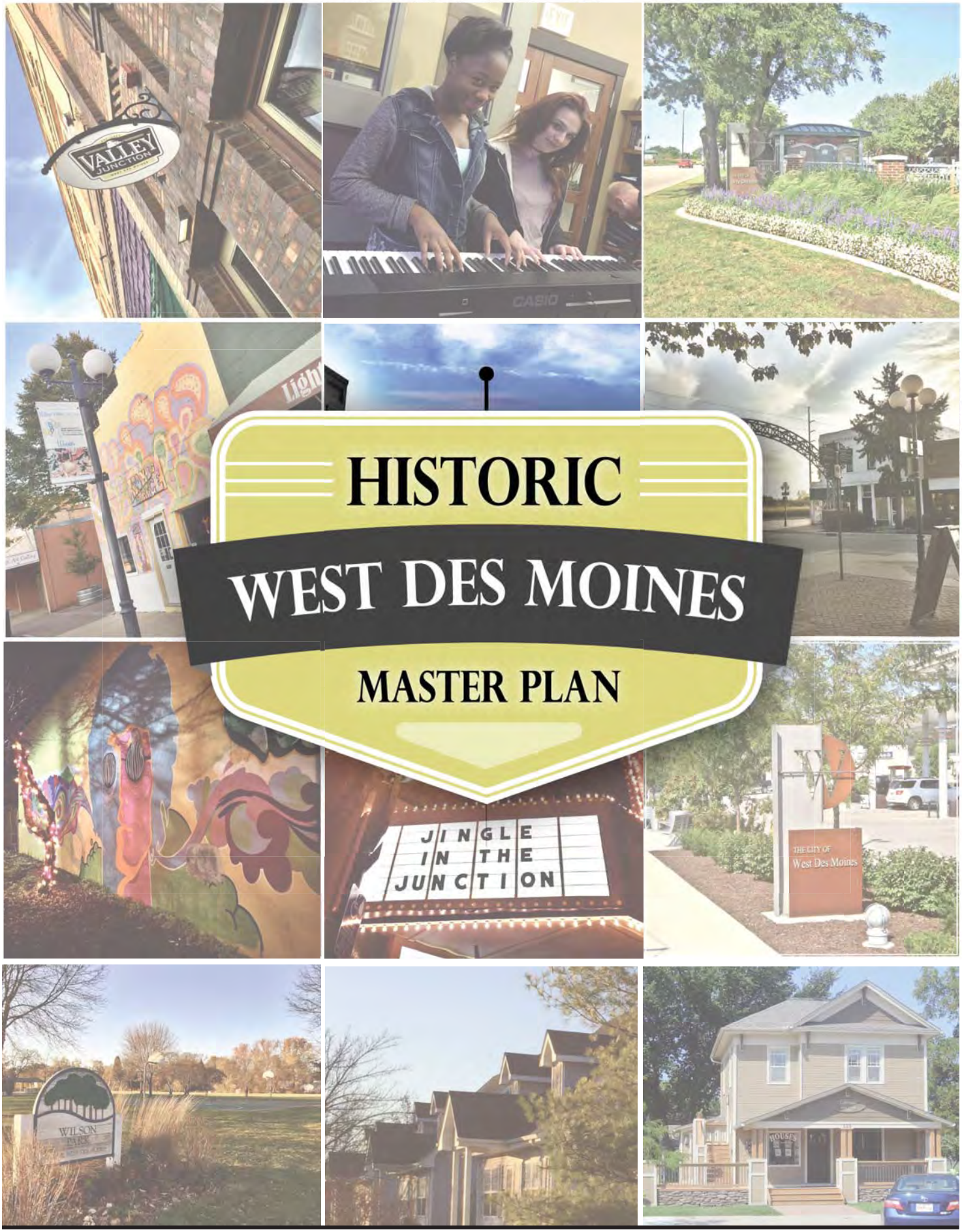

HISTORIC WEST DES MOINES

MASTER PLAN

MASTER PLAN | SEPTEMBER 2016

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the many residents and business/property owners who participated in development of this Master Plan through interviews, meetings, workshops, surveys, and through participation via the project Mobile App and Website.

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Accepted by the City Council on September 19, 2016

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This Master Plan for Historic West Des Moines (HWDM) is the culmination of over a year's worth of analysis, research, and community dialog. It is a guide book, outlining steps in order to take a wonderful part of the community and make it even better.

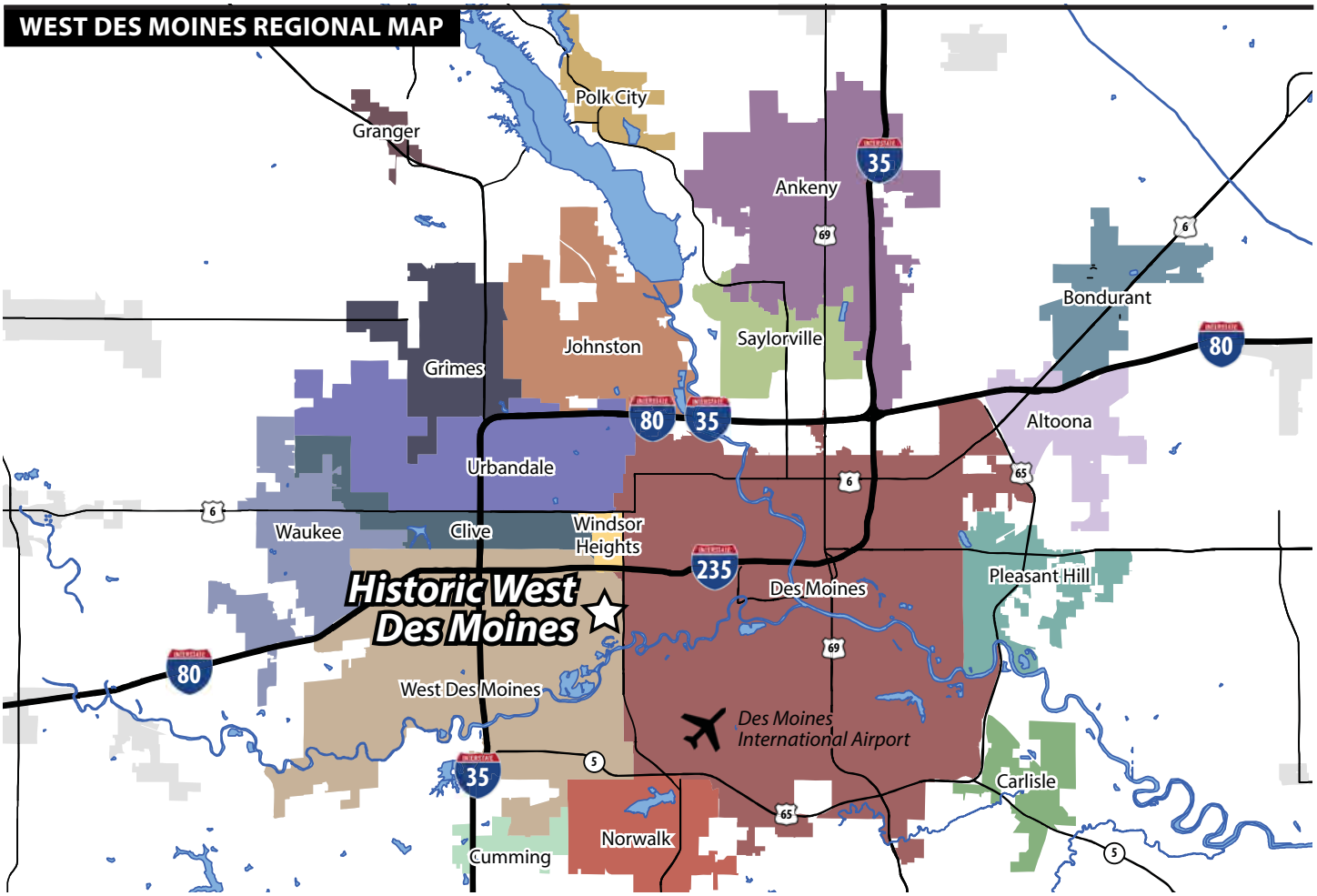
What is HWDM?

HWDM (Historic West Des Moines) is the community's gathering place and where the City of West Des Moines began. It is a desirable place to do business and to live. The commercial district includes some of the City's most historic buildings and most modern retailers. Residents are proud of their diversity, great schools, and local parks. They recognize and celebrate the distinctive character of their neighborhood within the context of West Des Moines' success. In a word, HWDM is unique.

Numerous myths exist about HWDM. Examples are: Valley Junction only has antique stores; neither HWDM residents nor residents in the City's more distant neighborhoods patronize downtown businesses; and the residential area is less desirable than other parts of the City. Frankly, all of these are 'urban legends.' The facts are: HWDM has many savvy retailers and functions both as the heart of the community and as a regional destination; many residents do patronize downtown businesses-some spend more, some less; and the broader HWDM residential area has a wide range of household incomes and housing options, in addition to great schools and parks.

"Numerous myths exist about HWDM. Frankly, all of them are urban legends."

Diane Williams, BDI



Where is HWDM?

In the case of HWDM, the name says it all – HWDM is indeed immediately west of the City of Des Moines, Iowa. The area was originally known as Valley Junction due to its location in the valley of the Raccoon River (immediately to the south) and the junction of two railroads including the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad (now Union Pacific) which had a roundhouse, switching yards and repair shop in Valley Junction.

HWDM is generally defined by 1st Street (Highway 28) to the east, Railroad Avenue to the south, and Grand Avenue to the north and west. To keep the plan focused, certain parcels along the periphery of this area are excluded (see location map).

Location Map

Why and how was this plan developed?

From outward appearances, HWDM is doing well. Most space within the downtown is leased; the area is busy with activity during the Farmers Market and other events hosted by the Historic Valley Junction Foundation, and homes within the surrounding neighborhood area appear well kept. Yet a look beyond the surface reveals underutilized upper-story spaces, homes and buildings with sometimes significant deferred maintenance, and an ever more competitive business environment that demands attention. To address these issues and to capitalize on the wonderful assets present in HWDM, the City contracted a consulting team to work with the community to develop a Master Plan to serve as a blueprint for the next 10 to 20 years.

Three key elements went into developing the plan. A robust community engagement effort was designed and executed to solicit input and ideas from residents, businesses and visitors. A thorough background analysis was conducted to examine both past plans and existing conditions. These efforts, as well as development of specific solutions to address identified issues, were guided by the professional expertise of the consulting team of Teska Associates, Inc. and Business Districts, Inc. A short summary of these efforts is provided on the following pages, while a more detailed summary of the background analysis is documented in the Appendix of this Master Plan.

3 Key Elements of the plan

1. ***Robust engagement***
2. ***Thorough background analysis***
3. ***Development of specific solutions***

OVER THE YEARS...

1846

- The first settler to the area was James C. Jordan in 1846. He was politically active, and served as a county supervisor, a state senator and a state representative. His home was a stop on the "Underground Railroad", and has been preserved by the West Des Moines Historic Preservation Society.

1891

- Between 1891-1896 the area grew rapidly. A group of businessmen formed the Hawkeye Investment Company and purchased 40 acres of land east of 8th Street which is now the Valley Junction Downtown.

1922

- The surrounding neighborhood has always been diverse. Many African American and Hispanic workers were brought in to work on the railroad (particularly during a 1922-1923 strike), and their families have remained in the area ever since.

1993

- Major flooding in 1993 led to the construction of the levee and rehab of many homes.

Photos courtesy of Historic Valley Junction Foundation + West Des Moines Historical Preservation Society

Community Engagement

Effective engagement is about meeting folks where they are and providing a variety of tools which enable them to interact. Everyone engages differently and in this way we allow them to choose and interact via the method with which they are most comfortable. From in-person interviews and meetings with business owners and stakeholders, to idea sharing via the website, mobile app and at events such as Jingle in the Junction, to focus groups with seniors, millenials, empty nesters and students at Stilwell Elementary... and a mobile idea chalkboard posted in Valley Junction -- a variety of outreach tools and avenues were explored to maximize input. Below and on the two pages that follow is a visual tour of engagement methods, statistics, and feedback received over the course of the project.

OUTREACH COMPONENTS

- ☐ Website
- ☐ Mobile App
- ☐ Quick Polls
- ☐ Idea Chalkboard
- ☐ Interviews
- ☐ Steering Committee
- ☐ Walking Tour
- ☐ Workshops
- ☐ Graphic Brainstorm
- ☐ Focus Groups
- ☐ Survey by Neighborhood Development Corporation
- ☐ Community Events
- ☐ Open House, Public Hearings

SHARED IDEAS

"Sidewalk cafes are needed."

"Utilize Phenix school. It would be a great place for meetings, community activities, indoor farmers market, etc."

"Increase the mixed use of Fifth Street."

"More upper story rental apartments and condos would be great for the district and businesses."

"Keep the street parking in Valley Junction. Helps create the small town atmosphere."

BUSINESS OWNER KICK-OFF EVENT

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP | STILWELL JUNIOR HIGH

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP | OPPORTUNITY SITES POLL

WALKING TOUR | STEERING COMMITTEE

JINGLE IN THE JUNCTION

DESIGN-4-LIFE WORKSHOP

PROJECT MARKETING | EVENT POSTER

WEBSITE

Free

Release: Dec 03, 2015

PROJECT APP

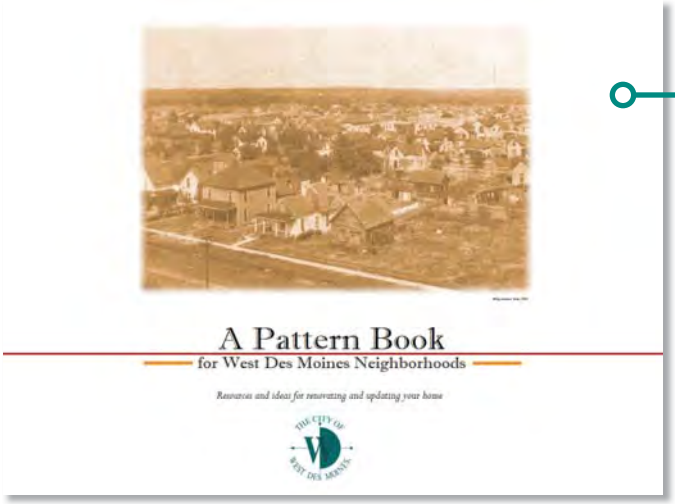
Background Analysis

Understanding the historical, physical, demographic, and economic conditions within HWDM is critical to developing a plan for its future. The following is a brief summary of key components of this background analysis. For additional detail, please see the Appendix (published separately).

Past Plans: As the oldest section of West Des Moines, the study area has been addressed at varying levels in a number of past planning efforts. Most of these plans are available for review and download on the City's website. – www.wdm.iowa.gov

Past plans include:

- **City of West Des Moines Comprehensive Plan (2010)** – presents policies and a Future Land Use Plan which is supportive of existing development patterns.
- **Valley Junction Streetscape Plan (1999)** – much of this plan has been implemented.
- **Valley Junction Market Strategies Plan (2010)** – created branding and other concepts, many of which have been implemented by the Historic Valley Junction Foundation (HVJF).
- **City of West Des Moines Public Art Master Plan (2015)** – Outlines a clear City-wide commitment to public art, including potential for additional opportunities within HWDM.
- **City of West Des Moines Bicycle Master Plan (2015) –** Details a City-wide plan linking neighborhoods with key destinations throughout WDM, and within greater Des Moines.
- **Architectural/Historical Reconnaissance Survey of Valley Junction (1998)** – Examines existing structures for architectural and historical significance, noting "the residential neighborhood east of 8th Street and the old downtown district along 5th Street represent important and disguisable historic entities worthy of preservation."
- **A Pattern Book for West Des Moines Neighborhoods (2008) –** Examines historical housing styles in WDM, and outlines suggestions for remodeling and expansion, including many green building techniques.
- **Southeast Basin Stormwater Study (2013)** – Addresses the causes of and potential solutions to the issue of flooding in the area, including potential new stormwater basins at 12th Street and Vine Street, and along the west side of 16th Street south of Stilwell Junior High School.



Recipient of the Outstanding Planning Award for Best Practice from the Iowa Chapter of the American Planning Association

Economic + Market Assessment

This effort focused on both residential and commercial opportunities in HWDM. Highlights include:

- HWDM is both a neighborhood and a traditional commercial district. It fits what the Urban Land Institute (ULI) describes as a 'diet urban' location – a suburban area near and accessible to a major city center, with walkable blocks and proximity to employment.

- The commercial district has two core markets, a neighborhood market and a larger custom market related to the unique mix of shops in Valley Junction. Both are strong markets offering significant potential.

  CORE MARKET #1: The population of the study area is approximately 4,800 residents, while the larger neighborhood market has a population of approximately 30,000, and an average household income of slightly over $90,000. However, the average household income of $57,700 in the HWDM study area is significantly lower than the larger neighborhood market. This neighborhood market generally extends north to Interstate 235, south to the Raccoon River, west to Valley West Drive and east to 42nd Street in Des Moines.

  CORE MARKET #2: The custom market (which was defined based on interviews with local merchants), has a total population of approximately 272,000 and an average household income of approximately $96,000.

Less than 5% Commercial Vacancy
Rents at $10-$15 Per Square Foot

- When compared to other similar downtowns in the region, Valley Junction has significantly more retail shopping options but significantly fewer dining options. Strong local ownership and the variety and unique character of local shops are strong positives for the district.

- While the HWDM business mix had historically been dominated by antique shops, this mix has changed significantly in recent years with an increasing variety of retail establishments. This is a very positive trend. The market study recommends that businesses continue to appeal to younger consumers.

- Attracting additional small office users, particularly to upper story space, is recommended. The study notes that the average suburban office worker spends an average of $104 per week near their place of employment.

- Most of the commercial space within the downtown is currently occupied (less than 5% vacant), and rents are reasonable ($10 to $15 per square foot).

"Valley Junction is the place to go if you want a unique gift item."

- Four current retail and restaurant trends relevant to HWDM include:

  TREND #1 - The Experience: Delivering a unique consumer experience is key to customer attraction, sales performance, and image positioning.

  TREND #2 - Millennials: As the U.S.'s largest demographic cohort, their direct or indirect impact on all real estate uses is significant – and regions like Des Moines have been particularly attractive to this age cohort.

  TREND #3 - Post-Digital Effect: The advent of on-line shopping has radically changed the shape of retailing. While major retailers have struggled with sales at their stores, many independent retailers have experienced increased sales due to unique products and presentation. Several participants in the focus group interviews noted that Valley Junction is the place to go if you want a unique gift item.

  TREND #4 - Local: Trends supporting small business owners, local foods and food systems, and a general push to 'shop local' is a major plus for HWDM.

56% Renter Occupied Housing
1 in 3 Adults have a Bachelors Degree

- When looking at the immediate residential market (the two census tracts covering HWDM) compared to the City of West Des Moines as a whole, several interesting facts emerge:

  POPULATION: The population density within the study area is significantly higher than that of the overall community (4,320 people per sq. mile vs. only 1,550 City-wide).

  OWNERSHIP: The percent of renter occupied units is also higher, with 56% renter occupied in HWDM vs. only 37% for the City as a whole.

  INCOME: Average household income is significantly less in HWDM ($57,700 vs. the entire City $93,300).

  EDUCATION: 28.1% of adults living in HWDM have at least a bachelor's degree (slightly above the 27.7% state-wide value). However, 50.4% of all West Des Moines adults have a similar educational attainment.

- Based on demographic trends and interviews with local real estate professionals, the residential market evaluation recommends:

  - Adding new housing options, including both rental and owner occupied. This includes adaptive reuse such as the rehabilitation of the former Phenix school or upper-story spaces along 5th Street and new construction on identified opportunity sites including potential for new residential south of Railroad Avenue.
  - A focus on promoting rehabilitation of existing homes and apartments to meet modern codes and green building practices. This effort will require partnership and potential incentives.

Land Use + Zoning

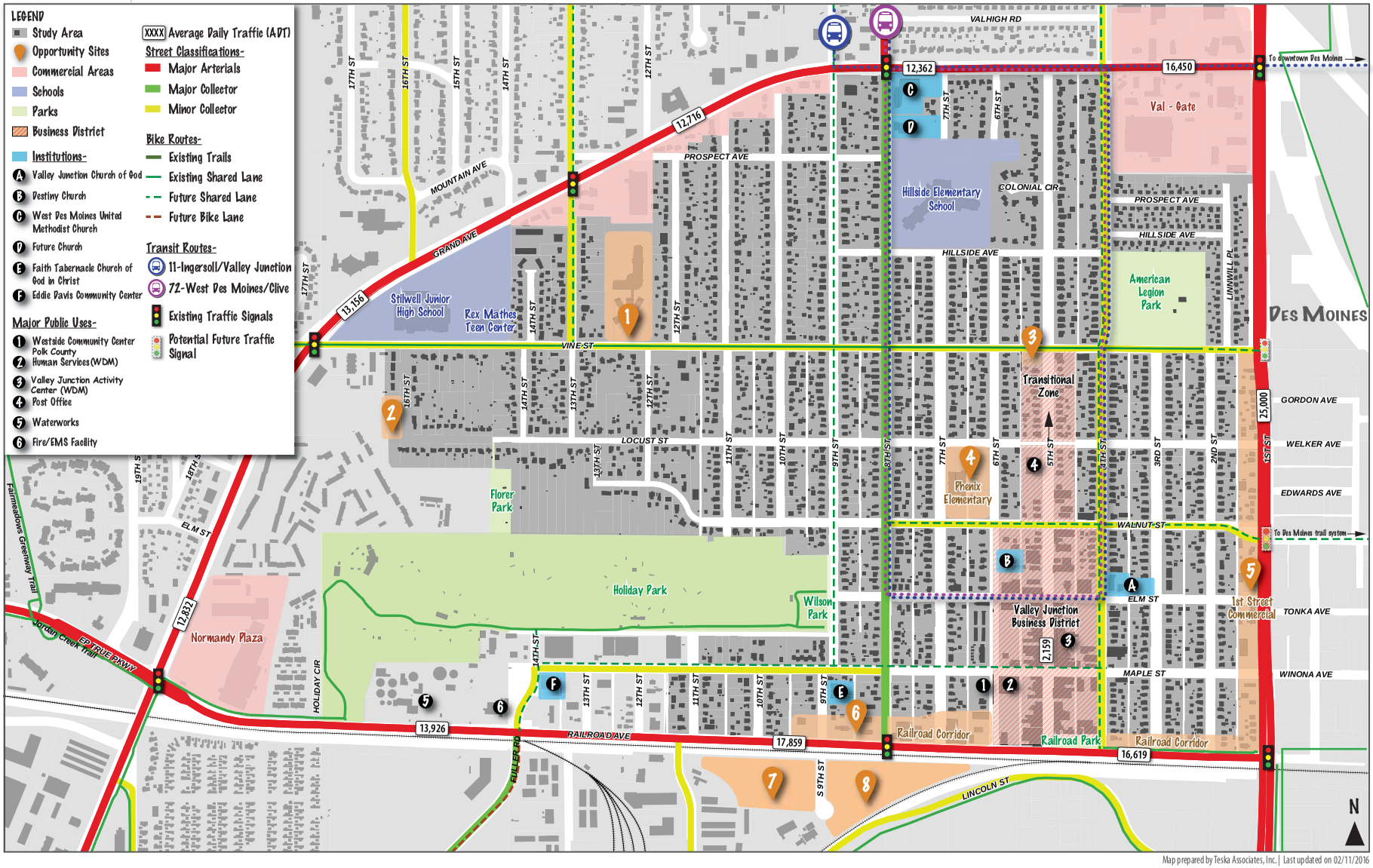
Existing land usage within HWDM is primarily single-family residential, with a strong commercial district along 5th Street south of Locust Street and on adjacent blocks immediately east and west.

The City's Future Land Use Plan and Zoning Map both suggest future extension of this downtown north to Vine Street. Other significant land uses within HWDM include parks (American Legion, Holiday, Florer, Railroad and Wilson), schools (Hillside Elementary and Stilwell Junior High), and neighborhood commercial development at 1st Street and Grand Avenue (Val-Gate) and Railroad Avenue and Grand Avenue (Normandy Plaza). Existing Zoning patterns are summarized in the Appendix.

The **Issues & Opportunities Map** on the following page highlights the location of many of the key neighborhood features including general land use, institutions and public uses, street classifications, and bus and bike routes.

HISTORIC WEST DES MOINES MASTER PLAN

Issues + Opportunities Map



Map prepared by Teska Associates, Inc. | Last updated on 02/11/2016

Physical Conditions

Physical conditions in HWDM are shaped largely by three factors:

☐ **Land** – Land in HWDM all drains to the south to the Raccoon River. The topography is fairly flat south of Vine Street (with the exception of some steeper slopes on the north side of Holiday Park). Once north of Vine Street, slopes increase more significantly (in the 3% to 10% range) going up toward Grand Avenue. A significant portion of this area south of Vine Street was in a designated flood plain, but this designation was removed once the Raccoon River Levee was constructed. The area is blessed with significant park land.

☐ **Landscape** – The landscape of HWDM is characterized by typical suburban landscapes of lawns, trees and gardens. A significant number of mature trees exist within the residential neighborhood, particularly north of Walnut Street.

☐ **Buildings** – Overall, there has been little new construction in HWDM in recent years. Many of the commercial structures along 5th Street were built in the railroad boom times between 1892 and 1918. According to the 1998 Architectural Reconnaissance Survey for Valley Junction, "the great majority of the buildings constructed in Valley Junction between the 1890s and 1940s were… based upon vernacular forms. As employed by architectural historians, the term vernacular refers to common, ordinary structures that were not designed by professional architects." The only building in HWDM that is on the National Register of Historic Places is the former City Hall/Engine House at 137 5th Street (now the Historic Valley Junction Foundation offices).

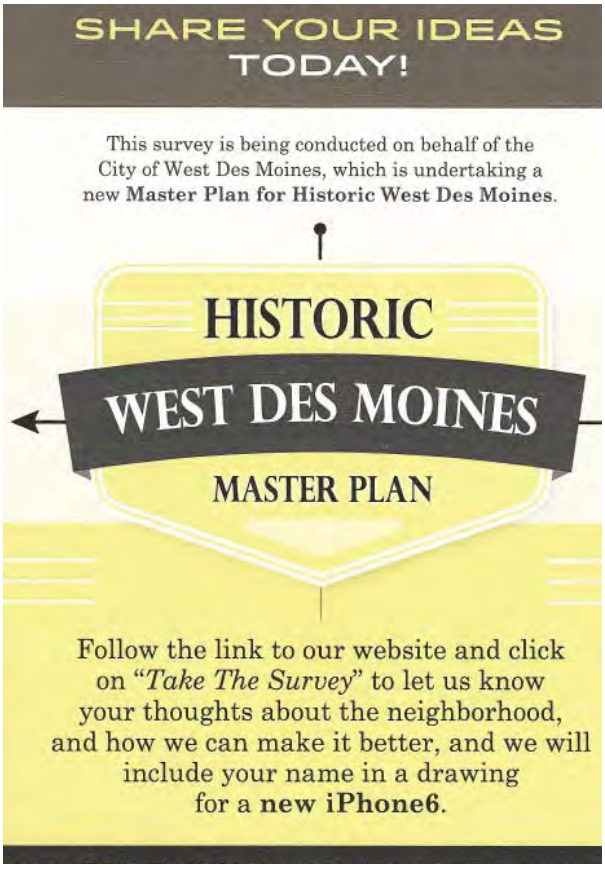
PHYSICAL CONDITION | PHOTO MOSAIC

Transportation Infrastructure

While Valley Junction historic rail activity has declined, increased accessibility by car, bike, bus and even plane continue to provide HWDM with excellent regional access and mobility.

West Des Moines is at the junction of Interstates 80 and 35 providing easy access to virtually anywhere in the nation. Regional routes such as 1st Street (SW 63rd Street or Iowa Route 28), Grand Avenue, and Railroad/Ep True Parkway connect HWDM to downtown Des Moines and neighboring communities within the Greater Des Moines Metropolitan Area. West Des Moines, and the surrounding region, has a growing network of bike trails.

The popular Levee Trail providing access to HWDM points east (including downtown Des Moines) and west. The Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) provides bus service into and through HWDM via fixed route service on Route 11 (Ingersoll/Valley Junction) and Route 72 (West Des Moines/Clive) and an on-demand service. And the Des Moines International Airport is less than six miles south of HWDM.



The survey was conducted on-line in late 2015, and had 1,060 responses.

HWDM Survey

Separate from but in conjunction with this Master Plan, the City of West Des Moines engaged Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDC) and Revelation Research Solutions to conduct a survey, with follow-up focus groups, to learn about the public's awareness of, attitudes toward, use of, and interest in living in HWDM.

The survey was conducted on-line in late 2015, and had 1,060 responses. Focus groups included young adults, empty nesters & retirees, those who live and work in the area, and frequent visitors. A more detailed summary of the survey, including details of methodology and demographics is provided in the Appendix. Highlights of survey results include:

- ☐ People like the areas historic character, small town feel, friendliness, unique local shops, events, and richness of the experience (many things in one location).
- ☐ Survey respondents would like to see even more local shops, more restaurants, easier parking during events, and improvements to older commercial and residential buildings.
- ☐ The historic, small town character of the area suggests that new development should remain small in scale and character (no big box retail, no 4-story plus buildings, etc.).
- ☐ Of those interested in living in HWDM, approximately 60% expressed interest in single-family detached homes while 40% preferred attached homes or apartments.

CHAPTER 2

VISION

What does HWDM want to be?

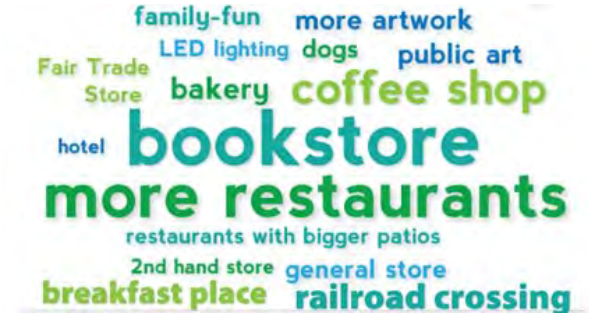
A phrase often repeated during the planning process was that the goal of the Master Plan is to take a good neighborhood and make it great. HWDM is already a very attractive area to live, with great accessibility, availability of nearby shops and dining, and streets lined with affordable homes arranged in walkable blocks.

To identify ways to take the area from good to great, a variety of exercises were conducted with both the Steering Committee and the community to help determine a desired future for Historic West Des Moines.

- ☐ **An Idea Chalkboard** was created to ask two fill-in-the-blank questions. Highlights of this activity are summarized in the word pictures shown on the right.
  - The Valley Junction Commercial District would be great if _____.
  - The surrounding neighborhood would be great if _____.

- ☐ **A "Mad-Lib" exercise** was conducted at the Today and Tomorrow Community Workshop. This exercise allowed participants to describe what they like about the downtown and the surrounding neighborhood, where they go frequently, and what improvements they would like to see. The table on the following page summarizes the results of this activity.

Chalkboard Ideas for the Downtown



Chalkboard Ideas for the HWDM Neighborhood

So based on this input, what does HWDM want to be?

THE FOLLOWING HIGHLIGHT THE DESIRED VISION / GOALS FOR HWDM:

- ☐ **An eclectic collection of unique small shops and restaurants.** It is the go-to place for that special gift or a fun night out. It has a growing variety of dining options, including family-friendly and ethnic restaurants. New shopping options are available, particularly on off-5th Street locations.

- ☐ **A special gathering place** to celebrate the history, diversity and culture of West Des Moines. A new event space and/or plaza has been created in a more central location within the downtown, and events are kept fun and fresh.

- ☐ **A wonderful place to work** within steps of great places to live or to grab a quick cup of coffee, have a relaxing lunch, or meet-up with friends after hours.

- ☐ **A great place to live,** with easy access to quality schools, parks, transportation, shopping and dining. New single family and multi-family housing options are becoming available, and existing homes are well maintained.

- ☐ **A sustainable and healthy environment** with enhanced bike and pedestrian access including a new connection to the levee trail and improved access across Railroad Avenue. A new community garden has been created, and green building and site design principals are being integrated into new construction, building rehabilitation, and public infrastructure projects.

Valley Junction Downtown		
Keyword Descriptors	Existing Destinations	Desired Improvements
• Great Vibe • Play • Shop • Eat • Meet People • Local • Unique/eclectic • Quaint • Variety • Accessibility • Busy • Friendly/fun • Edgy • Safe • Quiet/peaceful • Historic • Clean • Attractive • Walkable • Vibrant • Convenient	• Valley Junction • 5th Street • Railroad Avenue • Raccoon River Park • Farmers Market • Legion Park • Browns Wood • Antique Shopping • Coopers • Historic City Hall • Holiday Park • Listen to live music • Val Lanes • Finding Iowa • Longest Yard • Jordan Creek	• Signage • Streetscape • Flowers • Bike friendly • More restaurants • Energy independent • Infrastructure • New shops • Vendors • Outdoor stage • Building restorations • Preservation • Best breakfast in town

Surrounding Neighborhoods		
Keyword Descriptors	Existing Destinations	Desired Improvements
• Affordable • Walkable • Active • Convenient • Safe • Neighborly • Friendly • Historic • Connected • Close to amenities • Schools • Small town living • Unique • Well preserved • No place like it • Area parks • Beautiful • Diverse • Character • Bike paths • Atmosphere • Central location • Transitional homes	• Local Parks • Raccoon River • Holiday Park • Valley Junction • Local Brewery • Farmers Market • Legion Park • Close to DSM Airport • Close to downtown • Jordan Creek Mall • Phenix Park • Union Park	• Dog Park • Outdoor concerts • Bike connectivity • Bike parking • Advance parks • Celebrate parks • Building maintenance • More lighting • Streetscaping

CHAPTER 3

GUIDE

What do we need to do?

Historic West Des Moines (HWDM) is and will remain unique. The challenge is to identify ways to celebrate and enhance that uniqueness and make a really good place even better. The following recommendations are organized by category. They are based on listening to the needs and desires of local residents and businesses, filtered through knowledge of the market and professional expertise. They are listed in this section in no particular order. However, these recommendations are prioritized in the following chapter.

The work needed to complete plan objectives will take place over a decade, and the work needs to be done. These recommendations and related action steps will ensure that HWDM, already regionally known as a great place, will become an even greater experience with a stronger local economy.

"The challenge is to identify ways to celebrate and enhance the uniqueness of HWDM, and to make a really good place even better."

Celebrate the Story

The Historic Valley Junction Foundation's (HVJF) many events and marketing programs have solidified HWDM's regional reputation as a unique commercial district. This work must continue, while adding new ways to tell the area's story. HWDM's story should be recognized as an important part of the community's identity and as a regional asset. That story has both historical and modern day elements. As the birthplace of West Des Moines, the area's history is an interesting and engaging tale and worthy of celebrating. The thriving Main Street of today is also worthy of celebration, and the HVJF understands the value of communication and has and will continue to promote the evolving story of ongoing small business owner and entrepreneurial success—whether retailers, restaurateurs, or office users. The business growth opportunities, described on the following pages, also tell HWDM's story and illustrate how the area will compete and grow in the future. HWDM is not only a place where small businesses can invest and succeed, but it has appeal power because it is committed to a unique and unified experience.

HWDM's neighborhood is also a great place to live and invest, and is a story worth telling. New residents moving to the neighborhood are committed to investing in their properties. There are emerging opportunities for different types of programming to better engage HWDM's residents and to celebrate the area's historic and modern day diversity.

Residents love living in HWDM. By engaging children and their parents, residents gain greater affinity for their neighborhood. Ultimately, the evolving HWDM story will require continual communication to educate all potential customers, residents and future HWDM leaders.

Some ways to tell the story include:

STORYBOARDS OR PLAQUES

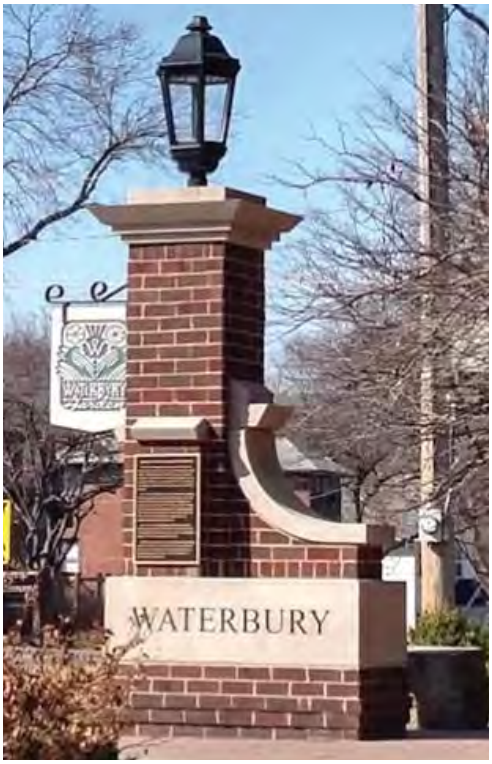
Many visitors to HWDM today have little way of knowing about the area's colorful and unique history. Installation of building plaques and storyboards within the HWDM downtown would be a simple way to tell the story and enhance the visitor experience.

WALKING TOURS

HWDM is a very walkable area full of wonderful stories. A walking tour would give visitors a better understanding of this history. The tour can be both self-guided and, as available, led by a tour guide/storyteller. Another opportunity would be to integrate historical facts and self-guided walking tour via an app – unlocking unique adventures.

HISTORIC DISPLAYS

Several residents suggested creating a small museum to tell the story of HWDM. Cost concerns are a big challenge with any type of museum, and WDM already has the Jordan House nearby which celebrates community history. As such, a separate museum is not recommended. However, temporary and/or moveable interactive exhibits and interpretive tools are suggested. A series of displays celebrating the area's history should be created and used at events and moved to various locations such as the HVJF office, the Community Center, Polk County Community Center, WDM Human Services building, etc. These displays would provide opportunities to celebrate immigration and ethnic stories.



More ways to tell the story include:

EVENTS AND RECORDINGS

HWDM has a rich, multi-cultural history which makes for wonderful, engaging stories. Story-telling events, and recording stories by some of the communities longer-term residents, are important to celebrating the area's past.

HISTORIC DISTRICT

The downtown along 5th Street, particularly south of Walnut Street, is a wonderful and unique regional attraction, with charming older commercial structures and a special character and identity. The City and the HVJF should nominate this area of 5th Street as a National Register Historic District. The creation of a National Register district will provide opportunities to access state and federal tax credits for rehabilitation projects. Enabling this type of reinvestment will sustain both the area's unique character and its 'brand' identity. A formal application will require additional historical research by a qualified consultant. Any guidelines developed for this National Register District should combine three elements for future success: encouraging quality rehabilitation projects; recognizing project cost constraints; and maintaining sufficient flexibility to integrate fun and whimsy into overall revitalization efforts.

EDUCATION

To continue to celebrate the areas unique heritage, it is recommended that the West Des Moines Historical Society, the City, and the HVJF work cooperatively with both Hillside Elementary and Stilwell Junior High School to educate students about their community. As one example, a multidisciplinary curriculum has been developed in Nashville to educate grade school children about their traditional commercial districts, neighborhood history, and local architecture. More information about the Nashville program is available here:
http://nashvillepreservationtrunks.blogspot.com/p/curriculum.html

NEIGHBORHOOD GATEWAYS

The City has already installed some attractive signs/identity elements along Railroad Avenue that celebrate the uniqueness of Valley Junction. However, development of gateway signs to welcome residents and guests are recommended at key community entrances, including:

- Vine St. and 1st St.
- Vine St. and Grand Ave.
- Grand Ave. and 8th St.

Business Growth

Valley Junction's position as a unique regional district will require focused business mix management based upon a growth system that responds to market change and sustains the district's local character. The district has been built on strong independent businesses, and that local focus is critical to maintaining the district's unique identity. Business recruitment efforts should be targeted to attracting additional independents, not national chains.

HWDM faces two (2) immediate business growth issues--first, how to activate HWDM's side streets in the downtown with new users, and second, how to support future business succession and transition planning for some of HWDM's most successful retailers. The activation of HWDM's downtown side streets with retail or restaurant uses near Fifth Street with less intensive uses, such as small offices, as the commercial district transitions into the residential areas represent mix management for business growth. Recognizing what businesses can succeed where and capitalizing on existing business adjacencies are the strategic components in collaborating with HWDM property owners to maintain strong tenancies. These strategies will also be crucial to working with developers as commercial infill projects occur in HWDM.

Regarding side street activation, it is recommended to start with Maple Street and Elm Streets first, with future activation of 4th and 6th Streets as demand dictates. Maple Street between 4th and 6th Street has already begun this transformation, and has significant opportunities for additional activation (see section on streetscape for a proposed festival street concept for this area). Likewise, Elm Street, with the existing Wicker in the Works shop at Elm and 4th Streets, offers similar potential. Future business growth along 4th and 6th Streets may be possible through development of the frontage of existing City parking lots with commercial development assuming additional parking can be provided to replace any lost spaces, possibly in a single level deck behind the future shops.

WICKER AND THE WORKS

In structuring this business growth system, West Des Moines and the Metro area have multiple resources, both expertise and access to funding, to provide succession planning for existing businesses and to sustain the district's future independent businesses. For example, the West Des Moines Business Incubator represents an opportunity to foster small office uses and additional shared, or co-working, spaces. Bringing together these varied resources into a comprehensive system will require additional partnerships and extensive coordination.

To foster similar entrepreneurial retail growth in recent years, the downtown experience now often includes temporary retail and food uses and events, most notably retail and restaurant pop-ups. These spaces are typically open interior first-floor spaces that can host a variety of events or short-term rental to one or more retail businesses. Creation of such a space serves at least four (4) purposes:

- Generating new forms of excitement about the district and its businesses, and by extension, the district's image;
- Cultivating potential business owners not yet ready for a physical location;
- Activating district vacancies or inactive areas, such as Valley Junction's best side street locations, to showcase those locations and begin to expand perceptions of the district's business offering;
- Enabling businesses to 'morph' business concepts, or to experiment. For example, an established restaurateur has the opportunity to test a new business concept with a 90-day restaurant in a vacant space or with a food truck.

This type of system supports entrepreneurial business growth, including emerging small retail and offices users, enables current owners' desire to expand their businesses or start a new business concept, identifies new businesses that fit the district's mix, or aids owner transitions, as described above. Developing a comprehensive business growth system should also incorporate emerging resources such as crowdfunding, to address the needs of entrepreneurs and property owners.

POP UP SPACE

Cultural & Entertainment Mix

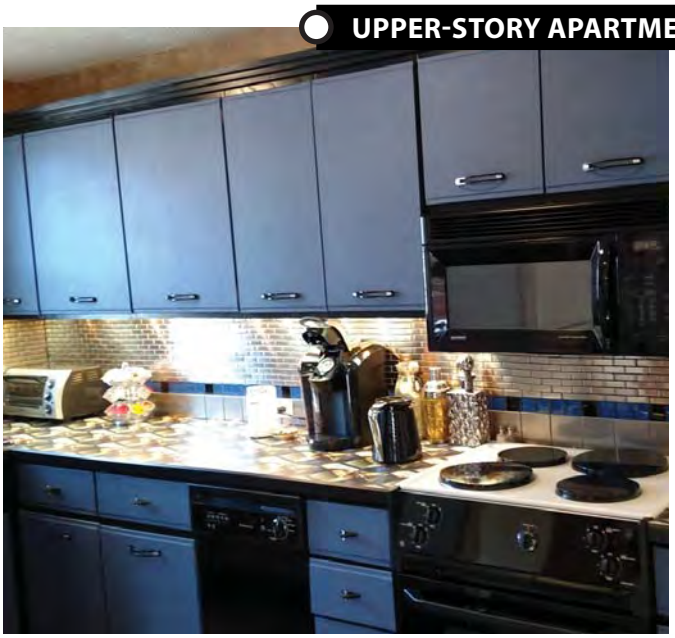
HVJF operates a wide variety of events and activities throughout the year, including a very popular weekly Farmers Market and Music in the Junction concert series during the summer and Jingle in the Junction during the Christmas season. These events are well attended and well promoted, and no major changes are recommended other than routine monitoring and refinement based on experience and visitor feedback. Events should be kept fresh, with new features added occasionally while eliminating features or events that are less successful.

The one element often mentioned by residents in both meetings and the survey was a desire for a small indoor concert/performance venue. Such a venue could provide year-round events and performances that could bring additional customers to HWDM shops and restaurants, and provide residents with a close-to-home entertainment option. Such a facility could potentially be created in one of the larger upper-story spaces, or perhaps on one of the larger opportunity sites. The success of venues like the Des Moines Social Club suggest an appetite for such facilities in the region, and HWDM would seem an ideal location for a smaller cultural/entertainment facility.

Residential Mix and Choice

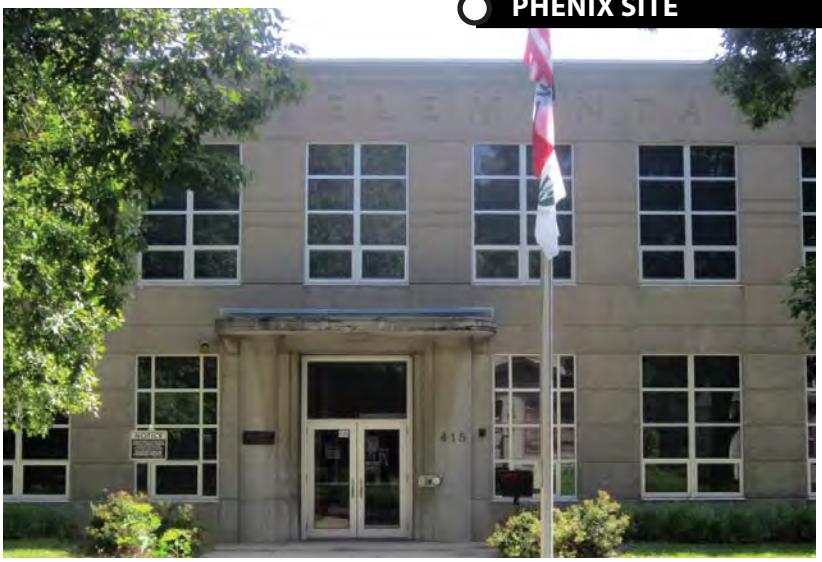
HWDM is a desirable place to live with convenient regional access and proximity to jobs, affordability, a walkable and attractive character, good local schools and parks, and access to both the HWDM downtown and other neighborhood goods and services at both Val-Gate and Normandy Plaza. Given these assets, homes in good condition do not stay on the market very long. Both the survey and focus groups conducted by Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDC) indicated additional interest in living in HWDM. Opportunities include:

UPPER-STORY APARTMENTS



While a few nice apartments have been created on upper story space along 5th Street, opportunities clearly exist for creation of additional units. Rehabilitation of these spaces can be expensive, and incentives will likely be needed to partner with property owners in capitalizing on this strong market potential. Challenges include the need to provide sprinklers, updating HVAC systems, replacing older roofs, and addressing accessibility issues. In some cases, walls and interior modifications will also be needed to create attractive spaces to meet market demand. Given the higher renovation costs, these apartments will likely need to be market rate units – which should be easily supportable given the unique and desirable living environment of 5th Street.

PHENIX SITE



This former school property, acquired by the City for redevelopment, offers the most immediate opportunity for new housing in HWDM. The school building is planned to be converted to apartments, with 75% of the units targeted as affordable by Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines. The frontage along 6th Street offers opportunities for a mix of attached and detached homes (see Opportunity Site 4 sketch).

Residential Mix and Choice

SOUTH OF RAILROAD AVENUE

Existing Valley Station Senior Housing

Although currently zoned for industrial use, two large and mostly vacant sites exist on the south side of Railroad Avenue at 9th Street. These sites offer potential for mixed use development, including potential higher density townhomes and apartments which could take advantage of the excellent proximity to both the HWDM downtown and the Levee Trail. This type of redevelopment and rezoning would be similar to the Valley Station development on Lincoln Street just south of Railroad Avenue, which was recently completed for senior housing. This approach will require modification to the City's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning to accommodate non-industrial use for these properties.

OTHER INFILL OPPORTUNITIES

Existing Bridges of Iowa (Site #1)

Two additional opportunities for new housing were identified, one being the Bridges of Iowa property along Vine Street between 12th and 13th Streets (Site 1), and another along the west side of 16th Street (Site 2). Both of these sites have also been identified for potential long-term stormwater management by the City. As plans progress, the City should explore potential opportunities to accomplish both redevelopment and needed drainage improvements on those sites. Site 1 could be developed for a variety of medium density residential homes, including smaller lot single-family, duplex and townhomes. Site 2 would be most appropriate for single-family or perhaps duplex homes. (See pages 37-39 for map and details of opportunity sites.)

Residential Character

Residential property maintenance and code enforcement were two related issues that were often raised when discussing HWDM with both residents and the Steering Committee. While a quick tour of the area reveals a charming neighborhood with older but well maintained homes, a closer inspection reveals some concerns – particularly in less visible locations such as along alleys. Programs such as the successful "Rock the Block" program by Habitat for Humanity have helped to improve some properties in the area. However, more work is needed. Consideration should be given to making "Rock the Block," or some similar community home improvement effort, an annual event. Incentives may also be appropriate to help spur additional rehabilitation efforts (see neighborhood investment below). Other efforts to maintain and enhance residential character include:

Landscaping & Curb Appeal

Do's and Dont's of Landscaping

Do's	Dont's	Reason
Do stake your tree if conditions require.	Don't stake your tree unless truly required.	Leaving a tree unstaked helps promote a strong root system that will help keep the tree anchored.
Do water and fertilize your plant.	Don't water and fertilize unless you know the correct amounts and appropriate products.	Applying incorrect products could be fatal for your plant. Ask a specialist about correct water and fertilizer application.
Do use mulch around trees and beds.	Don't over mulch or mulch too close to the base of the plant.	Mulch can provide many benefits to your plant, just make sure it stays away from the base.
Do prune your shrubs.	Don't prune off more than 1/3 of the plants overall size in one year.	Pruning is very beneficial, but pruning too much can make the plant suffer.
Do use plants where they will help block wind and sun and provide shade during summer months.	Don't place plants where they won't survive.	Plants can help provide protection from the elements, like shading your air conditioner and blocking winter wind, but they also have their own growing requirements. Pick appropriate plants for both aesthetics and function.
Do incorporate hardscapes.	Don't be afraid to call in a professional.	Wood, stone, and other materials can help define your outdoor spaces, however, their structure and stability is very important. Reaffirm that you are using correct materials and designs to make your hardscape last.

The Cape Cod
Family Room Addition

A portico, or columned, covered entrance, adds charm and protects visitors from the rain.

The trim on the addition matches the original house.

Outside, the addition blends in with the scale and style of the original house. Creating a huge 2-story family room here would have destroyed the character of our Cape Cod. You can often achieve the same spacious impression with a much lower tray or vaulted ceiling while keeping a modest exterior profile. Following the "rules" of the style here helps us to sensitively match our modern needs to a traditional exterior. The end result looks as if it were made by the same craftsman who built the original.

Original Elevation

The addition is modestly proportioned to match the house and neighborhood.

A PATTERN BOOK EXCERPTS

Guidelines

The City, in cooperation with the Iowa Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), developed a Pattern Book for West Des Moines Neighborhoods to "encourage homeowners to retain the integrity and character of their homes." This is an excellent guide to help maintain neighborhood integrity by allowing for additions that fit the existing housing character while integrating "green" building practices. These excellent guidelines should be well publicized, and they should be used in review of new construction, additions or exterior remodels within HWDM. The Pattern Book can be found here: http://www.wdm.iowa.gov/home/showdocument?id=1384

COMMUNITY GARDEN

Community Garden

A Community Garden can be a wonderful place for residents to come together, share gardening tips, and grow their own food – or food for others. The City of West Des Moines already has one Community Garden in Jordan Creek Park near I-35. However, a location within HWDM would provide convenient access to residents on the east side of the City, and would provide neighborhood residents with an additional opportunity for social interaction. Two potential sites within HWDM have been identified:

- ☐ An area within the former Phenix school site, or
- ☐ The southeast corner of 6th Street and Walnut Street (City owned property).

Neighborhood Organization

The existing Valley Junction Residential Association (VJRA) can be a key partner in enhancing the neighborhood through close coordination and information sharing with the City, identification of issues and concerns, and volunteer neighborhood improvement activities. Other possible areas where the VJRA could aid in plan implementation include:

- ☐ Share information about the Master Plan vision, and encourage plan implementation;
- ☐ Identify and implement neighborhood clean-up and beautification projects (in cooperation with the City);
- ☐ Assist with identifying appropriate residents to tell and record stories of the area's rich and diverse history.

Coordinated Home Improvement Resources

Development of a tool sharing program is suggested to provide residents with an opportunity to share resources and reduce the cost of home improvements. The tool library could also maintain a list of recommended contractors for projects that may go behind the scope of a do-it-yourself project. Although outside of HWDM, the Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity Restore has a tool library in operation at their Euclid Avenue location.

Downtown Character and Streetscape

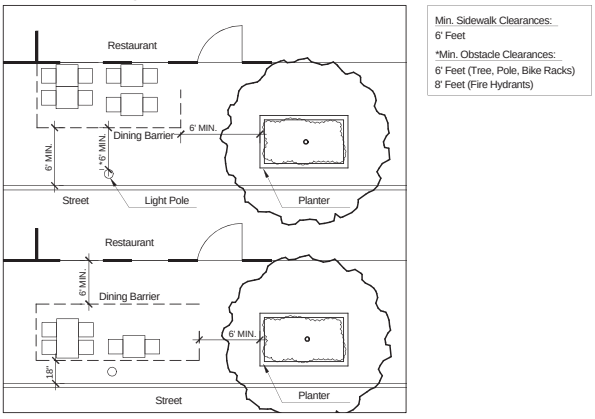
HWDM has a unique, independent, and historic character. Past streetscape projects have helped to enhance the area, including creation of Railroad Park, gateway treatments along Railroad Avenue, and attractive landscape planters throughout the downtown. Based on community input and field observations by the consulting team, a number of enhancements are proposed to improve and update the overall pedestrian environment and make the area even more appealing for both residents and guests. Proposed improvements include:

OUTDOOR SEATING AND OUTDOOR DINING

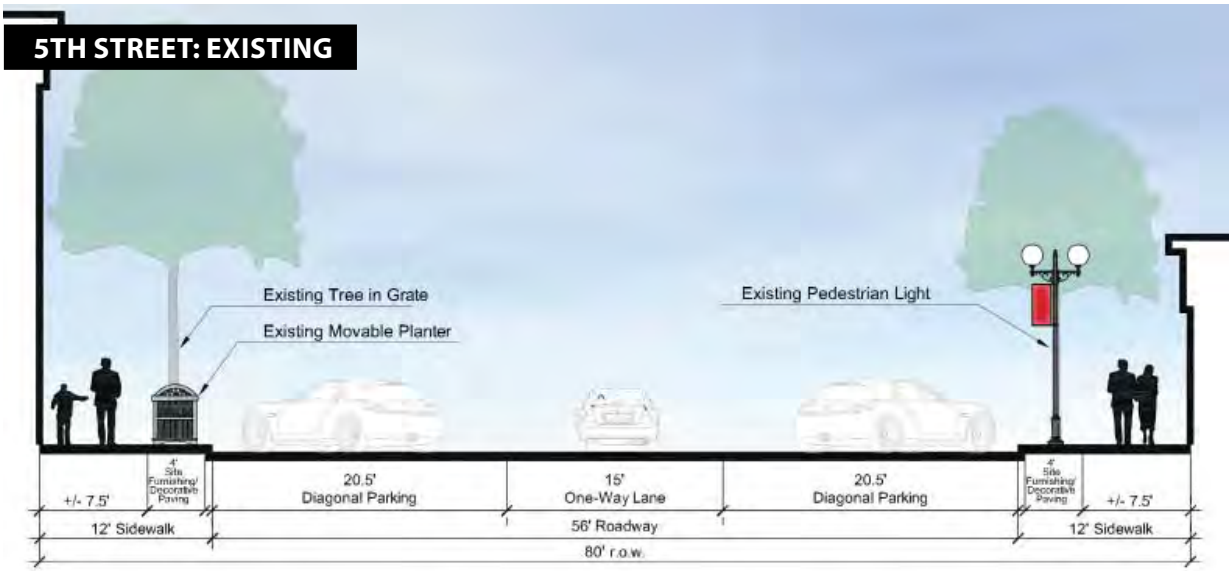
The relatively narrow sidewalks (approximately 12' wide) in the downtown along 5th Street do not allow for outdoor dining, and provide limited opportunities for seating today. The area has very limited public seating areas. Some local merchants have placed benches in front of their stores, often at the requests of shoppers who visit the area. To address this issue, several approaches are recommended:

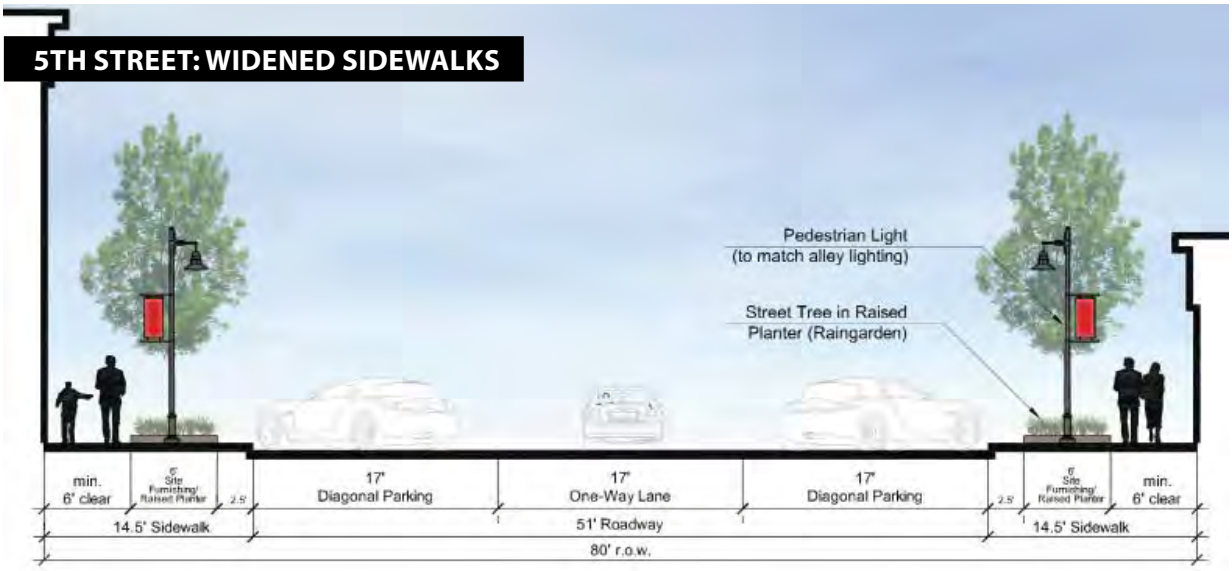
- ☐ For buildings that can accommodate it, consider roof-top patios.
- ☐ Widen sidewalks by narrowing the roadway drive-isle (see 5th Street/Mid-block Typology sketch).
- ☐ Allow restaurants to 'rent' parking spaces and create outdoor seating areas in front of their establishments.
- ☐ Create additional parklets for seating, and for fun. A parklet is a very small temporary park that fits within an existing parking space. The concept can be used to add additional seating opportunities, create opportunities for temporary art, and just to add some fun to the streetscape. The City of Covington Kentucky recently created a "Curb'd" design competition that brought several temporary parklets to their Main Street. The installations were constructed in the spring and removed in the fall to allow for winter snow plowing. http://www.curbd.org. An even more temporary approach is known as Park(ing) Day – an annual worldwide event where artists, designers and citizens transform parking spots into temporary public parks. http://parkingday.org.
- ☐ Allow for additional seating and/or dining in pedestrian bump-outs (areas at intersections where the roadway is narrowed to enhance pedestrian safety).
- ☐ Allow outdoor dining within pedestrian pass-throughs.
- ☐ Estimated streetscape enhancement costs of approximately $1,000,000 per block along 5th Street.
- ☐ Maintain Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility on all sidewalks.

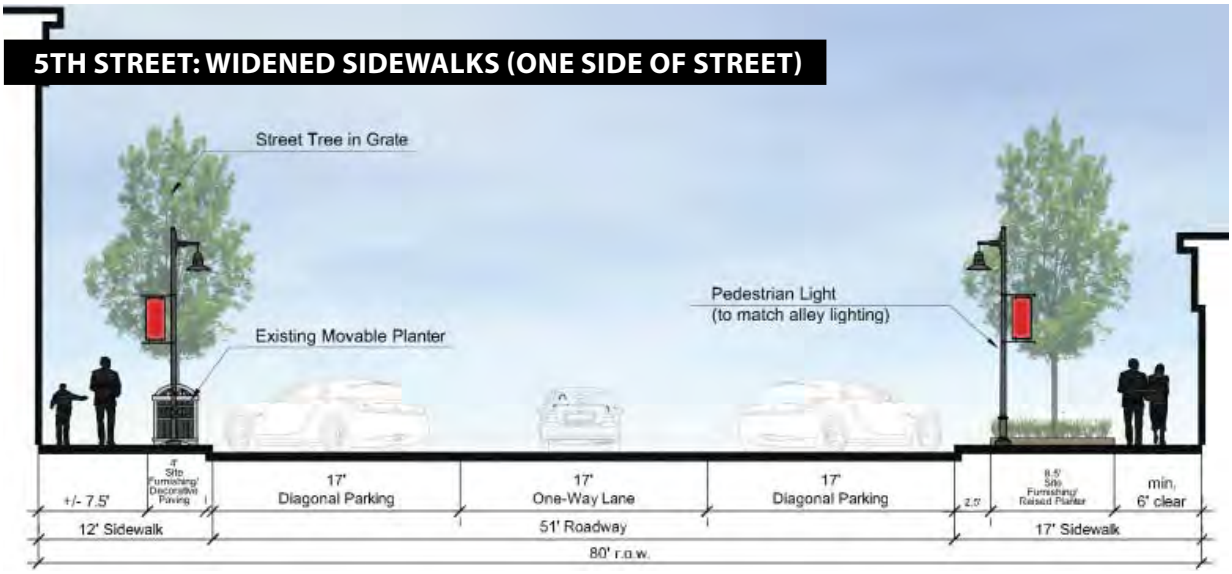
Outdoor Dining Guidelines



Widening Sidewalks







Positive Existing Streetscape Enhancements

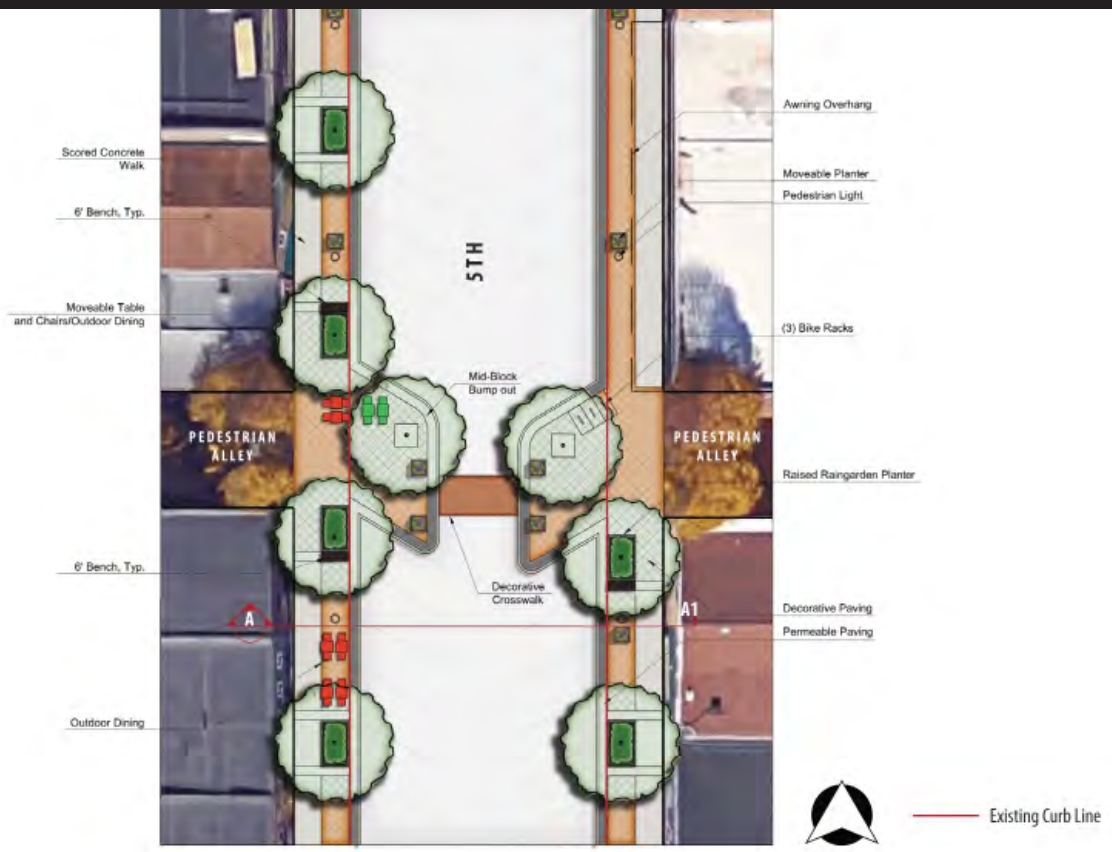
Possible Streetscape Improvements

EXAMPLE OF A RAISED INTERSECTION AND SUSTAINABLE CURBED BUMP-OUTS

EXAMPLE OF OUTDOOR SEATING POSSIBLE IF SIDEWALKS ARE WIDENED

PARKLETS ARE VERY SMALL TEMPORARY PARKS THAT FIT WITHIN EXISTING PARKING SPACES

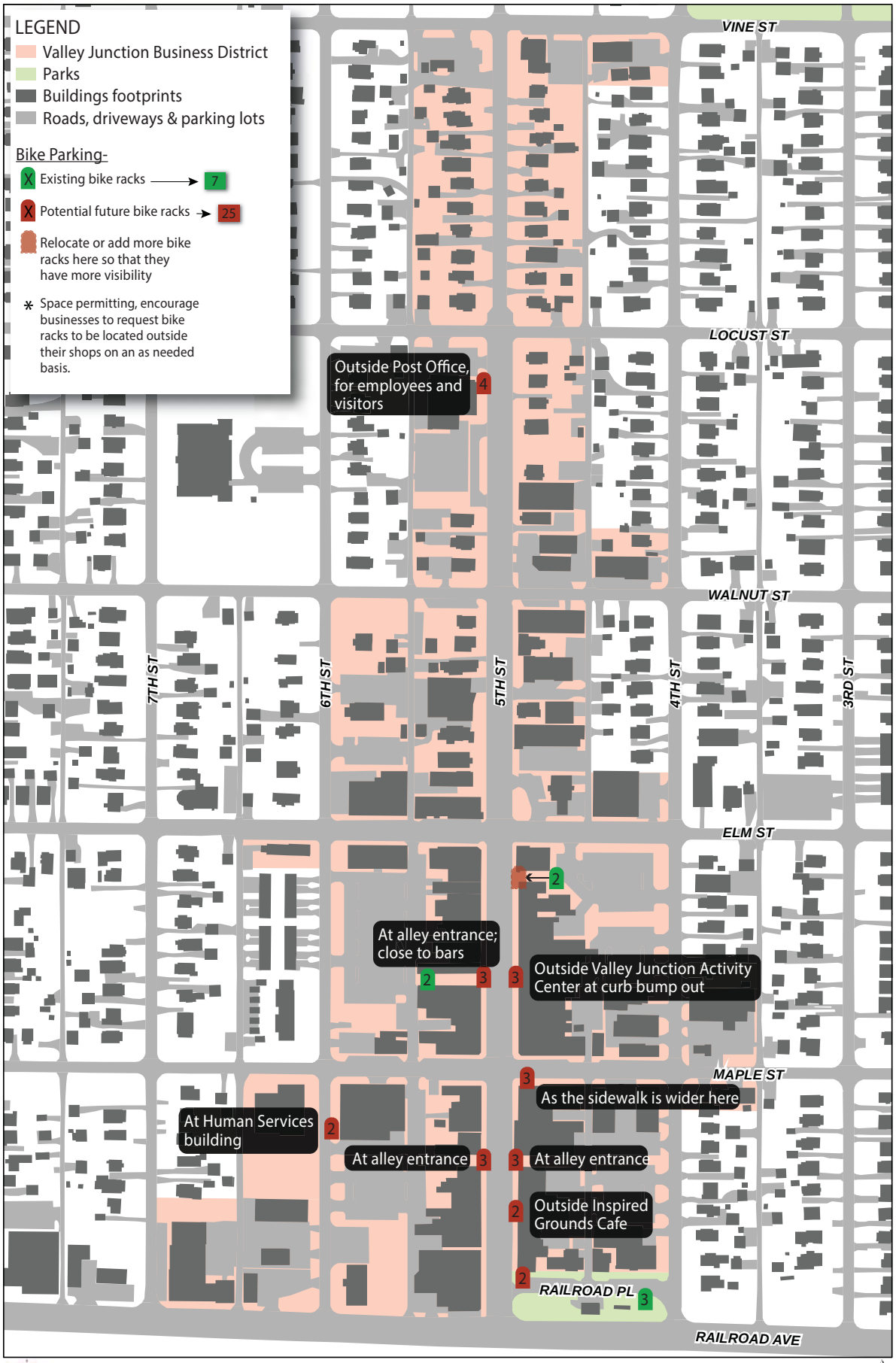
PEDESTRIAN BUMP-OUTS



PEDESTRIAN/BIKE ENHANCEMENTS

The walkability of HWDM is one of its primary draws. The following enhancements are recommended to improve the pedestrian experience and improve bike access:

- ☐ Create pedestrian bump-outs on 5th Street adjacent to existing pedestrian pass-throughs between buildings and at intersections. Mid-block crossings will provide a safer pedestrian environment and enhance the appearance of the district.
- ☐ Install additional bike racks (see plan) in visible locations.
- ☐ Create a raised platform at the 5th/Maple intersection that favors the pedestrian and encourages cars to slow down.
- ☐ Widen sidewalks where possible to prioritize the pedestrian over cars.
- ☐ Replace aging pavers to avoid potential trip hazards.
- ☐ Continue to enliven pedestrian pass-throughs as noted elsewhere with murals and other public art, seating and outdoor dining opportunities, enhanced landscaping, and keep it fun.



Bike Rack Locations Map | Historic West Des Moines Master Plan

Last updated on February 22th, 2016

0 300 600 Feet

Prepared by Teska Associates, Inc.

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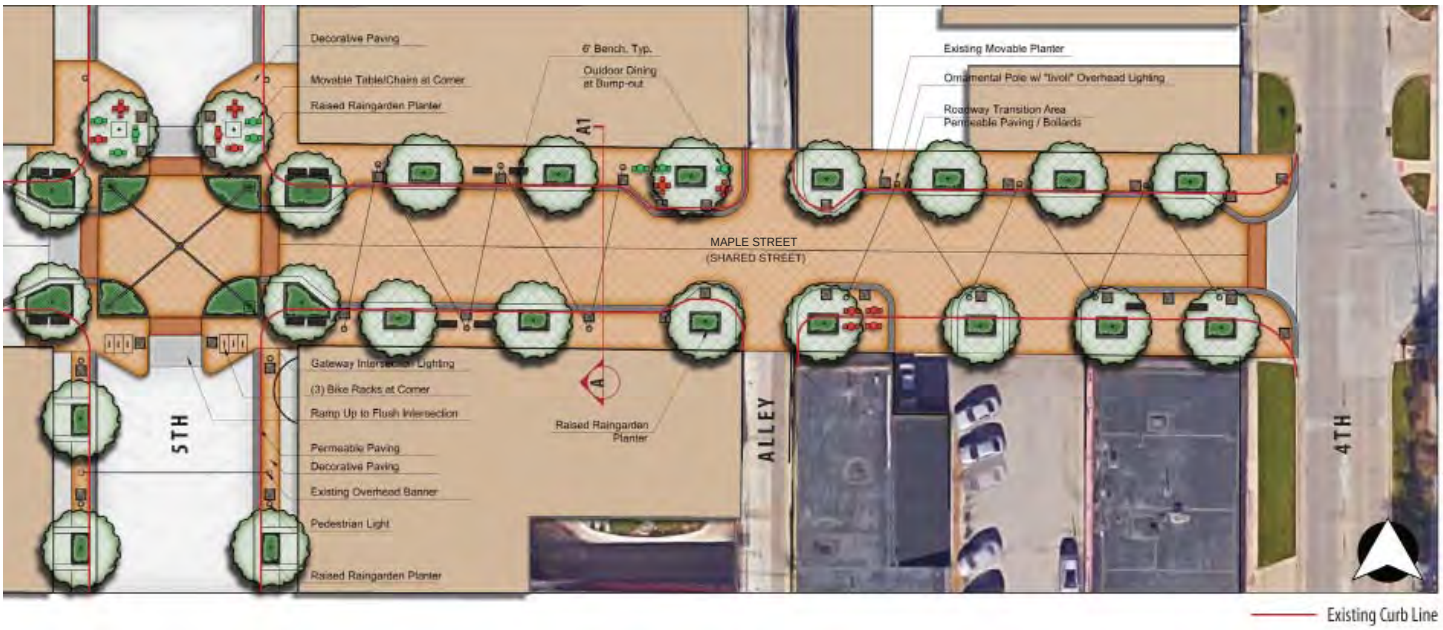
CIVIC SPACES

The only significant civic space in HWDM's downtown today is Railroad Park. While this park has been well used for events, its location adjacent to busy Railroad Avenue and on the edge of the district is less than ideal. An interactive fountain, public art, and both paved and green open space for events are features that should be considered within a new civic space. Two options to address this issue are proposed for consideration:

- Creation of a shared street along Maple Street. A shared street prioritizes the pedestrian and is designed like a civic plaza – that happens to allow cars and parking on non-event days. The illustration below shows how this approach could work.
  - Estimated Maple Street/5th Street intersection improvement cost of $300,000.
  - Estimated cost of creation of a shared street along Maple Street between 4th and 5th Streets of $2,000,000.
- Creation of a separate plaza on 5th Street if a property becomes available between Walnut and Railroad, preferably in a corner location.

Maple Street Shared Street Concept



Facade Improvements

FACADE IMPROVEMENTS

EXISTING BUILDING FACADE

- **A** Gooseneck Lighting
- **B** Remove Shingle Roof Awning, Replace with Sign Panel or Transom Windows, Flat or Blade Signs are appropriate
- **C** New Awning
- **D** New Decorative Wood Door
- **E** Paint Unpainted Aluminum-Frame Windows and Trim to Match (Use Natural colors for walls and trim and reserve brighter colors for accents such as doors, signs, and awnings)
- **F** Decorative Barber Pole
- **G** Blade Sign (min 7' height clearance)

MURAL EXAMPLES

MURALS

HWDM's Downtown has several interesting murals. Additional building facades, particularly within the pedestrian pass-throughs and along alleys, present opportunities to expand this effort. The HVJF, the City and its Public Arts Advisory Commission, local artists, local businesses, and schools should work together to create unique works of art that are fun, colorful, and celebrate the areas unique identity and culture.

ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES

Guidelines should be developed to guide commercial property owners in the renovation of their properties to maintain the character of the HWDM Downtown.

Development Opportunities

Twenty-six opportunity sites were identified within HWDM for potential redevelopment. Some will likely just involve reuse of a vacant structure, while others may involve a more extensive redevelopment. These opportunity sites were initially developed by the consulting team, with a few additional sites added based on comments from the Steering Committee and at community meetings. Those meetings were also used to help prioritize sites. The following plan and accompanying table identifies the location, size, and existing conditions on each site. It also provides recommendations for reuse.

The following sites were identified by the community to be addressed early-on in plan implementation. They are not listed in any particular order. The timing of development will be dependent on the market and desires of individual property owners.

SITE 3

Site 3 at the southwest corner of Vine Street and 5th Street. This now vacant commercial corner has a long history and connection to the neighborhood, and redevelopment is needed.

SITE 4

Site 4, the former Phenix School site, which is recommended for a variety of residential uses as well as integration of a small park/open space area.

SITE 21

Site 21, at the northwest corner of 1st Street and Railroad Avenue. This property is a gateway to HWDM, and improvements are recommended to maintain its commercial use while enhancing the sense of arrival for residents and visitors. Focus should be on the 1st & Railroad intersection with other properties included as appropriate.

SITE 22 + 23

Sites 22 and 23, south of Railroad Avenue. These larger sites offer potential for mixed use development, including new residential use, which could provide unique living opportunities conveniently located near the HWDM Downtown and the Levy Trail.

SITE 24

Site 24 is another gateway site, located at the northwest corner of 5th Street and Railroad Avenue at the entrance to the downtown. This building is in need of significant rehabilitation, but if improved could provide a welcoming and appealing 'front door' to HWDM.

SITE 25

Site 25 is located at the northeast corner of Maple Street and 4th Street. This property could serve as an anchor to a reinvigorated Maple Street corridor, and could accommodate a wide variety of uses including a destination restaurant, a variety of retail uses, or even residential use.

OPPORTUNITY SITES MAP

Opportunity Sites

Site No.	Area (Sq. Ft.)	Parcels	Existing Use	Land Use	Existing Zoning	Proposed Use	Notes
1	255,641	1	Bridges of Iowa	HD	RH-19	Medium to High Density Housing, with space for stormwater management	Existing easements; slopes 17' down to the south, 11% slope at mid point; potential stormwater management area (all or part of site)
2	40,405	1	Vacant lot	SF	SF-VJ	Single family (attached or detached), with space for stormwater management	Slopes 16' down to the west (12% slope); potential stormwater management area (all or part of site)
3	14,482	1	Vacant former convenience store (Scott's)	HBC	VJ-HB	Caterer or small restaurant	Slopes down by 2.7% to the east.
4a	101,411	5	Former Phenix School	SF	SF-VJ	Building converted to apartments and community use, small park, and appropraite parking	Slopes down by 2.7% to the east.
4b	21,961	3	Former Phenix School site	SF	SF-VJ	Single family (atttached or detached)	
4c	21,678	2	Former Phenix School site	SF	SF-VJ	Single family (atttached or detached)	
5	72,627	10	Single family homes	SF	SF-VJ	Single family homes (possible conversation to attached units based on market demand)	
6	51,005	5	Post office	HBC	VJ-HB	If Post office vacates possible uses could include a destination restaurant with parking, offices, or small fresh market/deli	
7	73,870	11	Single family homes	SF	SF-VJ	Business transition, allowing conversation of homes to small -low traffic generating businesses while maintaining residential character	
8	21,668	3	Single family homes	HBC	VJ-HB	Destination retail or office use	
9	19,321	1	Walnut Place Retreat (scrapbooking shop)	VJ SC	VJC	Retail or medium density residential use	
10	54,021	1	Municipal parking lot	HBC	VJ-HB	Parking, with potential retail use along 6th provided lost parking is replaced	
11	45,820	1	Municipal parking lot	HBC	VJ-HB	Parking, with potential retail use along 4th provided lost parking is replaced	

Zoning Descriptions

- RH-19 High Density Residential
- SF-VJ Single Family Valley Junction
- VJ-HB Valley Junction Historic Business
- VJC Valley Junction Commercial
- GI General Industrial
- BP Business Park

Opportunity Sites

Site No.	Area (Sq. Ft.)	Parcels	Existing Use	Land Use	Existing Zoning	Proposed Use	Notes
12	21,840	2	Townhomes	VJ SC	VJC	Medium density residential	
13	13,189	1	Cowles Automotive	SF	SF-VJ	Single-family or duplex	
14	34,961	1	Colorado Classics Furniture shop	VJ SC	VJC	Single-story retail, potential mixed use with ground floor retail/restaurant and upper-story office or residential	No slope. Potential brownfield redevelopment incentives.
15	17,862	1	Superior Auto Sales	VJ SC	VJC	Single-story retail, potential mixed use with ground floor retail/restaurant and upper-story office or residential	No slope. Potential brownfield redevelopment incentives.
16	23,957	3	Kinetico Water Systems	VJ SC	VJC	Mixed use with ground floor retail/restaurant and upper-story office or residential	Existing easements; nearly no slope. Potential brownfield redevelopment incentives.
17	24,896	2	Baptist Mission (storage)/ Culligan Water Conditioning	HBC	VJ-HB	Mixed use with ground floor retail/restaurant and upper-story office or residential	No slope. Potential brownfield redevelopment incentives.
18	68,929	5	Nostalgic Enterprises	HBC	VJ-HB	Mixed use with ground floor retail/restaurant and upper-story office or residential	Existing easements; no slope. Potential brownfield redevelopment incentives.
19	19,968	3	Vacant lot	MD	SF-VJ	Office or residential	
20	20,620	3	Vacant lot	MD	SF-VJ	Office or residential	
21	148,468	17	Single family homes/Contractor	VJSC and SF	SF-VJ and VJC	Mixed use (vertical or horizontal), with gateway feature on 1st/Railroad intersection	
22	199,899	1	Vacant railroad building	GI-Vacant	GI	Mixed Use, commercial and residential. Will need to be rezoned	Existing easements; no slope. Potential brownfield redevelopment incentives.
23	306,944	1	Vacant lot	GI-Vacant	BP	Mixed Use, commercial and residential. Will need to be rezoned	Existing easements; no slope. Potential brownfield redevelopment incentives.
24	6,622	1	Used car lot and retail shop	HBC	VJ-HB	Renovate existing building for enhanced retail/restaurant use	
25	21,877	2	Vacant buildings	HBC	VJ-HB	If buildings reused - ice cream shop or small snack shop (hot dog stand, italian ice, etc.), florist, or art galery for corner building, small office for larger one. If redeveloped, destination restaurant or mixed use (commercial and/or apartments)	

Zoning Descriptions

- RH-19 High Density Residential
- SF-VJ Single Family Valley Junction
- VJ-HB Valley Junction Historic Business
- VJC Valley Junction Commercial
- GI General Industrial
- BP Business Park

HWDM Investment & Future Development

Within the Valley Junction commercial district, opportunities exist for new in-fill development and for rehabilitation of the district's historic structures, including upper stories. New development on vacant land along Railroad Avenue, south of the existing commercial district, represents a third opportunity for new residential and commercial construction. This commercial construction would provide some new lease space to complement existing Valley Junction commercial space and tenancies.

The following three 'back of the envelope' calculations for sample project scenarios apply representative rents and costs to sample projects that could occur in HWDM. These calculations and their supporting assumptions are indicative, not precise. They reflect current average construction-related costs and rents for each use category that may or may not be components of any individual owner or developer proposal. In considering each scenario, this analysis compares estimated project costs to the value derived from the development program. This analysis assumes typical local market conditions and holding periods. It should be noted that investment timeframes differ and reflect individual ownership objectives, especially in commercial districts with high percentages of owner-occupied properties.

These sample projects include a historic building rehabilitation, in-fill opportunity, and a mixed-use project concept for one of the identified sites on the south side of Railroad Avenue.

Existing Building Rehabilitation

The following scenario describes two (2) concept redevelopment programs for one of Valley Junction's historic mixed-use buildings. This scenario assumes a 2-story building with a 3,000 SF footprint and includes two (2) 1,500 SF ground level lease spaces with four (4) second story 950 SF apartments.

Development Program		
Retail (2 spaces at 1,500 SF)	**3,000**	
Residential (4 units at 950 SF/Unit plus common)	**3,000**	
Current Rents and Value	**Monthly**	**Annualy**
Retail Rents	$12	
Apartment Rents: Month/Annualized	$0.90	$11
No parking costs		
NOI	$41,400	
Value (Income)	$487,000	
	Low Estimate	**High Estimate**
Rehab Costs PSF (Fully loaded)	**$50**	**$90**
Estimated Project Cost	$300,000	$540,000
Uses/Project Costs		
Hard Costs	$225,000	$405,000
Soft Costs and Contingency	$75,000	$135,000
Total	$300,000	$540,000
Sources of Funding		
Owner Cash (10%)	$30,000	$54,000
Main Street Challenge Grant	$50,000	$50,000
Federal Historic Tax Credit (20% of Eligible)	$36,000	$64,800
State Historic Tax Credit (25% of Eligible)	$66,000	$118,800
Debt (20% Cash Out from Perm Refinance)	$60,000	$108,000
Workforce Housing Tax Credit (10%)	$15,000	$27,000
Available Sources	$242,000	$395,600
Gap	-$58,000	-$144,400
Other Potential Costs/Change of Use		
Grease Interceptors	$40,000	
Fire Suppression	$15,000	
Full Restaurant Kitchen (Low Estimate)	$100,000	

The first redevelopment program shows a rehab costing $50 PSF, or $300,000, and the second program shows a rehab at $90 PSF, or $540,000. The building's current rents are assumed to be $12.00 PSF for the commercial space and $.90 PSF (or $11 PSF annually) for the rental units. Both reflect current Valley Junction conditions. The current estimated real estate value, given the rental income, is $487,000. Assuming an increase in rents after project completion to $15 and $12 PSF, respectively for commercial space and the apartment rents, this value increases to $593,000.

The overall projects costs are also compared with potentially available funding sources, including owner cash and debt, tax credits, and Main Street-related grant funding. Assuming the owner can successfully assemble this capital stack, the building rehabilitations in both programs result in financial gaps between available funding and rehabilitation costs and a modest increase in property value, given the likely rents are unchanged in either program. These scenarios indicate the need for additional incentives (financial and regulatory) to ensure quality rehabilitations to support strong ground level tenants and new downtown living options. A longer holding period by ownership would be assumed in this scenario.

Infill Construction

This concept assumes the construction of a new 10,000 SF mixed-use building in HWDM. This building would have a 5,000 SF footprint, on ground level, and 5,000 SF second-story with 5 apartments. There would be ten (10) shared parking spaces plus access to shared parking in Valley Junction.

Development Program: **2 Story Development - 1st Story Restaurant | 2nd Story Apartments (5 total)**
10 shared parking spaces

At Asking Rents						
Use	**Square Feet**	**Construction/Parking Cost Estimate**	**Rents**	**Annual Income**	**Estimated Value to Developer (8% Cap)**	**Difference**
Mixed Use	10,000	$925,000-$1,100,000	$15/$12	$70,000-$85,000	$1,029,000-$1,080,000	-$23,000 to $104,000

The asking rents for the completed in-fill lease space and apartments are $15 PSF for the ground level space and $12 PSF ($1 PSF per month) for the apartments. Assuming an 8% capitalization rate, the estimated project value is $1,029,000-$1,080,000. The different between this value and the estimated project costs indicates the potential for a successful project, assuming construction and land costs meet developer and owner project objectives.

New Development at Site 23

Site 23, located just south of Railroad Avenue, was identified during the plan process as a priority site for new development. The mixed-use development concept for Site 23 includes commercial and residential uses with provisions for parking, including a parking area (identified on the Site concept drawing as Expanded Parking) near the proposed Bike Bridge within the concept.

Development Program: **Site 23**

Uses	Construction and Parking Cost Estimate	Rents	Annual Income	Estimated Value to Developer	Difference
Apartment and Commercial	$24,100,000-$24,900,000	$18/$15	$1,900,000-$2,000,000	$27,000,000-$27,950,000	$3,000,000-$3,950,000

As a 'from the ground up' new development concept, the rents shown reflect typical rents for newer apartment and commercial lease space developments in the City and neighboring communities. The PSF rents are slightly higher than those shown in the in-fill example above ($18 versus $15 for commercial and $15 versus $12 for apartments). The capitalization rate for the multi-family/apartment component is lower (7%), reflecting regional market conditions and investor perceptions for those properties. The capitalization rate for commercial is 8%, as with the in-fill example. The resulting Site 23 estimates indicate the potential for a larger successful project, though the commercial component would be less attractive when applying the above assumptions.

HISTORIC WEST DES MOINES MASTER PLAN

Site 4: Site Development

CONCEPT A: Single-Family Lots

- **A** (16) Single-Family Lots (30' x 135') and (40' x 135') at Corners
- **B** Relocated Parking Lot: 50 Spaces
- **C** Neighborhood Playground Gateway
- **D** New Neighborhood Playground
- **E** Community Gardens

CONCEPT B: Townhomes

- **A** (20) 2-Story Rear-Loaded Townhomes +/- 2,200 s.f. (20' x 55')
- **B** Relocated Parking Lot: 50 Spaces
- **C** Neighborhood Playground Gateway
- **D** New Neighborhood Playground
- **E** Community Gardens
- **F** Open Space

Site 21: Site Development

A Commercial Building (1-story): 6,000 s.f.

B Outdoor Plaza w/ Decorative Paving, Seating and Trellis Structure

C West Des Moines Gateway Sign and Landscaping

D Existing Bike Path

E *Surface Parking: 28 Spaces
4.7 per 1000 s.f.
*To Accommodate Parking (1) Residential Property is Affected

F Screening Parking Lot w/ Fence, Shrubs and Trees

HISTORIC WEST DES MOINES MASTER PLAN

Site 23: Site Development

Site 23: Mixed-Use Development

- **A** (2) Commercial Buildings (1-story):
  13,000 g.s.f.
  Parking: 51 spaces @3.9/1000 s.f.
- **B** Outdoor Plaza w/ Decorative Paving, Seating and Trellis Structure
- **C** Street Parking: 36 spaces
- **D** New Bike Path (10' Min)
- **E** (2) 4-1/2 Story Apartment Buildings: 100 Units each
  200 Total Units
  288,000 g.s.f.
  Parking: 200 Underground Spaces
  100 Surface Spaces
  (300 Total @ 1.5 per Unit)
- **F** Detention/Water Feature
- **G** Existing Off-Street Path (8th)
- **H** Overhead Utility Wires
- **I** Existing Bike Path

Railroad Ave Frontage

- **J** Surface Parking: 28 Spaces @ 4.7 per 1000 s.f.
- **K** 1-Story Commercial Building: 6,000 s.f.)

Bike Improvements

- Existing Off-Street Path (8th)
- New Bike Path (10' Min)

Incentives

Improving already developed areas creates some unique financial challenges. From a market and economic perspective, four components to HWDM's improvements need to be addressed. All of these suggested incentives should increase private sector investment in HWDM.

Building Upgrades

While many HWDM commercial buildings are in adequate condition, others require upgrades. Examples include maintaining the building envelope and fostering upper-story development and improvements. Structuring a simple, targeted, and effective incentive to address these building upgrades will support stronger HWDM tenancies in the future and enhance HWDM's overall neighborhood experience with new types of spaces and uses.

Restaurant Attraction

As the business mix data in the Market and Economics section shows, HWDM has significantly fewer restaurants than other comparable districts in the Des Moines Metro area. A substantial number of respondents to the recent survey wanted more downtown restaurants, including restaurants with entertainment venues. Interviewees during this plan process also noted restaurants as an important opportunity. Current HWDM restaurateurs have also suggested interest in developing new restaurant concepts, including ethnic restaurants. All of these factors indicate market support. Currently, certain local and regional regulations increase costs to open in HWDM, making the district uncompetitive as a potential location for the type of experienced restaurateur that wants to locate in and could succeed in HWDM. Attracting additional restaurants will require incentives to address restaurant specific issues, such as grease traps, sprinkler systems, or other requirements for restaurant build-out.

Change of Use

Related to the building improvement and restaurant issues is the City's current change of use regulations. This issue obviously requires careful thought and careful balancing of life safety and commercial interests. As a historic commercial district, HWDM has the opportunity to develop upper story apartments and office uses. Both types of users will benefit HWDM. Identifying how the City can creatively approach this issue in partnership with downtown's property owners and HVJF will strengthen HWDM's real estate economics during the plan's life. Any incentives to support these new upper story uses have the opportunity to realize three (3) objectives—supplementing existing state and Main Street Iowa incentives to enable upper story redevelopment; applying best practices in upper story redevelopment to attract these new uses; and assuring that HWDM's historic character and real estate values are sustained over this plan's life.

Neighborhood Investment

Whether Millennials seeking a first home in an accessible neighborhood with urban amenities or buyers committed to the emerging small house ethic, neighborhoods like HWDM are an attractive option. Metro area investors are currently interested in rehabilitating existing homes and building new housing in HWDM. With new projects, such as the Phenix redevelopment, and potential for future apartment and upper story development, partnership opportunities exist to complement HWDM's current housing options and respond to new residents attracted to the neighborhood. Multiple housing resources are currently available from the City of West Des Moines, NDC, the Metro Home Improvement program, Neighborhood Finance Corporation, and Mid-American Energy, among others.

The Neighborhood Finance Corporation (NFC) is worthy of highlighting, as it has been very popular in the past and restoration of participation in this program was recently re-instituted (June, 2016). This program is designed to help with both home rehabilitation and/or home purchase. There are no income restrictions for the program. The City has budgeted $200,000 for this program, and that will be matched 4:1. It is anticipated that, as in the past, these funds will go quickly.

Packaging these offerings into a comprehensive program accessible to HWDM's residential owners will ensure that HWDM's residential areas remain strong, as new City residents consciously choose HWDM. Other potential tools include:

- ☐ **Establishment of a Conservation District for the HWDM residential neighborhood.** A neighborhood conservation district is typically a zoning tool to preserve residential neighborhoods with less restrictive regulations than a locally designated historic district. Often, these areas, or neighborhoods, have a unique or historic character, but they may be less significant in preservation terms or would not necessarily meet the criteria to become a local historic district. Who administers this function varies—it can be zoning, planning, historic preservation (in larger cities), or housing. Also, review is generally binding and administrative. Review is also based upon a specific set of design guidelines applicable to that neighborhood. Bloomington, Indiana, has extensive experience applying this tool and have used it successfully for the neighborhood near their downtown. This neighborhood consists of smaller homes—unique but not architecturally or historically significant. Iowa City, IA has also successfully employed this tool. Some communities also work with partners to provide homebuyer education and hands-on training designed to improve overall housing quality. The City's Pattern Book has guidelines in place for such a potential Conservation District.

- ☐ **Property Tax Rebate Program.** This program would be used to encourage and provide assistance to property owners in the renovation and redevelopment of vacant or underutilized retail, office or mixed use buildings and sites. The property tax rebate will be based on a five-year sliding scale, starting with a 75% rebate of the tax increment revenues generated by the upgrade/replacement, decreasing to 15% in year five. This program is currently only available for projects of $1,000,000 or more.

- ☐ **Property Improvement Fund.** Funding of between $5,000 and $150,000 is provided through this program that is designed to assist property owners in the renovation and upgrade of older commercial, office, and mixed use properties. Funds can be used for major renovations, including new electrical, plumbing, and mechanical systems, fire suppression systems, replacement roofs, and façade improvements. A minimum assessment agreement is required, which will allow the City to be paid back through the increased property taxes on the improvement.

- ☐ **Regulatory Compliance Fund.** As the name suggests, this program is designed to assist property owners in compliance with government regulations (fire sprinklers, ADA compliance, bringing building components up to code standards, etc.). The program funds up to 50% of the cost of compliance as a grant, up to a maximum of $150,000.

In addition to the above incentive programming, the planned National Register nomination for a HWDM historic commercial district should proceed. Having a district in place will allow HWDM's eligible property owners to take advantage of the 20% federal and Iowa's 25% rehabilitation tax credit. Improvements to Iowa's tax credit processing will ensure this opportunity exists for future building projects. These incentives, when layered with other available state and any new local incentives, will ensure that buildings are renewed, and strong tenants can be secured.

Bloomington Conservation District: https://bloomington.in.gov/sections/viewSection.php?section_id=629

Sustainability and Health

Many of the previous recommendations contained in this Master Plan address the economic sustainability of HWDM. However, the environmental sustainability of the area is also critical to long-term resiliency and prosperity. HWDM is already a healthy neighborhood, with short walkable blocks, access to excellent parks, schools, and shopping.

One interesting metric on walkability is called a 'walk score', a score determined by access to shopping, parks, schools, etc. as compiled by www.walkscore.com. The web site is primarily used by people looking for apartments that are in a convenient, walkable location. HWDM scores very well, with an overall score of 73 (on a 100-point scale). For comparison, the City of Des Moines has an average score of 44. Interestingly, one area the HWDM scored low on regarding the walkscore was in the area of culture/entertainment. Given the number of events and festivals in the area, this low score seems strange. It is likely that the scoring system does not consider events, and just looks at established indoor venues such as theaters or small concert/performance venues. Such an indoor facility would be a wonderful addition to HWDM, and should be explored within the context of one of the larger redevelopment sites.

The additional pedestrian enhancements, and the suggested community garden, will only enhance this healthy living environment. The following are key recommendations in this area.

HVJC OFFICE

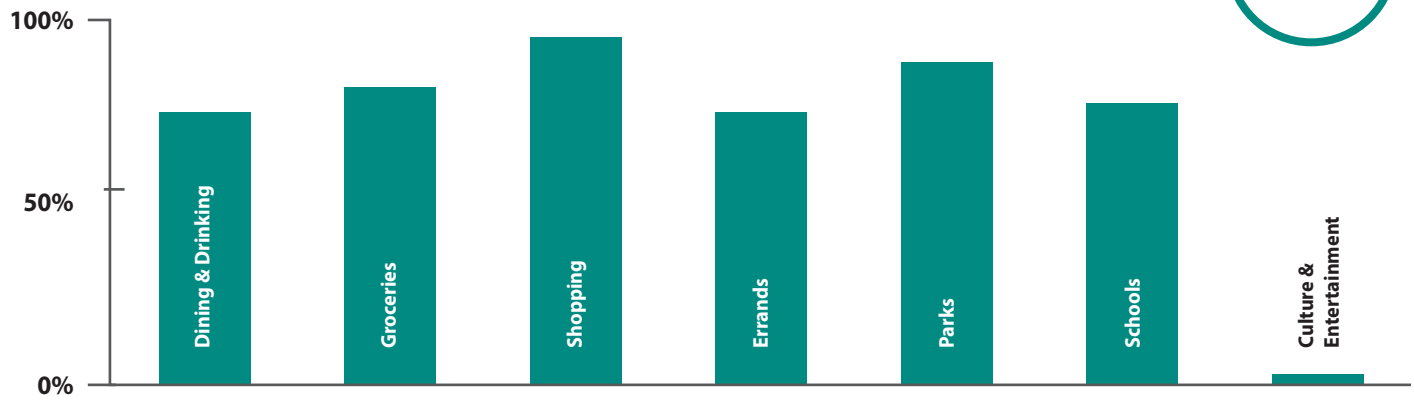
GREEN BUILDING PRACTICES

HWDM is already home to some successful green building efforts, including the LEED certified rehabilitation of the former City Hall/Fire Station at 137 5th Street (now occupied by the HVJF), and development of some green building demonstration homes built along Maple Street near Wilson Park. Both rehabilitation and new construction efforts in HWDM should build on these efforts, integrating energy efficiency whenever possible. The WDM Pattern Book provides good examples of ways this can be accomplished.

Walk Score

The Walk Score for this location is based on the following categories.

73



BIOSWALES AND RAIN GARDENS

Much has been done to address historic flooding issues within HWDM, including construction of the levee and improved storm sewers throughout the area. The City should continue these efforts, including:

- ☐ Encouraging the integration of rain gardens where practical, including both individual properties that have drainage issues and in public projects such as street and streetscape improvements.
- ☐ Enhancing the existing swale along 1st Street between Val-Gate and Vine Street with native plantings that can both enhance the appearance of the area, reduce maintenance, and do a better job of filtering and slowing run-off.

GREEN ALLEYS

WDM worked with property owners and enhanced the alleys in HWDM within the past ten years, and these improvements have helped. However, like any type of infrastructure, there will come a time when these alleys will need to be replaced. At that time, the City of WDM should consider a green alley program to improve drainage, function, and aesthetics within alleys in HWDM. An excellent example of such a program is in Dubuque, where permeable pavers have been installed in alleys to reduce run-off, provide a clean and attractive service access to properties, and provide an overall enhancement to the neighborhood. More information on Dubuque's program can be found here: http://cityofdubuque.org/1818/Green-Alley-Reconstruction

LED LIGHTING

Continue efforts to replace street, pedestrian and parking lot light fixtures, or installation of new fixtures, within HWDM utilizing LED illumination for enhanced energy efficiency. Mid-American Energy has a program to replace existing street lights within the neighborhood (and all of West Des Moines). The City will be responsible for addressing fixtures within the HWDM Downtown.

BIOSWALE

RAIN GARDEN

GREEN ALLEY

Parking

From observations, conversations, and data review, there appears to be two parking issues in HWDM. The first is proximity, with everyone wanting to park along 5th Street while parking spaces in City lots along 4th or 6th Streets go unused. This is a common issue in any downtown. The second is peak demand, particularly during festivals and events where certain streets are closed to traffic and large crowds create increased parking demand.

The Parking Availability Map on the following page shows existing parking within and around the downtown. Recommendations include:

ENHANCED PARKING DIRECTIONAL SIGNS

Additional signs are needed to direct visitors, particularly for events, to existing parking lots along 4th and 6th Streets.

MAINTAINING EXISTING PARKING LEVELS

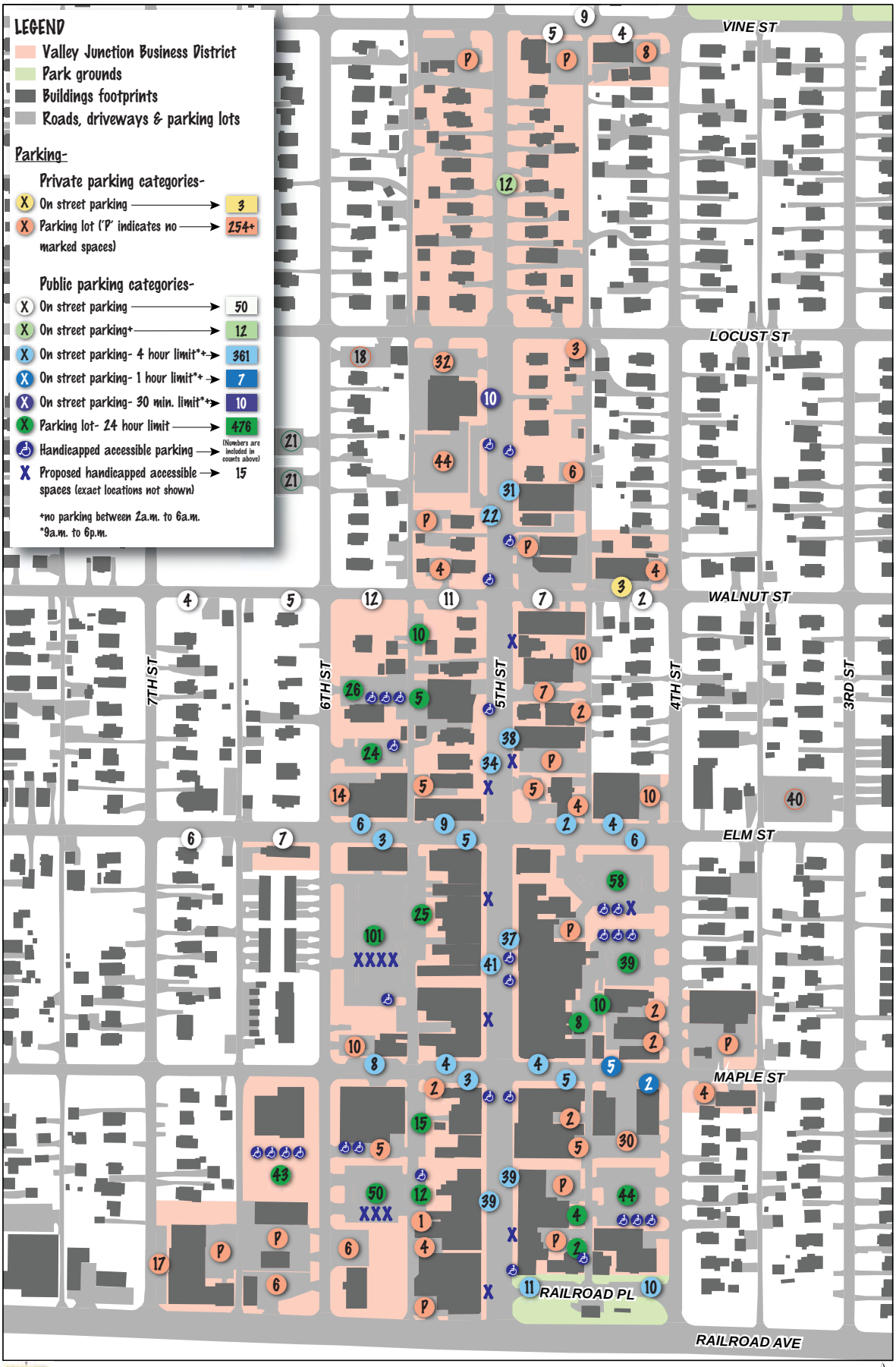
The plan does call for the loss of a few spaces along 5th Street for pedestrian improvements. However, particularly within existing public or private parking lots, any loss of spaces due to new development should be replaced on-site or within the immediate vicinity.

ADDITIONAL STREET PARKING

Develop additional on-street parking on 5th Street in the 500 block. As new commercial development occurs within this area, the City should extend the angled parking already in place in the 100 to 400 blocks to this block.

PROVIDE ADDITIONAL HANDICAP PARKING

As suggested by residents, a comparison of the proximity and number of handicap spaces within the downtown was completed. This examination suggested a need for additional handicap parking throughout the area. The diagram on the following page highlights (with an x) suggested locations for additional handicap parking.



Parking Availability Map | Historic West Des Moines Master Plan

Last updated on February 17th, 2016

0 300 600 Feet

N

Prepared by Teska Associates, Inc.

Bikes

West Des Moines has made significant strides in becoming a bicycle friendly community, with extensive paths and a detailed Bike Master Plan. HWDM already has a bike path connection along Railroad Avenue between 1st Street and 4th Street, and a bike path running east-west through adjacent Holiday Park. However, discussions with residents and businesses led to the following recommendations to enhance bike accommodations within the Study Area.

Connection to Levee Trail

Several alternatives to provide an enhanced connection between the Levee Trail and HWDM were explored, including grade separated bridge options. However, the recommended approach is to develop a connection from the Levee Trail that would use the existing 11th Street railroad crossing (near Lincoln Street), run along the railroad tracks in an easement recently obtained by the City to 9th Street, then within the 9th Street right-of-way to Railroad Avenue. From there it could run along the south side of Railroad Avenue, with a crossing integrated into the existing signal at 8th Street. An existing box culvert could be used as a dedicated trail providing access to Maple Street, which is shown on the Bike Master Plan as a designated shared lane bike route. The proposed new bike trail will require close coordination and approval by the Union Pacific Railroad.

Bike Racks

Additional bike racks are recommended within the HWDM Downtown. Racks should be located in visible locations for enhanced security (see plan on page 33).

Catalyst Activities

With any Master Plan, it is important to show early progress in achieving plan objectives to maintain plan momentum. Several areas of focus are suggested:

Add Restaurants

Add Restaurants. From a market perspective, capitalizing on the overwhelming interest in attracting new restaurants to HWDM represents the best early steps. Developing a restaurant attraction incentive, working with interested property owners with suitable HWDM locations, and identifying or revisiting area restaurant operators with interest in HWDM are all tasks that can be readily completed and will result in mix improvement and increased restaurant sales.

Pop-Up Space

Pop-up Space. Development of a temporary store front that can serve as seasonal sales space for local entrepreneurs, host special events, and serve as a potential incubator of ideas and future permanent businesses.

Redevelop Phenix Site

Noted elsewhere, redevelopment of this site will bring new residents to the area, providing new customers for area businesses and expanding the property tax base.

Public Art

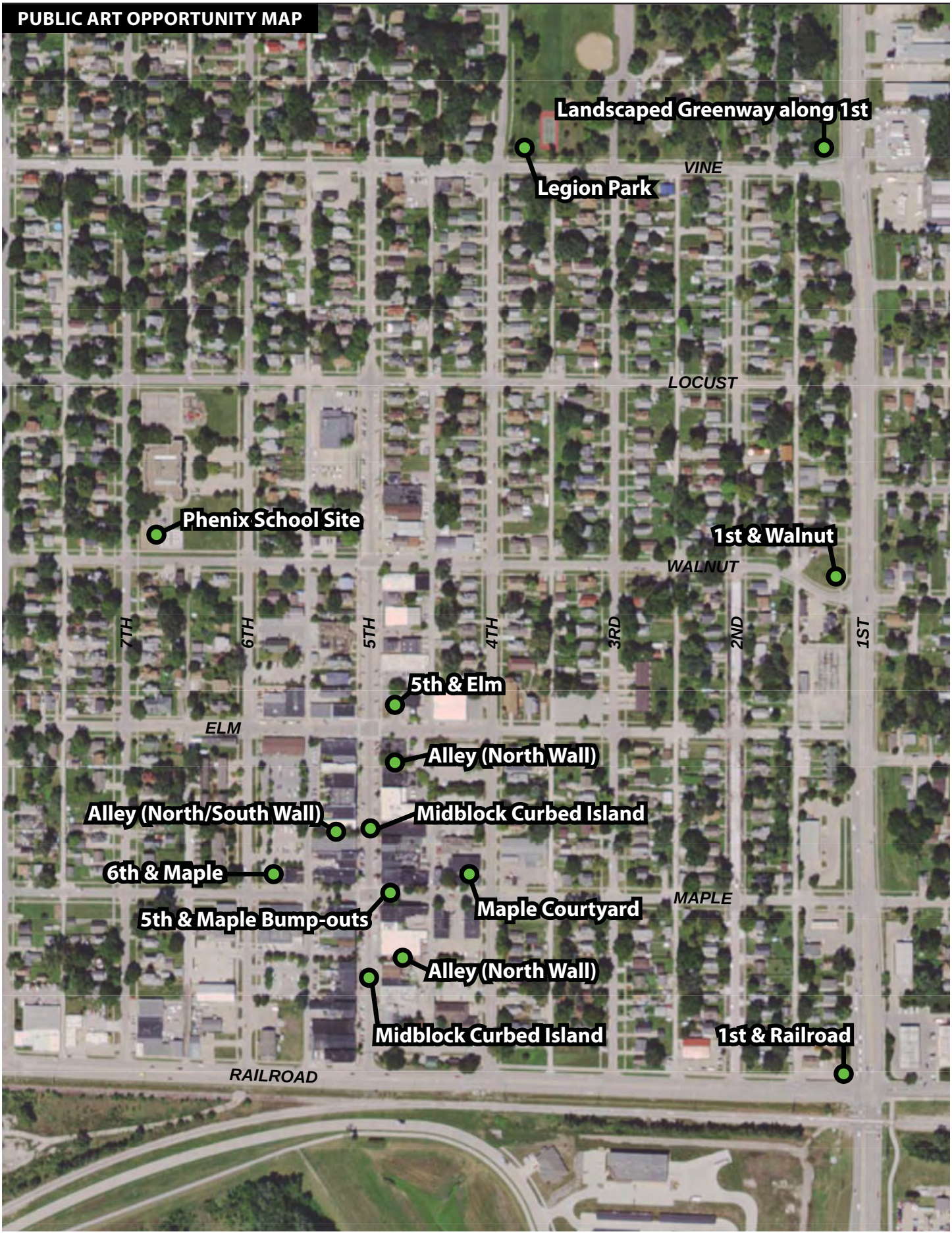
The City of WDM has an active public art program, and HWDM is the perfect pedestrian friendly environment for public art. Two tracks are recommended:

- ☐ Permanent or semi-permanent art installations by artists consistent with the guidelines in the City's Public Art Master Plan. Potential locations for these art installations within HWDM are suggested on the following plan.
- ☐ Temporary art displays, done by the community and/or local school students, that would add fun and color to the area.

PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITIES

Security

In interviews, focus groups, and general conversations during the planning process it was clear that both residents and visitors feel that HWDM is a safe neighborhood and shopping district. However, as with any busy area with retail activity and events, safety and security should never be taken lightly. Consideration should be given to installing a security camera, or cameras, in key locations within the downtown. Issues such as location, monitoring, archiving, etc. will need to be addressed if this concept is to be implemented.


PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITY MAP
Landscaped Greenway along 1st
Legion Park
VINE
LOCUST
Phenix School Site
1st & Walnut
WALNUT
7TH
6TH
5TH
4TH
3RD
2ND
1ST
5th & Elm
ELM
Alley (North Wall)
Alley (North/South Wall)
Midblock Curbed Island
6th & Maple
Maple Courtyard
MAPLE
5th & Maple Bump-outs
Alley (North Wall)
Midblock Curbed Island
1st & Railroad
RAILROAD

CHAPTER 4

ACTION

How do we get there?

This Master Plan presents many ideas and strategies for enhancing HWDM. Implementation of these ideas will require time, money, and significant effort on the part of residents, businesses, the City, and the HVJF. While some ideas can be done relatively quickly and inexpensively, ideas like the shared street concept will take significant resources, and time to accomplish. Successful places are always evolving and changing to adapt to economic, market, and social/cultural conditions . This Master Plan is designed to provide a roadmap for some of these changes for the next ten to 20 years.

"Plans are only good intentions unless they immediately degenerate into hard work."

- Peter Drucker

What and When

The Steering Committee, along with the consulting team, worked closely to prioritize plan recommendations. These priorities are noted below. Priorities are categorized as follows:

Category 1 – Tasks that can be completed within approximately one year.

Category 2 – Mid-term tasks, with a desired completion of between one and three years. Note that on-going tasks are color-coded in this category, with some projects anticipated before and some after this one to three-year period.

Category 3 – Longer-term, typically more capital intensive projects that will require more time to secure funding and complete design work.

	Item	Tasks	When
1	**Attract Additional Restaurants (with outdoor dining if possible)***	☐ Develop and implement incentive system to address extraordinary costs related to restaurants (commercial kitchens, grease traps, etc.) ☐ Identify potential restaurateurs and spaces ☐ Negotiate agreements	☐ Adopt incentive program by end of 2017 ☐ Two new restaurants open by end of 2017
2	**Phenix site redevelopment**	☐ Complete financing for rehab and conversion of existing building to apartments	By December, 2017
		☐ Select developer for 6th Street frontage, and approve development agreement	By June, 2017
		☐ Adopt site master plan, including relocation of parking for existing building, development of a new park area (with potential community garden, and new housing along 6th Street, approve new plat (and zoning if needed)	By December, 2017
		☐ Develop new homes along 6th Street	By December, 2019
		☐ Create park space	By December, 2020
3	**Community garden**	☐ Determine location and program/rules and maintenance plan ☐ Promote ☐ Install and operate, including monitoring and adjustment of regulations as needed	By Summer, 2017
4	**Signs (particularly allowing blade signs)**	☐ Modify sign regulations to accommodate appropriate pedestrian scale signs as noted in section on regulations (page 60)	By Spring, 2017
5	**Creating additional opportunities for outdoor seating (and dining)**	☐ Develop guidelines and allow parklets	By Summer, 2017
		☐ Implement streetscape recommendations (curb bump-outs, widen sidewalk, allow parklets, etc.)	By December, 2021
6	**Parking Education and Signage education**	☐ Develop and distribute a simple parking diagram showing available public parking, and promote on HVJF website and/or app	By Summer, 2017
		☐ Develop and install new parking directional signs as noted on the plan (page 50	By Summer, 2019
7	**Public art**	☐ Conduct a community-based temporary art installation within the downtown	By December, 2017
		☐ Install one or more art piece(s) within HWDM	By December, 2019
8	**Rehabilitate existing housing stock**	☐ Work with property owners to inform of available programs and implement other suggested activities (tool sharing, etc.)	On-going
9	**Add new parking**	☐ Install angled parking along the 500 block of 5th Street similar to that found on the 100-400 blocks	By December, 2020

	Item	Tasks	When
10	**Activating upper stories along 5th Street***	☐ Develop and fund local incentive system for building rehabilitation	December, 2016
		☐ Seek national register status for downtown, which will allow for additional tax credits and grants	December, 2017
		☐ Work with property owners to better utilize upper story space within the downtown	On-going
11	**Trail connection (to Levee Trail)**	☐ Work with railroad(s) and obtain approval for trail crossings ☐ Obtain funding and install trail connection	December 2018
12	**Develop priority opportunity sites (especially those that are vacant)**	☐ Meet with property owners to discuss options and promote redevelopment ☐ Negotiate development agreements and secure zoning as needed	On-going
13	**Neighborhood Gateways**	☐ Develop design for neighborhood gateways and secure appropriate sites ☐ Install neighborhood gateways	December, 2022
14	**Integrate sustainability**	☐ Integrate sustainable features into all new public projects and encourage in private development	On-going
15	**Celebrate history**	☐ Install plaques/story boards in downtown to celebrate areas history ☐ Conduct story telling event, including guided walking tours	December, 2018
16	**Funding**	☐ Adopt a new Urban Recovery Area and TIF	December, 2017

*Additional action steps provided in the Appendix

Examples of narrow lot single family homes that were highly ranked during the visual preference survey. Photos courtesy of Glenn Lyons, Neighborhood Development Corporation.

Building Capacity

The who, what, how, and when of the plan's recommendations and action steps will require a focused and substantial time commitment by multiple partners, but the most affected will be the City and the Historic Valley Junction Foundation (HVJF). As a non-profit, HVJF has limited staff and financial capacity, given the requirements of their downtown revitalization work. HVJF will need additional resources—staff and funding to enable self-supported plan implementation. Sustainable funding sources, such as a Self-supported Municipal Improvement District (SSMID), represent one possibility. City staff has community-wide responsibilities and commitments. Integrating HWDM implementation priorities into various staff roles and responsibilities will be an important aspect of implementation capacity. This integration also recognizes that potential HWDM (re)development will be highly visible and that its smaller scale will require staff time commitment in multiple partnerships with other entities.

Finding the Funds

Funding of improvements outlined in this Master Plan will come from a variety of both public and private sources. Key sources include:

PRIVATE INVESTMENT

HWDM, with its excellent access and amenities, is an attractive place to invest – and most of the funding for new private development will undoubtedly come from private sources. However, as noted previously, the economics of redeveloping or rehabilitating older properties suggest that some incentives will likely be needed as well.

URBAN RENEWAL AREA / TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF)

The Valley Junction Urban Renewal Area (URA) District was established in 2009, and was originally planned for a 15-year life span. Creation of this area allowed the City to utilize Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds to support redevelopment. TIF captures increases in property tax revenue to be used to make improvements within the District. However, due to court rulings and the opinion of the City's financial advisor and Bond Council, the current Valley Junction URA needs to expire on 6/30/2017. Prior to that date, it is recommended that the City consider creation of a new Urban Renewal Plan for HWDM. New boundaries, objectives, and projects will need to be defined – and this HWDM Master Plan should be used to help guide that effort.

TAX ABATEMENT

Under Iowa Statutes, the City can enter into a tax abatement agreement to promote redevelopment. However, use of abatements within the TIF District would be counterproductive as the abatement would cause there to be no or very little increment.

GENERAL REVENUE

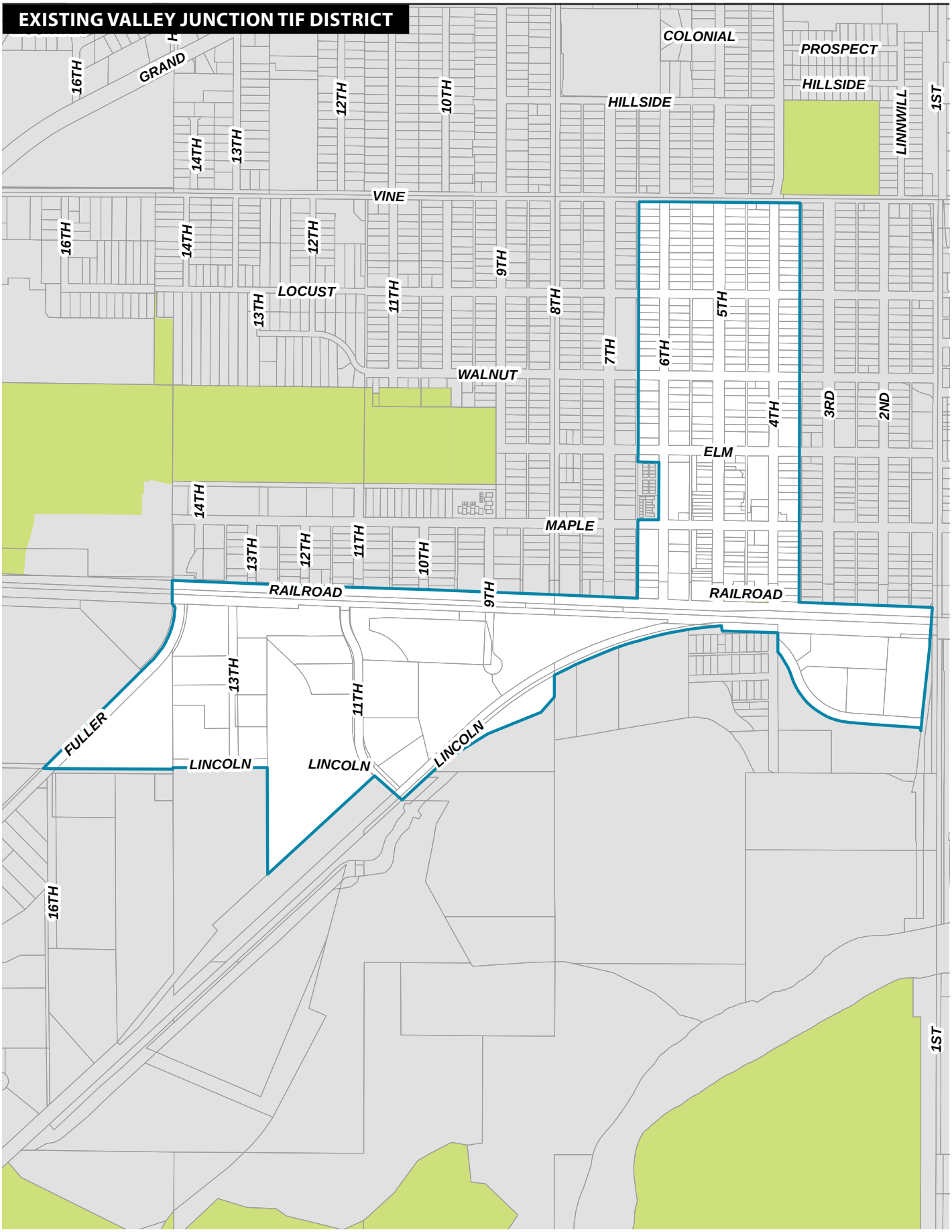
The City of West Des Moines can allocate a portion of their general revenue from property taxes and other sources to make public improvements within HWDM.

SPECIAL SERVICE AREA

The HVJF, in cooperation with property owners (at least 25% per statute – minimum 50% recommended), could create a Self-supported Special Service Municipal Improvement District (SSMID) to fund improvements within HWDM. This District would create an additional property tax for properties within the District, which would be used to fund improvements and services within the District.

LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX

The local option sales tax is a 1% sales tax that can be used by a municipality to fund government activities. While such an option is allowed in most of Iowa, it is not currently permitted in most of West Des Moines since it lies in Polk and Dallas Counties. If permitted by the State, this local option sales tax could generate significant revenue for the City, providing opportunities to both make improvements in HWDM and other areas of the community while potentially lowering property taxes.


EXISTING VALLEY JUNCTION TIF DISTRICT
COLONIAL
PROSPECT
HILLSIDE
HILLSIDE
LINNWILL
1ST
GRAND
16TH
12TH
10TH
14TH
13TH
VINE
16TH
14TH
12TH
9TH
LOCUST
13TH
11TH
8TH
5TH
7TH
6TH
WALNUT
4TH
3RD
2ND
ELM
14TH
MAPLE
13TH
12TH
11TH
10TH
RAILROAD
9TH
RAILROAD
13TH
11TH
FULLER
LINCOLN
LINCOLN
LINCOLN
16TH
1ST

Modify Regulations

To implement this Master Plan, changes to the City's sign regulations and zoning map will be required. Those changes are highlighted on the following pages.

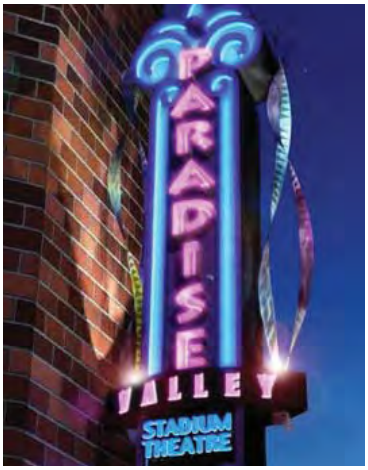
Sign Regulations

The HWDM downtown is a unique, pedestrian focused shopping environment within the City, and signage should reflect that character. The City's sign code needs to be amended to address the unique signage needs of the HWDM downtown, including allowing of blade signs and other pedestrian-oriented signs (sandwich boards, etc.). All signs should be scaled to the character of the district and associated buildings and businesses. Signs should relate to the architecture in at least one or more of the following categories: material, shape, and color.

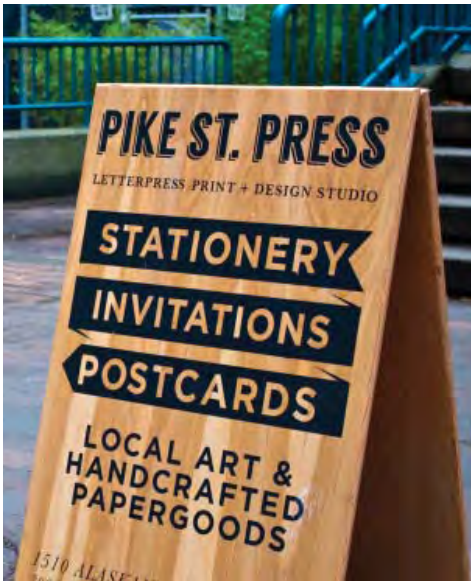
Suggested guidelines are highlighted in the following table.

Feature	Blade/Projecting Signs	Sandwich Board Signs
Design/ Construction	☐ Should not obscure or destroy architectural details. ☐ Signs on the same building must be coordinated (similar style, placement) ☐ Bracketing and support materials must fit the original architectural style of the building or enhance the design of the sign. ☐ Complex shapes are encouraged rather than simple rectangles, circles or squares. ☐ Signs should have two finished sides.	☐ Signs must be maintained in an upright position at all times, and may need to be weighted to ensure they do not fall into the public way. ☐ May only be displayed during open business hours ☐ Must be removed during times of snow and inclement weather.
Location	☐ Min. 8' from sidewalk ☐ Max. 4' projection from building, with minimum 4" between the storefront and sign. ☐ Must be mounted perpendicular to the structure to which it is attached. If at a corner of a building, the sign may be placed at a 135-degree angle to the façade of the building used for customer entrance. ☐ Must not extend of the parapet on single story buildings, or the top of second story windows.	☐ Must be placed in front of the associated establishment. ☐ Must not interfere with or obstruct pedestrian or vehicular traffic, with a minimum or five (5) feet of passage maintained on the sidewalk. ☐ Must be freestanding (not anchored to sidewalk or attached to poles, etc.)
Size	☐ Maximum 4 square feet, plus 1 additional square foot for each five lineal feet of store frontage over 20 feet. ☐ Maximum sign depth of 12"	☐ Maximum 2' wide, Max. of 3'-6" tall
Materials	☐ Wood, metal or similar materials	☐ Frame shall be painted or stained wood or metal. Plastic framed signs are discouraged. ☐ Lettering should be professionally applied. ☐ Chalkboard signs are permitted; white erasable boards are not allowed.
Illumination	☐ Most blade signs should not be illuminated. ☐ If illuminated, external illumination is preferred, with the light source designed to not create glare for pedestrians or motorists. Neon tubing is permitted. ☐ Interior lit signs must only be channel letters or have halo illumination.	☐ Sandwich boards shall not be illuminated.
Number	☐ 1 per building, or one per 20' of frontage if occupied by multiple businesses on the ground floor	☐ 1 per business

Blade/Projecting Sign Examples



Sandwich Board Sign Examples

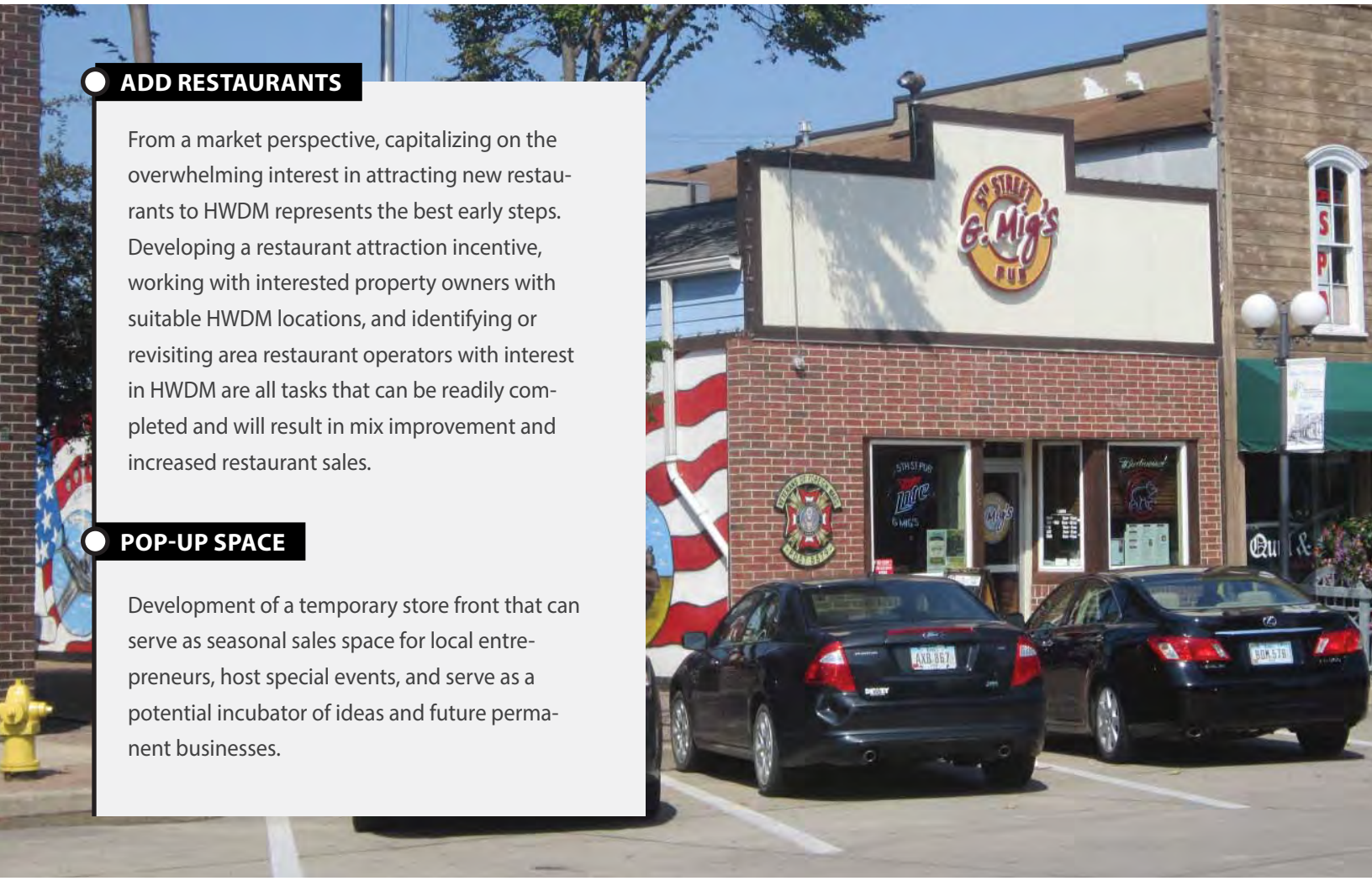


Rezoning of Sites 22 and 23 South of Railroad Avenue

These properties are currently zoned for industry and business park use. The plan calls for more mixed commercial and residential use. This change will also require an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan, and close coordination with the property owners to discuss potential development opportunities and ways to maximize benefit for both the private property owner, the City, and the HWDM neighborhood. The specific zoning that would be appropriate will be somewhat dependent on the nature of the specific development proposal, but would most likely be developed as a planned development. The suggested uses and character for these sites within the Master Plan do not exactly match any of the land use categories in the existing Comprehensive Plan. The Valley Junction Commercial category would be the closest, but it would need to be modified to include residential.

Initiate Catalyst Activities

With any Master Plan, it is important to show early progress in achieving plan objectives to maintain plan momentum. Page 53 notes several recommended steps to begin the process of plan implementation , which are summarized here:



ADD RESTAURANTS

From a market perspective, capitalizing on the overwhelming interest in attracting new restaurants to HWDM represents the best early steps. Developing a restaurant attraction incentive, working with interested property owners with suitable HWDM locations, and identifying or revisiting area restaurant operators with interest in HWDM are all tasks that can be readily completed and will result in mix improvement and increased restaurant sales.

POP-UP SPACE

Development of a temporary store front that can serve as seasonal sales space for local entrepreneurs, host special events, and serve as a potential incubator of ideas and future permanent businesses.

REDEVELOP PHENIX SITE

Noted elsewhere, redevelopment of this site will bring new residents to the area, providing new customers for area businesses and expanding the property tax base.

PUBLIC ART

The City of WDM has an active public art program, and HWDM is the perfect pedestrian friendly environment for public art. Two tracks are recommended:

- ☐ Permanent or semi-permanent art installations by artists consistent with the guidelines in the City's Public Art Master Plan.
- ☐ Temporary art displays, done by the community and/or local school students, that would add fun and color to the area.

Monitor Plan Success

Implementation of this Master Plan will take considerable time and effort on the part of many individuals and organizations, including property and business owners, developers, the City, and the HVJF. It is recommended that an implementation task force be created to spearhead this effort. The task force can be a subset of the Steering Committee used to develop the plan, and must include City Staff, HVJF Staff, and both resident and business owner representation. The task force should meet at least quarterly to discuss plan implementation activities and next steps.

Public Art Examples

Appendix

HISTORIC
WEST DES MOINES
MASTER PLAN

Draft
July 15, 2016

1) **Past Plans** - Page 1
2) **Economic and Market Assessment** - Page 5
3) **Land Use and Zoning** - Page 19
4) **Transportation Infrastructure** - Page 24
5) **Survey** - Page 28

Past Plans

Valley Junction Streetscape Plan

Much of this plan, created in 1999 by BRW, has been completed. Key components of the plan that have been put in place include:

- New streetscape along Railroad Avenue which welcomes visitors to the area.
- Reversed one-way traffic flow to south to north
- Created a Railroad Street Park/event space
- Enhanced the overall streetscape throughout the Valley Junction business district, including new lighting, wayfinding signs, and decorative plantings

Valley Junction Market Strategies Plan

This plan, created in 2010, focused on branding, identification of market opportunities, and recruitment strategies. It was prepared by Downtown Professional Network and Arnett Muldrow & Associates. Highlights of the Plan included:

- Acknowledgement that Valley Junction already has a well-known identity, and suggestions to reinforce that identify through logos, signs, collateral material, the web, and branded merchandise, and cooperative ad campaigns
- Identification of 5, 10 and 20-minute drive time markets. Based on their market analysis, key recommendations were to try to attract additional eating and drinking establishments with additional complimentary retail uses (furniture & home furnishings and clothing and clothing accessories stores), art and art-related uses, additional residential units (particularly upper levels of commercial buildings, new mixed-use buildings), and office and service uses (particularly on side streets and in upper floor space).
- Explore the idea of food and art related projects.
- Explore a 6th Street targeted redevelopment plan.

City of West Des Moines Comprehensive Plan

Adopted in 2010, this plan provides an overall guide to growth and development within West Des Moines. Key components relevance to the study area include:

- A Future Land Use Plan (updated in 2015) that fairly closely mirror the existing development pattern of the area, with residential use being the predominant land use, commercial uses located at key intersections around the periphery of the area and along 5th Street, Railroad Avenue, and 1st Street. A couple of land use categories are specific to the study area, including:
    - The **Historic Business District** designation shall be utilized to denote the old downtown area of Valley Junction. Uses within this area shall include professional offices, restaurants, specialty retail stores, upper floor residential, and other personal services.
    - **Valley Junction Commercial** areas shall be designated to provide for commercial centers or free-standing uses which are oriented toward providing services to commercial and industrial uses and/or employment centers. Typical uses would include but not be limited

to restaurants, professional offices, laundry and dry cleaning establishments, banks, drug stores, office supply stores, mill work operations, and other service uses.

- The plan highlights the history of the area, from *"The town was incorporated in October 1893 under the name of Valley Junction, for the junction of the railways. The influential men of the community attracted the railroads to build their shops in the newly incorporated town and began to build housing to accommodate the growth anticipated from the railroad businesses."*
- A projection of continued strong growth, with a projection of a population of approximately 72,000 by 2020 (by the Metropolitan Planning Organization).
- The plan also contains a number of policies. Some that are particularly relevant to the Historic West Des Moines area include:
    - Policy 1.3 In Valley Junction, the City shall discourage the encroachment of the commercial activities outside of the commercially designated areas. The architecture of commercial buildings should be designed with the historic character of Valley Junction in mind.
    - Policy 1.11 As a part of the Development Review Process, the City shall seek to maintain and improve the visual appeal of the community by ensuring proposed developments will provide site and building design that respects the existing patterns, context, and character of the vicinity.
    - Policy 5.3 The architecture of new development shall create or reinforce a neighborhood identity and be compatible with the quality and character of the City.
    - Policy 5.4 The City should promote residential rehabilitation, redevelopment, and maintenance programs throughout the community to enable housing for low and moderate income families and to prevent neighborhood decline.
    - Policy 5.5 In order to sustain a balanced community, the City should encourage the provision of a wide choice of housing in a range of styles, types, (both single- and multiple-family) densities, prices, and amenities.
    - Policy 8.8 The City shall encourage and foster lively stroll districts, with indoor and outdoor entertainment venues both large and small; which decreases the need for the automobile to experience the area.
    - Policy 9.8 The City shall encourage and consider state-of-the-art alternative means of resource conservation methods in public and private developments, by encouraging the construction of buildings incorporating sustainable design.

City of West Des Moines Public Art Master Plan

This recently adopted plan (2015) outlines the following vision for "the creation of a diverse collection of public works of art of high aesthetic and intellectual quality and excellence, and a program that promotes cultural expression and artistic appreciation. At the heart of the aspiration for public art in West Des Moines is the wish for an authentic, rich and diverse arts culture that is seen and understood as uniquely arising from the community – an arts culture that benefits and enriches all those who are fortunate enough to live, work in, and to visit West Des Moines."

The Public Arts Advisory Commission is focused on commissioning one major, site-specific and/or site integrated public work of art annually. Valley Junction is listed as one of six priority public art sites in the

plan. The plan outlines responsibilities for the Public Arts Commission, provides sample owner/artist agreements, and outlines collection guidelines, principals and procedures.

City of West Des Moines Bicycle Master Plan

Continuing the legacy of proactive planning, the City of West Des Moines recently (2015) adopted a Bicycle Master Plan. While addressing the entire City and connections to surrounding communities and the region, the plan also highlights some suggested improvements within the Historic West Des Moines area, including:

- Maintaining the existing shared lane facilities along Vine Street, the existing trails through Holiday Park and along Railroad Avenue between 1st and 5th Streets and between Holiday Park and Grand Avenue
- Creating new east/west shared lane facilities along Walnut Street between 1st and 8th Streets with a proposed traffic signal at Walnut and 1st Street, and along Maple Street between 4th Street and 14th Street
- Creating new north/south shared lane facilities along 4th and 8th Street from Railroad Avenue north to Ashworth (north of Grand Ave.), along 13th Street north of Vine Street, and along 14th Street between Holiday Park and Railroad Avenue
- A shared lane facility is essentially an existing road with shared land markings to highlight duel use by both cars and bicycles. "Shared land markings are high-visibility pavement markings that help position bicyclists with a shared vehicle/bicycle travel lane. These markings are typically used on streets where dedicated bike lanes are desirable but are not possible due to physical or other constrains. Share lane markings may be supplemented by signing."

Architectural/Historical Reconnaissance Survey of Valley Junction

Completed in April of 1998 by Bear Creek Archeology, Inc, this effort was designed to identify architectural and historical themes represented by buildings in the Valley Junction neighborhood and determine whether these properties have historic preservation values. The survey was not intended to document individually significant historic properties or result in designation of historic preservation sites or districts.

Six important historic property types were identified for houses and commercial buildings constructed between circa 1892 and 1948. These property type classifications were; Mechanic's Cottage, Bungalow, Suburban Cottage, Prairie Cube Craftsman, and Main Street Building.

A major finding of the survey was that while relatively few properties appear to meet the National Register criteria for significance as individual preservation sites, the residential neighborhood east of 8th Street and the old downtown district along 5th Street represent important and distinguishable historic entities that are worthy of preservation.

A Pattern Book for West Des Moines Neighborhoods

This document, prepared by the Iowa Chapter of The American Institute of Architects (AIA), illustrates historical building styles in the community, and ways to promote new construction, additions and other

renovations that maintain neighborhood character. The document also introduces many green building techniques.

Southeast Basin Stormwater Study

This study, completed in September, 2013 by L.T. Leon Associates, Inc., was designed to address a variety of flooding problems caused by several deficiencies within the existing storm sewer conveyance system. The frequency at which flooding occurs and the extent of the flooding has a significant impact on traffic, public safety, and potential property damage.

The study examined the existing stormwater conveyance system to identify the deficiencies, to develop proposed improvements that address the deficiencies, provide cost estimates, sequencing, and priorities for the proposed improvement projects, and to recommend stormwater management policy for future developments. Key recommendations of relevance for the Master Plan include two potential new stormwater basins, one on the existing Bridges of Iowa site at Vine and 12th Street, and one along the west side of 16th Street south of Stilwell Junior High School.

Economic and Market Assessment

Historic West Des Moines (HWDM) is truly unique. Simultaneously, HWDM is both a neighborhood and a traditional commercial district. It tells the story of the City's growth and success. It is suburban, urban, and different. Neighborhood residents love HWDM and would not live anywhere else. Valley Junction business and property owners appreciate the area's physical character, the support of their fellow investors, and the opportunities to grow within a nationally recognized, successful downtown. Ultimately, HWDM reflects what is best about the City of West Des Moines.

HWDM also fits what the Urban Land Institute (ULI) has recently described as a 'diet urban' location, or a suburban area proximate and readily accessible to their major city centers.[1] These locations are walkable neighborhoods, near successful downtowns, and often feature nearby employment. They are uniformly located in metropolitan areas, like Des Moines, with lower costs of living. These convenient suburbs and their neighborhoods appeal to the Millennial with their multiple housing options, high quality amenities, and sense of community. These kinds of locations also effectively link the suburb's downtown gathering place, a walkable neighborhood, and work/life balance, providing a new approach to suburban life.

This market and economic assessment examines current conditions and emerging market-supported opportunities as the basis for the plan's recommendations. As noted throughout the plan process, the goal is to make HWDM an even better place to invest and to live. HWDM's Valley Junction commercial district has achieved national recognition for its revitalization and management. It truly is the City's downtown and community place. The district's businesses' combined strength serve as an important regional destination. Positioning Valley Junction for business growth and adaptability to changing markets and emerging uses will be critical to its future. HWDM, as a neighborhood, is beginning to experience change. New residents are increasingly attracted to the neighborhood based upon its character, affordability, local schools, and proximity to Valley Junction. Current residents seek to remain in the area for these same reasons. By strengthening HWDM for its multiple constituencies, the community can thrive through change.

HWDM's Commercial District (Valley Junction)

Markets

Valley Junction's continued ability to attract consumers locally and regionally will be critical to the district's future. Understanding how to do this within the context of rapidly shifting consumer trends will be key to future commercial success.

The characteristics of two core (2) markets—a neighborhood market and an area custom market—are described below. These markets were identified during the plan's initiation phase through interviews and research. While Valley Junction's many destination businesses consistently receive visitors from out of state, the largest numbers of current and potential customers for most downtown businesses originate in these two (2) markets. Most important for Valley Junction as a commercial district, these markets are

[1] "Emerging Trends in Real Estate United States and Canada 2016, Urban Land Institute and Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2015.

uniformly strong in population, incomes, and spending power. Ensuring that the district remains relevant to these regional consumers will be fundamental to plan implementation.

Table 1: Neighborhood Market Demographics

Selected Demographics	Neighborhood Market	City of West Des Moines
Total Population	29,992	61,186
Population Density (Pop/Sq Mi)	2,167	1,554
Total Households (HHs)	12,949	26,383
HH Size	2.32	2.32
Median Age	36.6	33.5
Average HH Income	$90,392	$93,280
Median HH Income	$61,273	$67,984
Per Capita Income	$39,087	$40,273
Employees	10,556	43,978
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	44.9%	50.4%
Renter Occupied Housing	35.4%	36.8%
Total Retail Demand	$275,844,128	$582,578,536
Retail Demand: Eating and Drinking	$36,035,222	$73,004,092
Race and Ethnicity		
Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2.7%	6.1%
Black	4.5%	3.9%
White	87.8%	86.2%
Other	5.1%	3.9%
Hispanic Ethnicity	7.4%	5.7%
Not of Hispanic Ethnicity	92.6%	94.4%
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The Neighborhood market can be defined as residents living near Valley Junction, whether in HWDM or the City of Des Moines' western neighborhoods bordering HWDM. (The boundaries are nearest census block groups.) For these proximate residents, Valley Junction is their downtown, and they identify with their downtown and its businesses. These nearby residents routinely and frequently patronize any downtown's businesses, including those of Valley Junction. The resulting relationship between local residents and local businesses reinforces Valley Junction's local character and connects neighborhood residents to their local business community.

Table 1 compares the market characteristics of this Neighborhood market to those of the City of West Des Moines, and Figure 1 provides a map of this area. Population density within the Neighborhood market is slightly less than that of the City of West Des Moines. The Neighborhood geography (see Figure 1) includes significant open space, despite greater density in HWDM and in the Des Moines neighborhoods. Overall, average income for the neighborhood is 2.7% less than the City's average income. The difference between average and median incomes is much greater in this Neighborhood market, given the diverse range of household income levels comprising this market.

The percentage of rental occupied housing within the City (36.8%) is slightly higher than the Neighborhood's percentage (35.8%). This market's overall racial and ethnic diversity is generally comparable to that of the City proper, with slightly greater percentages of Black (4.9% versus 3.9%) and Hispanic (7.3% versus 5.7%) residents. Total retail demand for this Neighborhood market exceeds $300 million, presenting the opportunity to capture more spending power from nearby residents already affiliated with Valley Junction. Given these key characteristics, few differences exist between Valley Junction's Neighborhood market and the City of West Des Moines.

Neighborhood Market

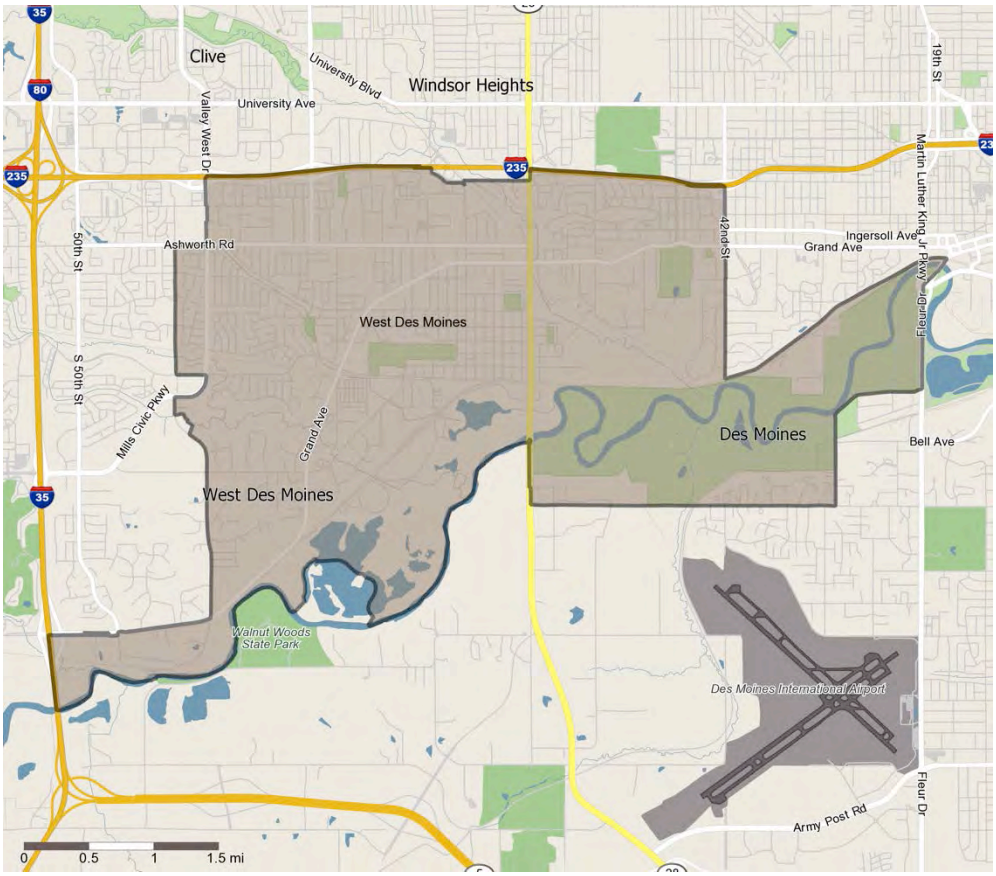

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Table2: Custom Market Demographics

Based upon discussions with Valley Junction businesses, a larger Custom market was identified as the trade area, or source, for most district customers. Selected demographics and map for this Custom market are displayed in Table 2 and Figure 2.

This Custom market includes nearly 110,000 households. Incomes exceed those of both the City and Neighborhood markets. Retail demand represents $2.5 billion in

Selected Demographics	Custom Market	City of West Des Moines
Total Population	272,129	61,186
Population Density (Pop/Sq Mi)	1,039	1,555
Total Households (HHs)	109,445	26,383
HH Size	2.5	2.32
Median Age	35.2	33.5
Average HH Income	$95,827	$93,280
Median HH Income	$72,650	$67,984
Per Capita Income	$38,656	$40,273
Employees	131,628	43,978
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	46.1%	50.4%
Renter Occupied Housing	25.8%	36.8%
Total Retail Demand	$2,518,635,154	$582,578,536
Retail Demand: Eating and Drinking	$313,918,542	$73,004,092
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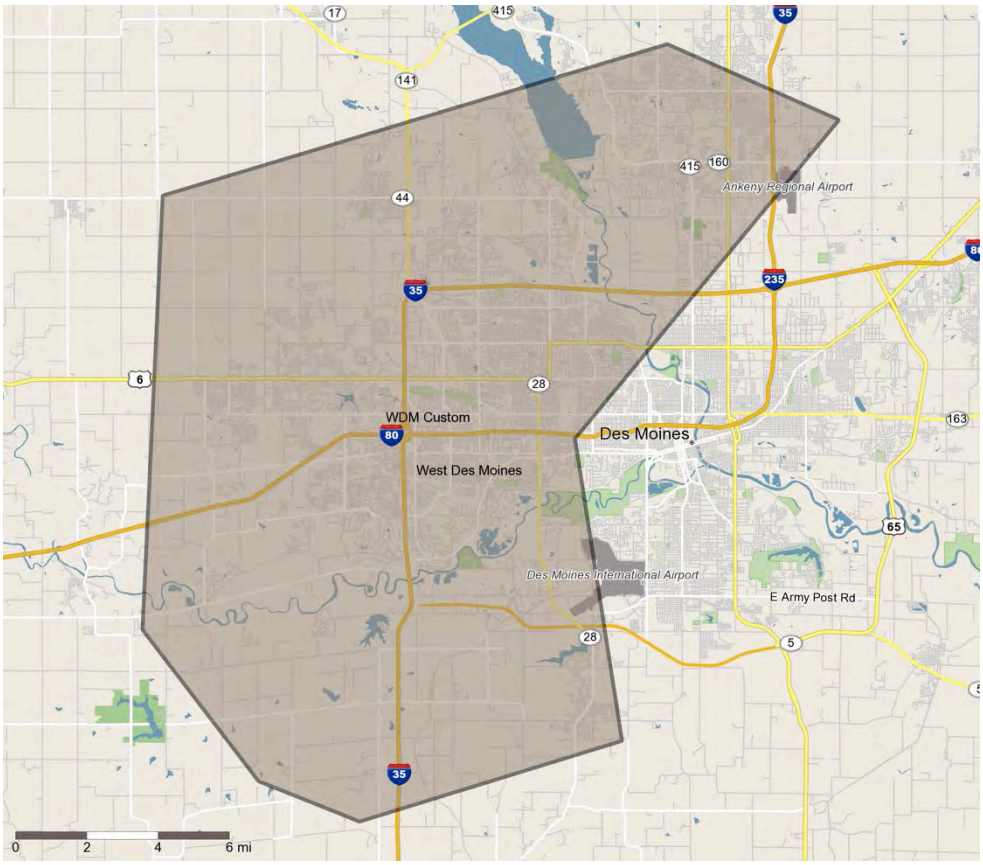
spending power, meaning that sufficient demand is available for Valley Junction's merchants to capture additional sales. One noticeable difference is the percentage of renter occupied housing units. This percentage is significantly lower (25.8%) in the Custom market than for the City of West Des Moines. Again, this larger market exhibits many similar demographic characteristics to those of the City of West Des Moines and Valley Junction's neighborhood market.

Figure 2: Custom Market



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Business Mix

Table 3 compares Valley Junction's current mix with those of three (3) nearby business districts—Des Moines' East Village, Ingersoll and Beaverdale. HWDM constituents identified these specific commercial areas as competitive with Valley Junction.

Most notable about Valley Junction's current mix is the strong retail component. Valley Junction's independent retailers provide strong customer service and store experiences. As a group, they function as a complementary cluster, attracting shoppers from the markets described and beyond. Most important, these retailers also understand how to operate successful businesses. Their success enables new retailers to perceive opportunity in a Valley Junction location, supplementing existing stores. Sustaining this strong retail component while supplementing the current mix, responding to trends, and

addressing business succession issues will be strategically important to Valley Junction's economic future. Service businesses also represent the next largest mix component. These service businesses attract customers for different purposes than retailers, providing additional exposure to district retailers, restaurants, and personal service businesses. The remainder of the mix is distributed among personal services and business categories generally categorized as small office users.

Table 3: Business Mix Comparisons

Business Category	Valley Junction	East Village	Ingersoll	Beaverdale
Retail	45.0%	32.0%	15.2%	21.6%
Service	28.8%	7.3%	21.2%	29.7%
Personal Service	6.9%	10.0%	4.5%	5.4%
Restaurant/Bar	6.9%	22.0%	16.7%	32.4%
Office/Employment	3.8%	7.3%	13.6%	0.0%
Institutional/Non-Profit	4.4%	10.0%	12.1%	2.7%
Professional Practices	4.4%	6.7%	16.7%	8.1%
Entertainment	0.0%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other*	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%
***Hotel in East Village**				
Sources: Current Business Map/Directories HVJF and East Village; Beaverdale Neighborhood Association Business Listings; Des Moines West Side Chamber Business Directory; BDI.				

Overall, these nearby districts have a more diverse ground floor business mix than Valley Junction. This greater diversity includes higher percentages of small office users, including professionals, non-profits, and their employees, who also support each district's ground level businesses. Valley Junction has significantly fewer restaurants and bars on a percentage basis than the other districts—6.9%, compared with 16.7% in Ingersoll and well over 20% in East Village and Beaverdale. The range of restaurant formats and cuisines is also less varied in Valley Junction when compared to these other districts. Personal services also contribute a lifestyle component to the mix and generate repeat visits. Valley Junction has the second highest percentage among the districts shown.

The results of the recent survey conducted by the Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDC) for the City of West Des Moines describe respondent reactions to the current business mix. Several mix-related themes were observed in the survey results.

Valley Junction has a great business mix currently. Respondents recognized the importance of specialty retail to the commercial district, recognizing that the combined attraction power of these specialty retailers is the district's niche and a competitive opportunity.
Local ownership of downtown businesses was strongly recognized. While some respondents indicated that some number of national or regional retailers could help Valley Junction, more respondents recognized that the presence of these unique retailers created the district's experience for visitors and residents.
Additional restaurants and entertainment venues, primarily for live music and late night gathering, were suggested as important additions to the mix. Restaurant suggestions included the addition of ethnic

cuisines and more casual dining options, such as brewpubs. Outdoor and/rooftop dining were also frequent responses.

A wide range potential retail store types were suggested as potential additions to the retail mix. Examples include niche and locally owned bookstores, craft stores, home brewing outlets, more specialty retailers, (such as a tall shop), jewelry, specialty foods (such as a cheese or spice shop), knitting/yarn, toys, Etsy store, and quality consignment.

Valley Junction's businesses should begin to appeal to younger consumers. The Des Moines area has seen an influx of Millennials[2] (29% of those who moved to the area from 2010-2012) attracted by the region's affordability, quality of life, and urban amenities. The percentages of 25-34 age cohort moving to West Des Moines, particularly into Historic West Des Moines, has also increased by an estimated 6%. This same cohort is also attracted to neighborhoods near traditional downtown districts with urban amenities[3]

These new area residents represent increasing spending power, particularly as they begin household formation. For Valley Junction's specialty retailers, attracting new consumers represents an opportunity to expand Valley Junction's overall customer base, applying new ways of communicating and merchandising.

With respondents recognizing the strength of the current business mix, adding business categories or formats that strengthen the existing mix will be important for future business growth. Sustaining the retail cluster will be important since it represents a vital component of Valley Junction's overall market position. The resulting opportunity is to grow the numbers of sustainable businesses in Valley Junction's mix. This can be fostered in three (3) ways--through expansions or new concept development by current downtown business owners, incubation of new businesses, or through the recruitment of new businesses operated by regionally successful independent owners.

Related to overall mix growth is the downtown's potential for incremental employment growth with the addition of small office users. The importance of nearby daytime populations to downtown businesses is often overlooked and underestimated. Table 4 displays employee data specific to HWDM and the City of West Des Moines.

Table 4: HWDM Employees

Location	# Employees	Spending Potential
Study Area	2,959	$309,304
Neighborhood	11,339	$1,185,266
5-Minute Drive	4,346	$454,287
City*	43,978	$4,597,020

Sources:© 2014 Experian, Inc. All Rights Reserved, Alteryx, Inc.; ICSC Office Worker Retail Spending in a Digital Age (2013);BDI.

Data from the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) indicates that the average office worker in a suburban downtown setting spends a weekly average of $104.53 near their place of employment.[4] Using this weekly average, the estimates spending potential is noted above for certain HWDM geographies. This additional spending represents a kind of 'bonus' market for downtown businesses. As one example, restaurants, through catering or increased lunch service, benefit from the nearby employment base. Valley Junction's current small office users and employers perceive the district

[2] 'Why Des Moines is the Nation's Top Market for Millennial Homebuyers." Des Moines Register. (desmoinesregister.com) October 2, 2015. "Do the Most Hipster Thing Possible. Move to Des Moines." The Atlantic. October 14, 2015. Additional NPR segment on October 13, 2015.

[3] 'Older, Smaller, Better.' National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Green Lab, October 2015.

[4] "Office Worker Retail Spending in a Digital Age." International Council of Shopping Centers. 2013.

as providing multiple amenities for ownership and employees. Encouraging the incremental growth of small office uses represents another aspect of successful expansion and diversification of Valley Junction's business mix over time. These same small office users present an additional activation opportunity for upper story development and for underutilized locations off Fifth.

Enhancing and strengthening the district's overall business mix will prepare Valley Junction for greater economic success. These efforts, as described in the plan's Key Recommendations, will emphasize how HWDM becomes a complete local economy within the context of the City's overall economic development efforts. Valley Junction will remain the City's unique economic entity through smaller scale growth emphasizing community character. Focused business mix growth will support activation of Valley Junction's side streets and upper story spaces and ensure suitable transitions from Fifth Avenue and these same side streets into HWDM. The potential for new lease space exists at strong Valley Junction locations, including potential redevelopment sites south of Railroad Avenue. Future mix growth also encompasses various forms of entrepreneurship--temporary retail converting to storefronts, growing local business incubation efforts, and home based businesses moving to shared space. One additional aspect for Valley Junction will be working with downtown's retail businesses to develop a formal business succession strategy. Valley Junction's current business owners will not want to operate forever. Ensuring that these successful owners have options for ownership transition will be an important basis for future success.

Real Estate

Retail real estate economics within HWDM is affected by two (2) factors: an estimated 50% of Valley Junction's real estate is owner occupied, or owned by the district's business owners, and published asking rents for older retail properties proximate to HWDM are $10.00-15.00 per square foot (PSF). The high percentage of owner-occupied properties in Valley Junction means that rents reflect the business and real estate objectives of individual owners. Rental information obtained in project interviews with multiple property owners generally supports existing market rents within the $10.00-$15.00 range.

Similar lease rates exist for office space, including for users requiring less than 10,000 SF of lease space. Most of HWDM's office space would be categorized as Class B or C office space. According to the Hubbell Market Review[5], all of the rents by class and available square footage, or inventories, remain relatively stable in all Des Moines sub-markets, including the western suburbs. Overall vacancy percentages continue to decline. Asking rents in Des Moines' western suburbs are $13.50-$16.50 for Class B space and under $13.50 for Class C space. (Recent LoopNet listings reflect similar asking rents.) Most important for HWDM, one West Des Moines project cited in the Market Review was an owner occupied home office.

[5] The Des Moines Metro Real Estate Market Survey 2016, CBRE/Hubbell Commercial, March 2016.

Trends

Four (4) current retail and restaurant sector trends, applicable to downtown's retailers and restaurateurs, include:

The 'Experience.' Whether a major mall, auto-oriented corridor, or a traditional downtown, delivering a unique consumer experience is key to customer attraction, sales performance, and image positioning for that commercial district. This distinctive character element serves as their point of differentiation for their target customers and within their competitive context. For downtowns, this means a stronger emphasis on community gatherings, visual appeal, unique retail, and successful business clusters, including restaurateurs. In recent years, the downtown experience now includes temporary retail and food uses and events, most notably retail and restaurant pop-ups. Temporary events can also be extended to include experiences, such as seasonal outdoor dining. In addition to serving as a downtown amenity, outdoor dining often becomes an important source of 'bonus' revenues for downtown restaurants, adding capacity and improving operating margins and profitability. Ultimately, this wide range of temporary events serve four (4) purposes:
Generating new forms of excitement about the district and its businesses, and by extension, the district's image;
Cultivating potential business owners not yet ready for a physical location;
Activating district vacancies or inactive areas, such as Valley Junction's best side street locations, to showcase those locations and begin to expand perceptions of the district's business offering;
Enabling businesses to 'morph' business concepts, or to experiment. For example, an established restaurateur has the opportunity to test a new business concept with a 90-day restaurant in a vacant space or with a food truck.

'Millennials.' The impact of the Millennial generation on all sectors—employment, housing, and retail--has been predicted and detailed extensively during and after the recent Great Recession. As the U. S.'s largest demographic cohort, their direct or indirect impact on all real estate uses will be significant. This cohort represents a 20.1% of the City's residents and 16.6% of HDWM residents, according to this plan's demographic data. As noted, regions like Des Moines are attractive to this population. Much has been published about this cohort's desire for retail and restaurant experiences and their preference for urban living and community. This generation has delayed household formation, and its related higher consumer spending, due to economic uncertainties. Their initial spending patterns, given generational issues like student loan debt, typically resemble those of their depression era grandparents rather than those of their 'baby boomer' parents. As consumers, the predominant behavioral question about the Millennial generation is how they will spend as they begin to move to suburbs.

Post-Digital Effect. The retail sector remains in a transformative state. With the advent of online and mobile-enabled shopping, the sector continues to adapt. Slower retail growth is predicted over the next five years. Fewer national or regional retailers are expanding store numbers; many are reducing store footprints. Despite predicted slower growth for major retailers, the opposite is true for many independent retailers. The most successful of these independent retailers are focused on expansion, either physical or online, and on product and service differentiation. Successful independents recognize that their stores function as an effective delivery mechanism for their customers for all sales channels.

'Local.' The concept of 'local' for places like HWDM has multiple facets—supporting small business owners, local foods and food systems, and shopper affiliation programs, as examples.

Valley Junction's successful farmers market is one example of a local activity. The 'local' movement now encompasses the shared community 'experience' described above, recognizing tangible investments by downtown business owners in their local community. 'Community retail' is an emerging aspect of this local trend. For independent retailers and restaurateurs, this means moving beyond selling product to developing relationships through direct communications with their 'community' of customers. This idea applies to restaurants and specialty food businesses as one component of the 'experience' trend described above. For example, micro-restaurants in shared kitchens allow new and experienced restaurateurs to test new operating concepts and create market support. Temporary restaurants in equipped restaurant space again serve as a different kind of proving ground for an overall concept and potential business growth. 'Shop Local' has become 'Shop Small,' as communities have learned that most downtown businesses need both residents and visitors from other communities to shop in their stores to ensure profitability and to attract customers from larger trade area, such HWDM's custom market.

While much of the above trend descriptors emphasize retail sector issues, restaurant trends generally track these retail trends. During the recent recession, consumers chose less expensive 'fast casual' or limited service eateries versus table service or fine dining options. As the economy improves, all major dining formats, including 'quick service' (fast food), continue to grow their market shares. Employee retention and recruitment, given the improved job market, represent an emerging restaurant industry challenge. Delivery and increasing application of technology, as with traditional storefront retail, present greater opportunities to address consumer demand for all formats. The National Restaurant Association (NRA) has projected a 5% increase in total restaurant industry revenues for 2016. For most national or regional restaurants, moderate increases in location numbers are driving overall sales growth and sustaining per unit revenues and margins. Despite the greater profile of these national and regional chain restaurants, the NRA notes that about 70% of all restaurants are independently owned. These independently owned restaurants have the capacity to target and quickly respond to their customers and their community. Industry-wide, this is viewed as an important competitive advantage.

One additional trend specific to downtown office, or employment, uses should be noted in considering HWDM's strategic opportunities. The nature of work and work environments continues to change. Shared, or co-working spaces, maker spaces, and incubators, like the West Des Moines Business Incubator, cater to the expansion of the contingent, knowledge-based workforce nationally. This segment of the workforce now represents 11% of all jobs nationally. The 46.5% growth rate of firms with fewer than 50 employees since 2013 is another contributor to overall small office growth. This is particularly evident in affordable areas, like the Des Moines region, that tend to foster entrepreneurial growth. Within the new work categories and spaces, other opportunities exist. For example, artisan make spaces often function or need temporary retail space.

In addition to national growth factors, two factors consistently affect downtown employment growth by small users—history and owner preferences. Traditional business districts, or downtowns, have always been the location for professional practices and businesses providing services to local customers. Owners of small office users typically choose their business locations for personal convenience. Secondarily, access to amenities and lower cost lease space contribute to the decision process. All of these factors are evident in HWDM.

HWDM's Neighborhood

The following data summarizes the demographics for the U. S. Census Bureau's two (2) census tracts encompassing HWDM, comparing these selected demographics to the City's demographics. A map of those tracts follows Table 5 (see Figure 3).

Table 5: HWDM Demographics (Census Tracts)

Selected Demographics	Neighborhood Tracts	City of West Des Moines
Total Population	9,247	61,186
Population Density (Pop/Sq Mi)	4,319	1,554
Total Households (HHs)	4,192	26,383
HH Size	2.21	2.32
Median Age	32.7	33.5
Average HH Income	$57,731	$93,280
Median HH Income	$48,436	$67,984
Per Capita Income	$26,343	$40,273
Employees	4,816	43,978
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	28.1%	50.4%
Renter Occupied Housing	56.0%	36.8%
Total Retail Demand	$78,031,273	$582,578,536
Retail Demand: Eating and Drinking	$10,196,535	$73,004,092
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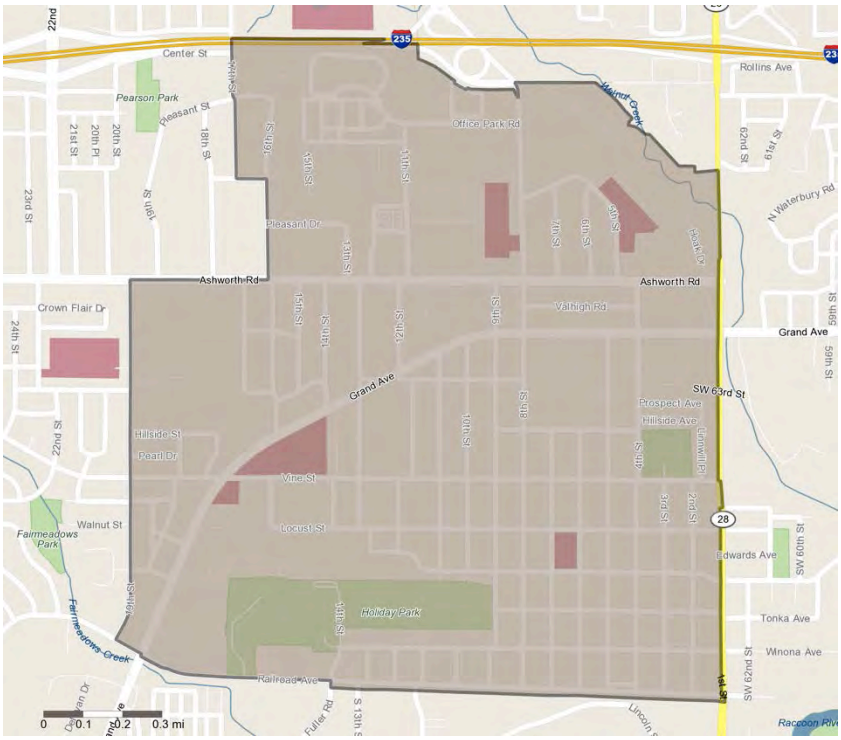
HWDM differs from the City in several demographic attributes—population density, income characteristics, and percentage of renter occupied housing. The study area is nearly three (3) times denser than the City as a whole. Median, average and per capita incomes are much higher Citywide than in HWDM. While incomes are lower, total retail demand, or spending power, within the census tracts is approaching $80 million. The percentage of renter occupied housing is also much higher in HWDM. Household size is actually smaller in HWDM versus the City (2.21 versus 2.32). Overall, the neighborhood remains younger and more diverse than the City itself.

While certain demographic distinctions exist, other data points have future implications for HWDM, its growth, and its housing stock. Residents ages 25-34 represent 22.7% of HWDM's population versus 20.1% of the City's overall population. HWDM also has a slightly higher percentage of residents aged 65 and older--12.2% versus 10.9%. In addition, 23.2% of HWDM neighborhood households have incomes exceeding $75,000 annually and that percentage is projected to increase to 31% by 2020. HWDM's population has remained relatively stable (about 9,000) since 2000. The City's population continues to increase, as indicated by the 2015 Special Census (by 10.9% since 2010) and according to Experian data's projection (7.8% increase by 2020).

These neighborhood statistics, when viewed together with the data comprising Valley Junction's neighborhood market (also census tracts), indicate an opportunity for quality, new housing types capitalizing on HWDM's existing densities and neighborhood amenities, and appealing to new residents to the community.

Figure 3: Map of Census Tracts including HWDM



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Existing Residential

Table 6 below shows the recent status of housing within the City of West Des Moines.

Table 6: Housing City of West Des Moines

	2010	2013	2015*
Total Housing Units	26,219	26,167	29,425
Occupied Housing Units	24,384	24,448	27,641
Vacant Housing Units	1,835	1,719	1,784
For Rent*			1,081
Owner Occupied Units	15,244	14,866	16,211
Renter Occupied Units	9,141	9,582	11,430
Homeowner Vacancy Rate (Percentage)		2.40%	1.40%
Rental Vacancy Rate (Percentage)		5.80%	8.10%
Homeowner Household Size			2.47%
Renter Household Size			2.00%

Sources: © 2014 Experian, Inc. All Rights Reserved, Alteryx, Inc.; U. S. Census, American Community Survey Housing 2013 for City of West Des Moines; Housing Data from the 2015 Special Census for the City of West Des Moines.

***For Rent data was not included in the 2010 and 2013 data. Vacancy rate not provided in 2010 Census data. Household size by occupancy is only noted in 2015 Special Census.**

The 2015 data shown above is from the City's Special Census. Renter occupied households are significant smaller than owner occupied households—2.0 versus 2.47. The 2015 rental unit vacancy rate indicated by the Special Census was 8.1%. This 2015 rental vacancy rate includes estimates for units for rent and for units rented but unoccupied. Regional data from other published housing data sources indicate significantly lower vacancy rates. The Hubbell Apartment Survey 2015 for the Des Moines Metro area states an overall regional apartment vacancy rate at 4.0%. This rate is a decrease from 4.6% in 2014. Sperling's 2015 vacancy rate for residential rentals in zip code 50265 (West Des Moines, including the Historic West Des Moines census tracts) is published at 3.1%. These low vacancy rates support the introduction of new and unique housing product, such as the Phenix development, and for longer term, upper story living in Valley Junction's historic building stock. These new housing products will also support HWDM's unique character and growth opportunities.

Real Estate

Residential rents and housing prices for the City and HWDM are displayed in Tables 7 and 8 below.

Table 7: City of West Des Moines Housing Costs

City of West Des Moines	2010	2013	Current Pricing*
Median Home Value	$191,677	$186,500	$187,100
Median Cash Rent	$735	$879	$1,473
Sources:© 2014 Experian, Inc. All Rights Reserved, Alteryx, Inc.; U. S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Housing 2013 for the City of West Des Moines; Current data from Zillow and Trulia 2016 Market Overview and Trend Reports.			
***Current Pricing represents the 2016 asking rents for all rental housing currently offered in West Des Moines and the average home sale price for the previous 12 months.**			

Table 8: HWDM Housing Costs (by Census Tract)

	19153011111	19153011001
2010 Median Home Value	$140,578	$102,903
Renter Occupied Housing (Percentage)	55.10%	47.30%
Estimated 2015 Median Cash Rent	$664	$647
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Current pricing is based upon 2016 data. Home sales prices continue to increase. The 2016 value shown above reflects a 5.8% increase over the previous year. The 2010 median home values specific to the neighborhood census tracts were 23-47% less than that of the City of West Des Moines.
Advertised rental rates for residential properties offered in HWDM range from $.65 to $1.30 per square foot per month. These residential rental properties varied in quality and size, with the average asking rental rate of $1.00 per square foot monthly, though multiple property owners are offering rental units at 30% above the market average. This $1.00 rate is the same as the published average rate for the City in regional real estate market sources.

Area real estate professionals remain interested in investing in HWDM single family housing, whether introducing new product or rehabilitation of existing housing. The affordability of homes in HWDM and the options for larger homes in HWDM's peripheral census tracts contributes to the neighborhood's desirability. These same investors indicate that several housing types represent options for HWDM. Additional future partnerships with Des Moines Metro area housing advocates can ensure the construction of new housing that reflects neighborhood character. Considering any refinements or updates to existing housing regulation and enforcement, specifically addressing issues observed in properties owned by HWDM problem landlords, and design education as a component of any future conservation district

Trends

Specific to housing, the 'Millennial' trend, described in the Commercial District section, has critical implications for housing markets. As noted, metro areas, like Des Moines Metro, are attractive for their high quality of life and affordability. According to Urban Land Institute, most 'Millennials' (60%) assume that they will be living in single-family homes in accessible and walkable suburbs within five (5) years.

The recent Great Recession upended the nation's entire idea of home ownership as an important investment. The rate of ownership declined from over 70% of households to 63.5% by mid-2015. Renters are simply not lower income households who cannot afford a single-family home or victims of home foreclosure. They represent a wide range of prospective tenants, including 'Millennials' choosing to delay home purchases for personal or professional reasons, and 'Baby Boomers' making conscious decisions not to own after years of home ownership.[6]

These same and varied changes in ownership status have increased overall investment opportunities for quality residential rental products and resulted in the development of new housing options, such as micro-apartments and 'small' houses. Sustainability and affordability are additional factors in re-thinking traditional housing options in most communities. Live-work spaces remain an attractive housing product in and near traditional commercial districts, such as Valley Junction.

These new housing types also require new ways of considering funding for (re)development. The capital stack required to build any project, particularly in an area like HWDM, often necessitates multiple partners. It may even include emerging financing tools, such as crowd funding. For HWDM, significant resources—partners, funding sources, and related expertise--exist in the Des Moines Metro area, and the City of West Des Moines has experience with these groups. Also, in many suburbs, these same regional partnerships have organized partnerships to improve older housing near their traditional commercial districts.

HWDM's Strategic Opportunities: HWDM's Neighborhood and Commercial District

HWDM and the City of West Des Moines recognize the need to integrate what is best about HWDM's commercial district with its surrounding residential neighborhood, expanding revitalization in a new way.

[6] http://www.curbed.com/2016/1/27/10842856/top-10-real-estate-trends-of-2016.

This integration is evident in the following strategic opportunities specific to Valley Junction and to HWDM's residential neighborhood.

Strategic opportunities identified for Valley Junction are:

Developing a comprehensive business growth system that addresses entrepreneurial support, downtown business expansion and retention, and succession planning. This business growth system responds to market shifts, extends to all uses, and emphasizes Valley Junction as the place within the City where local business ownership grows and thrives.
Expanding the business mix to include more restaurants and other business categories identified in the NDC survey, including those that appeal to new customers within the Custom market.
Understanding and quantifying the need for incentives to improve Valley Junction's historic commercial buildings in collaboration with the City of West Des Moines, Main Street Iowa, and other partners.
Capitalizing on ways to improve Valley Junction's overall pedestrian circulation and activity on side streets, supporting business growth, and enabling consumer business locations on or closest to Fifth Avenue.
Increasing HVJF's organizational capacity and funding to support plan implementation in partnership with the City of West Des Moines.

The resulting strategic opportunities for HWDM's neighborhood include:

Adding new housing options to the study area appealing to current and future HWDM residents. The proposed Phenix project represents a strong start as an adaptive re-use and new housing option.
Continuing to foster and pursue partnerships with regional housing expertise that emphasize quality improvements to HWDM's existing owner-occupied and rental housing,
Adopting or changing, as needed, local regulations, processes, or programs supporting new housing options and improvements to existing residential properties.
Identifying programs that will allow neighborhood residents, including children's programs, to connect with their unique neighborhood and learn more about HWDM's story.

Land Use and Zoning

Land Use

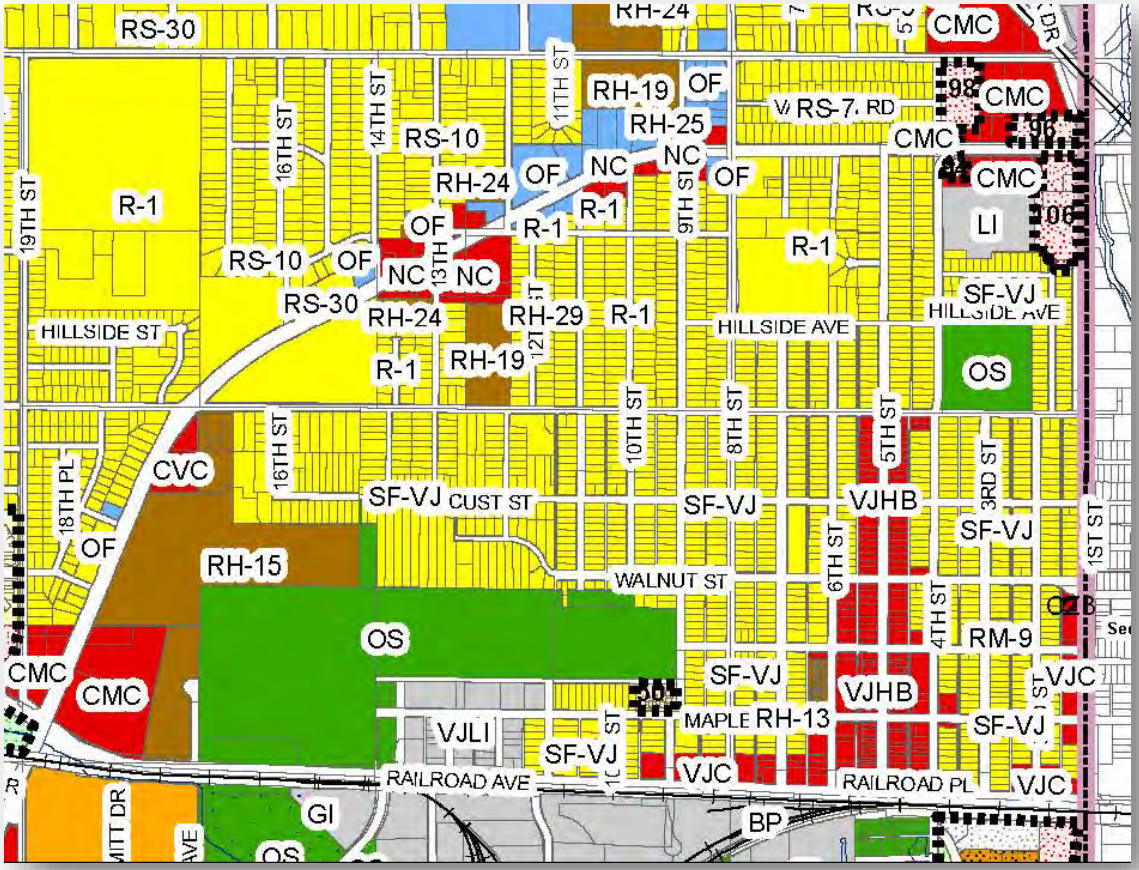
The HWDM is a nearly fully-developed neighborhood of primarily single-family homes, with an historic Main Street business district between Railroad Avenue and Locust Street along 5th Street. There a variety of small commercial uses along the north side of Railroad Avenue, and industrial use and/or vacant land south of Railroad Avenue. The Val-Gate neighborhood shopping area is just outside the northeast corner of the study area, and the Normandy Plaza shopping area and adjacent apartments is just outside the study area to the southwest. The area is served by a three parks; Holiday Park is a regional park offering numerous athletic fields and a waterpark, Wilson Park is a smaller neighborhood park offering a playground and similar local amenities, and American Legion Park is a newly renovated and larger neighborhood park offering a playground, spray park, and other similar facilities. The neighborhood is served by two schools, Hillside Elementary School on 8th Street, and Stilwell Junior High School on Vine Street. These general land use patterns are illustrated on the Issues and Opportunities Map (see HWDM Master Plan).

Zoning

Zoning within HWDM generally matches existing development patterns. A description of relevant zoning districts, along with an excerpt of the WDM Zoning map is provided below.

SF-VJ - Residential District Single-Family Valley Junction - To recognize and encourage the existing and unique residential neighborhood in Valley Junction as a neighborhood of single-family detached dwellings with a typical lot size of six thousand (6,000) square feet.
R-1 - Single-Family Residential District - To encourage residential neighborhoods of exclusively single-family detached dwellings with a minimum lot size of seven thousand five hundred (7,500) square feet.
RH - Residential High-Density District - To provide for a relatively high-density residential environment as a transition between commercial retail and office uses, and lower density residential uses.
OF – Office District - To attract desirable and stable professional office development which will be in harmony with adjacent land uses.
NC – Neighborhood Commercial District - To provide for small commercial centers and uses which provide a limited range of products and services to the residents of the surrounding neighborhood.
CVC - Convenience Commercial District - To provide for single use commercial sites or small commercial centers and uses which provide opportunities for the sale of most frequently purchased goods or services.
CMC - Community Commercial District - To supply daily and occasional shopping needs similar to neighborhood commercial area plus the sale of goods such as appliances, hardware, etc.
VJC - Valley Junction Commercial District - To provide for commercial uses which are oriented toward the motoring public along First Street and Railroad Avenue.
VJHB - Valley Junction Historic Business District - Denotes the old downtown area of Valley Junction.
BP - Business Park District – To provide desirable areas protected by performance, design and use controls regarding lot size, building size, appearance, land coverage, parking and loading facilities, noise, dust, fumes, internal circulation and other environmental and functional issues for a variety of office, research and development, warehouse and distribution, and light assembly and manufacturing uses, and a limited range of commercial uses located and designed to service the business park area.

GI - General Industrial District - To provide areas for light and heavy industrial uses, and warehouse and distribution facilities with outside storage and fabrication yards.
LI - Light Industrial District - To provide areas for most light industrial, and warehouse and distribution facilities with an adequate variety of sizes and locations of light industrial parcels.
Agricultural/Open Space District - To encourage the preservation of areas designated as agricultural/open space in a largely undeveloped state, allowable dwelling units may be transferred to portions of the subject property which are not designated agricultural/open space.
Valley Junction Light Industrial District - to recognize and encourage the existing and unique light industrial neighborhood in Valley Junction as an area with a typical lot size of seven thousand two hundred fifty (7,250) square feet.
PUD - Planned Unit Development District – To provide an area where land uses, transportation elements, building densities, arrangements, types, architecture and other development standards are set out in a unified plan.



Zoning Regulations

Zoning Category	Description	Types of uses	Setback	Max. Height	Open Space	Parking spaces
SF-VJ	Single-family Valley Junction residential district	Single-family detached dwellings	F- 20' R- 35' S- 7' Min. width- 40'		25%	2 per DU
R-1	Single-family residential district	Single-family detached dwellings, public or private parks	F- 30' R- 35' S- 7' Min. width- 50'		25%	2 per DU
RH-24	Residential high-density district	Single-family attached and multi-family dwellings of no greater than 18 DU/acre; higher densities need city council approval in accordance with comp plan.	F- 2 story- 35', 3+ story – 60'* R- 2 story- 35', 3+ story – 60'* S- 30'* Min width- 150' Min. principal bldg. separation- 30'		25%	Efficiency- 1.5/DU; 1 - 2 bedroom/ 2 per DU; 3+ beds/ 2.5 per DU 1 per 300sf for offices and 1 per 50sf of multipurpose space
RH-29	Residential high-density district				25%	
RH-19	Residential high-density district				25%	
RH-15	Residential high-density district				25%	
OF	Office district	Office uses include insurance, medical, law, real estate, finance and investment, and other services.	F- 30' R- 35' S- 10' Min. width- 80'	36'**	25%	Up to 20k GFA- 1 per 200 sq ft; Over 20k GFA- 1 per 225 sq ft
NC	Neighborhood commercial district	Professional offices, laundry/dry-cleaners, drugstores, supermarket, personal services.	F- 45' R- 35' (0' allowed if next to similar dist.) S- 35' (0' allowed if next to similar dist.) Min. width- 50'	30'	25%	Up to 200k GFA- 1 per 225 sq ft; 200-600k GFA- 1 per 250 sq ft; Over 600k GFA- 1 per 220 sq ft
CVC	Convenience commercial district	Convenience market, professional offices, daycare centers, banks, and other personal services.	F- 45' R- 35' (0' allowed if next to similar dist.) S- 50' (0' allowed if next to similar dist.) Min. width- 50'	30'	25%	

Zoning Category	Description	Types of uses	Setback	Max. Height	Open Space	Parking spaces
CMC	Community commercial district	A variety of merchandise store, one or more supermarkets, a drugstore, restaurants, banks and a large number and variety of other stores.	F- 100' R- 50' (0' allowed if next to similar dist.) S- 50' (0' allowed if next to similar dist.) Min. width- 50'	36'**	25%	
VJC	Valley Junction commercial district	Restaurants, convenience gas stations (without repair service), professional offices, laundry and dry cleaners, banks, drugstores, office supply stores, or other service uses as defined by the VJ commercial land use matrix.	F- 35' R- 35' (0' allowed if next to similar dist.) S- 35' (0' allowed if next to similar dist.) Min. width- 50'	30'	25%	
VJHB	Valley Junction historic business district	Professional offices, restaurants, specialty retail stores, and other personal services.	F- 0' R- 0' S- 0' Min. width- 50'	36'	0%	Provision of off street parking is not required
BP	Business park district	A variety of office, research and development, warehouse and distribution, and light assembly and manufacturing uses, and a limited range of commercial uses to service the business park area.	F- 50' R- 50' S- 50' Min. width- 75'	60 feet**	35%	Varies based on the exact use
GI	General industrial district	Light and heavy industrial uses, warehouse and distribution facilities.	F- 40' R- 35' S- 35' (0' allowed if next to similar dist.) Min. width- 75'	60'**	20%	3 per 1,000 sq ft of GFA

Zoning Category	Description	Types of uses	Setback	Max. Height	Open Space	Parking spaces
LI	Light industrial district	Light industrial, and warehouse and distribution facilities.	F- 45' R- 40' S- 50' (0' allowed if next to similar dist.) Min. width- 75'	60'**	20%	
VJLI	Valley Junction light industrial district	Low impacting industrial uses that can coexist with residential uses	F- 15' R- 10' from alley S- 0' if next to similar dist., 10' if next to residential Min. width- 50'	15 feet, 30 feet***	20%	
OS	Agricultural/ Open Space District	Agricultural uses, grazing, nonfarm wooded areas and very large lot estate or farm homes.	F- 50' R- 50' S- 50' Min. width- 200'	60'**	75%	1 per employee
PUD-94, 106, 50		Mixed residential, commercial, office, industrial and public land uses.				

Transportation Infrastructure

There are four primary components to the transportation system serving HWDM; cars and trucks, and public transportation. These items are reviewed below.

Cars and Trucks

Most roads within the study area are controlled by the City of West Des Moines. The one major exception to this is 1st Street/Route 28/63rd Street, which is controlled by the Iowa DOT. Roads are generally in good condition. The area is served by a grid pattern of streets, providing convenient access and alternatives should an accident or traffic block a particular route. No major traffic issues have been identified in the area. Traffic counts for major routes through the area are summarized in the table below.

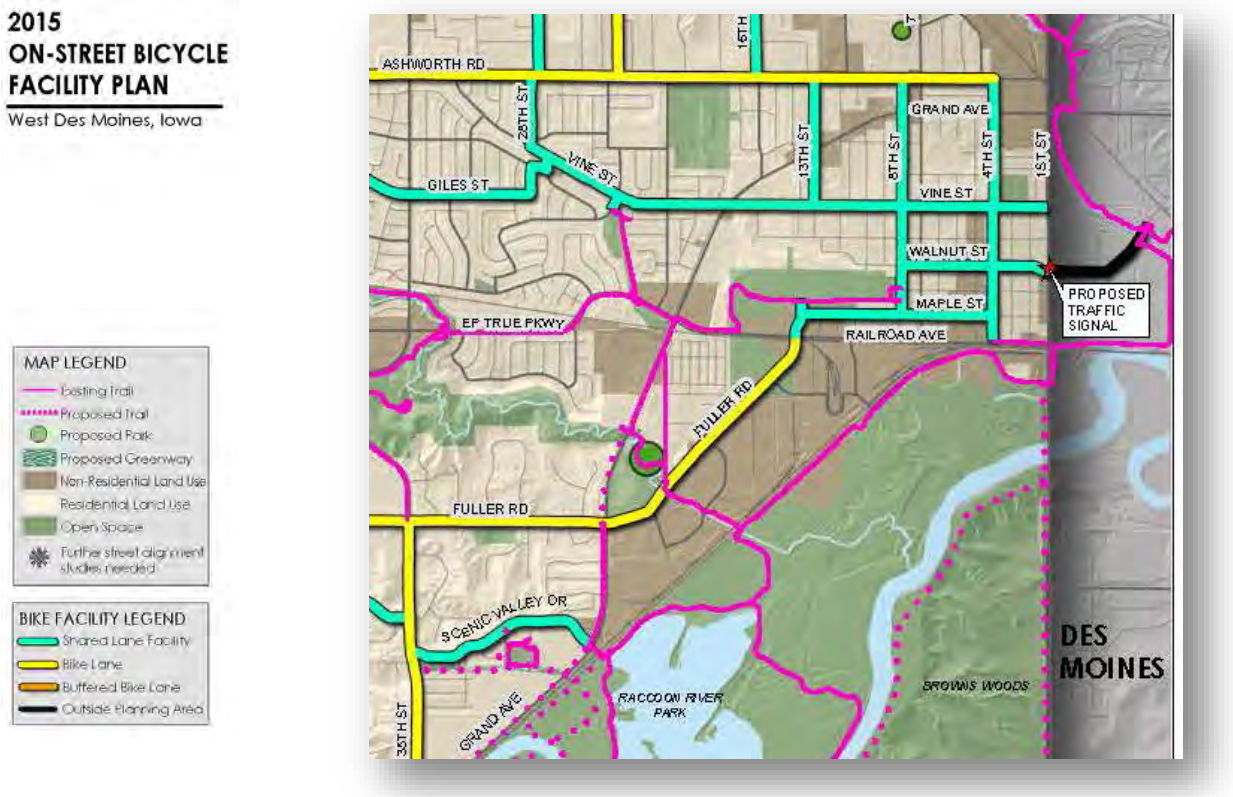
Average Daily Traffic Counts (ADT)

Segment	2006	2010	2014	Change 2006-2010	Percent Change 2006-2014
Grand Avenue 1st Street to 4th Street	21,705	16,302	16,450	(5,255)	-24%
Grand Avenue 7th Street to 8th Street	17,421	15,123	12,362	(5,059)	-29%
Grand Avenue 11th Street to 12th Street	10,053	12,992	12,716	2,663	26%
Grand Avenue 16th Street to Vine Street	15,195	12,660	13,156	(2,039)	-13%
Grand Avenue Elm Street to Railroad Avenue	13,722	12,620	12,832	(890)	-6%
Railroad Avenue 3rd Street to 4th Street	17,408	16,444	16,619	(789)	-5%
Railroad Avenue 9th Street to 10th Street	19,309	19,650	17,859	(1,450)	-8%
Railroad Avenue Fuller Road to Holiday Circle	15,480	15,354	13,926	(1,554)	-10%
5th Street - Elm Street to Maple Street	1,932	1,868	2,159	227	12%
8th Street - Prospect Avenue to Hillside Street	5,478	5,298	*	n/a	n/a
8th Street - Walnut Street to Elm Street	4,060	7,080	*	n/a	n/a

* No traffic counts available due to road construction

Bike Paths and Routes

The City of West Des Moines operates an extensive bike path and bike route system throughout the community, providing both recreational and general transportation benefits. The City's Bike Master Plan was previously summarized. Below is an excerpt of the plan.



Walking

The same grid roadway network noted above also helps to create a very walkable neighborhood, with sidewalks provided throughout HWDM. Sidewalks are generally well maintained, and the City has an active maintenance programs to replace or repair any damaged walkways.

Public Transportation

Des Moines Area Rapid Transit (DART) provides public transportation services within the region. In the HWDM area, DART offers several services:

- The route 11—Ingersoll Ave/Valley Junction—operates a weekday service providing four trips in the morning and afternoon during the peak commute times.
- The 96 E.P. True Express operates weekday service with four trips in the morning and afternoon during the peak commute times.
- The 72 West Des Moines/Clive Flex route provides extensive service throughout West Des Moines. The service provides a vital connection between Valley Junction, Valley West

Mall, the Medical Mile and the University corridor, Jordan Creek Town Center and the Mills Civic Pkwy business and shopping district. Since this is a Flex route, it provides additional opportunities to travel well off the defined route to connect customers to other work, shopping or selected sites.

Approximately 300 trips per week, or 60 trips per day, are being generated on these routes in Valley Junction and the immediately surrounding area.

In addition to those trips, DART also operates Paratransit service for senior citizens and persons with disabilities living in Polk County who are functionally unable to independently use the regular DART bus service all of the time, temporarily or only under certain circumstances. Paratransit service is door-to-door and wheelchair accessible.

In June and November of 2012, DART significantly redesigned their services based on the DART Forward 2035 Transit Service Plan that was approved by the DART Commission in September 2011. In West Des Moines, the local route 11, Express Routes 94, 95 and 96 and the West Des Moines On-Call services were restructured and realigned. Also, new services were introduced; the 52 Valley West/Jordan Creek Crosstown and the 72 West Des Moines/Clive Flex services. In August 2013 route 11 received an additional trip morning and afternoon, routes 3, 52 and 72 service hours were extended weekday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays.

DART's ridership has increased overall by 9% since the implementation of the DART Forward 2035 from fiscal year 2013 through fiscal year 2015. The most heavily used stops in the Valley Junction area are:

- Grand Avenue & Normandy Plaza
- 9th & Ashworth
- 11th & Office Park
- 8th & Vine
- 5th & Elm
- Grand & 62nd

Based on the 2014 DART Customer Satisfaction Survey the general characteristics of DART's riders are as follows:

- Slightly more men (51 percent) ride DART than women (49 percent).
- Approximately 72 percent of DART riders are between ages 25-64, i.e. the working age population.
- Senior use is low accounting for just 5 percent of ridership, and this has remained constant since 2010.
- 76 percent of DART riders are from households that have an annual income of less than $35,000. Eight percent of riders come from households earning $75,000 or more.
- 68 percent of DART riders are employed, with 48 percent employed full time.
- 68 percent of DART riders are White, 20 percent of Black/African American, six percent Asian, and five percent Hispanic.

- Most DART riders are regular transit users; 84 percent of riders use DART more than three days per week.

Improved access and transit amenities have shown to attract and retain transit ridership, and bus shelters are consistently the top rated amenity request based on DART survey results over the past few years. DART is in the process of updating its long-range transit services plan: the DART Forward 2035 plan. As part of this effort there will be a review of facility and transit amenity needs throughout the region.

DART doesn't maintain the locations of passengers that board with bicycles, but in general the usage of bike racks on DART buses has been steadily increasing system wide over the past five years. For the first six months of the current Fiscal Year 2016 (July 2015 through December 2015), DART averaged over 5,000 customers boarding with a bicycle per month (Total = 30,446). During the warmer weather months, they average about 6,100 boarding's per month, with a high peaking at over 6,400 boarding's in one month. All the DART vehicles operating in the West Des Moines and Valley Junction area are equipped with bike racks.

Survey

A detailed report was prepared to document all survey results. As this document is nearly 300 pages in length, it is not included here. What follows is a summary and interpretation of results provided by Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDC).

HISTORIC WEST DES MOINES
Comments Related to the Recent AAU Survey and Focus Groups

COMMERCIAL LAND USE

Preserving 5th Street

Preserving the historic, small town character of the commercial area on 5th Street was identified as a high priority by both survey respondents and focus group participants alike. At the same time, some noted that many of the older buildings were in need of repair and improvement. And, others noted that not all of the buildings along 5th Street were as historically significant.

Potential recommendations for the Master Plan that address these issues include the following:

- A financial assistance program, possibly similar to that recently employed along SW 9th in Des Moines, which encouraged owners of older, historic buildings along 5th Street to improve their facades; and

- Zoning and development guidelines that would restrict redevelopment along 5th Street to two story structures (or, possibly three story, with the top floor set back from the street).

Increasing the Commercial Component On or Near 5th Street

While survey respondents and focus group participants clearly wanted to retain the small town character of the street, many also suggested that the commercial area could be improved by adding more shops, restaurants, and entertainment establishments.

There may be some opportunities for commercial infill development on the north end of the 5th Street commercial strip (e.g. near the post office). The primary locations for expansion of the commercial area if it is to occur, however, would be behind 5th Street (in either direction), where the City of West Des Moines owns a considerable amount land that is used for surface parking.

If the City were to develop commercial shops on some of their 4th and 6th Street frontage lands, those projects ideally should be compatible with both the surrounding neighborhood and 5th Street commercial area – and some form of replacement parking should also be provided. In the short term, the lost parking may also be replaced by acquiring another parcel for surface parking.

These liner retail buildings are built in front of a parking garage in Boulder Colorado. A one-story retail version of this with a two level garage could be built on either 4th or 6th Streets at some point in the future.

In the longer term, development of a two level parking structure built behind a one-story liner commercial frontage could allow for both an increase in the number of shops and a small increase in the amount of public parking.

Potential recommendations for the Master Plan include the following:

- An investigation by the City of Des Moines regarding the feasibility of developing commercial uses and associated parking on some of their 4th and 6th Street lands at some point in the future.

The timing and scale of such redevelopment, as well as its financing and economic feasibility, would be prime considerations in moving forward with such a strategy.

At the current time, market rents on the Street are too low to economically justify development of the commercial portions of a new commercial building and public parking in the area is currently provided free of charge (thus providing no revenue to support the construction of a parking garage). Such an approach to commercial and parking expansion should probably, therefore, be considered longer term in nature.

Other Potential Commercial Activity Sites

Two significant buildings exist on the edge of HWDM which could be used to support additional commercial activity in the community. The first, is the large brick warehouse at 11th Street on the South side of Railroad. The second, is the Val Air Ballroom. Both are currently underutilized and could be repurposed to bring additional activity to the neighborhood.

RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

Residential Investment in the Neighborhoods

Survey respondents and focus group participants had mixed feelings about the residential areas adjacent to 5th Street. Many saw potential in the older homes and envisioned younger people moving into the neighborhood and fixing them up. Others wondered whether some of the houses were worth fixing up at all. Most people seemed to support rehabilitation of existing housing, but also saw the opportunity for some sensitive infill on neighborhood streets (townhouses were most often mentioned).

Fifty foot lots are common in HWDM's residential area. The following are examples of narrow lot single family and two-family developments on 50' lots – and of a larger townhouse project that would be appropriate in HWDM.

17 feet wide single family homes on 25 foot wide lots are a common Inner City building form in Calgary, Alberta. These two houses have replaced a one story single family home on the original 50 foot lot.

A similar narrow lot single family home project in the Western US

These two 21 foot wide semi-detached homes are located on a 50 foot lot formerly occupied by a one story home. Each house is owned fee simple.

A traditional-style townhouse project in Minneapolis.

Potential recommendations for the Master Plan include:

- Programs to provide loans and other financial assistance for home rehabilitation in the neighborhood; and

- New zoning that would allow for infill development, including single family homes on smaller lots and townhouses where larger development opportunities exist.

Residential Development on the Arterials

The three major roads that frame HWDM, namely Railroad Avenue, Grand Avenue, and 1st Street, each have a mix of residential and commercial development fronting them. Much of the commercial development on these arterials is older and lower density (i.e. one-story). Much of the residential development, especially on 1st Street, is comprised of single family dwellings that are not well-suited for the volume and speed of traffic existing on these roads today.

Apartment-style development along these arterials would increase the neighborhood's population without negatively affecting the interior low density residential streets.

Potential recommendations for the Master Plan include:

- Rezoning portions of the frontages along Railroad Avenue, Grand Avenue, and 1st Street to accommodate apartment development.

In the case of Grand Avenue, mixed use developments might also be a viable option.

TRAFFIC

Focus group members expressed concerns about the speed of traffic along **Railroad Avenue**. The street is signed for 35 mph, but traffic speeds of 45 mph are not uncommon. This occurs because of its configuration (i.e. a four land street, with few traffic signals, very few full 4-way intersections, etc.). It may make sense to try to slow traffic on Railroad, especially if the number of pedestrians crossing it increases in the future. Right now, there is little N/S traffic to justify any capital intervention. If, however, significant development on the south side were to generate additional pedestrian traffic, some intervention (beyond normal police enforcement) might be called for.

Some focus members called for a return to one-way traffic in the other direction on 5th Street and some survey respondents suggested that conversion to two-way traffic would work better. I think that the current parallel parking arrangement with one-traffic works well and can't see a need for changing it.

No recommendations for traffic changes are offered.

PARKING

The Parking 'Shortage'

The extent to which both the survey respondents and focus group participants identified the need for additional parking was both surprising and, in some respects, not surprising at all. Calling for additional parking is a common public refrain when asked about traditional downtown and street retailing districts. Shoppers have come to expect a "sea of available free parking" surrounding their shopping destinations. To many, anything less than this is considered to be a shortage.

It should be clear to any objective observer, however, that except for large event days such as the Farmers Market when 5th Street is closed and thousands of people are coming for the event, that there is no shortage of parking on 5th Street. It is rare on non-event days to see the parking on 5th Street fully occupied, let alone the public parking lots located behind 5th Street.

Parking would be even more available on 5th Street, if employees would refrain from parking there and if they used the adjacent public parking lots. There are, however, few ways to effectively achieve this since parking on 5th Street is offered to the public for free.

The shortage of parking on large event days, however, does remain at the top of the public's mind when thinking about 5th Street and may influence their visitation decisions. There may be potential parking locations on the south side of Railroad, but I am not aware of them – and they would probably be considered by most visitors as being "too far away" to alter their opinion of the parking situation on 5th Street.

Future Parking Actions

While I think that it would be prudent to anticipate a future need for additional parking, I would caution against making any large public investments to solve what is currently a "perceived" problem. Acquiring too much additional property to provide surface parking lots behind 5th Street may

serve to reduce the neighborhood's charm. And, building a public parking structure will be expensive, especially if it is operated free to the public, and would likely only be used on event days.

At a certain point, if 5th Street continues to grow in popularity, additional parking may be justified, as may be development of a public parking structure. Development of such a structure could be done as part of a comprehensive redevelopment scheme discussed above in Commercial Development and could include some commercial uses at grade.

Potential parking recommendations for the Master Plan include:

- Purchase of additional properties behind 5th by the City of West Des Moines on an opportunity basis;
- The development of additional surface parking on these newly acquired lots; and
- Possible small scale commercial/parkade development behind 5th Street at some future date.