

## CASCADE, IOWA

January 24-26, 2023



Conducted by:

Iowa Downtown Resource Center



**IOWA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
1963 Bell Avenue, Suite 200 | Des Moines, Iowa 50315  
PH: 515.348.6180 | [James.Engle@IowaEDA.com](mailto:James.Engle@IowaEDA.com)

[Iowa Economic Development Authority \(IowaEDA.com\)](http://IowaEDA.com)

[Downtown Resource Center | Iowa Economic Development Authority \(IowaEDA.com\)](#)

## ASSESSMENT TEAM

The Iowa Economic Development Authority's Assessment Team included four downtown development professionals:

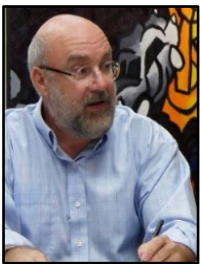
**LIESL SEABERT** is a Florida native who moved to Iowa in 2016. She is a licensed attorney and has a background in community development, placemaking, and consensus building. Currently Liesl works as the Rural Community Revitalization Program Manager within the new Center for Rural Revitalization in the Iowa Economic Development Authority. In this role, Liesl is responsible for managing the Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative, focused on developing policy recommendations addressing rural Iowa concerns through three task forces as well as implementing outcomes. Liesl serves as an ex-officio executive member of the Iowa Rural Development Council, is a member of the Main Street Iowa Advisory Council, is the 2022 Vice President of the APA Iowa Chapter, is a member of the Florida Bar and Georgia Bar, holds a BA from the College of William and Mary, JD from Florida State Law School, and MSP from Florida State University College of Urban and Regional Planning.



**JOE JENNISON** is the Director of Main Street and Marketing for the Mount Vernon-Lisbon Community Development Group. A trained playwright and performer, Jennison is passionate about volunteer recruitment and retention, festivals, promotions and downtown development. He has been involved in the Main Street Program in Mount Vernon since 2010 and has led his community through multiple award-winning projects such as the Frank Benesh Uptown Theatre A Go-Go, the Mount Vernon-Lisbon Comedy Festival, the First Street Community Center Business Incubator and the 52314 Zip Code Day. He speaks regularly to groups about his community, its accomplishments and its 477 registered volunteers. He is also the co-host of "Good Morning Mount Vernon Lisbon" on [vimeo.com/mvlsun](https://vimeo.com/mvlsun).



**DENNIS REYNOLDS** delivers award winning master planning, urban design, site design and public art with his unique combination of innovative design; presentation and listening skills; quick hand drawings; and pro-active facilitation of the design process. Prior to creating his own consulting practice, Reynolds Urban Design, he provided senior level design services and leadership at HOK (Kansas City), Sasaki (Boston) and NBBJ (Columbus). He founded and led the innovative HOK S+V+E "Design Studio," facilitating cutting edge multi-disciplined design concepts. His major projects include Ho Chi Minh City's Thu Thiem Peninsula Master Plan, Nanjing Olympic Sports Park (that hosted the 2005 China Games and the 2008 Summer Olympics), The Great American Ballpark for the Cincinnati Reds and the Dubai Autodrome Formula One Racing Community. As Director of Design for a major Midwest real estate development company from 2005 to 2011, Dennis was responsible for groundbreaking projects including the "New Urbanist" Village of Ponderosa and "Shimmer" lakeside terrace. Recent projects include urban design, site design and public art for the emerging downtown Des Moines Bridge District, the North Kansas City Vision Plan, East Village's City Square, Bondurant's Swings and Fireflies, Overland Park Medical Center's "Heritage" public art trail and Edina Grandview Urban Design Concepts. Dennis has a Bachelor of Arts from Wheaton College with concentrations in Fine Arts, Economics and Group Dynamics and a Masters of Landscape Architecture from Kansas State University. He has served on both the Urban Design Review Board for the City of Des Moines and the Iowa Urban Land Institute Board, volunteers for multiple Dog Rescue groups and provides therapy dog visits with Mister Cotton.



**JIM THOMPSON** CMSM, HREDFP, serves as a Downtown Economic Development Specialist covering development for downtown districts for the Iowa Economic Development Authority. He has served at the local level in all aspects including program director, board member and volunteer. Jim received certification as a Historic Real Estate Development Finance Professional from the National Development Council.



He earned his Certified Main Street Managers credentials through the National Main Street Center. He engages communities in market analysis including data analysis, business retention, recruitment, and implementation strategies. He has also led efforts in tax increment finance, urban revitalization, housing & real estate development, branding and one-on-one business technical assistance for Iowa's communities. Jim serves on the Iowa Rural Development Council Executive Board and leads the Empower Rural Iowa Leadership Taskforce. Jim is the grant administrator for the Community Catalyst Building Remediation grant program. He has over 25 years' experience in community development, retail management and served on a City Council for 10 years. Jim has also served as a consultant for the National Main Street Center, worked in several states and presented multiple times at the National Main Streets Conference.

The following report summarizes the observations and recommendations resulting from an Iowa Downtown Resource Center Assessment conducted in Cascade, Iowa. In preparation of this report, the Assessment Team learned about Cascade’s development history and plans for future development. The Team’s familiarization process began with a review of materials supplied prior to the visit, a pre-visit survey, a driving tour of the city and a walking tour of the downtown commercial district.

The intensive three-day visit also included interviews with approximately 70 community leaders, individuals and groups representing the public and private sectors and a community meeting. Based upon these activities and the Assessment Team’s extensive working knowledge in downtown economic development, this report summarizes their findings and recommendations for Cascade.

## OVERVIEW

This Downtown Assessment report and recommendations for Cascade are based on the Team’s downtown development experience. Their beliefs are grounded by the philosophy that for Downtown to re-establish itself as the social and commercial center of the community—the physical heart and soul of the city—Downtown must become more valuable physically, economically, socially, and politically.

The health of Downtown has a direct impact upon the entire community’s economic well-being. They are inter-related. Downtown revitalization IS economic development. Downtown is a prime location for incubating small business, it is an affordable location for independent businesses and is historically one of the community’s major employers. The commercial center provides a compact environment with multiple stories for commerce, government and living spaces, thus reducing sprawl and the cost associated with extending city services and infrastructure. The pedestrian friendly environment is convenient and accessible, serving as the center (community space) for not only commercial trade but also cultural, social, and civic engagement. Historic downtown districts can serve as heritage tourism attractions. A building’s condition, the business’ viability, and maximization of the building’s square footage for income generation, affect not only the property’s value, but also the value of the neighboring properties and real estate in the entire community. Investments in Downtown allow it to “pay its fair share” in taxes resulting in lessening the tax burdens of its citizens and city government.



Most of our memories are directly associated with a place. We “go back” to places we feel good about. We “go back” to places where we have had positive shopping experiences. We “go back” to places where we have had fun. We “go back” to places we think are important. We are also attracted to places where we think we will have a positive experience. We must strive to make Downtown a “go to” kind of destination, not an avoidable area we pass through on our way to somewhere else.



This Downtown Assessment is somewhat unique in the fact this is not our first effort in Cascade. The Downtown Resource Center completed an assessment in 2015 and has been onsite for several visits with Community Catalyst grants. All of this leads us to a much clearer understanding of how to partner with Cascade on future efforts.

## PURPOSE

The City of Cascade worked with the Iowa Downtown Resource Center, Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), to conduct a Downtown Assessment to raise awareness, educate, make recommendations, and encourage the local community. In conducting this “self-discovery” process, Cascade has begun to empower itself by stepping out of its comfort zone. It is a good sign that the community appears ready to take additional steps to address Downtown’s challenges.



This assessment and recommendations should serve as a call to action and provide the community with current information to formulate strategies necessary to address the very serious issue of saving or improving the downtown for future generations. This report cannot and does not provide all the answers. Ultimately,

Cascade citizens must explore their options, decide what is relevant and realistic and acquire additional information and resources as they address Downtown’s future.

## INTRODUCTION

Cascade, Iowa is a community of 2,386 residents and is located in Dubuque and Jones counties. Cascade is located on Highway 151 between Dubuque and Cedar Rapids. The community demonstrates quality pride in place especially in the upkeep of local residences, parks, and recent downtown building projects. There is a feeling of positive momentum happening. The retail businesses and restaurants located downtown seem to be doing very well. All of this gives the assessment team the opportunity to dig deeper into specific challenges and work on plans to help downtown Cascade be even better. Our assessment input comes from a combination of what the assessment team already knew, what we saw and the input we received from the residents of Cascade. Our goal is to provide suggestions on how to make Cascade’s downtown even stronger. We hope this set of observations and recommendations can be used to encourage downtown Cascade to new heights.



## THE SURVEY SAYS....

The Iowa Downtown Resource Center administered an on-line survey to residents of Cascade to get their ideas and opinions about the downtown area. 98 people participated in the survey. A complete summary of survey responses is available as an attachment.

### **PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY TRENDS SHOW....** (answers in order of popularity)

#### **DOWNTOWN'S GREATEST STRENGTHS:**

- Downtown BUILDINGS (46)
- Cleanliness/Appearance (22)

#### **DOWNTOWN'S GREATEST WEAKNESS:**

- Not Enough to Do (18)
- Downtown Buildings (17)
- Appearance/Cleanliness (16)
- Lack of Downtown Businesses (15)

#### **HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN DOWNTOWN?**

- Improve Storefronts (30)
- More Parking (7)
- Streetscape (6)

#### **WHAT TYPE OF NEW BUSINESS IS MOST NEEDED?**

- Restaurant (13)
- Clothing/Boutique (10)
- Bowling/Entertainment (5)
- Ice Cream/Smoothies (5)
- Bar/Sports Bar/Irish Pub (5)
- Consignment/Slightly Used (4)

## ASSESSMENT TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The Assessment team's recommendations have been grouped into five themes with suggested time frames for specific projects.

- Organizing Your Volunteer Team
- Leveraging Your Resources
- Leadership Development
- Dream Bridge to the Future
- Connecting City Government to Building Rehabilitation

It is important to take one step at a time and understand that the longer-term recommendations are not of much consequence until the shorter-term recommendations are addressed.

The Assessment Team hopes Cascade will assess each recommendation and develop a plan to implement what is right for Cascade. As the process gains momentum, community leadership will need to determine additional strategies and develop approaches that are more sophisticated.

Our hope was/is to work with leaders to identify the strengths, challenges, and opportunities in a constructive way to help the community improve the vitality of the downtown over time. We appreciate the openness and honesty of residents, and we appreciate that community leaders allowed the Assessment Team to be honest in its findings.

This Assessment Team believes that many of the items mentioned in the earlier 2015 Downtown Assessment visit are still valid. Use this new report to compare how far you've come in a short amount of time. The success Cascade has created applying for and receiving grants has been tremendous. Keep up this effort and continue to reach out to find new partnerships.

## THEME 1: ORGANIZING YOUR VOLUNTEER TEAM

It is clear to us that Cascade already has a ready-made, active volunteer community. The hardest part of this work is done. You have an active volunteer base. Congratulations!

The assessment team spoke to dozens of people who regularly volunteer in the community; they are making a difference even now in the town they call home. From here, putting a volunteer database together should be an easy first step. Once you have your list of phone numbers and/or emails, set up email blasts announcing volunteer projects, share out to your volunteer contacts and post on social media feeds.

We recommend creating both an inventory of volunteers and an inventory of volunteer organizations and groups. These lists would be managed by an umbrella organization not yet determined (City? Chamber? Other?). There are several potential umbrella organizations here but ultimately the umbrella organization chosen to lead this effort should have at least one full-time paid person to manage said volunteers. Several individuals interviewed with us also mentioned various groups in which they are affiliated.



- The following groups were mentioned in interviews. There are a lot of people and organizations caring for this community.

American Legion

CARE (Cascade Area Resources for Education)

Cascade Development Corporation

Cascade Enhancement Committee

Chamber of Commerce

Economic Development

Future Farmers of America (FFA)

Fireman Fundraiser/Dance

Garden Club

Historical Society

Library Group

Lion's Club

Retailer Group

Youth League Organizations

- A complete list of annual events should also be inventoried. Here is a list of what Cascade currently has based on our interviews.

Cleanup Days – Spring and Fall

Library programs – Throughout the Year

Valentine's Day – Shopping Event – February

St. Patty's Day – Bar Event – March

Memorial Day Event – May

Mother's Day – Shopping Event – May

Sidewalk Sales Day – Spring and Fall

Outdoor Markets – One in April and September

Boutique Tours – Shopping Event – Several a Year

Wingfest – May

Rockin on the River – June, July, August

4<sup>th</sup> of July – Parade, Fireworks

Hometown Days – August

National Night Out – August

Halloween and Parade -- October

Shop Small Saturday – November

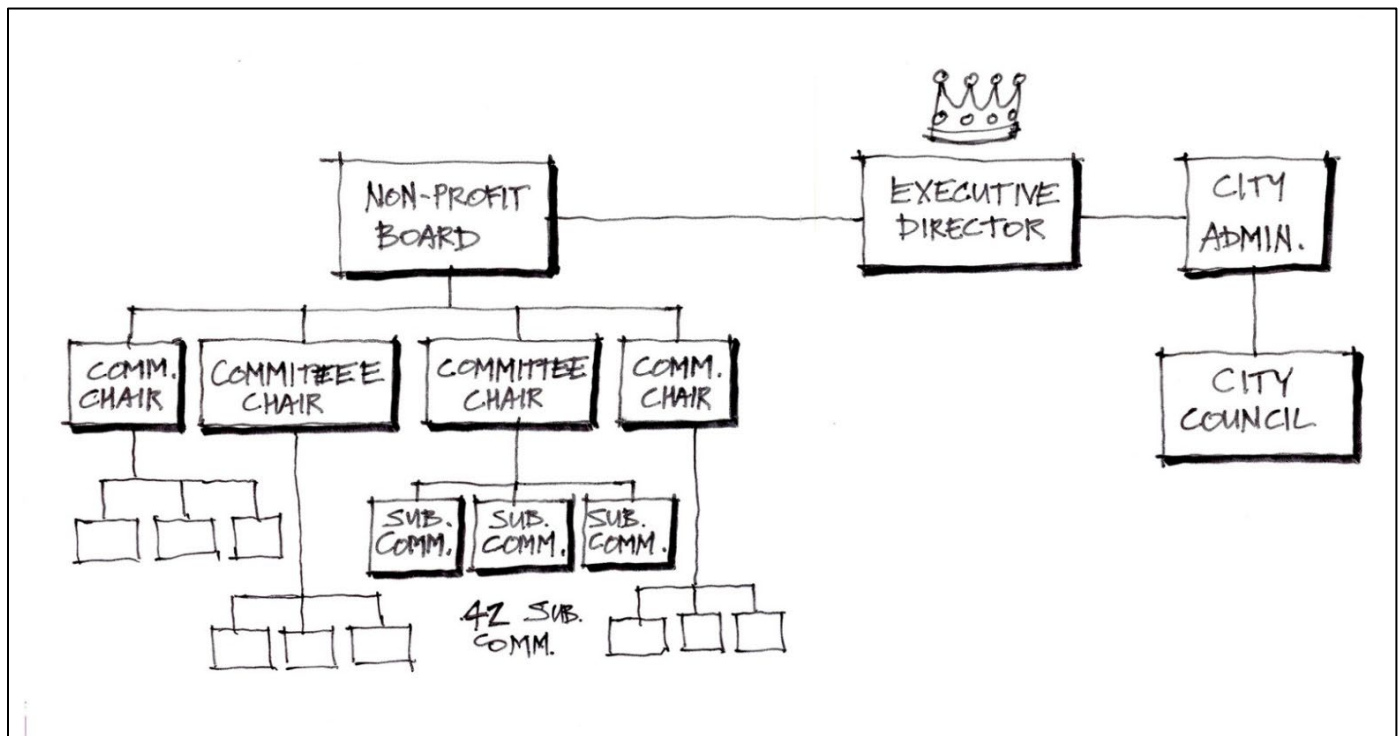
Christmas Event – December



Any town would be proud of this list of events featured on its events page. But we do feel that a local organization needs to step up and manage the posting/marketing of all of these events to local media and through social media.



- At the end of the year, an Annual Report is a nice tool to remind volunteers, donors, businesses, City Council, and others of what was accomplished through all this good volunteer work. Yes, this can also be posted to a web site or shared through social media outlets, but it takes it to the next level when it is also in a written report that can be held, mailed, archived, and put in businesses, the new library, waiting rooms, salons etc.
- Volunteer Organization Chart – Implementation of downtown projects is best accomplished with a committed group of volunteers (and sometimes staff) that can divide duties. This is an example of Mt. Vernon, Iowa’s downtown, volunteer organization chart; it may be completely different from how Cascade’s will look, and that is ok. Mount Vernon is a participant in the Main Street Iowa Program, but some of the Main Street principles could help Cascade when building a volunteer organization or adapting a current Cascade organization to better serve the needs of the downtown.



- (Mt Vernon) Executive Director is employed by a non-profit organization (Mount Vernon Lisbon Community Development Group) and is a City employee. Primarily, the Director reports to a board of 10. The board conducts the annual review; manages the PTO and vacation hours. The Director (Joe Jennison) never takes time off during festival season (May through August), but other than that his free time is his own. The Board would need to go through the City (pays the salary) in order to relieve the Director of his duties.
- Mount Vernon is a designated Main Street Iowa Community – Main Street was originally a program through the National Trust for Historic Preservation – now it is its own entity through the National Main Street Center.

- There are 54 Main Street communities in Iowa, 1,600 in the U.S. – basically Main Street is Economic Development through Historic Preservation and from Mount Vernon’s perspective it works!
- In 2007, there was a brochure for Mount Vernon promoting the fact that Mount Vernon had 3 food and beverage businesses and 13 retail stores – now Mount Vernon has 34 retail and 8 food and beverage businesses . It is unclear if all that is attributable to the local Main Street program, but the Main Street program has made a real difference in Mount Vernon.
- All Main Street Iowa programs need to adhere to 11 points and are assessed every year to determine that the community is practicing all 11 points. This includes active board and committees. All Main Streets have to maintain four active committees: Promotion, Design, Economic Vitality, and Organization
- All subcommittees/projects need to fit under one of the four committees. In Mount Vernon, all board members need to Chair or Vice Chair one of the four main committees. That’s how communication is maintained throughout the entire organization. At any given time, the organization has as many as 47 subcommittees and projects under the four main committees. NOTE: This approach works in Mount Vernon, but Cascade gets to decide what works in its downtown. Not one-size fits all.
- Currently, the Community of Mount Vernon has 14 annual festivals and events. They have learned that events should always support downtown’s retailers; they are the lifeblood of small towns. It is important to know that not every event is a money-maker for every-type business – but in a healthy retail community, every small business should be able to point to a few events that positively affect their bottom line.
- Take a long hard look at all your events – survey your small businesses downtown to find out:
  - Which events are good and for which businesses?
  - Adjust the schedule and/or subject of each event based on retailer feedback.
  - Move forward – fail better next time.
- It is clear that most small businesses in Cascade on Main Street appreciate Shop Small Saturday. Mount Vernon has added a second Shop Small Day during the Holiday season and are considering adding a third. This seems like an easy add to your events calendar that will bring in more shoppers and more dollars to your retailers during the holidays. Consider how businesses and other donors might be able to add incentives to keep people coming back and shopping small all December long.
- The Assessment team was told that there is no community theater in Cascade. We only found one mural on the other side of the river. Although art and theater are a big part of other communities, we’re not convinced (through the interviews we participated in) that the arts are necessarily an important part of Cascade – that is ok. We were told that the baseball field is expanding to bring in more such fields. Clearly baseball is important here. With the ramping up of the Field of Dreams this summer, now might be a good time to consider some sort of baseball-themed tour focusing on your baseball history.
- There is a trend statewide in regard to [plein air painting](#). This might be something to consider as your downtown is so incredibly picturesque – downtown historic buildings regardless of whether they are renovated or not currently as beautiful as they could be. An event titled “Painting Cascade” is an easy, no brainer project to gauge this town’s interest in art. How it works – artists are invited through social media to come and paint en plein air – buildings, bridges, businesses, houses throughout the Main Street District



over two days. A downtown gallery or other business exhibits said paintings over a week or a month and offers said paintings for sale. Some towns offer prize money, others offer what they call a purchase price (thereby agreeing to buy a certain number of paintings from the invited artist list). Either way, you have people coming downtown – some to paint and some to watch.

- So, people come, then what?
  - We heard again and again that parking is an issue. Although the assessment team did not experience that parking problem, we know this is an issue with Cascade residents and are confident that this will be addressed – in the meantime remember what we say in Main Street, change is incremental. We all saw those photos of “Rockin on the River” and your audience got here and parked somehow.
  - Maps and visitors’ guides are so important for visitors and sometimes residents to promote the downtown and find what they are looking for. We did not see anything like this in Cascade. Did we miss it? These are easy fixes. These tools are helpful to tourists and should be placed at every hotel/coffee shop/City facility. Perhaps these exist on social media, but it’s nice to have a physical map or visitor guide available in the downtown area to help visitors get around.

**ACTION STEPS:**

- Create an inventory of volunteers.
- Create an inventory of volunteer groups and organizations.
- Create an inventory of special events.
- Do a downtown development annual report
- Identify lead organization to manage and market all events and opportunities.
- Ensure inventory includes both volunteer-led events and local retail business programming.
- Develop a visitor guide and map

The Assessment team enjoyed our time in Cascade with your very nice businesses and volunteers. You people rock! Be proud of the work you are doing. Don’t let the haters take you off course. We love this community and want to visit during the summer and have a cold beer with you at Rockin on the River.

## THEME 2: LEVERAGING YOUR RESOURCES

As the team met with stakeholders, one of the consistent themes we heard was the pride felt by residents in their track record to accomplish big projects from within. This is a fantastic characteristic of any community. Having residents and businesses that are willing to invest back into public amenities and the quality-of-life experience of a community is a pivotal component of a successful town.

However, there were a few unintended consequences of this “pull ourselves up by our bootstraps” mentality:



- **Donor Drain** We consistently heard that donors, big and small, were tapped out from decades of consistent fundraising. Some groups mentioned that they were strategically waiting a period of time before requesting donations from some who had indicated they were drained.
- **Slower Implementation Due to Fundraising** Directly connected to donor drain, if projects have to delay fundraising efforts due to donor fatigue – the project will have delayed implementation. This is especially true for projects without an immediate need, such as the new library which is replacing an existing library. The sense of urgency is lacking so if donors were recently tapped, they may feel drained and either donate less or not at all.
- **Single Project Timelines** Small communities that focus primarily on internal fundraising resources are often unable to tackle multiple large projects all at a time. This has been the case in Cascade over the past few decades. While consistently accomplishing large-scale projects, they are implemented one at a time. Ultimately this will make it difficult to attempt new projects, as soon those that were fundraised for two decades ago will need their turn for major renovations and upgrades from the same pot of donors.



However, despite these challenges, the team was excited about the opportunities Cascade can tap into in an effort to take your fundraising and project implementation to the next level. It is time for Cascade to get fully plugged into the statewide resources available for rural communities. As a community that has seen the impact of the Community Catalyst Building Remediation Grant program and the Iowa Downtown Resource Center Downtown Assessments, now is the opportunity to build upon this and leverage additional resources to accomplish big goals.

### Statewide Resources for Rural Communities

- **Empower Rural Iowa** The Center for Rural Revitalization, housed within the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Empower Rural Iowa (ERI) initiative, implementing ERI task force recommendations, acting as a liaison to rural communities, and helping small communities access programs that support rural areas. ERI has had three primary focus areas, with a task force dedicated to each.
  - **Investing in Rural Iowa** – striving to address the rural housing shortage and develop strategies to support rural businesses and entrepreneurs.
  - **Growing Rural Iowa** – striving to address leadership, recruitment, and retention in rural communities.
  - **Connecting Rural Iowa** – striving to address broadband connectivity.

**Each of the programs listed below are managed by the Center for Rural Revitalization.**

- [Rural Housing Assessment Grant Program](#) partners with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach through their Rural Housing Readiness Assessment Facilitation Process. Grant awardees use publicly available information and rural community efforts to interpret hard data and the current development environment through analysis of existing development codes, local ordinances, and housing incentives. This assessment then leads to a report of recommended next steps and grant funding to work towards immediate implementation.
- [Rural Innovation Grant Program](#) supports big, innovative ideas that address challenges faced by rural communities associated with the themes of community investment, growth and connection and can serve as a model for other rural communities across Iowa. Successful applications have identified a solution that has never been done and will make a community-wide or regional impact.

- [Rural Scale-Up Grant Program](#) aims to support the replication and spread of creative solutions addressing current issues and challenges faced by rural communities. In 2020, the Center for Rural Revitalization, a division of the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), launched the Rural Innovation Grant program, supporting creative and unique solutions to rural challenges. Over the past annual funding cycles, grant recipients have illustrated best practices that are now primed for sharing across the state. Funding from the Scale-Up Grant program will assist other communities with the opportunity to implement these and other creative solutions.



- [Rural Enrichment Grant Program](#) aims to support small quality of life projects that will create meaningful results in rural communities. Developing quality spaces for people to want to live, work, play, and engage will support the vibrancy of Iowa's rural places. Eligible projects must be open to the public and contribute to the vitality and engagement of the community. This program would be an ideal fit for projects such as the dog park, streetscaping including wayfinding signage and recycling bins, and park development.



- [Rural Child Care Market Study Grant Program](#) seeks to support the use of data and analysis by rural communities to determine the specific needs and solutions for childcare in their area. Childcare is a challenge across rural communities in Iowa and across the nation. Many factors need to be carefully analyzed to first determine the market feasibility for development of a childcare center, expansion of an existing one or support for in-home providers. Through greater understanding of their geographic market, demographics, competition and other factors, communities can be armed with the information needed to take proactive steps towards addressing childcare challenges. Funding from the program will empower communities to assess their current childcare market environment and develop strategies. Applicants must identify the professional organization that will facilitate the market study.

- [BOOST Program](#) aims to provide teams of experts to assist passionate community and business leaders in developing intentional plans for next step growth. This pilot program is designed for rural communities, nonprofits, or employers to receive personalized technical assistance for identifying and implementing action steps to launch into the next stage of success. Rural BOOST has two tracts which target either communities or businesses. The Rural BOOST Program is designed to assist businesses or communities which have plateaued or hit an unexpected challenge to gain momentum for new growth. **Warning:** Rural BOOST is not for the faint of heart. Applicants must be committed to leading a transformation in rural Iowa if only in their own community, organization, or business. Rural BOOST, managed by the Center for Rural Revitalization, will dispatch 3-5 experts to meet with a local committee and discuss the existing conditions, assets, and anticipated needs. The Center for Rural Revitalization and supporting partners will then create an action plan and provide targeted financial support to launch next steps.

## Other Programs

- Many of the other initiatives mentioned by stakeholders could be supported by state or regional programs. For example, Enhance Iowa includes the [Community Attraction and Tourism grant program](#) which can fund projects such as local trails and baseball fields.
- Public art, theater programs, or a plein air festival could be funded in part by an [Art Project Grant](#) through the Iowa Arts Council. Larger projects such as the community rec center and library could be funded in part by the [USDA Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program](#).
- Finally, there are a few programs outside of state government that can assist in soft cost projects, such as planning, engineering, marketing, or website development. First, the Power of Connection grant through Iowa Rural Development Council (contact Executive Director Bill Menner at [director@iowardc.org](mailto:director@iowardc.org) for more information), which includes working with a SWOT team to provide feedback and connect to additional resources, and [Ripple Effect](#) which would be available through partnership with Cascade Communications.



## ACTION STEPS:

- Organizations familiarize themselves with funding opportunities.
- Leverage grant and loan funding for existing projects.
- Participate in regional funding workshops hosted by Downtown Resource Center to remain updated on program changes and additions.

## THEME 3: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

There are many leaders in Cascade, working in multiple committees and accomplishing impactful projects, but there are also signs of burn-out and transition challenges in addition to communication challenges.

There are a couple different initiatives that may help to work through the following questions:

- |  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| Who does what?                         | Is there overlap?   |
| Who has the authority?                 | Is there confusion? |
| Who is responsible for implementation? | What are the voids? |
| Are there partnership opportunities?   |                     |



- One consideration would be to have a single person to coordinate the various groups and have a common location for updates, events, etc. Appointing a “point person” for all organizations to work through will benefit the entire community through easing of communication, ensuring there are fewer overlaps, and recognizing opportunities for synergies.
- Another consideration is to intentionally work towards the development of new leaders within the community. As previously mentioned, there are many strong leaders in the community, but many stakeholder groups still indicated that it is often the same people at the table. Working to foster new leaders will ease the burden in committees, boards, and projects across the community.



- One way to accomplish this is through the development of a local leadership program. Most leadership programs include 8-15 classmates each year who meet typically once a month for 4-8 months. The design, structure, and focus are tailored to meet the needs of your community, but the outcome is to identify “up and coming leaders” who can step into these boards and committees with fresh energy feeling empowered by the leadership program process.
- Cascade may consider participation in the Iowa Leadership Exchange & Bootcamp, hosted this year in Nevada on October 26 and 27. The Leadership Exchange brings together “existing and potential” leadership program managers to discuss best practices and challenges in running a leadership program. The Exchange is open for anyone and provides an opportunity to learn about the variety of programs existing across the state.
- The Leadership Bootcamp is only available to communities who apply for a [Rural Leadership Bootcamp Grant](#) and is a half day training on the development of a leadership program. Communities that participate are required to bring a team of at least three to the Bootcamp, be partnered with a mentor for a year, as well as receive a \$1,000 grant (with a \$500 cash match) as start-up funds for the program.

### ACTION STEPS:

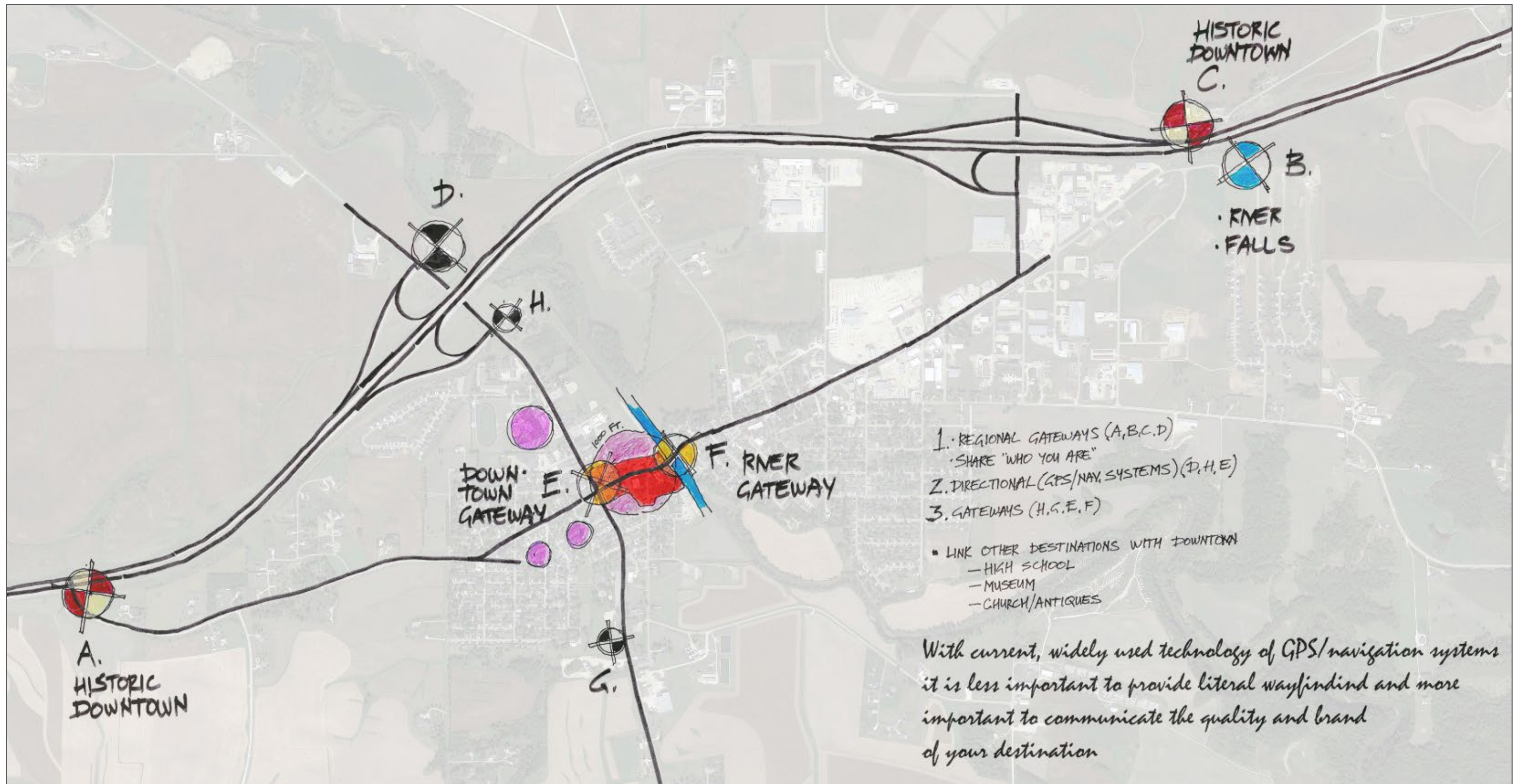
- Attend and participate in Leadership Exchange & Bootcamp.

Dennis Reynolds travels the entire State of Iowa partnering with the Iowa Economic Development Authority and the Downtown Resource Center on design related issues and solutions.

Dennis provided the following photos and renderings in response to the feedback and discussion during the community's breakouts. These images are designed to encourage the community to consider the possibilities and see the downtown through a different perspective. Cascade is unique and will require some innovative approaches to implementation.

**Note:** The design renderings have been included in this report, but you can download each rendering file to your computer for future reference by accessing the "Download Here" link located under "Resources" at the end of this report.





We want to bring attention that all roads can lead to downtown. This aerial is presented to demonstrate the importance of regional gateways, directional signage, and internal gateways. The regional gateways pull you off the 4-lane and start the journey to downtown. The directional signs need to act like constant reminders that something is ahead. Internal gateways function as you've reached your destination, downtown. The river and downtown are a natural magnet that we want you to capitalize on. Be proud of your destination.

The value of a quality first impression cannot be overstated.

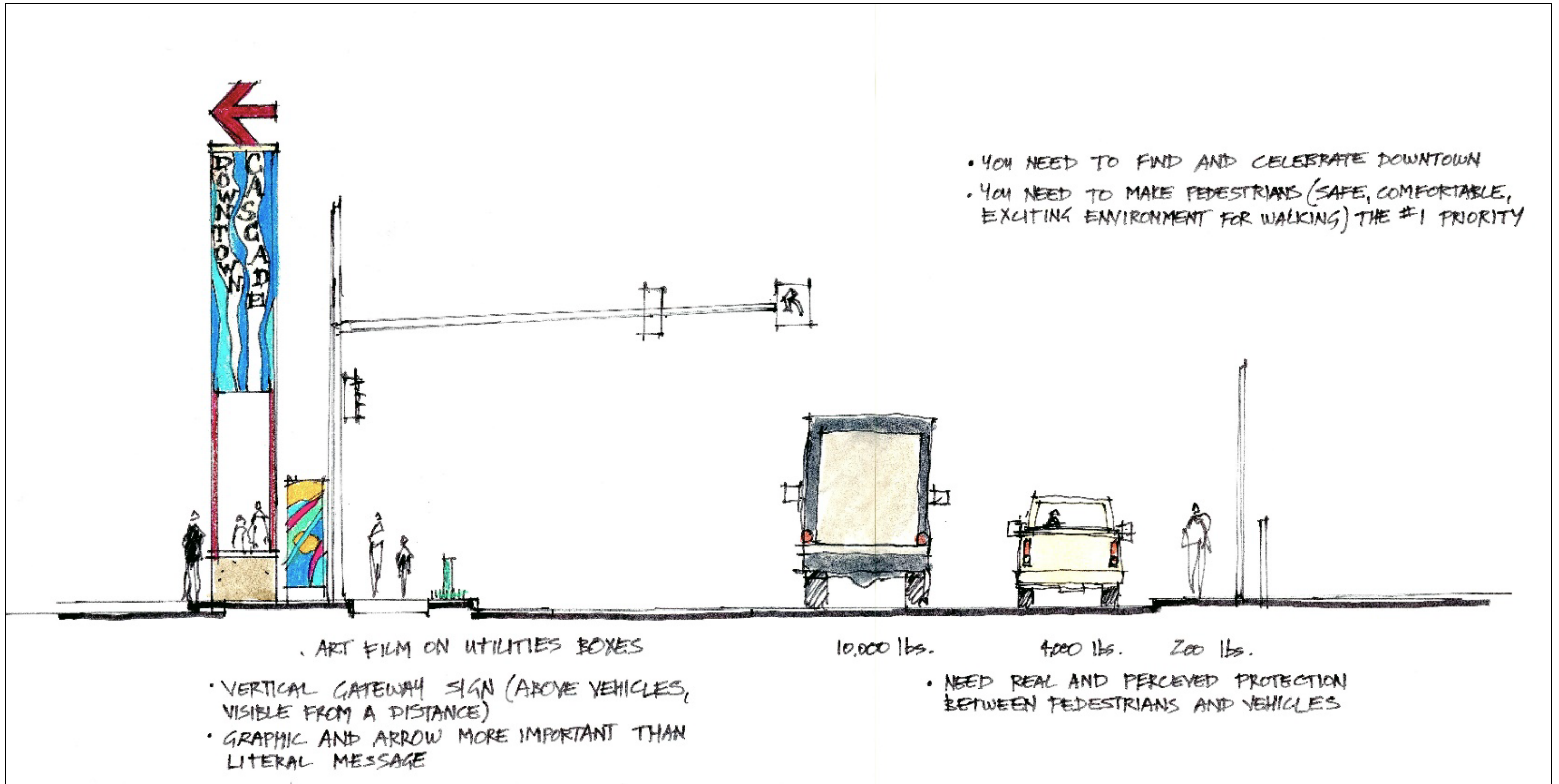
Some people seeing this sign will make their mind up that this community does not care what others think about them.

It would be better taken down.



This is a great example of what it could be. Frankly, anything is better than what is there now.





Celebrate downtown with a safe and inviting experience. Make sure pedestrians feel safe walking, shopping, and crossing the street. Art film can add a touch of color and add to the improvements. We are encouraging you to create a "You've Arrived" approach to downtown improvements.



Check out the detail on this example and address the "hot opportunities/at risk" areas in orange.

BEFORE



POSSIBLY AFTER



BEFORE



POSSIBLY AFTER



The downtown is unique with serpentine street. The mural is an excellent welcome to downtown from the 4-lane. The City Hall building is impressive and welcomes you to the downtown.



Naturally, your eye is drawn to the building facades. It's important to address them appropriately.



The view coming from the other direction is sad and needs help. The business billboard is inappropriately allowed and should be replaced with a welcome mural greeting vehicles and pedestrians.



We added this photo demonstrating the historical image of what once was in downtown. We apologize for the quality of the image.





Wonderful opportunity to rehab a building and recruit a riverfront restaurant and upper-story housing. The view of the river needs to be enhanced. The view from the apartments would be breathtaking. When the inappropriate business billboard comes down replace it with welcome signage or consider public art opportunities.

- ADD CANYON TO PROTECT APARTMENT STAIRCASE FROM WEATHER
- CONTRASTING COLORS FOR WINDOWS AND ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

- RIVERFRONT RESTAURANT (SIT DOWN ITALIAN W/ COCKTAILS?) WITH RIVER CORRIDOR VIEWS FROM ROOFTOP PATIO (WITH SOLO MUSIC PERFORMANCES ON FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS, HIGHLIGHT LOCAL MUSICIANS INCLUDING HIGH SCHOOL)
- REMOVE "DOORS" AND ADD WINDOWS ON RIVER SIDE (1<sup>ST</sup> AND 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOORS)

- MODIFY CHAINLINK FENCE ON BRIDGE TO ALLOW BETTER VIEWS OF THE RIVER
- ADD FOUR GATEWAY LIGHT FIXTURES AT EACH CORNER OF THE BRIDGE (LARGE SCALE, HISTORIC DETAILS)
- REMOVE BILLBOARD FROM EAST FACADE OF BUILDING FACING THE RIVER (OR REPLACE BILLBOARD WITH PUBLIC ART MURAL)



- BUFFER PARKING FROM 1<sup>ST</sup> AVENUE WITH SALT TOLERANT PERENNIALS/GRASSES AND SHADE TREES (ALSO A PEDESTRIAN AMENITY WITH POTENTIAL FOR A BENCH)

- OPEN FIRST FLOOR TRANSOM WINDOWS FOR NATURAL LIGHT
- MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE BUSINESSES 1 + 1 = 3 (EVENING ENTERTAINMENT)

- OPEN FIRST FLOOR WINDOWS SO PEOPLE CAN SEE ACTIVITY AND CONNECT WITH STREET AND RIVER
- ADD BRIGHT GRAPHIC SIGNAGE (BLADE SIGNS, WINDOW SIGNS...)

The Star Building needs to be addressed before it fails. When downtown buildings fail, they also hurt the buildings they're attached to. This example includes 4 upper-story apartments and commercial first floor. This building must be a top priority for the city. Continuing to allow inappropriate uses cannot continue.



**YOUTH/STUDENT INTERVIEWS:**

The Assessment team interviewed youth in Cascade and found their perspectives to be very insightful and well thought out. We included this information directly from those meeting notes below.

Please continue this dialog with youth to ensure broad-based community support during implementation.

- ROADS — CONFUSING . NOT SAFE
  - CLARIFY
  - WASTED CONCRETE
- NOT ENOUGH VALUE IN PLTGS.
- NOT PRETTY
- OLD UNDER-USED BLDGS. — GOOD BONES
  - TYPED LOCKING
- PATCHING
  - LUNA RAY
  - HAPPY JOES — GD. RENOV.
- LIMITED PKG.
- ONE-WAYS?
- DOG PARK — OLD SEWER PLANT SITE
- RIVER PARK — OLD PEOPLE MUSIC
  - PHOTO OP

- ENERGY EFFICIENCY
  - LIGHTING
  - EY CHARGING
  - ELEC. BIKES
  - RE-CYCLE BINS
- SIDEWALKS — NARROW
  - UNEVEN PAV'T
- VACANT OR UNKNOWN USES IN BLDGS.
- NEW LIBRARY NEEDS PKG.
- OLD LIB. — MAKE PKG.
  - SM. BUSINESS
  - DOESN'T FIT DOWNTOWN
- RIVER
- CAMP GROUND —
- NEED REC. PLACES
  - BOWLING
  - FITNESS (TRAINING)
  - REC. CENTER
  - WEBER CENTER — SPORT COURT
  - MINI-GOLF INDOORS
- NEED STAFF

- SKATING — ICE
  - ROLLER
- LIBRARY — CHILL ROOMS
- PET SUPPLIES/GROOMER
- ICE CREAM
- FEED STORE — HANG OUT
  - McDERMOTT'S
- + — TOGETHER /
  - COMMUNITY FUNDING PROJECTS
  - NEW POOL / SPORTS
  - HELPING EA. OTHER
  - SCHOOLS
  - FIRE DEPT. SUPPORTIVE
- DRIVE-IN THEATER SCREEN
- - A PLACE WE CALL HOME
  - WE STAY OR COME BACK
  - FAMILY/FAMILIAR
  - GROWTH / MOVING AHEAD

## THEME 5: CONNECTING CITY GOVERNMENT TO BUILDING REHABILITATION

Cascade should be extremely proud of the building improvements you have initiated and encouraged. The City of Cascade is a model for that other towns should be striving for.

Four Community Catalyst grants in 5 years is outstanding. What the assessment team found interesting is that there are so many more buildings that need work. Some can't even be occupied. Our interviews were very interesting.

Not everyone in Cascade can see the value of saving/investing in downtown buildings. The Assessment Team does not agree with opinion. The buildings just need some priority and that includes local investment to leverage additional funds from state and federal sources. We surveyed residents prior to coming to town. Perhaps the most interesting trend we heard was the fact that downtown's greatest strength was identified as downtown businesses while downtown's greatest weakness was downtown buildings.

Followed by downtown's greatest strength and greatest weakness was **appearance/cleanliness**. When asked how respondents would invest in downtown, the most common response was to improve storefronts. It appears that overall, the community values these resources, but lacks the knowledge and confidence to undertake the challenge of the rehabilitation, especially for the more significant projects.

Taking this challenge head on will not come without significant local financial investment, but the alternative is the eventual loss of buildings. Buildings that are torn down in downtowns rarely come back and the physical capacity/density of a downtown that has frequent demolition projects is weakened. The loss/demolition of buildings in a downtown destroys the very character and qualities that make it attractive – its walkable character and density. Downtowns are a place for walking and strolling. Continuous storefronts built to the sidewalk encourage people to walk from building to building, business to business. Downtown is a place to gather, do business and interact with other members of the community. It is a community's social and business hub...the heart of the town. Maintaining commerce, positive community image and a social center is very difficult with this type of decline. Downtown begins to look and feel like a place to simply drive through, not a pedestrian friendly walkable commercial neighborhood. Cascade is a destination. Now is the time to act.

Poor building maintenance seems to be paralyzing the entire downtown community and is a huge obstacle to Cascade's downtown revitalization efforts. Addressing these buildings is a challenge that will require substantial commitment and resources – of both time and money. Many communities have addressed buildings like these – some in even worse condition. Other buildings appear to be generally structurally sound but have had a number of well intentioned, but inappropriate alterations. Many suffer from deferred maintenance; others just need cosmetic improvements to greatly enhance their inherent architectural character.



**“If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got.”**

IOWA  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This situation is not unique to Cascade; however, given the state of decay of many of the Cascade buildings this is a very serious issue. Saving downtown must start with a proactive approach to save downtown buildings. Rehabilitation costs far exceed the property resale values and income potential of many of the buildings, which is very typical in downtown revitalization, especially in smaller rural areas. The key is to find ways to fill this financial gap. Volunteer efforts and contributions can help reduce some costs. In addition, rents/income are subject to market realities. Therefore, subsidies/incentives are crucial to make these projects feasible. There must be a quality return on investment for building owners, business operators, city, county, and the school district through increased property tax collection. Create a win-win-win scenario.

There are positive signs in downtown Cascade that could help turn the tide and build more positive momentum. Consider the three completed catalyst projects. These have been examples not only for Cascade but the entire State of Iowa. The challenge is not these quality buildings and businesses – it is the other downtown buildings.

A key to the future of downtown Cascade is to continue to build upon this momentum and transfer the lessons learned to more complicated (and costly) projects. If the issue is absentee building ownership, then it's time to address this issue head on. These building owners should not be allowed to harm the value of their neighbors' buildings. We recommend local ordinances to address this issue. The community has to stick together to enforce these ordinances. Success will always be achieved with a one business, one building at a time attitude. This incremental approach will always be driven by self-help and baby steps toward success. We want to help! Ask us!

The second major priority relating to this theme is **incentives**. This includes the creation of local incentives to get what you want – better building conditions and the ability to leverage additional state and federal grant dollars into Cascade. Consider creating a local grant specifically for downtown building improvements. Do an informal survey of building/business owners to determine what type of assistance is most needed and create specific parameters for eligible activities (façade improvements, signs/awnings, roofs, tuckpointing...). The program should emphasize good design and have guidelines attached. A scaled drawing or rendered photograph of the proposed changes and a written description of proposed work and materials should accompany any application. Require owner investment with a 1:1 match. If existing property owners are not willing to become part of this success, then downtown properties will need to change hands to more progressive ownership. Downtown development will only be successful when the appropriate players are at the table and there is broad-based community support. Adaptive reuse and full utilization of vacant or underperforming properties that adhere to appropriate design guidelines is essential.

The third priority under the building theme is **city ordinances**. The city has allowed inappropriate uses (storage & vacancies) for far too long. It is time for the city to get aggressive about creating ordinances that get you what you desire – fully occupied buildings that provide a quality return on investment. Enforcement of these ordinances will be critical for success.

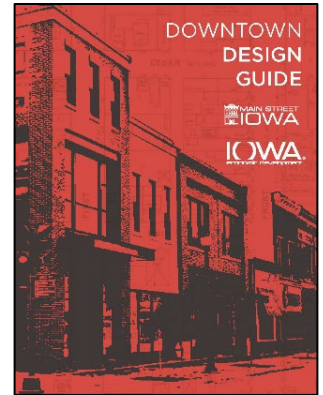
**Consider adopting three ordinances:**

1. Minimum Maintenance Ordinance
2. Vacant Building Ordinance
3. Vacant Building Registry (we've attached examples of each as a resource)

## ACTION STEPS:

- **Create a Downtown Taskforce.**
  - This taskforce should be made up of a combination of city staff & elected positions, as well as local property owners and business operators.
  - Start with a downtown walking tour. Take really good notes and be willing to discuss them. This is a great time to take off your rose-colored glasses. See Cascade for the first time in a long time.
  - Identify volunteer opportunities like a downtown cleanup or inventorying buildings and businesses.
  - Consider making community visits to identify what is working in other towns. This will create a best practice opportunity. Why re-invent the wheel? Borrow the best ideas and bring them home.
- **Inventory every building in the downtown district.**
  - A small group of the downtown taskforce needs to be tasked with inventorying every building in the district. Inventory every level and tour the spaces if possible.
  - A great place to start is with a Beacon™ Report for each address.
  - Current ownership and use should be the priority.
- **Become more familiar with historic property redevelopment and become more proactive in rehabilitating downtown properties.**
  - Visit other communities that have made an impact with building rehabilitation initiatives in their downtowns. Talk to them about their challenges, designs of the buildings, financing, etc. The Iowa Downtown Resource Center can help you identify communities that have had success. Examples would include Jefferson and Washington, Iowa. These communities have done amazing things with downtown buildings that many residents would have considered ready for the wrecking ball.
  - Determine a rehabilitation cost/budget for each property; be sure it with the help of experienced developers and contractors familiar with these types of projects.
  - Assess local market conditions. How much demand is there for quality rentals? What is the maximum residential rental for Cascade? What is the median market rent? What are reasonable commercial rents for Cascade?
  - Assess the financial “gap” between the reasonable income potential of these properties and the rehabilitation costs. There will be a financial gap. If the market were strong enough to support the rehabilitation costs – an investor(s) would have already completed the project.
  - Investigate programs that can help fill the inevitable financial gap. There are financial incentives available for rehabilitation of historic buildings. These include state and federal historic tax credits. Housing assistance programs in the form of grants, loans and tax credits are also available. This a great place to consider applying for additional Community Catalyst Building Remediation grants.
- **Determine a reasonable level of annual participation from the City to support buildings in the entire downtown district.** These projects will never occur without some significant sort of financial assistance from the City of Cascade. If the buildings are not rehabilitated, the City will be faced with demolition cost. What will this cost? Wouldn't it be more productive to reinvest that money back into the buildings themselves in order to keep them on the tax rolls and to provide much needed housing and business opportunities for the community?
  - Create a substantial annual financial assistance program. Direct matching grants are the most desirable and successful assistance. A dollar-for-dollar match is typical. Individual grant awards of \$5,000 - \$25,000 are also necessary. Based on community need, this should be the target for Cascade.

- Develop standards/requirements regarding the use of the financial assistance tools. These tools should be used to incentivize appropriate rehabilitation – not just any rehabilitation. Property owners should expect to adhere to certain guidelines and rules in order to access any financial incentive. Download the Downtown Design Guide developed by the Iowa Downtown Resource Center available at [design recommendations](#). If you agree with them, you could adopt them and include them in your local scoring. The incentives should help “raise the bar” for improving the aesthetic and functional appeal of downtown. Incentivize the kinds of projects you want.



- **Develop an investment group** to acquire, rehabilitate and operate downtown properties in Cascade. There is strength in numbers. Local investment groups not only get things done but they also share the risk. This is a common strategy across the country to address downtown property development.

- Create a list of potential local investors. The list should include businesspeople, key community leaders and other successful businesspeople in and around Cascade.
- Consider approaching Cascade alumni who have become successful in other areas of the nation to reinvest in their hometown. Solicit former residents to be benefactors in local revitalization and community development projects.



- **Lead Downtown Taskforce Volunteer Identified.** Create a key volunteer opportunity with the responsibility of being the lead on Community/Economic Development.
  - This person should answer directly to the City Administrator and work cooperatively to facilitate development downtown. Create a dialog with building owners to address building needs and suggested local incentive development. Building owners need someone they can trust. This staff person should not be lead on industrial/manufacturing, that responsibility should be added to the City Administrator role.
  - Schedule regular City sponsored downtown walking tours to identify priorities (building improvements, building maintenance, and clean & safe). This is also a tool to identify volunteer opportunities.
- **Partnerships Incentives (Carrots)** Investigate the creation of local incentives. Which ones are right for Cascade?
  - **Tax Increment Financing (TIF)** is a method to incite business to locate or expand operations in an area by directing the tax revenues generated within the TIF district for investment in the district. City councils or boards of supervisors may use the property taxes resulting from the increase in taxable valuation caused by the construction or substantial rehabilitation of commercial facilities to provide economic development incentives within the district.
  - **Urban Revitalization Area Plan** The Urban Revitalization Act, Chapter 404 of the Code of Iowa, is intended to encourage development, redevelopment, and revitalization within a designated area of a city by authorizing property tax development incentives to the private sector. Qualified real estate within a designated area may be eligible to receive a total or partial exemption from property taxes on improvements for a specified number of years, with the goal of providing communities with a

long-term increase or stabilization in the local tax base by encouraging new construction which might not otherwise occur.

- Use the tools identified above to create local façade improvement grants or additional access to capital like revolving loan funds or loan guarantee programs.
  - Consider providing in-kind support in the form of forgiving building permits if you receive a local incentive. Identify other in-kind forms of support to encourage and entice additional development downtown.
- **Leverage local incentives to maximize state and federal programs.**
    - [CDBG Downtown Revitalization Projects](#)
    - [CDBG Community Facilities & Services](#)
    - [Community Catalyst Building Remediation Program](#)
    - [Nuisance Property and Abandoned Building Remediation Loan Program](#)
    - [CDBG Housing Rehabilitation Fund](#)
    - [CDBG Upper Story Housing Conversion Program](#)
    - [Workforce Housing Tax Credits](#)
    - [Brownfield/Grayfield Tax Credit Program](#)
    - [Historic Tax Credits](#)
    - [State Tax Credit](#)
    - [Federal Tax Credit](#)
    - [Property Tax Exemption](#)
    - <https://iowaculture.gov/history/preservation/tax-incentives/property-tax-exemption>
    - [ADA Federal Tax Credit](#)
  - **Investigate options for additional downtown technical assistance for building rehabilitation and property development. Iowa State University’s School of Design is one option.**
    - Conduct a building-by-building needs assessment for not only visual improvements, but also for structural needs and code compliance issues.
    - Tailor local incentives to address the most pressing needs identified from the assessment. Basic structural repairs including repointing, roofs, and general stabilization, while not visually impressive can be critical to extending the life and function of the structures.
    - Assist property owners to implement rehabilitation projects. Assistance can include:
      - Securing additional architectural/engineering services
      - Helping locate contractors/suppliers
      - Assisting with grant funding (both direct funding and applying for and managing grant applications and requirements)
      - Full utilization of the Downtown Design Guide
  - **Recognize and celebrate your successes when a project is completed.** Consider having a ribbon cutting. Present the owner with a framed “before and after” photo of the project. It can be amazing how soon we all forget how far we’ve come. Even a “certificate of accomplishment” suitable for framing can be a



very positive public relations activity that can help change attitudes towards the condition of downtown and help create additional interest and investment in the local community.

- **Partnerships Ordinances (Sticks)** Investigate options for new ordinances.

- **Minimum Maintenance Ordinance.** This ordinance requirement is intended to preserve the structural integrity of the building and property values while assuring a clean and attractive community.

- **Vacant Building Ordinance.** This ordinance addresses current or future vacant commercial and industrial buildings which are dilapidated, unsafe, or inadequately maintained creating or contributing to blight. The city seeks to assure the property maintenance of vacant buildings for the purpose of preserving and promoting public health and safety and preventing public and private nuisances and potential fire hazards.

- **Vacant Building Registry.** Owners have 30 days from the date the building becomes vacant to file this form. The cost to register is free for the initial filing and the first 6-month period. If after the six-month period the building continues to remain vacant, an inspection of the building is made, and a fee charged. Each subsequent one-year period of vacancy will trigger a re-inspection and fee. Owner is responsible for all exterior and interior as well as lot maintenance. Failure to properly maintain the vacant building could result in increased renewal fees.



Every successful, destination driven downtown includes a robust and vibrant upper story living component. As more people are on the sidewalks, more opportunity for additional business downtown exists. Downtown housing is not the solution to Cascade’s housing issues, but it is part of the solution. The appropriate selection and inventory mix is critical to addressing this issue. Getting a quality return on investment is critical for existing property owners. Cascade has too many current downtown properties where housing isn’t even an option. Inappropriate building treatments that close off the second story windows eliminate a revenue producing option of housing. Natural light and life safety are critical components to building improvements that provide effective housing options downtown. Buildings that do not maximize every buildable square foot miss out on the added revenue that a building needs to cover regular repair and maintenance issues. Downtown residential use is an important component in downtown revitalization. Living downtown is continuing to rise in popularity across the country (and in Iowa). Many communities have seen the need for housing and initiated renovation projects in which apartment units are rented before the project is even completed. These spaces can offer affordable housing and produce numerous benefits. They increase the town’s tax base; property owners improve the cash flow of their building and property values increase. Having residents in the downtown creates a built-in market for downtown businesses. It creates affordable housing. Downtown housing appeals to young professionals just moving to town, and to the empty nester looking to ditch the yard and live closer to an active downtown. Cascade has the potential to add several quality units.

Iowa's split-classification of downtown properties greatly favor upper story housing and makes remodeling upper story units a sound investment for property owners. The best prospects for new downtown housing might be directed toward the development of units that are quite different from the current inventory of housing options available in the broader community. Cascade should take advantage of the unique dimensions, layouts, and materials found in the upper levels of downtown commercial buildings to create distinguishable and even funky living spaces. Renovated units should build on the opportunities provided by the architecturally and historically interesting spaces of downtown buildings.

#### **ACTION STEPS:**

- Create a housing taskforce. Apply for a Rural Housing Needs Assessment through IEDA Empower Rural Iowa. This should include a community partnership. All local and regional players should become part of the solution.
- Inventory available upper story housing, rental rates, and potential new units. Research funding sources for downtown housing projects. Assess local market conditions. How much demand is there for quality rentals? What is the largest residential rental for Cascade? What is the median market rent? What are reasonable commercial rents for Cascade?
- Take field trips. Visit communities that have had success with upper story housing projects. Good examples can be found in Mason City, Spencer, Marshalltown, and Iowa Falls. Talk to them about their challenges, the designs of the buildings, financing, etc.
- Consider local incentives for downtown property owners to renovate upper floors into residential space. (work with the downtown taskforce)
- Consider all options for upper story improvements: monthly rentals as well as Airbnb for nightly or extended stays.
- Invite experienced developers to Cascade. Have them demonstrate how they made their projects cashflow.
- Consider evaluating existing city codes to allow additional housing options, where appropriate in downtown. (work with housing taskforce)
- Make sure you do not allow housing on the store-front side of first floor downtown buildings.
- Encourage additional owner-occupied units like the quality example you have above the catalyst project.

## CLOSING:

Unfortunately, as the Downtown Assessment Team met with various focus groups, including the youth of the community, we heard that downtown is: “dirty, dull, bland, lifeless, lacks shade, and you walk it and you’re done with nothing to see.” Fortunately, our team sees many opportunities to build upon the compact, walkable nature of downtown Cascade to make it the vibrant, thriving, and fun downtown the community desires.

As you plan to make downtown more vibrant, cool, and fun; think about creating places with 10 or more things to do in one place such as simply sitting to conducting business to dining. By creating many of those small places with 10 things or more to do, you will be creating a destination. There are many enhancements to downtown, many of them small and quick action items, which can make a big impact.

Members of the Downtown Assessment are available to discuss and help plan and implement the action steps on the following page.

Downtown Cascade has been “assessed” before. But this team feels like THIS is Cascade’s time. The community has seen recent improvements and new businesses and many people are interested in making a difference in the downtown. The Iowa Downtown Resource Center looks forward to a continued relationship with Cascade and we offer our future help to make sure implementation is on track.

We hope this will be a working document for years to come. We encourage you to gather the community together soon to review the recommendations in this report and chart a course forward with the most popular ideas from this report and form implementation teams. One of the best ways to build on the citizen interest and excitement expressed during the Downtown Assessment is to identify “quick win” projects that show what is possible when the community comes together to revitalize downtown.

## PRIORITIES:

The Assessment team encourages Cascade to prioritize projects listed in this report, as well as other opportunities we feel are of importance.

Theme #	Immediate Priorities: (0-6 months)
1	Create an inventory of volunteers
1	Create an inventory of volunteer groups and organizations
1	Create an inventory of special events (include retail events)
2	Explore funding opportunities
2	Participate in regional funding opportunities hosted by IEDA, Iowa Downtown Resource Center, and Empower Rural Iowa
3	Attend and participate in the Empower Rural Iowa Leadership Exchange and Bootcamp
5	Create a key volunteer or staff person to lead the charge
5	Create a Downtown Taskforce to assist the key person
5	Inventory every building and business
5	Create local incentives
5	Consider local ordinances to recommend to the city
5	Consider creating a housing taskforce and applying for a Rural Housing Needs Assessment
5	Take field trips to similar Iowa towns
Theme #	One Year Priorities (0-12 months)
1	Identify lead organization to manage and market all events and opportunities
2	Leverage grant and loan funding from Empower Rural Iowa
5	Become familiar with Historic Preservation Redevelopment
5	Consider adopting the Downtown Design Guide and creating a partnership with local incentives
5	Inventory upper story space including square footage, use, rental rates, potential housing units
5	Get 2-5 businesses signed up for ShopIowa.com
Theme#	Longer Term Projects: (0-24 months)
5	Create local financial assistance program for smaller rehabs (tied to design guidelines)
5	Investigate development of investment group for acquisition and building rehabs
5	Approach Cascade alumni to reinvest in their hometown
5	Develop list of incentives and investigate merits of each for Cascade (including CDBG Downtown Revitalization façade program)
5	Investigate ordinances when incentives fall short (for example, minimum maintenance ordinance)
5	Invite experienced developers to Cascade. Learn from them.

## CONTACTS:

Iowa Downtown Resource Center, IEDA, Des Moines, Iowa.....	515.348.6180
..... <a href="http://www.iowaeda.com">Downtown Resource Center   Iowa Economic Development Authority (iowaeda.com)</a>	
Keep Iowa Beautiful .....	515.323.6507
..... <a href="https://www.KeepIowaBeautiful.com">https://www.KeepIowaBeautiful.com</a>	
ISU Iowa Community Indicators Program Retail Analysis .....	<a href="http://www.icip.iastate.edu/retail">http://www.icip.iastate.edu/retail</a>
Certified Local Governments, State Historic Society of Iowa .....	515.281.6826
CDBG Downtown Revitalization Program.....	515.348.6208
..... <a href="https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/DowntownFund">https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/DowntownFund</a>	

## National and State Preservation Services and Programs:

National Trust for Historic Preservation .....	<a href="http://www.preservationnation.org">www.preservationnation.org</a>
Main Street America (Main Street America Network Membership).....	<a href="https://www.mainstreet.org">https://www.mainstreet.org</a>
National Park Service Preservation Briefs .....	<a href="https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm">https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm</a>
State Historic Preservation Office.....	<a href="http://www.iowahistory.org">www.iowahistory.org</a>

## RESOURCES: Available for download (until March 29, 2024) [here](#).

- A Checklist for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings
- Awning Examples
- Awnings
- Getting Your Business Ready to Sell -Business Succession Planning
- [Better Block](#)
- Business Transition Checklist
- Business Visitation Form
- Color Schemes
- Creative Placemaking & the Arts Resource Guide
- Creative Placemaking Manual
- Design Guidelines
- Design Renderings
- Main Street Sign Guide
- Cascade Pre-Visit Survey Summary
- Preservation Brief: Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings
- Preservation Brief: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts
- Preservation Brief: Use of Awnings
- Project for Public Spaces
- Restoring Historic Commercial Buildings
- Sample Building Inventory Form
- Signs & Awnings for Downtown
- Wayfinding/Parking Examples
- Window Displays
- Woodbine Business Plan Competition