

CARROLL, IOWA

November 28-30, 2023



Conducted By:

Iowa Downtown Resource Center



IOWA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
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The following report summarizes the observations and recommendations resulting from an Iowa Downtown Resource Center Assessment conducted in Carroll, Iowa. In preparation of this report, the Assessment Team learned about Carroll's downtown history, recent planning efforts, economic development and quality of life initiatives. 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 90 community leaders, individuals and groups representing the public and private sectors. Based upon these activities and the Assessment Team's extensive working knowledge in downtown economic development, this report summarizes their findings and recommendations for Carroll.

OVERVIEW

This Downtown Assessment report and recommendations for Carroll 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 to get somewhere else.

**"Never doubt that a small group of committed
dependable citizens can change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
-Margaret Mead**

ASSESSMENT TEAM

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

JIM ENGLE, Director, Iowa Downtown Resource Center, Iowa Economic Development Authority, Des Moines, Iowa. Jim has been with IEDA since January 2014. As director of the Iowa Downtown Resource Center, he oversees all downtown development programs of the authority. His current responsibilities include managing a million-dollar annual budget, overseeing the planning and delivery of technical assistance services, and developing training opportunities for all Iowa communities. Jim's areas of expertise are in organizational development, promotion, business development and working with smaller communities with populations ranging from 400 to 80,000. Prior to joining the IEDA, Jim served as Coordinator of the Wisconsin Main Street Program for 23 years. He also served as the Main Street Executive Director in Oskaloosa, Iowa. He holds a degree in Business Management from Central College in Pella, Iowa. Over the years, Jim has consulted for Main Street programs in Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Washington, Tennessee, and Michigan. He has also presented at many national downtown conferences.



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 Manager 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.



JEFF GEERTS, EcoDistricts AP, NCI CS & CM, Special Projects Manager, Iowa Economic Development Authority, Des Moines, Iowa. Working for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for 15 years and the Iowa Economic Development Authority for the last 13+ years, Jeff has more than 25 years of grant writing, grant management, and program development experience with an emphasis on environmentally sustainable development. Jeff's expertise is matching up a community's vision with the resources to make the vision a reality. Jeff is actively involved with several nonprofit organizations and currently is a board member of Des Moines Heritage Trust. For 20+ years Jeff has programmed an award-winning international comparative policy course in best practices for community leaders and graduate public administration students in the Drake University College of Business and Public Administration. Along with being an EcoDistricts Accredited Professional and certified in the National Charrette Institute's Charrette System and Charrette Management, Jeff has a Bachelor of Science degree in management science and statistics from St. Ambrose University and master's degree in public administration from Drake University.



ERIN CHAMBERS, AICP, is an energetic leader with nearly 20 years of experience working in the urban planning and community development field. She is passionate about impacting the quality of life within communities through service, citizen engagement, policy guidance, and urban form/design. Erin has worked for the City of Newton, Iowa since 2006, first as the City Planner, then as the Director of Planning and Zoning, and most recently as the Community Development Director. As Community Development Director, Erin oversees the functions of



Building Permitting/Inspections, Planning and Zoning, Economic Development, Community Marketing, Airport, and Parks and Recreation. In her years with the City of Newton, Erin has served as part of the team of community leaders and citizens working on Newton’s economic recovery and reinvention in a post-Maytag era. Some highlights of projects that she has been a part of include: working with volunteers and elected officials to establish the first Newton Historic Preservation Commission and growing the local ethic for preservation, developing the current comprehensive plan, leading the establishment of Downtown Design Guidelines and a

Downtown Streetscape Master Plan, participating in the creation of a new community brand and logo, directing neighborhood revitalization through the local Dangerous & Dilapidated Program, and serving as a primary author for various program and grant applications which have brought approximately \$20 million to the community. Previously, Erin served as a planner for the Town of Groton, Connecticut.

SAM KESSEL PLA, LEED AP – Principal-in-Charge – As a principal landscape architect, Sam uses his broad



knowledge and extensive design understanding to find solutions for complex projects that blend function and aesthetics. Sam began his landscape architecture career in 2005 and has proven himself at every turn, excelling on multidisciplinary teams as both a designer and project manager. His experience includes sustainable urban design, multimodal design, public art incorporation, site development, and construction observation/administration. Sam’s passion for landscape architecture is exemplified through building strong relationships with clients and engaging with city staff and the public during the design process.

PURPOSE

The City of Carroll and Carroll Chamber of Commerce 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.

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

INTRODUCTION

Carroll, Iowa is a community of 10,300+ residents and is the county seat of Carroll County, Iowa. Carroll serves as a regional hub for commerce and employment in west central Iowa. The community hosts many large corporations, has a regional hospital, and two high-quality school districts. Carroll is the proud home of the Carroll Merchants baseball team and the class 1A and 2A high school state baseball tournament. The community has a multitude of wonderful parks and recreational facilities and an extensive recreational trail network.

Members of the Downtown Assessment Team believe the identification of strengths and challenges in this report should be taken constructively and utilized by local leaders to do many good things in the Downtown. We hope the following observations and recommendations will help identify priorities and be a motivator for positive Downtown and community projects.

ASSETS/STRENGTHS

COMMUNITY



- Parks
- Merchants Park
- Regional Hub for Retail, Healthcare, and Recreation
- Two High-Quality School Districts
- Strong Industrial Base
- Trail System
- Well Maintained Neighborhoods

DOWNTOWN



- Strong Businesses
- Cluster of 60+ Businesses Downtown
- Downtown is Very Walkable
- Carroll 5 Theater
- Depot and Adjacent Greenspace
- Quality downtown public improvements

THE SURVEY SAYS....

The City and Chamber of Commerce administered an on-line survey to residents of Carroll to get their ideas and opinions about the downtown area. A total of 560 people participated in the survey. A complete summary of survey responses is available for download later in the report. (see resources section)

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

WHAT ARE DOWNTOWN'S GREATEST STRENGTHS?

- Appearance/Cleanliness
- Location
- Downtown Buildings
- Downtown Businesses
- Promotional Events



*Carroll Live + Local
Carroll Chamber of Commerce*

WHAT ARE DOWNTOWN'S GREATEST WEAKNESSES?

- Lack of Downtown Businesses
- Not Enough to Do
- Other (parking, mix of businesses, and lack of mature women's clothing were top answers)
- Downtown Buildings

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST \$100,000 IN DOWNTOWN?

- Specific Business Requests
 - Department Stores/JCPenney®/Christopher and Banks/Clothing Stores
 - Restaurant/Chick-Fil-A®/Steakhouse/Cafes/Outdoor Dining
- New Business Attraction/Fill Storefronts/Retail
- Business Incentives/Rent Incentives
- Entertainment for Kids and Families
 - Entertainment Center: Bowling, Golf, Pickle Ball, Batting Cage, Arcade, Roller Skating, etc.
- Renovate and Fill the Old JCPenney® Building
- Renovate Buildings
- More Greenspace/Park/Outdoor Commons Area/Event Spaces
- Add/Better Parking



WHAT NEW BUSINESS IS MOST NEEDED DOWNTOWN?

- Clothing
- Department Store/Kohls®/JCPenney®/Marshalls®/Target®/TJ Maxx®
- Restaurant
- Bakery/Coffee
- Family & Teen Activities/Entertainment
- Sporting Goods



WHAT NEW ACTIVITY WOULD CAUSE YOU TO SPEND MORE TIME DOWNTOWN?



- Adult and Teen Activity Center/Fun Center/Activity Center
- More Community Events
- Dining/Outside Dining
- Shopping
- Concerts/Live Music/Summer/Music Venue/Bandshell
- Kids Activities
- Bar/Sports Bar/Rooftop Bars

WHAT PUBLIC AMENITIES ARE MOST NEEDED DOWNTOWN?



- Places for Kids
- Parking
- Greenspace
- Public Art

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Business Image/Identification
2. Activities/Events/Experience
3. Local Capacity
4. Buildings
5. JCPenney® Building

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 Carroll will assess each recommendation and develop a plan to implement what is right for Carroll. 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.

THEME 1 BUSINESS IMAGE/IDENTIFICATION

Downtown Carroll has an impressive amount of retail and an extensive mix of more than 60 businesses in a compact, walkable downtown. The number of businesses and amount of retail in downtown Carroll would be the envy of many similar size communities serving as regional hubs for commerce as Carroll does. Surprisingly, one of the biggest issues that residents have with downtown Carroll (as exhibited in the survey) is a lack of downtown businesses. What can the problem be?

- Residents remember the good old days when downtown had even more retail businesses. Obsolete store signs from businesses that have closed (like JCPenney®) is a constant reminder of this. That is all they can focus on.
- Perhaps residents have not been downtown lately.
- Businesses don't always present an identity from the street. Can residents understand what is inside simply by looking at a sign? Also, the mall on both sides of Adams Street does create visibility issues for businesses that do not have a street presence.



Every small town faces the challenge of communicating what it has to offer to residents and visitors and many times, we focus on what is missing rather than the assets that currently exist. A unified and multi-faceted marketing effort needs to be created to “tell the story” of Carroll in a positive way. Carroll needs a combination of old school and new ways to get the word out. This almost certainly will have to be done with the help of a hired professional and talented volunteer help such as that of a social media marketing class. Working together begins with strengthening the lines of communication between the City, the business community and the residents of Carroll.

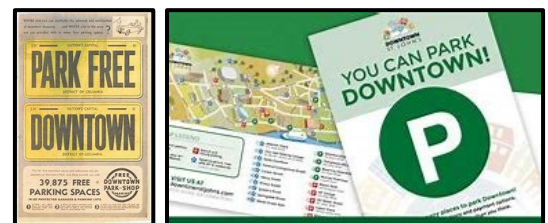
Cooperative marketing and shared events are also a big part of any downtown plan. Businesses working together will boost attendance, enhance shopping experiences and encourage increased spending. Individual businesses do a good job of marketing themselves, but much can be gained by efforts to promote the collection, variety and clusters of businesses. Consider these ideas and which forms of media can be best used to get the word out.

60+ businesses to promote!!!!

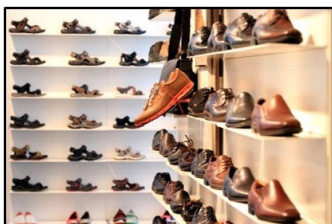
Ski's	Promesign Image	A Fun Top + Jeans
Wilke Clothier	Artworks Studio	Meraki Salon
Just Around the Corner	Anderson Shoes	Whyle Eye Care
Carroll 5	True Value	Kathy's Headquarters
Western Iowa Sleep	Jeanine's Hallmark	Crossroads Nutrition
K + Co Artistry	Jena Bug	Next Generation Chiropractic
True Wealth	Full Swing	Daryl's Hair Stylist
S + S Spa	Books & Bakery	Basic Fitness Studio
Integrity PT	Eckerman Jewlery	Office Store
Learning Connection	Affinity Salon	The Flower Garden
Studio 521 Fitness	Hair Force	Mike's Shoes
Feldman & Company CPA	Principal Financial	Releve Bar + Yoga
Brothers on Main	Deep Roots Salon	Edward Jones
Toploft	Alchemy Salon	Star Destinations
Buckle	Jeanine's Beauty Shop	JGM - Attorney/Mediator
Hair Biz	Sporrer's Barbershop	A Touch of Country
Brown's	Cloud 9 Spa	Children's Museum
Pretty Nails	3 Souls Company	The Grooming Company
Jachelle's	Vita Suite	Hair Market Salon
Bordenaro's	Aveda	
Glick's	Merle Norman	

ACTION STEPS

- The local newspaper and radio station used to highlight/promote individual Carroll businesses. Bring that idea back. Do ads and videos highlighting the store/businesses, their products, their people, etc.
- 60+ downtown businesses. **60!** Make a big deal out of that. Use that number repeatedly in downtown image ads.
- Likewise, downtown Carroll has over 420 free, downtown parking spaces. The survey also identified a misconception that there is no place to park downtown. Develop image ads perhaps with simple maps that show that wealth of downtown parking.
- Downtown fun facts. Trivia. Historical information about the buildings or businesses. Develop a small radio segment, newspaper feature or social media posts that share interesting information about downtown Carroll that gets everyone excited about it.



- Thirty things to do in downtown Carroll! Make a list and promote, promote, promote. Maybe, it's even 50!
- Develop ads that focus on the breadth of goods and services that can be found in downtown Carroll. People really don't know. Perhaps this is a series of A to Z ads featuring everything you can get that begin with those letters. "Downtown Carroll....has Everything from A to Z.....Apple pie, Banking services, Candy, Denim jeans, etc."



- Promote business clusters. Downtown Carroll has a number of complementary business clusters for example businesses that serve women (clothing, salons, accessories), several downtown shoe stores (we never see this!), etc. This is a great opportunity to market these clusters and complementary businesses together. The shoe selection is a great way to start.

- Develop an on-line business directory that shows the number of businesses downtown. This will surprise local residents.

- Develop a simple but attractive holiday catalog featuring 1-3 items that can be purchased in downtown businesses. Great photography is a must.



- [Shop Iowa](#) is an initiative of the [Iowa Economic Development Authority](#), with the support of the [Iowa Small Business Development Center](#), enabling small retailers to have a shop on the platform for **FREE**. Few Carroll businesses take advantage of this opportunity. Get familiar with the website and get involved. Although it will take some businesses out of their comfort zones, with things like photographing their products and shipping, this is a good way for businesses unfamiliar with on-line selling to get started. Familiarize your team with this and promote it to Carroll businesses. We would love to see 5-10 new businesses using the Shop Iowa platform in the next few months.



- Develop and implement five new cross-promotion ideas in which downtown businesses could collaborate. Perhaps this is just a walkable collection of three or four businesses that sell similar complementary products.



Here are a few other suggestions you may consider:

- Display other business' brochures, posters or other marketing materials. Attractions can cross promote with businesses to keep people in the downtown for longer periods of time. Set up a display at your cash register or hang posters around your store that show your partner's complementary products. Your partner should do the same for you.
- Start a referral program. Give a discount to customers who refer business to your partner from your store and vice versa.
- Make friends on social media. Cross promotion on social media is all about shared audiences and interests. Share ideas like tagging each other in posts or sharing the cost of an ad featuring both brands.

Improving the familiarity of downtown businesses can also be accomplished with physical improvements:

- Make sure downtown windows are full of quality displays and are lit at night. Most Carroll businesses do a good job with this, but not all. Perhaps business owners (that are particularly good at this) can offer some assistance to their neighbors that don't have this skill .
- Consider a kiosk reflecting the variety of businesses and parking available downtown. The limitation of a structure like this is that it can be quickly outdated.



- Take obsolete store signs down immediately. They only remind people what you no longer have.
- Store hours were frequently mentioned by residents as a downtown weakness. Businesses must be open when customers can shop. The 9-5 standard set 100 years ago – no longer works. Businesses must also be consistent with their hours of operation.
 - Work together as businesses. All stores are different but at the very least, set agreed upon minimum hours for the downtown. Secure testimonials from businesses that make money during extended hours of operation. Success will not occur overnight, but consistency in this area will benefit both downtown businesses and residents alike.
 - Many downtown businesses do not post their hours. Develop a window card or sign that downtown businesses can use to promote their store hours.
- Develop signage that clearly identifies parking spaces/lots.



Downtown Carroll has a good business mix. The Assessment team was surprised by the ambience, quality of products, merchandising and variety of things we saw in businesses once inside. Would we have gone into those businesses if we were not assessing the downtown? Maybe not. Many businesses do not look as good from the street as they do inside. Businesses need to tell their stories from the sidewalk. *Jenabug's sign to the right clearly identifies what this business sells.*



What is the name of your business? What do you sell? Does your sign help communicate what type of business it is, the products/services offered? Does one think "quality" when they see your storefront? This assessment team believes that many of downtown Carroll's business strengths are hidden.

- Offer a signage workshop for downtown businesses focusing on the 10 important features of a business sign). Walk the downtown with those businesses. Conduct a sign audit. Talk about the elements of good signage and how businesses can benefit by improving their existing signage.
- On this walk, consider the transparency of the businesses. Do current windows and displays help to tell the story of the business? Can shoppers see inside? In store activity should be visible. Perhaps this is an easy fix or a storefront rehab that creates more transparency. Are the façades welcoming to pedestrians?



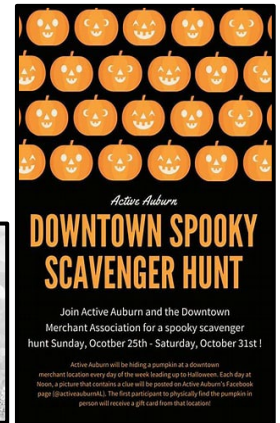
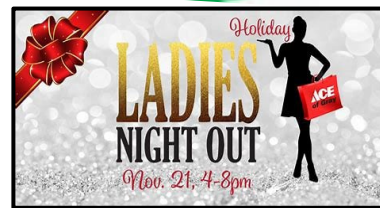
- Consider colorful open signs/flags or sandwich board signs.
- Spill merchandise out onto the sidewalk when appropriate. Take advantage of sidewalk seating.

Another way to make locals and visitors more familiar with your business mix is to engage in event-based store familiarity. Develop promotions designed specifically to get people inside the businesses (perhaps for the first time). Jingle & Mingle was

mentioned as perhaps Carroll’s most effective downtown event! Set a goal of adding two new business familiarity events in the next year.

Examples:

- Scavenger Hunts (perhaps tied to local history)
- Store Drawings (must be in attendance to win)
- Cluster Based Events such as Ladies Night Out. Most downtowns don’t have the variety of stores to pull this off – Carroll does!
- Cash Mob: Get 40 willing consumers to agree to spend at least \$20 in one business over a two-to-three-hour period on a specific date and time. Choose the business out of a hat. Be sure to let the business know it is happening! Afterward, have fun. Meet for drinks and set up the next event. Do this 3-4 times a year.



This Assessment Team believes that downtown Carroll has a very good business mix, but it can be strengthened. Perhaps downtown Carroll’s greatest business mix weakness is the lack of businesses that people come specifically for. These types of businesses tend to be food based.....restaurant, coffee, bakery and ice cream. All of these are present in the community but not downtown. These types of businesses generate foot traffic for other businesses.

- Develop a wish list of businesses that you would like to see in your downtown’s vacant spaces. Consider pop ups to test the market. Determine whose role it is to follow up on potential new business leads.
- Inventory all of your downtown buildings – most certainly your vacancies. Collect all of the information you need such as ownership, square footage, building conditions, past uses, etc. Develop specialized marketing pieces for vacant spaces. Be ready to show these spaces off. Once ready, keep them clean.
- Develop attractive business opportunity signs that identify the space and promote the type of businesses that would make a great tenant for the building and the downtown.
- Create specific events for the business types you are seeking to recruit. If done well, a food truck fair is an example of an event that could generate interest from start-up or expanding restaurants. Be strategic and target mobile food vendors that also have brick and mortar locations.
- Work with property owners on incentives such as temporary rent rebates for specific business types.



THEME 2 ACTIVITIES/EVENTS/EXPERIENCE

By enhancing its existing downtown activities and events and improving the overall downtown experience, Carroll can build on its destination downtown and well-deserved reputation as a regional hub. Some current annual downtown events are treasured by the community and present leverage opportunities for greater community impact. A strong foundation of quality, public space improvements in Downtown Carroll also supports event opportunities. Carroll’s combination of a robust retail destination and walkable Downtown provide a good foundation to build a memorable visitor experience.

During the Downtown Assessment Team’s research and visit some local participants expressed concerns about parking and walking distances downtown. Downtown Carroll is quite walkable and has ample parking.

To help you visualize how walkable the distances are in Downtown Carroll, here is an overlay of Jordan Creek Mall in West Des Moines on top of Downtown Carroll.

What makes visiting downtown Carroll memorable? What would make it more memorable? Think of the places you have visited that you remember most and long to visit again. What makes those places memorable?

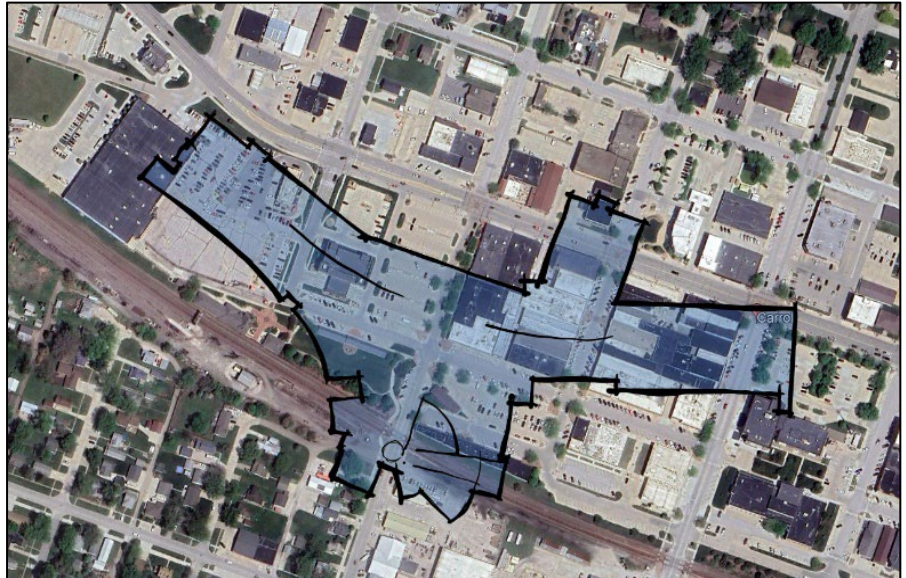
There are steps that can be taken to create a more warm, comfortable, and inviting environment in Downtown Carroll that will encourage visitors to stroll, linger, and shop longer—all creating an opportunity for fond memories and a desire to visit Downtown Carroll again and again.

Downtown Carroll has wonderful pedestrian scale streetlighting, well done intersections and mid-block foundational plantings and benches. Many planters exist throughout Downtown. The Lincoln Highway markers along Highway 30 are well done. The historical building information on each building is some of the most comprehensive we’ve seen anywhere in Iowa. There are some enhancements that could be added to make the downtown experience better.

Downtown Carroll has a somewhat stark and cold feeling. Some of that may be a result of the time of year in which the Downtown Assessment Team visited, but there are ways to add warmth and color to the downtown through the use of trees, flowers, planters, and public art.

For visitors to Downtown Carroll, it is currently difficult to identify (quickly and easily) what businesses are in Downtown. In the pre-assessment survey, many residents indicated a lack of businesses as Downtown’s greatest weakness. Some survey respondents even indicated there aren’t any businesses Downtown. This sentiment

Jordan Creek Mall Overlay on Downtown Carroll Highlighting


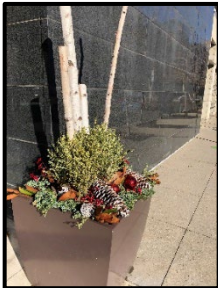




needs to be reversed. Making it quick and easy for visitors to identify the 60 plus businesses in Downtown would be a good start.

Adding warmth and color to the Downtown and improving the community's awareness of the businesses Downtown are critical to supporting the long-term vitality of Downtown Carroll. Also important is the need to program Downtown with a variety of quality, well-promoted community activities and events that activate Downtown and expose the public (residents and visitors alike) to all that Downtown Carroll has to offer.

The following action steps are recommended to support a thriving and viable Downtown Carroll for many years to come. As you consider these action steps, keep in mind that you want to inspire people to walk and explore your Downtown. Implement improvements that will engage the pedestrian every 20 feet and make them want to explore more of Downtown. Make the destinations visible so the visitor can see where they should go. Add improvements that appeal to the five traditional human senses of vision, hearing, taste, smell, and touch.

ACTION STEPS

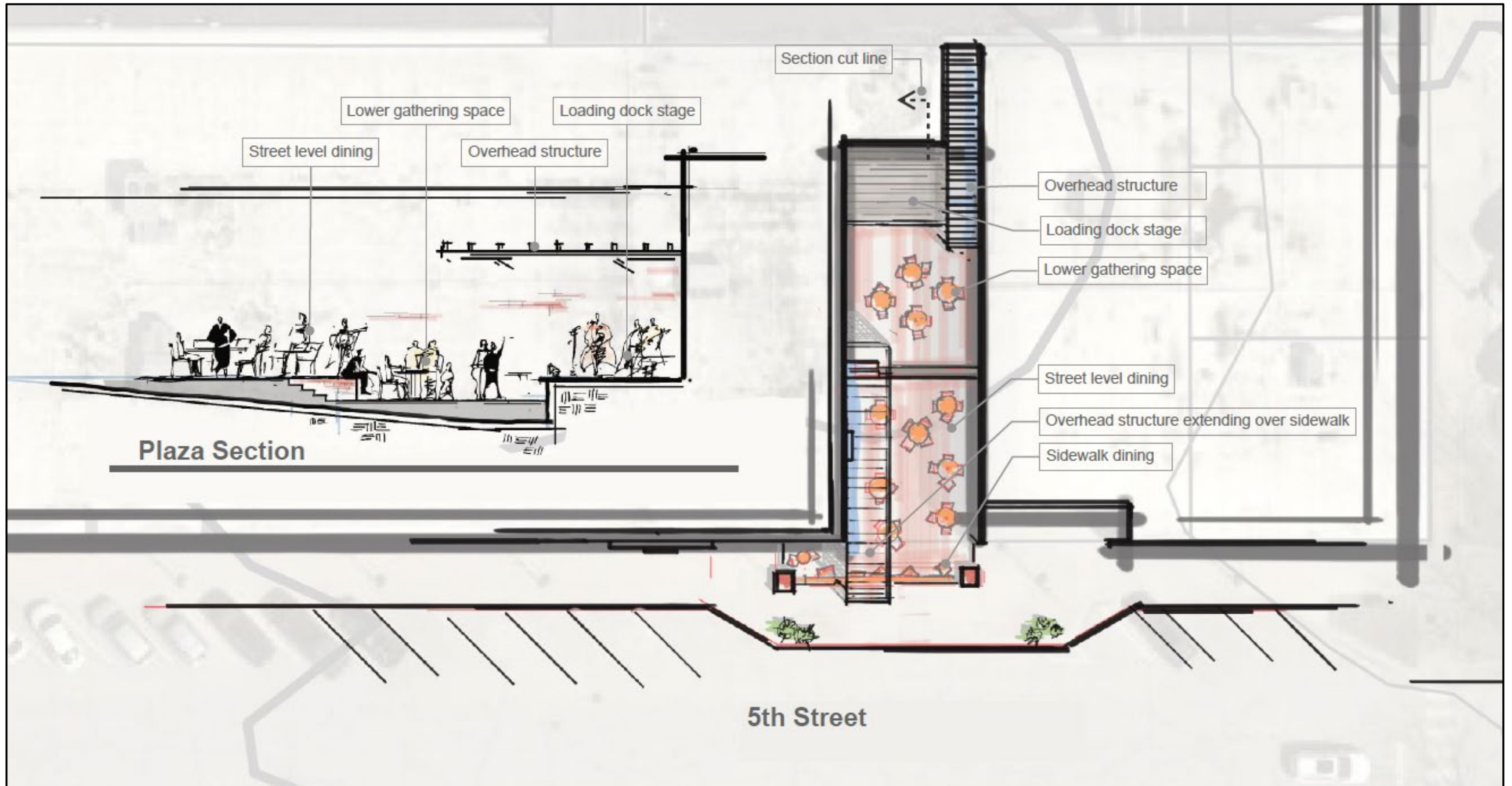
- **IMPROVE DOWNTOWN BUSINESS SIGNAGE.** Add blade signs to each business. This may require an easy local zoning code change. Blade signs are easy for pedestrians to see and draw pedestrians down the street to see what is in the next store. Blade signs will also help motorists on Highway 30 become better aware of all the businesses that Downtown has to offer. Sandwich board sidewalk signs, open signs and banners would also be helpful. Business signs should make it clear as to what that business does and what is in their store. Quality business signs can be a form of public art in a community and add color and interest to a Downtown. Consider working with local students, artists and sign companies to create unique, visually appealing Downtown business signs. Utilize some of the local business and building incentive funds to cost share sign improvements with local business owners.
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- **CREATE AN ONLINE DIGITAL DIRECTORY OF DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES.** The directory should display the businesses on a Downtown map, should be keyword searchable, and also include a listing of the businesses with a direct link to each business website and social media. Prior Lake, MN and Pearl Street in Boulder, Colorado have examples of model Downtown business directories. This could be a wonderful partnership opportunity between the city, chamber, social media/marketing/entrepreneurial/computer classes in the local schools and local businesses.
- **ADD COLOR.** More color needs to be added Downtown. The planters Downtown must have seasonal flowers/plants/decorations in them year-round. Add trees to the Downtown that are appropriate for street trees. Trees will also help address the community's desire for more shade Downtown. The Iowa DNR and the City of Des Moines maintain lists of recommended street tree varieties. Add flowers to the intersection and mid-block crossing planting areas and baskets or banners to the light poles. The city, local business/building owners, local garden club, or FFA/4-H programs could take the lead on growing, planting, and/or maintaining the plants and flowers.
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- **ADD PUBLIC ART.** Work with the local art commission and Artworks Studios to develop a public art program for Downtown. The community could begin commissioning one or more public art pieces per year to build up a destination public art collection in Downtown Carroll. Invite local artists to display their art in Downtown public spaces, storefront windows and in the mall areas. For inspiration, check out the approaches that communities like Woodbine, Charles City, Clive and Urbandale have taken to add public art in their communities.
- **ADD OUTDOOR DINING.** Nothing else does more to add vibrancy to a Downtown than seeing people having a good time on the streets and sidewalks of Downtown. Opportunities exist throughout Downtown to add outdoor dining. The intersection bump out, sidewalk and parking, along Adams Street next to Ski's Sandwich Shop, are excellent opportunities to add outdoor dining. Add outdoor seating outside the Eastgate and Westgate mall entrances on Adams St. Bring some of the Bordenaro's Meat Market seating from inside the mall to outside along Adams Street in the mid-block crossing area.



The loading dock area and adjacent sidewalk bump out of the former JCPenny® store and the alley facing Highway 30 on the north side of Westgate Mall also present interesting potential areas for outdoor dining. (see concept drawing on the following page)

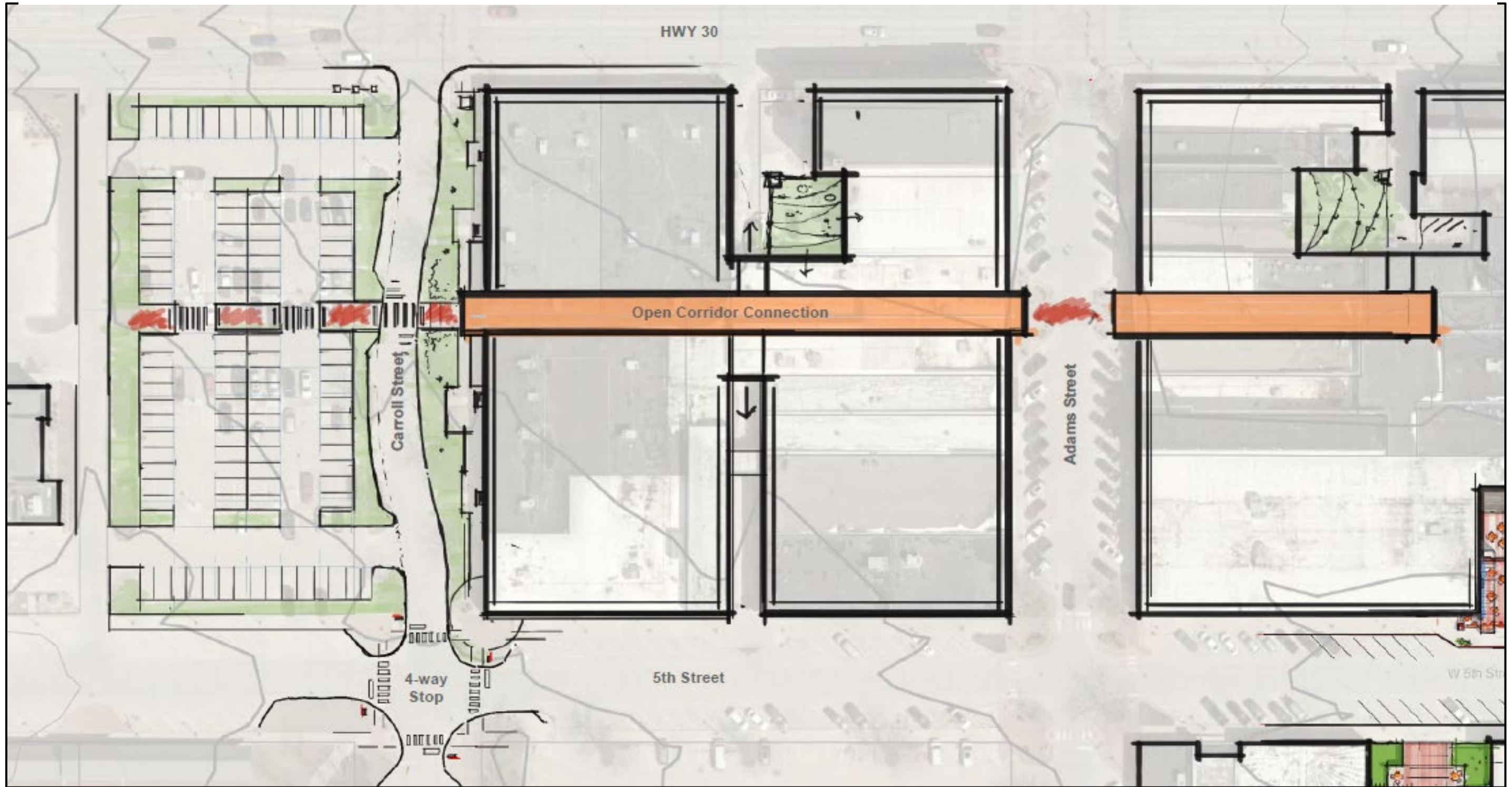
5th Street Entertainment Café Stage Concept for Loading Dock of Former JCPenny® Building



- **ADD MUSIC.** Add recorded or live music playing in the Downtown on a regular basis. The addition of music improves the overall ambiance of Downtown and provides a more festive atmosphere. Woodbine and DeWitt, Iowa are excellent examples of Iowa communities that regularly play music throughout their Downtown.
- **DOWNTOWN, PARKING AND RESTROOM SIGNS.** Strategically add signs on Highway 30 that direct visitors to Downtown and available parking options. Add downtown signs directing visitors to public restrooms. Consider options to keep the public restrooms open even when the mall corridor is closed.
- **IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND DOWNTOWN WALKABILITY.** Downtown Carroll is very compact and walkable but there are improvements that could be made to make the walking experience better and safer while providing better access for more mature visitors and those with mobility challenges. The through traffic on Carroll Street creates a dangerous situation for Downtown walkers, especially those entering the west doors of the Westgate Mall. N. Carroll Street and West 5th Street should be converted to a 4-way stop to help slow traffic currently speeding up and down Carroll Street. A 4-way stop here would also provide an opportunity to improve driver awareness when heading north on Carroll Street for people that are crossing from the west parking lot into Westgate Mall. Adding parallel parking to the east and/or west sides of Carroll street next to the mall would slow traffic and provide further visual indication that this is a shopping district. Reorient the parking layout to create a “central spine” for pedestrians that provides a direct visual connection to the Westgate Mall Entrance. Update the west side of Westgate mall to have a sidewalk with shop plazas at each entry point to improve business visibility and the pedestrian experience.

Changes to the pedestrian crossing markings on Carroll Street are also recommended (see conceptual drawing on the following page).

Concept for Reoriented West Gate Mall Parking, Improved Pedestrian Safety and Open Corridor Connection



- **KEEP N. ADAMS AND HIGHWAY 30 TRAFFIC SIGNAL.** The city is currently studying the removal of the traffic signal at N. Adams Street and Highway 30. The Downtown Assessment Team strongly encourages and recommends that the traffic signal remain in place. People support communities – not cars. Communities must be designed and built for people – not cars. Approximately 15,000 cars travel on Highway 30 each day. The goal should be to slow those cars down to give the occupants in those cars an opportunity to see what your community and Downtown have to offer. Maintaining the traffic signal will also make it safer and more convenient for pedestrians to cross Highway 30 and support collaboration between Downtown property and business owners and HUB 712.

- **CONVERT ORNAMENTAL STREETLIGHTS TO LED.** Apply to IEDA’s [Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program](#) to replace the lamps in the ornamental streetlights with LED lamps. This will save utility costs and may provide options to change light colors and dim lights during special events. Consider reinvesting the energy savings into downtown improvements such as trees, plantings, banners and business sign grants.

- **WINDOW DISPLAYS.** Downtown Carroll has some really well-crafted window displays. Keep up the good work and make sure window displays are lit in the evening. Have your local skilled window display creators assist other business owners to install enticing window displays. Rotate displays seasonally and install attractive window displays in current vacant storefronts. These windows can be used to promote other businesses, market the available business space within, support local artist displays, create a walking storybook throughout the Downtown.



- **ENHANCE DOWNTOWN EVENTS.** Keep offering the current Downtown events such as Ridiculous Days, Jingle & Mingle, and Live + Local. Involve the local businesses in planning those events and identify more ways for the businesses to leverage those events for greater positive business impact. Consider combining the farmers’ market with Live + Local. Consider alternative setups and/or alternative stage designs for Live + Local that will minimize access and parking disruptions on N. Adams Street on Live + Local event days. For example, a smaller, more portable stage may not require as much space or require as early a setup as the current, difficult to maneuver, semi-trailer does.

- **ADD ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS.** In the pre-assessment survey, the community clearly indicated that more events and activities would bring them Downtown. Add more seasonal events; events that are geared towards a variety of ages and interests. Consider having various local groups each adopt an event such as the youth, the hospital, Downtown businesses, local industry, service organizations, churches, etc.

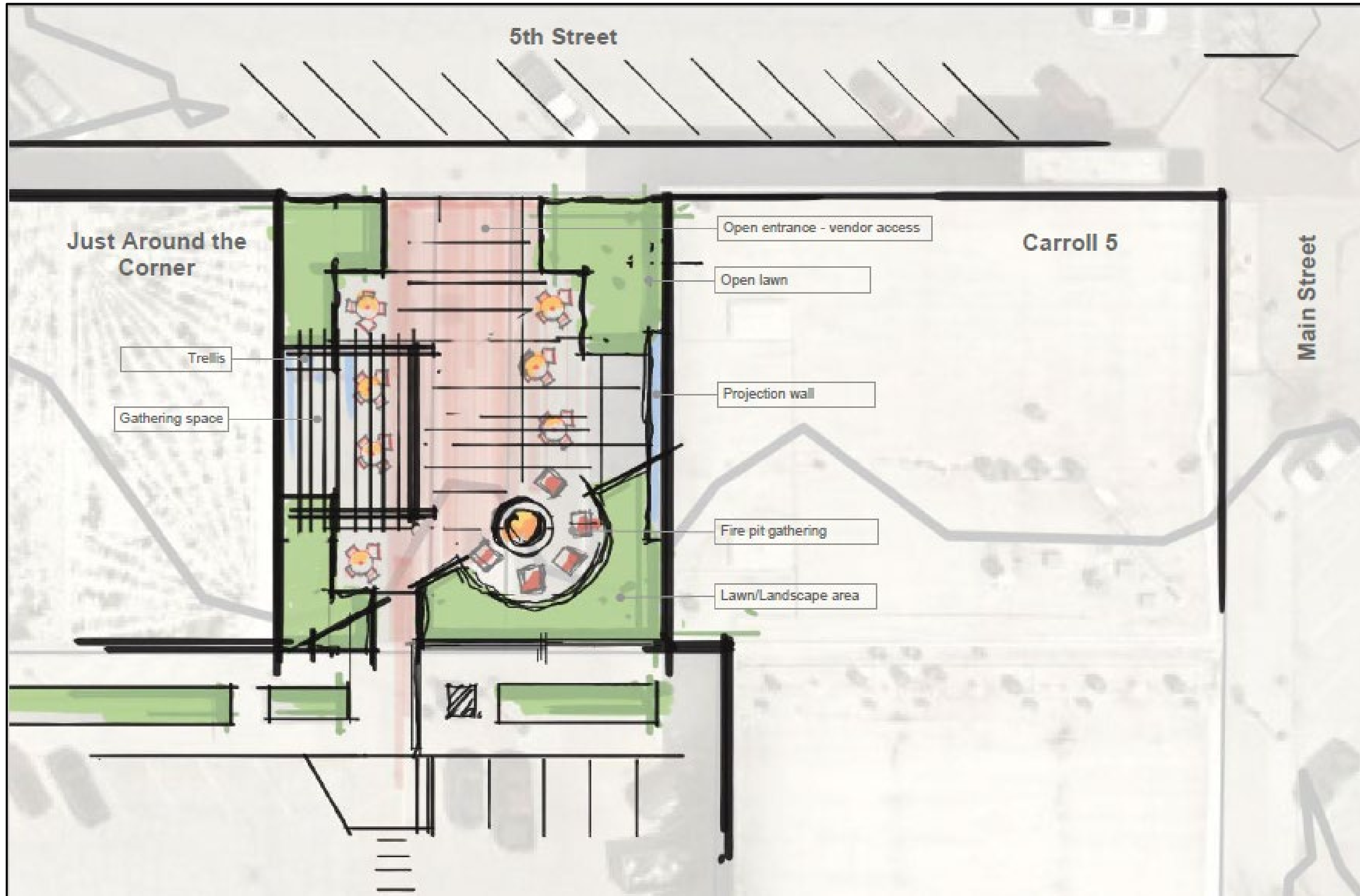


- **ACTIVATE VACANT LOTS ON W. 5TH STREET.** The vacant lots on W. 5th Street (between Just Around the Corner and the Carroll 5 theater) present a tremendous opportunity to add vibrancy to Downtown and to create a place for kids that so many in the community indicated in the survey is needed. Gather a representative cross-section of the community, especially youth, and develop a vision for this space. The Downtown Assessment Team can visualize this space with simple landscaping, shade, a community fire pit, oversized games (Jenga, Connect 4, etc.), corn hole (bags), table tennis, and video games (broadcast on the east or west walls) and community movie nights in partnership with the theater. A simple concession stand could be built by local building trades classes and staffed by entrepreneurial students. Maybe the concession stand is supplied by the adjacent Carroll 5 theater. A project like this could be implemented quite quickly and at low cost with materials and resources already available in the community. For inspiration see [Better Block](#), [WikiBlock](#), the [Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper](#) approach from the Project for Public Spaces, and the *Creative Placemaking Manual* in the Resources section of this report.

Current Vacant Lot on W. 5th Street Behind Movie Theater



Concept for W. 5th Street Entertainment Theater Plaza



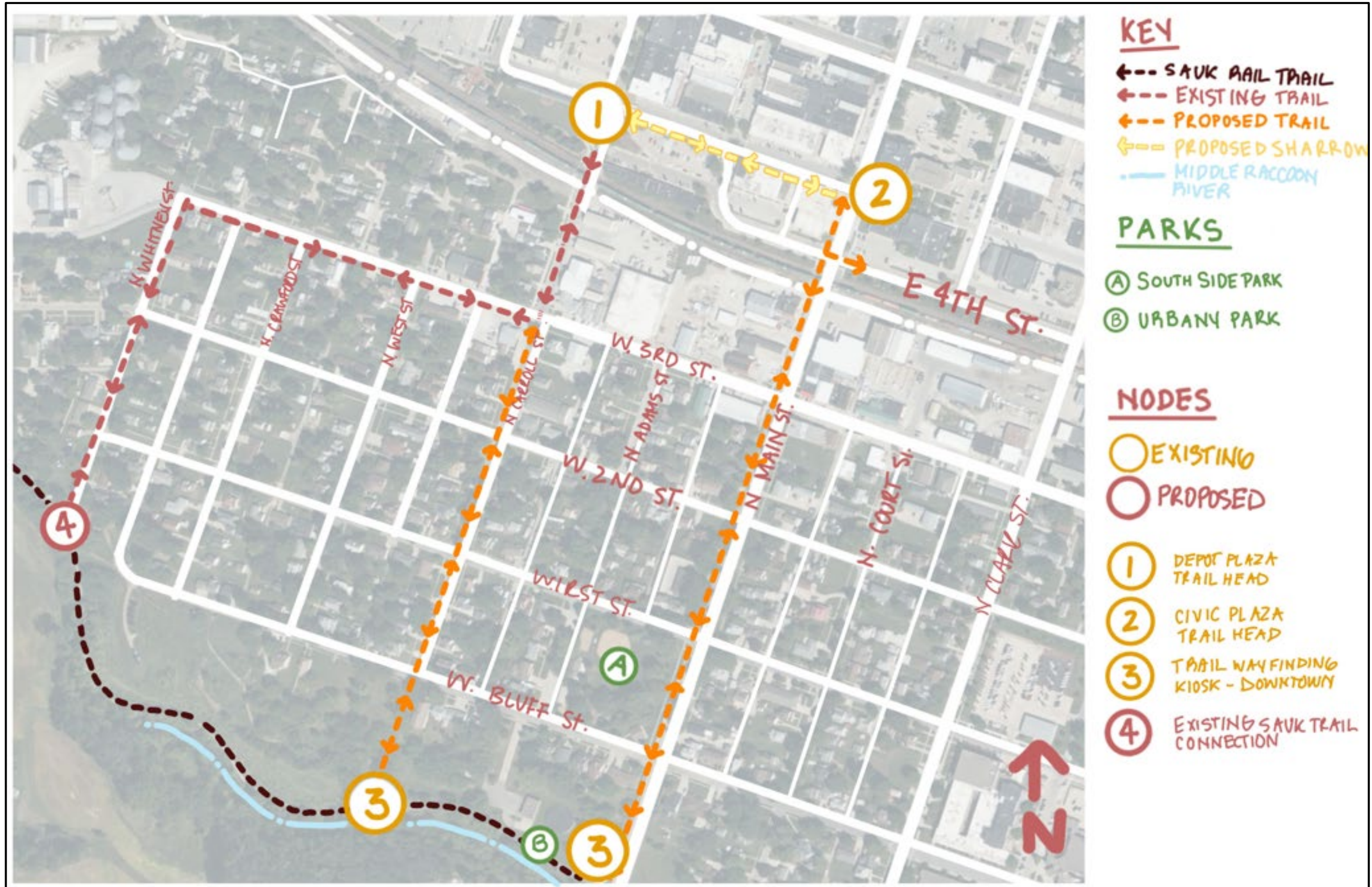
- **W. 5TH STREET ENTERTAINMENT THEATER PLAZA.** Lawn space adjacent to the theater provides opportunity for outdoor gathering space

- Construct a visual barrier on the south end to enclose plaza from parking/utility area.
- Celebrate existing mural on west wall with low plantings and gathering space for informal gatherings.
- Incorporate fire pit on the south end for casual use and gatherings.
- Establish open turf areas with sufficient size for corn hole (bags) and other lawn games
- Enhance theater concept with outdoor movies projected onto the east wall of the plaza.
- Incorporate projected wall art (LED light pattern/screen) on theater wall when not projecting movies.
- Consider electrical connections for charging and sound systems for movies.
- Leave space open along 5th Street for food trucks and outdoor popcorn stand.



- **HISTORY WALK.** The building history plaques displayed on each building are really informative and a nice touch. A potential next step could be to incorporate a QR code on each sign that takes visitors to a website with additional information and photos. With today’s artificial intelligence programs, visitors could even be treated to video of local historical figures telling the history of Carroll, its Downtown, and its buildings and businesses. See an example at [Fine Spirits Media](#). The talent is likely available locally to develop a similar experience.
- **CONNECT TRAILS TO DOWNTOWN.** Carroll has a robust recreational trail system, but the current trail system does not reach Downtown. Therefore, Downtown is missing out on the potential support and vibrancy that trail users can bring. Depot Park and the civic plaza area by the library are two tremendous opportunities for Downtown area trail hubs. The assessment team encourages adding trail map kiosks in Urban Park directing trail users to Downtown. See trail connection concepts below.

Leveraging the Carroll Trail System to Enhance Downtown



- **INVIGORATE DEPOT PARK.** Depot Park’s close proximity to Downtown is an asset for attracting more people to Downtown. The project team compiled a list of potential uses and activities to invigorate use of Depot Park and to bring more visitors Downtown.
 - Lower Investment Concepts
 - Food Truck Days
 - Increase seating opportunities
 - Trail head and Wayfinding
 - Bike parking
 - Outdoor grills and gathering space
 - Public art displays
 - Higher Investment Concepts
 - Playground structure
 - Splash Pad (Summer) Ice Rink (Winter)
 - Enclose part of the Structure (see image below from Fergus Falls, MN)
 - Expand structure to allow covered uses beyond linear.



Riverfront Pavilion – Fergus Falls, MN
(Photo Credit: Bolton & Menk)

So far, the citizen feedback, recommendations, and ideas that have been discussed in this report generally focus on what can be done to improve the experience one has with and the understanding of Downtown Carroll. However, great plans only become great in their implementation. Through collaboration and leadership, Downtown Carroll can not only maintain its status as a regional commerce hub, but it can also grow into a compelling destination that people go to shop and socialize.

Carroll's size can be a challenge when discussing the notion of capacity. Towns much smaller than Carroll seem to miraculously pull off exciting revitalization projects, obtain outside funding assistance or plan well-coordinated events, despite their smaller population. On the other hand, it seems obvious that cities larger than Carroll succeed in accessing grant dollars, enticing developers, and coordinating community festivals. In a very small town, if everyone doesn't pitch in and volunteer, things do not happen. In the larger cities, financial capacity allows for the hiring of professionals to serve as leaders in these areas. Communities in the middle, like Carroll, are challenged because they are just big enough that citizens don't always feel compelled to pitch in, but they are not quite big enough to afford professionals to do the work.

That said, throughout the team's visit to Carroll, we met highly qualified individuals and groups all working in the areas of economic development, community event planning, and beautification. By supporting these economic developers and giving them a clear, focused path for implementation, Carroll will succeed in accomplishing the things found throughout this document.

The following action steps are recommended to maximize the capacity and skills already in existence across Carroll's non-profit groups, local government, and business/property owners.

ACTION STEPS

- **ESTABLISH A WORK PLAN.** The first question that Carroll leaders should be asking themselves is "Who is doing What?" But, before that question can be answered, Carroll must define the "who" and the "what." From there, a plan of action is formed to ensure that the priorities for Downtown's revitalization and growth are addressed. Who is the "Who"? It is important to identify one or more community development officials for the City of Carroll. The assessment team met many capable individuals and groups already working in the economic and community development arenas. Begin with those people first and establish a plan of action.
 - **City Government**
 - Starting with the City Council and City Administrator, take a look at the talented City staff and see what action items can be folded into their regular work.
 - **Development Support Organizations**
 - Seeking out assistance from [Region XII Council of Governments](#) is a great place to add additional capacity for initiatives. Their list of services includes grant writing and administration, technical assistance on matters such as city codes, bonding, urban renewal/TIF, and urban revitalization/tax abatement.
 - Carroll County Growth Partnership provides a lot of support for new and existing business and industry. As it relates to the Carroll Downtown, more businesses could take advantage of services such as "Retail Coach" offered by the partnership.

- Carroll Chamber of Commerce works to elevate the experience of doing business in and visiting Carroll. With anything and everything available to consumers with a simple swipe on their phone, downtown retail businesses increasingly rely on authentic and engaging experiences around the act of shopping. The Chamber of Commerce is an entity that continues working on such experiences. Additionally, downtown business owners should participate in the Chamber of Commerce. If they are not, figure out why and address those issues.
- Hub 712 will provide co-working space and business resources to help grow the local economy. Hub 712 is a new resource that could have a significant impact on Carroll's Downtown, especially when considering filling some significant vacancies.
- **Local Non-profit Organizations and Community Partners.** This list is just an example of entities that could be considered for partnerships and is not intended to be all encompassing. Even if a group doesn't initially come to mind when considering community and economic development matters, don't rule them out. There are many ways in which groups can contribute to building up a Downtown.
 - St. Anthony's Regional Hospital
 - Community Foundation of Carroll County
 - RSVP of Carroll County
 - Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, and other such service clubs
 - Religion-based Organizations and Churches
 - County Conservation
 - New Hope Village
- **Property Owners.** Perhaps, property owners should be at the very top of this list because without their participation and buy-in, not much can happen in Downtown Carroll. Build relationships with property owners. Start with initiatives that everyone can get behind.

"What" should they be doing? A number of different activities or initiatives are recommended to help guide Downtown Carroll down a successful path.

- Establishing and Administrating Local Grant Programs
- Code Review, Code Updates, Code Enforcement
- Business Support
- Pursuit of State/Federal Dollars
- Housing Development and Population Growth
- Marketing
- **Establish and Administer Local Grant Programs.** Local grant programs can be a simple way to support new and existing small downtown businesses in Carroll. When designing your local grant program, consider several things- goals for the program, funding source, and aesthetic/design considerations.

Before creating local grants to help with building or business improvements, it is important to first establish goals and parameters for the program. Start with reviewing what other communities do for their local grant programs. There are many communities in Iowa who have created their own local grant programs to assist new and existing businesses.

To get started in the research process, here are a few examples of the programs and applications that some communities have in place.

- Jefferson, IA: <https://jeffersonmatters.org/building-facade-mini-grant-application-up-to-500/>
- Newton, IA: <https://ia-newton.civicplus.com/934/Local-Grants-Available>
- Knoxville, IA: <https://www.knoxvilleia.gov/348/Downtown-Facade-Improvement-Grant>
- Story County, IA: <https://www.storycountyiowa.gov/1073/Facade-Grant-Program>
- Ames, IA: <https://www.cityofames.org/government/departments-divisions-i-z/planning/downtown-facade-assistance-program>
- Oskaloosa, IA: <https://www.oskaloosaiowa.org/462/Downtown-Facade-Improvement-Project>

What improvements or types of businesses does Carroll want to see in the downtown area? Whatever they are, those are the things that should be incentivized. For example, when Newton’s local grant program started, they focused just on facade improvements because their signage and entrances were looking shabby. The City later added housing grants and restaurant grants to the list as both are important elements to building vibrancy downtown.

Facade grants need to have some design criteria upon which projects are reviewed for funding. Carroll should adopt design guidelines. It is recommended that adopting design guidelines, at this point, should not be mandatory code requirements. Rather, they should be optional, but if a property or business owner intends to apply for and receive local funding, then they would be required. The State of Iowa has prepared some design guidelines that could get the community going.

Utilizing bonding capacity and Tax Increment Financing, the City of Carroll can create a pool of funds available for the purpose of awarding local grants. The City of Carroll should work with their bonding attorney on the specifics of establishing the pool of funds for the program. With discussions of TIF reform frequently in the air at the State level, it may benefit the community to get this going sooner rather than later.

- **Review Local Ordinances and Update as Necessary.** While we will discuss the JCPenney® building in greater detail later, it is important to note that during our meetings with Carroll stakeholders during the assessment visit, there were many creative ideas for uses or businesses that could go into the empty building. As some of these cool, creative ideas gain traction, the City needs to be prepared to respond appropriately. Review the current zoning code list of permitted uses to make sure the list incorporates potential future uses. It may also be necessary to delete outdated uses listed in the code that the community does not want to see downtown.

Additionally, the assessment team first recommends collaboratively addressing vacancies and run-down buildings through public-private partnerships including, but not limited to, applying for state grant funding or establishing local incentive programs. That said, sometimes, communities have to be serious when collaborative efforts stall out. In addition to making sure the zoning code provides an appropriate listing of permitted uses for your downtown, Carroll should review all city ordinances and consider updates or additions in some of the following areas, as deemed necessary:

- **Sign Ordinance.** Outdated signage can be such a drag on a commercial area. If one is not already in place, consider adopting an ordinance that limits the duration business signage can remain up once a business is closed. Limitations can range from as short as 6 months to as long as 12 or 18 months. If such an ordinance is already in place, make sure that it is being enforced.
- **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.
- **Commercial Property Inspection Ordinance.** Carroll has an established rental inspection program. Similarly, a commercial property inspection ordinance can also ensure that commercial spaces are well maintained and safe. Consider focusing first on empty buildings before transitioning to all commercial properties. When rolling out such a program, make sure to work collaboratively with the business community to maintain a business-friendly environment.
- **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 X number of 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 will be made, and a fee will be charged. Each subsequent one-year period of vacancy will trigger a re-inspection and fee. The owner is responsible for all of the exterior and interior areas as well as lot maintenance. Failure to properly maintain the vacant building could result in increased renewal fees.
- **Residential on First Floors Limited.** Consider establishing a restriction on Adams Street, at minimum, which limits residential uses in storefronts. As the primary shopping corridor in Downtown Carroll, it is important to preserve those retail spaces. Having storefronts converted into residential uses becomes a drag on the vibrancy of a downtown area and should not be allowed.
- **Sample Language.** Residential Use is permitted only within upper stories or in the rear of the ground floor for properties located within the Downtown Area. Properties in the Downtown Area shall be maintained for commercial use within storefronts along public streets on the first floor of the building. The Commercial use shall occupy at least 40% of the depth of the building and the entire width.
 - The Downtown Area could be a defined geographic location bounded by, for example:
 - The north boundary of the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way.
 - The south boundary of US Highway 30 right-of-way.
 - The centerline of North Carroll Street.
 - The centerline of North Main Street



- **Business to Business Mentorship.** The assessment team found an active Chamber of Commerce in Carroll that planned robust events and activities designed to show-off the downtown area and businesses. The assessment team recommends continuing with these efforts, but there should be an opportunity to have business to business networking and mentorship focused on business functions. Some topics that could be discussed at those networking sessions could include:

- Sharing of Best Practices

- Customer Engagement, Social Media, and Direct Marketing tips and tricks
- Window Displays
- Store Hours
- Cross Promotion Opportunities
- Customer Loyalty Programs
- Sensory Engagement and Customer Experience
- Succession Planning

- **Business Resiliency.** If there is anything that the world learned post-Covid, is that flexible and quick to adapt businesses fared better than those who were slow to react. Working together as a business district to share ideas, collaborate, and pre-plan together for scenarios like:

- IT and Power Outages
- Natural Disasters
- Loss, Illness or Injury of Key Employees
- Supply Chain Disruptions
- Crime

By pre-planning both as individual businesses and as a business district, negative outcomes can be mitigated as a whole. The district succeeds when individual businesses succeed.

- **Seek Regional, State, and Federal Assistance, Resources, and Guidance.** In order to receive state and federal dollars, a community must prepare and submit applications. Identify employees or volunteers with the City of Carroll, Chamber of Commerce, Hub 712, CCGP or others who have energy and writing skills to tackle a few funding opportunity applications. Later in this document, a number of programs and resources are listed for consideration. The assessment team recommends working toward a Community Catalyst Building Remediation Grant for the former JCPenney® building. With its significant footprint and endless opportunities for reuse, redeveloping this building could be a catalyst for additional growth in Carroll's downtown.
- **Address City-Wide Housing Needs.** Housing plays a significant role in community and economic development. While opportunities for downtown living are limited (due to there being few multi-story retail

buildings and noise from the railroad and Highway 30), addressing city-wide housing needs will benefit the whole Carroll economy which will ultimately impact the downtown.

- **Collaborate with Employers.** Work with local employers to address the housing needs of their employees. The housing assessment team heard from various sectors about challenges that new employees have had finding appropriate housing in Carroll.
- **Explore the Use of Tax Increment Financing for Housing.** Utilizing TIF to help with the development of new, market rate housing can be beneficial for a number of reasons. For example, TIF can be used by the municipality to construct essential infrastructure to support new housing developments. When TIF is used for housing, the State of Iowa code requires a Low-Moderate Income set-aside. This means that a portion of the new increment generated must be set aside to support the development or redevelopment of affordable housing. A city can use this required pot of funds to support initiatives such as affordable housing projects or local housing rehabilitation programs.
- **Downtown Housing.** Downtown living can bring vibrancy with it. Carroll may not have a lot of available second story spaces in the downtown area ready to be filled with housing. That said, incentivize property owners that do have second stories to create new downtown living units or rehabilitate existing ones. Examine the excess parking lots that surround the downtown area. Could any of these be utilized for new apartment buildings?

THEME 4 BUILDINGS

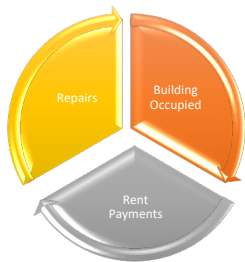
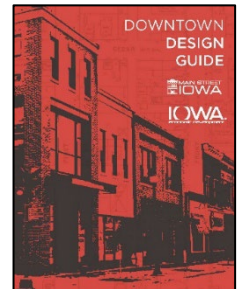
Nothing defines a downtown more than its buildings. The public and commercial buildings create the downtown character and set your community apart from others. When those buildings have been altered, removed, or not maintained, it impacts the downtown, community and business potential in a challenging way. A lot can happen to these buildings in 100+ years. Businesses change. Owners change. The economy changes. Fires. And, in Carroll's case, urban renewal. Every historic downtown has seen its share of building issues over the years. Some have reacted better than others to preserve their buildings with design guidelines, incentive programs, and constant community education pertaining to these grand, old buildings. Considering building improvements with a "one building a time" approach is always the way to go.

Building improvement projects do not necessarily need to be expensive to have a major impact on the feeling and character of a downtown. Something as simple as an appropriately applied paint scheme can make a huge difference. A good sign can also make a huge visual impact. Removing extraneous elements from the façade can also help. In general, the objective should be to enhance and maintain the original design and character of the building. Improvements that maintain and enhance the original character of any building will usually have better long-term sustainability than a project that is more trendy and less appropriate.

Many of downtown Carroll's grand buildings have come down over the years. But several significant structures still stand. The district is a mix of one, two and three story buildings. Most of them have seen inappropriate changes and some suffer from neglected maintenance. The best businesses often want to be in the best buildings. Downtown Carroll has a nice business mix but needs more attention to the buildings that house those businesses and upper story opportunities.

ACTION STEPS

- **Local Design Guide.** Create appropriate guidelines to consistently approach quality downtown building rehabilitation.
 - Consider adopting [The Downtown Design Guide](#) developed by the Iowa Downtown Resource Center. Once adopted, include them in your local considerations. This could lead to possible incentives that should help "raise the bar" for improving the aesthetic and functional appeal of downtown. Incentivize the kinds of appropriate rehabilitation projects you want.
 - When considering the adoption of the Downtown Design Guide make sure they are tied to your local incentives. The guidelines are still suggestions but when tied directly to local incentives will determine the amount of appropriate rehabilitation and will then determine the amount of incentive available. If a property owner insists on inappropriate rehabilitation, they should not receive any local support. Keep the bar high and expect the best.



*Believe it or not,
some property owners
won't pay for their own
building repairs.*

- **Local Incentives.** To build on the partnerships created in action step above, investigate appropriate local incentives. You will always get what you incentivize. Make sure when you create a local incentive that they are flexible as well as direct to get what you desire. In some cases, you will have to break the disinvestment cycle. Let's make sure your local incentives create a positive cycle of investment.
 - Review existing local opportunities like:
 - Tax Increment Financing (Urban Renewal)
 - Consolidated Abatement (Urban Revitalization)

- **Develop Façade Improvement Grants.** This incentive partnered with your design guide will protect and save your buildings.
 - **Consider façade mini grants.** Façade mini grants are an excellent way to encourage the kinds of desired improvements everyone will see demonstrated right before your eyes. Frankly, they just make sense. They aren't really all that expensive and you get what you want. Set expectations high and see the quality results. If no one applies, pick a different priority. As you create these important local incentives make sure you stay connected with the Iowa Downtown Resource Center on additional state and federal incentives. Now, you can provide additional local match to make your applications even more competitive.
 - **Consider applying for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG).**
 - The goal is to develop viable communities by providing decent housing and suitable living environments and expanding economic opportunities, principally for persons of low-and moderate income.
 - Funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
 - State's program only for non-entitlement communities (cities with populations under 50,000)
 - Must meet a National Objective
 - Low-and Moderate-Income Benefit (70% of total funding)
 - Slum and Blight Elimination
 - Urgent Need
 - The most common uses for downtowns are:
 - Downtown Revitalization Fund
 - Upper Story Housing

- **Disabled Access Credit (ADA).** Two tax incentives are available to businesses to help cover the cost of making access improvements.

- The first is a tax credit that can be used for architectural adaptations, equipment acquisitions, and services such as sign language interpreters.
- The second is a tax deduction that can be used for architectural or transportation adaptations.

NOTE: A tax credit is subtracted from your tax liability after you calculate your taxes, while a tax deduction is subtracted from your total income before taxes, to establish your taxable income.

Form 8826		Disabled Access Credit		OMB No. 1545-1205
<small>(Rev. September 2017) Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service</small>		<small>► Attach to your tax return. ► Go to www.irs.gov/Form8826 for the latest information.</small>		<small>Attachment Sequence No. 86</small>
<small>Where to show on return</small>			<small>Identifying number</small>	
1	Total eligible access expenditures (see instructions)	1		
2	Minimum amount	2	\$ 250	00
3	Subtract line 2 from line 1. If zero or less, enter -0-	3		
4	Maximum amount	4	\$ 10,000	00
5	Enter the smaller of line 3 or line 4	5		
6	Multiply line 5 by 50% (0.50)	6		
7	Disabled access credit from partnerships and S corporations	7		
8	Add lines 6 and 7, but do not enter more than \$5,000. Partnerships and S corporations, report this amount on Schedule K-1. All others, report this amount on Form 990, Part III, line 1e	8		

For Paperwork Reduction Act Notices, see instructions. Cat. No. 12114N Form 8826 (Rev. 9-2017)

- **Apply for a [Center for Rural Revitalization | Iowa Economic Development Authority \(iowaeda.com\)](http://www.iowaeda.com).**
 - Click [here](#) to access fact sheet.
 - Rural Leadership Bootcamp Grant
 - Rural Housing Assessment
 - Rural Childcare
 - Rural Scale-up Grant
 - Rural Enrichment Grant
 - Rural Innovation Grant
 - Rural BOOST Program
 - Rural EMS Pilot Grant

- **Leverage local incentives to maximize state and federal programs.**
 - **CDBG Downtown Revitalization Projects**
[Downtown Revitalization Fund | Iowa Economic Development Authority \(iowaeda.com\)](#)
 - **CDBG Community Facilities & Services**
[CDBG Community Facilities & Services | Iowa Economic Development Authority \(iowaeda.com\)](#)
 - **Community Catalyst Building Remediation Program**
[Community Catalyst Building Remediation | Iowa Economic Development Authority \(iowaeda.com\)](#)
 - **Nuisance Property and Abandoned Building Remediation Loan Program**
[Nuisance Property & Abandoned Building Remediation \(iowaeda.com\)](#)
 - **CDBG Housing Rehabilitation Fund**
[CDBG Housing Rehabilitation | Iowa Economic Development Authority \(iowaeda.com\)](#)
 - **CDBG Upper Story Housing Conversion Program**
[CDBG Housing Rehabilitation | Iowa Economic Development Authority \(iowaeda.com\)](#)
 - **Workforce Housing Tax Credits**
[Workforce Housing Tax Credit | Iowa Economic Development Authority \(iowaeda.com\)](#)
 - **Brownfield/Grayfield Tax Credit Program**
[Redevelopment Tax Credits | Iowa Economic Development Authority \(iowaeda.com\)](#)
 - **Historic Tax Credits**
<https://iowaculture.gov/history/preservation/tax-incentives>
 - **State Tax Credit**
[Historic Preservation Tax Credit | Iowa Economic Development Authority \(iowaeda.com\)](#)
 - **Federal Tax Credit**
<https://iowaculture.gov/history/preservation/tax-incentives/federal-tax-credit>
 - **Property Tax Exemption**
<https://iowaculture.gov/history/preservation/tax-incentives/property-tax-exemption>

- **Rent Ready Sites.** This must become one of the highest priorities of a downtown focused program. As you walk your district it is easy to miss the quality improved sites because the vacant underutilized ones control your interest. This is very unfortunate. Carroll has some wonderful locations that sometimes get lost in the fog of inappropriate rehabilitation and vacancies that are not rent ready simply because no one has washed the windows or cleaned up the space.

- **Property clean-up.** Create a volunteer driven process that partners with cooperative building owners that truly want to rent their spaces. Use your imagination to create a fun and enjoyable process of following up on a property owner visit. Start with easy tasks like washing windows and based on volunteer abilities move on to more comprehensive approaches.

- **Property tours.** As you accomplish these partnerships with property owners, move towards window graphic advertising based on what your market-based research desires to fill the space. Complete this process by holding property tours showing off the space and demonstrating what could be.

- **Incentive priorities.** Rent Ready Sites should be priorities for the incentives you've created to fill vacant space. Business expansion and recruitment should be encouraged.



- **Individual Buildings & Downtown Multi-Tenant Buildings.** When we dive into the topic of individual downtown buildings we must start with, “Why were building owners allowed to do inappropriate rehabilitation, and can we fix it?” Reducing the size of the windows must never be allowed. Closing in upper story windows makes it harder to even occupy that space safely. With a limited number of buildings with upper floors, you can’t allow even one to go unoccupied. We must work towards occupying every available square foot to receive a quality return on investment, for the property owners and the community. Carroll has some wonderful building bones left and we must create partnerships in order to receive the positive results you desire and deserve. The buildings lost to urban renewal are gone but we can be successful with the few remaining.



The Buckle Building

The Buckle...what a magnificent building but completely underutilized. The entire upper floor is vacant and has been for quite some time. The first floor has a wonderful business, but the rest of the building is needy. Through appropriate design and local incentives, we have to work together to bring this building back to life. There are several incentive programs available for this building, but it must start at home first. Creating local incentives has to happen, this building needs it and could be a great example.

The Brown's Shoe Fit Company Building

This building is one of the ugliest buildings downtown and at the same time it holds one of the best destination retail businesses in Carroll. The window displays invite customers into the space to enjoy their deep assortment of quality shoes and accessories. The awning and metal slipcover have not been updated in years and it shows. When walking into this quality first floor space, don't look up. This building could be a great example of a demonstration project for a newly funded local façade incentive. Usually, the removal of the metal slipcover is not that expensive. The challenge comes with its removal, what has the slipcover hidden over the years and how much damage has it caused or created. Start with historic photos of this building prior to the inappropriate metal slipcover being installed.

Request professional help from a qualified contractor and do the investigation necessary to move this project into appropriate rehabilitation. Use the newly adopted design guide and local incentives. This could be a quality partnership opportunity. After the historic photo review and the contractor discovery process, consider moving this project along. This project will likely take a leap of faith by the property owner and the city.

Before or Existing



Proposed Improvements



Downtown Multi-Tenant Buildings

There is quite a disconnect between Adams Street (Downtown) and Thomas Plaza. For whatever reason there exists a pedestrian barrier. This sometimes-unconscious effect can be devastating to a downtown district. It just does not feel connected to a pedestrian friendly atmosphere or environment.

This structure looks like it hasn't had any improvements since it was built. The wooden mansard roof completely traps it in the 1970's and the building is crying out for an appropriate rehabilitation.

The newly adopted design guide will help with the suggested improvements. Another quality partnership effort, truly waiting to happen. Everyone wins with quality rehabilitation.

Thomas Plaza (existing)



Westgate Mall

The city has done a great job with public improvements. The streetscape and amenities are quality improvements. The building owners need to step it up. This effort must be a partnership effort.

This project is in great need of a facelift. Our proposal is to raise the roof. As you walk from Adams Street into this space, you walk quite a distance before you even know there are retail opportunities. If you continue, you reach destination, retail businesses like True Value Hardware & Jeanine's Hallmark. Unfortunately, many other entrances have been closed off. It's time for a quality rehabilitation.

Existing Entrance from Adams Street



Proposed Improvements



THEME 5 JC PENNEY® BUILDING

If Carroll has to continue the grieving process over losing JCPenney - do it, get over it, and then move on. Carroll has grieved over losing this business way more than JCPenney has grieved over leaving Carroll. The business is gone – it is not coming back.

ACTION STEPS

- Remove all old signage from the JCPenney® building. It has to go and is overdue. This could be a great way to develop partnerships. The city could help. Other volunteers could help. Make it a party.
- Utilize the newly adopted Design Guide to ensure only appropriate rehabilitation can happen.
- Explore the newly created incentives. Many of these incentives can match additional state and federal programs. This large white elephant needs additional funding streams.
- Above all others though is to TAKE ACTION. It might be in the form of encouraging pop-up entrepreneurs or something as simple as creating marketing sheets/prospectus for the space.

Adams Street side of the former JCPenney® building.

(The creation of two storefronts)



The 5th Street side of the former JCPenney® building.

(The creation of three storefronts and a mural)



Demonstrate new or additional opportunities for this property. Everything will depend on who wants to purchase it and what they are going to occupy it with. Carroll needs to use this property as a great way to enhance and expand your downtown district. Most towns don't have an opportunity like this. Make sure you get everything you want and need out of this development opportunity.

PRIORITIES

The Assessment team encourages Carroll to prioritize projects listed in this report and other opportunities we feel are of importance.

Theme #	Immediate Priorities: (0-6 months)
1	Research ShopIowa.com and set goal of signing 5-10 Carroll businesses up.
1	Take all obsolete store signs down (in downtown).
1	Develop attractive business opportunity signs for windows in vacant buildings.
1	Get business together to brainstorm ideas to develop uniform business hours.
1	Add colorful business open signs/sandwich boards.
1	Develop a downtown business wish list based on market data, business voids and focus groups.
1	Work with building owners on incentives such as temporary rent rebates to fill downtown space.
2	Add color to downtown. Develop Ideas.
2	Improve downtown pedestrian safety and walkability.
2	Change out window displays seasonally; add window displays to vacant/underutilized windows.
3	Identify local non-profit and community partners. Meet to discuss missions and commonalities.
3	Review local ordinances and discuss possible updates.
3	Develop ordinance that restricts storefront housing.
3	Identify/ inventory regional, state and federal resources. Identify staff person to keep up to date.
4	Adopt Iowa Economic Development Authority's Downtown Design Guide. Tie to local incentives
4	Apply for Catalyst Grant
5	Remove signage from the JC Penny® building.
5	Develop a prospectus to market JCPenney® building.
Theme #	One Year Priorities (0-12 months)
1	Develop/implement a branding campaign with several ideas to communicate downtown's business strengths, parking opportunities, what makes downtown special: Target market: Carroll residents
1	Develop a downtown building inventory.
1 & 2	Improve business signs and host a workshop.
1 & 2	Create an online digital directory of businesses.
2	Add public art.
2	Add outdoor dining.
2	Add music to downtown.
2	Downtown parking and restroom signs
2	Convert ornamental streetlights to LED.
2	Enhance downtown events.
1 & 2	Add activities and events to downtown. Goal: Two new store familiarity-based events.
2	Activate vacant lots on W. 5 th Street.
2	Enhance the existing history walk with digital enhancements and resources.
3	Establish a workplan that identifies who the stakeholders are and who does what.
3	Update ordinances, i.e., sign ordinance and establish others lacking to meet downtown's needs
4	Establish package of local incentives especially for building rehabilitation.
4	Get familiar with Center for Rural Revitalization and match Carroll's needs with grant programs.
4	Work on rent ready sites. Clean spaces. Add window graphics. Lead generation
4	Brown Shoe Fit building: Go to work! Take that metal down.
5	JCPenney® Building: Go to work! Marketing and design improvements.

Theme#	Longer term Projects: (0-24 months)
1	Create Downtown holiday catalog.
1	Implement five new business-to-business cross promotion ideas.
1	Develop parking/lot signage program.
3	Establish a business-to-business mentorship program.
3	Address city wide housing needs.
4	Host downtown property tours to market space.
4	The Buckle Building: Go to work! Activate all floors.
4	Thomas Plaza: Go to work! Needs building improvements.
Theme#	Down the Road....but plan now: (24 months +)
1	Reassess downtown Carroll marketing and branding efforts. Success? What next?
1	Add a downtown business kiosk. Keep it updated.
4	Westgate Mall: Raise the roof. Incorporate good design.

CLOSING

It was a pleasure for our team to work in Carroll. The community has enthusiastic volunteers and leaders that will make a difference. We hope this visit and report can assist in building a solid plan for downtown projects and improvements. We encourage leaders, organizations and volunteers to work collaboratively. Focus on projects that you get excited about. We are here for continued support. Good luck!

CONTACTS

Iowa Downtown Resource Center, IEDA, Des Moines, Iowa.....	515.348.6180
.....	https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/Community/idrc
Keep Iowa Beautiful	515.323.6507
.....	https://www.KeepIowaBeautiful.com
ISU Iowa Community Indicators Program Retail Analysis	http://www.icip.iastate.edu/retail
Certified Local Governments, State Historic Society of Iowa	515.281.6826
CDBG Downtown Revitalization Program.....	515.348.6208
.....	https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/DowntownFund

National and State Preservation Services and Programs:

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

RESOURCES

Electronic files are available for download here. (for 12 months)

- Carroll ESRI Data & Market Snapshot
- Carroll Downtown Assessment Survey Results
- Carroll Design Renderings
- Creative Placemaking Manual
- Design Guidelines
- Event Evaluation
- Retail Events
- Preservation Brief: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts
- Restoring Historic Commercial Buildings
- Problem Properties
- Sample Building Inventory Form
- Signs & Awnings for Downtowns
- Upper Story Housing Benefits
- Characteristics of a Successful Downtown