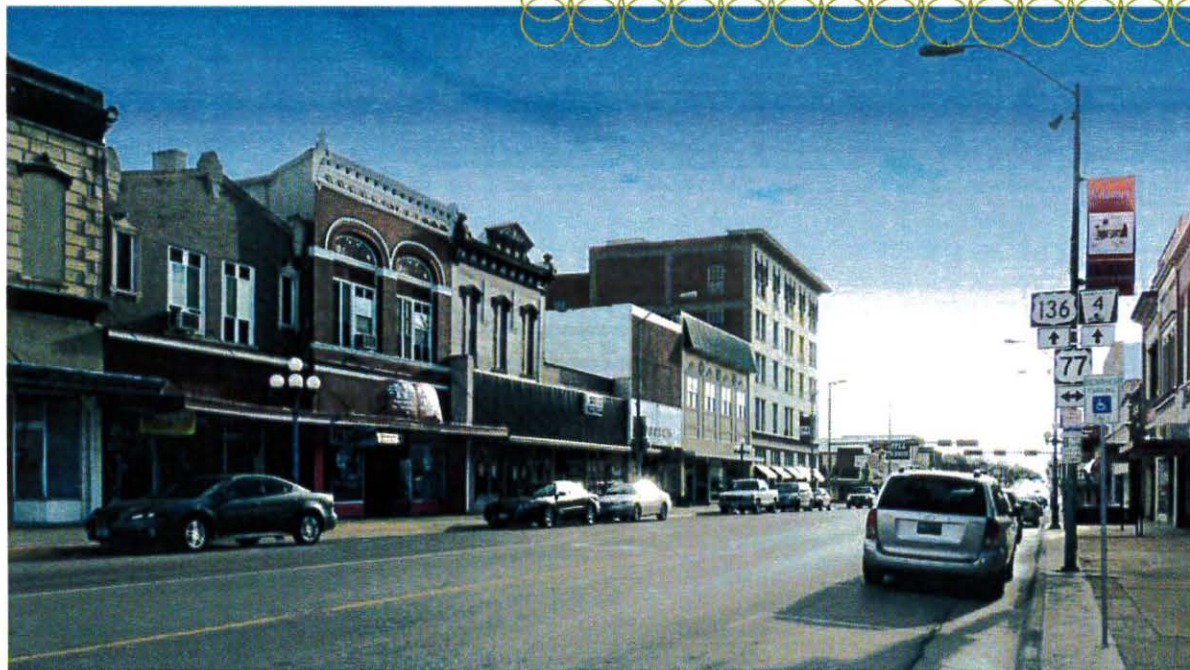




Beatrice Downtown Revitalization Plan



For the City of Beatrice, Nebraska
Prepared by RDG Planning & Design
June 20, 2011

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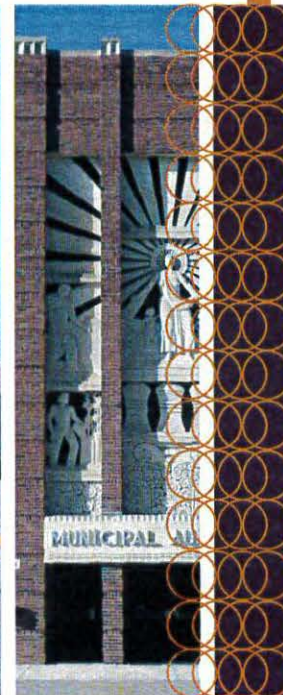
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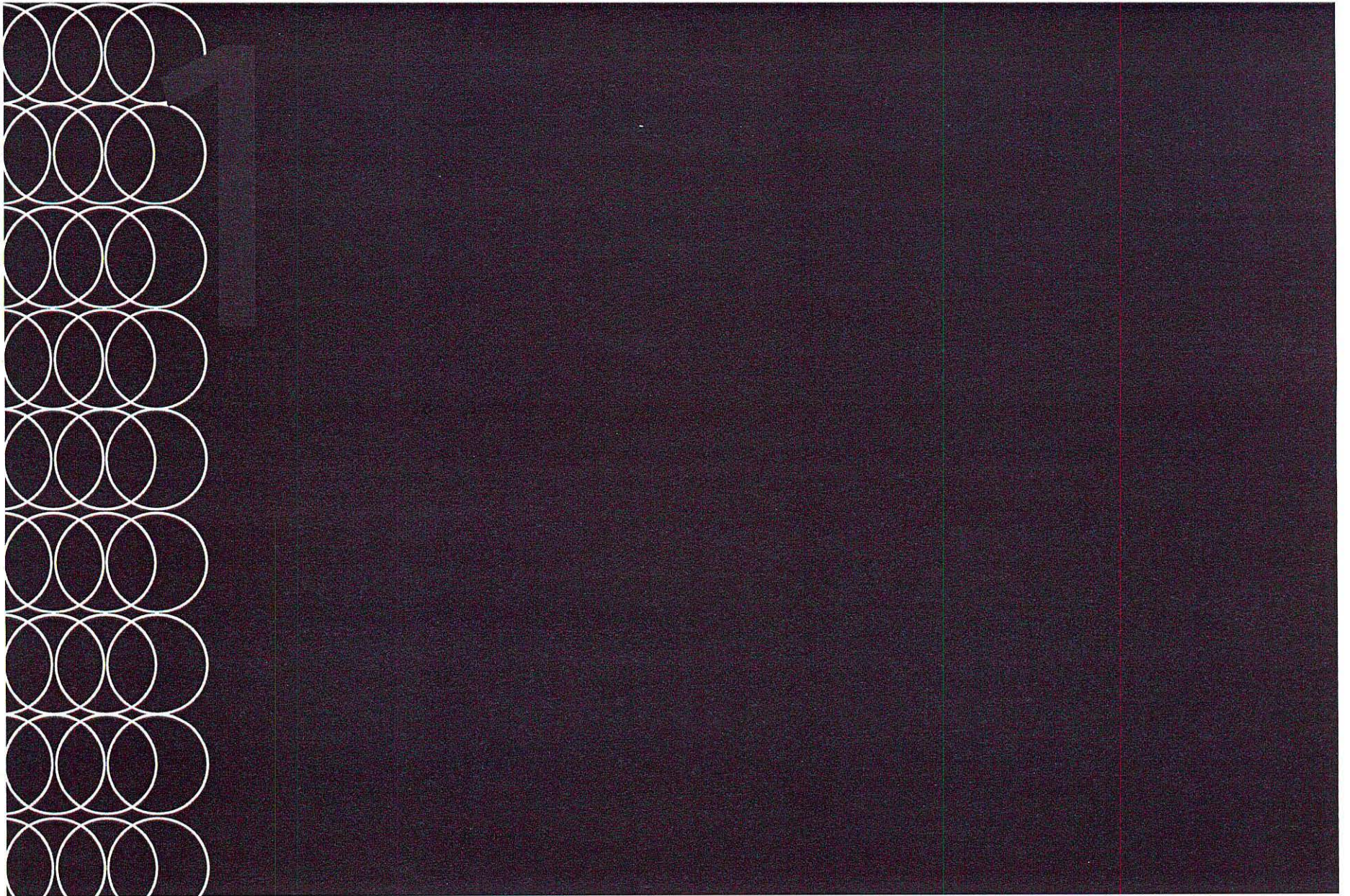
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Chapter 1

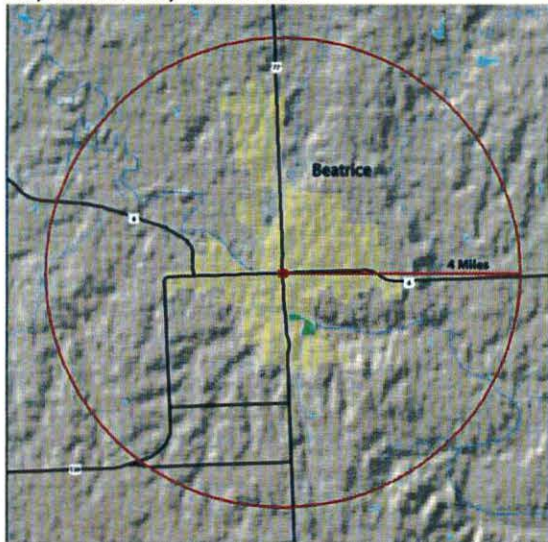


MARKET ANALYSIS

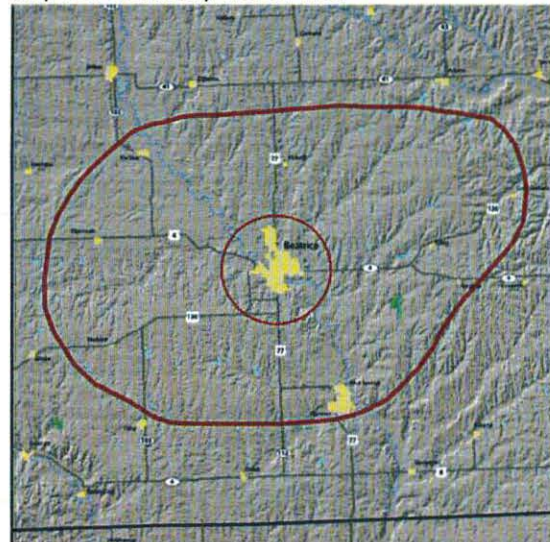
This market analysis considers population and demographic characteristics for multiple geographic areas extending outward from the City of Beatrice. It examines commercial, office, and residential possibilities for the City, and estimates future development potentials for these markets in Downtown.



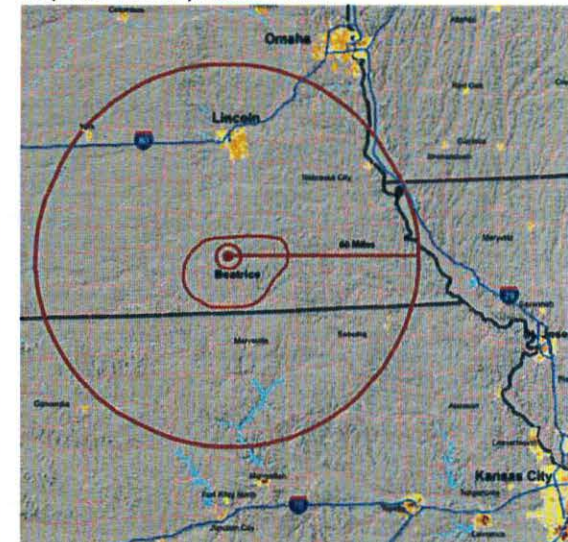
Map 1.1: Primary Market Area



Map 1.2: Secondary Market Area



Map 1.3: Tertiary Market Area



MARKET AREA DEFINITION

The market analysis begins by defining the city's market areas. Beatrice is a regional community with major commercial and cultural resources. Its significant market provides services to local residents and is also a trade center for rural markets in Gage County. Beatrice's markets are limited however by its proximity to Lincoln, a major commercial and industrial center for the region that is easily accessed by US Highway 77.

Map 1.1-3 illustrates the different geographic areas used by this study.

- **Primary.** Primary market area is the City of Beatrice and the immediate surrounding area that extends out 4 miles from the intersection of 6th and Court Streets. Residents of the city do much of their daily shopping in Beatrice and view the city as a location for retail services, civic life, and entertainment.
- **Secondary.** Secondary market area extends 10 to 20 miles from the city's municipal limits. The market area is defined by a gravity model that considers the population and distance of cities of similar size and assumes that people living within the vicinity travel to the closest regional trade center for a greater selection of

goods and services. The area extends about halfway to surrounding market centers, including Fairbury, Auburn, and Marysville, Kansas. While to the north this radius only extends about 60 miles out from the city, due to the influence of Lincoln area markets. Lincoln markets exert a powerful draw for special or large purchase items.

- **Tertiary.** Tertiary market area extends out 90 miles from the city's municipal limits. This broader area includes people who visit Beatrice for special events, tourism or niche businesses.

DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION Trends and FOREcasts

This section describes changes in the characteristics and dynamic of Beatrice's population. Since the 1950's the city's population has grown on average by 0.1% annually, from 11,813 in 1950 to 12,459 in 2010. Table 1.1 summarizes the historical population change in Beatrice while Table 1.2 compares Beatrice's population to similar sized communities in and around the Lincoln/Omaha Metroplex. Significant conclusions include:

- Beatrice has grown slowly over the last sixty years with its strongest period of growth occurring between 1970 and 1980. During this ten year period Beatrice grew by 4.1% (502 residents).
- Beatrice experienced a period of population decline. The most significant decline in the 1980's by 537 residents. The city did rebound some by 2000; however, its population was still below that experienced prior to 1980.
- While Beatrice has lost population since 2000, many of the other communities in the Metroplex region have grown over the past twenty years as "bedroom communities" to Lincoln and Omaha.

Table 1.1: Historical Population Change, Beatrice

Year	Population	Decennial Change	Decennial % Change	Annual Rate of Change
1950	11,813			
1960	12,132	319	2.7%	0.3%
1970	12,389	257	2.1%	0.2%
1980	12,891	502	4.1%	0.4%
1990	12,354	-537	-4.2%	-0.4%
2000	12,496	142	1.1%	0.1%
2010	12,459	-37	-0.3%	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

- The secondary market area continues to experience significant population loss as rural populations continue to move towards urbanized areas. Between 1990 and 2010 this market area has lost 3.7% of its population.
- The growth of Beatrice's population and economy are effected by its proximity to Lincoln. While the city is close to Lincoln, it is not close enough to effectively serve as a bedroom community. Yet, retailers and manufacturers are influenced by the market opportunities presented by locating operations or stores within Lincoln.
- The secondary market will continue to decline as more residents move from rural areas towards major population centers within the Lincoln/Omaha Metroplex.
- The tertiary market, which includes most of the Lincoln metropolitan area, will continue to grow over the next five years.

Income CHARACTERISTICS

Table 1.4 presents the median household income for residents of each market area. Beatrice's median income was \$43,347 in 2010 according to Claritas, Inc. This is slightly more than the surrounding secondary market area at \$42,940. While median income has increased in the last 10 years, it still trails behind income reported for the state of Nebraska at \$48,087.

Unemployment Rate

Table 1.5 illustrates the unemployment rate for Beatrice over the past five years. Like many other communities throughout the nation, Beatrice has experienced a significant increase in unemployment over the last

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Projecting the future population of Beatrice helps to predict the future demographic character of the community. This in turn helps guide the city's planning and policy decisions regarding future investments. Table 1.3 illustrates future population growth for the city and its market areas.

- It is assumed that Beatrice's population will change little over the next 5 years, with the population estimated to be 12,480 by 2015

Table 1.2: Population Change, Comparable Communities 1990-2010

	1990 Population	2000 Population	Change	% Change	2010 Population	2000-2010 Change	2000-2010 %Change
Beatrice	12,354	12,496	142	1.1%	12,459	-37	-0.3%
Seward	5,634	6,319	685	12.2%	6,964	645	10.2%
York	7,884	8,081	197	2.5%	7,766	-315	-3.9%
Ashland	2,136	2,262	126	5.9%	2,453	191	8.4%
Nebraska City	6,547	7,228	681	10.4%	7,289	61	0.8%
Plattsmouth	6,412	6,887	475	7.4%	6,502	-385	-5.6%
Marysville, Kansas	3,359	3,271	-88	-2.6%	3,294	23	0.7%
Secondary Market Area	20,539	20,471	-68	-0.3%	20,349	-122	-0.6%
Secondary Market Area (wo Beatrice)	8,185	7,975	-210	-2.6%	7,890	-85	-1.1%
Tertiary Market Area (60 -mile ²¹)	373,238	410,433	37,195	10.0%	438,235	27,802	6.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, and Claritas, Inc.2



Table 1.3: Projected Population 2000-2014, Market Areas

	1990 Population	2000 Population	Growth Rate bw 1990/2000	% Change 1990/2000	2010 Population	2015 Estimate	Growth Rate 000-2015	% Change 2000/2014
Primary (4-mile)	12,354	12,496	0.1%	1.1%	12,459	12,480	-0.01%	-0.13%
Secondary	20,539	20,471	0.0%	-0.3%	20,349	20,112	-0.1%	-1.75%
Secondary-Primary	8,185	7,975	-0.3%	-2.6%	7,890	7,632	-0.4%	-4.30%
Tertiary (90-mile)	373,238	410,433	1.0%	10.0%	438,235	449,563	0.7%	9.53%
Tertiary-Secondary	352,699	389,962	1.0%	10.6%	417,886	429,451	0.8%	10.13%

Source: Claritas, Inc.

Table 1.4: Median Income Forecasts in Beatrice's Market Areas, 2000-2010

	2000 Census	2010 Estimate	Change	% Change
Primary	\$34,796	\$43,347	\$8,551	25%
Secondary	\$34,073	\$42,940	\$8,867	26%
State	\$39,604	\$48,087	\$8,483	21%

Source: Claritas, Inc., U.S. Census Bureau

Table 1.5: Unemployment Rate

Year	Rate
2006	3.4%
2007	3.1%
2008	6.1%
2009	5.5%
2010	4.7%

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

three years. The closure of Husqvarna and other manufacturing operations contribute to Beatrice's increased unemployment rate. Unemployment is a double edge sword, while a higher unemployment rate can help to attract new industries to a region, it can have a negative impact upon retail sales.

BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT

Retail Performance and Potential for Downtown

Table 1.6 displays the distribution of employment for the market areas. Findings include:

- About 80% of all workplace establishments are located in the primary market, and employ the majority of the regions workforce.
- Service businesses account for 39% of the Primary Market's establishments and 35% of the city's 9,575 employees. Service employers are the largest employer with 3,371 members of the city's workforce.
- Retail businesses account for 20% of the establishments and about 22% of the total people employed in the Primary Area.
- Manufacturing employs 15% of Beatrice's workforce (1,407 employees) at 47 independent establishments. Each manufacturing establishment employs 30 workers on average, while the overall ratio of employees to establishments in the Primary Area is 1:11.
- Like Beatrice, the majority of establishments in the secondary market are service and retail businesses (54%) and account for 55% of the trade areas total employment.
- Leading employer in the secondary market is service-oriented businesses.



Table 1.6: Work Places and Employment for Beatrice's Trade Areas

Business Description	Primary Trade Area				Secondary Trade Area (exclusive)			
	Total Establishments	%	Total Employed	%	Total Establishments	%	Total Employed	%
Industries (All)	862	100%	9,575	100%	170	100%	1,157	100%
Agriculture (All)	29	3%	75	1%	12	7%	33	3%
Mining (All)	1	0%	6	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Construction (All)	73	8%	341	4%	10	6%	136	12%
Manufacturing (All)	47	5%	1,407	15%	9	5%	37	3%
Transportation, Communications/Public Utilities	49	6%	401	4%	18	11%	83	7%
Wholesale Trade (All)	32	4%	218	2%	6	4%	21	2%
Retail (All Retail)	172	20%	2,131	22%	41	24%	186	16%
Finance (All)	73	8%	305	3%	6	4%	16	1%
Service (All)	340	39%	3,371	35%	51	30%	450	39%
Public Administration (All)	46	5%	1,320	14%	17	10%	195	17%

Source: Claritas, Inc., 2010

CONSUMER SPENDING PATTERNS

Table 1.7 compares annual consumer expenditures by product type in each trade area to the national average. National average per capita expenditures are equal to a market index of one, which is the ratio of the Annual Average Household Expenditure (AAHE) in each trade area compared to the AAHE for the United States. Therefore, scores greater than 100 indicate that consumers spend more on a good or service compared to the rest of the nation.

- Consumers tend to spend less than the national average on most consumable goods; notable examples include clothing, day care, and educational services.
- Consumers in Beatrice and the secondary market are spending more than the national average on such goods and services as prescription drugs, medical supplies, smoking products, used vehicle, and recreational vehicles.
- Spending on prescription drugs is slightly higher than the nation. However, Beatrice's aging population contributes to the strength in this market.
- Regarding used vehicles however, it is important to note that the "Cash for Clunkers" program created a shortage in good quality used vehicles that lead to an inflation in the price of used vehicles.
- Consumers spend less on dining out when compared to the nation. Yet, consumer spending is comparable to the national when going out to enjoy an alcoholic beverage.

Table 1.7: Consumer Spending Patterns based on Nat'l Standards

	primary	secondary
TOTAL CONSUMER EXPENDITURES	88	88
FOOD AT HOME	90	90
FOOD AWAY FROM HOME & ALCOHOL		
Alcoholic Beverages	96	94
Food Away from Home	84	83
DAY CARE, EDUCATION & CONTRIBUTIONS		
All Day Care	72	70
Contributions (All)	72	72
Education	53	55
HEALTHCARE		
Medical Services	91	90
Prescription Drugs	111	111
Medical Supplies	99	100
HOUSEHOLD FURNISHINGS & APPLIANCES		
Furniture	77	78
Household Textiles	86	84
Major Household Appliances	91	91
Miscellaneous Household Equipment	86	95
Small Appliances & Housewares	90	87
HOUSING RELATED & PERSONAL		
Housing Expenses	91	91
Household Repairs	89	88
Household Services	68	69
Housekeeping Supplies	90	90
Personal Expenses and Services	94	93



PERSONAL CARE & SMOKING PRODUCTS

Personal Care Products & Services	84	84
Smoking Products & Supplies	122	124

PET EXPENSES

89 93

SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Photographic Equipment/Supplies	81	82
Reading Materials	98	94
Sports & Recreation	79	77
Travel Expenses	80	79
TV, Radio, & Sound Equipment	81	80

TRANSPORTATION & AUTO EXPENSES

Automotive Maintenance	94	95
Gasoline	95	96
Diesel Fuel	110	107
Vehicle Purchases & Leases	103	101
New Autos/Trucks/Vans	76	75
Used Vehicles	123	123
Boats & Recreational Vehicles	169	160
Rented Vehicles	73	61

TOTAL APPAREL

73 72

Source: Claritas, Inc., 2011

Retail Sales

One way of evaluating Beatrice's retail role in the region is to consider its share of total regional retail sales. Table 1.8 indicates total retail sales in each market area while Table 1.9 indicates the total retail sales for the primary and secondary markets by retail sector. In 2010 total retail sales in the primary and secondary market were about \$169 million. Retail sales that occurred in Beatrice accounted for 85% of the region's total sales.

Table 1.9 identifies the gap between consumer demand expenditures and retail sales within each retail sector. A positive value results from demand exceeding supply, indicating a leakage of consumer dollars to outside markets. In other words, residents have dollars to spend but they are spending them outside of their respective market area. A negative value results from sales exceeding demand and indicate a flow of regional dollars into the city's retail market. In 2010, Beatrice's primary market area accounted for \$143 million in adjusted retail sales, while local residents generated a demand for \$129 million. The surplus of \$14 million in sales illustrates that Beatrice is a center for retail trade. In comparison the secondary market (not including Beatrice) is an exporter of retail dollars. Adjusted consumer expenditures were \$60 million, while total retail sales were only \$26 million. While a portion of the gap is being picked up by Beatrice's market, the majority of these sales are likely being captured by Lincoln.

Merchandise categories with strong retail sales in Beatrice include:

- General merchandise stores, such as Wal-Mart and Alco (\$57 million)
- Auto dealerships (\$54 million, report excluded from total retail sales)

Table 1.8: Share of Total (Local) Retail Sales, 2010*

	Total Retail Sales	% of Total
Primary (4-mile area)	\$143,364,524	85%
Secondary (10-20 mile area)	\$26,124,138	15%
Total	\$169,488,662	100%

Source: Claritas Inc.

* Figures exclude motor vehicle dealers/parts, fuel stations, and non-store retail.

- Building material and supply dealers (\$21 million)
- Pharmacies and drug stores (\$13 million)
- Miscellaneous retailers (\$9 million)
- Home furnishing stores (\$7 million)
- Lawn and garden equipment stores (\$6 million)

While Beatrice has a strong retail market, it is also being influenced by the draw of retail stores in Lincoln. Several sectors within Beatrice's economy are being influenced by the draw of Lincoln's markets. These include the following:

- **Food and beverage stores.** The primary and secondary markets have a demand for more than \$36 million dollars in grocery store retail. However, total sales for the region amounted to less than \$13 million dollars. This suggests that either residents are doing the majority of their grocery shopping outside of the region, or that these sales are being reported under another sector such as general merchandising.
- **Food Service.** Restaurants and limited service eating places meet the majority of demand for the primary market currently, while sales from the secondary market are being exported. Downtown Beatrice has



a limited number of restaurants, most establishments are located along Highways 77 and 136. Restaurants are an important industry to focus on, because of the compliment they offer to other services. They can encourage additional activities for a district, such as district shopping, or provide a place for visitors to eat within the district before and after movies, theatre productions, or special events.

Beatrice needs and is capable of capturing sales from the rural market.

- **Electronic and Appliance stores.** While there is a significant amount of retail dollars being lost to outside markets. The proximity of Lincoln with a wide selection of retail outlets in this sector would make it difficult to capture a significant portion of this gap.
- **Sporting Goods and Hobby Stores.** This sector is exporting the majority of sales to outside markets, similar to electronic and appliance stores. The low volume of sales makes it difficult for a larger retail store to locate within the community. Specialty retailers such as a hunting goods stores or golf pro shops would be good specialized businesses within this sector that could prove to be effective niche retailers for the city.

- **Pharmacies and Drug Stores.** While Beatrice imports a significant amount of sales within this sector, there is an additional \$5 million in sales leaking from the secondary market. The development of marketing campaigns to regional residents, or the development of specialized retail sales in this sector are ways that this market could attempt to capture additional market share.

As downtowns across the nation compete for a share of the retail market, many have found success in specialty or niche markets. Downtowns that compete successfully against “big box” retailers have focused on service oriented and specialty retailing. Beatrice’s downtown has remained vibrant and active in part because of its strong mix of retail and service businesses. While its markets are unlikely to grow significantly over the next five years, steps should be taken to ensure that the district’s economy remains stable.

- **Main Street Beatrice.** The organization provides structure for economic development through revitalization and marketing efforts. Actions common to Main Street organizations include:
 - Programming for special events, such as district wide sales, festivals, concerts, and etc.
 - Scheduling and prioritizing improvement for streets and sidewalks
 - Providing an avenue for communications and co-operation between area businesses
 - Guiding improvement funds for such things as streetscapes and façade improvements
 - Create a marketing campaign in order to promote the district both locally and regionally.
- Establishing wayfinding and Informational kiosks to aid visitors in navigating the district.
- Improve physical connections between the downtown, courthouse, major transportation corridors, and surrounding neighborhoods.

PROJECTED ANNUAL EXPENDITURE GROWTH

Forecasting retail expenditures can help to determine the future. Even though Beatrice’s markets are influenced by Lincoln, it is still an important regional trade center. Many of the businesses in downtown are destinations, providing goods and services that are not always readily available at larger retail chains like Wal-Mart. By using the data in Table 1.9, current per capita spending can be determined. If the amount of dollars spent per individual is applied to Beatrice’s population and that of its regional market, future retail sales (based on 2010 dollars) can be calculated. These market areas should continue to capture projected retail sales at current rates, but should also strive to capture a portion of the dollars that leak to other market areas.

Based on the data in Table 1.9 the following assumptions can be made:

- The secondary market is the area of greatest opportunity for capturing additional retail sales.
- Beatrice will continue to find itself competing against Lincoln, Fairbury, and Marysville, Kansas for a share of the sales in the regional market as consumers continue to shop outside of Beatrice for goods and services. However, consumers are seeking for experiences that downtown Beatrice can offer.

Given the potential for limited population growth within the primary and secondary markets, it is difficult to project for future retail space demands. However, there are markets within these two market areas that still hold potential for Beatrice, and could become opportunities for further expansion of the city’s retail markets, of which the downtown can expect to attract a portion.

- **Clothing Stores.** Sales for clothing stores are meeting 20% of the overall demand in the primary market. Overall demand is \$5.4 million, yet the area is reporting \$1.1 million in sales. The aggregate per capita annual spending for clothing within the primary and secondary markets is estimated at \$436 and \$332 respectively. The total unmet demand for the combined area is \$6.8 million. Assuming a capture rate of 30% of this unmet demand, then a potential demand of 6,200 square feet of clothing retail space could be absorbed.
- **Restaurants.** The per capita annual spending for restaurants within the primary and secondary markets is estimated at \$1,600 and \$1,169 respectively. Retail sales and expected demand for retail sales balances in the primary area, yet a significant unmet demand are present in the secondary market. The total unmet demand for the combined area is \$7.5 million (full-service and limited), mostly generated by the secondary market. If 30% of this unmet demand could be captured (\$2.2 million), then a potential demand of 6,000 square feet of new restaurant space could be absorbed.
- **Sporting Goods and Hobby Stores.** The aggregate per capita annual spending for sporting goods and hobby stores within the primary and secondary markets is estimated at \$189 to \$140 respectively. The total unmet demand for the combined area is \$2.8 million. Assuming a capture rate of 30% of this unmet demand, then 2,500 square feet of sporting goods and hobby stores could be absorbed.
- **Niche businesses.** Local entrepreneurs may need a storefront space to begin a business that may serve more than the regional clientele. For example, the Heritage Falls Candles & Gifts shop in Falls City specializes in candle making and exports their goods to larger communities throughout the Midwest. Their immediate market area is well-served, yet they are shipping into larger markets and online. A contributing factor for remaining in downtown Falls City is the affordability of their space. Businesses in other communities share similar stories.

Table 1.9: Market Area's Demand, Supply and Opportunity Gap, 2010

	Primary			Secondary (exclusive)		
	Consumer Expenditures	Retail Sales	Opportunity Gap/Surplus	Consumer Expenditures	Retail Sales	Opportunity Gap/Surplus
Total Retail Sales Including Eating and Drinking Places	\$195,512,440	\$209,252,167	(\$13,739,727)	\$93,615,506	\$52,539,554	\$41,075,952
Adjusted Retail Sales	\$129,230,348	\$143,364,524	(\$14,134,176)	\$60,026,818	\$26,124,138	\$33,902,680
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	\$34,646,652	\$53,582,142	(\$18,935,490)	\$18,484,130	\$5,628,980	\$12,855,150
Automotive Dealers	\$28,602,548	\$50,069,555	(\$21,467,007)	\$14,944,801	\$5,297,552	\$9,647,249
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	\$3,264,305	\$2,615	\$3,261,690	\$2,263,567	\$125,375	\$2,138,192
Auto Parts/Accessories, Tire Stores	\$2,779,799	\$3,509,972	(\$730,173)	\$1,275,762	\$206,053	\$1,069,709
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores	\$3,772,914	\$7,382,873	(\$3,609,959)	\$1,718,930	\$301,462	\$1,417,468
Electronics and Appliances	\$4,101,733	\$1,848,398	\$2,253,335	\$1,826,944	\$6	\$1,826,938
Building Material and Garden Equipment	\$18,755,931	\$27,213,153	(\$8,457,222)	\$9,003,150	\$6,800,766	\$2,202,384
Building Material and Supply Dealers	\$17,036,005	\$20,899,415	(\$3,863,410)	\$8,063,466	\$2,180,539	\$5,882,927
Lawn/Garden Equipment, Supplies Stores	\$1,719,926	\$6,313,739	(\$4,593,813)	\$939,684	\$4,620,227	(\$3,680,543)
Outdoor Power Equipment Stores	\$367,920	\$1,344,061	(\$976,141)	\$248,395	\$1,396,072	(\$1,147,677)
Nursery and Garden Centers	\$1,352,006	\$4,969,678	(\$3,617,672)	\$691,289	\$3,224,155	(\$2,532,866)
Food and Beverage Stores	\$27,183,240	\$818,899	\$26,364,341	\$12,746,170	\$13,204,813	(\$458,643)
Grocery Stores	\$24,585,494	\$312,362	\$24,273,132	\$11,571,905	\$12,607,317	(\$1,035,412)
Specialty Food	\$814,076	\$411	\$813,665	\$384,865	\$62,576	\$322,289
Beer, Wine and Liquor	\$1,783,670	\$506,126	\$1,277,544	\$789,401	\$534,921	\$254,480
Health and Personal Care	\$13,310,665	\$14,317,956	(\$1,007,291)	\$6,182,133	\$100,586	\$6,081,547
Pharmacies and Drug	\$11,536,096	\$13,393,821	(\$1,857,725)	\$5,351,969	\$96,282	\$5,255,687
Cosmetics, Beauty Supplies, Perfume	\$479,105	-	\$479,105	\$222,352	-	\$222,352
Optical Goods	\$455,875	\$168,512	\$287,363	\$217,111	\$3,013	\$214,098
Other Health and Personal Care Stores	\$839,589	\$755,623	\$83,966	\$390,701	\$1,291	\$389,410

	Primary			Secondary (exclusive)		
	Consumer Expenditures	Retail Sales	Opportunity Gap/Surplus	Consumer Expenditures	Retail Sales	Opportunity Gap/Surplus
Gasoline Stations	\$18,043,641	\$9,805,766	\$8,237,875	\$8,858,798	\$12,099,930	(\$3,241,132)
Gasoline Stations with Convenience	\$13,614,343	\$21,536	\$13,592,807	\$6,637,690	\$9,788,279	(\$3,150,589)
Other Gasoline Stations	\$4,429,297	\$9,784,230	(\$5,354,933)	\$2,221,108	\$2,311,652	(\$90,544)
Clothing & Clothing Accessories	\$7,661,049	\$4,940,260	\$2,720,789	\$3,520,317	-	\$3,520,317
Clothing Stores	\$5,449,155	\$1,139,523	\$4,309,632	\$2,539,923	-	\$2,539,923
Shoe Stores	\$1,094,180	\$2,376,995	(\$1,282,815)	\$511,083	-	\$511,083
Jewelry, Luggage, Leather Goods Stores	\$1,117,715	\$1,423,742	(\$306,027)	\$469,309	-	\$469,309
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music	\$3,431,778	\$1,000,339	\$2,431,439	\$1,527,784	\$110,141	\$1,417,643
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument	\$2,361,666	\$543,940	\$1,817,726	\$1,073,267	\$110,141	\$963,126
Book, Periodical and Music	\$1,070,112	\$456,399	\$613,713	\$454,517	-	\$454,517
General Merchandise	\$25,735,940	\$57,316,818	(\$31,580,878)	\$12,017,964	\$81,645	\$11,936,319
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$5,321,090	\$8,943,114	(\$3,622,024)	\$2,560,939	\$2,854,776	(\$293,837)
Florists	\$360,206	\$904,582	(\$544,376)	\$169,005	-	\$169,005
Office Supplies, Stationery, Gift	\$1,928,421	\$4,767,083	(\$2,838,662)	\$865,707	\$891	\$864,816
Used Merchandise	\$371,246	\$207,632	\$163,614	\$166,686	\$13,048	\$153,638
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$2,661,218	\$3,063,817	(\$402,599)	\$1,359,540	\$2,840,837	(\$1,481,297)
Non-Store Retailers	\$13,591,799	\$2,499,735	\$11,092,064	\$6,245,760	\$8,686,506	(\$2,440,746)
Foodservice and Drinking Places	\$19,956,009	\$19,582,713	\$373,296	\$8,922,485	\$2,669,941	\$6,252,544
Full-Service Restaurants	\$8,926,487	\$8,349,025	\$577,462	\$3,975,387	\$671,921	\$3,303,466
Limited Service Eating Places	\$8,373,023	\$8,463,379	(\$90,356)	\$3,758,906	\$51,074	\$3,707,832
Special Foodservices	\$1,640,561	\$1,260,419	\$380,142	\$736,874	\$1,213,694	(\$476,820)
Drinking Places Alcoholic Beverages	\$1,015,938	\$1,509,890	(\$493,952)	\$451,319	\$733,252	(\$281,933)

Source: Claritas, Inc., 2011

Note: Business types not reporting sales indicate too few business to permit reporting.

CONCLUSIONS

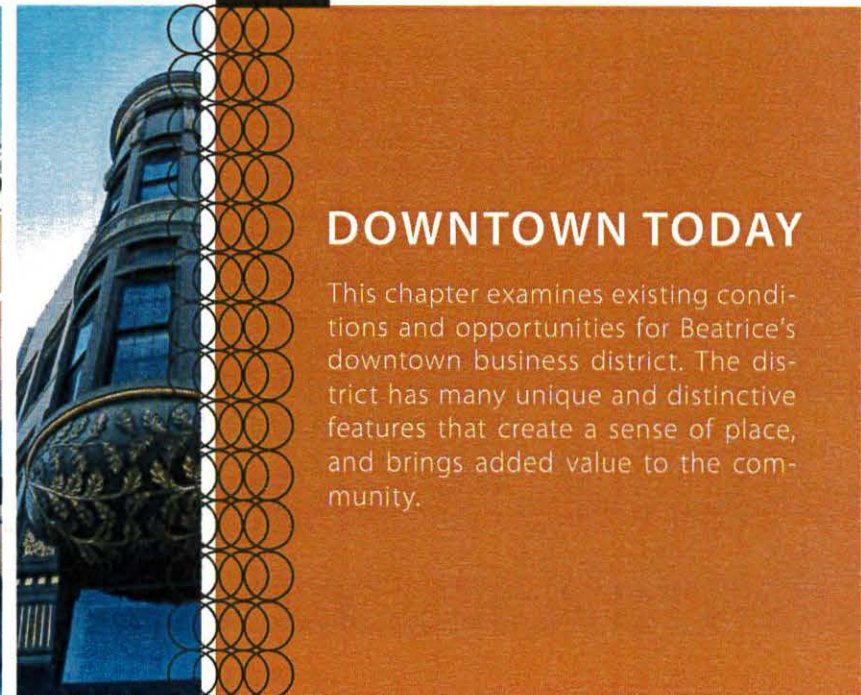
This analysis of population and potential markets leads to the following conclusions:

- The growth of Beatrice's population and economy are effected by its proximity to Lincoln. While the city is close to Lincoln, it is not close enough to effectively serve as a bedroom community to the metro area. Yet it is close enough that retailers and manufacturers are influenced by the market opportunities presented by locating operations or stores within Lincoln.
- Nearly 60% of Beatrice's employment in the primary market is dedicated to service and retail.
- Consumer spending by residents in Beatrice's primary and secondary markets is similar to the nation; however, there are key retail sectors that are considerably higher than the national index, including Pharmacy, Medical Supplies and Vehicle Sales.
- The combined primary and secondary market reports \$260 million in retail sales, with 85% of those sales occurring in the primary market.
- Beatrice's retail leaders include General Merchandise Stores (\$57 million), Health and Personal Care (\$14 million), and Building Materials and Garden Supplies (\$27 million).
- Promising market areas include Food and Drinking Places, Clothing and Clothing Accessory Stores, and Sporting Goods and Hobby Stores. These retail store types are often found in downtown settings.

A sound business plan for the marketing strategy and management of the operation will have a significant influence on the success of any new business venture. Recommendations alone for potential sales demand are not a guarantee of business success.

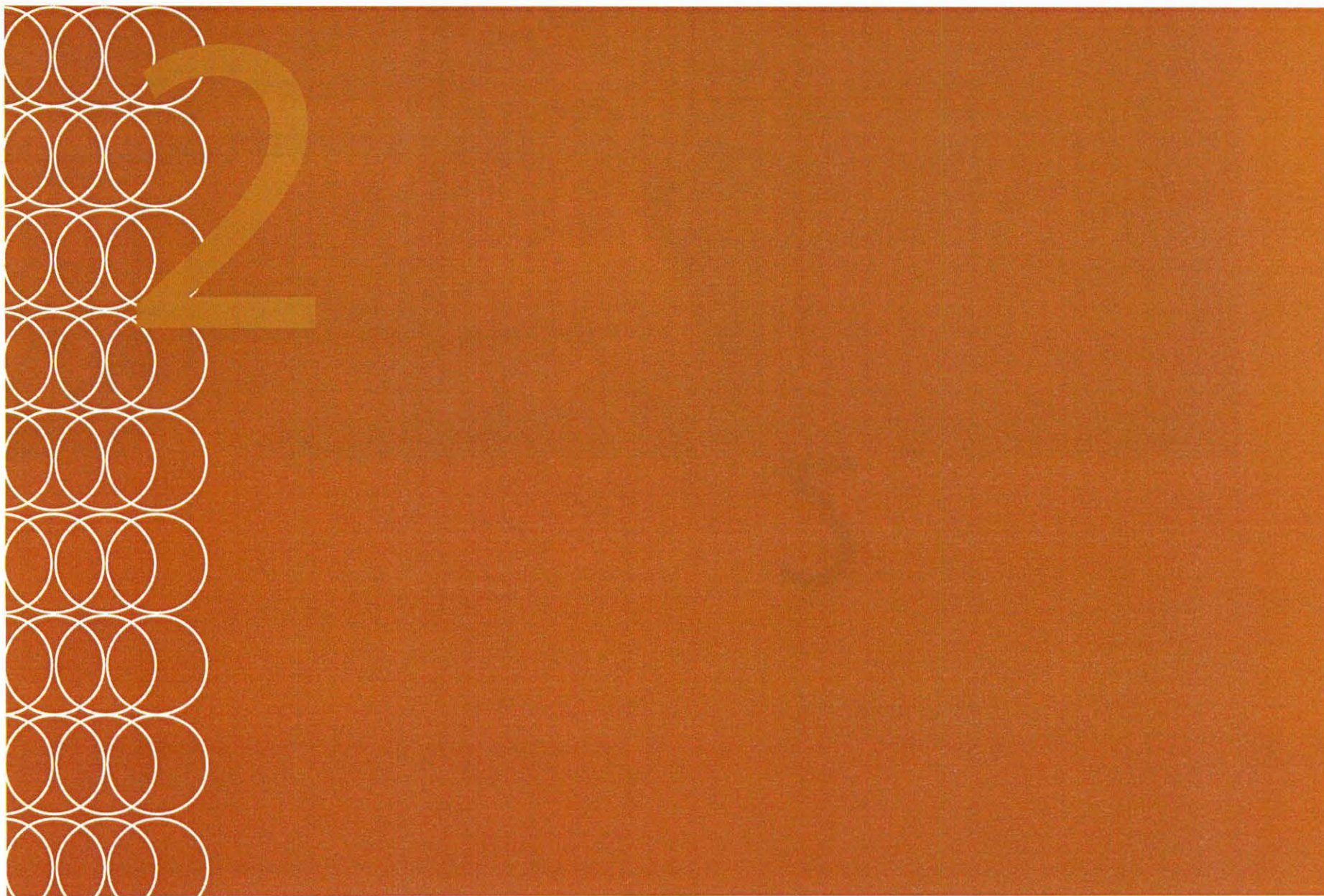


Chapter 2



DOWNTOWN TODAY

This chapter examines existing conditions and opportunities for Beatrice's downtown business district. The district has many unique and distinctive features that create a sense of place, and brings added value to the community.



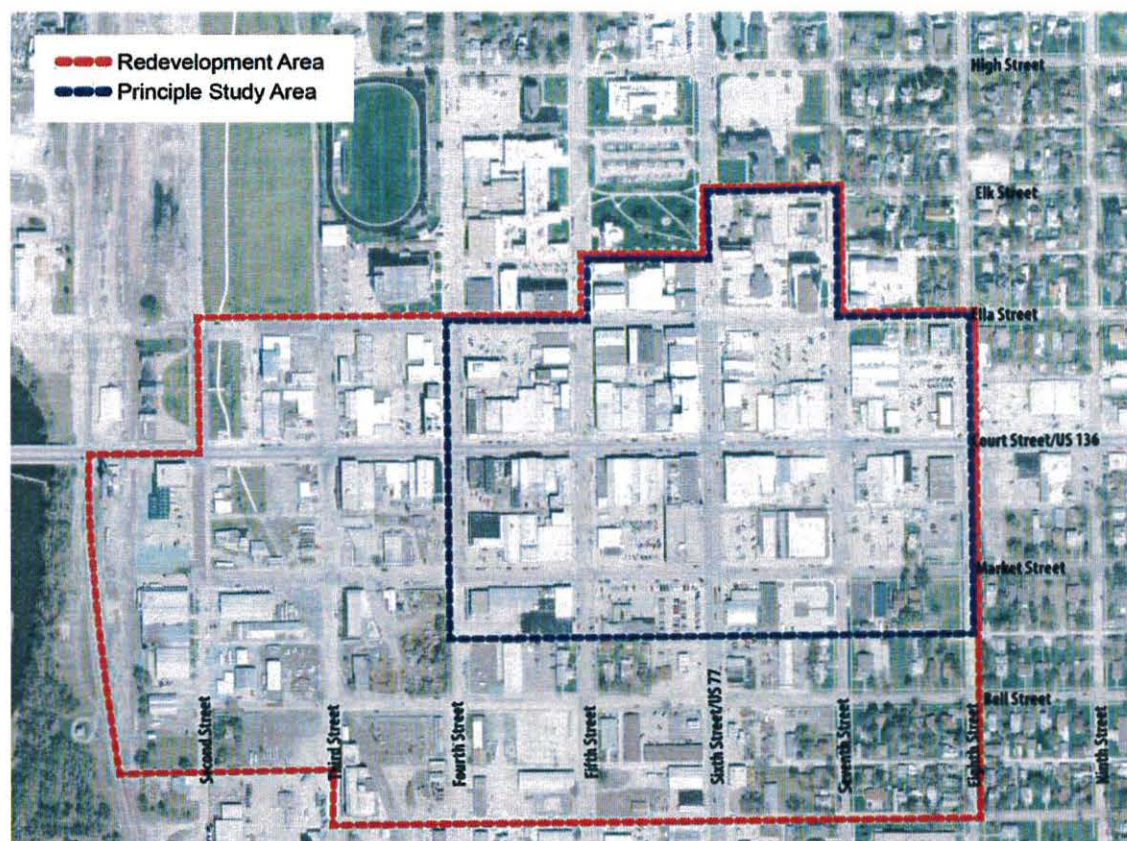
DOWNTOWN BEATRICE TODAY

This chapter examines existing conditions and opportunities for Beatrice's downtown business district. The district has many unique and distinctive features that create a sense of place, and brings added value to the community.

Long before the exploratory party of the newly formed Nebraska Association chose the location of what would become Beatrice; westward settlers crossed the Big Blue River just north of the present day Court Street Bridge on the DeRoin Trail, towards the Oregon Trail near present day Alexandria, Nebraska. Prior to this, the popular trace was also known as the Brownville Road, and directly followed the route of an old Otoe-Omaha Indian trail.

Beatrice quickly grew from a small frontier outpost, into an important commercial and manufacturing center in southeast Nebraska. Much of Beatrice's early success is due to the development of the nation's rail network. The development of a rail spur by Burlington Railroad connecting Beatrice with Lincoln, Omaha, and St Joseph, Missouri meant that manufacturers could quickly connect with costumers across the region.

Today the primacy of the railroad is long gone, as are many of the manufacturers who paved the way for the city's early success. However, new transportation networks, such as US Highways 77 and 136 have brought with them new investments and opportunities. Downtown Beatrice rests at the crossroads of these two important highway corridors. While these networks help to keep downtown an active center for commercial trade, they have also lead to fragmented development patterns, with strip malls sprawling out along these corridors from the traditional town center.



As Beatrice's downtown district plans for its future, it must take into consideration a number of factors that have affected the stability and growth of the district.

1. Beatrice's proximity to the Lincoln Metropolitan Area has limited the city's population growth over the last thirty years.
2. The widening of US Highway 77 to a four lane divided highway, has lead to more residents traveling into Lincoln for goods and services.
3. Beatrice's declining manufacturing base a has affected retail sales throughout the community, and have lead to a decline in population.

DOWNTOWN SUB-DISTRICTS

To better understand the character and function of downtown Beatrice, further analysis is conducted by dividing the downtown into its respective sub-districts and corridors. Map 2.1 illustrates the many sub-districts that comprise Downtown Beatrice.

- Downtown Core.** The traditional heart of Beatrice, the district developed on high ground to the east of the Blue River and Burlington Railroad. The district is bounded by Market Street on the south, Eighth Street to the east, Ella to the north, and Fourth Street to the west. Buildings in the district are built to the property lines with parallel and diagonal parking along city streets. Additional parking is provided by off-street lots located along the district's periphery, with buildings ranging from one- to four-stories. The district is characterized by retail and service businesses, restaurants, offices, and banks.

Streetscape improvements including decorative lighting, benches, and planters along Court Street attempt to create a more pleasant and safe environment for pedestrians, despite the significant truck traffic through the district. Traffic signals are located at major intersections along Court Street and Sixth Street, in order to control the flow of traffic along these important corridors.

- Industrial District.** Located to the southwest of the downtown core, the industrial district was once home to a number of mills, foundries, factories and warehouses. Over the years Beatrice's manufacturing base has changed significantly. Many of the manufacturing operations that were once located here have either closed their operations, or moved out along Highway 77 on the north side of the city. Today there are a number of empty lots and underused buildings located within this district. While some manufacturers still exist, the majority of uses include industrial mechanics, construction plants, and machine shops.

Map 2.1: Sub-Districts Map



- Civic District.** Concentrated along the northern edge of Downtown Beatrice are many of the city and county's most important civic institutions. At the heart of this sub-district is the Gage County Courthouse, this important facet of local government brings county residents to Beatrice and the downtown on a regular basis. Additionally, this district is also home to the public library, Civic Auditorium, School Administration Building, Middle School, and several churches.
- Highway 77 Corridor.** This federal highway is the primary north/south route for traffic traveling through the region, and provides direct access to the cities of Lincoln and Marysville, Kansas. Highway 77 cuts through the middle of downtown Beatrice, where buildings are built up to the property line along the corridor. To the south of the downtown core are strip malls, service stations, and small stand alone businesses with small parking lots either in front or to the side of the business. Development patterns to the north are marked by a number of large public institutions, single-family homes, and stand alone office and retail outlets.

- **Highway 136 Corridor.** US Highway 136 is the primary east/west route for travelers through southeast and south central Nebraska. The highway connects Beatrice with such communities as Brownville, Auburn, Hebron, Fairbury, and Red Cloud. Highway 136 is the primary retail corridor within the core downtown district, with parallel parking on both sides of the street from Second to Ninth Streets.

To the east, are located larger highway oriented commercial operations including grocery stores, fast food restaurants, banks, commercial offices, and a number of single-family homes.

- **Market Street Corridor.** Market Street serves as a truck-bypass between Second Street and Fifth Streets. Primarily meant as a way for trucks to bypass Court Street, and access Highway 77, many district employees use Market Street to access parking lots located on the south side of the downtown district. A number of automotive dealerships, auto service, storage and industrial uses are located along Market Street.

BUILDING CONDITIONS

Map 2.2 shows a cursory review of building conditions for Downtown Beatrice. Generally, building conditions are in good to fair condition. Older commercial structures along Court Street to the west of the Fifth and Court Street intersection, exhibit some distress, requiring inspection for structural and maintenance repairs. However, the struggling building conditions are located out of the principle study area to the southwest, where a number of older commercial buildings are either in poor or degraded conditions.

BUILDING USE

Map 2.3 identifies the building use, while Table 2.1 summarizes building use in the study area. Within the principle study area, the district provides approximately 851,057 square feet of gross floor area, with about 526,627 square feet on street level and an additional 324,430 square feet of upper-story space.

- Overall the district provides consumers with a variety of retail and service choices. Retail and services account for about 173,000 square feet, while private office uses occupy 101,000 square feet.
- Restaurants and Entertainment venues are one of the smallest uses in the district, accounting for about 44,000 square feet of first floor space. As a percentage of overall first-floor building use, this is less than what is seen in comparable sized communities. Restaurants are an important asset for the downtown environ-

ment. They help to keep people in the district longer when shopping or attending an evening performance at a local theatre.

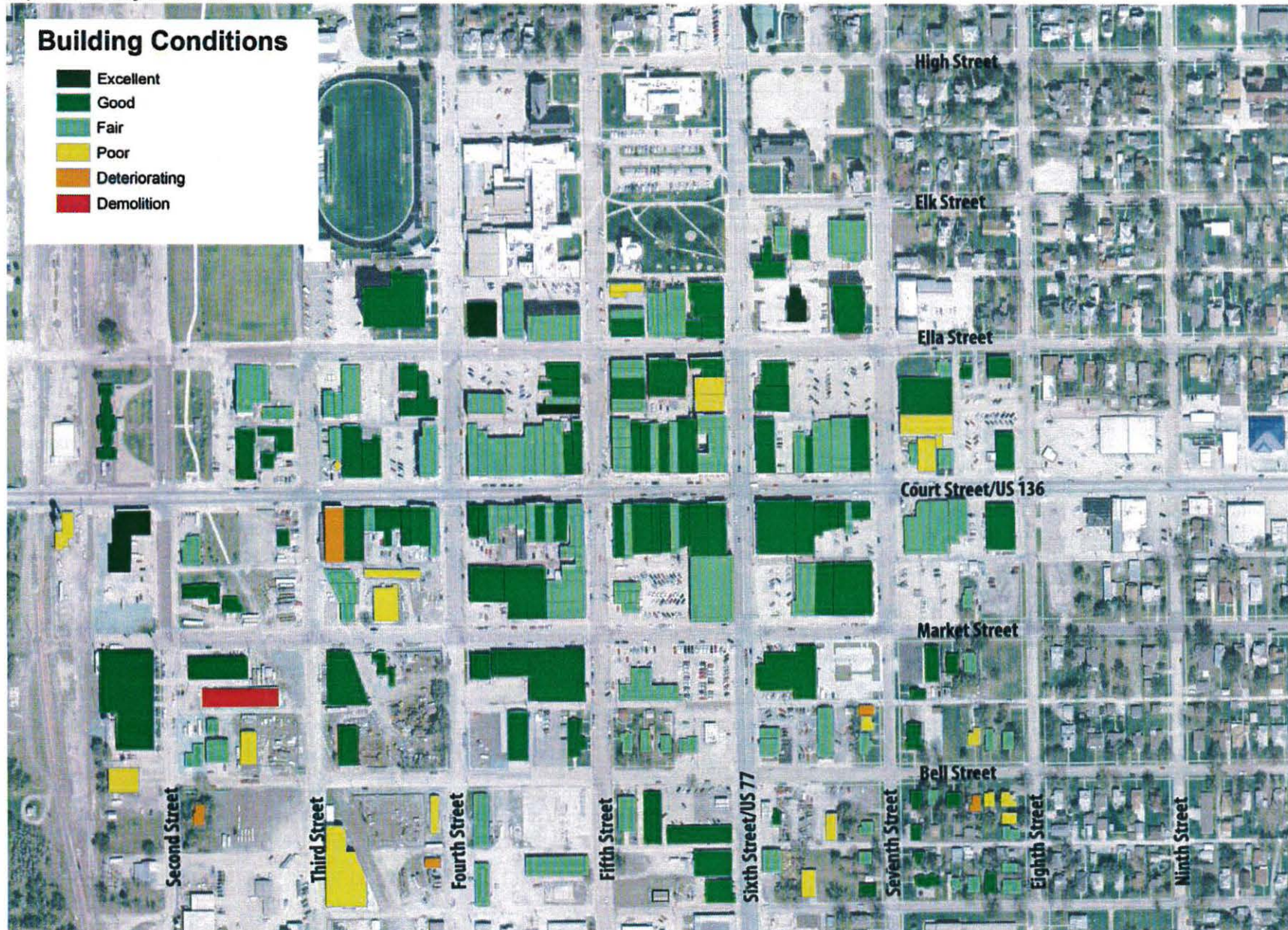
- Street level vacancy rates in the principle study area are 9%, which is at the ceiling for a healthy vacancy rate. It allows potential tenants a choice when choosing a location. Vacancy rates however, feel much higher than 9% in downtown Beatrice. This perception is created by the high level of upper-story vacancy that makes the district appear empty and neglected. There is 187,000 square feet of vacant upper-story floor space in the district, which accounts for 58% of all upper-story space available. One issue that has been touched on, is that there is not enough multi-family housing in the downtown. Addressing the need for more multi-family housing through the revitalization of upper-stories in the downtown would fill much of this vacant space.

Table 2.1: Land Use

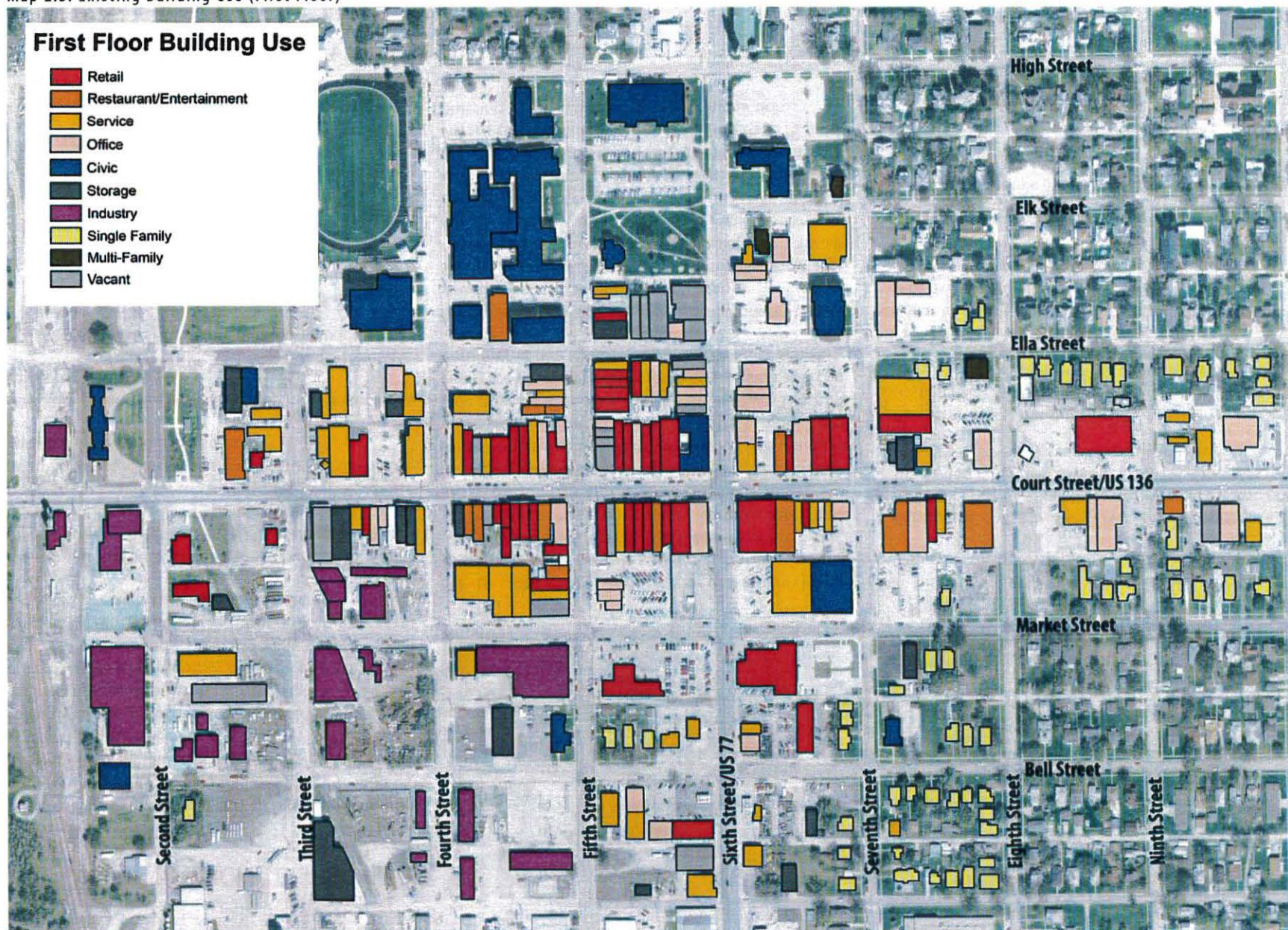
Land Use	First Floor Area	Percent	Upper Story Area	Percent
Civic	25,132	5%	0	0%
Retail	162,807	31%	0	0%
Office	86,844	16%	20,950	6%
Service	110,008	21%	26,923	8%
Restaurant/Entertainment	44,288	8%	7,212	2%
Multi-family	5,540	1%	50,534	16%
Industry	27,651	5%	9,021	3%
Storage	18,959	4%	22,457	7%
Vacant	45,398	9%	187,333	58%
Grand Total	526,627	100%	324,430	100%

Source: RDG Planning & Design, 2011

Map 2.2: Building Conditions



Map 2.3: Existing Building Use (First Floor)



HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Beatrice's downtown has a rich architectural heritage, with a number of historic buildings that are solid examples of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century commercial vernacular architecture. While the vast majority of these buildings may not be significant on their own accord for listing on the National Register, as a group they tell the story of Beatrice as the "Queen City of the Blue", and its rise from a fledgling frontier outpost in former Indian Territory into an important regional commercial and industrial center.

The commercial structures of downtown Beatrice have undergone significant change. Downtown still boasts several National Register eligible structures. Building upon these assets through their preservation and/or adaptive reuse, can serve as an impetus for further rehabilitations within the district.

Structures that have significant historical importance to Beatrice include:

- Civic Auditorium, Art Deco/Depression Moderne
- Burlington Railroad Depot, Neoclassical Revival
- Paddock Hotel, Spanish Revival
- Carnegie Library, Beaux Arts
- Court Street Plaza, Spanish Revival
- Beatrice National Bank Block, Italianate
- First Christian Church, Greek Revival



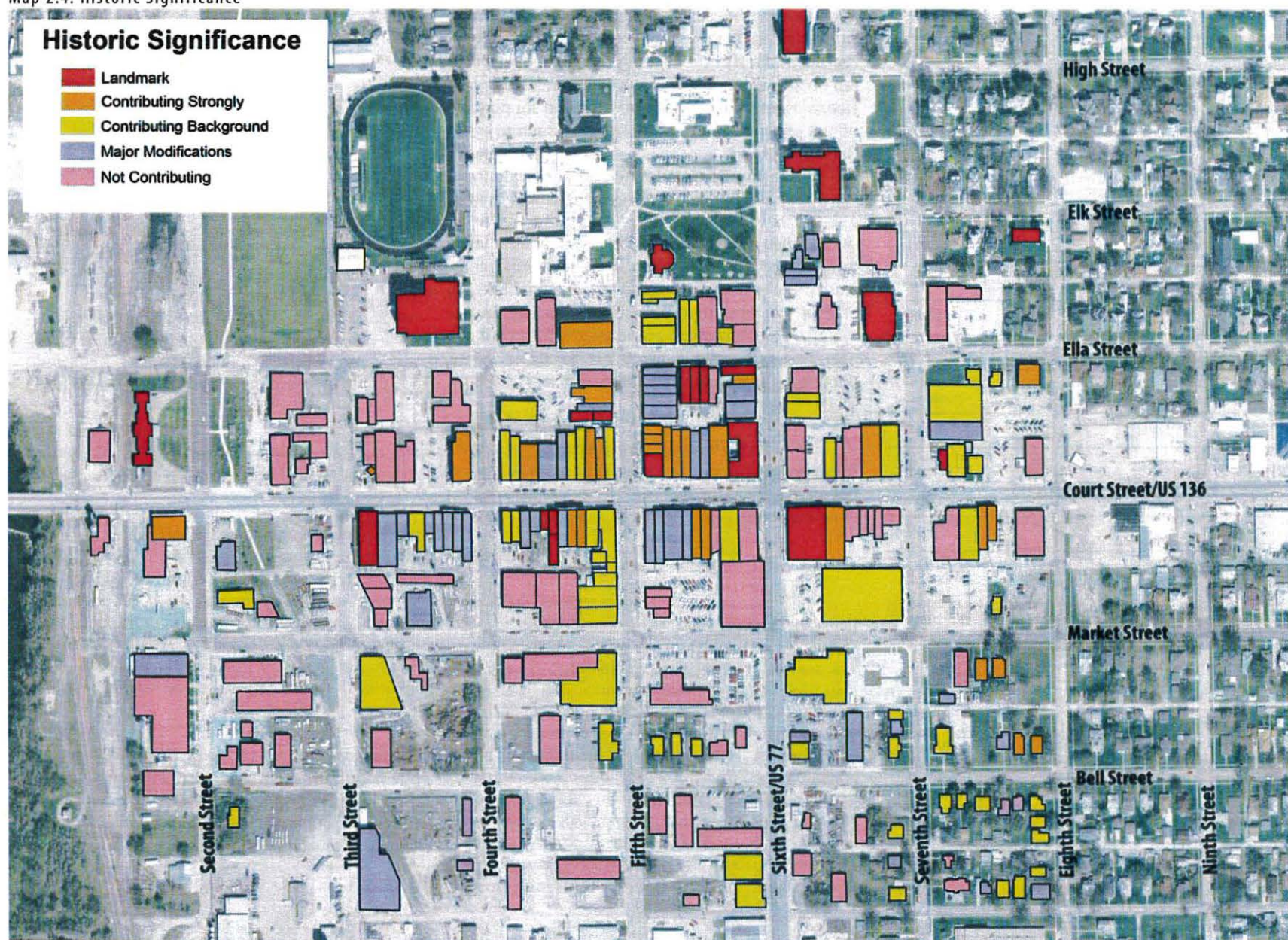
Survey participants cited that the downtown's strongest assets are its historic structures. However, participants also felt that the historic integrity of the district is threatened. High upper-story vacancy rates have led to the alteration of window openings, and in several cases the alteration of building facades with false fronts, or the removal of cornice decorations. Adaptive reuse and rehabilitation of upper-stories could provide new opportunities for the downtown. These include the creation of downtown apartments and condominiums, but also opportunities for office space.

All rehabilitation and adaptive reuse work on historic structure should be carried out in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation. In addition, the city could implement a historic overlay district within the existing zoning ordinance. Zoning provisions could address the treatment of building walls, roofs, ornaments, windows, doors, colors, and signage. District designation and zoning provisions could include a special building code to guide building modifications, and new construction.

The historic Assessment Map classifies downtown buildings in the following categories.

- **Landmark.** These buildings have historic significance and are either listed or eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Examples include the Carnegie Library and Burlington Depot.
- **Contributing Strongly.** These structures contribute to the character of the district. Some may also be eligible for individual listing. The Beatrice National Bank Block is an example.
- **Contributing Background.** These buildings represent examples of vernacular commercial architecture. While probably not individually eligible for Register listing, they contribute to the character of the area.
- **Major Modifications.** These structures have undergone major modifications and do not contribute to the integrity of the district in their current form. Some buildings have been irreversibly modified.
- **Not Contributing.** These structures do not contribute to the fabric of a significant historic district.

Map 2.4: Historic Significance



TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is a vital part of the downtown framework. Downtown's primary streets include Court Street (Highway 136), Sixth Street (Highway 77), Market Street, Ella Street, Fifth Street, Fourth Street, and Third Street. Map 2.1 shows traffic movements in downtown.

- **Regional Access.** Access to the city from surrounding communities is provided by two primary arterial routes. US Highway 77 provides north/south access across the city, and connects Beatrice to the cities of Lincoln and Marysville, Kansas. East and west access is provided by US Highway 136 that provides a direct link between many of the larger communities in southern Nebraska, including Fairbury, Red Cloud, Auburn and Brownsville.

City traffic is bottle necks onto these two roads as they provide the only two points of crossing over the Blue River within Beatrice.

- **Downtown Circulation.** Traffic moves through the district efficiently, with Court (Highway 136) and Sixth (Highway 77) Streets forming the backbone of the district's transportation network. The streets of downtown are similar in width to comparable sized cities. Traffic signals are present at most intersections along Court Street in order to maintain the circulation of traffic along the Highway 136 corridor.

Currently, Market and Ella Streets are one-way through the district and into the neighborhoods to the east of the downtown. The primary purpose for these one-way pairs is to provide a truck bypass route around the downtown, between US Highway 77 and US Highway 136 West. This truck bypass system is poorly marked as many trucks still turn at the intersection of Highway 77 and 136. Trucks attempting to turn at the crossroads of Highways 77 and 136 get trapped often, resulting in traffic backing up and forcing to maneuver to allow trucks to move through the intersection.

- **Court Street Condition.** The existing pavement consists of two 12' drive lanes and a 10' center turn lane. Parallel parking is located on both sides of Court Street. The driving lanes provide positive drainage from the center line to the gutter. The asphalt pavement in the driving lanes is in fair to good condition and provides a smooth ride for motorists. Parking can feel tight at times given the narrow clearance between parking stalls and drive lanes. Periods of heavy traffic can make it difficult for drivers to enter and exit their vehicles. The concrete curb is in fair to good condition. Lighting along the corridor is sufficient, making it easy for motorist to see pedestrians as they cross the street during evening hours.

PARKING

Quantity and quality of parking is an important issue for the district. Map 2.5 Parking Supply and Demand shows the location of on-street and off-street parking stalls, and illustrates the distribution of surplus and deficiency of parking.

Parking in the downtown area consists of stalls along streets, public lots along Market Street and Ella Street, and a parking garage at the intersection of Sixth and Market Streets. Several smaller private lots located throughout the district provide for direct access to individual businesses. These businesses include Valentino's, Beatrice Bakery, and Security First Bank, to name a few.

Table 2.2 summarizes the total parking supply and distribution. Overall, the principle study area has 185 on-street and 472 off-street stalls for a total of 657 stalls. Retail businesses along Court Street generate a high demand for parking, and parking along these streets is at a premium. Table 2.3 calculates total parking demand in downtown. Calculations are based on demand generated by each 1,000 square feet of use. For example, every 1,000 square feet of retail space generates a demand for 2.5 stalls.

Table 2.2: Downtown Parking Supply

	Number of Spaces	% of Total
On-Street	185	28%
Off-Street	472	72%
Total	657	100%

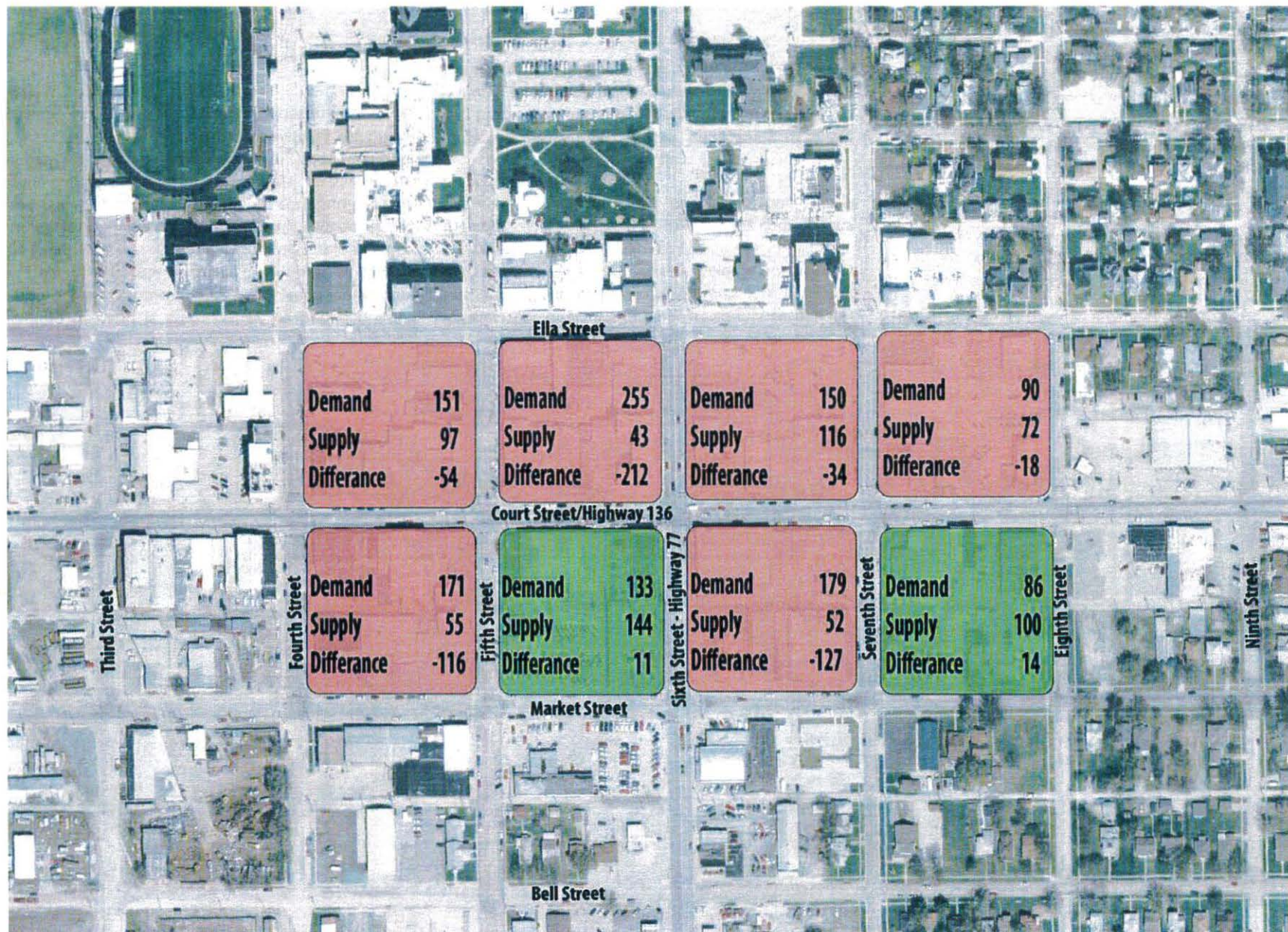
Source: RDG Planning & Design, 2010

Table 2.3: Parking Supply & Demand

	Square Feet	Parking Demand	Stalls per 1,000 sf
Civic	25,132	63	2.5
Retail	162,807	407	2.5
Office	107,794	323	3.0
Service	136,931	342	2.5
Restaurant/Entertainment	51,500	155	3.0
Multifamily	56,074	84	1.5
Industry	36,672	92	2.5
Storage	41,416	41	1.0
Total	618,326	1,507	

Source: RDG Planning & Design, 2010

PARKING





Parking demand is estimated to be between 1,000 and 1,500 stalls, which is 56% higher than the amount of parking currently available. It is important to note that these are merely standards for determining parking demand. Demand can vary greatly from city to city and district to district. For example, communities with more compact development patterns can have a lower parking demand. The close proximity between businesses and residences encourages walking and biking as alternatives to driving from one destination to another.

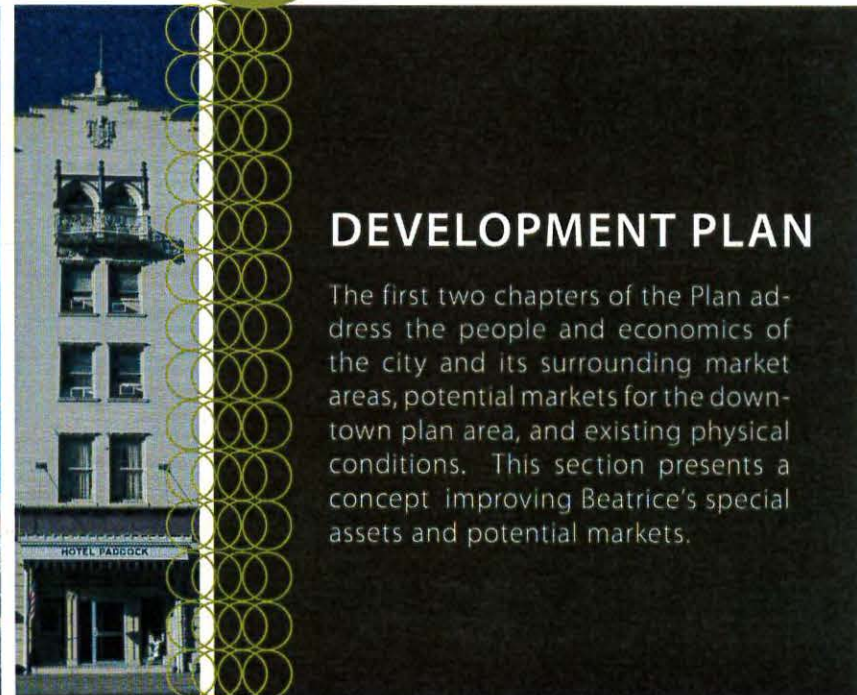
Policies that direct visitors and residents to parking lots, and minimize the amount of time that cars may be parked along the street can increase accessibility for those making quick trips to businesses. In addition, the improvements should be made to the connections between parking lots and businesses, particularly along Court Street.

Pedestrian wayfinding, proper landscaping to shield lots from sidewalks and signage directing vehicles to parking areas, can not only improve the aesthetics of the district, but also make the district more enjoyable for pedestrians.

Sidewalks

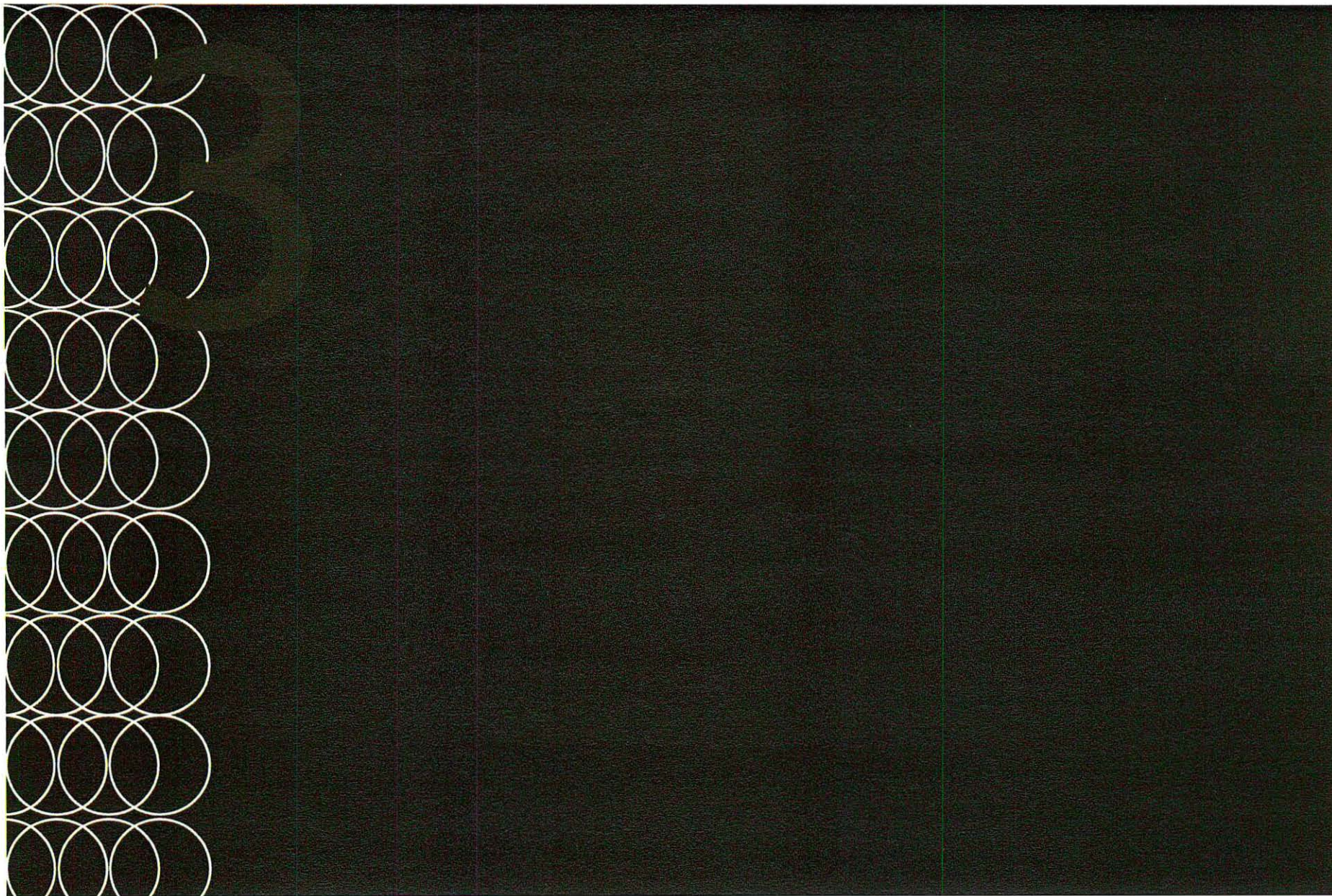
The concrete sidewalks are 8' to 10' wide, provide positive drainage away from the buildings and into the gutter. Sidewalks are in fair condition, however, some cracking and buckling of the sidewalks do exist to the east of Sixth Street along Ella and Court Streets. Street furniture is limited though out the district. Benches are placed along building facades at mid-block points, with trash receptacles at intersection and decorative planters located near decorative pedestrian lighting fixtures. While pedestrian amenities do exist along Court Street, similar pedestrian amenities are absent on the surrounding side streets.

Chapter 3



DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The first two chapters of the Plan address the people and economics of the city and its surrounding market areas, potential markets for the downtown plan area, and existing physical conditions. This section presents a concept improving Beatrice's special assets and potential markets.



PLANNING PROCESS

When identifying with one's community, many people will often identify with one particular place within their city. Sometimes this location is a park, a church, or even one's home. More often than not however, the downtown is the place most individuals will identify. This is because the downtown is the one constant within our memories of important events and occasions that have occurred to us. It is where one has met up with friends and co-workers after work for a drink, it is where one has seen their children march in the school band during a 4th of July celebration, and it is where we have lead our daily lives running errands and having chance meetings with friends and family.

Downtown Beatrice is no different, it holds a special place in the hearts of many of the city's residents. Yet, many residents agree that the downtown is in need of redevelopment efforts. The decline of the city's industrial economy, truck traffic along US Highway 136, inadequate parking, increased vacancy rates and underutilized upper-stories have robbed the district of the vitality it once enjoyed. The redevelopment of the district creates new opportunities, that will increase new business startups, unite the district with the Blue River, create a unique shopping and business environment, and improve connections to surrounding neighborhoods.

- **Kick-off Presentation.** The initiation of the project began with a presentation to City Council on February 7th, reviewing the process for preparing the plan and identifying emerging issues.
- **Focus Group Discussions & Individual Interviews.** Focus groups took place on March 8, 2011 to discuss issues and challenges facing downtown. Also, several individual interviews provided in-depth understanding of downtown.



- **Community Roundtable.** The public participated in round-table discussions with their peers to identify goals, issues, and aspirations for downtown on April 4th.
- **Design Workshops.** Following the Community Roundtable, design workshops took place from April 4th to April 6th to engage citizens, residents, business owners, and other stakeholders directly in conceptual planning for downtown. Participants shared their ideas, issues and concerns informally with the design team, and helped define and test concepts for the future of the planning area.
- **Downtown Steering Committee.** The Downtown Steering Committee met throughout the process.
- **Open House.** A public Open House occurred prior to the City Council meeting on June 6, 2011. The open house provided the public an opportunity to review and comment on the development plan before formal adoption.

PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPMENT

The vision begins by establishing a development program, much like the architectural program for a building project. This program identifies the ingredients of development – the amount of space that markets can absorb, present and future community needs, current projects that are pending, and other opportunities. The program includes three separate agendas; development, community, and functional.

The Development Agenda

- **Retail Development.** Beatrice serves both local residents, and has a demonstrated ability to attract business from outside the city. Downtown markets should continue to focus on the development of niche businesses that create unique shopping opportunities and experiences.

Beatrice has destination businesses, including the Black Crow which is well known throughout the region. Niche markets that are important to Downtown Beatrice include; men's clothing, home furnishings, pharmacies and health services, jewelry, clothing stores, and eating and drinking establishments.

- **New Community Players Theatre.** Having outgrown their original theatre space at 412 Ella Street, the Community Players have begun to plan for a new facility. Initial plans including locating outside of the downtown, likely along the Highway 77 corridor. The organizations cites, the lack of adequate parking as their primary reason for wanting to relocate elsewhere.

Retaining the theater to downtown is critical to creating an active nightlife and for economic development.



- **Create new residential units within Downtown Beatrice.** Residential growth has proven to be an indispensable part of downtown district development. Despite the housing crisis of 2008 the oncoming wave of baby boomers will generate demand for unique housing that combines aspects of residential living with some of the uniqueness of living within a downtown environment.

Underused highway-oriented commercial development along the US Highway 136 corridor provide the opportunity for new housing, creating stronger markets for retailing and services in the traditional downtown. These developments should be mix incomes and occupancy types, and take full advantage of the attributes of these redevelopment areas, including water, cultural access, and convenience. Adaptive reuse of upper levels of downtown buildings presents other housing settings that can increase the return on investment for building owners.



- **Increase business and private investment.** The implementation of the development concept should encourage new investment and reward productive reinvestment in buildings. Initial investments in the public environment can create conditions for economic growth that is unlikely to happen spontaneously. These investments will maintain proper values, increase sales tax revenues, and create a district that adds business to the city.
- **Preservation and Reuse.** Beatrice has a strong stock of historical-contributing buildings, yet many of them have been adapted over the decades. Restoring the buildings should be a priority, particularly for the structures along Court and 5th Streets.
- **Public Restrooms.** This amenity provides visitors to the district with convenient access to a restroom. Often visitors to the district must search out a restroom, within a nearby business. This can be problematic, especially when businesses only make their restrooms available to paying customers and many do not comply with ADA requirements.

The Community Agenda

- Retain and Attract Businesses to Downtown.** Improving the quality of downtown creates an environment for businesses to stay in downtown, while attracting new private investment. Recommendations should include improved access to available parking and enhancing the overall experience of visiting Beatrice.
- Upgraded Downtown Streetscape.** City streets comprise the largest segment of public property in any community, and likewise they tell visitors a great deal about a community. The streetscape in downtown Beatrice is simple, yet shadowed by the standard highway amenities including signage, galvanized lighting, and lack of street furniture and landscaping. Improvements to this environment should create a unique pedestrian environment that is not only pleasant for the pedestrian, but also to the passing motorist, encouraging them to stop and explore the district. An improved streetscape for Downtown Beatrice should include at a minimum, landscaping (including trees), wayfinding, benches, and trash receptacles.
- Activate Downtown.** Downtown Beatrice wants to be the center for entertainment and civic life. Private investments should be supported by city policy and capital improvements (streetscape and gathering spaces). Businesses should change their operating hours to cater to typical evening and weekend shoppers.
- Gateway features along Court Street.** Gateways would welcome visitors to the district and include landscaping, decorative lighting, and some form of signage either along or over the street that welcomes visitors to the district. Improve public gathering spaces. Common space is central to the life of traditional town centers. Beatrice's Charles Park is a wonderful, yet underused public amenity with poor visibility and connections to the downtown because of buildings

along Ella Street that block it from view. The downtown itself lacks significant green space for small events and people to gather. Small public spaces such as pedestrian nodes, plaza, and passageways can enhance the Downtown experience, and stimulate surrounding redevelopment efforts.

- Improved Parking.** Parking is an issue in nearly every town center across the nation, and in many cases the availability of parking can either make or break a district. At present, parking demand exceeds what is currently available in Downtown Beatrice. Along Court Street parking is tight do to lane requirements for Highway 136, and parking lots are scattered and difficult to find. The district has a parking garage structure off of Sixth and Market Streets, however, the structure is poorly designed and has a limited capacity. Redeveloping this parking structure, increasing on-street parking, greening existing parking lots, wayfinding, and better routes from car-door to store-door would improve the district's parking environment.
- Linkages to the Riverfront.** The Blue River and the parks that line its western banks, are considered to be one of the community's greatest assets. However, they are isolated from a large portion of the community. The vacant lots and industrial sites that stand along the east bank create a psychological barrier in the minds of resident, in addition to not being a pleasant environment to travel through. The riverfront should be redeveloped along the river's east bank, with pedestrian access across the river to Nichols Park. Pedestrian and bicycle connections to the downtown should be further reinforced through streetscape improvements along Ella Street.
- Connect Homestead National Monument to Downtown.** Beatrice and Gage County have the claim to fame as being the location of the first Homestead listed under the Homestead Act of 1862. This act opened the final frontiers of the American west to



settlement, and paved the way for Nebraska's statehood in 1867. However, little is done within Beatrice to capitalize on this important historical site. Extending the Homestead Trail that runs from Beatrice to Lincoln out towards the monument would create a community link to this great cultural asset, and create a new amenity for leveraging tourism efforts. In addition, the redevelopment of the riverfront will help unite neighborhoods on the west side of the Blue River with the Downtown, and create a regional park that is an asset to the community, and to the region.

- Revitalize the Riverfront.** Initially Beatrice's riverfront was home to mills, factories, foundaries and rail road yards, but over the years nearly all of these industrial uses have disappeared. Today the riverfront is lined by a number of vacant lots due to the decline of industry base, and the purchase of property by the city to remove structures from the Blue River's flood plain. This has left neighborhoods to the west of the Blue River isolated from downtown and the rest of the city. In addition, the historic Burlington Railroad Depot is isolated from the downtown. Revitalizing the riverfront into parkland, with nature trails and improved pedestrian connections to the downtown will activate the riverfront, and serve as a catalyst for redevelopment of the western portion of the downtown district.

The Functional Agenda

- **Realignment of US Highway 136.** Highway 136 is the primary route for motorists traveling east and west through Beatrice. It is also the primary retail corridor within the downtown. While businesses have some visibility to motorists, the traffic volumes make it difficult for individuals to be aware of business available along the street. Often motorists are focusing on moving through the district safely, avoiding parked cars, truck traffic and pedestrians.

Realigning Highway 136 will divert through traffic to the southern edge of the district, and allow for flexibility in street design for Court Street, providing additional parking, building signage, and sidewalk amenities. In addition, pedestrians will benefit from an improved streetscape, and improved safety at intersections.

- **Improve the flow of highway traffic through Beatrice.** Downtown Beatrice's greatest asset and yet also its greatest liability are the US Highway 77 and 136 corridors. While these highways provide businesses along Sixth Street and Court Street with good visibility to passing motorists they also have a negative affect upon the quality of the street environment. Parking is limited to parallel parking along Court Street, due to street width standards for the highway. In addition, heavy truck along these corridors necessitates one-way truck routes on Ella and Market Streets as a way of reducing traffic volumes on Court Street between Sixth and Third Streets. While this creates a safer pedestrian environment it also makes it difficult to navigate by car through the district, and limits the street visibility for businesses on sidestreets.



- **Convert streets from one-way to two-way circulation.** With the exception of Court and Sixth Street the core of the downtown district is comprised of one-way streets. While these are effective in circulating truck traffic around the district, they do affect business by limiting a store's visibility to motorists traveling only in one direction. In addition the system of one-way streets causes motorists to travel out of their way when attempting to access parking near the front door of a businesses. One exception is the block with the drive-thru Pharmacy.
- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation.** Beatrice's transportation network should be multi-modal, providing safe and secure routes for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists within public rights-of-way. Upgrading on-street facilities that link with trails can complete the overall transportation system, while providing bicycle racks reserves parking.



- **Access for West Beatrice Neighborhood Access.** This small neighborhood of single family houses and commercial buildings is connected to downtown by the Court Street bridge, but lacks convenient pedestrian access.
- **Private Investment.** Initial investments in the public realm can create conditions for economic growth that are unlikely to happen spontaneously. These investments will maintain property values, increase sales tax revenues, and create a central district that adds business to the city.
- **Capitalize on Key Business Niches.** While downtowns nationwide have struggled to preserve their traditional retail roles, successful districts capitalize on business niches that attract people to traditional business districts. Examples include Yesterday's Lady, Sunrise Bakery, and Back Alley Eatery.

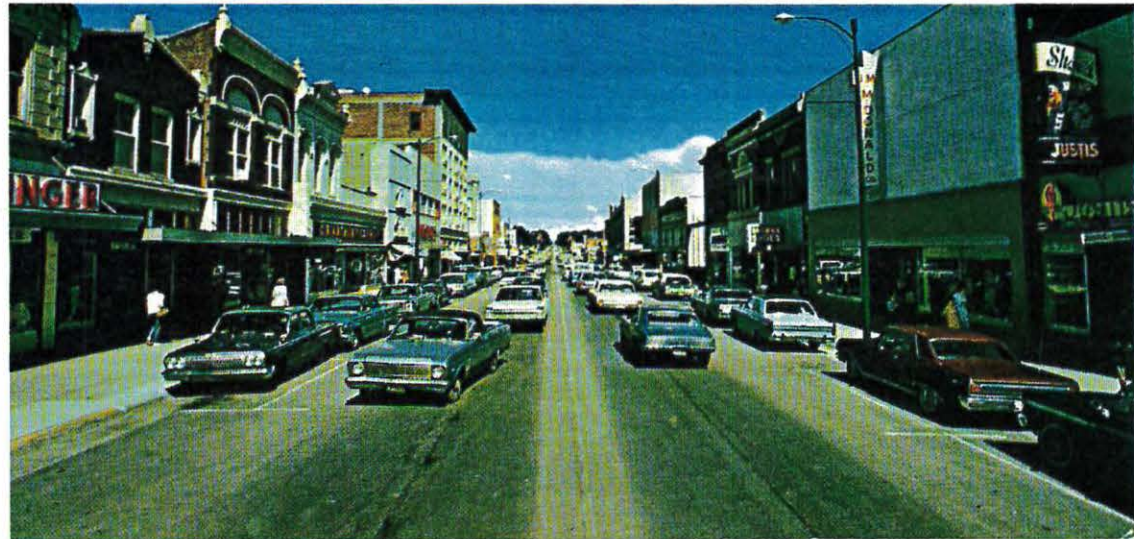
An aerial photograph of a city grid with a semi-transparent development concept overlay. The overlay consists of a grid of colored rectangles (brown, green, purple) and a central horizontal corridor with a series of small, dark, circular structures. The text 'Development concept' is centered over the map in a white, sans-serif font. On the right side of the map, there is a vertical column of overlapping white circles.

Development concept

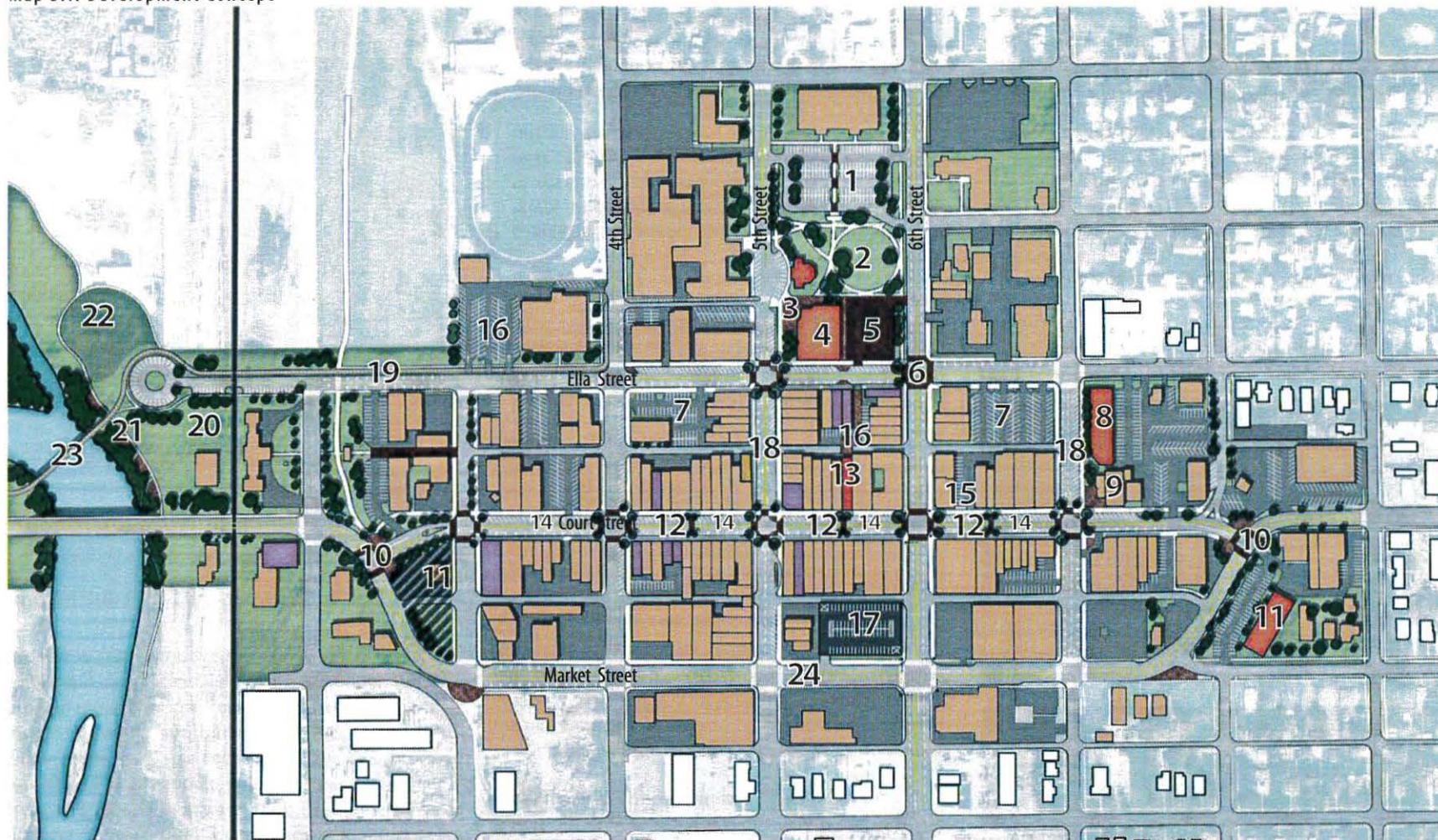
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

The vision for the Downtown Beatrice Plan emerges by following the program based on the Development Agenda, Community Agenda, and Functional Agenda. Map 3.1 shows a Development Plan that illustrates the concepts in the plan. The components of this vision include:

- **Mobility and Access**, address the circulation that links major projects and that links the larger Beatrice Community
- **Major Project Areas**, self-contained projects that together create a transformed district.
- **Policies**, describing methods that various needs and markets are met and projects are implemented.



Map 3.1: Development Concept



1. Parking Lot Redesign
2. Charles Park Improvements
3. Playhouse Plaza
4. New Community Playhouse
5. Carscape Plaza
6. Wayfinding
7. Parking Lot Landscaping & Efficiency
8. New Downtown Housing

9. Restored Gas Station
10. Gateway Features
11. Potential Commercial Redevelopment
12. Mid-block Crossing
13. Roxie's Passageway
14. Streetscape Enhancements
15. Parking Connection
16. Parking Efficiency Improvements

17. New Parking Structure
18. Conversion to 2-Way Traffic
19. Bicycle Track
20. Outdoor Museum Exhibit
21. Riverfront Park and Trail
22. Tallgrass Prairie Restoration
23. Pedestrian Bridge
24. Proposed Reroute of US Highway 136

- New Development
- Reuse
- Redevelopment

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

Downtown Beatrice's location at the crossroads of US Highway 77 and 136 has undoubtedly helped to maintain the district's commercial and retail base. However, these streets have also limited improvements to the district's retail corridor, because of requirements for state and federal highways. Improvements to these regional corridors should be coupled with local circulation initiatives. This section establishes a program for improvement and presents concepts that for improving mobility and access through the city. Map 3.2 shows the existing circulation system, while Map 3.3 shows the Circulation System in downtown Beatrice.

PROGRAM FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Improve circulation and safety for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists.
- Improve the experience driving through Beatrice.
- Define the arrival to downtown.
- Communicate a community-wide theme through graphics and landscape design.

CONCEPT FOR DEVELOPMENT

Relocate Highway 136

On some occasions, the priorities of safe and efficient transportation, urban design, and downtown development coincide. The possible relocation of US 136 (Court Street), proposed by this plan, presents one of these unusual opportunities.

Major highways forming as crossroads in a downtown district are at best a mixed blessing. The crossroads created the conditions for the district in the first place, and, by introducing both regional and local traffic into downtown, increase its visibility and the likelihood that regional travelers might stop for food, goods, or services. But this accessibility comes at a high price. The junction of US 77 and 136 in the heart of Downtown Beatrice introduces heavy truck traffic into the city's center and clearly affects its economic and human environment. Similarly, the current alignments create significant operational conflicts for traffic, including:

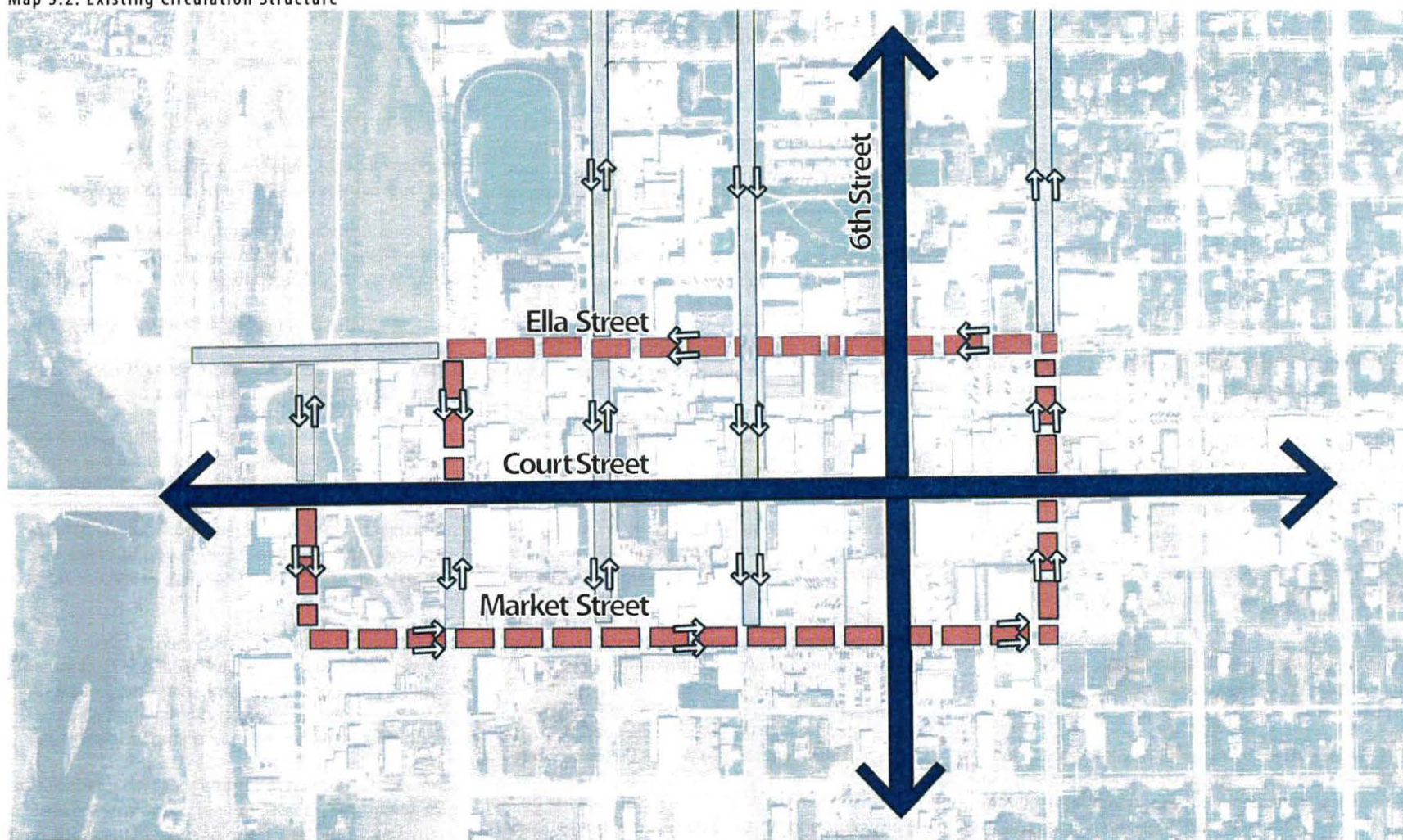
- Constrained truck turning movement at 6th and Court. While alternative truck routes are available, compliance is imperfect and the routes do not address all movements. In addition, the intersection of 6th and Court is too tight to accommodate movements by large vehicles.
- Land use and traffic conflicts on truck routes. Ella Street introduces regional truck traffic into the edges of residential and consumer commercial areas, and near civic institutions such as the Municipal Auditorium and middle school.
- Parking issues on primary commercial streets. Sixth Street prohibits on-street parking and Court's highway traffic discourages people uncomfortable with parallel parking from using its spaces. This makes convenient



on-street parking at strategic locations inaccessible to many users.

- Of the two crossroads highways, Court is the dominant retail street. As such, highway traffic creates conflicts with pedestrians, including residents of the Kensington who are largely older adults. This intensifies hazards at intersections in a district that should normally be walkable to most users, and affects the quality of the pedestrian and district environments.
- State highway designation limits Beatrice's ability to improve the downtown environment or expand convenient on-street parking.

Map 3.2: Existing Circulation Structure



As a result relocation of one or both highways has been a source of debate in the city for many years. However, the very high cost of proposals to date and fear of the economic impact of routing traffic away from the city center have made such a relocation unfeasible. This plan proposes a new solution that addresses these concerns – use of the Market Street right-of-way as a new route for US 136. Features of this concept include:

- Transition from the Court to Market alignments on the west between 1st and 2nd Streets and on the west between 7th and 9th Streets. Land required for these transitions is generally vacant or in marginal uses, and avoids major impact on the character of the business district.
- Improvement of Market as a wide three-lane section with parallel parking on at least the south side, providing the same functional section as Court with more generous standard lane widths. While Market requires reconstruction, this section can be accommodated within the existing right-of-way and generally within the current street channel.
- With proposed replacement of the existing 6th and Market parking structure eliminating encroachments on public right-of-way, a minor widening of US 77 to include left-turn lanes onto Market/US 136.
- Signature gateways with landscaping, entrance monuments, and public art features at T-intersections with Court Street near either end of the new alignment.
- Redeveloping Court Street as a pedestrian oriented main street, including a two-lane section, diagonal parking on the north side, corner nodes, and appropriate street landscaping, crosswalks, and other features.

While the US 77 intersection must remain signalized, other intersections along this now local business street may be controlled by four-way stops.

- Implementation of two-way traffic on Ella Street.

This concept requires further study, but offers the following advantages:

- Land acquisition for the realignment is relatively minimal and generally does not involve intensive use or very costly purchases.
- The Market Street right-of-way accommodates the proposed section without additional acquisition on its main line.
- The Market Street alignment for US 136 is still part of the downtown environment and in fact provides better visibility to off-street parking serving Court Street businesses.
- Ella Street returns to a more appropriate two-way, mixed use character, consistent with adjacent civic, commercial, and residential uses.
- Left turns can be successfully incorporated into a rebuilt 6th and Market intersection, saving time for truckers.
- New redevelopment sites are created both along Market Street for traveler services and industries, and at both gateways.
- Re-envisioning the existing Court as a pedestrian-oriented main street that remains highly visible to regional traffic vastly improves the image and marketability of Downtown Beatrice.

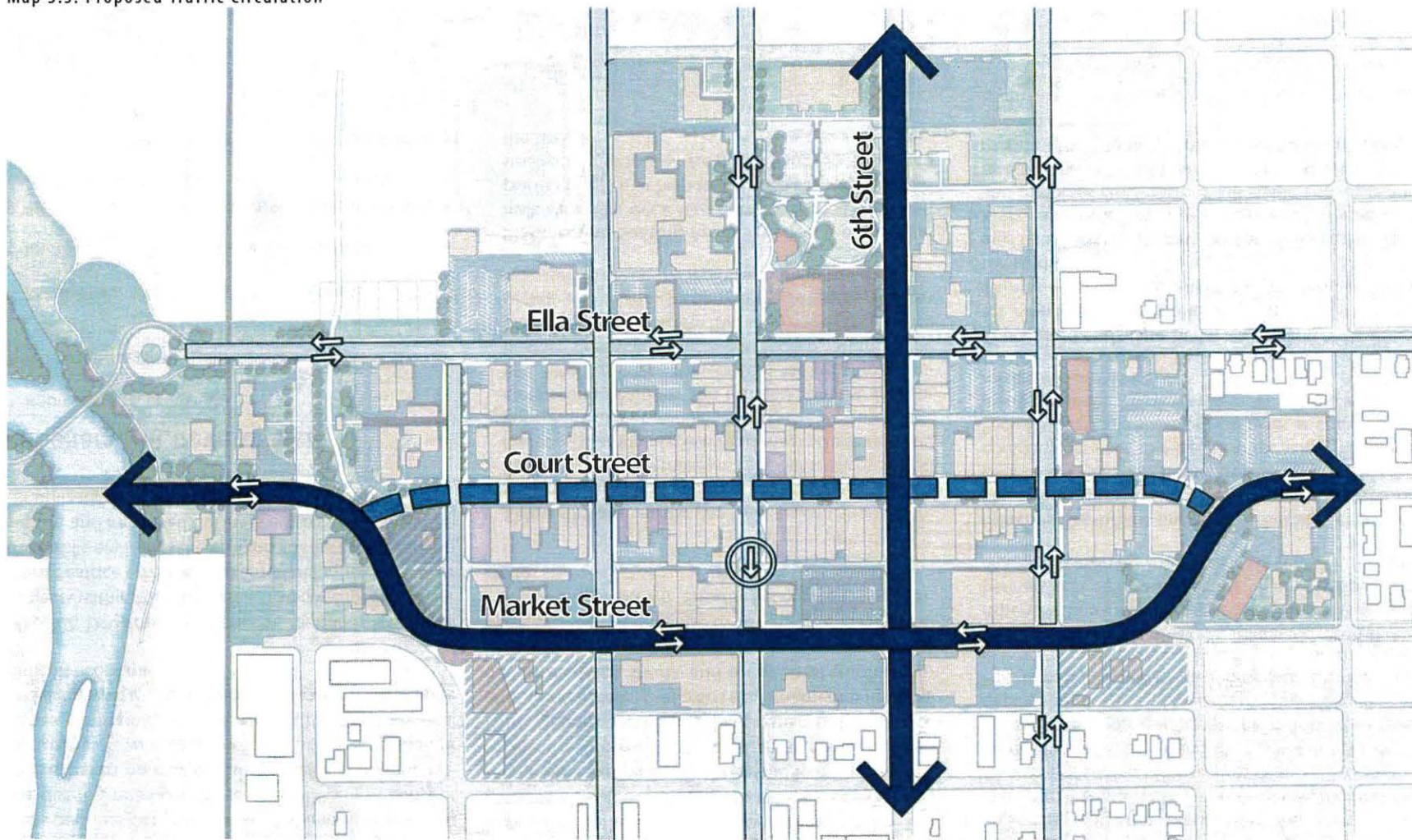
Next Steps

The US 136 realignment concept should be viewed as at best a medium-range, five to ten year project. Next steps in pursuing this project include:

- Consultation with NDOR and other officials, including formal presentations of the concept and its advantages. It is important to realize that the idea presented here is a concept and by no means a refined design.
- Funding and execution of a corridor feasibility study to determine the relative feasibility, costs, and benefits of the Market Street concept, other alternatives, and a no-build alternative.
- Assuming a positive outcome, development of a detailed corridor study, functional design, and environmental assessments.
- Inclusion of the project on the state capital program.

Funding for the project is likely to depend on Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds but will include a substantial local match from conventional sources such as transportation bonds and unconventional sources such as tax increment financing (TIF) and redevelopment bonds.

Map 3.3: Proposed Traffic Circulation



DOWNTOWN CORE

Downtown is one of Beatrice's principle centers for commercial and civic life that has maintained a stable retail and office market. However, high upper-story vacancy rates and vacant storefronts along the districts' periphery, create a sense of abandonment along the districts' retail corridors. A development concept that is based on markets and realistic economic opportunities, new access, and the distinctive character of the community will strengthen the city's physical and economic assets, moving Beatrice forward despite difficult economic times.

Map 4.2, Development Concept, identifies individual projects within the study area. The concept for Downtown Beatrice envisions incremental improvements to the public environment, enhancements to the parking supply, and improved business environment, and better utilization of public spaces.

PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Improve traffic circulation.
- Improve streetscape, particularly sidewalks and crosswalks.
- Rehabilitate and reuse existing structures.
- Improve parking accessibility and availability
- Identify potential redevelopment sites that will increase district activity.
- Connecting the downtown and surrounding residential districts with the city's riverfront.

The Concept

Streetscape Enhancements.

Recommendations focus on both functional and aesthetic improvements to the district are possible by improving traffic circulation along the Highway 136 corridor. The corridor needs to create a positive and memorable experience for everyone to attract visitors to the downtown. Features such as the pedestrian lighting, trees and benches to create a sense of place and human scale. Clean streets, ornamental lighting, native plantings, shrubs and community graphics can influence the impression of the corridor. Similar applications should be made to 5th Street and Highway 77 through downtown. Specific Recommendations include:

- **Sidewalks and curbs.** Sidewalk paving should provide texture and visual character, but should use efficient and durable materials. Special surfaces should be focused at intersections and may include textured concrete or color conditioned concrete. Finer concrete scoring patterns also can add contrast and define amenity areas. The concept for the Downtown Beatrice streetscape suggests a random pattern of colored and scored concrete that evokes the image of the section and quarter section method of surveying that was used to divide the region into homesteads.
- **Planters and Seating Areas.** The width of the sidewalk allows for dedicated outdoor seating areas and planting beds that help to break up the sidewalk, and small public spaces where pedestrians can relax along the street.
- **Pedestrian lighting.** Along Court Street there are a number of historic light fixtures from the early twentieth century. However, they are located sparsely along the street and only provide minimal street lighting. In updating the streetscape these historic fixtures could be reproduced in order to provide additional pedestrian lighting along the corridor. Reproduction of these fixtures may be costly, and as a cost saving method it is recommended that these fixtures be moved to another location, such as around the Gage County Courthouse. In their place an acorn or teardrop fixture that directs light downward towards the street, and reduce light pollution would be an appropriate substitution.
- **Banners and Flower Baskets.** Minor and relatively inexpensive enhancements such as flower baskets and banners add color and interest. Banners should be changed seasonally and for special events.
- **Benches, Trash Bins and Bicycle Racks.** Seating areas should be well-defined. Benches provide space for people to sit and watch people. Trash bins should accompany benches to reduce clutter along the street. Each block should have bicycle racks at corners and along the street. These features can be installed at intersections or mid-block.
- **Trees and Landscape beds.** Landscape beds along the curb edge provide color to the district. Their uniformity and even placement provides continuity in the landscape design. Landscaping should use plantings native to the tall grass prairies of the eastern Nebraska and Iowa. Street trees planted at intersections and midblock crossings provide shade and visual interest to the street. Shade from trees during the summer months also helps to improve energy efficiency of buildings.

Figure 3.1: Streetscape Concept



- **Crosswalks.** The use of a contrasting stamped surface offers durability and ensures that drivers notice the crosswalk as they approach the intersection. Also, they natural calm traffic through the district.
- **Midblock Crossings.** Midblock crossings, create a node at the middle of the block where pedestrians can cross. The use of a contrasting stamped surface provides a visual cue to motorists of potential pedestrian crossings. Midblock nodes provide spaces for landscaping and furniture, while increasing the accessibility between the two sides of the street.
- **Wayfinding.** Pedestrian scale wayfinders, such as blade signs, inform and direct people to the district's various destinations, including the Museum, Riverfront, and Charles Park.



Figure 3.2: View of Streetscape Components

Figure 3.3: Court Street - Proposed Section

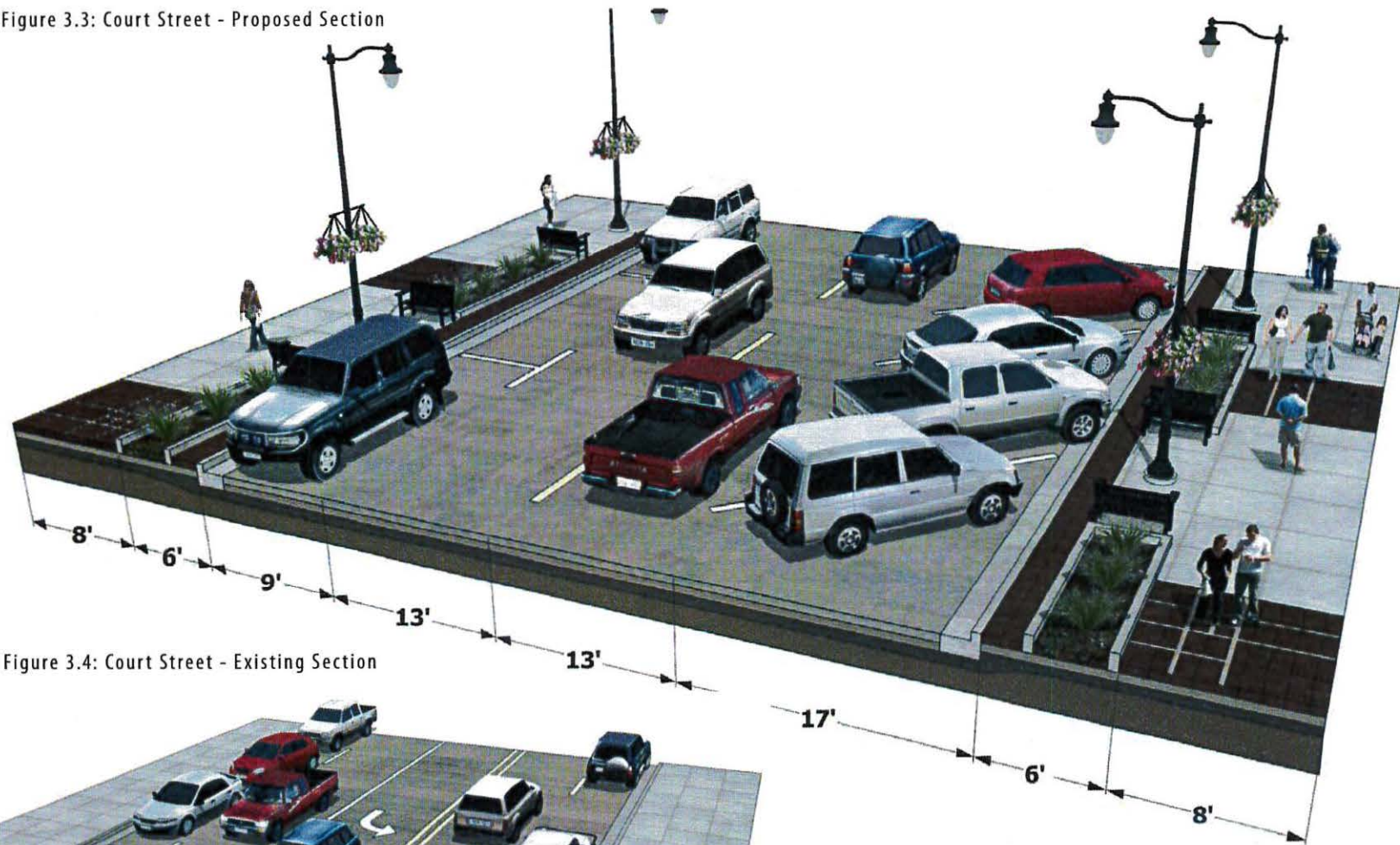


Figure 3.4: Court Street - Existing Section

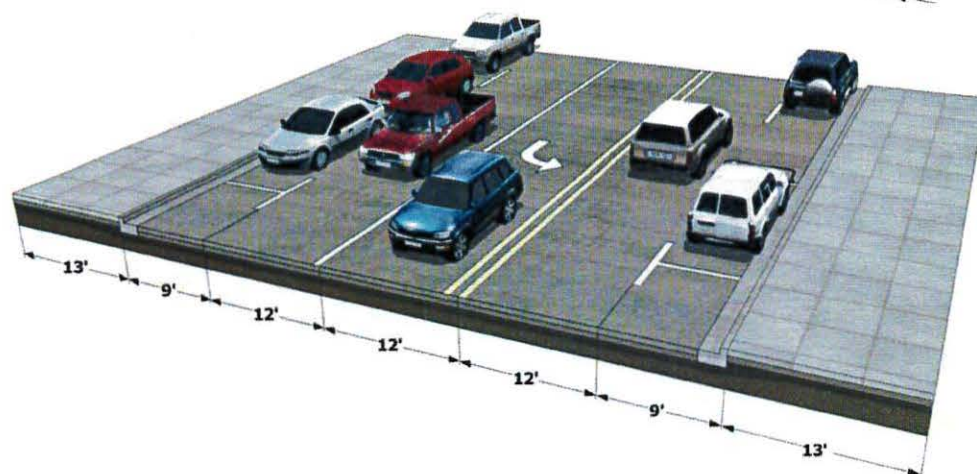


Figure 3.5: Streetscape Concept for Court Street



Gateway Entrance Feature

Defining the gateways to downtown establishes the arrival to the district. Features of the gateway element should be consistent with other streetscape materials adopted in the area.

The proposed concept for Beatrice's gateway represents a land section, folded around a column and linked to a series of other columns by rods and chains. The concept of the land section unites Beatrice's historical connection to the Homestead Act and National Monument.

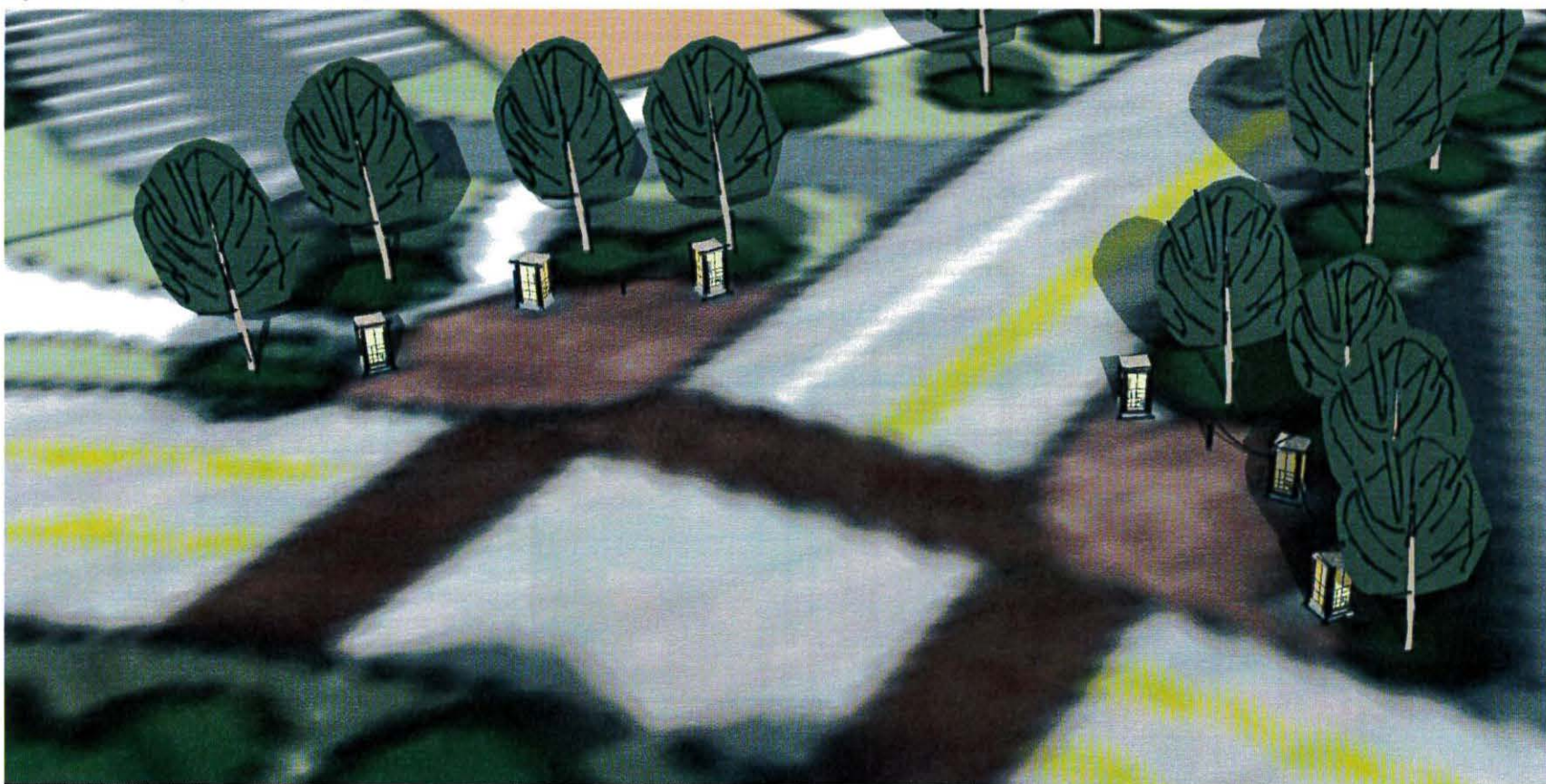
The corners of the monument represent the historic use of brick used for streets and buildings. The panels could be internally lit. The Marker could be used throughout the city to reinforce the community's brand with the Homestead Monument.

Interpretative panels should be installed near gateways to Court Street, describing the symbology of the marker.

Figure 3.6: Monument Marker for Gateway Entrance



Figure 3.7: Gateway Entrance in Concept



Rehabilitate and Reuse Buildings.

The life and economy of downtown takes place in its buildings. Historic preservation and adaptive reuse are important to downtown. This plan recommends a building development policy that encourages preservation and adaptive reuse. Map 3.2 indicates buildings that should be reused.

Components of this concept include:

- **Using design guidelines.** The Secretary of the Interior's Standards provide an excellent starting point for evaluating downtown rehabilitation projects. Particularly important is restoration of buildings that have been "modernized" or severely modified with unsympathetic facades. New development in the downtown core should preserve the scale, materials, and character of traditional architecture in the District. Figure 3.5 shows potential retrofits for a building facade, as an example. Priority elements include:
 - **Facades.** In general, façade upgrades should restore windows to original scale, replace inappropriate storefronts, and include awnings, doors, and other features that add scale. However, diversity is important in an eclectic district, and absolute uniformity is neither necessary nor authentic.
 - **Business Signs.** Desirable signage includes wall-mounted signs with individual letters, awning signs, and carefully designed projecting signs. Typically, flush-mounted cabinets, pole signs and other "auto-strip signs are not appropriate in the downtown district. Signs should not obscure large areas or major facade design features.
- **Energy Efficiency Audits and Improvements.** Energy efficiency improvements may include insulation, window upgrades, ceiling repairs, heating and ventilation system upgrades, and lighting. NDED encourages communities to consider programs to improve the functional and ongoing use of the facility.

Figure 3.8: Possible Facade Enhancement



- **Adopting flexible building codes that encourage upper level residential adaptive reuse.** Housing development has been a foundation of successful downtown revitalization. Federal tax incentives, construction costs, the nature and preferences of residents in urban districts, and knowledge of successes in other Nebraska cities can encourage residential use of upper levels. Beatrice should review building codes to ensure that they encourage adaptive reuse without compromising health, safety and welfare. In addition, assisting property owners to rehabilitate downtown structures. The city should consider reasonable design

standards to guide reuse and rehabilitation projects.

- **Financing incentives to encourage restoration.** Incentives work most effectively when building owners see an economic return from these investments. Often, improvements in the public environment create conditions that make these incentive-driven investments more attractive to owners.
 - **Providing gap financing for major rehabilitation projects.** Appropriate historic rehabilitation may not be economically feasible without financing

Figure 3.9: Possible Facade Enhancement for Entire Block



assistance or participation. Elements of a potential financing program for projects Beatrice include:

- **Historic tax credits.** The credit provides a 20% investment tax credit against passive income for certified rehabilitation projects.
- **Tax Increment Financing.** The city should consider TIF to leverage substantial rehabilitation efforts. Alternatively, a portion of other, energy-related revenue sources may be used to assist with financing of downtown projects.
- **Community Development Block Grants.** CDBG funds can be used to provide gap financing for projects that meet statutory requirements for the program. A benefit of the Phase II funding is that

it can be granted to businesses for the improvement of their building. The plan proposes a 25% match up to \$20,000 for facade improvements. In other words, A business may contribute \$5,000 of funds and receive \$15,000 in Phase II funding. Buildings along Court, Ella and 5th Streets should receive priority for funding assistance.

- **HOME Housing Investment Partnership funds** may be used for new construction ownership developments that are targeted toward low and moderate income households.
- **Preservation Easements.** Donation of facade easements can provide tax advantages to building owners and allow public financing for facade restoration. Typ-

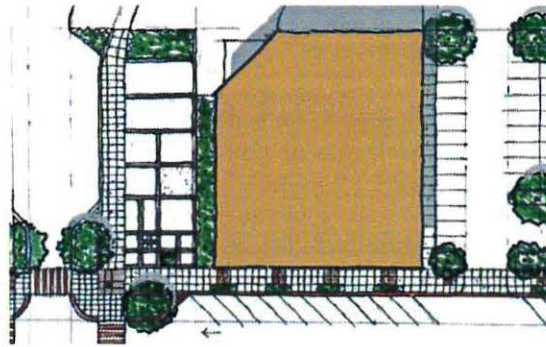
ically easements expire after 7 to 10 years, returning the facades back to the owners. Establishing a facade easement would enable the city to pursue costly improvements, such as replacing upper-story windows. Rawlins, Wyoming and Belle Plaine, Iowa are two communities working towards establishing a facade easement.

- **Other local public and private resources.** The public and private sectors could collaborate to offer financing that provides a real incentive to participants. The result could have major benefits to both property owners and the community's business community.

Charles Park

Located along the northern edge of the downtown, Charles Park is an underutilized community asset. Its location to the west of Highway 77 makes accessing the park difficult, while the buildings along the north side of Ella Street limit the visibility of the park towards the downtown. Successful downtowns often have a community gathering space where festivals and other special events can occur. While the lawn and street in front of the Burlington Depot have been used for community events in the past, its location along the Blue River is isolated.

Improving the visibility and functionality of Charles Park will create a public space close to the downtown shopping district where special events can occur. The demolition of buildings along the north side of Ella Street will provide the park with better visibility into the downtown, and make room for the development of a community playhouse and parking plaza where events such as a farmers market could occur. To the east the Beatrice Public School parking lot would be redesigned to allow for 20% increase in parking to support increased park activities. This would require removing the center drive lane and creating two bays additional parking bays. A pedestrian walkway from the Beatrice Public Schools Administrative Building then extends down into the park, connecting to walkways through the park that connect to Court Street through an alley passageway. Pathways in Charles Park would be redesigned to create a large central lawn that can be better utilized for recreational purposes.



Community Playhouse

Having outgrown their original theatre space at 412 Ella Street, the Community Players have begun to plan for a new facility. The lots immediately south of Charles Park are not performing to their potential, and could be redeveloped to provide space for a new community playhouse.

The design of the facility should orient to both Charles Park, Ella Street and the adjacent parking. The face of the building along Charles Park could be adapted for outdoor performances.

Playhouse Plaza

The outdoor plaza site creates a link between the proposed community playhouse, Chamber of Commerce, and Charles Park. The plaza's hardscape design would interpret the history of the Homestead Act, by the division of the land into sections and quarter sections through the patterning of pavers. The addition of a interactive fountain would create an additional point of activity for Children that further activates the space and Charles Park. Landscaping along the edges of the plaza should use native grasses, flowers and shrubs in order to reinforce the historic significance of the surrounding land.

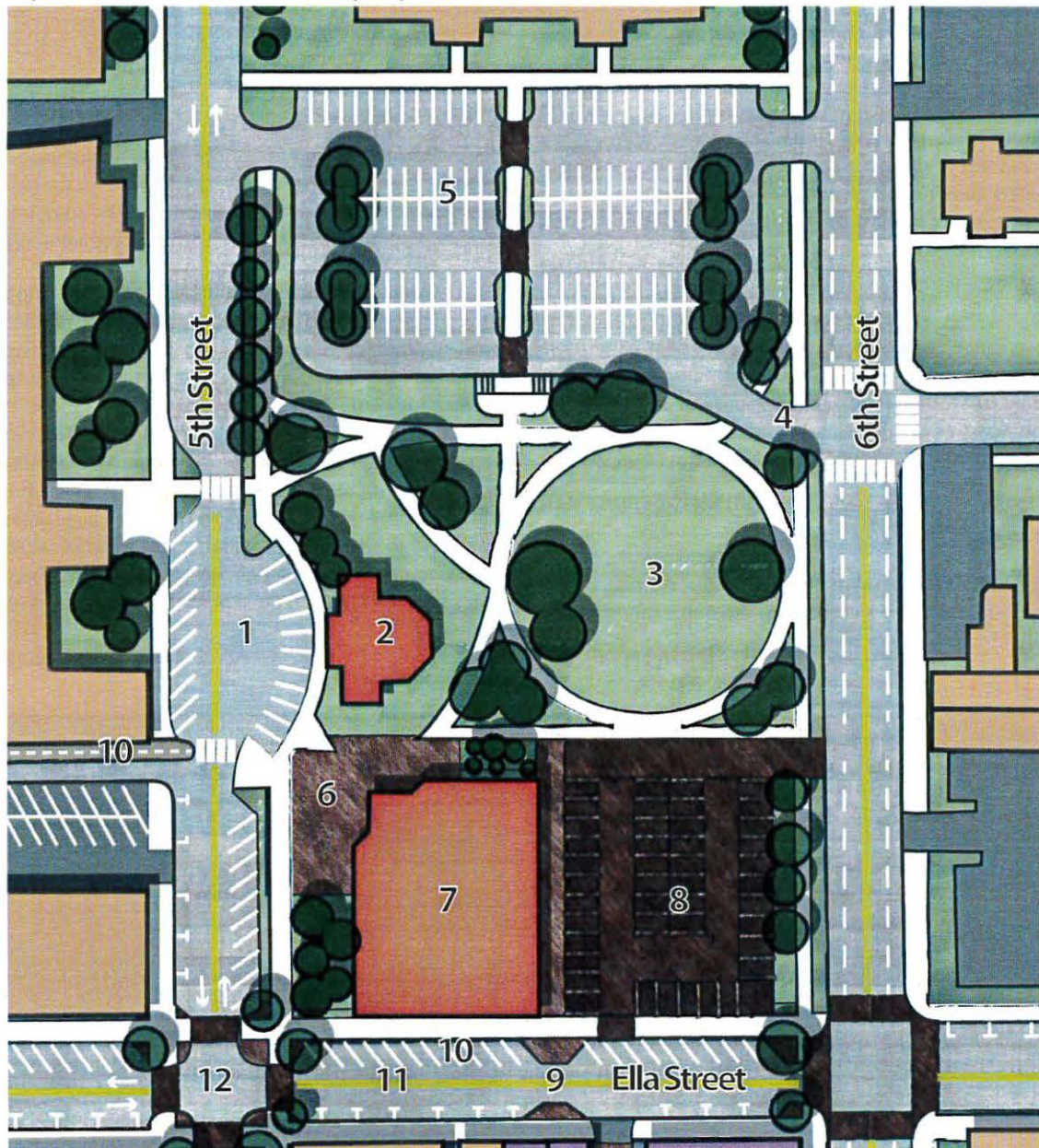


Carscape

Parking is an issue for every downtown, and often takes precedence over the development of plazas or parkland. By clearing buildings along the north side of Ella Street between Fifth and Sixth Street, Charles Park will become more visible and accessible to the district, as will the building south of Ella Street. Convertible plazas have existed for centuries throughout Europe. They have operated as public markets and parking areas during the day, and at night and on special occasions become public space for concerts, festivals, and weekend nightlife.

Landscaping and retaining walls will frame the space along Sixth Street, while permeable pavers will manage stormwater runoff. A similar application is being used in Council Bluffs, Iowa (image above)

Map 3.4: Charles Park and Community Players Theatre



1. Two-way Circulation and Upgraded Parking
2. Carnegie Library Rehabilitation
3. Charles Park Enhancements
4. Elk Street Connection
5. Parking Lot Redesign (Efficiency & Landscaping)
6. Playhouse Plaza
7. Community Players Theatre
8. Carscape
9. Midblock Crossing
10. Angle Parking
11. Two-way Circulation
12. Improved Intersection



Roxie Passageway

This passageway provides a shortcut between Court Street and Charles Park, and allows for additional off-street parking to be created in the heart of the downtown. The pathway could share the alleyway, connecting Court Street and the Community Players Theatre. However, it could be expanded to replace the barbershop, providing a more direct access from block to block. Yet, the barbershop is a significant asset to downtown, and pursuit of this alignment should not displace operating businesses from downtown. Relocating the business to a higher profile location along Court Street or deferring action is appropriate.

The main floor of the Roxie building could be retrofitted with covered passageway, public restrooms, and two commercial tenant spaces. The upper-story could be rehabilitated for housing or offices.



Parking lot upgrades.

Landscaping along the edges of sidewalks, screens the lot and creates a more pleasant street environment for pedestrians to walk along.

New Parking Structure

The parking structure at 6th and Market Streets is inefficient and underused. Despite the high demand for parking on the block, visitors often choose to park on the adjacent surface lot. The City should consider alternative uses for this site, including replacing the structure or using it for surface parking.

Circulation Design and Efficiency

Improving the design of surface parking lots will improve the efficiency of function of downtown's parking resources. For example, the redesign of the Civic Auditoriums parking lot would add two-thirds more parking.



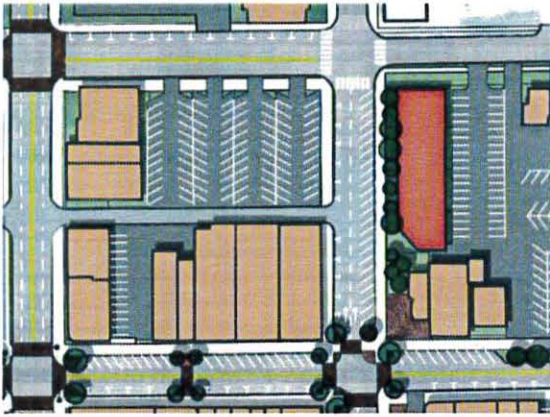
Theatre District & Passageway

The small parking lot along the west side of the Holly Theatre provides employee parking for neighboring businesses. A 6-foot concrete wall screens the lot from Court Street and requires employees and pedestrians to walk to 6th Street to access a sidewalk. The design intentionally prevents passage between the lot and Court Street.

The presence of a concrete wall in the heart of the district is an inappropriate use. Rather, a knee wall constructed of brick with a gap to provide passage improves the permeability of the space and increases security for the cars parked in the lot.

Landscaping beds, or public artwork along the length of the wall will also add character to the street environment.

Map 3.5: Possible Downtown Housing



New Housing Development

Residential growth has proven to be an indispensable part of downtown district development. The redevelopment of land at Seventh and Ella Streets would be an effective location for either the development of live/work units, or an independent living facility. Baby boomers and empty nesters are often looking to downgrade from a traditional single family home with a yard to either a smaller home or apartment that requires less maintenance. The site could either develop as townhouses with attached garages, or apartments with an enclosed at grade garage, or off-street lot located to the east of the structure.



Restored Gas Station and Welcome Center

The former Service Station is one of the earliest service stations in Beatrice, and its unique neoclassical features lends it historical significance. The rehabilitation has been difficult because of the limited amount of parking along Seventh and Court Streets. With improved on-street parking as part of the Highway 136 realignment the service station could be potentially rehabilitated. A similar service station was renovated into a Welcome Center in Ogallala, Nebraska.

The location in front of the building where the service pumps once stood could be turned into a landscaped plaza with ornamental pumps and outdoor seating.

Map 3.6: Possible New Commercial Development



Highway 136 Commercial Redevelopment

The realignment of Highway 136 will require the City of Beatrice and State of Nebraska to acquire property along the proposed corridor. This acquisition would allow the city to create redevelopment sites on several blocks. Rather than commercial development occurring on the peripheral areas of the city, new opportunities exist to develop along the southside of Market Street, in the center of the city.

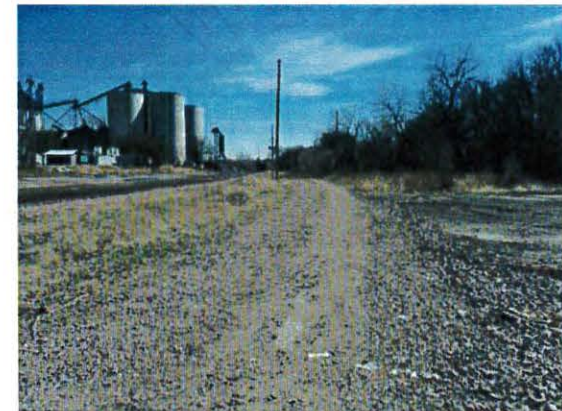
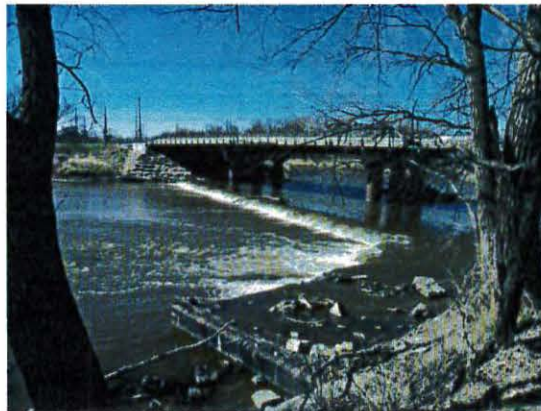
RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

Outdoor Museum Exhibit Space

The Gage County Museum has a number of exhibits that interpret the history and culture of Beatrice and Gage County. Utilizing city owned property to the west of the museum, the museum has the potential to expand its programming to include outdoor exhibits. These exhibit could include historic locomotives relating to the city's railroad and industrial heritage, or interpretive exhibits that are linked to programming efforts at the Homestead National Monument.

Bicycle Track

Creating a bicycle track between the Homestead Trail and Charles Park provides a safe bicycle route between the downtown the trail, the Blue River, and Nichols Park. This dedicated bicycle right-of-way is separated by a narrow concrete median from traffic lanes on Ella and Fourth Street. Parallel parking along the path's median provides additional protection for bicyclists from traffic. Additionally, painting the path green designates it for solely bicycles. Sidewalks improvements along the south side of Ella Street would provide pedestrians with access to the trail and riverfront.



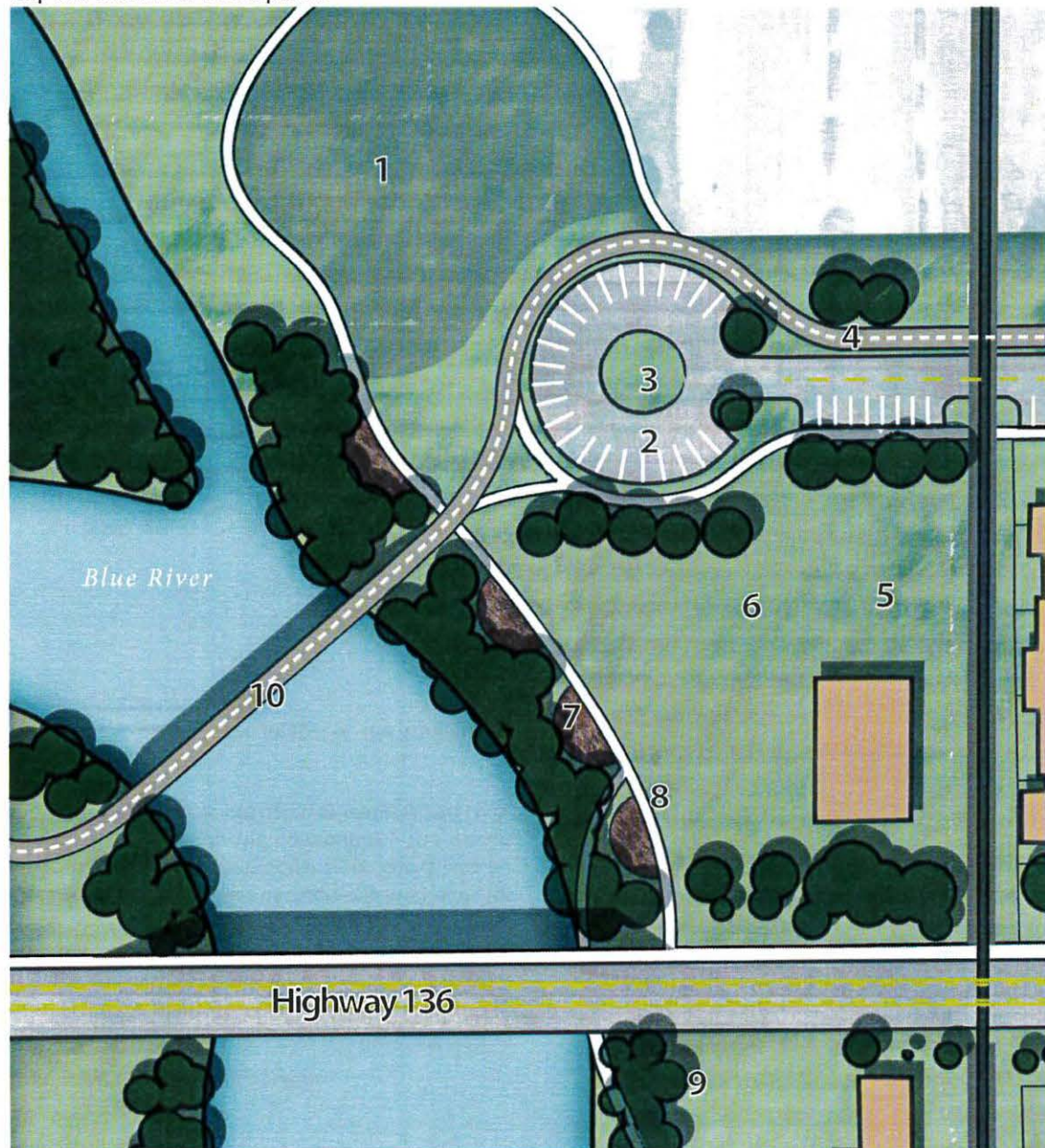
Riverfront Park and Trail

Beatrice's success is undoubtedly linked to its location along the Blue River. The city's strategic location at one of the few bridge crossings that initially existed along the Blue River ensured the city's early success as a center of commerce and industry. Over the years the riverfront has declined in importance as mills that utilized the river for operation have closed, and the railroad returned many of its rights-of-way to the city. Reconnecting the riverfront with the downtown will not only make the river a more attractive community amenity, but it will also provide linkages to Nichols Park and the Homestead National Monument.

- **Riverfront Trail.** Along the banks of the Blue River a new trail provides opportunities to engage nature and observe the environment. Wellness stations and education exhibits could be placed along points of the trail to attract users.
- **Park Lawn.** To the south of the Ella Street parking circle the park lawn allows for recreational space where informal and spontaneous activities can take place.

- **Ella Street Parking Circle and Trailhead.** The trailhead allows for bicyclist and hikers to park at the park and directly access the trails leading between the Homestead National Monument and Lincoln, Nebraska. Additional parking along Ella Street leading from the park towards Second Street will provide parking for the Gage County Museum.
- **Restore Native Prairie.** Along the confluence of the Blue River and Indian Creek is a large expanse of vacant land that was once the city's rail yards. This portion of parkland could be restored into a tallgrass prairie preserve with meandering paths. The addition of information graphics or educational programs from the Homestead National Monument, could help to activate the space as a learning tool with local schools.
- **Blue River Pedestrian Bridge.** Links to the neighborhoods on the western banks of the Blue River are limited to the Court Street Bridge. This new bridge connection provides pedestrians and cyclists with an dedicated route between city parks located on the western banks of the river and downtown Beatrice.

Map 3.7: Riverfront Development



1. Restore to Prairie Grass
2. Parking
3. Public Art
4. Bicycle Track
5. Outdoor Museum Display
6. Park Lawn
7. Education Exhibits / Wellness Stations
8. Riverfront Trail
9. South Extension
10. Pedestrian Bridge

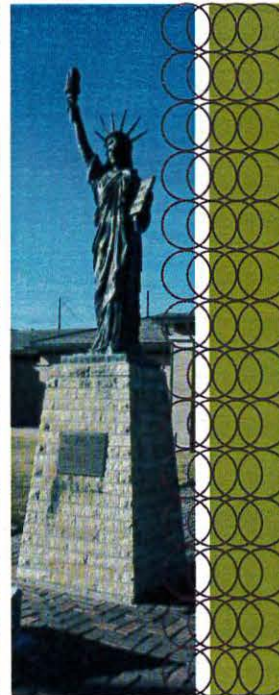
Community Wayfinding System

Installing directional wayfinding graphics will inform travelers of the many destinations that Beatrice offers. The signage system should be a two tiered system – one that is legible for motorists to read and one oriented to pedestrians walking around the downtown. Placement should be near decision-making points for travelers in the City. Additional signs could also be placed at entrances to the community. The design should flow with other the gateway features and community theme.

The concept exhibits the shape of the Homestead Monument and land section.



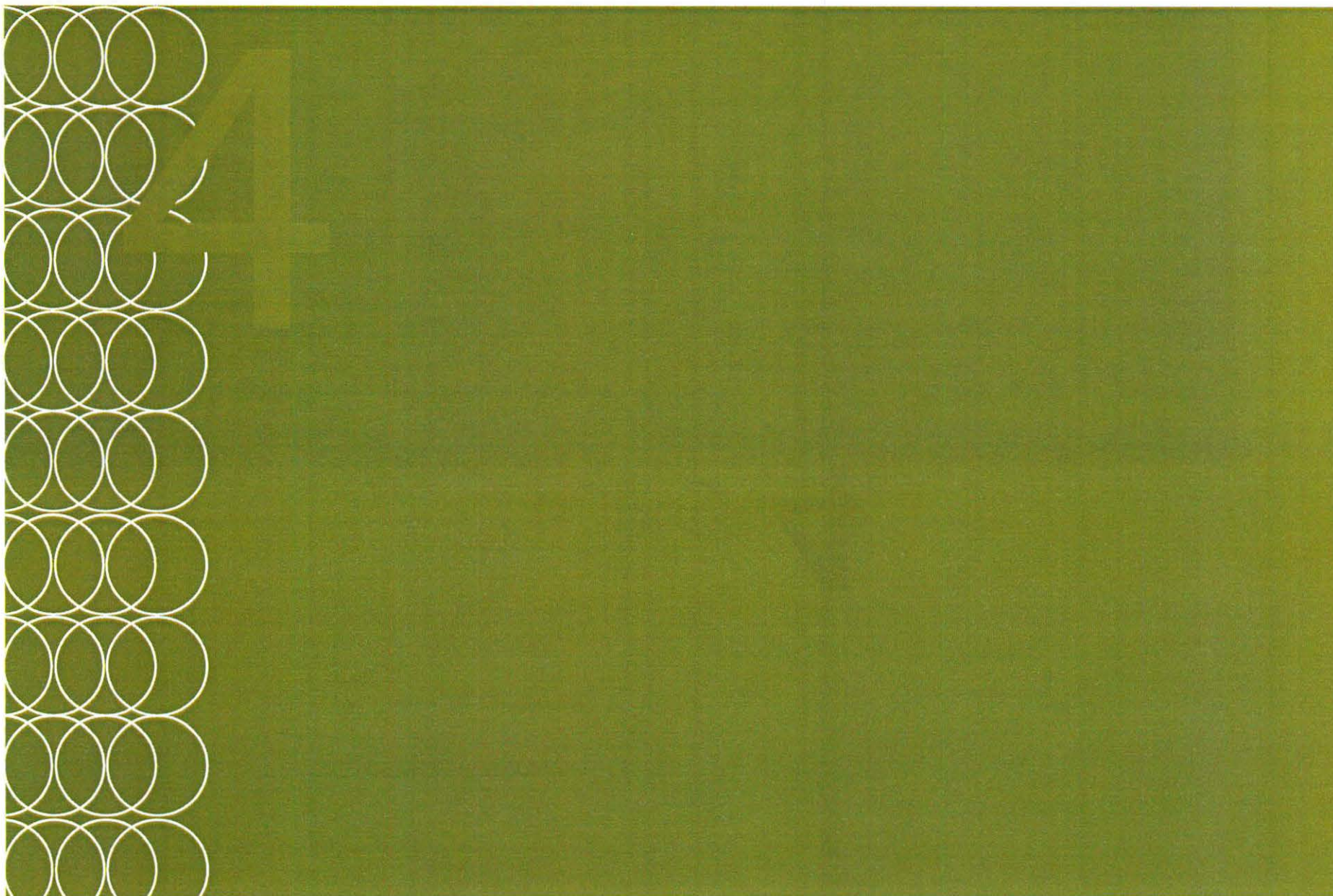
Chapter 4



IMPLEMENTATION

The Downtown Beatrice Plan presents an ambitious and varied program that helps the district take advantage of its potential. This chapter considers several factors critical to implementing the Plan, including:

- Organizational Structure
- Priority Criteria
- Opinion of Probable Costs
- Funding Techniques





The Plan and its scheduling will inevitably change over time. Some projects may advance as opportunities arise, while others appear less important over time. This planning project, initiated by the City of Beatrice from funding received from Nebraska Department of Economic Development's Phase I Revitalization Program, identifies projects that may lead a combination of implementation projects.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

This section considers organizational aspects of the business district and offers recommendations that can strengthen the support structure for the Downtown. Successful development efforts require successful organizations and public/private partnerships. The City of Beatrice can be a catalyst for major development efforts.

Staff and Organization

The Downtown Redevelopment Program should operate under a new position in the City of Beatrice. A Community and Economic Development Director would manage economic development projects for the City, and could possibly serve the entire county. Effectively, the position would assume responsibilities otherwise cared for by the Main Street Director. This ambitious redevelopment program has many moving parts - managing public improvement projects, marketing and administering redevelopment sites, coordinating transportation improvements, doing development deals, and seeking financing to name a few.

While the City Administrator would oversee the redevelopment program, day-to-day plan implementation would be carried out by the Community and Economic Development Director.

Beatrice Chamber of Commerce.

The Chamber of Commerce should continue recruiting businesses to the City and organizing events that showcase the community, including downtown.

Community Redevelopment Authority

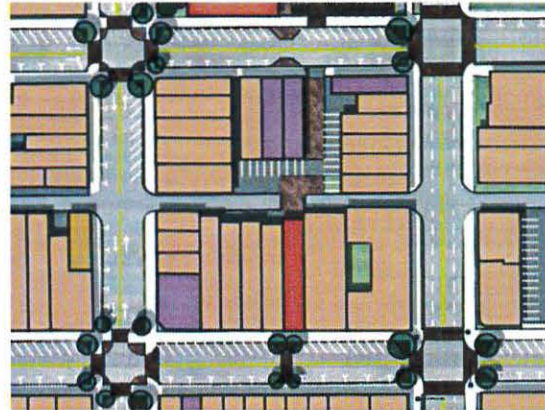
The City of Beatrice has been the catalyst for major redevelopment efforts. As redevelopment efforts move forward the City of Beatrice should develop a Community Redevelopment Authority to administer and coordinate projects. The department and its directorship would function under the auspices of the Community and Economic Development Director. Principle responsibilities include:

- Managing redevelopment
- Preparing requests for proposals and administering the developer selection process for redevelopment sites.

Beatrice Main Street Program

The responsibility of the Beatrice Main Street program is to retain and attract businesses to the downtown district. Principal responsibilities of Beatrice Main Street include:

- Retaining and recruiting business and retail in concert with the Chamber of Commerce.
- Exchanging dialogue with business and property owners.
- Developing marketing material directed to attracting patrons to downtown.
- Developing joint marketing materials and expanding the program of events. Downtown should offer regular programming during the course of the year to maintain district activity.
- Advocating for projects and raising funds for downtown projects.



PRIORITY CRITERIA

The Downtown Plan establishes two project categories, including Mobility and Access and Major Project Areas. The plan includes many projects that will be developed incrementally over time, and requires setting priorities, completing initial steps, and evaluating new conditions along the way. Beatrice is fortunate to become a recipient of \$350,000 of Phase II Downtown Revitalization financing from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

The City with coordinating agencies should maintain a five year Downtown capital program, updated annually, much as city and state governments do with their capital improvement plans. Table 4.1 identifies individual projects and provides a conceptual schedule for implementation. However, market demands and opportunities will inevitably affect this schedule. Annually, the Downtown capital development group should update the schedule, based on priority criteria. These evaluative criteria may involve applying the following questions to specific projects at the time of consideration:

- Does the project respond to specific or high-profile community issues or needs?
- Does the project generate maximum private market response?
- What is the project's potential to transform the image of the area and community?
- Does the project attract both local residents and visitors, increasing business traffic and creating new reasons for people to be downtown?
- Does the project support the growth of existing businesses?
- Does the project capitalize on established, but unmet, market needs?
- Can the project be realistically implemented within a reasonable time frame with potentially available resources?
- Does the project generate substantial community support or consensus?
- Does the project incorporate and leverage outside funding sources, such as state grants or charitable contributions?

OPINION OF PROBABLE COSTS AND IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Financing of elements of Downtown projects will require both public and private participation. This section describes available funding sources and techniques. Projects staging is also likely to manage capital requirements.

An initial schedule is presented here to guide the public and private agencies in the process of making this plan a reality. The schedule establishes four time frames: Ongoing, Within 3 Years, 4-10 Years, 10+ Years. Priorities and opportunities will inevitably shift the schedule for some projects.

Table 4.1: Implementation Schedule

	Cost Range	On-Going	< 3 Years	4-10 Years	Over 10 Years
DISTRICT ARRIVAL- HIGHWAY 136 REALIGNMENT					
Gateway Features	\$20,000-\$35,000 (each)				X
Gateway Nodes	\$40,000-\$110,000				X
Realignment of US 136	Requires Study		X		
CHARLES PARK & COMMUNITY PLAYHOUSE					
Parking Lot North of Park	\$150,000-\$180,000		X		
Park Renovations	\$280,000-\$320,000	X	X	X	
Community Playhouse*	Requires Study		X	X	
Plaza in Front of Theater*	\$175,000-\$200,000			X	
Parking Plaza				X	
DOWNTOWN CORE					
Streetscape Improvements	\$350,000-\$510,000			X	
Building Facades (NDED Phase II)	<\$20,000	X	X		
Roxie's Passageway	Requires Study		X		
Restored Gas Station and Plaza	\$400,000-\$700,000				X
Downtown Housing	Requires Study			X	
7 th and Ella Streets Parking Lot	\$28,000-\$40,000			X	
4 th and Ella Streets Parking Lot	\$35,000-\$50,000			X	
Parking Structure	\$2.1-\$2.4 Million				X
RIVERFRONT PARK & BEATRICE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM					
Environmental Study	Requires Study	X			
Prairie Restoration	Requires Study				X
Park Landscaping and Trail	Requires Study			X	
Trail Bridge	Requires Study				X
Bicycle Track					X
Outdoor Museum Exhibit Space	\$125,000			X	



IMPLEMENTATION SCENARIOS

The Downtown Beatrice Plan proposes a long-term program for investment in this important and active business district. This program is built of many individual projects and recommendations that overtime create an economically strong city center that offers customers, residents, and visitors a diverse and attractive environment. However, not everything can be done at once, and the downtown development is a process that moves forward in increments. In applying the Priority Criteria discussed earlier and examining options for Phase II Downtown Revitalization financing, the plan proposes several basic principles:

1. Public investments in early phases of the process should create a “chain reaction” – a strong and desirable private market response that leads to self-sustaining investment. Thus, the ability of initial projects to generate positive momentum is very important.
2. Projects proposed by this revitalization plan fall into three categories: catalytic, enhancement, and sustaining projects.
 - Catalytic projects, substantial efforts that are large and strategic enough to change an important part of the downtown economy or environment. These projects create conditions that encourage other people to make significant, if smaller investments. Catalytic projects often combine an under used existing asset with a demonstrated need or market opportunity.
 - Enhancement projects, usually investments that improve the appearance, image, or function of the public environment.
 - Sustaining projects, that encourage private businesses, developers, and property owners to respond to the improved environment that “catalytic” and “enhancement” projects creates.
3. Different projects mature at different times during the downtown development process. Table 5.1 Implementation Schedule, is based on this principle. The largest proposed project, the primarily private/public Community Playhouse, has the potential to change the image of downtown and create a new state of the art facility for the theater, and encourage reinvestment on surrounding blocks.

The Phase II program should ideally include one of each type of project: a catalytic project that uses an existing demand to transform an under used asset; an enhancement project that makes a highly visible improvement in the district’s image or function; and a sustaining program that encourage private businesses to take advantage of new opportunities.

DEFINING PHASE II PRIORITIES

Concept One: Buildings and Business

This concept proposes the purchase of under used properties, as a catalyst for establishing a standard for property maintenance, and to stimulate interest and investment in the downtown. For example, the purchase and renovation of the German National Bank Building (411 Court St) would restore a rare example of Romanesque architecture that the private market may not be able to justify. The space can be used as a business incubator, or a small business center where businesses lacking conference rooms and meeting spaces can rent out space for meetings with clients.

- Initiating a façade rehabilitation fund. This may focus on Court Street as a Priority 1 applicant, Fifth Street as Priority 2, and then surrounding properties as Priority 3 applicant. The program is conceived to be a 25% - 50% match with ability to apply for \$10,000 to \$25,000. Total improvements for one property could be \$50,000. All three Phase II concepts include this recommendation, although total allowance for application varies. Phase II funding is one of the few programs that can be granted to private businesses.
- Business Plan Contest. The contest would require entrepreneurs interested in starting a small business to submit business plans to the Chamber of Commerce. At the close of the application process the Chamber would choose the best business plan to receive a grant to secure additional financing and start the business.
- Public Restrooms/Retail Incubator. Creating a public restroom and retail incubator in the Roxie Building, provides the district with a public restroom facility, and a location for a smaller retail business to take up shop. Small retail businesses, often operate as cottage industries, out of homes providing goods and services directly to clients either via mail or direct delivery. This space allows for a small business to broaden its market reach, while not having to invest in a larger commercial space.

Concept Two: Buildings and Walks

Improving the street environment of Downtown Beatrice would significantly influence people's perception of the quality of the City, establish a standard for property maintenance, and stimulate interest and investment in the downtown. Façade and street improvements should focus on Court Street as a Priority 1 applicant, and surrounding properties as a Priority 2 applicant. Streetscape improvement funds in this scenario would provide for roughly 3 blocks worth of basic sidewalk and street improvements (\$100,000/\$5 per sf=20,000 linear feet of concrete, that at a 10ft width equates to 2,000 feet of sidewalk). Additional grant funding for streetscape improvements would be available through a NDED Public Works Grant. These grants are used for infrastructure improvements in low and moderately income areas. Downtown Beatrice is eligible for the use of these funds for improvements along Court Street and 6th Street where there are apartments present.

- Initiating a façade rehabilitation fund. This may focus on Court Street as a Priority 1 applicant and surrounding properties as a Priority 2 applicant. The program is conceived to be a 25% - 50% match with ability to apply for \$10,000 to \$25,000. Total improvements for one property could be \$50,000. All three Phase II concepts include this recommendation, although total allowance for application varies. Phase II funding is one of the few programs that can be granted to private businesses.
- Building Purchase for Reuse. The purchase of under utilized buildings in need of rehabilitation that can serve as examples to the type and quality of restoration expected by independent property owners. These sites could either then be turned back over to the private market, or be used as small business incubators, and encourage economic development.



Table 4.2 Concept One

Project Component	Project Category	Phase II Funding	Private Funding	Total
Business Plan Contest	Catalytic	\$40,000		
Buildings Purchased for Reuse	Catalytic	\$150,000		
Public Restrooms/Retail Incubator	Enhancement/Catalytic	\$100,000		
Façade Improvements	Sustaining	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$350,000
Total		\$465,000	\$175,000	\$640,000

Table 4.3 Concept Two

Project Component	Project Category	Phase II Funding	Private Funding	Total
Façade Improvements	Sustaining	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$400,000
Sidewalk Improvements	Enhancement	\$100,000		
Buildings Purchase for Reuse	Catalytic	\$165,000		
Total		\$465,000	\$200,000	\$665,000

Table 5.4 Concept Three

Project Component	Project Category	Phase II Funding	Private Funding	Total
Façade Improvements	Sustaining	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$350,000
Alley Reconstruction	Enhancement/Catalyst	\$80,000		
Sidewalk Reconstruction	Enhancement	\$100,000		
Buildings Purchased for Reuse	Catalyst	\$110,000		
Total		\$465,000	\$175,000	\$640,000

Concept Three: Buildings and Pathways

Improving the street environment of Downtown Beatrice would significantly influence people's perception of the quality of the City, establish a standard for property maintenance, and stimulate interest and investment in the downtown. Façade and street improvements should focus on Court Street as a Priority 1 applicant, and surrounding properties as a Priority 2 applicant. Like Concept Two, streetscape improvement funds in this scenario would provide for roughly 3 blocks worth of basic sidewalk and street improvements (\$100,000/\$5 per sf=20,000 linear feet of concrete, that at a 10ft width equates to 2,000 feet of sidewalk). This scenario includes improvements to the Alley behind the Roxie building. This improvement would provide employee parking for surrounding businesses, and serve as a catalyst for later completion of the Roxie Passageway. Additional grant funding for streetscape and alley improvements would be available through a NDED Public Works Grant.

- Initiating a façade rehabilitation fund. Similar to concepts two and three.
- Building Purchase for Reuse. Similar to concepts two and three.

FUNDING TECHNIQUES

Available financing tools to help realize the vision for the downtown plan include:

LOCAL TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

- Business Improvement District
- Building Façade Easements
- Building Façade Loan Programs
- City General Revenue Funds
- Downtown Bond Issue
- Estate Taxes
- Land Sale Proceeds
- Local Option Sales Tax
- Private and Foundation Philanthropy
- Revenue Bonds
- Revolving Loan Program
- Tax Increment Financing

State & Federal SOURCES

- Community Development Block Grants
 - Phase II Financing
- Historic Tax Credits (HTC)
- National Trust Main Street Program & Loan Fund
- ReTree Nebraska
- Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation
- Small Business Administration
- Transportation Enhancements
- USDA Grants
 - Business
 - Energy conservation and renewable energy
 - Housing
 - Community Facilities
 - Rural Water and Waste

The following discusses the application of these individual techniques and how they apply to specific recommendations in the plan.

LOCAL TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Building Façade Easements

Many of the districts older commercial structures are candidates for establishing building façade easements. Façade easements could be dedicated to the city, protecting the façade from unsympathetic modifications and providing a tax benefit to the donor. In addition, various forms of public financing, including TIF, may be available as a result of permanent public easements. Typically, these easements last for 7 to 15 years, and then return to the owner of the property.

Building Façade Loan Program

Buildings in the downtown could be eligible for a façade loan program where owners can apply for up to the known amount with a matched percentage. A similar program was initiated in Gothenburg, Nebraska, where owners were able to apply for up to \$7,500 with a \$2,500 match. Their program resulted in 12 improved facades. Additional information available is below under Local Option Sales Tax (LB 840).

Business Improvement District (BID)

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are special assessment districts that permit businesses to finance public capital improvement projects and district maintenance. BIDs are petitioned and approved by property owners and created by the City following a specific process established by Nebraska State Statutes Chapter 19 §4015 to §4038 and administered by a BID Board. While BIDs are a valuable tool, it is important that assessments not be so large that they create a burden to property owners. This plan recommends that the City adopt a policy of public financing of major capital projects, with required BID funding of maintenance and district management and promotion.

Omaha's Benson Neighborhood Business District successfully adopted a BID for upgrades and maintenance of the area. A similar BID could be adopted by business owners in the downtown area.

City General Revenue

General revenues, appropriated through the city's annual budget process, can finance services, improvements, facilities and development projects. These appropriations are separate from general revenues devoted to debt service on bonds. Common uses of general revenues in downtown development programs include funding staff and organizational expenses, or projects that can be divided into smaller phases, such as streetscape improvements.

Downtown Bond Issues

General obligation bond issues are appropriate to finance major public projects or improvements, and are secured by general city revenues. These revenues typically include property taxes or, potentially, local option sales taxes. General obligation bonds require majority voter approval. In the downtown concept, bonds are most appropriate to finance all or part of the streetscape project.

Shenandoah, Iowa refinanced a maturing bond to pay for the reconstruction of their streetscape.

Estate Taxes

Estate taxes are collected by the county and may be appropriately used to help finance capital improvement projects for gateway and corridor enhancements.

Land Sale Proceeds

Proceeds from sale of land to development projects, could be allocated back to central city improvements and acquisition for other redevelopment activities.

Local Option Sales Tax (LB 840)

Beatrice voters could approve a local option sales tax for economic development. Under LB 840, these funds can be used to finance public and private projects that support local development objectives. Beatrice should use a portion of these funds to sustain Downtown as a major community asset. LB 840 proceeds may be used to help finance bonds for downtown public improvements, but should also be used to establish an enterprise fund to assist desirable private investment in the district – "a Downtown Fund."

- Equity investments targeting new businesses.
- Zero interest loans, blended with loans at prime rates from local lenders, for approved rehabilitation/storefront restoration projects.
- Loan guarantees for storefront rehabilitation and restoration.
- Loans for residential conversion/adaptive reuse projects on gap finance basis.

It is essential that such a Fund be administered with strong fiduciary accountability and careful project review.

Revenue Bonds

Revenue bonds are debt instruments that are repaid all or in part from revenues generated by the project or by other associated revenue sources. Revenue bonds typically are not secured by the credit of the community.

Revolving Loan Program

A downtown revolving loan program could provide low-interest loan funds granted by the city to cover any portion of costs to convert downtown buildings into more marketable assets. Those eligible to receive funds could include for-profit and non-profit organizations. The City of Gothenburg recently established a revolving loan program with a starting capital of \$100,000.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Local Tax Increment Financing (Local TIF) permits the use of a portion of local property and sales taxes to assist funding the redevelopment of certain designated areas within your community. Projects pay their entire established tax obligation. However, taxes produced by the added value of the property caused by redevelopment or improvements may be used to finance project-related improvements or other public improvements in the district. TIF may be used to pay certain costs incurred with a redevelopment project. Such costs may include, but are not limited to:

- Professional services such as studies, surveys, plans, financial management, legal counsel.
- Land acquisition and demolition of structures
- Building necessary new infrastructure in the project area such as streets, parking, decorative lighting.
- Relocation of resident and business occupants located in the project area.

State and Federal

Community Development Block Grants

The Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) is administered by the Department of Economic Development. The Nebraska Department of Economic Development offers a Phase II grant worth \$350,000 to assist cities with costs for improving downtown. The City of Beatrice anticipates receiving this funding to pursue various projects identified in this downtown plan.

Historic Tax Credits (Federal)

The Historic Tax Credit program offers a 20% investment tax credit for certified rehabilitation of National Register or National Register-eligible buildings if:

- The building is used for income-producing purposes;
- Rehabilitation work follows the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation; and
- The project receives preliminary and final approval from the National Park Service.

Property owners, developers and architects must apply for the tax credit through the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and are encouraged to work with SHPO staff to ensure that appropriate rehabilitation measures are followed. The SHPO then passes its recommendations on to the National Park Service for approval.

National Trust Main Street Program & Loan Fund

Beatrice is a member of the Main Street Program. The local organization is beginning their campaign to improve downtown with the adoption of this plan. The National Trust Main Street Program was established in the 1970s as an approach to the special needs and circumstance of America's traditional downtown commercial centers. The program's innovative approach combines historic preservation with economic development in the revitalization of these districts, and has led to the creation of a network of more than 40 statewide, citywide and countrywide programs with more than 1,200 active Main Street programs nationally. While the program relies largely on the efforts of individual communities to help themselves, the statewide program typically offers administrative and technical assistance. The program is based upon four points that work together to build a sustainable and complete community revitalization effort, these are; organization, district/community proportion, design, and economic restructuring.

Tax incentives may be available for your restoration project from the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office. The National Trust Loan Fund (NTLF) has more than 35 years of experience in supporting preservation-based community development projects across the country. As a certified Community Development Financial Institution, it has a mission of providing financial and technical resources to organizations that use historic preservation to support the revitalization of underserved and distressed communities.

NTLF specializes in pre-development, acquisition, minipermanent, bridge and rehabilitation loans for residential, commercial and public use projects. Eligible borrowers include not-for-profit organizations,

revitalization organizations or real estate developers working in certified Main Street communities, local, state or regional governments, and for profit developers of older and/or historic buildings.

ReTree Nebraska

ReTree Nebraska includes a variety of grant opportunities to communities, as well as specific selected Nebraska communities. Target sites for Beatrice are along Court Street, Charles Park, The Riverfront, and areas within the public right-of-way. Nebraska Community Enhancement Program (NCEP) Shade Our Streets (SOS), Trees for Nebraska Towns (TNT), Shade Structure Program, and Green America Awards are just a few.

For more information, visit www.nfs.unl.edu/ReTree/retreenebraskafunding.asp

Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation (Rural LISC)

The mission of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) is to provide assistance to community residents in transforming distressed neighborhoods into healthy and sustainable communities of choice and opportunity. LISC works to mobilize corporate, government, and philanthropic support to provide local community development organizations with:

- Loans, grants and equity investments
- Local, statewide and national policy support
- Technical and management assistance

LISC's support is geared towards building sustainable communities through the achievement of five goals in their support of local initiatives:

- Expanding investment in housing and other real estate
- Increasing family income and wealth
- Stimulating economic development
- Improving access to quality education
- Supporting healthy environments and lifestyles

For additional information, contact Rural LISC at 202-739-9283, or visit their website at www.rurallic.org

Small Business Administration

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has a financial assistance program which provides access to debt and equity primarily from banks or other private sources. SBA evaluates each loan application on two levels; the first is for eligibility, which varies by industry and SBA program, and second on credit merits of the application. SBA programs and services support small business owners, connecting businesses to loans, government contracting opportunities, disaster assistance and training programs to help your business succeed.

For more information, visit www.sba.gov.

Transportation Enhancements (TE)

The Transportation Enhancement (TE) program provides 80% federal financing for such projects as enhancements to major transportation corridors, trails and other non-motorized transportation projects, and the preservation of historic transportation structures. The program is administered by the Nebraska Department of Roads with the assistance of a project review advisory committee. TE funds are appropriate for financing such programs as:

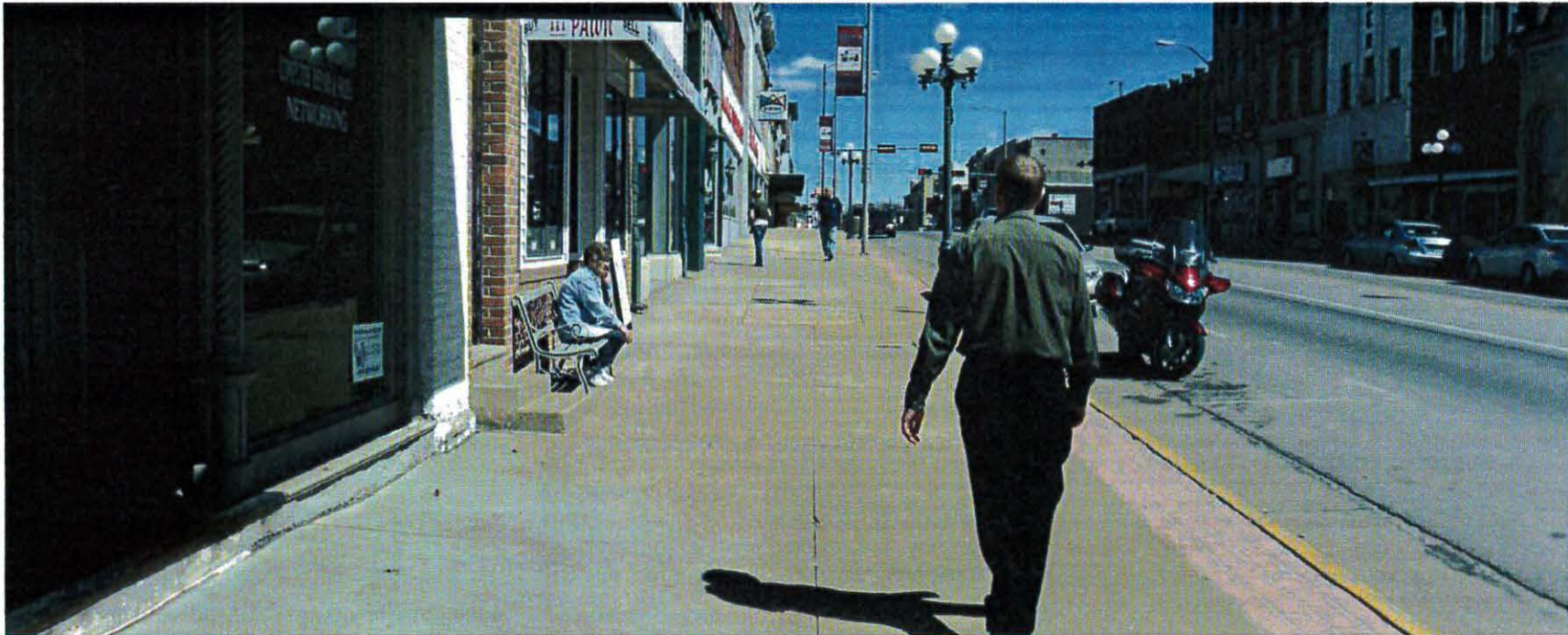
- Street improvements, including lane reconfiguration and access improvements.
- Gateways at Court Street and Highway 136 bypass.
- Realignment of Highway 136.
- Intersection and Crosswalk Improvements

USDA Rural Development Programs

Rural Development, a division of the US Department of Agriculture, has many programs for businesses, energy conservation and renewable energy, housing, community facilities, and rural water and waste.

Business

- Intermediary Relending Program (IRP) loans are made by Rural Development to public bodies and non-profit community development organizations who then make loans to businesses and communities with the ultimate goal of creating and/or saving jobs. Individual businesses or communities can contact IRP participants for a revolving loan.
- Business & Industry Guarantee Loans (B&I) lenders (banks, etc.) apply for a guarantee from Rural Development in order to make sizeable loans to businesses (up to \$25 million for a business, up to \$40 million for cooperatives).
- Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants (REDLG) loans or grants to utility cooperatives who then can loan to businesses and/or community projects.
- Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) A farmer or producer group can apply for a grant to fund their feasibility study or working capital to add value to their raw goods.



Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy

The Rural Energy for America Program awards grants and loan guarantees to small businesses for renewable energy projects and energy efficiency improvements. Example projects for downtown businesses include geothermal heating and equipment upgrades.

Housing

- Direct and Guaranteed loans to purchase a home in a rural area (20,000 pop. Or less)
- Loans and grants to repair a home (Grants available to homeowners over age of 62)
- Subsidized rents for apartments or townhouses in rural communities

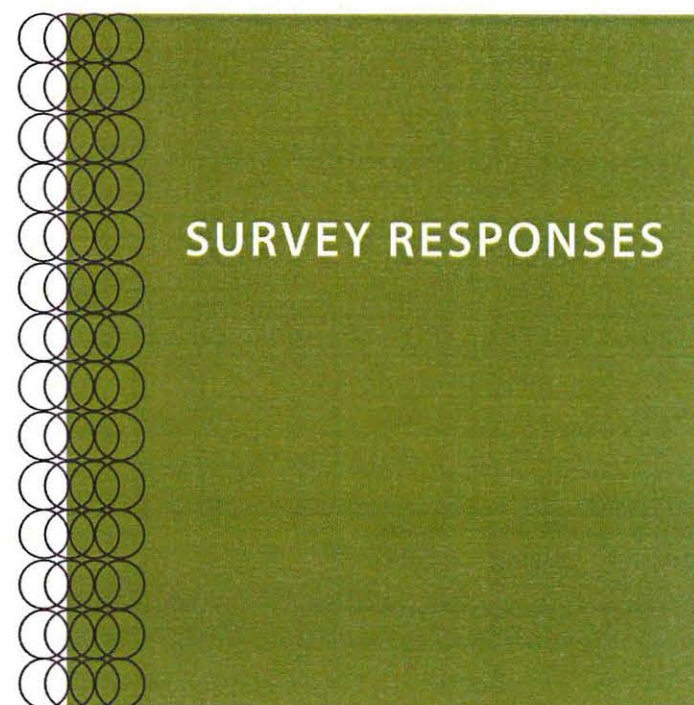
Community Facilities

Candidate projects include the Depot relocation project. Loans and grants to nonprofits or public bodies such as counties, cities, community centers, day cares, senior centers, homeless shelters, fire halls, ambulances, fire trucks, emergency equipment, and much more.

Rural Water and Waste

Loans and grants to help cities replace or upgrade city water, sewer and storm water systems. For more information visit www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn/ or contact the Rural Development State Office 402-437-5551.

appendix



PUBLIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Rating of Features

The process began with an opinion survey, designed to gather opinions and perceptions about Downtown Beatrice. About 249 people completed the survey on-line or on paper.

A community questionnaire asked respondents to rank various features of downtown on a 5 (excellent) to 1 (poor) scale. Results are tabulated and reported by the frequency of responses. Items are listed in ascending order by average score.

Appendix: Table 1: Ratings of Downtown Features

Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	Don't Know	Rating Average	Response Count
Connection to trails	16	41	77	66	33	11	3.38	244
Parks and Open space	19	57	77	53	32	6	3.16	244
Marketing and Promotional Activities	17	39	104	69	15	2	3.13	246
Connection to Big Blue River	24	61	81	40	26	11	3.07	243
Sidewalk Area and Public Spaces	17	48	101	64	14	1	3.05	245
Directional Information to Downtown	28	56	97	37	9	18	2.99	245
Traffic Circulation	22	60	88	64	9	4	2.96	247
Adequacy of Parking	21	64	88	59	17	0	2.95	249
City Investment in Downtown	22	68	96	40	2	16	2.92	244
Restaurants and Entertainment Establishments	23	70	85	48	16	3	2.89	245
Overall Appearance of Downtown	18	69	100	53	5	1	2.84	246
Availability of Housing Downtown	44	88	58	10	4	40	2.84	244
Growth in the Office Market	35	97	59	14	0	37	2.83	242
Willingness of Property Owners/Businesses to Invest	51	79	55	23	4	34	2.80	246
Prospects for Future Business Development	35	78	70	40	12	10	2.78	245
Condition of Surrounding Residential Areas	32	85	88	34	3	2	2.58	244
Tourism	37	93	69	31	5	8	2.58	243
Retailing Environment	26	108	76	28	1	5	2.53	244
Quality of Downtown Housing	70	98	32	8	1	36	2.51	245
Overall Economic Health	36	108	67	15	1	14	2.50	241
Cultural Facilities and Attractions	37	104	65	31	5	4	2.49	246
Condition of Buildings	45	89	77	31	3	3	2.46	248
Business Variety	40	92	86	27	3	0	2.44	248
Public Perception of Downtown	46	102	70	23	0	7	2.40	248

Appendix: Table 2: **Actions for Downtown Beatrice**

Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	Don't Know	Rating Average	Response Count
Attraction of New Retail Businesses	3	11	12	58	138	4	4.46	226
More Restaurants and Entertainment	6	12	43	69	90	2	4.04	222
Improve Traffic Flow for Trucks	8	30	34	55	90	8	3.95	225
Improve intersection of Court and 6th Streets	10	25	42	65	67	12	3.86	221
Special Events and Activities	4	21	62	79	53	4	3.75	223
More Events and Activities	3	20	65	87	48	2	3.72	225
Restoration of Historic Business Facades	6	26	57	75	60	0	3.70	224
New Construction on Vacant Sites	14	32	51	69	53	5	3.58	224
Additional Parking	7	32	65	71	48	2	3.56	225
Improved Streetscape	5	39	66	57	55	1	3.54	223
Better Advertising and Promotion	5	22	93	64	39	2	3.52	225
Entrance Features and Gateways	7	36	67	67	39	6	3.51	222
Improved Business Signage	7	27	80	65	39	4	3.51	222
Upgrade alleys and rear facades	13	35	56	70	44	4	3.49	222
Convert to two-way circulation	29	41	58	27	23	41	3.44	219
Special Graphics and Signs (including historic information)	11	33	77	60	37	2	3.39	220
More Office Development	9	43	73	63	28	6	3.34	222
Extended Business Hours	14	39	76	55	37	4	3.33	225
Bury powerlines	25	41	63	39	38	15	3.31	221
Additional Public Spaces	8	49	80	60	20	6	3.24	223
Housing in Upper Stories	28	58	58	36	25	18	3.12	223
Murals and Public Art	18	54	73	49	29	2	3.10	225
Better Directional Information to Downtown	16	51	87	41	23	6	3.10	224
Improved Pedestrian Safety Crossings	14	53	92	32	28	4	3.09	223
Improved Trail System	30	63	61	46	21	3	2.88	224
More Housing	34	63	67	30	14	15	2.87	223
answered question								227
skipped question								22

ACTIONS FOR DOWNTOWN BEATRICE

About 227 people completed the survey question.

Respondents to consider ideas and actions for improving downtown Beatrice, again ranking them on a "5" (greatest importance) to "1" (least importance) scale.

ASSETS

In the first of four open-ended questions throughout the survey, respondents were asked to list downtown Beatrice's three greatest assets. The most frequently mentioned assets pertained to existing businesses and operations. All responses are listed.

Appendix: Table 3: **Greatest Assets**

Count	Asset
101	Historic buildings/character
66	Access/location/traffic flow
61	Business variety
45	Entertainment (theater, restaurants, and bars)
40	Dedicated, friendly, local business owners and managers
34	Streetscape/ lighting / facades/ ongoing improvement
33	Active Main Street Program and Board
20	Potential for growth and existing available spaces
14	Compact area, walkability
13	Parking is adequate & free
13	River potential
13	Attractive/clean
9	Black Crow
8	Local community players
8	Park/public space potential/ trails connectivity
5	Christmas lights / Seasonal Decorations
4	Back Alley Eatery
3	Homestead National Monument
3	The Kensington (assisted living, historic building)
3	Specialty knowledge/specific products (ie. shoes)
3	Banks
2	City Auditorium

Appendix: Table 3: **Greatest Assets**

Count	Asset
2	Marketing/Branding Beatrice
2	Sunrise Bakery
2	Locally owned pharmacies
1	Everything Ratigan-Shottler has improved after buying
1	Schuster's Outdoor
1	Gift shops
1	Claubaughs
1	Eclipse freight brokerage
1	Alexis Winder
1	Lots of people
1	Kabo
1	Nick J Computer Doctor
1	Possibility of downtown housing
1	Public Library
1	Farmers market
1	Leo's Jewelers
1	One-way streets
1	Gage County Railroad Museum
1	Safe
1	Junior High School/football field
1	Surrounding housing
1	Affordable property
1	Beatrice Bakery
1	Shoe Store

Appendix: Table 4: **Greatest Liabilities**

Count	Asset
99	Deteriorating facades/ historic buildings
62	Parking availability
52	Empty Buildings
32	Traffic
27	Lack of business variety
27	Sidewalks
21	Absentee Landlords who won't improve their buildings
19	Semis not using truck route / noise
17	Lack of owner investment
16	Lack of events/activities/ entertainment
15	One way streets
11	Variety
10	Leadership (General: City Council, Officials, Chamber, Main Street)
10	Maintenance (snow removal/ sweeping)
9	Lack of customers
9	Lack of retail
8	Lack of new businesses
7	Lack of greenspace/gathering space/ seating
7	Lack of theme or city design
6	No "Real" Retail anchor/ larger brand names
6	Restaurants, Lacking good
6	The Naked Mannequin Store (formerly Hannah's)

Appendix: Table 4: **Greatest Liabilities**

Count	Asset
5	Signage
5	Store hours
5	Wal Mart
4	Streets
3	6th & Court intersection
3	Alleys
3	Hours of operation
3	Housing
3	Rent is expensive
3	Unemployment / lack of job opportunities
3	Upper-story use (use and fire code challenges)
2	Businesses aren't Interconnected
2	Convenience
2	Does not attract spending from outside Beatrice
2	Lack of incentive by Beatrice
2	Lack of trees lining sidewalks in downtown
2	Marketing of downtown
2	Perception of general public
2	Poor customer service
2	Power Lines

Liabilities

Survey respondents listed the greatest liabilities as business variety and facades. Some of the liabilities can be matched up, such as facades and upper-stories. Responses are listed.

DESIRABLE BUSINESSES

Survey respondents listed the desirable businesses that they would like to see in the downtown. Most common responses was clothing stores and restaurants. Responses are listed.

Appendix: Table 5: Desirable Businesses

Count	Asset
252	Retail
87	Women's clothing / department stores
32	General retail
29	Specialty retail
13	Gift / variety store
12	Craft/hobby Shop
10	Music/electronics store
8	Grocery/ meat market/ organic
7	Shoe store
7	Furniture and furnishings
6	Book store
6	Hardware store
4	Dollar store
3	Second hand goods
2	Farmer's market
2	Childrens goods
2	Outdoor sporting goods
2	Bicycle shop
2	Office Supplies & Copy Center
2	Florist
2	Toy store
2	Party shop
1	Sporting goods

Appendix: Table 5: Desirable Businesses

Count	Asset
1	Antique stores
1	Walgreens
1	Party outlet store
1	Fabrics and quilting
1	Auto parts store
1	Candy store
1	Small, high-traffic chain (Verizon)
1	Video
1	Appliance store
1	Western store
1	Hardware
124	Restaurants
77	Quality, full time, family restaurants
31	Small gathering (Coffee/sandwich/ bake shop)
7	Ice cream parlor
2	Health Food restaurants
3	Outdoor dining
1	Buffet-type restaurant (Old Country Buffet)
2	Fast-food
1	Lounge or bar for older tastes
32	Entertainment / Arts
12	General/Unspecified
9	Art gallery
1	Arcade
5	Improved Theatre
3	Childrens museum

Appendix: Table 5: Desirable Businesses

Count	Asset
1	Dance Hall
21	Service
14	Professional offices
1	Tanning salon
2	Hotel
1	Music studio
1	Call center
1	Small business college
1	Technology development
7	Other
2	Co-op to sell food, art
1	Youth Center
1	Museum
2	Destination
1	Senior Center

