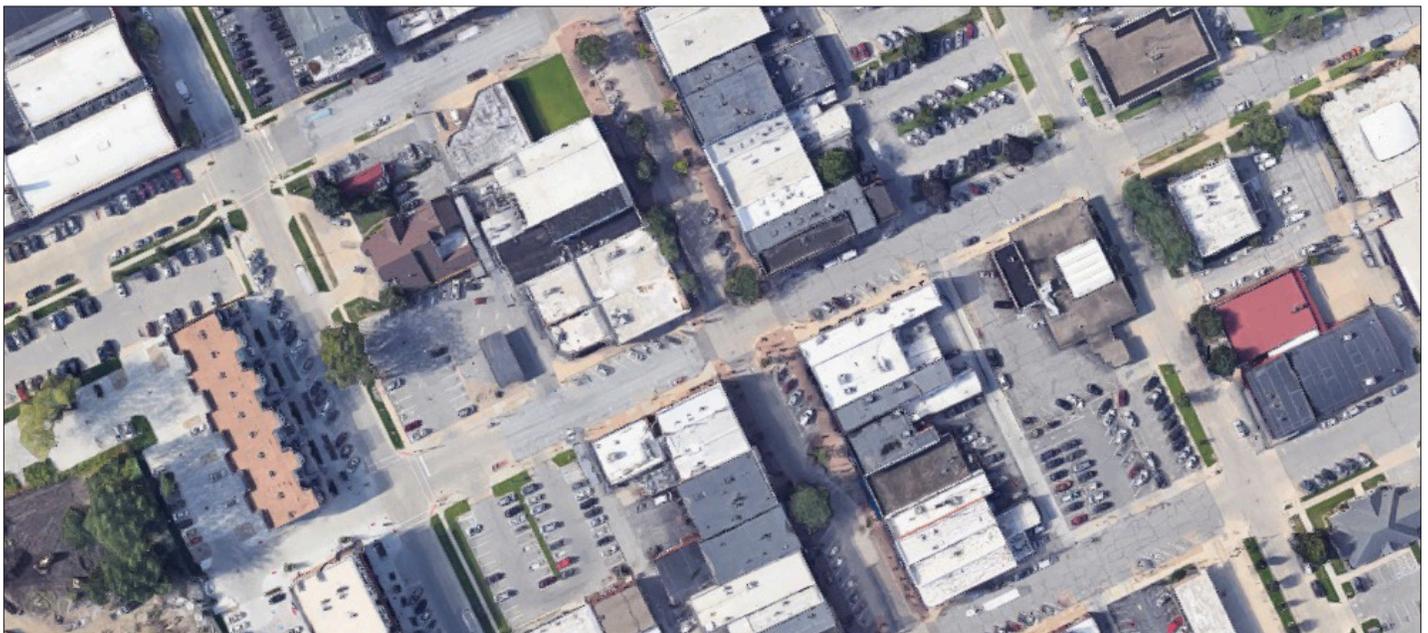
**3. Be Specific About Infill Standards.** The zoning code needs to include specific infill standards and processes. Infill standards are designed to ensure that the zoning code does not inadvertently make infill development difficult or impossible by applying general standards that unique lots cannot accommodate. If the City wants to encourage applicants to take up the challenge of development or redevelopment, it will help to provide clear intent and be very specific about where the zoning code can help to fit projects into difficult lots and spaces. In the context of Downtown and nearby neighborhoods, any new development standards should be drafted specifically for a redevelopment context, since the study area is built-out. The new Downtown standards might include parameters for administratively adjusting some requirements—such as dimensional standards, landscaping/tree requirements, and preferred sign types—on a site-specific basis to address atypical situations.

**4. Right-Size Standards to Create Unique Places.** Older zoning codes are more likely to regulate at a pretty high and very general level, with one set of parking standards or one type of perimeter landscaping. Codes drafted pre-2000 particularly tend to be more one-size-fits-all and not include a layer of regulatory detail that is focused on form and scale. A number of issues that are particularly problematic in Downtown and traditional neighborhood environments that can be better addressed through more site-tailored regulations include: creating a scaled approach to residential parking requirements; moving away from suburban setbacks and lot coverage standards for the Downtown commercial areas that are outside of the CBD Overlay; and creating design standards for residential development that set rules for context sensitive infill/missing middle development types.

Focusing on form and scale is key for the full range of Downtown zoning standards. The zoning update needs to synchronize the community aspirations of the *Imagine Downtown Plan* with context-specific regulatory standards that emphasize form, character, and intensity. The current regulations are focused on specific land uses and statistical measurements that are pretty easy to calculate but that do not make the connection between the plan preferences and the built environment. Updated districts that regulate form, character, and intensity are more holistic, allow the City to review not only individual structures on individual lots, but also the relationship between buildings, and between buildings and the public realm, including the sidewalk and street.

**5. Illustrate.** The current code is almost exclusively text. Modern zoning ordinances are much more user-friendly, incorporating “plain English”, illustrations of intent, clear diagrams, and tables to improve clarity and reduce text. The Downtown update should be reformatted and include graphics, with the goal of making similar changes for the entire code.

*The overall approach, content, and format of the zoning update will be determined in the next phase of this project. However, some initial concepts for new development standards are included in the Character Area and Frontage Type sections, beginning on page 35.*





# CHARRETTE WEEK: PUBLIC VISIONING WORKSHOP

The Community Design Charrette was an intensive week-long process working with citizens and stakeholders to define a vision for the future of Downtown and nearby neighborhoods. The week included a public Hands-on Design Workshop, Open Design Studio, brown bag Lunch & Learn, Technical Meetings, and Work-in-Progress presentation.



# Public Hands-On Design Workshop

## Envisioning the future

On Saturday morning, June 1, Cedar Falls residents came together, rolled up their sleeves, and got to work discussing how they wanted the Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods to grow and change (or not) in the future.

## Working Together

Working in small groups, citizens literally drew their aspirations for the future on top of an aerial photo of the study area—focusing on topics like walkability; character and scale of new buildings; and opportunities for redevelopment. This technique ensures that plans and aspirations are rooted in the physical reality of the study area, and that potential consequences are considered.

## Sharing Concerns & Aspirations

After working through the issues and discussing opportunities, a representative from each table presented their major ideas/concepts for the future of Downtown to the entire group. Many areas of consensus quickly emerged. These points of consensus were studied and tested throughout the charrette week and form the foundation of the *Imagine Downtown Vision Plan*.



# Open Design Studio & Technical Meetings

## Refining the Vision

During the week of June 2 - 6, the Cedar Falls Woman's Club became an urban design studio where the consultant team worked to turn the citizens' Hand's-On plans into a draft downtown vision plan.

## Ground-truthing

Throughout the week, the team held a series of technical meetings with engineers and technicians from the City and Cedar Falls Utility (CFU); Iowa DOT staff; local police and fire officials; City planning staff; local developers; the bicycle and pedestrian committee; the historic preservation commission; the Cedar Falls Library; the transit authority; the parking management committee; University of Northern Iowa administrators; Community Main Street; and members of the City Council.

These sessions provided an opportunity to gather additional information and test the citizen plans against real-world contingencies. The technical considerations informed and shaped potential redevelopment scenarios that were built on the citizens' ideas—but never contradicted or undermined the overarching community vision.



## Lunch & Learn

On Tuesday, there was a Brown Bag Lunch & Learn on the topic “Downtown Transportation & Parking: How It’s Different & Why It Matters” to begin the conversation about the relationship between the recently completed Downtown Parking Study and the new *Imagine Downtown Plan*. The presentation included information about street configurations and “food for thought” about walkability, traffic calming, road diets, and overall downtown mobility.



## Open Design Studio

The urban design studio at the Woman’s Club was open for several hours each day and residents were welcome to drop in and see the work that was underway. The team explored several redevelopment scenarios, using prototypical parcels and sites within the study area to ensure they ‘fit’ within the Cedar Falls context. Hand drawn and computer simulated “before and after” images of these development studies will help residents visualize potential change before it occurs.





On June 6, a “Work-in-Progress” presentation at the Woman’s Club concluded the Charrette Week activities. The team shared the preliminary work on the *Imagine Downtown Plan*, which was built on the community input from both the April community kick-off and the week’s Hands-on Design Workshop, stakeholder interviews, and technical meetings. The overview of the work to-date included: the teams’ context and site analysis; downtown mobility and parking ideas; and the economic and demographic analysis. The primary emphasis of the evening was on several urban design and planning concepts, beginning with the “Big Ideas” from the public design workshop and including the identification of character sub-areas within the study area; walkability and placemaking; compact, mixed-use environments; and the importance of design—the relationships of physical location, scale, form, and character—in all of the above when planning for a redevelopment context.

The presentation provided numerous illustrations of prototypical infill and development scenarios, including before-and-after simulations of potential redevelopment of actual Cedar Falls sites.

Based on an exit survey at the meeting, more than 90% of the respondents felt the “Work-in-Progress” presentation was generally on the right track. *(Complete exit survey results are provided in the Appendix.)*

The following pages build on the “Work-in-Progress” presentation with new and improved images and additional information that make up the *Imagine Downtown Vision Plan*.

## Design Charrette “Big Ideas”

- 1. Improve walkability: safety, connectivity, comfort**
- 2. Respect historic character**
- 3. Add street trees and other green space**
- 4. Rethink parking**
- 5. Provide housing options for all ages**
- 6. Make biking easier beyond the trails**



Google

# IMAGINE DOWNTOWN FRAMEWORK

*In order to translate the “Big Ideas” from the Public Visioning Workshop into a conceptual vision plan, it is important to think in physical and place-specific terms and incorporate basic urban design concepts. These design concepts, the community aspirations, and context analysis provide the vision plan framework and lay a foundation for updating the development regulations for the study area.*

## URBAN DESIGN BASICS

### Placemaking

A term describing the core task of good planning—how to make the ‘place’ that the citizens want. This requires focusing on the desired form and character of the built place, rather than the various technical aspects of development regulations. The “placemaking” approach leads by asking the question: “what kind of place do we want to live in?” The technical questions of how that place can be achieved are dealt with secondarily—they must be answered, but they should not lead the City planning and urban design efforts.

### Walkability: Changing the character of Downtown Streets

A “walkable” place is much more than one in which there are sidewalks. It refers to an environment where walking can be a primary mode of transportation. In these locations, it is a pleasure to walk; there are places to go and things to see and do; and walking is safe and efficient.

### Gateways: Creating a Sense of Arrival

A gateway is a physical location that marks the entry into a new place, in large part by being different. Gateways are important to placemaking because they can change behavior. For example: a gateway design could help calm incoming traffic, by bringing buildings close to the street and planting street trees, to mark the change from the outlying suburban or rural (and high speed) environment into the urban, constrained (low speed) and pedestrian environment. More than mere signage, the strongest gateways are made with distinct changes to the physical place.

### “Park Once” Mixed-Use Environments

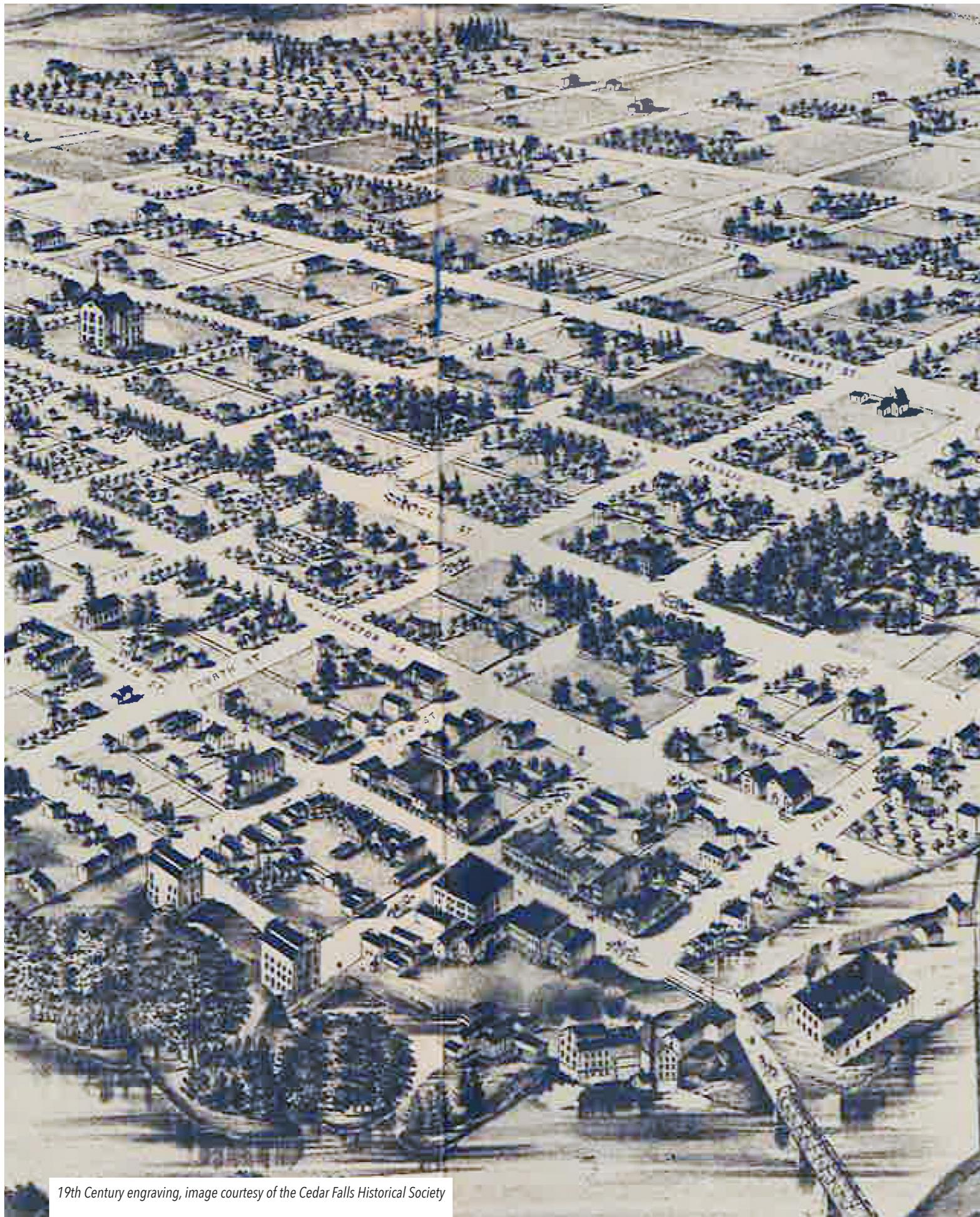
The fatal parking problem of suburban development is that it must provide multiple parking spaces for every car, at each different place: a space where you work, a space where you shop, a space where you worship, a space where you play, and a space where you sleep. Cities can better manage the parking issue by creating an environment where you can park your car in one spot and comfortably walk to multiple activities: where you work, shop, play, and where you sleep. For every one of those basic activities that can be combined in a “park once” environment, a parking space is effectively created—or ‘freed up’ to be used by someone else.

### The Public Realm and Building Frontages

The spaces that people experience as they move through the city—typically the public streets and sidewalks (from building face to building face) and parks and squares, rather than private (building lot or home yard). The best public realm is a defined space with a sense of enclosure provided by building fronts or street trees. The public realm of a city is central to its quality of life—as well as its economy. Building frontages—where the building meets the street—are a key element of the character of the individual streets. The public realm creates the overall “sense of place” while allowing a great deal of variety within the urban framework.

### Missing Middle Housing

Missing Middle refers to that in-between scale of building that seems to have been forgotten—from duplexes to rowhouses to small apartment buildings—and that can be comfortably integrated into traditional urban neighborhoods. Smart development regulations (zoning) can facilitate and enable a return of those kinds of neighborhood infill housing options. (*Missing Middle building forms are further described on pages 32-33.*)



19th Century engraving, image courtesy of the Cedar Falls Historical Society

Translating the community aspirations from the Public Visioning Workshop into implementation actions is a fundamental step in creating a vision plan framework. Not only are these concepts embedded within the overall *Imagine Downtown Plan* recommendations, this page identifies specific steps for realizing each “Big Idea” in the physical vision plan for Downtown.

## 1. Big Idea: Improve walkability: safety, connectivity, comfort

### *Implementation Steps*

- Improve (and widen) sidewalks throughout the district.
- Expand the positive street environment beyond the Parkade.
- Build/reconfigure Downtown streets to be good streets, not speedways. Narrow the automobile travel lanes to calm traffic and decrease pedestrian crossing distance and increase pedestrian comfort.
- Maintain connectivity: preserve small block size and the street and alley pattern.
- Improve pedestrian crossings, particularly on 1st Street.

## 2. Big Idea: Respect historic character

### *Implementation Steps*

- Encourage the re-use of existing (urban fabric) buildings and preserve significant architecture.
- Establish zoning for new development that respects the scale and character of the context.
- Make sure the rules enable small scale infill and redevelopment.
- Manage / control the scale and massing of buildings to transition between Downtown and nearby neighborhoods.

## 3. Big Idea: Add street trees and other green spaces

### *Implementation Steps*

- Use street trees to “green” downtown, help define the pedestrian realm and slow traffic.
- Explore opportunities for additional urban green space—squares and civic greens.

## 4. Big Idea: Rethink parking

### *Implementation Steps*

- Create a “park once” environment by improving walkability and exploring opportunities for shared parking.
- Revise requirements and policies to increase supply of public parking in key locations (and help finance it).
- Properly locate and price short- and long-term parking.

## 5. Big Idea: Provide housing options for all ages

### *Implementation Steps*

- Change the zoning to enable a range of housing types.
- Revise parking requirements to enable and encourage less expensive (market-rate) housing.

## 6. Big Idea: Make biking easier — beyond the trails

### *Implementation Steps*

- Provide bicycle lanes in key locations as district streets are rebuilt.
- Increase publicly available bicycle parking in Downtown.

# Missing Middle Housing

Often discussed by citizens during the charrette week, Missing Middle refers to the in-between scale of buildings that current developers (and municipalities) seem to have forgotten. Once common, these buildings are more intense than single-family detached houses, but much smaller than an apartment complex or high-rise. They complement traditional neighborhoods, and can help transition from more intense Downtown development to single-family detached houses. Missing Middle forms can provide new housing choices lacking in the marketplace today, often at a more affordable rate. They can also be designed and built in a context-sensitive form and scale.

Missing Middle housing can take many forms. Here is a sample of that variety—including some that exist in Cedar Falls today. Note that *context is important* and not all of these examples will be appropriate in every part of the study area.

## Twins (duplexes)

A simple variation that can fit onto existing lots in single-family detached neighborhoods. They often appear to be single-family houses, comparable in size to those nearby. They may be configured with units side-by-side or over-under. The near-right building is a side-by-side configuration and is in the study area.



## Small Apartments (small)

At the lower end of the range of scales, these can be almost unnoticed in the midst of a single-family detached neighborhood. They typically have small front, back, and side yards, similar to the surrounding context, and are more commonly found on corner lots.



## Small Apartments (medium)

Typically found on corner lots or larger streets and avenues, these may have small front, back, and side yards; or be located at the back of the sidewalk, depending on the surrounding context.



## Rowhouses

Rowhouses are attached single-family houses. Typically two- to four-stories tall, they may be configured with stoops or porches. Whether platted on narrow fee-simple lots or a single parcel, each rowhouse has direct street access and a rear private space. Parking is off the alley.



## Cottage Courts

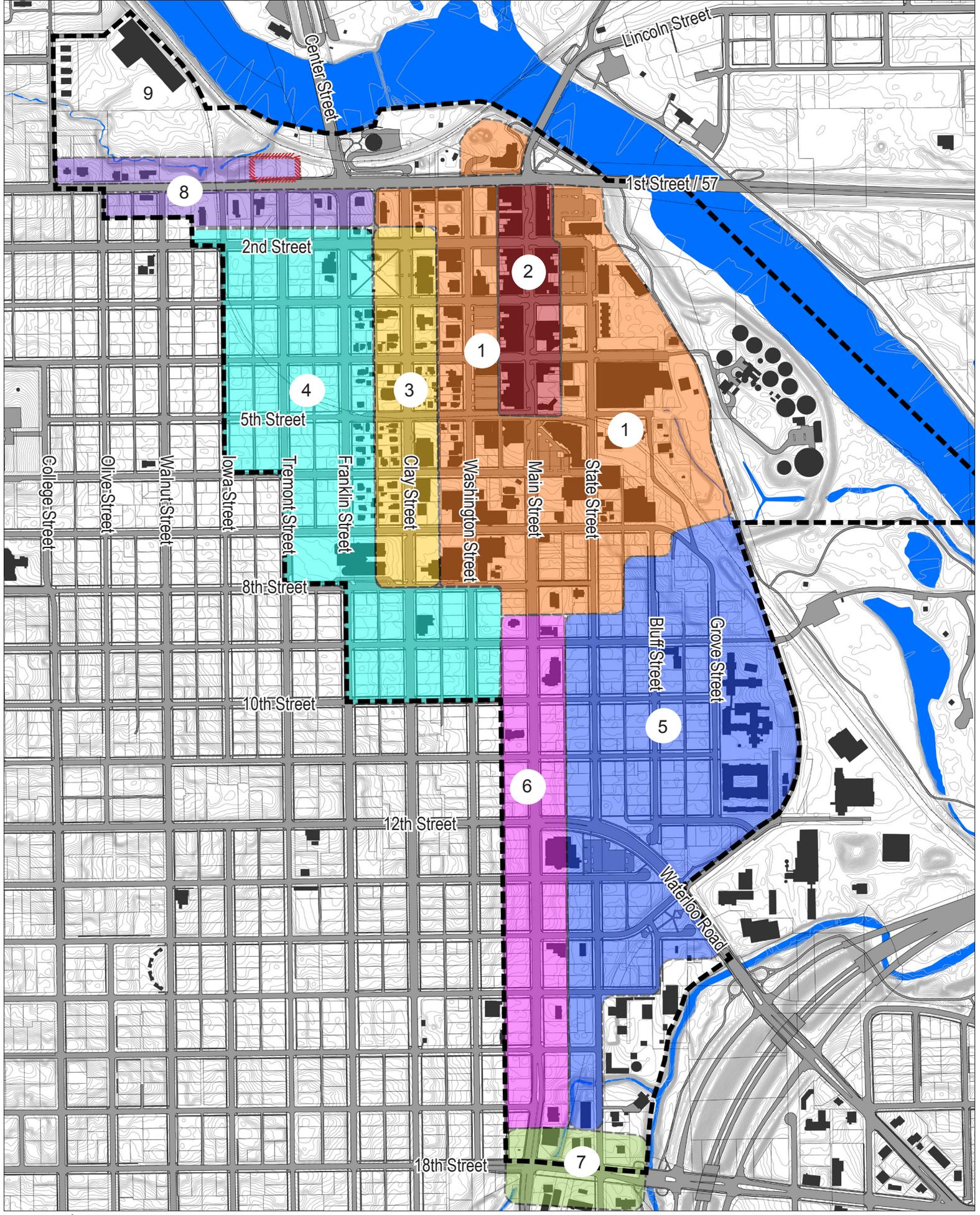
Small detached structures around a central green space, cottage courts can provide the feel of a detached home at a smaller scale. They may require oversize or atypical lots to fit within a neighborhood context.



## Accessory Dwelling Units

Apartments that are part of an owner-occupied property and can be configured over a garage, as a basement unit, or as a standalone structure. Although not currently permitted in Cedar Falls, ADUs can provide affordable housing, as well as financial assistance to the homeowner.





# Understanding Downtown: Character Areas

The Downtown Cedar Falls study area is not just one thing or one kind of place, rather it is made up of several distinct sub-areas all different in physical character, intensity and scale. Based on the context analysis, market conditions, and community and stakeholder input, the team identified the following Character Areas.

In envisioning growth and planning for the future, these Character Areas provide a framework of intent for the scale of growth and change that is desired. To what degree should each area be maintained, evolve, or be transformed? The *Imagine Downtown Plan* begins to answer that question. There are several historically significant buildings sprinkled throughout the study area that warrant additional study by the city to determine if any individual properties should be designated for special preservation standards under the updated zoning.

**1. General Downtown:** This area is what many *Imagine Downtown* Project Kick-Off meeting participants thought of as “downtown” Cedar Falls. (If the wastewater treatment plant is relocated or downsized, its redevelopable area should be included in this Character Area.)

Going forward under the *Imagine Downtown Plan*, this area will allow for growth with new downtown-type buildings—multi-story (maximum 4 to 5 stories), and aligned along the back of the sidewalk—and permitting a variety of uses including office, retail and residential. There will also be streetscape improvements to enhance the walkability of the whole General Downtown area.

During the charrette, there were some advocates for larger buildings (above 5 stories) as opportunities for economic development. A taller building may be warranted if it will fulfill a defined community goal and create a significant and quantifiable net public benefit to the community that would not otherwise be realized. However, given the growth rate of Cedar Falls, buildings taller than 5 stories could result in a number of unintended consequences, including:

- Significantly increasing the cost of construction, which may require a high level of public subsidy;
- Increasing the costs to provide adequate parking (either in land area or in construction costs for structured parking);
- Creating an incentive for a developer to “cannibalize” another remote site to provide the needed parking, creating an unfriendly pedestrian environment at the remote site.
- Absorbing demand for new growth on one or two sites, leaving other potential development sites to languish for a longer period of time.

In general, it may be more economically beneficial to spread the market demand more broadly across the downtown rather than concentrating it on one or two individual sites.

**2. The Parkade:** The historic Main Street between 1st and 5th Streets—the current “jewel” of Cedar Falls. Under the *Imagine Downtown Plan*, this area will be protected and enhanced.

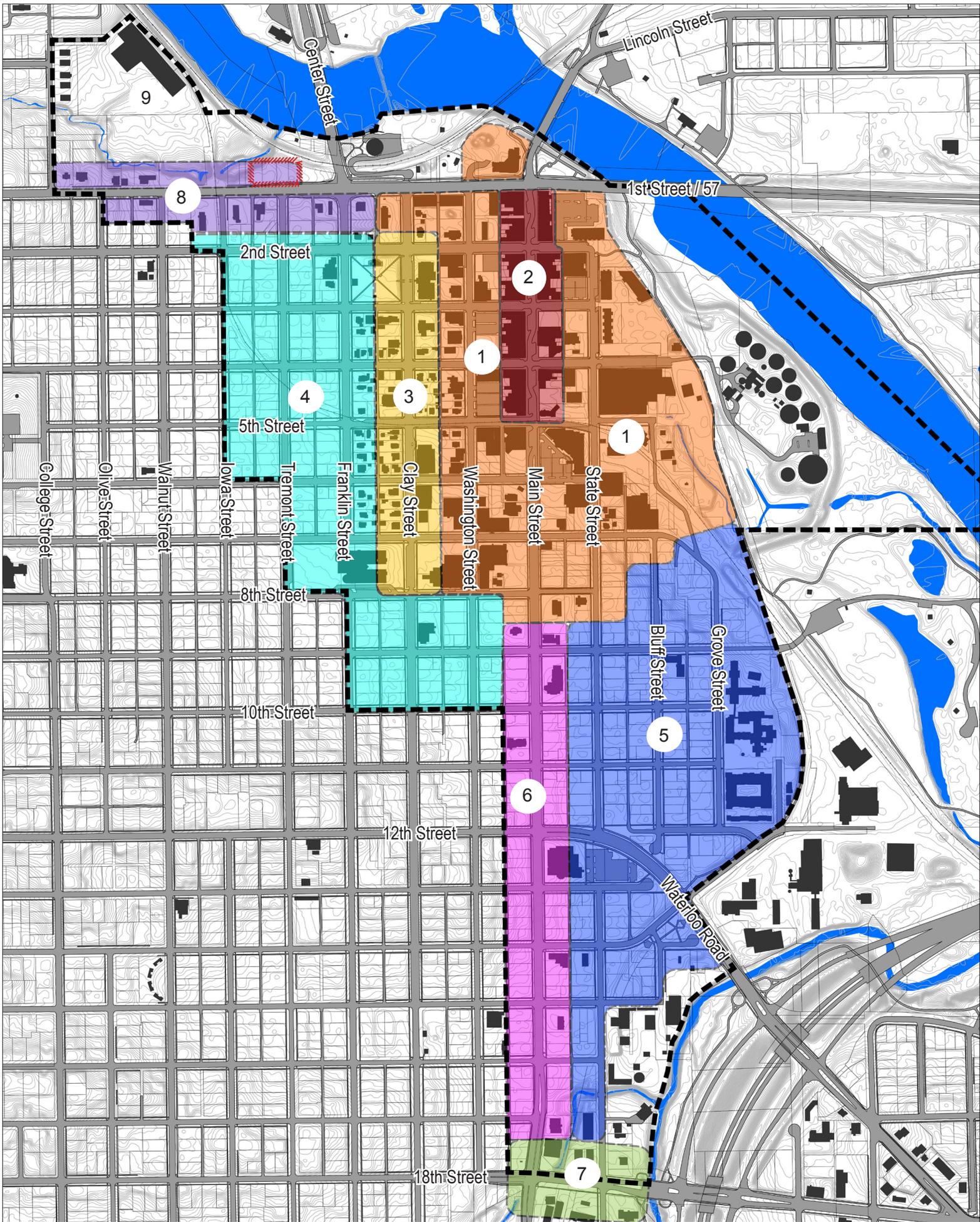
Any new construction on the Parkade will be closely modeled on the existing scale, form, pattern and materials of the historic buildings. New buildings will be no taller than the eave or parapet of the Oster Theater Building on Main and 1st Street (limited to four stories and 50 feet).

**3. West Transition Area:** A mixed-use area, generally along Clay Street, between the General Downtown and the Overman Park Neighborhood Character Areas. It is currently a mix of building forms and uses—urban and suburban, residential and office. This area serves as a transition to the more residential Overman Park Neighborhood.

New buildings, under the *Imagine Downtown Plan*, will continue to permit a mix of uses (however, new retail will not be encouraged). New structures will be limited in scale: no more than three stories in height and 120 feet in breadth or frontage (façade length along the sidewalk). The buildings will be aligned, either along the back of the sidewalk or with small dooryards. Height at the rear lot lines will also be limited, to protect adjacent single-family houses in the neighborhood. Some individual historic homes may be eligible for specific designation.

**4. Overman Park Neighborhood:** A stable, residential, neighborhood of primarily owner-occupied single-family detached houses interspersed with a few small offices, in close proximity to the Main Street Parkade. Incremental infill should be allowed—both more single-family detached houses and Missing Middle forms at a context-sensitive scale.

Under the *Imagine Downtown Plan*, this area will be protected. New structures will be limited in the scale; no more than two-and-a-half stories in height and 60 feet in breadth (along the sidewalk) with additional design, architectural and form standards to break down the building massing, and all will have front yards. Limiting the intensity allowed for new development, whether Missing Middle or not, will discourage the redevelopment of lots with existing, viable, buildings.



The development of vacant lots or derelict properties will be encouraged, but at a scale that doesn't stray far from that of the existing context.

**5. Southeast Neighborhood:** A residential neighborhood of primarily single-family detached houses, with a significant number of rental properties and a few large residential institutions. The area is bordered on the south and east by some semi-industrial buildings.

New buildings, under the *Imagine Downtown Plan*, will include infill of Missing Middle housing of a context-appropriate scale. New buildings will continue to have small front yards, be limited to three-and-a-half stories and their breadth to the street limited to 75 feet or 100 feet, depending on the context and the degree of evolution or transformation desired.

**6. Main Street Corridor (9th to 17th Streets):** A tree-lined corridor with buildings set behind small front yards, that includes a mix of single-family detached houses (some of which are being used as offices), small commercial buildings, and religious and other civic institutions.

Under the *Imagine Downtown Plan*, the “green” nature of this corridor will be maintained and enhanced. Landscaped front yards will line the street and significant improvements to the streetscape itself are planned. New buildings will be limited to three and a half stories and their length/widths to the street limited to 75 feet or 100 feet, depending on the context. Uses along the corridor will continue to be primarily residential, mixed with some office space and places of worship. New retail will not be encouraged. Service and parking will be accessed from alleys; no new curb cuts will be permitted along Main.

**7. Southern Gateway (18th Street and Main):** This is the southern entrance to the study area. The 18th and Main Street area is currently underdeveloped in a primarily highway-commercial form.

In the *Imagine Downtown Plan*, new buildings could be at a form and scale similar to the General Downtown, but with height limited to three stories (further limited where adjacent to existing residences) and lower required frontage build-out. Building uses will be flexible, allowing retail, residential and office. Redevelopment will be limited by the lot sizes and depths, and at the Main Street intersection it is further limited by the flood plain. A roundabout, as a Gateway feature to calm traffic before it enters the Main Street Corridor, should be explored. (The City's 2017 *Main Street Corridor Traffic Study* also mentioned a roundabout in this location.)

**8. Northwestern Gateway (1st Street from Franklin Street to Walnut Street):** One of the main Gateways, this corridor gives many visitors their first impression of Downtown Cedar Falls. It is currently underdeveloped in a wide range of forms, from its more urban form at the eastern edge at Main Street to scattered auto-oriented (highway) commercial at its western end. This area includes the recently designated Wilde Historic District (*outlined in red*) that will be covered by special preservation standards in the updated zoning ordinance.

New development under the *Imagine Downtown Plan* would be with urban mixed-use building forms (to define a physical/spatial Gateway) and transform this area. New buildings will be between 2 and 4 stories along the street with service access and parking lots behind, within the block interior. Major streetscape improvements to this busy road are underway and should improve the pedestrian realm and salvage walkability. Special height and setback limitations will apply to redevelopment sites that back-up to the residences fronting on along 2nd Street.

**9. Northwest Riverfront:** This is one of the Downtown study area's largest potential redevelopment sites—separated by 1st Street and distinct from the core downtown area. Residents provided minimal input about the area during the *Imagine Downtown* public visioning process (likely due to that physical separation).

Additional urban planning and design will be needed for this site. Any redevelopment here should extend the street grid and complement Downtown—and fulfill the other *Imagine Downtown* “Big Ideas”. The area may accommodate taller buildings, as long as they contribute to the desired compact, street-oriented, walkable character of the study area. The potential uses are broad—excepting that significant retail could dilute and compete with the existing Downtown retail.

*The following pages provide general parameters about specific building forms and street frontages for redevelopment in the study area. They describe the desired character of new buildings, their scale and placement on the lot, and details about the relationship to the street, including the range of variation in different character areas.*

# General Downtown Frontages



**Maximum Building Height:**  
4-5 stories\*

**Facade Transparency:**  
Ground floor 33-80%;  
Upper floors 20-70%

**First Finished Floor Elevation:**  
Minimum 0-3 feet, depending on use  
(residences at the street must be elevated)

**Permitted Projections:**  
Awnings, bay windows, shopfronts,  
balconies, and signs

**Ground Floor Ceiling Height:**  
Minimum 11-15 feet above sidewalk,  
depending on use

**Frontage Build-Out:**  
Minimum 75%

**Permitted Uses:**  
Ground Floor: Retail, Restaurant,  
Office, Residential  
Upper Stories: Office, Residential

**Minimum Private Open Area:** 15%  
of buildable area, at or above grade

*\*varying with specific location and  
adjacencies*



This is the basic American “downtown” street frontage, once typical in towns and cities across the United States. Multi-story buildings with closely spaced entrances and windows are lined up shoulder to shoulder behind the sidewalk, filling out the block-face.

This frontage is for new downtown-type buildings: street-oriented, and mixed-use. Required throughout the General Downtown area, these frontage buildings can accommodate a range of uses, allowing retail shopfronts, office or residential buildings, and/or mixed-use buildings, with service access and parking lots in the block interior, accessed from the alley.

Where adjacent to single-family residential areas, special setbacks and height restrictions will apply, to protect the existing neighborhoods.



# Storefront Frontages



## Maximum Building Height:

4 to 5 stories\*

## Facade Transparency:

Ground floor 50-90%;  
Upper floors 20-70%

## First Finished Floor Elevation:

At grade

## Permitted Projections:

Awnings, covered entrances, bay windows, shopfronts, balconies, and signs

## Ground Floor Ceiling Height:

Minimum 14 feet clear

## Frontage Build-Out:

Minimum 85%

## Permitted Uses:

Ground Floor: Retail, Restaurant  
Upper Stories: Office, Residential

## Minimum Private Open Area:

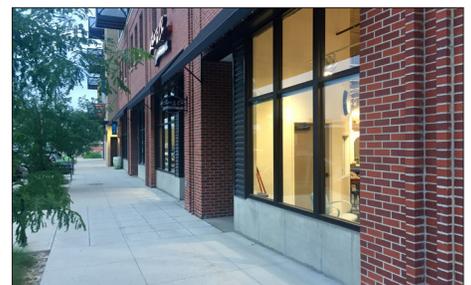
10% of buildable area, at or above grade

*\*varying with specific location and adjacencies*



The Storefront is the quintessential American “main street” frontage, with retail and restaurant uses on the ground floor and residences or offices upstairs. The overall building form is the same as the General Downtown frontage, but with large display windows across the ground floor facade and frequent entrances along the street.

This frontage will be required in the Parkade Character Area and permitted in the General Downtown Character Area.



# Missing Middle Small Frontage Type



**Maximum Building Height:**

2.5 to 3.5 stories\* excluding basements

**Facade Transparency:**

20-70%

**First Finished Floor Elevation:**

Minimum 3 feet, maximum 8 feet above sidewalk

**Permitted Projections:**

Bay windows and balconies

**Ceiling Height:**

Minimum 9 feet clear

**Frontage Build-Out:**

Minimum 50 to 75%\*

**Continuous Facade Length:**

Maximum 65 feet

**Permitted Uses:**

Residential, Home Office

**Minimum Private Open Area:**

15% of buildable area, at grade

*\*varying with specific location. The half-story refers to allowing habitable space within the roof—an Attic Story*



The character and intensity of the Missing Middle frontage varies but is generally moderate, linked to its Character Area. It is often a series of smaller structures—configured as single-family detached, attached or stacked flats.

This scale of Missing Middle is more limited—in its height and footprint, specifically to comfortably fit into the existing context, allowing redevelopment and limited intensification of the Downtown-adjacent neighborhoods. These frontages generally have rear yards and parking accessed from an alley. The alignment of new building facades to the street and sidewalk will be closely tailored to work with the existing context, typically providing a small front yard.

# Missing Middle Medium Frontage Type



**Maximum Building Height:**

3.5 to 4.5 stories\* excluding basements

**Facade Transparency:**

20-70%

**First Finished Floor Elevation:**

Minimum 3 feet, maximum 8 feet above sidewalk

**Permitted Projections:**

Bay windows and balconies

**Ceiling Height:**

Minimum 9 feet clear

**Frontage Build-Out:**

Minimum 50 to 75%\*

**Continuous Facade Length:**

Maximum 75 to 110 feet\*

**Permitted Uses:**

Residential, Home Office

**Minimum Private Open Area:**

15% of buildable area, at grade

*\*varying with specific location. The half-story refers to allowing habitable space within the roof—an Attic Story*



This scale of Missing Middle is tailored to comfortably fit into the existing context and is linked to its Character Area. It is a step up in intensity and scale from the Small Missing Middle frontages, allowing redevelopment and limited intensification of these Downtown-adjacent neighborhoods.

These frontages generally have rear yards and parking accessed from an alley. The alignment of new building facades to the street and sidewalk will work with the existing context—the buildings may be placed close to the sidewalk with stoops, or further back with front porches and small dooryard gardens.





**PLAN KEY**

 Existing Buildings	 Wilde Historic District
 Potential Infill Buildings	 Main Street Historic District

# The Vision

*The **Imagine Downtown Plan** includes an illustrative master plan, showing prototypical redevelopment scenarios throughout the district, incremental infill of downtown sites, and re-imagined downtown streets. It is aspirational and provides a framework for future investment, growth and development. The focus is on the overall urban form and character of the district rather than the design of individual buildings.*

This is a vision document, and it explores various “what if…” scenarios. Its foundation is the public input from the hands-on session and it illustrates urban design solutions within the Cedar Falls context that translate the “big ideas” from the citizens’ work into physical form.

The illustrative master plan shows one way in which development may occur in the Downtown Cedar Falls study area—a possible future build out of the area, assuming most underutilized parcels are redeveloped. It assumes no time line, as the market generally determines the pace of growth and investment. The plan respects the existing context and suggests where mixed-use (residential with commercial) makes sense, and areas that should be primarily limited to residential.

Residents described (and drew) a district where a variety of activities are possible, including living, working, shopping, and playing, all within close proximity. While the automobile should be accommodated, the district should be a place that pedestrians feel safe and comfortable undertaking a variety of daily activities—where someone will walk by choice, not only by necessity! This plan focuses on the urban design or overall form of the district. The buildings pictured are intended to illustrate scale and character—there are multiple alternative building designs that would fulfill the same plan intent.

The economy and transportation infrastructure will play significant roles. How do you change the character of auto-dominated streets to make them pedestrian friendly? What will it take to bring in the number of new residents and office workers necessary to support a broader variety of retail and promote economic development? What are the best locations for new public space? How do you improve the physical connections between adjoining neighborhoods? What needs to happen first? The pages that follow provide guidance and direction.

## Downtown Vision Plan Design Principles

1. Buildings are aligned and close to the Street: buildings and street trees provide a sense of enclosure, framing and defining the Public Realm (or Street-Space).
2. Reconnect or expand the street grid whenever possible—always preserve existing streets and alleys.
3. Buildings oversee the Street-Space with windows and doors: these “eyes on the street” contribute to safe and vital public spaces.
3. Buildings should occupy block corners (reducing the perceived pedestrian crossing gap and maintaining the Street-Space)
4. Buildings are designed for the city: buildings aren’t simply pushed closer together (that is sub-urban development) but are designed for the urban setting. Views are directed to the street and rear yard/garden, not into the neighbor’s property.
5. Vehicle parking, garbage, and mechanical equipment, should be kept away from the Street-Space.



# Illustrative Projects: *Visualizing Change Before It Occurs*

The pages that follow illustrate several “what if” redevelopment scenarios to further explore what is shown in the Illustrative Plan in specific locations, at the scale of both buildings and streetscapes. For any of these scenarios there are several different building design possibilities, both in configuration and style. The images are intended to provide a sense of an appropriate scale, massing, and siting, rather than specific architectural design or aesthetic.

- 1. Visualizing Change: New Downtown Side Streets** (currently illustrated on p. 46-47)
- 2. Prototypical Project: Mixed-Use Parking Ramp off Main Street.** (see page 48)
- 3. Prototypical Sites: Main Street from 6th to 7th Streets.** (see page 49)
- 4. Prototypical Project: Parkade Civic Green and Mixed-Use Ramp.** (see page 50)
- 5. Prototypical Sites: General Downtown Blocks** (see page 51)
- 6. Prototypical Project and Visualizing Change: Clay and 4th - Missing Middle** (see pp.52-53).
- 7. Prototypical Project: Grove and 11th - Missing Middle** (see pp.54)
- 8. Prototypical Project: Grove and 7th - Missing Middle** (see pp.55)
- 9. Prototypical Project: Main and 13th - Missing Middle** (see pp.56)
- 10. Prototypical Project: Waterloo/12th Street.** (see page 57)
- 11. Prototypical Project: East Viking Pump Site.** (see page 58)
- 12. Prototypical Project Wastewater Treatment Site.** (see page 59)

## Re-Imagining Downtown Streets

- Main Street Corridor** (see page 60)
- 3rd to 6th, Parkade to Alley** (see page 61)
- 3rd to 6th, Alley to State/Washington** (see page 62)
- State Street** (see page 63)
- Washington Street** (see page 64)
- 12th/Waterloo Street** (see page 65)
- Franklin Street at Overman Park** (see page 66)

PLAN KEY	
 Existing Buildings	 Wilde Historic District
 Potential Infill Buildings	 Main Street Historic District

# Visualizing Change: New Downtown Side Streets



## Existing Condition

Looking west, down 4th Street, away from Main Street.

This is in stark contrast to the Parkade environment and requires people to walk through a long stretch of asphalt, along narrow sidewalks and blank building walls, with no street trees for shade.



## New Public Infrastructure

Here public investments in infrastructure begin to re-shape the environment.

Now there are wider sidewalks, increased street lighting, proper planting areas for street trees interspersed with the angled parking, and narrower travel lane widths.

The public realm is improved for both pedestrians and automobile drivers.



## An Urban Parking Ramp

This view includes the redevelopment of the half-block from the alley to Washington, between 3rd and 4th, with a prototypical mixed-use parking ramp, with active uses fronting the street.

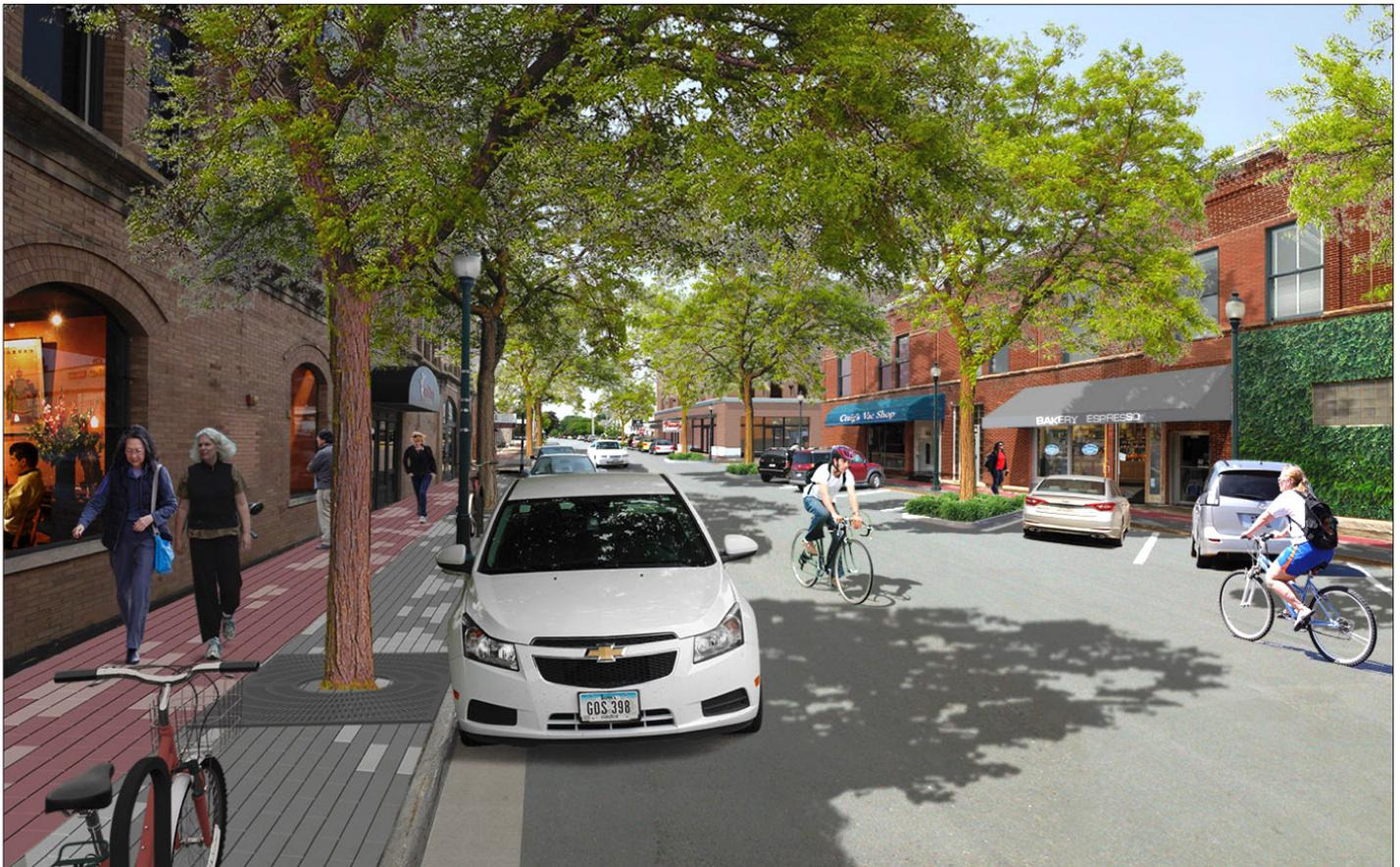
This greatly increases the available parking adjacent to the Parkade. (see page 48)

# Visualizing Change: New Downtown Side Streets



## A Sense of Place

Here the private sector responds to the investment in the Public Realm. Existing historic buildings are re-used. Formerly blank walls are carefully opened up with new shopfronts, doors, and windows. Pedestrian traffic between the Parkade and the ramp (and other on-street parking) creates retail opportunity.



## The Downtown Vision in Full

In this view, street trees have been planted in beds in on the north (right) and in a continuous planting trench (with porous pavers or a bridging slab) on the south; bicycle parking has been added.

With the addition of viable street trees, bicycle facilities, and opened building facades with active frontages, the street is reclaimed as complement to the Parkade. The buildings and street trees provide a sense of enclosure, creating a comfortable public realm and excellent place for working, shopping, dining...and living. This is a street that is “good for business” and an incentive for more private sector investment. More information on a prototypical Mixed-Use Parking Ramp follows.

# Prototype Project: Mixed-Use Parking Ramp



Proposed Mixed-Use Parking Ramp (see also page 49)



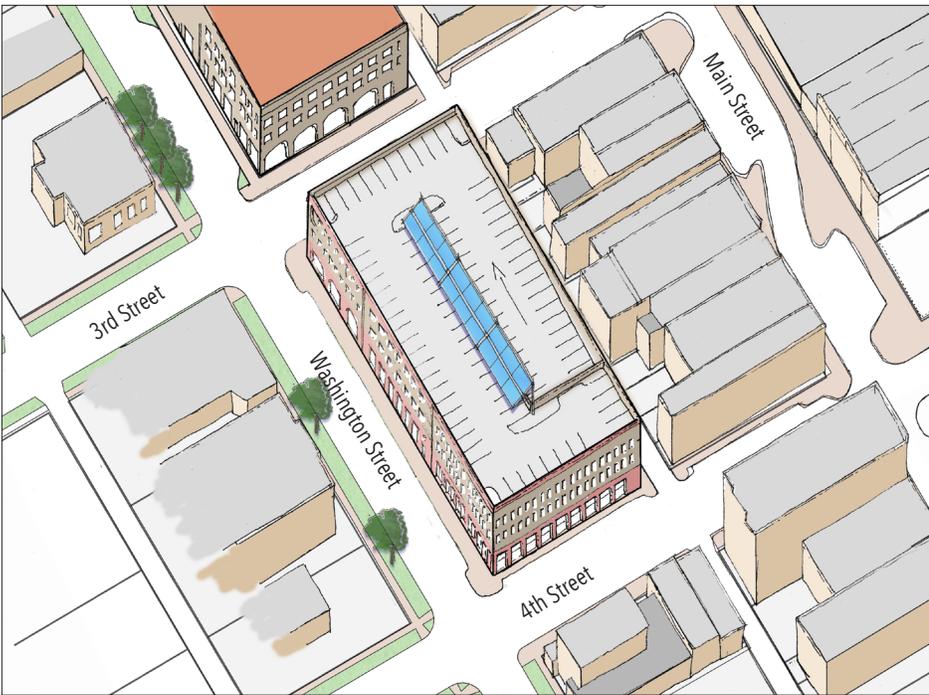
Comparable Parking Ramp, Arlington County, VA

## Vision: a Mixed-Use Ramp

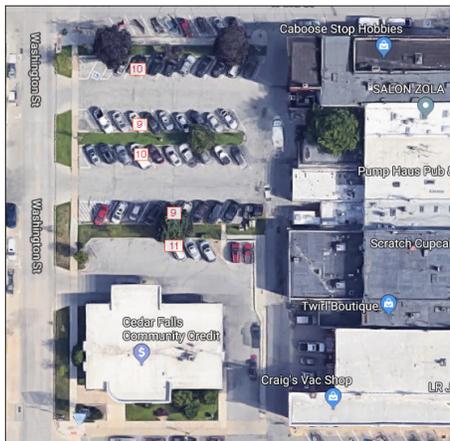
This prototypical redevelopment would include active ground floor space fronting the sidewalks on Washington, 3rd and 4th streets. Parking is increased from 49 spaces (2019 count) to approximately 276 spaces on this half-block.

This is an illustrative project; such a mixed-use parking ramp could fit on several different downtown blocks along State or Washington Streets. A half-block is the minimum size for a reasonably efficient and cost effective ramp. The minimum space needed for car circulation is fixed and a smaller ramp starts to require more circulation than it provides in parking.

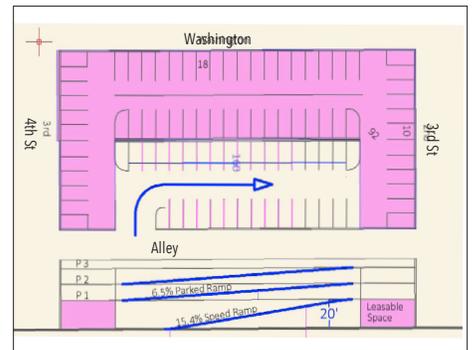
The example drawn to the left includes solar panels on the top parking level, which could also serve to provide covered parking.



Sample Existing Condition

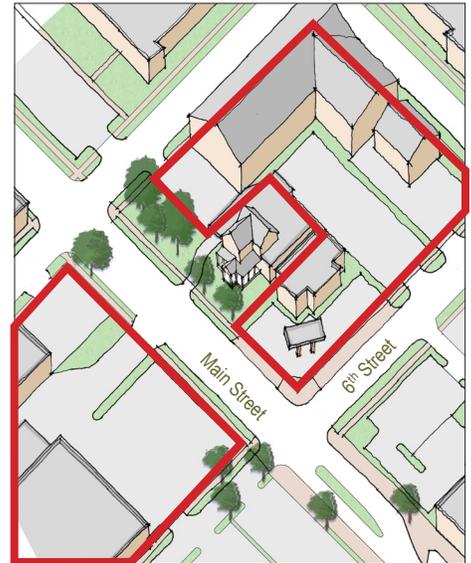


Sample Existing Condition, 49 parking spaces

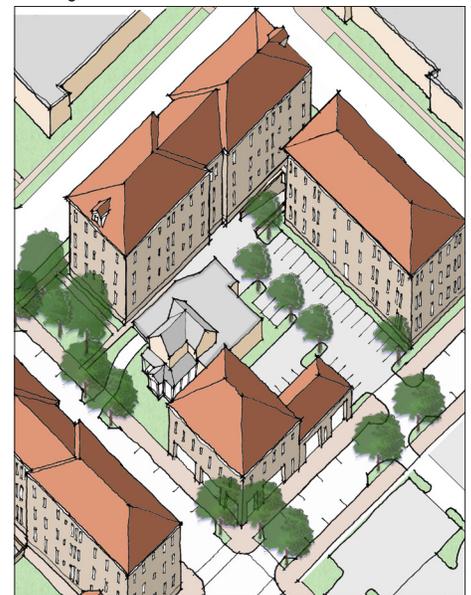


Parking Ramp Configuration Diagram, Plan and Section

# Prototypical Sites: Main Street/6th-7th



Existing Condition



3-Story Version on Washington & 7th Street sides

## Vision, General Downtown

Buildings located at back of sidewalk with active ground floor uses, and parking on interior block surface lots and under buildings (note the ramps coming off the alleys in both blocks). In these examples, a reasonable amount of parking is provided on-site. Uses are flexible, but may be limited by market and parking demands, as some users might want more. (See a full parking ramp option on p.50)



Potential General Downtown building forms with flexible uses, shopfront to office to all-residential

# Prototypical Sites: Parkade Gateway & Mixed-Use Ramp

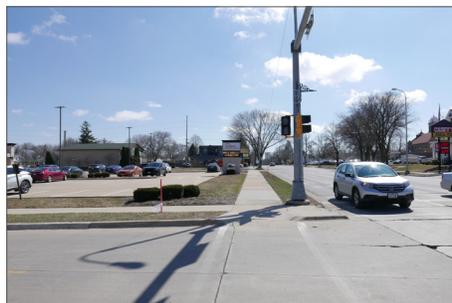


## Vision: What if...

In searching for a location for a new public green, the parking lot in front of the library and community center stands out. However, this parking is critical for these two public facilities.

What if...a new mixed-use ramp could be provided between 6th and 7th streets, directly across from the Community Center? Some amount of accessible parking spaces would need to remain on the Library site; however, if much of it could be relocated across the street in a mixed-use ramp, this area could be converted to a new beautiful public green, creating an much improved southern gateway.

A small plaza could be created in the near term, but in order to create a usable green, these two projects would need to be undertaken in tandem.



## Existing Condition

Three surface parking lots and a gas station provide an uninviting southern gateway to the heart of Downtown.

# Prototypical Sites: General Downtown Blocks



## Building Height/Intensity and Parking

The prototype buildings shown here are of modest heights, illustrating typical building square footage that could also accommodate reasonable parking demand on-site without requiring a parking “ramp” above or below grade.

For greater building heights (and use intensity) the market will likely demand additional parking, which will require a new approach to providing and managing parking (see p. 17).

Building heights above 5 stories require a different and more expensive construction type—often making structures from 6 to 10 stories cost prohibitive.

## Vision, Downtown Blocks

Buildings with active facades line the downtown streets and define the public realm, improving walkability as well as the business environment. Parking is provided in the block interior, on surface lots (as drawn above) or under the building (see drawings on previous page), or in a mixed-use parking ramp.

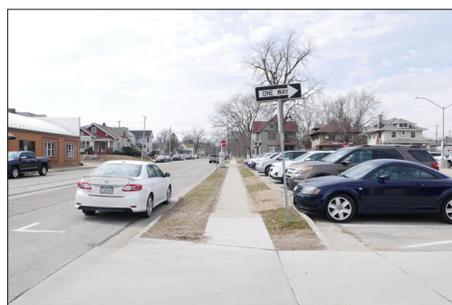
New building along Downtown streets represent economic development opportunities. A great deal of value (new tax base) can be created in the downtown by having active buildings along all the streets.



Existing Surface Parking on Downtown Building Lots

## Existing Conditions:

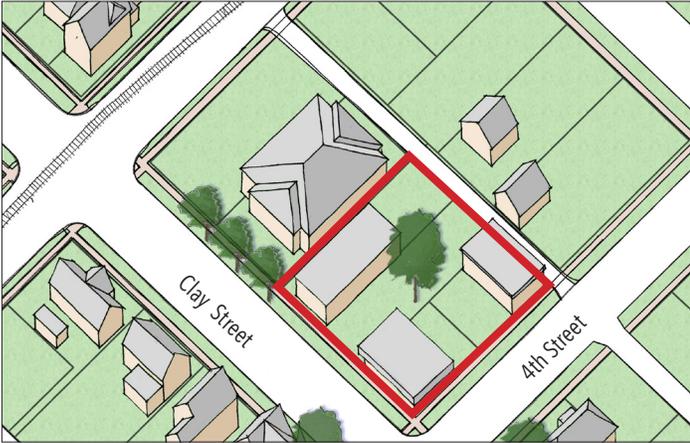
Much of the Downtown land near the Parkade and Main Street is given over to surface parking lots. These provide parking for current uses, but but make no contribution to the City’s tax base or its walkability and quality of life, and limit opportunity for growth and economic development.



Surface parking lots along the sidewalk... erode the Public Realm

Imagine Downtown!  
November 2019

# Prototypical Site: Clay and 4th – Missing Middle



## Existing Condition

A standard Downtown quarter-block site, currently with one-story buildings, surface parking, and a vacant lot, serviced by an alley.



**Rowhouses.** Facing the street with small front yards, and private backyards. Surface parking or detached garages accessed from the alley.



**Two Small Apartments.** Two-and-a-half or three-story buildings. Parking is provided off the alley.



**Small Courtyard Apartment.** A residential building with a courtyard entrance and shared rear yard. Parking is provided off the alley.

# Visualizing Change: Clay and 4th

## Existing Condition

View toward the southwest, looking across the intersection of Clay and 4th streets. The existing one-story office buildings are very different than the surrounding context. They present blank walls to the street, with minimal windows and doors along the sidewalk. They also under-utilize their sites, given their proximity to the center of the downtown.



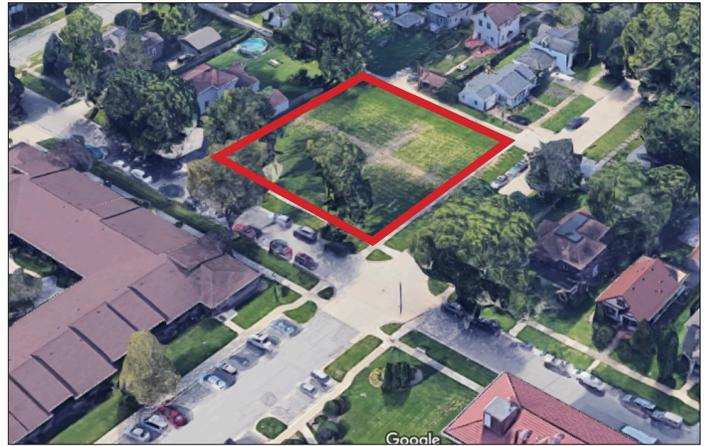
## Potential Redevelopment

The same lots could be redeveloped in several forms, as illustrated on the previous page. This “before and after” sequence demonstrates a rowhouse configuration. Parking is provided off the alley to the rear, behind the new buildings, and on-street. These buildings could be used as offices, live-work units, or residences.



**Full Vision:** This view adds investments in public infrastructure to the property frontage: street trees and proper travel lane widths. This is now a pleasant place to walk that contributes to the quality of life (and tax base) of the city.

# Prototypical Site: Grove and 11th – Missing Middle



**Existing Condition** This site is a standard quarter-block in a traditional Cedar Falls neighborhood. It includes two vacant lots, with street frontage on two sides and alley access at the rear.



**Rowhouses** Three sets of Rowhouses. Parking is accessed from the alley. These could also be configured as stacked flats (small apartments).



**Two Small Apartments** Two or two-and-a-half story buildings, fully integrated into the neighborhood. Parking is provided at the back of the lot. Small detached structures at the back of lot could be additional units or garages.

# Prototypical Site: Grove and 7th – Missing Middle



## Existing Condition

A large, underutilized and irregularly shaped corner lot, embedded within an existing traditional neighborhood, with alley access.



## Cottage Court

Several small cottages front around a central green space. The layout of the site is oriented to the neighborhood, rather than internally. It maintains the street edge, defining the public realm through both building placement and street trees. Parking is provided at the rear of the lot, accessed from the alley.



Drawing by architect Ross Chapin, from AARP website.

Cottage courts can provide a housing option for people who desire a detached single-family house, but with considerably less upkeep, expense, and maintenance. Individual cottages are typically small, with 1 to 2 bedrooms at most.

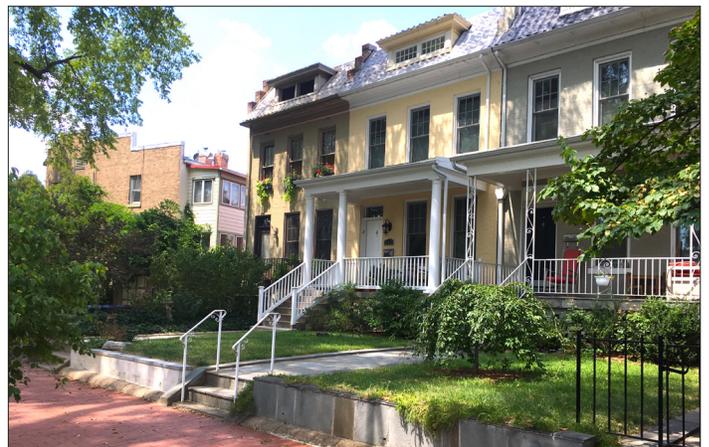


# Prototypical Site: Main and 13th – Missing Middle



## Existing Condition

A standard quarter-block site, along the Main Street Corridor. Currently vacant property.



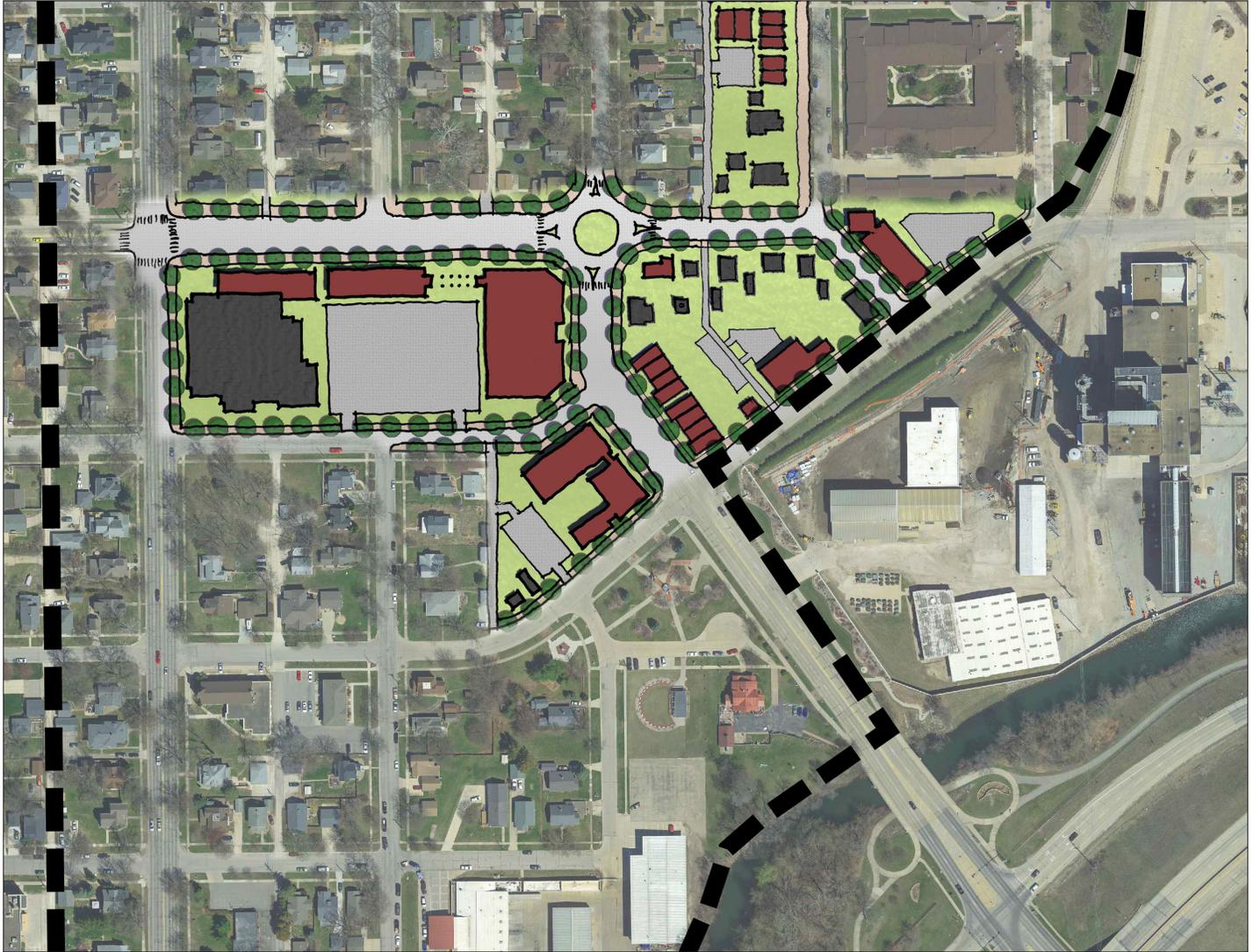
## Rowhouses

This scenario was explored in conjunction with the “greening” of the corridor (*see page 68*). In character with the existing context, this group of rowhouses have front yards matching the existing context. Each house has a back yard and a detached garage accessed off the alley. The rear garages could include upper-story granny flats.

Rowhouses—or Attached Single-Family Houses—provide an affordable housing option for people who desire a single-family house, but with considerably less upkeep and maintenance.

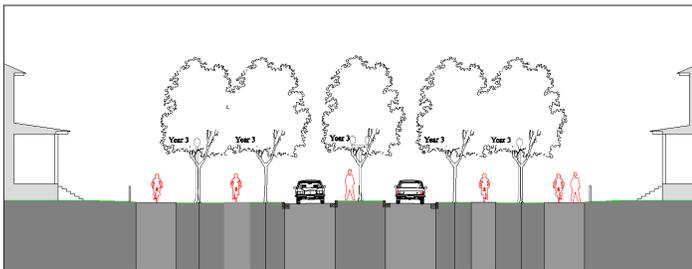


# Prototype Project: Waterloo Road / 12th Street

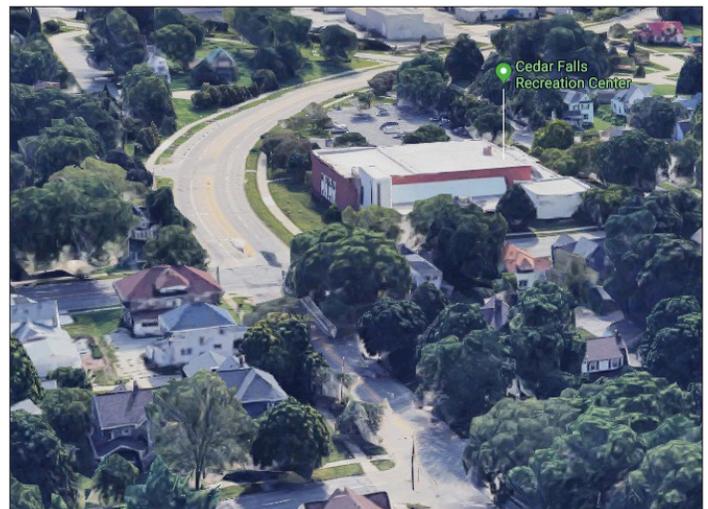


## Vision

This “what if...” scenario proposes a reconfiguration of Waterloo Road/12th Street. Traffic coming into the neighborhood from the highway will be calmed as this new street pattern will send the clear signal that this is a neighborhood—no longer a high-speed environment. This will reconnect the neighborhood north and south of Waterloo and improve both pedestrian and auto connections. A traffic study will be necessary prior to implementation. This arrangement creates new, buildable land area along the street frontage. This illustrative drawing shows several potential new buildings along 12th/Waterloo Streets, more parking, and new street and pedestrian connections. (see page 66)



Proposed Waterloo/12th Streets Center Left Turn Lane / Treeed Median



## Prototype Project: East Viking Pump Site



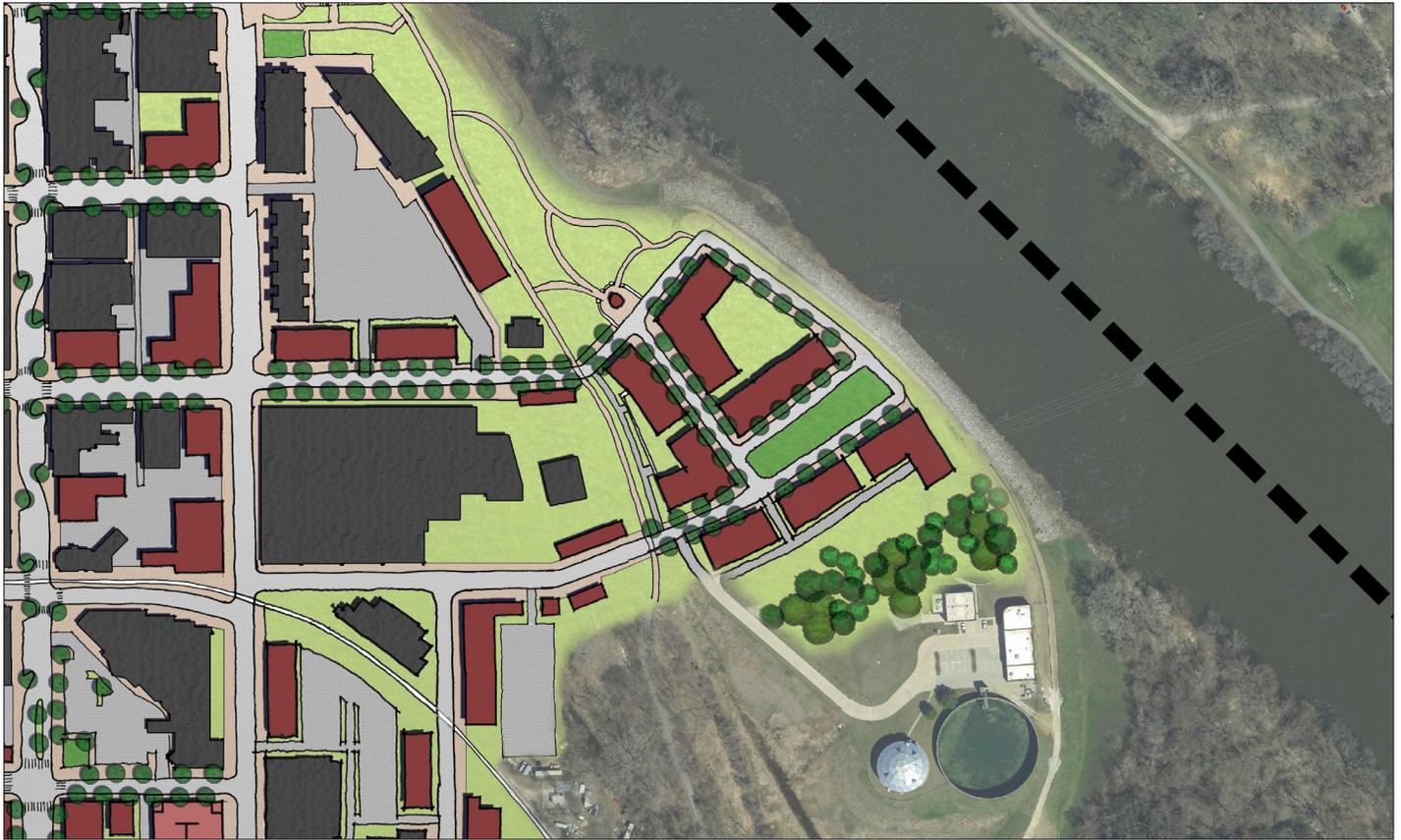
### Potential Redevelopment: What If...

This is a “what if...” scenario, wholly at the option of the Viking Pump operation. The eastern portion of the property is redeveloped, allowing a large and efficient parking garage hidden behind mixed-use liner-buildings on its north and south sides. The new “liner” buildings could provide new office or R&D space for Viking or their tenant(s). It would be available for the full range of uses permitted in the General Downtown Character Area.

This redevelopment would expand the Downtown environment, providing additional parking within comfortable walking distance of the Parkade and Viking Pump itself.



# Prototype Project: Wastewater Treatment Plant Site



## Potential Redevelopment: What If...

From the Public Kick-Off “strengths and weaknesses” exercise to the Charrette Week “hands-on design workshop”, the most consistent idea heard was to relocate the wastewater treatment facility outside of Downtown. While such a move would be a major public policy decision for the City, with a significant price tag, the design team did explore the possibility. *Despite the fact that there are numerous unknowns and variables at this time, the City should have clear goals for the redevelopment of all or a part of the site, should the opportunity arise.*

- Based on stakeholder interviews and technical meetings, the above schematic illustration recognizes the need for a portion of the treatment facility to remain on-site, including a pump station and a detention/retention tank, even if the principal operations are relocated.
- Some of the unknown variables include: the minimum land area required for the remaining operations; limitations on and/or expense of redevelopment and construction due to soil quality (previous fill), water table, or potential brownfield hazard issues that might limit future uses.

As this site represents the potential single largest redevelopment parcel within Downtown, the opportunity to address several *Imagine Downtown Plan* aspirations should not be ignored. In addition to relocating the wastewater plant, another popular idea throughout the public visioning process was to create new public green space in Downtown. Due to the built-out nature of the study area, there are almost no locations where this might occur. The wastewater treatment facility property provides an exception.

This illustration addresses several key goals that should be included in any redevelopment scenario.

- Reintegrating the site into Downtown through the extension of the street grid
- Providing a public (or publicly accessible) green space to reconnect Downtown and the Cedar River, creating more value for private redevelopment on adjacent parcels
- Accommodating a range of housing types
- Creating additional parking (under the building plinth and the green spaces)
- Maintaining approximately 50% of the site as a public wastewater facility (as well as the existing levee)

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# Re-Imagining Downtown Streets

Streets are a community's first and foremost public spaces and should be just as carefully designed and planned as any park or public building. The character of the street—both its scale and its details—plays a critical role in determining the quality of the pedestrian realm in a given location.

Streets must balance the needs of all forms of traffic—auto, transit, bicycle and pedestrian—to maximize mobility and convenience for all residents and users. Street character will vary depending on location and design: some will carry larger volumes of traffic and provide a more active and intense urban pedestrian experience while others will provide a less active and more intimately scaled street-space.



*The street sections on the following pages are presented as models for future street reconfigurations (and for any new street construction) in the Downtown Study Area. The narrow lane widths are recommended—as auto traffic in the Downtown Study Area should be slow moving. (However, all lane widths are subject to adjustment.)*

These models are proposed in pursuit of Downtown Mobility (*see p.16*), with the goal of moving people, not just cars. They show one way to balance the different mobility and quality of life interests competing for the public rights of way in the Downtown. Getting the design of the street “right” can mean the difference between a vibrant, walkable, and economically successful Downtown and a downtown that is just a “pass-through” for motorists.

The configurations proposed are one way to balance the various demands of a great street space and achieve the overall goals of the *Imagine Downtown Plan*.

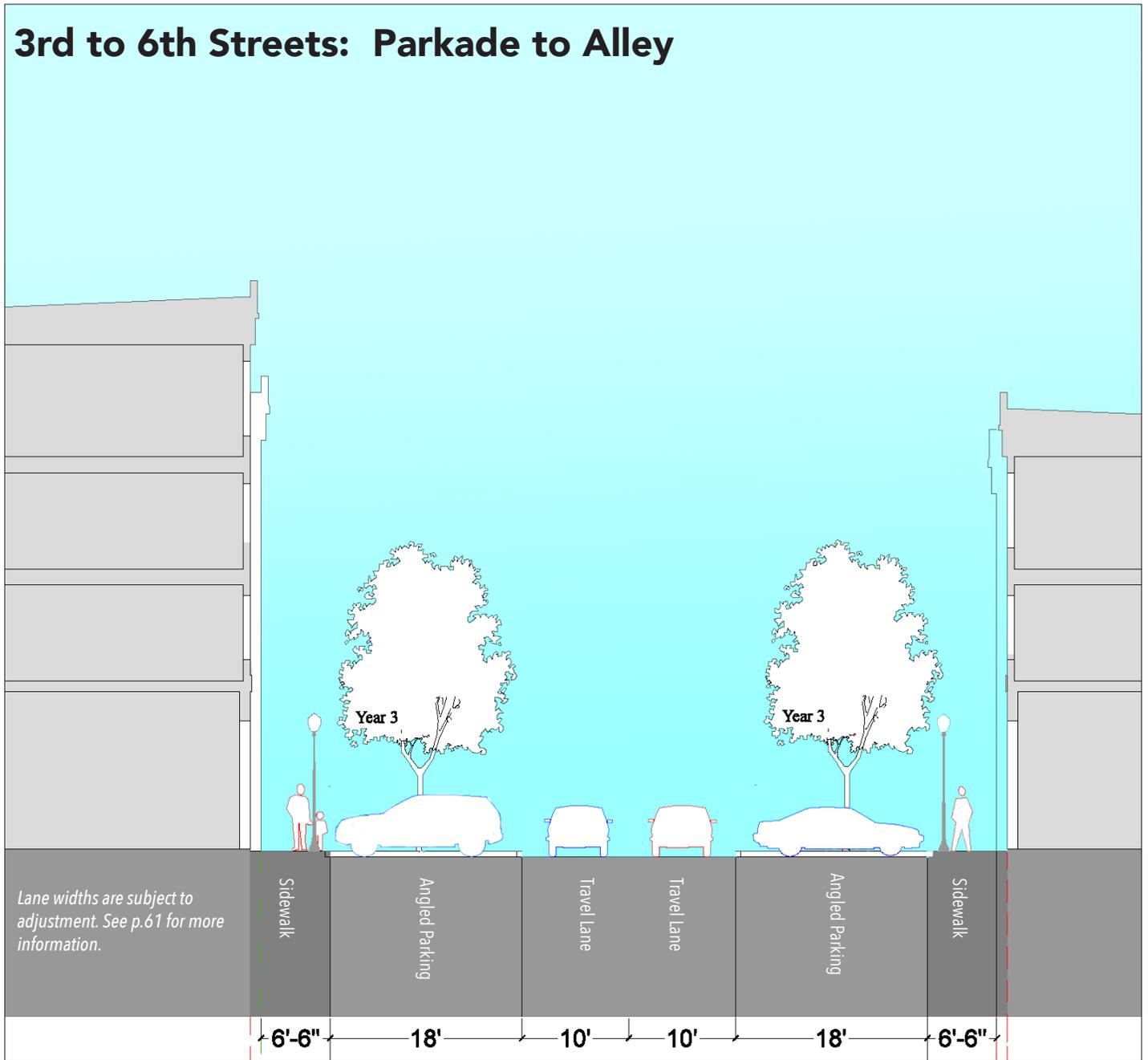
## Street Design Principles

*The appropriate design of streets is one of the most important elements of the **Imagine Downtown Plan**.*

- Designing for continuous free-flowing traffic creates situations where vehicles will travel at speeds greater than desirable for pedestrians.
- With appropriate street designs, drivers choose slower speeds and less aggressive behavior, a feat typically not achieved through basic speed limit signage/postings.
- The interconnected street network in Downtown allows traffic capacity to be diffused and maintained across numerous streets.
- Differences between “requirements” and “preferences” can be significant—increased lane width and the accompanying increased vehicle speed more often than not decrease the overall safety for pedestrians.
- On-street parking slows passing vehicular traffic and acts as a buffer between moving vehicles and pedestrians.
- Overall function, comfort, safety and aesthetics of a street are more important than efficiency alone.
- In the Downtown Study Area, non-vehicular traffic should be provided with every practical advantage so long as safety is not adversely affected.
- Street design should take into consideration what is reasonably foreseeable, not every situation that is conceivably possible.
- Designing a street to facilitate (rather than accommodate) infrequent users may actually be the wrong design for the frequent users of the space.
- When the street design creates a conflict between the vehicular and non-vehicular user, it should be resolved in favor of the non-vehicular user.

# Re-Imagining Downtown Streets

## 3rd to 6th Streets: Parkade to Alley



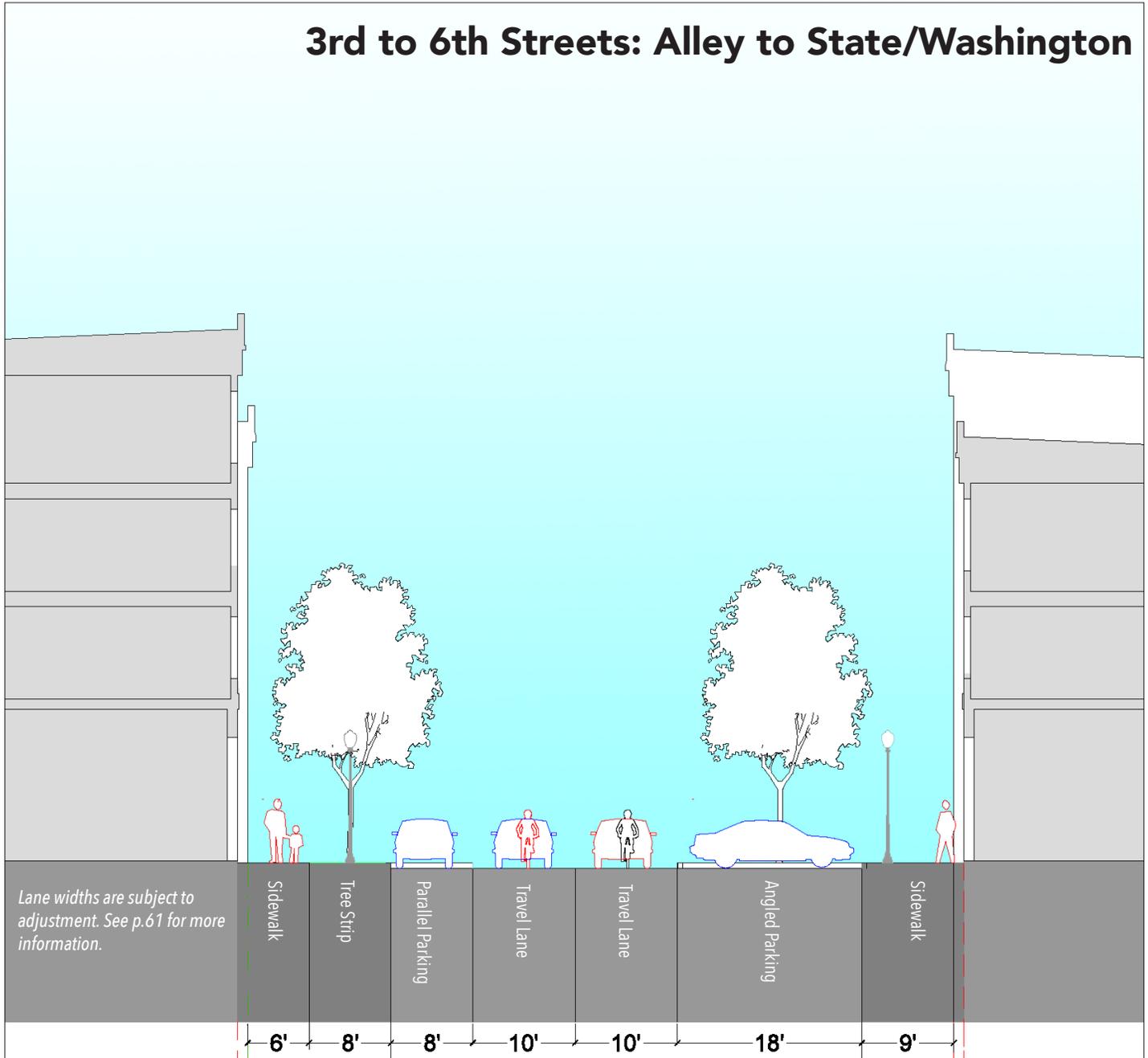
### Side Streets: Walkability Improvements

The streets just off the Parkade are a sharp contrast to the Parkade itself. The concrete and asphalt expanse is barren and unfriendly for the pedestrian and business owner alike; they are a barrier to walkability and contribute to a sense that ‘there isn’t enough parking in downtown’ even though there are public parking lots a mere half-block away.

This street section is recommended for the half-block between Main Street and the alley, increasing parking immediately adjacent to the Parkade, with head-in angled parking on both sides of the street (currently only on one side). This re-configuration narrows the auto travel lanes—allowing space for better sidewalks and some street trees to provide shade and greenery.



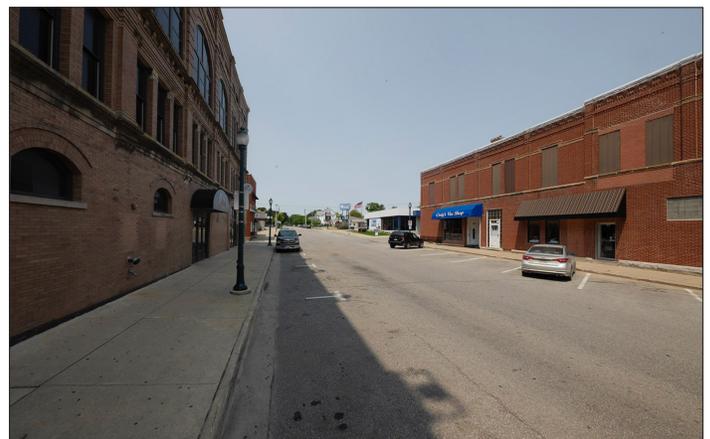
## 3rd to 6th Streets: Alley to State/Washington



### Side Streets: Walkability Improvements

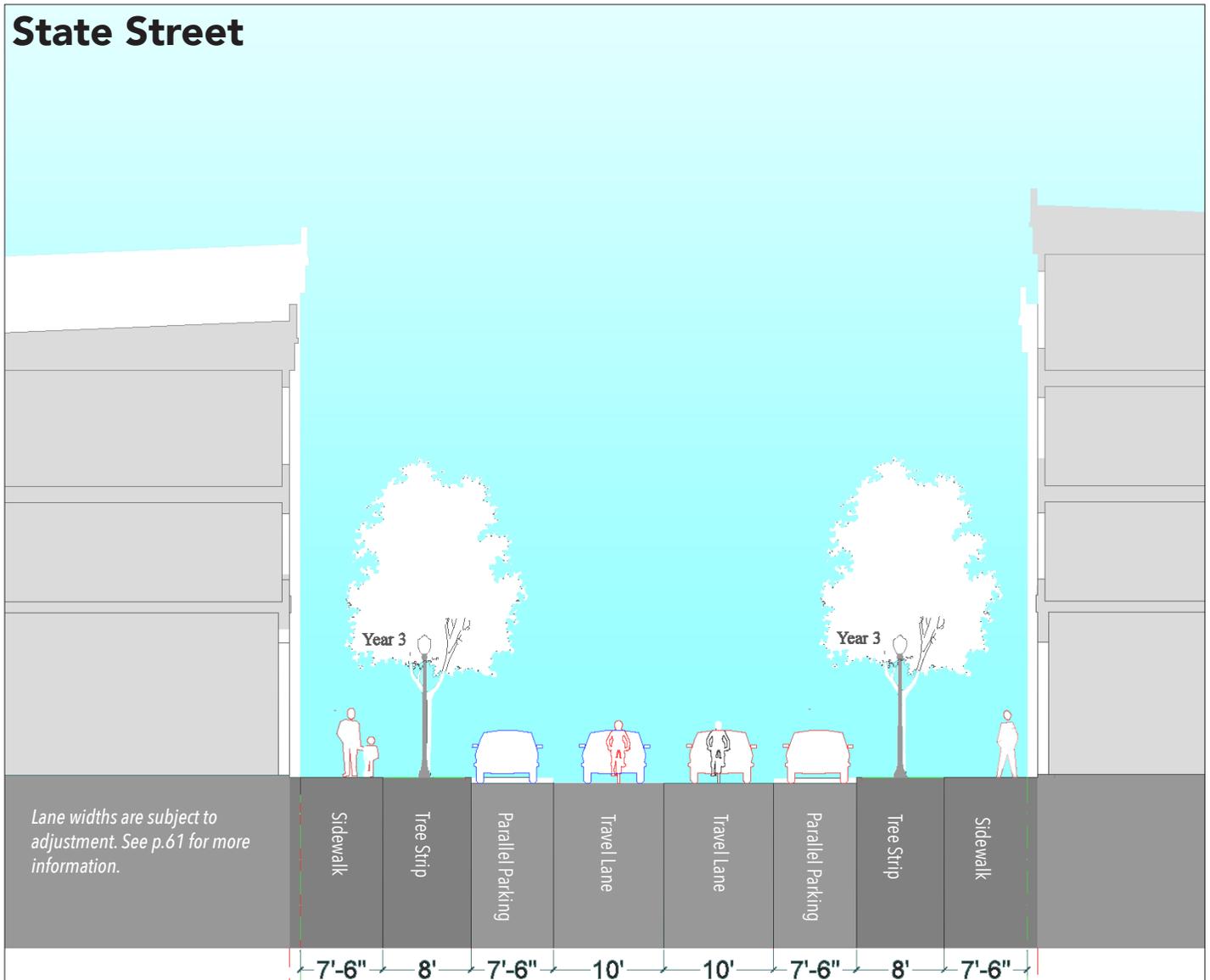
The above street section is recommended for the half-block from the alley to the next parallel street (State or Washington), providing a better pedestrian environment and transition to the surrounding areas—while retaining the current amount of parking.

This re-configuration works with the general position of the existing curbs, narrowing the automobile travel lanes. This configuration reapports the excess asphalt, increasing the sidewalk space and making provisions for some street trees to provide shade and greenery. This new street will be a more positive environment for pedestrians and businesses.



# Re-Imagining Downtown Streets

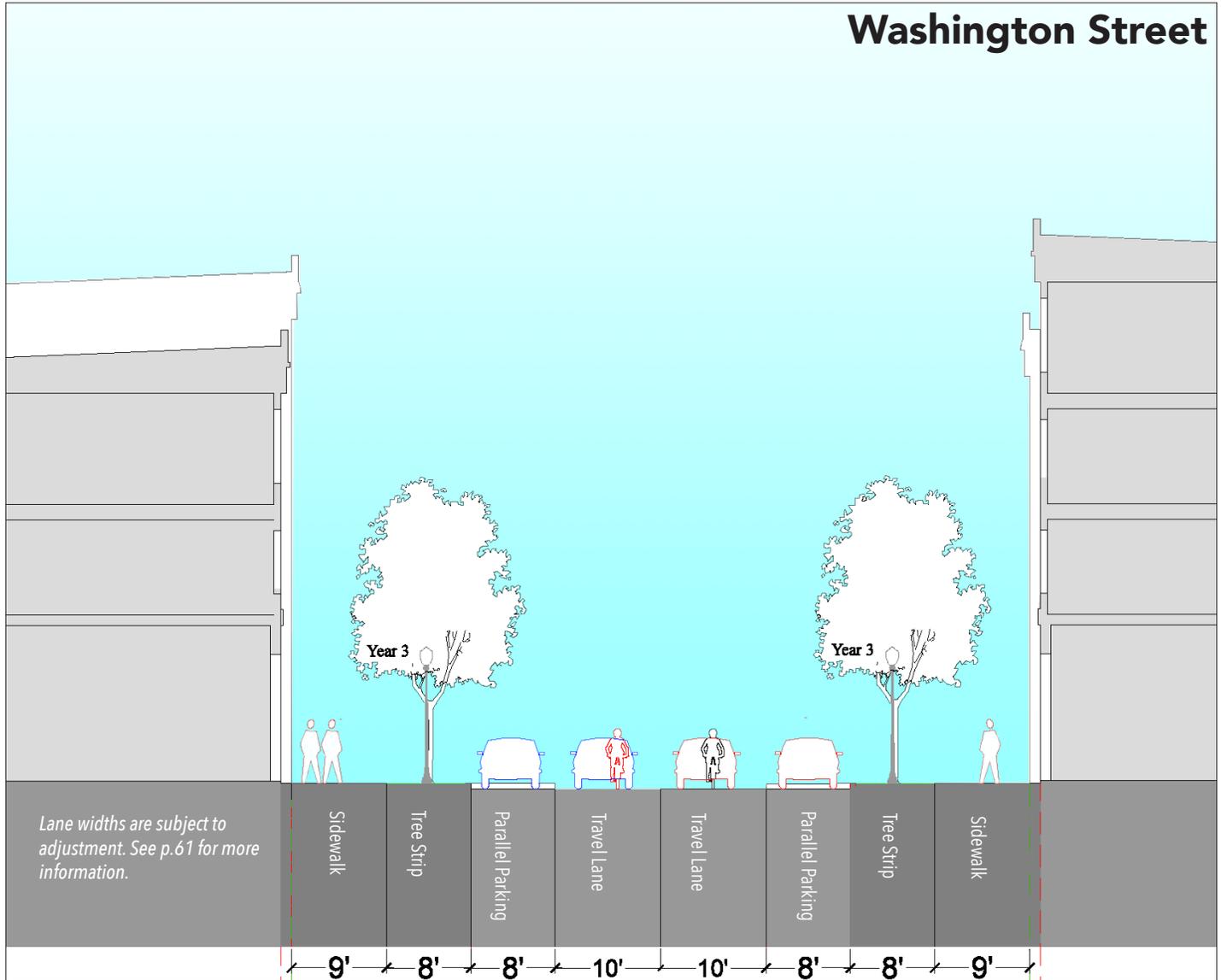
## State Street



### State Street: Walkability Improvements

State Street has a good underlying structure and scale—but the automobile travel lanes are excessively wide (speed-inducing) and the pedestrian is underserved. The above configuration reapportions some of that excess, increasing the on-street parking and the sidewalk space.

## Washington Street



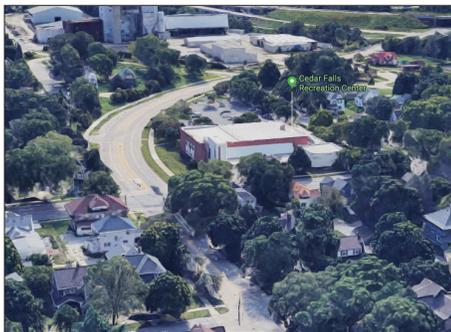
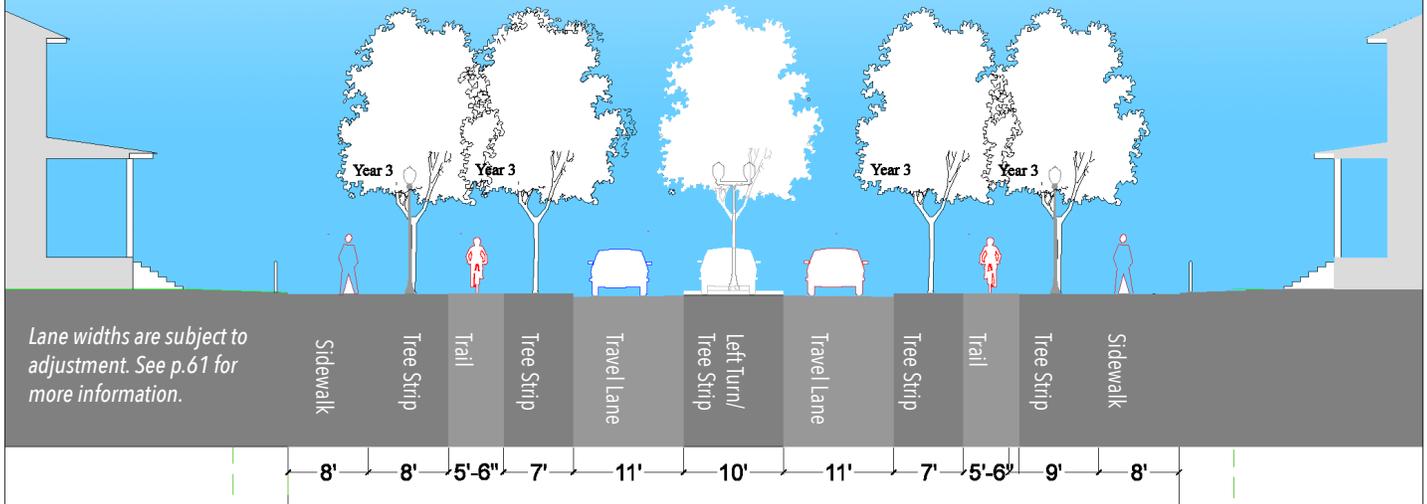
### Washington Street: Walkability Improvements

Washington Street starts with a good structure and scale. Its right-of-way is slightly wider than State. Like State, the automobile travel lanes are excessively wide (speed-inducing). The above configuration reappropriates that excess, increasing the on-street parking and the sidewalk space.



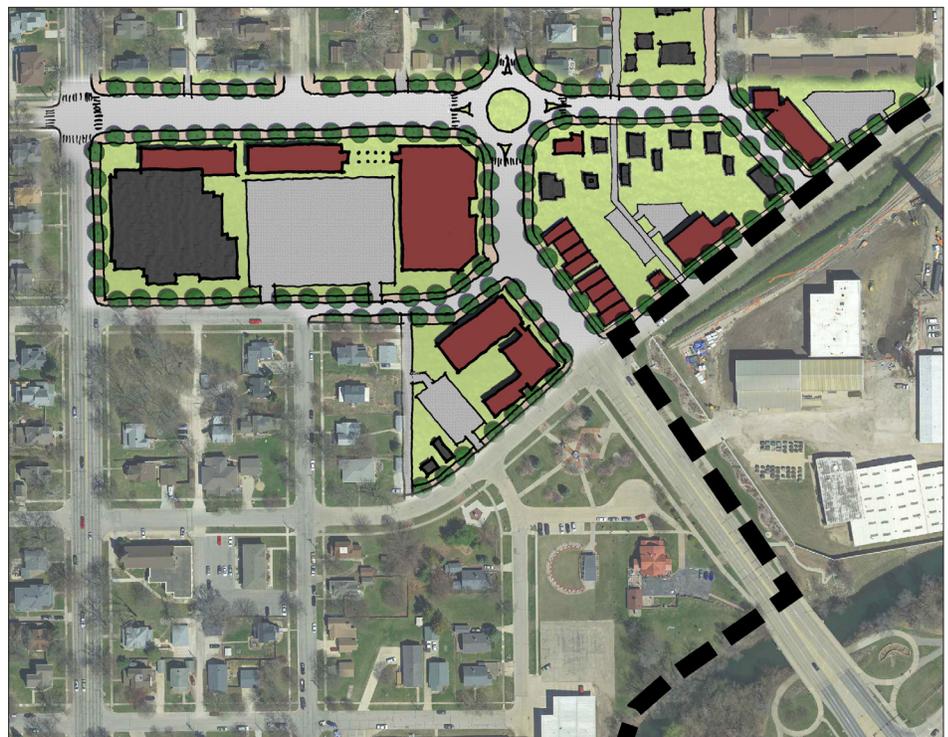
# Re-Imagining Downtown Streets

## 12th Street / Waterloo Road



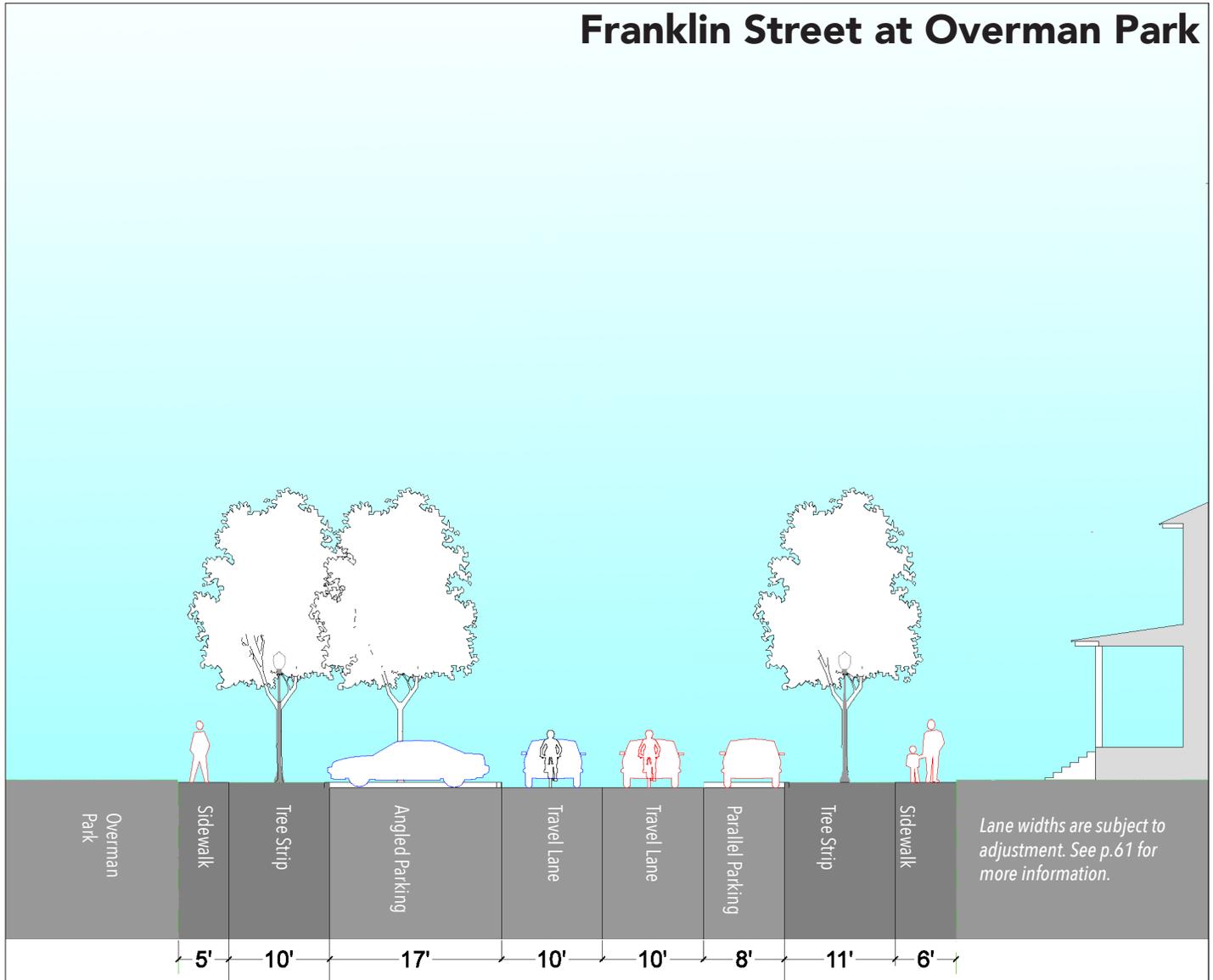
This reconfiguration creates new, pedestrian friendly versions of Waterloo Road and 12th Street. This will help re-connect the neighborhood with itself. The Recreation Center will now be more accessible by foot and bicycle.

This new gateway to Cedar Falls will be a memorable tree-lined boulevard. (see page 57)



# Re-Imagining Downtown Streets

## Franklin Street at Overman Park



### Franklin Street at Overman Park: More Parking and Trees

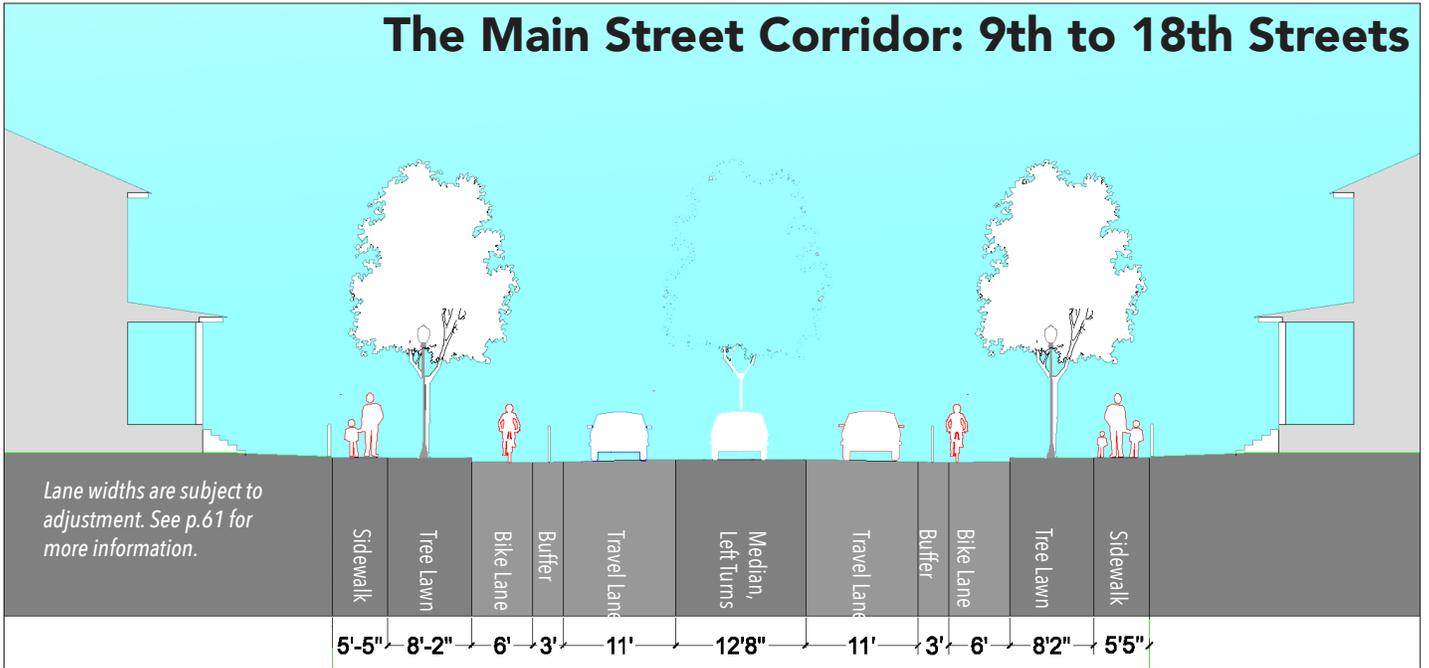
This configuration addresses two things: increasing the available parking for events at Overman Park and narrowing the travel lanes on Franklin to a width more appropriate for neighborhood travel. This reconfiguration does not change the existing curb lines. The new angle-in parking along Franklin should have ‘bump-outs’ at the intersections of 2nd and 3rd streets—with new street trees planted, adding to the shade and green of Overman Park.



View looking south down Franklin Street. Overman Park is on the left.

# Re-Imagining Downtown Streets

## The Main Street Corridor: 9th to 18th Streets



Current view looking north up Main Street toward 7th Street.



Illustration showing treed median/left turn lanes.

### Greening the Main Street Corridor: What if...

There was a clear consensus during the community visioning process to increase the Downtown tree canopy, in general, and to maintain and enhance the “green” character of this section of Main Street.

Based on the current and projected traffic, this section of Main could be redesigned to reduce congestion created by vehicular left turns and improve pedestrian and bicycle safety, while also accommodating generous tree lawns and a (periodic) treed median. These changes would create a more inviting public realm that could also assist with stormwater management and reduce the heat island effect that is common in downtown environments. Character improvements like this enhance walkability and property values while also better defining the gateway into the heart of Downtown.

This proposal builds on the City’s 2017 *Main Street Corridor Traffic Study*: adding a treed median/left turn lane and bike lanes as part of a 4-lane to 3-lane conversion. The above configuration retains the capacity to carry twice the current traffic, maintaining flow and improving safety by removing turning vehicles from the through-lane.

### The Case for a Road-Diet<sup>1</sup>

- This section of Main Street currently carries a volume of +/- 9,000 vehicles per day (vpd)
- The capacity for a 4-lane undivided road like Main Street is +/-27,000 vpd; capacity for 3-lane road would be +/-18,000 vpd (which is well above current volumes)
- Main Street could realize volume growth of approximately 2 times current traffic with 3 lanes
- On urban streets, capacity is dictated by turns at intersections and into driveways
- The addition of a turn lane removes left turning vehicles from travel lanes, allowing traffic to continue to flow
- In most peer ‘road diet’ cases, volumes stay steady or vary slightly; in no cases does a road “lose” half its volume
- Volume and capacity are different things

<sup>1</sup> Analysis provided by Wade Walker, PE., Alta Planning and Design

The preceding pages illustrate potential redevelopment projects that show one way in which the *Imagine Downtown Vision Plan* might be implemented over time. Each example—whether *Visualizing Change*, a *Prototypical Project or Site*, a *What If...* scenario, or *Re-imagining Downtown Streets*—addresses one or more of the plan goals and recommendations. Those goals and recommendations are based on a synthesis of stakeholder interviews, site and market analysis, and community aspirations gathered during the course of the *Imagine Downtown Project*. Similar redevelopment projects could be undertaken in other locations within the Imagine Downtown study area.

The timing of plan implementation and sequence of redevelopment projects will depend on public, private, and non-profit sector involvement, decision-making, and investment, within the context of the local Cedar Falls market. As new projects are proposed, they should be evaluated based on how well they fulfill the following.

## SUMMARY OF PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

See the Executive Summary on pp. 2-3 for a brief description of each.

- **Increase the “sense of place” throughout Downtown.**
- **Define the public realm with active building facades and additional street trees.**
- **Design Downtown Gateways to provide a sense of arrival.**
- **Expand beyond the success of the Parkade as a destination environment.**
- **Implement the street and sidewalk rebuilding program to improve the pedestrian environment and enhance walkability.**
- **Understand the market and use it to create more housing and employment options.**
- **Change the rules for development.**
- **Create a consistent process for development review and approval.**
- **Update the current parking requirements.**

# NEXT STEPS

The **Imagine Downtown Project** was initiated not only to establish a road map or framework for future growth and development, but also to provide inspiration for the quality and character of that development. The ideas presented in this plan will be implemented in partnership between the City and the private and non-profit sectors—and at the behest of the citizens of Cedar Falls. Each group has an important role to play. Some tasks are already underway, while others can be undertaken in the near-term, with others requiring more time (depending on the completion of prior tasks, market conditions, etc.) to be implemented over the medium- and long-term.

## Recommended initial steps to implement the Imagine Downtown Plan

- Move forward with plans to rebuild downtown streets and plant street trees to improve walkability and the overall the public realm.
- Continue implementing Parking Study strategies.
- Establish an entity or authority to manage (a new approach to) parking and related revenue.
- Determine preferred location(s), and evaluate financing mechanisms, for a public-private parking ramp to support existing Downtown activity centers and future growth.
- Adopt new zoning for the entire Downtown Study Area, with the express purpose of plan implementation and an emphasis on the appropriate form and character of new development.
- Endorse Downtown Street cross sections *in concept*.
- Consider proposed road diets (4- to 3-lane conversions) when and where feasible.

Implementing the *Imagine Downtown Plan* will require cooperation and collaboration between all involved. The city can write the rules and provide the infrastructure, but it will require private sector investment to build the compact, mixed-use walkable place envisioned by the community. The updated zoning and new development review process should make it easy for people who meet the new standards to build the community vision for Downtown Cedar Falls.

# APPENDIX

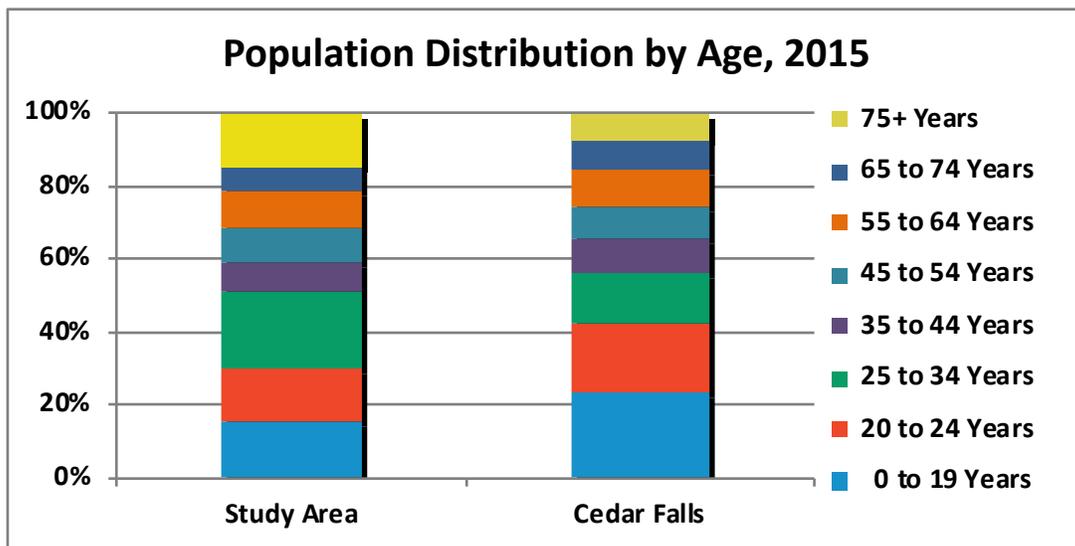
*The following documents and studies were produced during and in support of the **Imagine Downtown Visioning Project** process.*

• <b>Market Considerations Report</b>	<b>71</b>
• <b>April 2nd Project Kick-Off Event – Attendee Survey Results</b>	<b>79</b>
• <b>Visual Preference Exercise Tally</b>	<b>81</b>
• <b>June 6th Charrette Work-in-Progress Presentation – Exit Survey Results</b>	<b>84</b>

## Demographics

Cedar Falls' demographics have implications for Downtown's future development. The city's population has grown 6.1 percent since 2010, adding roughly 2,400 new residents and just under 1,100 new households. The Downtown study area has an estimated 1,500 residents living in over 700 households – 4.5 percent of the city's households.

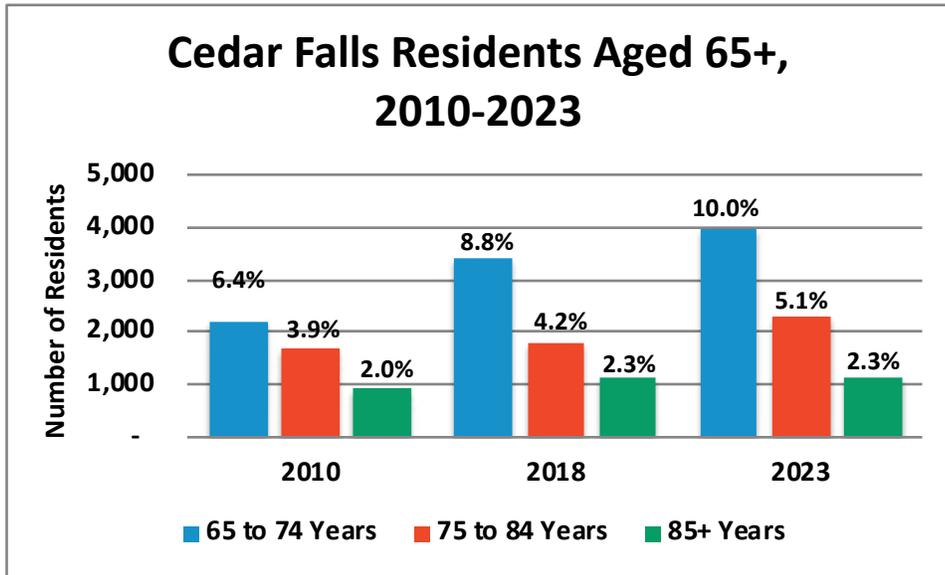
By age, the study area's population differs significantly from the citywide population. Residents aged 25 to 34 represent 22 percent of the study area population and 14 percent of the city population. Thanks to the presence of the Western Home retirement community, the study area's share of residents aged 75 and over is significantly larger with almost 15 percent of all residents as compared with just over 7 percent citywide.



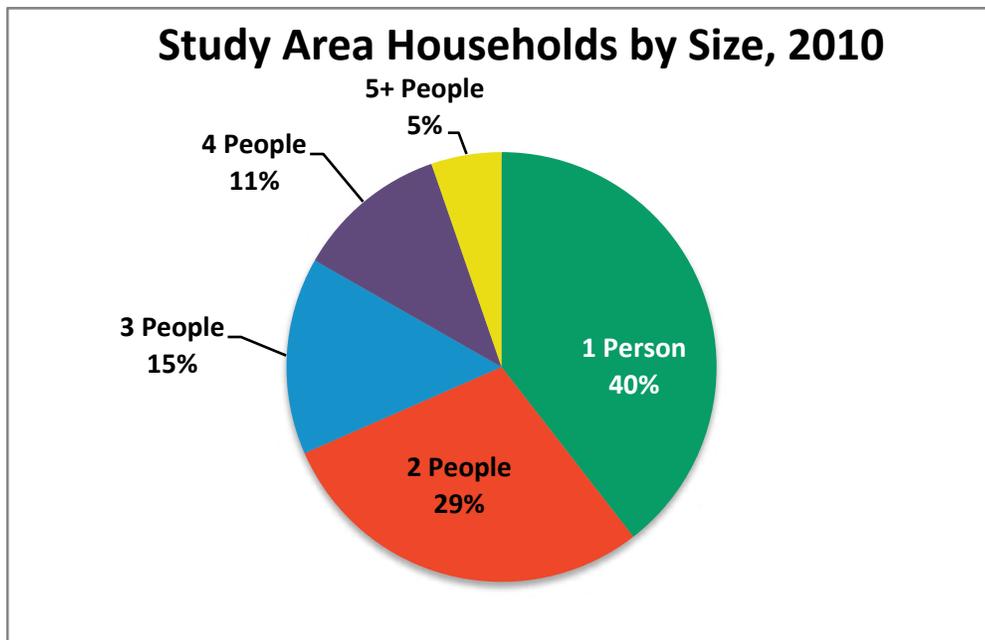
Over the next five years, the age distribution will shift as the generations age. The younger Baby Boomers (the generation born from 1944 to 1964) will be turning 65, and older Millennials (the generation born between 1981 and 1996) will be over 35. The number of young adults aged 20 to 24 is projected to decline by roughly 100 people from 19.1 percent of all residents in 2018 to 18.3 percent in 2023 as Generation Z (born from 1997 to 2015) replaces Millennials. These shifts will have implications for the housing market.

ESRI, a national demographic data provider, projects that the 35 to 44 age cohort will grow by about 800 people by 2023. Many Millennials have delayed marriage and childbearing, so many more may settle down and buy homes in the next few years. Currently, 53 percent of those aged 25 to 34 own their homes as compared with 78 percent of those aged 35 to 44. This shift will create opportunities for townhouses, duplexes and other more affordable starter housing.

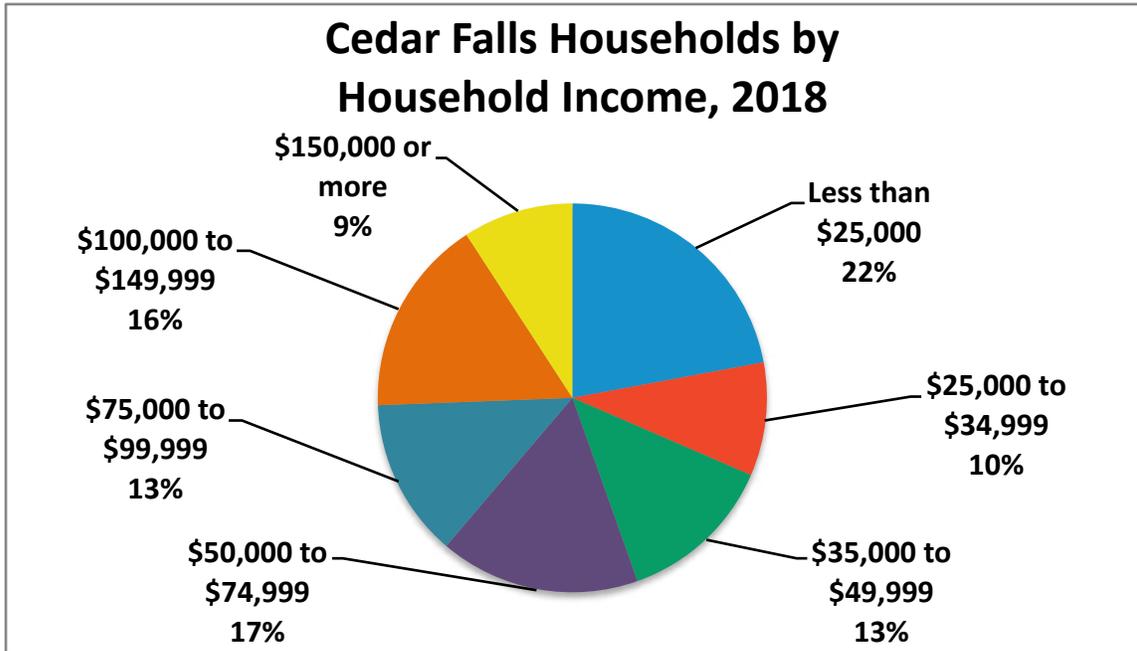
Citywide, the aging of the Baby Boom means that the number of people aged 65 to 74 will increase by more than 500 people by 2023. That may generate more demand for empty-nester housing for those who no longer need their large family homes and prefer to be able to travel without worrying about yard upkeep. The increase in the population over the age of 75 will translate into higher demand for independent and assisted living options.



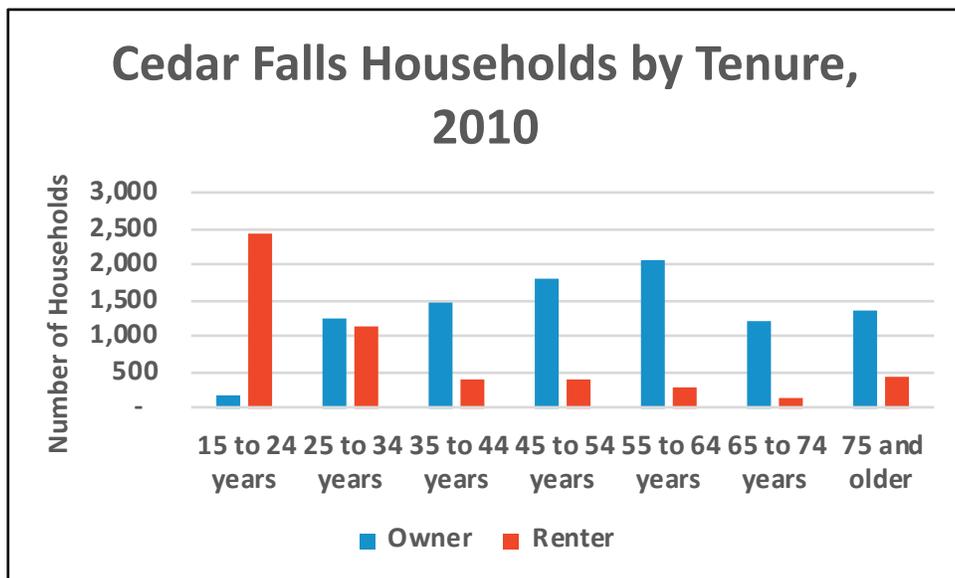
Household sizes are relatively small with more than 64 percent of households having only one or two persons. Though many small households still choose to live in single-family houses larger than they need, this suggests potential demand for both multi-family units and smaller single-family houses, including townhouses, duplexes and other “missing middle” types of housing sized between detached houses and multi-family apartments or condominiums. Downtown is well positioned to meet this demand, at least for households with higher incomes. With the presence of Western Home and a higher share of multi-family housing, the study area’s average household had 2.03 persons in 2010 as compared with 2.37 persons in the city as a whole. Forty percent of study area households were people living alone.



Cedar Fall households have a median household income of \$56,200 with 39 percent having incomes of \$75,000 or more and 26 percent with incomes of \$100,000 or more. Study area incomes are slightly lower with a median of \$54,000.

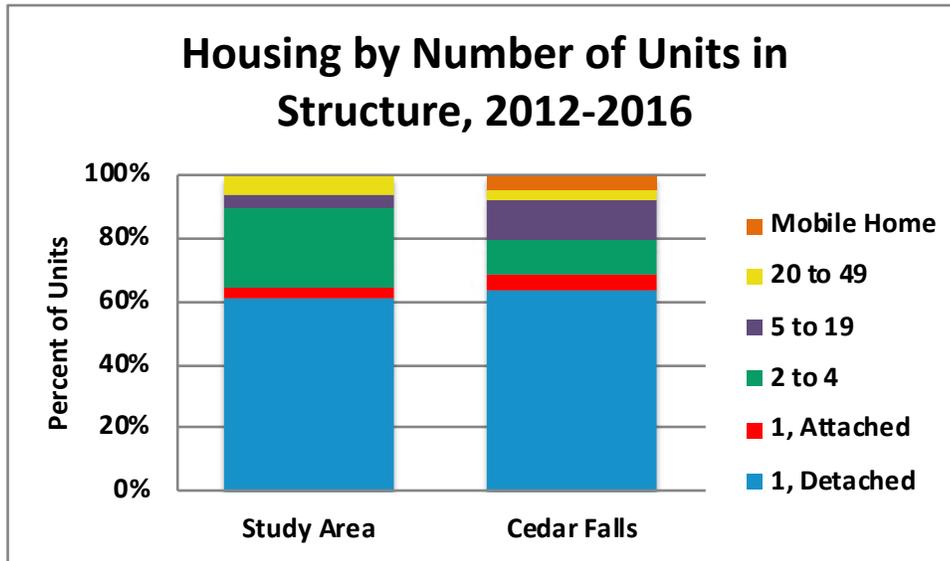


Just under 65 percent of Cedar Falls households own their own homes, up from 64 percent in 2010 but down from 73 percent in 2000. By age, most renter households are headed by an individual under the age of 35, but not all. Based on data from 2010, the share of each age cohort that rents declines from 47 percent of those aged 25 to 34 to 22 percent for those 35 to 44 down to 11 percent for those 65 to 74 before increasing to 24 percent of those aged 75 and older. As the population continues to age, that suggests a growing demand for ownership units. However, reliance on these data may underestimate the number of households that would like to locate in Cedar Falls if quality rental housing were available.

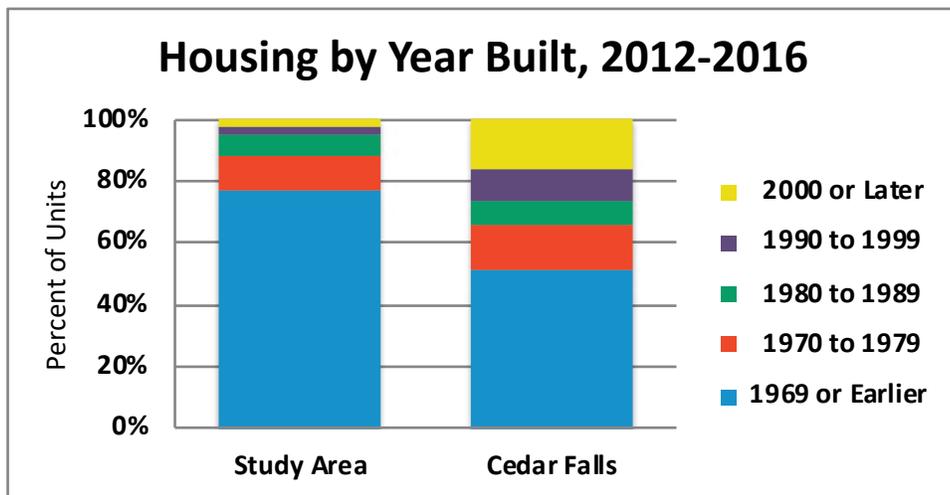


## Housing Market

Cedar Falls' housing has been dominated by single-family units, including detached units at 61 percent of all units and attached units (townhouses) at almost 5 percent of the total, based on data from the 2012-2016 American Community Survey (ACS), the latest information available. The study area also had a majority of its housing units in single-family detached and attached housing, 56 and 3 percent, respectively. A key difference was that duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes represented one-quarter of all study area housing as compared with 11 percent of the citywide housing inventory. Multi-family units constituted 17 percent of all units, but that share has grown with recent multi-family construction downtown.



The historic nature of many of the study area neighborhoods is reflected in the fact that 58 percent of its housing was built before 1940, based on statistics from 2012 to 2016. This compares with less than 14 percent of the citywide inventory. Over the last three decades, almost all of the new housing built in the city has been built outside the study area.



CoStar, a national real estate data company, provides information about the city's apartment market. It shows that the multi-family rental inventory has expanded from 33 to 40 buildings with the addition of 413 new units to a 2019 total of 2,745 units. The current occupancy rate of 94.7 percent indicates a market basically in balance between demand and supply. The average rent of \$855 per month is 9 percent higher than the 2010 average. CoStar reports that

downtown's multi-family rental housing is fully occupied, indicating a shortage of rental units. The average downtown study area rent of \$1,202, 40 percent higher than the citywide average. The new units opened in 2016 leased up quickly. New downtown residents include a diverse mix of ages, household types and backgrounds. The multi-family units have had particular appeal for empty-nesters who no longer want to maintain a single-family house, particularly those who winter in Florida or Arizona.

Two new apartment buildings – the Arabella on 1<sup>st</sup> Street and the latest phase of River Place on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street –are under construction along with a third River Place mixed-use building that will include 25 new units at the corner of State and 3<sup>rd</sup> streets. Opportunities for additional new apartment and condominium buildings are limited by the small number of sites large enough to accommodate the number of parking spaces required by the current zoning code. By requiring more on-site parking than the market demands, the code has the effect of increasing the cost of building new units and the subsequent rents that must be achieved to cover those costs. This is particularly true when the parking must be provided in an above-ground structure or underground. Underground parking is extraordinarily expensive; local rents do not support the cost of building below ground.

The response to new downtown apartments and condominiums suggests a significant pent-up demand for downtown housing. As new jobs are created downtown, they will generate additional demand for downtown living that will allow an easy walk to work.

Nationally and locally, younger workers have shown preferences for urban housing that allow them to live without a car or with a couple sharing only one car. They seek out housing in mixed-use environments where they can work, live and play within the same area. With its growing base of housing, Downtown Cedar Falls is starting to respond to that market demand.

Over the next decade, downtown could support development of an additional 200 to 400 housing units if sufficient sites can be made available, possibly through public/private partnerships, and if the zoning code is changed to encourage downtown development. The new offerings should include a mix of housing types, sizes, rent levels and prices so as to reach more than just high-end renters and buyers. A range that includes small to large townhouses, duplexes, mansion houses, and small to medium-sized apartment and condominium buildings would provide a variety of housing options, while respecting the scale of existing neighborhoods.

## **Retail Market**

Downtown hosts a mix of retail businesses and restaurants taking advantage of the historic Main Street location. Focused primarily between 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> streets along Main Street, the downtown retail mix includes boutiques, gift shops and specialty shops. Stores focused on daily needs are more limited, including a dry cleaner, a fitness center and four salons or spas but no grocery store, drugstore or barber. Banks are plentiful along with the Post Office. Events, other programming and live music enliven downtown and attract patrons from around the region.

Main Street has almost continuous storefronts between 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> streets. New storefronts have been developed along State Street with the River Place mixed-use development. That has generated some shifting of spaces. The new River Place building at State and 3<sup>rd</sup> streets will include 9,030 square feet of retail space, tentatively divided into five bays. The Arabella on W. 1<sup>st</sup> Street also will include first-floor commercial space.

Until this year, there was a waiting list of stores seeking Main Street spaces. There is no longer a waiting list. Inventory of the downtown retail space identified six vacant first-floor storefronts on Main Street. Two additional spaces are being renovated for stores “coming soon.” Two of the six vacant spaces may already be committed to specific tenants as part of a shuffling of downtown stores.

Downtown serves a regional market that extends beyond the city boundaries, attracting regional residents to shop and eat lunch during the day or to enjoy restaurants, live music and theater in the evening and on weekends. Independent, non-chain shops predominate, offering unique goods and personal service. However, the concentration of local owner/operators means that most Main Street stores operate on limited hours – typically 10 to 6 on weekdays and 10 to 5 on Saturdays. That schedule does not mesh well with the lives of most working people and limits their ability to reach the full potential market. Some progress has been made to extend hours to Sunday afternoons, and some stores are now open until 7 at least a couple of nights per week.

Retailing is experiencing tumultuous times with the increasing competition provided by ecommerce. An estimated 14.3 percent of all retail sales occurred online nationally in 2018, up from 6.4 percent in 2010. Some retail categories have shifted online almost completely. Most are influenced, at least to some extent, by shoppers' online research. Some categories that were historically resistant to online competition, such as fresh groceries, are increasingly impacted by ecommerce. Downtown's concentration of restaurants is well situated to continue attracting customers, providing an experience not replicable online.

A 2016 public survey conducted for Community Main Street identified the following retail types as those most desired for downtown:

- bookstore;
- distillery;
- grocery and specialty foods, particularly locally-sourced food and produce and artisanal foods;
- micro-brewery;
- office space, especially meeting rooms; and
- restaurants, including outdoor dining, fine dining, full-service breakfast, sports bar and specialty/ ethnic dining.

While public desire for any particular store type does not ensure that a store can be attracted or supported economically, but these priorities provide some insights. Some of the desires may have been met by restaurants and brew-pubs opening since the survey was conducted.

Going forward, there are some concerns:

- Rising rents and occupancy costs have started to squeeze retailers' operating margins and financial viability. Store owners also noted the significant increases in property values and taxes that result from higher rents. The latest reassessment increased Main Street property values by more than a third from 2016 to 2019.
- Continued expansion of the supply of retail space may outpace the growth in retail demand.
- In particular, extending retail uses down Main Street beyond 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> Street would negatively affect Main Street retailers by diluting the power of concentration between 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> streets. The current length is ideal for ease of shopping on foot.
- Service and office uses located in the Main Street core interrupt shoppers' movement from store to store down Main Street. Ideally, there would be fewer office uses in first-floor space. Locating office uses in second-floor spaces and in side-street locations just off Main Street could benefit Main Street retailers.

Supporting further expansion of downtown retailing will depend on attracting additional customers to spend more money. Most effective would be expansion of the downtown office and residential development within walking distance of the retail core. Office tenants frequently eat out and/or shop on their lunch hours, providing a steady source of weekday patronage. New residents help to increase the evening and weekend shopping activity with

demand for a greater variety of goods and services to support their daily lives. Downtown residential development has the additional benefit of generating more pedestrian activity, contributing to downtown's sense of place.

## Office Market

In recent years, the Cedar Falls office market has been dominated by new development in the Industrial & Technology Park in the south part of town. The Downtown office market has focused primarily on banking, offices for local professionals, financial advisors, insurance agencies, medical services, and a small number of technology companies. Most are oriented to serving local residents and businesses. The key exception is the headquarters operation of Viking Pump, a long-time Cedar Falls corporation that serves an international market.

CoStar identifies 80 office buildings in the city with just over 900,000 square feet of space, which likely undercounts the total inventory. Those buildings have a reported occupancy rate of 95.8 percent, which indicates a healthy balance between supply and demand. Total office use has expanded by 169,000 square feet since 2010 – an average of 18,200 square feet annually. Most of the city's office space is in single-tenant buildings, many of which were built-to-suit the company's needs.

Downtown, CoStar lists 24 buildings with 139,000 square feet of space with less than 900 square feet of vacant space for an overall occupancy rate of 99.4 percent. Most of downtown's office tenants are small businesses with less than 10 employees. The tightness in this market suggests there is untapped demand for companies that would like to be located in this mixed-use, walkable environment.

Nationally, office demand is shifting dramatically away from traditional industrial and business parks to mixed-use districts with nearby places to eat, shop and live. Younger workers have shown pronounced preferences for jobs in vibrant, walkable environments. In these times of low unemployment, companies are increasingly seeking out business locations that help them recruit and retain young workers, particularly tech workers. With an expanded supply of downtown office space, Cedar Falls could enhance its ability to attract new companies.

The new Mill Race coworking and collaboration space at River Place has introduced a new type of space into the market – allowing entrepreneurs to access office space and services a day at a time and making available meeting rooms and classroom space on an hourly basis. Such flexible access is important to small businesses that do not want to commit to a long-term lease and do not need their own conference rooms. Some of the new first-floor spaces under construction will be available for use as either office or retail space.

Any medium-sized to large company that might be recruited to Downtown Cedar Falls would need a new building to be constructed. Given the speed with which most companies like to move, the City now should be working with the private sector to identify suitable sites for new office development and interim space options until the new building can be delivered, adopting supportive zoning and developing effective incentives, such as a public parking ramp. A developer is unlikely to be willing to build an appropriate office building speculatively without the benefit of a lease commitment, in part because new construction would necessitate higher rents than are currently being paid in the market. Existing downtown office tenants are paying relatively low rents that take advantage of the older building stock. Some might be able to afford to move into newly built space with higher rents, but most would probably prefer to stay in less expensive Class B space in older buildings.

## Implications for the Vision Plan

- The market will continue to support additional development, though the amount of new retail space should be limited.
- New residential and office development will support downtown retail by bringing in new customers, helping the retailers withstand the pressures from ecommerce.
- Better pedestrian and bicycle connections from surrounding areas, including north of the river, also will help support downtown retailers.
- Development should be scaled and/or phased in bite-sized chunks so as not to overwhelm the market with too much new product at one time.
- Focus retail uses between 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> streets for a good customer experience (with the exception of a grocery store/coop, which will be a destination). Do not allow retail proliferation along South Main and West 1<sup>st</sup> Street.
- Land is in short supply, so no new one-story buildings that squander that resource.
- Adjust the ratios for parking for new development to require only as much on-site parking as the market demands, and design for lower parking needs in the future.
- Develop structured parking in partnership with private developers above or behind first-floor uses as the market requires it to support new development.

*Market Considerations Report prepared by*



## Cedar Falls Community Center Attendee Survey Tuesday, April 2, 2019

### SUMMARY of 63 Responses

#### 1. Do you:

a. Live in the study area?	<b>22</b> Yes	<b>38</b> No	<b>3</b> Nearby	<i>Total</i> <b>63</b>
b. Work in the study area?	<b>26</b> Yes	<b>36</b> No		<i>Total</i> <b>62</b>
c. Own property in the study area?	<b>23</b> Yes	<b>36</b> No	<b>1</b> Nearby/ <b>1</b> Formerly	<i>Total</i> <b>61</b>

**Note:** 20 respondents answered “no” to live, work, and own property in study area; 8 responded “yes” to all three

#### 2. How often do you come downtown? (circle one) Total – 61

a. Every day	<b>28</b>
b. A few times a week	<b>25</b>
c. Several times a month	<b>6</b>
d. Once or twice a month	<b>1</b>
e. A few times a year	<b>1</b>

#### 3. What typically brings you downtown? (circle all that apply)

a. Live downtown	<b>14</b>
b. Work downtown	<b>24</b>
c. Shopping	<b>35</b>
d. Restaurants	<b>56</b>
e. Civic activities (city hall, worship, library, community center, etc.)	<b>42</b>
f. Special event (holiday, festival)	<b>40</b>
g. Other (answers provided by respondents):	
walking/bike trails/workout/fitness	<b>5</b>
nightlife	<b>2</b>
Washington Park	<b>1</b>
Farmers' Market	<b>2</b>
theater	<b>1</b>
law office	<b>1</b>
river	<b>1</b>

#### 4. When you come downtown, how do you usually get here? (circle one) Note: Some people circled more than one.

a. Drive (personal vehicle)	<b>51</b>
b. Take the bus	<b>0</b>
c. Walk (run)	<b>20</b>
d. Ride a bicycle	<b>8</b>
e. Ride-share (Taxi, Uber, Lyft, etc.)	<b>4</b>

***Please provide any additional comments below or on the back.***

- Love downtown!
- I live just a few blocks from Downtown, and chose to be there in 2004 specifically to be close to Downtown
- There's got to be a better solution than metered parking on the Parkade and adjacent lots. We've used meters before and it killed retail. We must do things that support our retailers.
- We live only 2 miles away so will often walk or ride bicycles to the downtown area.
- Drive through after coming and going to rentals by UNI and where I live
- Don't ask what we think if you ignore what we say.
- I'm also representing Cedar Falls Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee which is committed to walkability and bikeability for downtown.
- 1) Need parking. 2) Need more parking. 3) Need a lot more parking. 4) Really need a lot more parking.
- I really like the trees, the art sculptures, the brick sidewalks with curving streets, the walkable streets, & the library
- More bikeability, bike lanes, aesthetic pleasing with art, etc., more aesthetic lighting
- Resident on Main Street; good start. I like the approach I see in the philosophy of your photos and discussion.
- Love downtown; want to keep it thriving; would like to figure out how to connect our church more w/downtown folks
- Please enforce parking downtown + fix side street sidewalks, provide benches, better lighting, bike racks to connect these areas to Main St. to make side street parking safer + more appealing.
- Our downtown is threatened by Amazon
- Parking is fine
- Need a parking ramp
- Lack of parking for visitors at my home. Invasion of commercial businesses.
- Lived downtown 15 years!!! I would like to see more recycling options downtown (instead of just trash cans).
- 1) I am concerned about the parking downtown with all of the new apartments being built. This is a huge problem. We can't keep building apartments with no parking. 2) I am concerned about the talks of changing Main Street from 6<sup>th</sup> to University to 3 lanes. There are times of the day there is lots of traffic on Main. We don't need bike lanes on Main. We have Clay Street and the bike trail on each side of Main Street.

# Visual Preference Exercise: Summary of Board A Results



**OUR CEDAR FALLS**  
*Downtown*  
 Imagine the possibilities!

Cedar Falls, Iowa  
 Public Kick-Off Meeting  
 April 2, 2019  
 Visual Preference Exercise  
**RESULTS**

**FERRELL  
 MADDEN**  
 urban design,  
 town planning, &  
 form-based coding



**BOARD A**

## Adjacent Neighborhoods – Small to Medium Scale Residential

 1	 2	 3	 4	 5	 6
 7	 8	 9	 10	 11	 12
 13	 14	 15	 16	 17	 18
 19	 20	 21	 22	 23	 24

# Visual Preference Exercise: Summary of Board B Results



**OUR CEDAR FALLS**  
*Downtown*  
 Imagine the possibilities!

Cedar Falls, Iowa  
 Public Kick-Off Meeting  
 April 2, 2019  
 Visual Preference Exercise  
**RESULTS**



**FERRELL  
 MADDEN**  
 urban design,  
 town planning, &  
 form-based coding

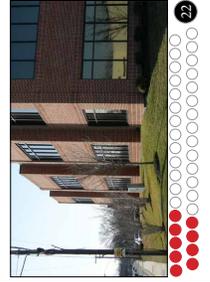
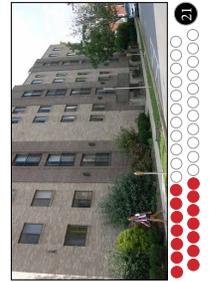
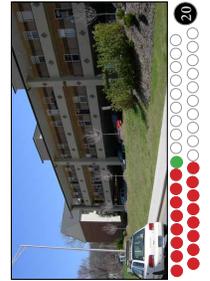


## BOARD B

### Downtown Residential – Medium to Large Scale



### Downtown Commercial – Mixed-Use



# Visual Preference Exercise: Summary of Board C Results

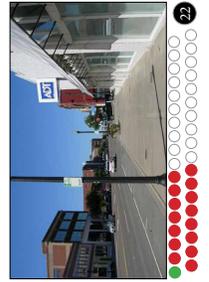


Cedar Falls, Iowa  
Public Kick-Off Meeting  
April 2, 2019  
Visual Preference Exercise  
**RESULTS**

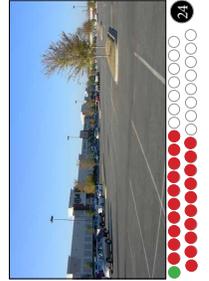
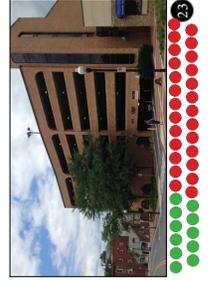


## BOARD C

### Street Space – Public Realm



### Downtown Parking



## Cedar Falls Woman’s Club Attendee Exit Survey Thursday, June 6, 2019

### SUMMARY of 35 Responses

#### 1. Do you:

- |                                    |        |       |
|------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| a. Live in the study area?         | 11 Yes | 24 No |
| b. Work in the study area?         | 9 Yes  | 26 No |
| c. Own property in the study area? | 10 Yes | 25 No |
| d. Other?                          |        |       |

*Frequent study area daily  
Volunteer a lot  
City Council  
Live & work in Cedar Falls, just not downtown  
Spend time – shopping & library  
Live & work adjacent; frequent customer in study area  
Shop  
Western Homes on S. Main  
On P&Z and Community Main Street  
Family owns property in study area  
Did work (4 years ago) & own property (1 year ago)  
Volunteer at Comm. Main Street. Shop downtown*

*Note: More than half of respondents (19) answered “no” to all three questions (live, work, or own property).*

#### 2. Which of Downtown Vision Plan events have you attended? (circle all that apply)

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| a. Kick-Off Presentation (Tuesday night, April 2)              | 16 |
| b. Public “Hands-On” Design Session (Saturday morning, June 1) | 19 |
| c. Lunch and Learn (Tuesday, June 4)                           | 6  |
| d. Technical Meetings (Monday and/or Tuesday, June 3-4)        | 6  |
| e. Open Studio (Sunday-Wednesday, June 2-5)                    | 7  |
| f. Tonight is my first event                                   | 9  |

#### 3. What was the most important idea that you heard tonight?

- *This is a developer driven town. It’s great to bring some vision to the table for them to imagine.*
- *I am opposed to saying we don’t need one care per bedroom. People still drive cars here. We are not New York.*
- *Green space and street trees – but city must dedicate funds to maintain at a better rate than currently doing in other areas.*
- *That the future of Cedar Falls looks bright.*
- *The planting of many trees*
- *Walkability & streetscape re-do*
- *That you completely screwed up. The public does not matter & you do not have basic understanding of economics. Terrible. It sucks!*
- *New housing ideas and new street design.*
- *I liked some parts but didn’t feel parking was really addressed. Cramming in more people without really addressing parking. We are still a rural area not a big city and have cars.*
- *Idea of turning South Main [sic] into 3 lanes with green space & turning lanes & bike lanes*
- *Mixed-use development; options for Missing Middle*
- *Parking, walkability, character. Glad you’re addressing the middle*
- *Difficult to see relations between existing structures and future developments*

- *Development should reflect the character of the neighborhood*
- *We need form-based code in CF so that we can do all of the things you're recommending.*
- *Creative housing idea outside of Main Street*
- *Broad ideas*
- *Research-based recommendations (and recos based on citizen input)*
- *The multi-use parking facility – would solve a lot of problems.*
- *Walkability!*
- *Simplify zoning while keeping character*
- *Change in zoning laws to help facilitate different styles of buildings*
- *Maintain character*
- *Community involvement*
- *Walkability; contain retail*
- *Walkability/streetscape*
- *Mixed use parking ramp*
- *Can't have all merchandise shops on Parkade; change in concepts of housing arrangements; parking options not thought about or utilized now; upgrade of walking areas*
- *Love the infill ideas and the ideas for taking certain areas & re-developing the streetscape*
- *Infill can be appropriate in scale & a variety of options is important. Many concepts aren't new but an extension of the past.*
- *Missing middle. I did not realize that is where I am heading*
- *Desire to live work play in prox. To downtown is growing among diverse groups*

**4. Based on tonight's presentation, is the Downtown Vision Project generally (circle one):**

- |                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| a. On the right track          | <b>22</b> |
| b. Somewhat on the right track | <b>10</b> |
| c. Somewhat on the wrong track | <b>1</b>  |
| d. On the wrong track          | <b>1</b>  |
| e. Don't know                  | <b>1</b>  |

**Individual additional comments:**

- *Details matter. It will be interesting to see how this dovetails into zoning.*
- *I am concerned about changing Main Street to having less lanes. In Waverly they did that on Bremer Avenue and it can take you awhile to turn left because there is a long line of cars you have to wait for. I walk across Main Street a lot and am concerned it will be hard to cross the street of here is a long line of cars. I am concerned about modifying zoning and allowing developers to not provide parking. Ex. Not having one bedroom per parking space. Cedar Falls is gaining population – I don't think we should lose lanes on Main Street.*
- *Garages need to be considered for "missing middle" models – that age group has "stuff" and needs garage*
- *Thank you so much. This is exactly the type of visioning we need.*
- *I am confused by the reference to South Main as starting at 12 St – actual South Main is south of University Ave. Very confusing for us locals!<sup>1</sup>*
- *Love this type of way to get community input! (13 years on Planning & Zoning; 4 years on City Council)*

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<sup>1</sup> Note: During the "Work-in-Progress" presentation, the consultants incorrectly referred to the southern portion of the Main Street corridor within the study area as "South Main" – that nomenclature has been corrected in the Imagine Downtown Vision Plan report.

- *Great ideas for in-between/medium housing development; great ideas for parking structure that disguises design & creates more retail space*
- *Have not addressed what to do about making “new” areas more [illegible word] friendly; lost the river*
- *Love it; Excited to see the next steps and be a part of it*
- *I didn't hear acknowledgment/recognition of impact weather has on walkability. This varies hugely from summer to winter, so the idea that people will be walking & biking applies to maybe 1/2 - 2/3 of year. The rest of the year there will be more vehicular traffic. The other piece of the puzzle is folks who want to come downtown from “non-walkable” distances, as well as older, but not handicapped people whose mobility is limited to e.g. a 1-block walk. How do we accommodate those folks, many of who may be tourists.*

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