



Office of Outreach and Engagement

FINAL DELIVERABLE

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Community Partners	City of North Liberty, Iowa

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North Liberty Civic Corridor Plan



School of
**Urban &
Regional
Planning**



**Office of Outreach
and Engagement**

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Executive Summary

The purpose of developing the North Liberty Civic Corridor plan is to serve the community as an instrument for prioritizing goals that reimagine this specific area of North Liberty, which is bounded by current and future civic facilities. After identifying a geographically-defined area, the planning team outlined a set of project goals. This set of goals outlines a set of parameters under which the community can operate, and to summarize the primary ideas for how best to move forward and create a new community-oriented corridor. By establishing a scope for this project, the community can focus its efforts towards prioritizing actionable recommendations and implementing the vision.

There are three fundamental means of implementing this civic corridor plan. One is to collaborate and **engage with the community** to ensure their collective voice is considered. The next is appropriate **investment** to support physical improvements such as pathways, streets, and streetscape amenities. The last is to establish an identity and **promote** the vision for the civic corridor through advocacy and adoption of this plan. Ultimately, the North Liberty Civic Corridor could prove to be a vibrant and welcoming place for generations to come.

This plan provides a strategically focused, goal-driven outline for the future development and growth of a centralized civic corridor. The plan builds upon existing assets, such as Penn Meadows Park and the North Liberty Recreation Center, and it proposes changes to enhance the area. Those recommendations are based on findings, priorities, best practices and references from other communities. Beginning with alterations to land use in the corridor area, the planning team proposes property acquisition, rezoning, and development. Cherry Street and its intersections are primary focus points of this plan. This involves the consideration of a new street design to improve traffic flow while also ensuring a pedestrian-friendly corridor. For this reason, the planning team explored elements relating to the complete street policy and design approach. This addresses the overall streetscape, ranging anywhere from signage and lighting to new pathway construction. Furthermore, a key component of reimaging this civic corridor is the design and façade elements along the corridor. These recommendations are intended to guide North Liberty towards the creation of a dynamic civic corridor welcoming and encouraging all to enjoy.

This plan provides both major and minor changes within each section. Inevitably, some ideas may never be realized, but every strategy and recommendation are intended to collectively enhance the continuity and identity of the corridor. By reimaging the Cherry Street area, this plan would help the community realize a civic corridor that enables safe, convenient, and comfortable travel and access for people of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation.

Introduction

This project exists thanks to a partnership between the City of North Liberty, the University of Iowa School of Urban and Regional Planning, and the Office of Outreach and Engagement. Each section of this report breaks down key areas in which the Cherry Street civic corridor could be reimagined, and each section provides a list of both major and minor changes. That includes land use, streets, sidewalks/pathways, streetscape amenities, and the design and façades of structures fronting onto Cherry Street. The planning team envisions this report to serve as a guide that can be used well into the future. Therefore, a statement was formulated to represent the long-term vision of a future civic corridor. That is, the Cherry Street civic corridor will enhance traffic flow, it will be pedestrian-friendly, it will serve as a connection to the existing trail network, and it will attract residents and visitors alike.

According to the American Planning Association, “the process of developing a corridor plan begins with defining the geographic extent of the plan area as well as the problems or issues to be considered as part of the plan analysis and recommendations.” From the beginning of the planning process, various “fact finding” steps were taken to realize a set of project goals to guide the development of this *Creating a North Liberty Civic Corridor* plan. The planning team examined demographic data, collected photographic documentation of current conditions, considered existing city ordinances and zoning in the area, and referenced best practices from other communities. Additionally, the planning team created several maps using Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping technology to present both the existing situation and proposed changes to the area surrounding Cherry Street. Based on input, research, and best practices, the following list of project goals were identified by the planning team.

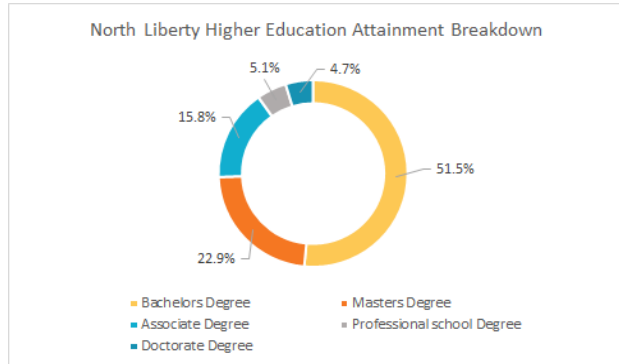
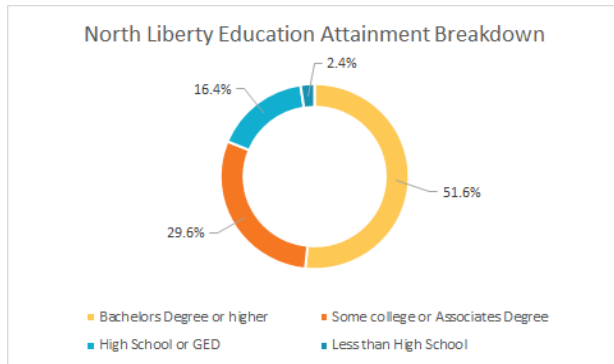
PROJECT GOALS

- Develop a plan reimagining the North Liberty civic corridor that is consistent and supportive of other relevant past, current, and ongoing community-oriented planning initiatives
- Promote a pedestrian-friendly mixed-use streetscape
- Leverage the existing attractions and community assets along Cherry Street, and reimagine properties fronting onto West Cherry Street
- Establish a theme for the civic corridor that can be easily and clearly branded, using existing characteristics of the area such as red brick along pathways
- Ensure continuity along Cherry Street connecting the future City Hall to the commercial activity at the corner of Highway 965
- Provide graphic content to help the community understand how the project will fit into the existing urban center
- Create a greater mix of housing with a focus on attracting residents to live, work, and play near or within the civic corridor in public spaces
- Recommend strategies to improve traffic issues, examine desirable land use, parking, and other related subjects

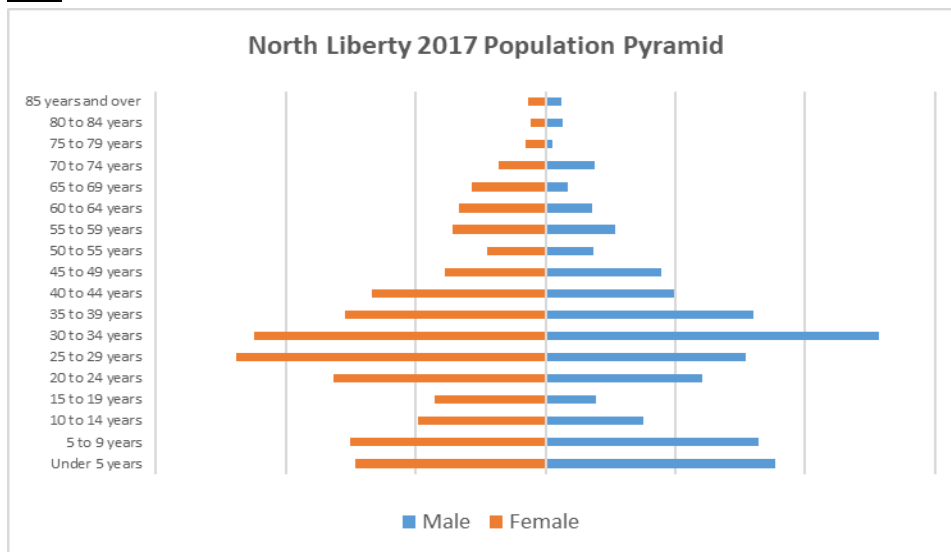
North Liberty Demographics

With many young families calling North Liberty their home, this plan highlights the value a civic corridor could provide to the community. In collaboration with the University of Iowa School of Urban and Regional Planning course, *Housing Policy*, city-wide demographic data was collected and is featured below. This information is used to provide a general profile of North Liberty as a whole. In summation, North Liberty is home to a highly educated, younger population who mostly work outside of the city (US Census, American Community Survey 2013-2017).

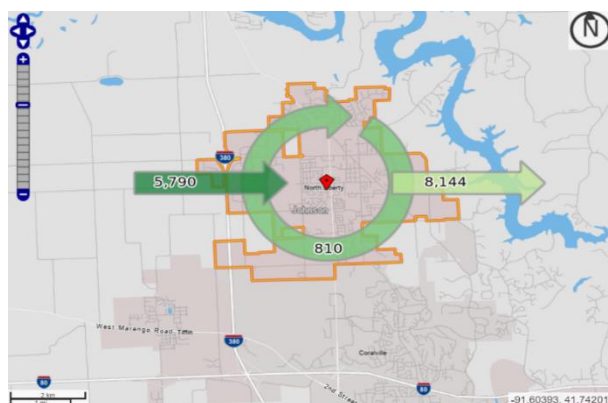
Education Attainment:



Age:



Inflow/Outflow Job Analysis:

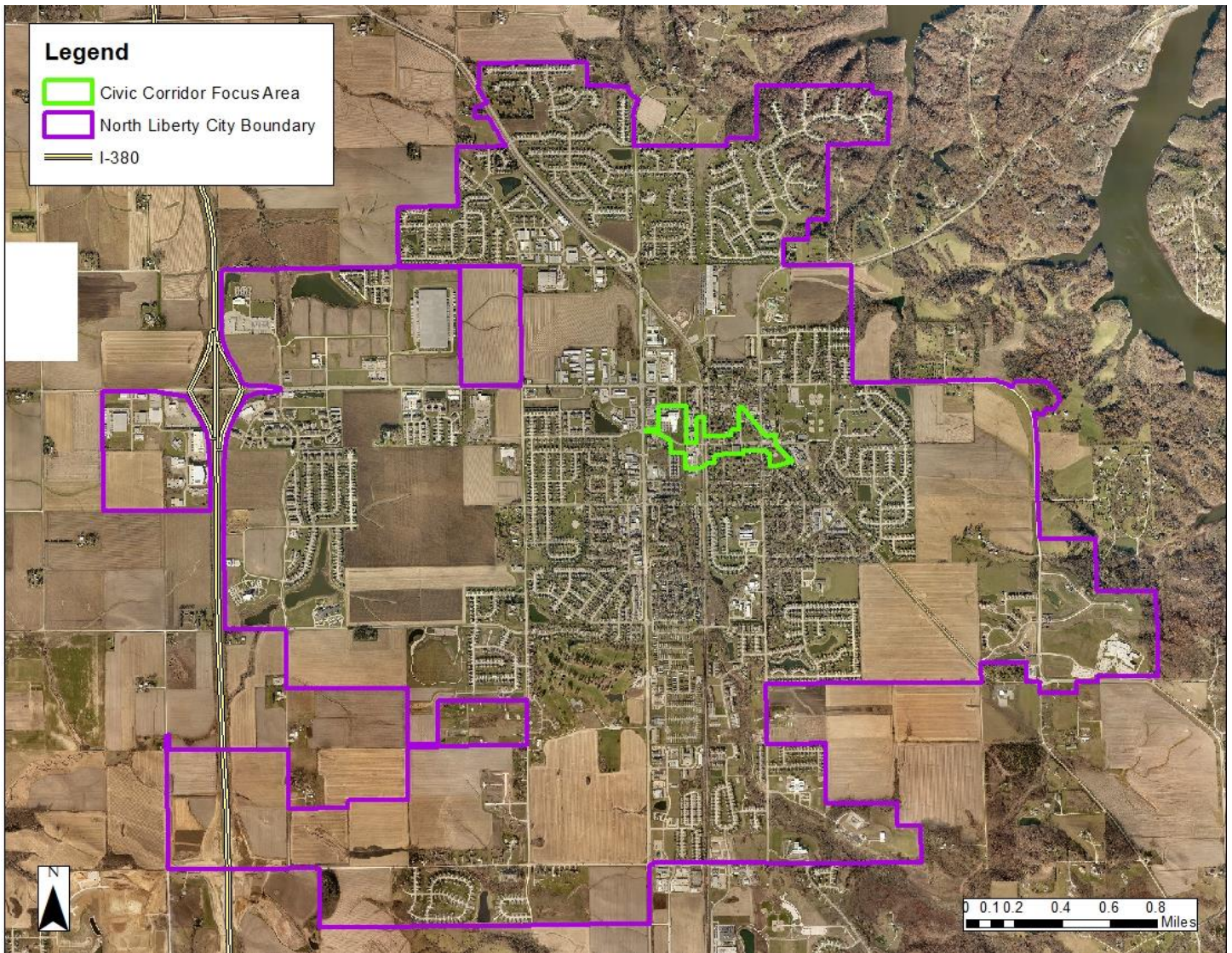


Inflow/Outflow Job Counts (All Jobs) 2015

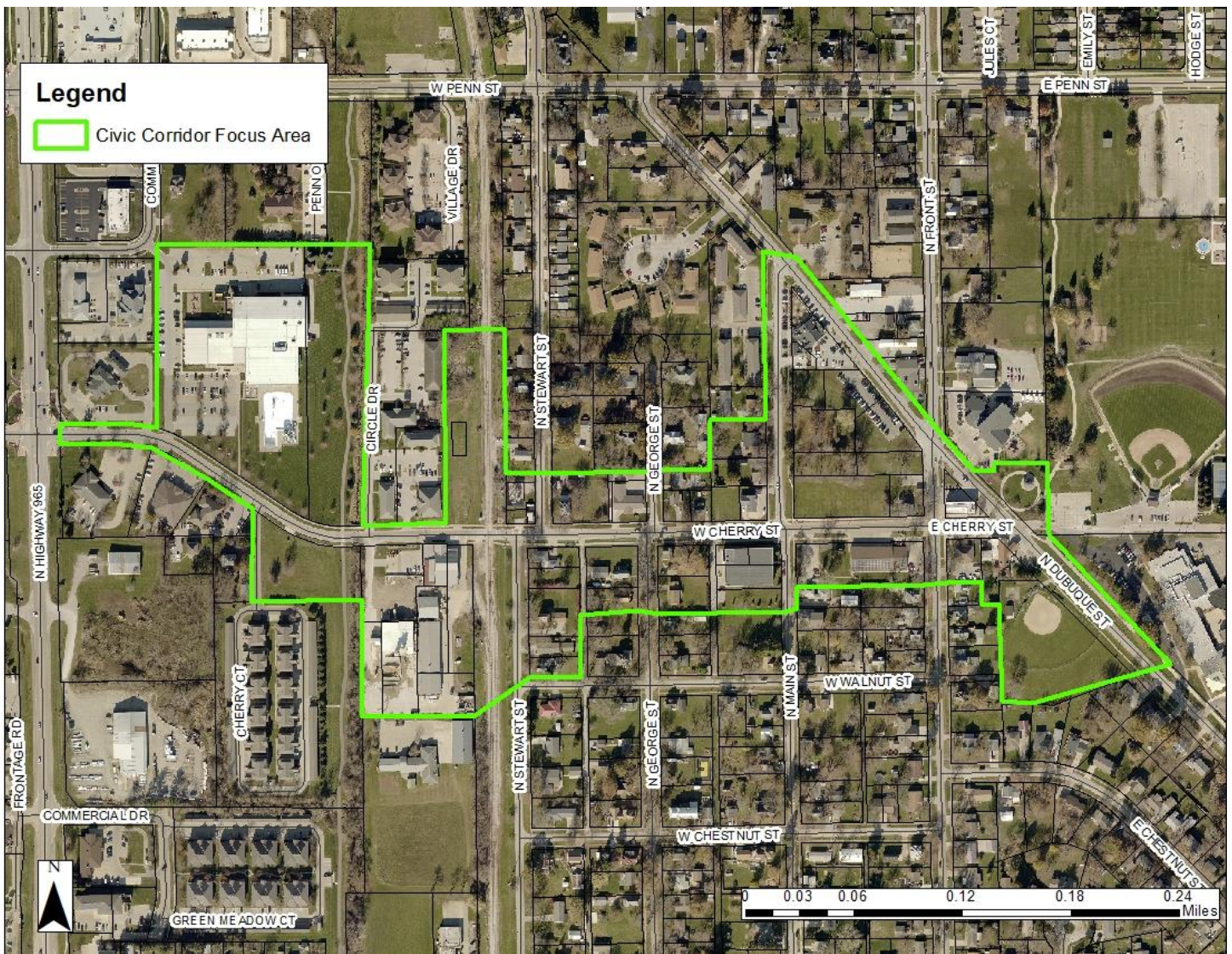
Category	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	6,600	100.0%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	5,790	87.7%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	810	12.3%
Living in the Selection Area	8,954	100.0%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	8,144	91.0%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	810	9.0%

Profile of the W. Cherry Street Civic Corridor Focus Area

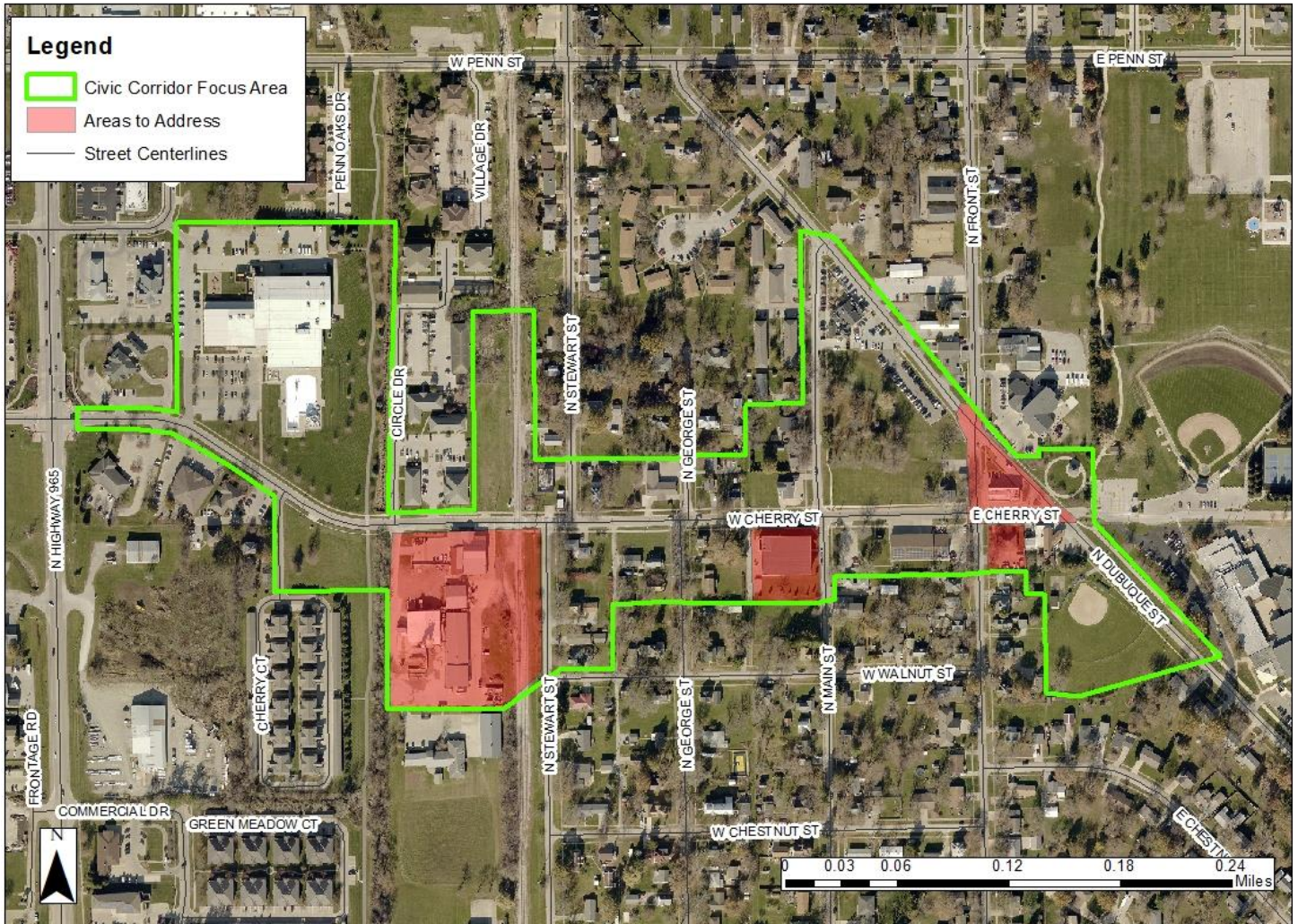
The Civic Corridor Focus Area we are proposing is roughly 43.57 square acres. The focus area is near the center of the greater North Liberty city boundary. It is about 2/3 of a mile long from west to east along W Cherry St. Our proposals reflect a reimagined area, resembling a downtown with a focus on the several existing and future civic uses located along W Cherry St.



During the process of formulating this plan, the City of North Liberty and the planning team have identified specific existing uses along the corridor which may be hinderances to the achievement of the goals and recommendations of this proposal. For example, the current industrial uses and a large concrete South Slope building on the south side of W Cherry St. reduce the visible continuity and connectivity of the corridor and they are drastically different than surrounding uses. A visitor to North Liberty, may turn east onto W Cherry St. from Hwy 965 and be unable to determine whether they should continue travelling eastward toward an unseen downtown/civic corridor after observing uses which breaks the continuity of the corridor. These areas were selected specifically for evaluation to support the aspirations the City of North Liberty has for the area to become its “Civic Corridor”, and a center for community pride and identity. Throughout the document recommendations for future alternative use and design of these areas are detailed.

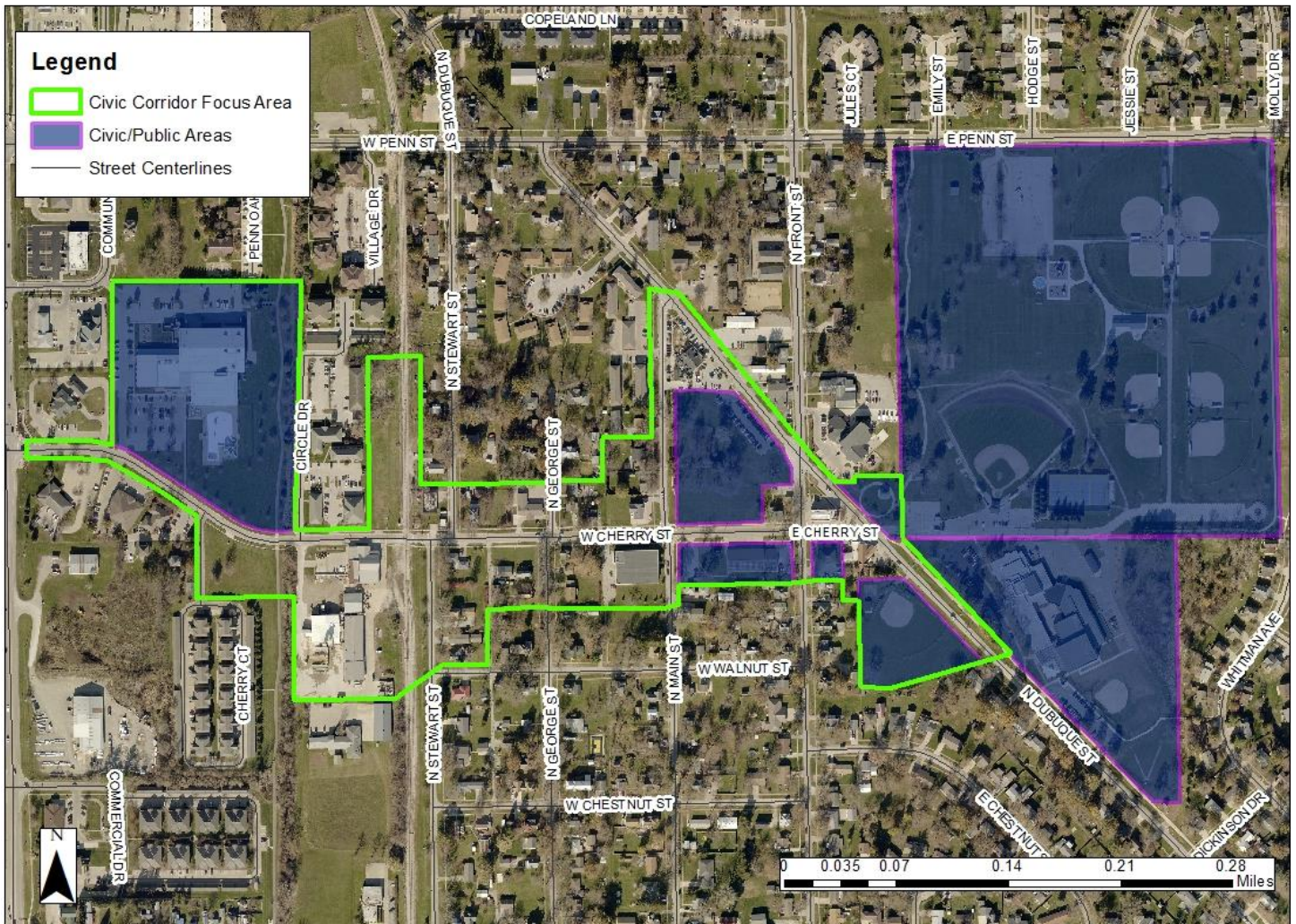


North Liberty, Iowa Civic Corridor Areas to Address



The boundaries were determined based on the location of civic uses and assets on the eastern and western sides of the focus area. The project team finds potential to, spatially and visually, improve the connection between the ends of the corridor. The objective of this project is to create an accessible continuity between the western and eastern ends of the corridor to create an inviting, safe, and identifiable community space.

Civic/Public Areas



Land Use

Findings

Properties within the focus area are zoned predominantly Residential Single-Family (RS-7 & RS-8). There are also areas zoned Commercial (C-1-B), Public, Industrial (I-1), Residential Duplex (RD-10) and Residential Multifamily (RM-21). In the focus area, including right-of-ways, there's an existing 7.73 acres of single-family residential, 1 parcel of 0.39 acres of two-unit residential, 9.94 acres of commercial, 4.87 areas of industrial, 19.5 acres of public zoned areas.

Civic uses, including a trail, a community recreation center, aquatic park, and library exist on the western side of the corridor. The new police department and location of the future city hall, fire department, old police department, an elementary school, and baseball diamonds and a park exist on the eastern side of the corridor.

Commercial uses include an ice cream shop, a preschool, a general store, a bar and restaurant, and a bicycle store. Some surrounding industrial and commercial uses may appear damaging to the continuity and aesthetic appeal potential and identity of the corridor.

The team finds that the city currently lacks a designated, mixed-use zoning classification which allows for a mix of commercial and dense residential use and resembles a "downtown" zoning district.

Priorities

- Enhance and improve North Liberty's sense of community and self-identity
- Create and implement programs and incentives for continuing privately initiated property maintenance and improvements and redevelopment of questionable land use which is not compatible with surrounding uses.
- Enable uses of the Civic Corridor in ways that promote public use and accessibility and increases the desirability of the area.
- Guide the aesthetically pleasing development of the community through use of strong design standards
- Provide a diversity of land use opportunities within the City to ensure a wide range of employment and consumer options, as well as housing choices.

Proposed Rezoning

- 18.32 acres of a new Mixed-Use zoning designation zoned near the center of the corridor, which would allow medium to high density residential uses and commercial uses
- 4.84 acres of rezoned Industrial land to either Public, Commercial, or Multi-Family housing

Current Zoning - Civic Corridor Focus Area

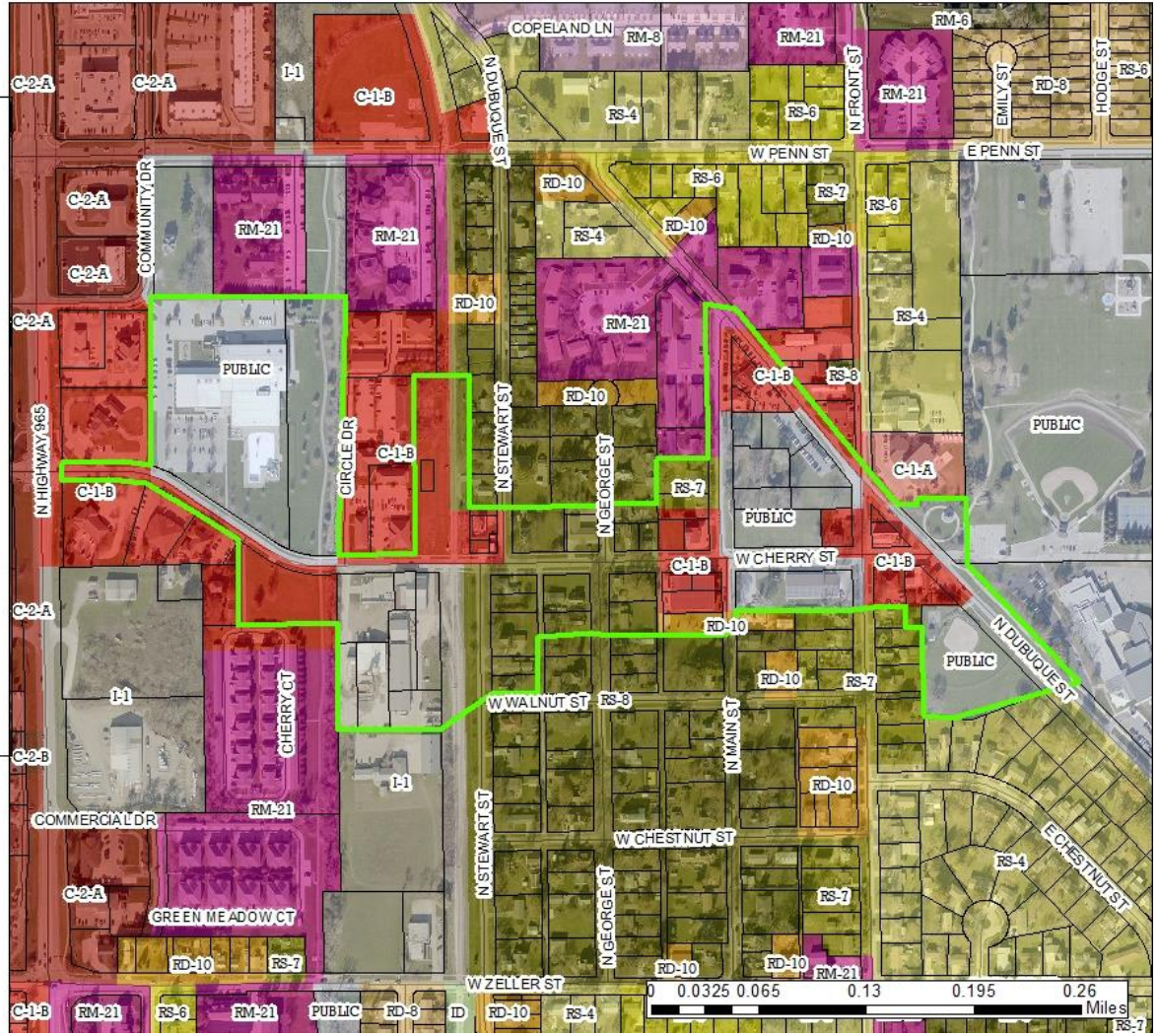
Legend

- Civic Corridor Focus Area
- Parcels

Zoning Districts

District

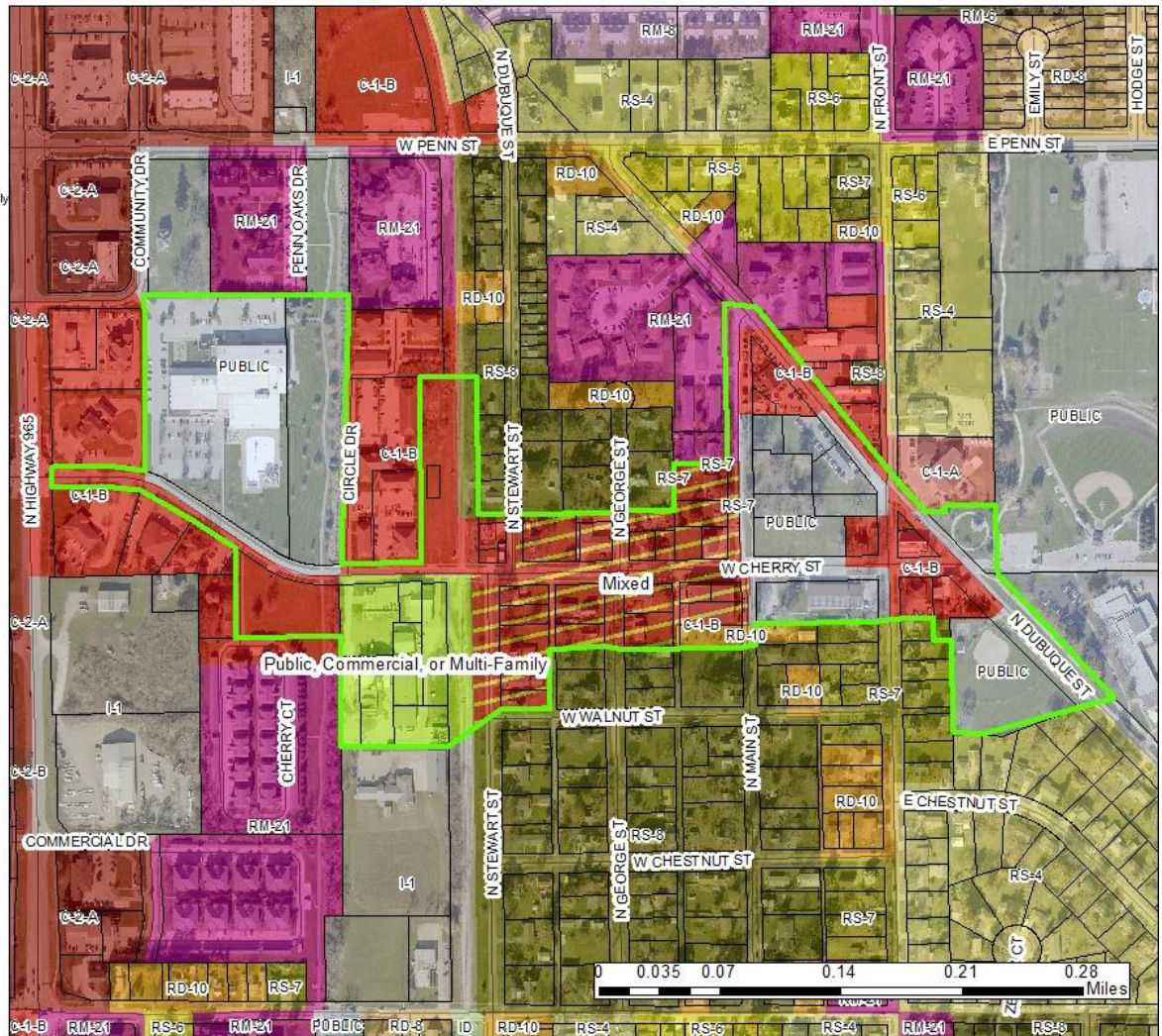
- Public Use
- ID: Interim Development
- RS-3: Residential Single-Family
- RS-4: Residential Single-Family
- RS-6: Residential Single-Family
- RS-7: Residential Single-Family
- RS-8: Residential Single-Family
- RD-8: Residential Duplex
- RD-10: Residential Duplex
- R-FB: Residential Factory-Built
- RM-8: Residential Multi-Family
- RM-12: Residential Multi-Family
- RM-21: Residential Multi-Family
- C-RV: Commercial Rec Vehicle
- ORP: Office/Research Park
- C-1-A: Commercial, General
- C-1-B: Commercial, General
- C-2-A: Commercial, Highway
- C-2-B: Commercial, Highway
- I-1: Industrial, Light
- Street Centerlines



Proposed Rezoning - Civic Corridor Focus Area

Legend

- ▭ Civic Corridor Focus Area
- Parcels
- Proposed Rezoning**
- Zoning**
- Duplex/Townhome
- Mixed-Use
- Multi-Family
- Public
- Public, Commercial, or Multi-Family
- Zoning Districts**
- District**
- Public Use
- ID: Interim Development
- RS-3: Residential Single-Family
- RS-4: Residential Single-Family
- RS-6: Residential Single-Family
- RS-7: Residential Single-Family
- RS-8: Residential Single-Family
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- RM-12: Residential Multi-Family
- RM-21: Residential Multi-Family
- C-RV: Commercial Rec Vehicle
- O/RP: Office/Research Park
- C-1-A: Commercial, General
- C-1-B: Commercial, General
- C-2-A: Commercial, Highway
- C-2-B: Commercial, Highway
- I-1: Industrial, Light
- Street Centerlines



The map on the previous page shows the current zoning in the project area and the map above shows the planning team’s proposed rezonings for the area. Near the center of the focus area, is the heart of the civic corridor for which a rezoning to a new mixed-use commercial and residential zone is proposed. The existing C-1-A Commercial zoning district, which exists in North Liberty’s Code of Ordinance, could be used as well, but it only allows second-level residential housing above commercial uses. A Planned Area Development (PAD) overlay could be applied in addition to a C-1-A Commercial zoning to allow further flexibility of use. This change could provide an immediate influx of activity into the corridor, by increasing pedestrian and residential activity as well as the commercial viability of the area. A vision for the mixed-use zone could be similar to that of mixed-use zones which have been successful in Des Moines, Iowa, Johnston, Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, and numerous other communities around the country. Mixed-use are viewed as attractive by young adults and small business and artisans.

A rezoning of the existing industrial area south of W Cherry St. and west of the proposed mixed-use area is recommended. The existing industrial area is surrounded by mostly non-industrial uses, breaks the vision of continuity for the area, and is not aesthetically pleasing. As reflected in the rezoning map above, some industrial area is left industrial to the south. Our team believes this area, consisting of 7 parcels, could be better utilized for another public use, commercial use, or additional multi-family housing which could increase foot traffic through the corridor, based on existing surrounding uses. Additionally, while islands should be discouraged in zoning, a rezoning recommendation for the industrial area further south is not reflected in the proposed rezoning map. This area falls outside of the identified civic corridor boundary and as a result falls outside of the purview of this proposal.

Across the street to the north of the industrial area, adjacent to the train tracks, is an empty plot of land which is currently owned by the Cedar Rapids & Iowa City Railway Co. and could be utilized as public space or off-street parking. However, since underground utilities run through the space, grading or excavation for a new use may not be possible. The Old Police Station is also an area which should be considered for utilization as a public use, such as a new location for the public library, or additional parking.

While city acquisition from dissenting homeowners may be discouraged, parcels fronting onto Cherry St., which are integral to the vision for the area, should be prioritized for acquisition, rezoning, and redevelopment. Parcels may be acquired to increase the pace of development and further enforce design standards. Following acquisition, parcels could be sold to developers with conditions or deed restrictions attached that require specified use and design standards to be met. Below is a table with information for parcels which could be considered by the city for acquisition and redevelopment if rezonings of the area and allowance of existing non-conforming uses alone is not desirable.

All Parcels Considered for Acquisition in the Civic Corridor Focus Area

Parcel Number	Land Value	Building Value	Dwelling Value	Total Value (\$)	Property Class	Parcel Area (sq. ft.)
612430001	0	0	0	0	C	3999.829772
612415009	0	3890	0	3890	C	2749.982994
612415014	0	53000	0	53000	C	12000.00057
612418001	48100	104700	0	152800	C	8014.3076
707328001	74500	148600	147400	370500	C	7445.156535
612479009	27000	0	83400	110400	R	9000.004654
612478001	42700	0	94800	137500	R	13500.00351
612479001	48600	0	115100	163700	R	18000.0155
612479002	27000	0	107300	134300	R	9000.010841
612479003	21600	0	0	21600	R	9000.010841
612478002	44600	0	131800	176400	R	16500.00213
612479005	31500	0	70300	101800	R	10499.98791
612479004	50400	0	161700	212100	R	20999.989
612451007	172400	199300	0	371700	I	28729.93994
612451006	100100	0	0	100100	I	16686.37284
612479008	27000	0	161500	188500	R	8999.997991
612415020	51100	0	159600	210700	R	23779.97494
612477002	0	0	0	0	C	5699.988113
612451002	231100	0	0	231100	C	38515.18963
612451025	235200	0	0	235200	C	62674.35938
612412004	122000	18000	92500	232500	C	12092.94947
612413002	45900	0	115600	161500	R	18699.34919
612414006	29600	0	93900	123500	R	7200.006265
612414007	21300	0	50300	71600	R	5400.252028
612414005	26500	0	118700	145200	R	8433.142238
612413003	36700	0	67000	103700	R	13120.45925
612418002	24500	0	0	24500	R	8388.169036
707328002	10400	0	0	10400	C	1481.595783
612477003	0	0	0	0	E	13300.00107
612477001	0	0	0	0	C	5699.976824
612477004	0	0	0	0	E	13300.00055
612451009	122700	190900	0	313600	C	20512.32523
612451008	138600	298800	0	437400	C	23046.32763
612451001	52100	216200	0	268300	C	8607.606636
612451027	67800	0	0	67800	C	28261.23814

Total Value: \$4,935,290.00

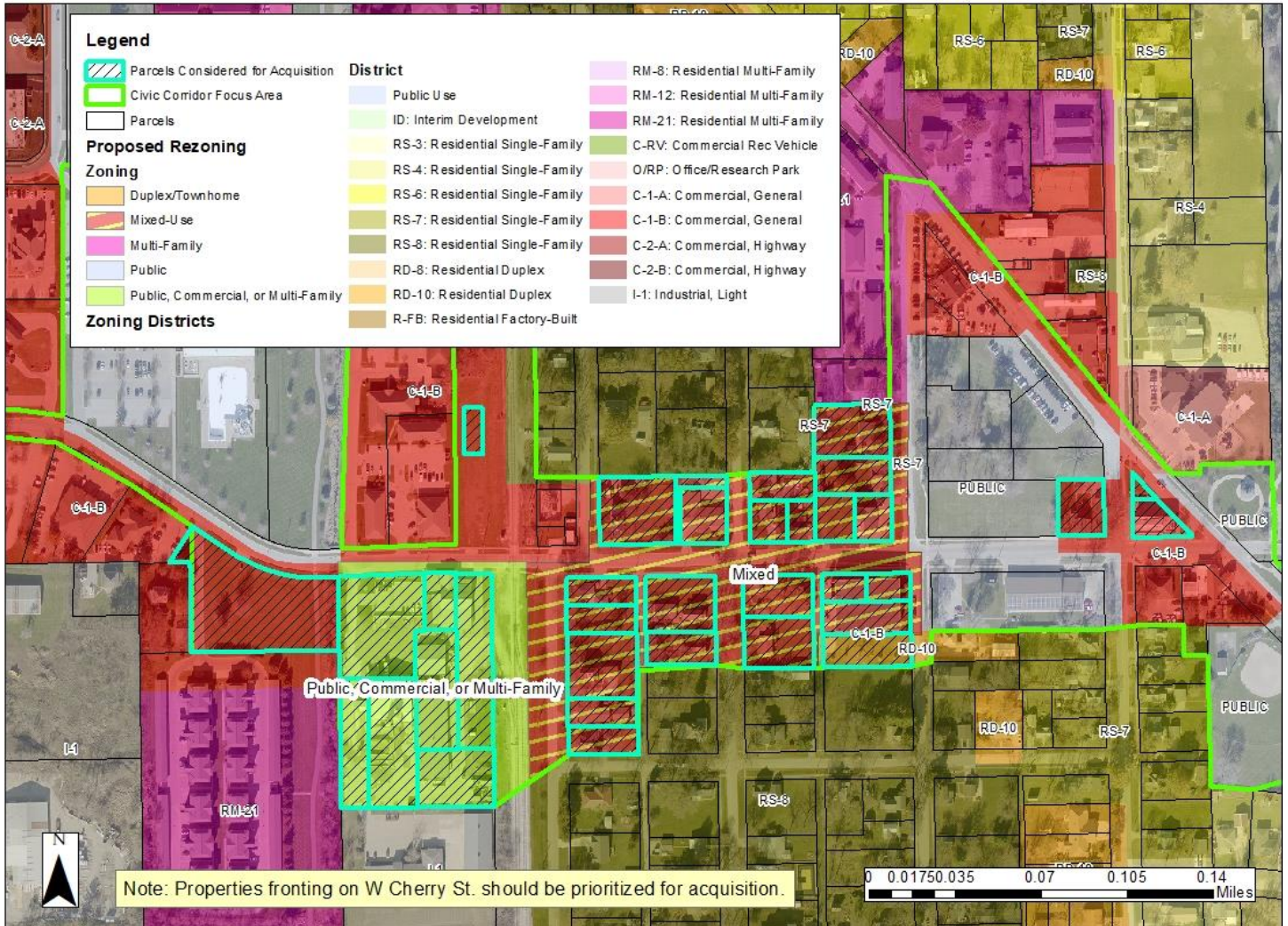
Parcels Fronting on W Cherry St. & Within Proposed Rezoning Boundaries						
Parcel Number	Land Value	Building Value	Dwelling Value	Total Value (\$)	Property Class	Parcel Area (sq. ft.)
612415014	0	53000	0	53000	C	12000
612418001	48100	104700	0	152800	C	8014.308
612478001	42700	0	94800	137500	R	13500
612479001	48600	0	115100	163700	R	18000.02
612479002	27000	0	107300	134300	R	9000.011
612415020	51100	0	159600	210700	R	23779.97
612477002	0	0	0	0	C	5699.988
612451002	231100	0	0	231100	C	38515.19
612414006	29600	0	93900	123500	R	7200.006
612414007	21300	0	50300	71600	R	5400.252
612418002	24500	0	0	24500	R	8388.169
612477001	0	0	0	0	C	5699.977
612451001	52100	216200	0	268300	C	8607.607
612451027	67800	0	0	67800	C	28261.24

Total Value: \$1,638,800.00

Existing Parcels Owned by The City of North Liberty					
Parcel Number	Exempt Code	Land Value	Total Value (\$)	Property Class	Parcel Area (sq. ft.)
612426003	CI	1196500	1196500	C	197639.6
612411003	CI	61200	61200	C	10225.79
612411004	CI	99400	99400	C	16587.47
707352002	CI	195510	195510	C	12682.83
612476001		0	0	E	47124.99
612411010	CI	123200	123200	E	23074.58
612411009	CI	60820	60820	E	19939.63
707351002	CI	0	0	E	92574.24
612412008	CI	103230	103230	E	12538.09
612412007	CI	189150	189150	C	13073.73
612412003	CI	94070	94070	E	34076.72
707326008	CI	43480	43480	C	26904.35
612426005	CI	1731900	1731900	A	289521.7

Total Value: \$3,898,460.00

Parcels Considered for Acquisition & Proposed Rezoning



Recommendations

- Consider use of form-based codes and design guidelines to promote community identity and continuity in architectural character of new and existing structures.
- Consider the relocation of uses which are not aesthetically pleasing, such as commercial and industrial uses which aren't compatible with surrounding uses on W Cherry St or the proposed vision for the Civic Corridor. Moving these uses can improve the identity and continuity of the corridor, are the main objectives of this plan.
- Implement a C-1-A Commercial zoning with a PAD overlay or adopt a new Mixed-Use residential/commercial zoning designation which could increase pedestrian use, general use of the area, and locational desirability for small businesses, restaurants, and shops. Provisions of a new zoning district could be utilized to direct the form and use within the zone desired by North Liberty.
- Consider acquisition of properties along the Civic Corridor which are recommended for rezoning and redevelopment, as seen on the previous page.
- Provide a greater diversity and density of housing, such as multi-family or medium density units, to increase pedestrian use of the corridor and increase its locational appeal to potential small business uses.
- Adapt the current police station into another civic use, such as a new location for the public library, following the relocation of the department this year.
- Consider applying a public, recreational use for the greenspace west of the railroad tracks to the west of N Stewart St.

References for Best Practices:

- The Fort Kent, Maine Downtown Revitalization Plan
 - Formatting template for this document
 - A "main street" as the key component of a downtown
 - Recommendation of Form Based Codes
- Hiawatha, Iowa Comprehensive Plan 2036
 - Promotion of mixed-use zoning to promote economic activity in the town center
- Merle Hay Road Redevelopment Plan, Johnston, Iowa
 - Adoption of mixed-use zoning in a town center
 - The creation of a downtown
- Waukee, Iowa Downtown Master Plan
 - Adoption of mixed-use zoning in a town center

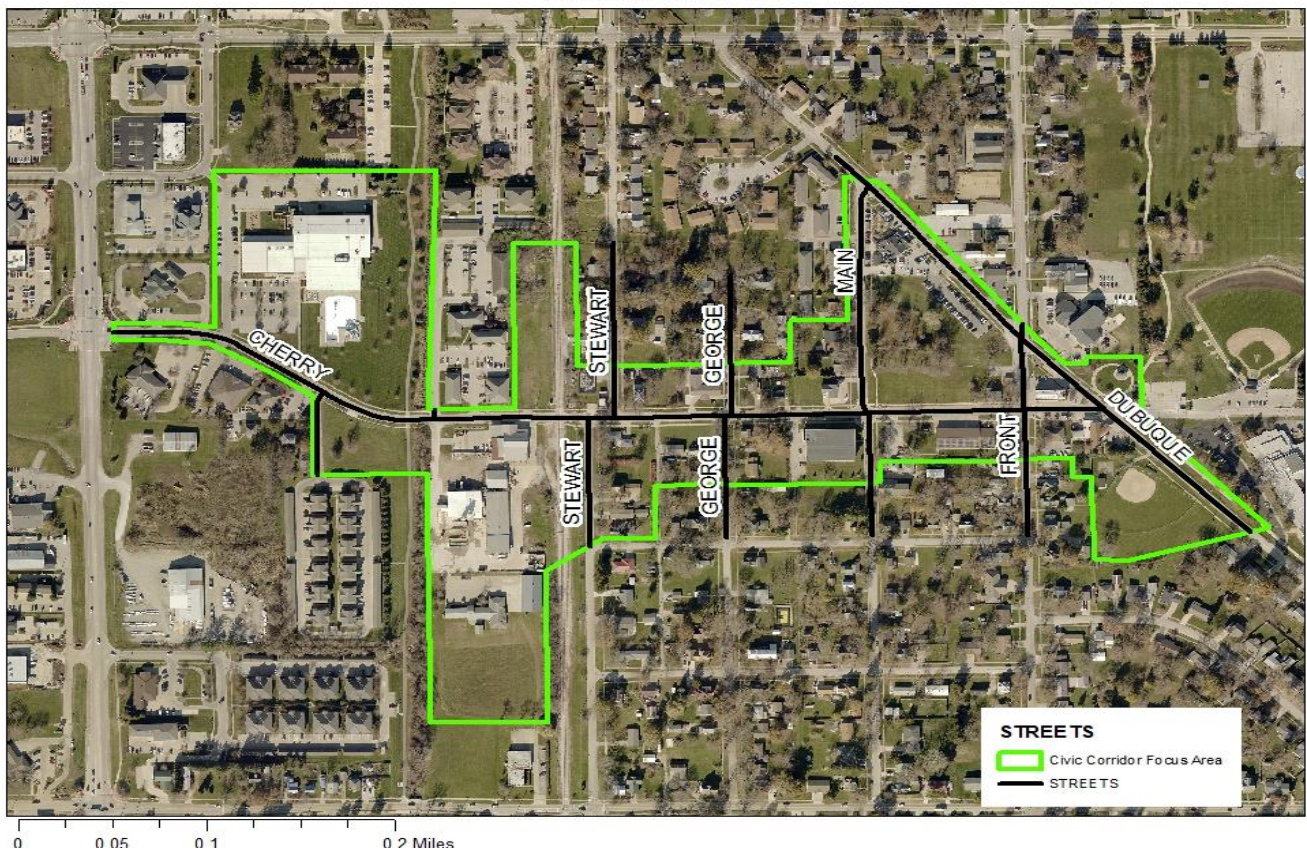
Streets

Findings

Streets, sidewalks, and alleys occupy on average between 25-30% of urban space. Streets present an opportunity to change and address most urban problems since they are the largest chunk of undeveloped space. Streets are also publicly owned and therefore cities do not need to negotiate for ownership, maintenance, and control. Thus, streets are untapped urban resources that cities can use to change how people use and enjoy urban space in efficient and sustainable manners.

Designing a good street is challenging because it must fulfill a wide variety of functions for different groups of people at different times. Therefore, it is difficult to design a street that will satisfy everyone. Traditionally, engineers are generally tasked with the responsibility of designing streets. Their main objectives have been to ensure there is efficient movement of traffic through the urban spaces. The influence that engineers have on street design tends to neglect ideas that might attract visitors to the streets. However, recently engineers have expanded their influence on street design to consider factors beyond traffic flows and designing strictly for automobile use. This has led to the increased prevalence of various groups advocating for or directly influencing street design. These groups include bicycle coalitions, bus and/or rapid transit advocates, businesses, school districts, and utility companies. Although satisfying everyone may not be possible, a well-thought out street design may improve the general well-being of an urban community. Redesigning the streets (as shown in the map below) within the civic corridor will enhance and improve all kinds of traffic flow to the proposed downtown civic corridor.

MAIN STREETS



Priorities

The following are the main priorities:

- Redesign Cherry Street to accommodate all types of traffic
- Provide diverse and adequate parking in the downtown/Civic Corridor area
- Integrate the street design with all other land uses
- Consider renaming or giving Cherry Street a second name
- Redesign the intersection of Cherry and Dubuque Streets to enhance traffic flow
- Ensure continuity along entire length of W. Cherry Street

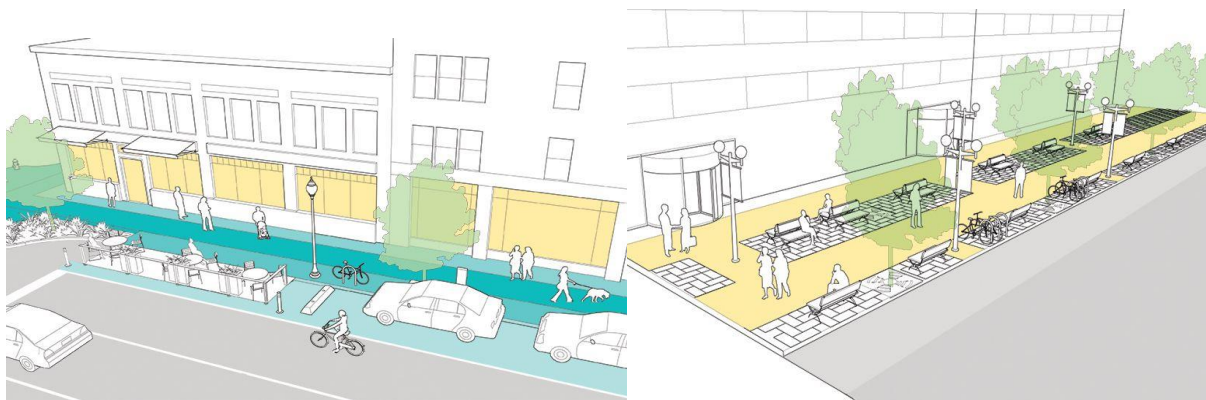
Cherry Street

Since Cherry is the major street in the study area, redesigning it will improve automobile traffic flow and attract pedestrian traffic too to the civic corridor. A good street design creates consensus with existing infrastructure, promotes an area through its image, and builds economic activities in an area. The physical organization and character of a place is revealed through its design. This highlights the need to consider expanding Cherry Street to accommodate all forms of traffic.

Best street designs include lane widths, sidewalks, curb extensions, and transit streets whenever applicable. The current width of Cherry Street is not adequate enough to accommodate future multi uses both pedestrian and vehicle traffic not forgetting commercial vehicles uses too. A combination of sidewalks and streets with curb extensions enhances traffic flow and safety.

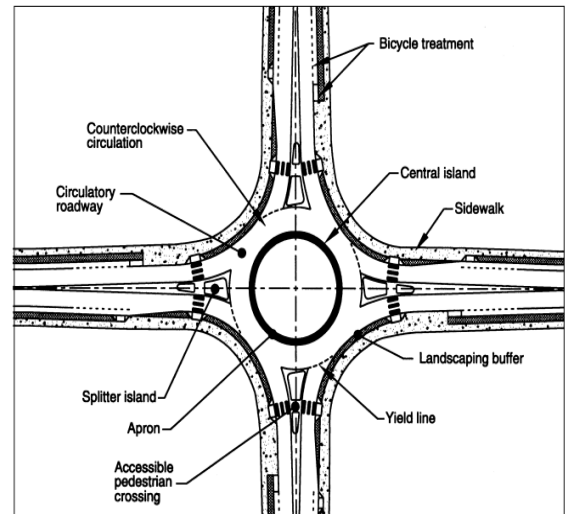
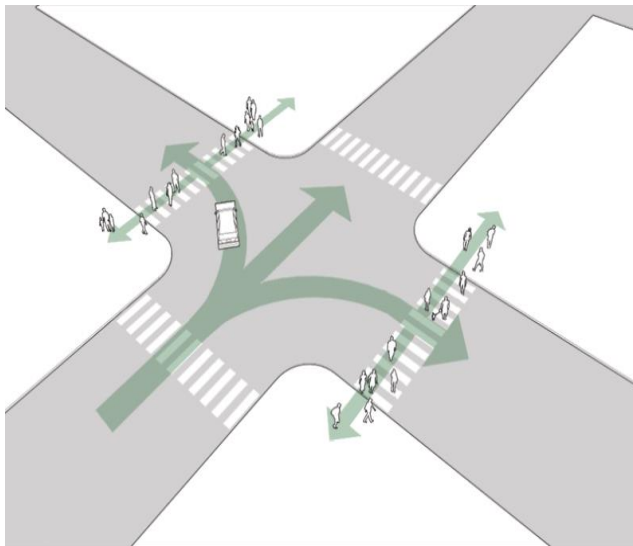


A street designed for multi uses. Proposed future Cherry Street Design should emulate such uses



Intersection of Cherry Street and Dubuque Street

To enhance traffic flow, the intersection should be redesigned to accommodate increased traffic considering the future changes in land use. Even though a four way stop sign intersection has some positive aspects like pedestrian safety, it also has some disadvantages that outweighs its advantages. North Liberty's plan to relocate police station and future city hall will increase traffic on Cherry Street and Dubuque. Below is the current intersection of W Cherry St. and N. Dubuque Street with a 4 way stop sign.

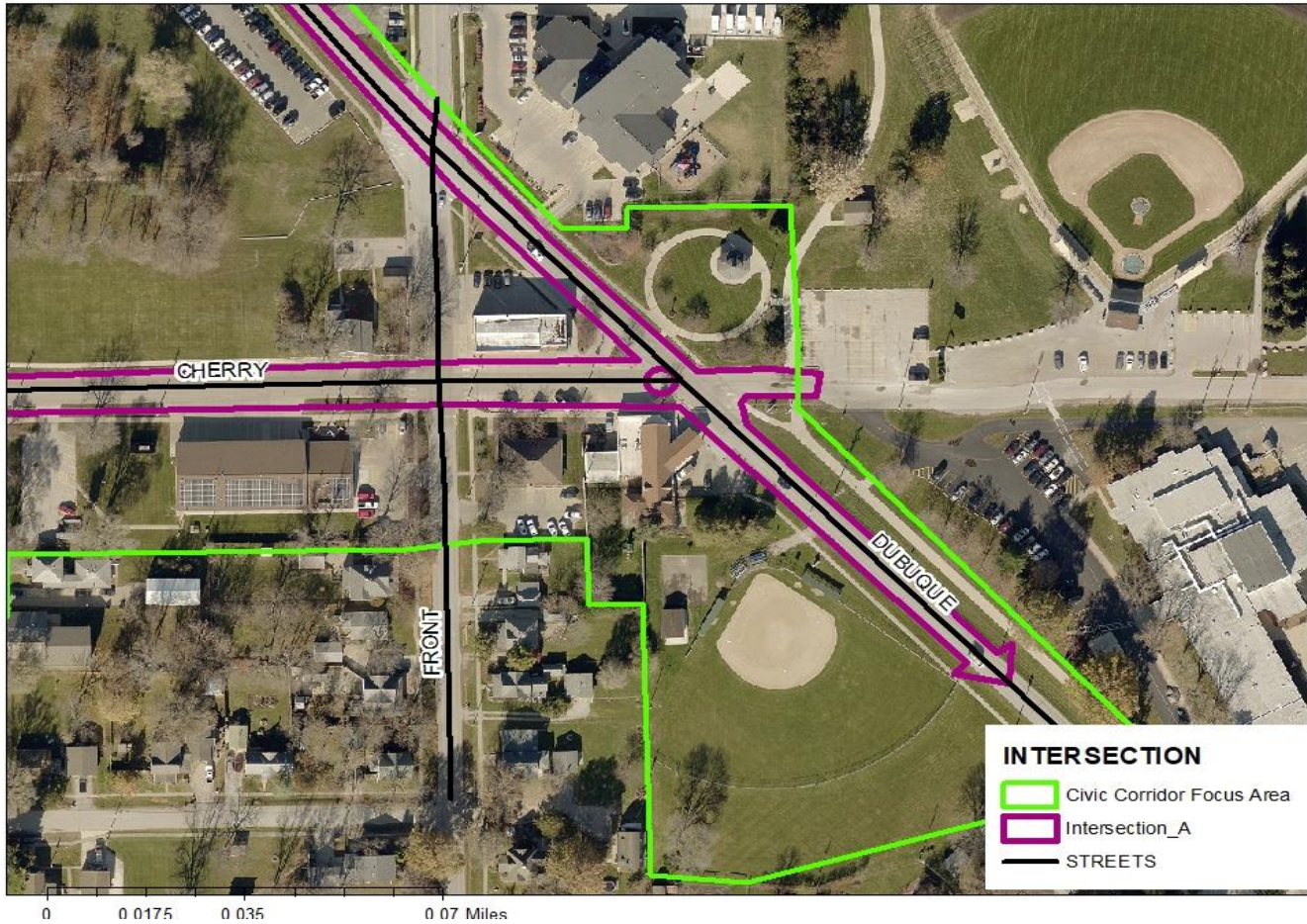


Another option involves adding a traffic circle as shown in the figure above right that might be more appealing in a civic corridor, as it could prove to have a traffic calming effect. Additionally, it could be a great space for landscaping, trees, benches, and/or a fountain at the intersection of Dubuque Street and Cherry Street.

The following are the other recommendations for the intersection of W Cherry and Dubuque Streets. Each recommendation is subject to changes in future land uses and traffic study.

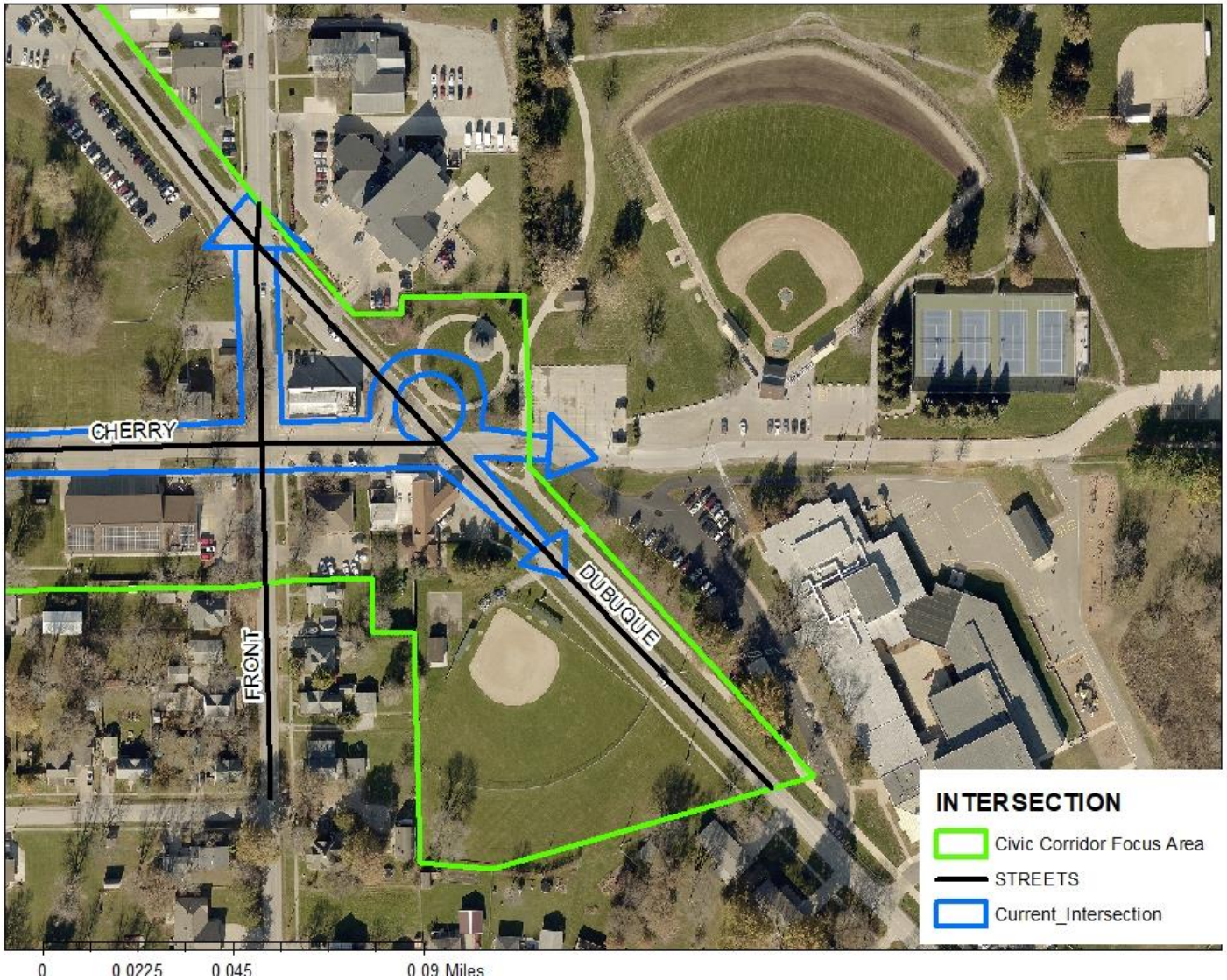
- Consider the closure of the section of Front Street between Cherry and Dubuque Streets and make it a pedestrian corridor. Traffic circle at the intersection of Cherry and Dubuque to replace the stop signs. A traffic circle could also be located at the intersection of Cherry and Main Street.

PROPOSED DESIGN A



- Closure of Dubuque Street between its intersection with Cherry and North Front. A traffic circle at the intersection of Dubuque and Cherry will divert traffic to Cherry Street and then to Front and back to Dubuque. This will ensure that the four-way stop has been replaced to enhance traffic flow in the Civic Corridor.

PROPOSED DESIGN B



Parking

- There is already existing parking as shown in the map below. Changes in land uses however may increase vehicle traffic in the future. Demand for parking space therefore requires provision of more parking spaces by either building a parking garage, a parking lot, or expand the streets for curbside parking. Parking should however be priced to recover the costs and cover general maintenance costs. Priced parking also encourages turn over and reduce congestion.



Recommendations

- Redesign the entire W Cherry Street from Highway 965 to Dubuque Street. Redesigning the entire street for multi-use will enhance traffic flow and attract both pedestrian and automobile traffic to the Civic Corridor.
- Consider providing commercial parking, picking and dropping off spots on Cherry Street.
- Consider changing the intersection of W Cherry and Dubuque to enhance the traffic flow. Commuters coming from the south along Dubuque Street can either continue north on Dubuque or turn left onto W Cherry Street. There are two proposed designs for the intersection.
- Consider changing the name of W Cherry to a more traditional downtown corridor name such as Main Street (see figure on the right) or First Street. While there is an existing main street, the names can be switched, or a new name that reflects the community identity can be chosen.

References for Best Practices:

- National Association of City Transportation Officials
 - Urban Street Design Guide
 - Roundabouts: An Informational Guide



Sidewalks/Pathways

Findings

According to the [Trails Resolution](#) accepted in 2013, W Cherry Street is identified as a connection within North Liberty. This can be seen in the accepted and approved trails network map in [Appendix A](#). As defined by that resolution, the term “trail” is a wide sidewalk or shared use path intended for use by pedestrians, bicyclists, skaters, runners, and others. The trails identified in the trail corridors network are to be eight feet in width, and the city shall remove snow and repair and replace the trail surface. However, adjacent property owners are required to mow the grass within the right-of-way between the property line and the street curb.

The resolution is based off the [North Liberty Trails Network Plan](#) adopted on August 25, 2009. Within that plan, the city identifies East Cherry Street along with sections of Dubuque Street and Mehaffey Bridge Road as “First Priorities.” The ‘First Priority’ ranking is defined as “projects that can be completed quickly and easily and provide a substantial impact.” The connection along West Cherry Street extends from Highway 965 to East Cherry Street by Penn Meadows Park, “providing a vital east-west connection from Penn Meadows to the main off-street trail, to the library and recreation center, under 965 to Liberty Center and Quail Ridge Park.” As of this plan, most of the sidewalks along Cherry Street are 4-to-6-feet wide, and only the stretch of sidewalk from Highway 965 to the off-street trail running along the Railroad tracks are maintained by the city.

The existing network of sidewalks along Cherry Street is inconsistent and fluctuates in design, width, and quality throughout the (approximately) half-mile distance. The sidewalk that is adjacent to Highway 965 appears to have newer concrete, landscaping, and red brick is inlaid within the concrete (as seen in the first picture below). Near the community center, the sidewalk width changes from 4-feet to 6-feet (as seen in the middle image). Also, the stretch of sidewalk near Jans Small Engine & Repair directly abuts Cherry Street with no curb or form of separation (as seen in the third image).



Priorities

- Improve bicycle and pedestrian safety
- Trail network and Cherry Street connection should promote the use of alternative transportation types to reduce dependence of vehicles
- Begin prioritized implementation of the Trails Resolution adopted in 2013
- Improve existing sidewalks to comply with ADA guidelines
- Incorporate ecological best practices in public right-of-way spaces

Recommendations

- Expand existing sidewalks from off-road trail west of the rail-road tracks to Dubuque Street to fit design standards approved by the 2013 resolution
 - All sidewalks should be at least 60 inches (5-feet) wide to be ADA-compliant
- Ensure continuity along Cherry Street from High 965 to Dubuque Street by separating pathways from roadways
 - Incorporate red-brick inlay from sidewalk near Highway 965 throughout the Cherry Street corridor for consistency
 - Incorporate the same streetscape amenities and infrastructure along trail network (i.e., lighting, benches, signage, design guidelines, etc.)
- Repair or replace all crumbling infrastructure (as seen in the images below)
 - Curb ramps must be provided wherever a sidewalk crosses a curb such as street intersections or driveways (slopes must be less than 1:12, must be 36 inches (3-feet) wide, and must contain a detectable warning device with a raise dome surface and contrasting color such as the red tiles seen below)



Placemaking and connectivity are central themes of this civic corridor plan. North Liberty has a unique opportunity to ensure these two themes work collaboratively to activate the Cherry Street corridor. The transformation process should make Cherry Street a premier location in the city that is an enjoyable place to live, work, and gather. It should serve as a safe mobility corridor for all modes of transportation as well as pedestrians. An example of this can be seen in the illustration below from [Portland, Oregon](#) which highlights the aesthetic impact of redesigning the entire streetscape. Design and structure are an important component of providing a sense of arrival and location to a specific place. The trails and pathways along Cherry Street can serve as a great resource to connect and promote city amenities as well as being a branding opportunity to highlight a community identity. Placemaking strategies and branding opportunities can be referenced in the [Connecting Down Page, Arizona](#) report from the American Planning Association.

References for Best Practices:

- Connecting Downtown Page, Arizona: CPAT Final Report
 - Wayfinding, branding, and placemaking strategies
- Portland, Oregon Comprehensive Plan Update – “Corridors and Connections”
 - Civic corridors and greenways
- Fort Kent, Maine Downtown Revitalization Plan
 - Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and accessibility



Reimagining the East Cherry Street sidewalks with brick inlay



Reimagining a civic corridor – Example from Portland, Oregon ([LINK](#))



Civic corridors – present and future?

Streetscape Amenities

Findings

North Liberty provides streetscape amenities including lighting, street trees, and trash receptacles along West Cherry Street which is considered the center of the proposed corridor. The street lights need relocation out of existing sidewalk segments to facilitate pedestrian easement during dark hours.

Signage in a downtown serves several purposes. Functionally, signage provides a source of information for visitors in terms of wayfinding. For businesses, it can serve as a form of advertisement. It also serves to ensure safety for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian commuters. Finally, it serves to promote a sense of community pride, historic character, and civic interests. The two areas that are recognized as needing improvement include wayfinding signage for vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic as well as the expansion of promotional signage in a cohesive and consistent style.

North Liberty has a signage ordinance (Ord. 2016-05 - Aug. 16 Supp.) and sign restrictions. According to the ordinance, development complexes shall be permitted one ground sign per public street frontage. For business and public use signs: each enterprise, institution, or business shall be permitted wall signs, one canopy sign per street frontage, and one ground sign per public street frontage - subject to the following maximum size requirements: Maximum Wall Sign Area in C-1-A, C-1-B, and Public districts will be one square foot for each lineal foot of building wall when viewed in elevation – 40 square feet for building walls up to 50 feet in length and 80 square feet for building walls over 50 feet in length.

W Cherry St is about 880.64 m long with public open space on both sides of the street, but there is little to no seating along this road.



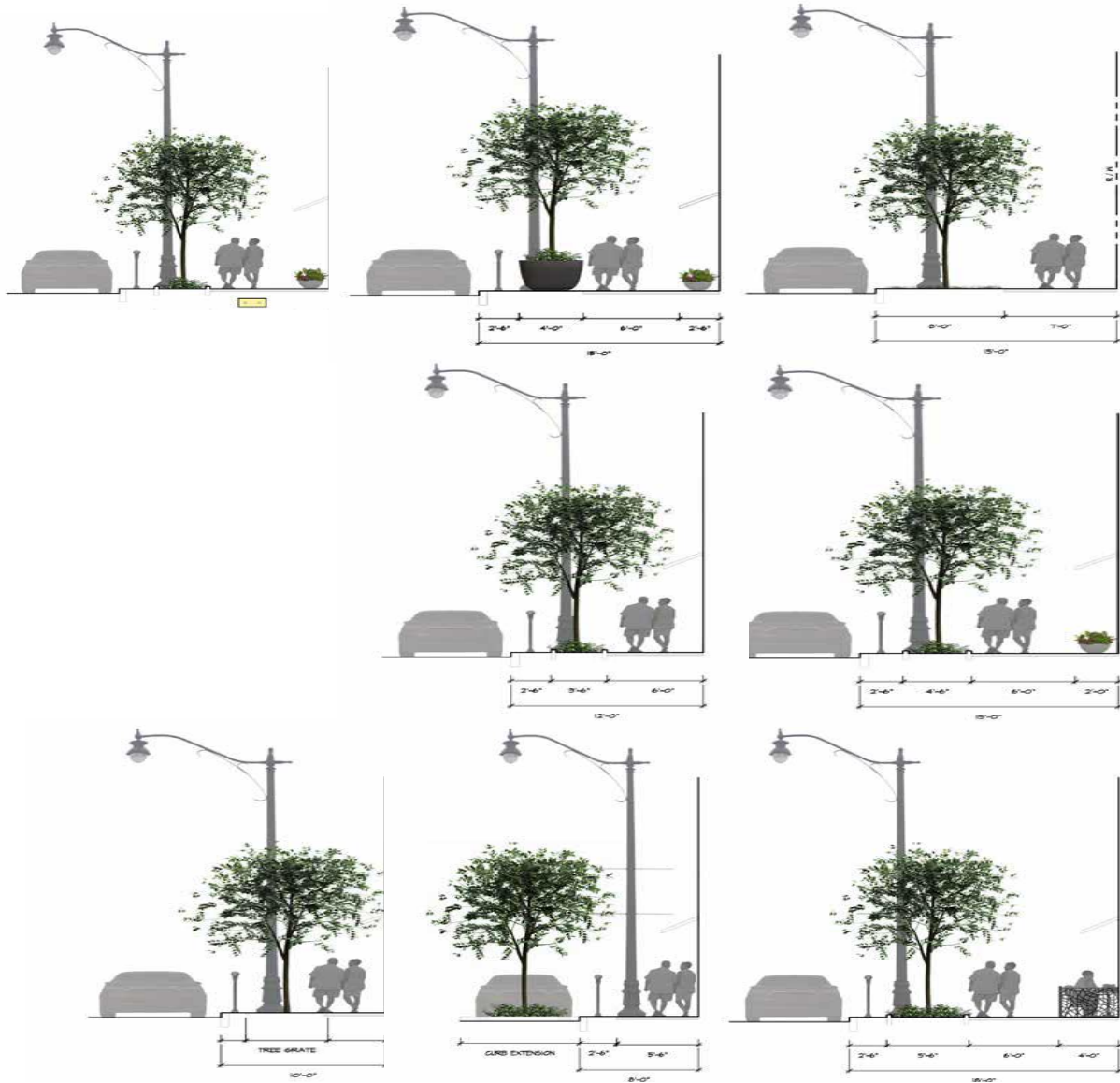


Priorities

- Improve lighting distribution along Cherry St.
- Create and implement programs/incentives to maintain a sense of safety and security at night.
- Improve wayfinding signage for pedestrian and vehicular visitors to the civic corridor, adjacent neighborhoods, and cultural resources. Also, develop consistent signage design standards.
- Guide the development in an aesthetically pleasing way using existing design standards.

Recommendations

- Add gateway signage at the entrances to the civic corridor based on specified design standards.
- According to North Liberty, IA Code of Ordinance Chapter 169 - ZONING CODE – DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS – 169.02 Landscaping Requirements E: Landscaping shall not be located where it will block visibility and create traffic hazards or sight distance problems; F: Landscaping shall be used in conjunction with required fencing as buffer between land uses where possible; and G: Plants which drop seed pods or fruit should not be located where such droppings would cause maintenance or safety problems. Selection of roadside trees and shrubs must follow the city code.
- Wood mulch should be used instead of rocks around all plantings because rocks retain heat that can translate into moisture stress and they can make removal of trees difficult (Mason, 2016).
- Prohibit inorganic ground cover (rock, chip brick, synthetic turf) except in limited applications.
- Large areas of wood mulch should be prohibited unless around a play structure because Mulches serve several functions in the landscape including moisture retention (Dosmann. & Iles, 1999), erosion & compaction reduction soil temperature optimization (Marble, Koeser, & Hasing, 2015)
- Utility improvements along W Cherry St including upgrading to LED street lighting for more cost efficiency and improved, safer lighting. Also, consider burying all power and utility lines.
- Identify the safe walking/bicycling routes between places where people live, work, go to school, and play where additional public seating along the corridor could be provided.
- Consider creating a private business director for the downtown located at key focal gathering points such as community center parking lots and/or the future City Hall location. This signage can be designed in a way that promotes existing assets and expresses the vision for the future.



Various ideas for streetscape amenities and their placement

DO'S



DO NOT'S



Avoid using rocks in landscaping around plantings and trees

Design and Façades

Findings

Red or brown brick is a common façade treatment for many of the commercial properties along Cherry Street. The commercial properties located towards the west end of the project area are single story multi-commercial structures. Commercial properties at the west end of the project area differ in that they tend to be single entity buildings but are similar in that they also use red brick for facades.



The single-story homes within the project area tend to fall within the Minimal Traditional or Ranch-style of architecture. Design features often found in Minimal Traditional or Ranch-style buildings include minimal façade decoration, a relatively small scale, single-story, simple window framing, and non-complex rooflines that are typically gabled. The styles differ in that Ranch-style homes tend to be longer and have a more horizontal layout. This type of home design is common and can be found throughout the state and the nation. The style has been popular for decades because it is easy to produce and is comparatively inexpensive to construct.



Minimal Traditional

Ranch Style

The two-story homes within the project area are a mix of American Foursquare, National-Style, Split-Level, or Bungalow homes. Foursquare homes are typically boxy, two-story homes with large front porches. National-Style homes are rectangular, utilitarian homes with gabled roofs. Split Level homes, as the name suggests, are staggered between two levels. The split level of the home is typically indicated on the exterior façade. Bungalow homes typically have a front porch and have small lofts on their second floors.



American Foursquare

National-Style

Split Level

Multi-family structures within the project area tend to mimic the style of traditional single-family homes: using vinyl siding, shingles and overhangs above doorways.



Located at the corner of Cherry and Main Street, a building stands out and does not fit the look of the rest of the buildings in the civic corridor. The building, owned by the South Slope Cooperative Telephone Company, has no windows has no signage. All facades are cast concrete surfaces.



The Hawkeye Ready Mix building complex is a large industrial site located along Cherry Street. The buildings on site are metal warehouse style construction.



Adjacent to the railroad is street-level electrical infrastructure surrounded by a short wall.



Priorities

- Create cohesive building standards for design and materials.
- Consider the human scale and the pedestrian's interaction with buildings.
- For mix-ed use development, use architectural features to distinguish between commercial and residential functions within the same building.
- Address current buildings that don't contribute to the visual appeal of the area
- Use architectural design to help activate the area

Recommendations

- Continue use of red brick in all new construction to create a cohesive look and brand for the civic corridor. A cohesive appearance to all buildings within the project area is integral to the establishment of an identity of the civic corridor. Create standards for all materials to be used in new construction.
- Ensure that all buildings with frontages on Cherry Street have windows. If the city intends for the area to be a place that is welcoming to pedestrians, it is important that the buildings are approachable and hospitable. Currently, the South Slope Cooperative Telephone Company and a church along Cherry Street have little or no street facing windows.



- If future development is to be taller than two stories, consideration the height of surrounding structures must be considered. A study on mid-rise, mixed-use development was created by the city of Toronto and can be found [here](#).
- Because pedestrian and active transportation is being encouraged within the civic corridor, consideration for how residents will approach or enter buildings should be considered. Entrances should be highlighted and easily stand out. Windows should allow for sight into the shop, restaurant, or business.
- For new mixed-use buildings, architectural elements that are associated with residential buildings should be used to differentiate between the commercial and residential uses. Common residential features within the architectural vernacular include bay windows, balconies, dormer windows, chimneys, or shutters.

- Any blank walls within the civic corridor would be prime candidates for murals. To enforce the idea that the area is civically focused, the subject matter of the mural should be tied to that concept. A rendering of what a mural on the South Slope Cooperative Telephone Company building could look like can be found below:



- Establish standards for architectural screening. Architectural screening can be implemented to obscure the view of buildings or street level infrastructure that can't be changed to fit the brand of the civic corridor. Screening can also be used to surround receiving areas, trash/recycling, or storage areas for commercial properties.



Examples of architectural screening

- Encourage single-story structures to have roof-top outdoor spaces.
- Consider hiring design professionals to create suggestions for improving current buildings.

Below is a rendering showing the potential transformation of Cherry Street:

Cherry Street in front of the fire station



Cherry Street with mixed use development



Recommendations Summarized:

Land Use:

- Consider use of form-based codes and design guidelines to promote community identity and continuity in architectural character of new and existing structures.
- Consider the relocation of uses which are not aesthetically pleasing, such as commercial and industrial uses which aren't compatible with surrounding uses on W Cherry St or the proposed vision for the Civic Corridor. Moving these uses can improve the identity and continuity of the corridor, are the main objectives of this plan.
- Implement a C-1-A Commercial zoning with a PAD overlay or adopt a new Mixed-Use residential/commercial zoning designation which could increase pedestrian use, general use of the area, and locational desirability for small businesses, restaurants, and shops. Provisions of a new zoning district could be utilized to direct the form and use within the zone desired by North Liberty.
- Consider acquisition of properties along the Civic Corridor which are recommended for rezoning and redevelopment.
- Provide a greater diversity and density of housing, such as multi-family or medium density units, to increase pedestrian use of the corridor and increase its locational appeal to potential small business uses.
- Adapt the current police station into another civic use, such as a new location for the public library, following the relocation of the department this year.
- Consider applying a public, recreational use for the greenspace west of the railroad tracks to the west of N Stewart St.

Proposed Rezoning

1. 18.32 acres of a new Mixed-Use zoning designation zoned near the center of the corridor, which would allow medium to high density residential uses and commercial uses
2. 4.84 acres of rezoned Industrial land to either Public, Commercial, or Multi-Family housing

Design and Facades:

- Continue use of red brick in all new construction to create a cohesive look and brand for the civic corridor. A cohesive appearance to all buildings within the project area is integral to the establishment of the identity of the civic corridor. Create standards for all materials to be used in new construction.
- Ensure that all buildings with frontages on W Cherry Street have windows. If the city intends for the area to be a place that is welcoming to pedestrians, it is important that the buildings are approachable and hospitable. Currently, the South Slope Cooperative Telephone Company and a church along W Cherry Street have little or no street facing windows.
- If future development is to be taller than two stories, consideration the height of surrounding structures must be considered.

- Because pedestrian and active transportation is being encouraged within the civic corridor, consideration for how residents will approach or enter buildings should be considered. Entrances should be highlighted and easily stand out. Windows should allow for sight into the shop, restaurant, or business.
- For new mixed-use buildings, architectural elements that are associated with residential buildings should be used to differentiate between the commercial and residential uses. Common residential features within the architectural vernacular include bay windows, balconies, dormer windows, chimneys, or shutters.
- Any blank walls within the civic corridor would be prime candidates for murals. In order to enforce the idea that the area is civically focused, the subject matter of the mural should be tied to that concept.
- Establish standards for architectural screening. Architectural screening can be implemented to obscure the view of buildings or street level infrastructure that can't be changed to fit the brand of the civic corridor. Screening can also be used to surround receiving areas, trash/recycling, or storage areas for commercial properties.
- Encourage single-story structures to have roof-top outdoor spaces.
- Consider hiring a design professional to create suggestions for improvements to current buildings.

Streets:

- Consider redesigning W Cherry Street from the intersection of W Cherry and Highway 965 to its intersection with N Dubuque Street to accommodate more traffic and multi-use.
- Consider changing the intersection to redirect and ensure continuous flow of traffic in the intersection of N Dubuque and West Cherry Street intersection.
- A traffic study on the intersection of W Cherry and N Dubuque to determine the best way for redesigning the intersection.

Sidewalks/Pathways:

- Expand existing sidewalks from off-road trail to N Dubuque Street to fit design standards approved by 2013 resolution
 - All sidewalks should be at least 60 inches (5-feet) wide to be ADA-compliant
- Ensure continuity along Cherry Street from High 965 to N Dubuque Street by separating pathways from roadways
 - Incorporate red-brick inlay from sidewalk near Highway 965 throughout the W Cherry Street corridor for consistency
 - Incorporate the same streetscape amenities and infrastructure along trail network (i.e., lighting, benches, signage, design guidelines, etc.)
- Repair or replace all crumbling infrastructure (as seen in the images above)

Curb ramps must be provided wherever a sidewalk crosses a curb such as street intersections or driveways (slopes must be less than 1:12, must be 36 inches (3-feet) wide, and must contain a detectable warning device with a raise dome surface and contrasting color such as the red tiles seen above)

Streetscape Amenities:

- Additional gateway signage at the entrances to the Civic Corridor district should be considered.
- Utility improvements along W Cherry St., including upgrading to LED street lighting for more cost efficiency and improved, safer lighting.
- Provide further seating arrangements along pedestrian/bicycle routes.
- In addition to the signs that promote the Town at the municipal boundaries, additional gateway signage at the entrances to the downtown district should be considered.
- According to North Liberty, IA Code of Ordinance Chapter 169 - ZONING CODE – DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS – 169.02 Landscaping Requirements E: Landscaping shall not be located where it will block visibility and create traffic hazards or sight distance problems; F: Landscaping shall be used in conjunction with required fencing as buffer between land uses where possible; and G: Plants which drop seed pods or fruit should not be located where such droppings would cause maintenance or safety problems. Selection of road side trees and shrubs must follow the city code.
- Wood mulch should be used around all plantings and in planting beds.
- Large areas of wood mulch are prohibited unless around a play structure.
- Inorganic ground cover (rock, chip brick, synthetic turf) is prohibited except in extremely limited applications.
- Utility improvements along W Cherry St including upgradation to LED street lighting for more cost efficiency and improved, safer lighting.
- Consider design guidelines or standards for sign ordinance creation within the downtown.
- Identifying the safe walking/bicycling routes between places where people live, work, go to school, and play to provide proper seating arrangement along these routes which is absent at present.
- Consider creating private business directory signage for the downtown to be located at key focal gathering points such as community center parking lot and the future City Hall location. This signage can be designed in such a way that can provide promotional handout materials and is in keeping with gateway signage aesthetics later.
- Bury all power and utility lines on W Cherry St.

References

During the preparation of this plan, the planning team referenced multiple planning documents from other cities. The planning documents referenced are:

Connecting Downtown Page. (2019, April). American Planning Association. Retrieved from https://planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/publication/download_pdf/Page-Arizona-CPAT-Final-Report.pdf

Corridors and Connections. (2016, December). The City of Portland, Oregon. Retrieved from <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/57352>

Downtown Master Plan. (2009, March). The City of Waukee, Iowa. Retrieved from <https://www.waukee.org/313/Master-Plans>

Fort Kent, Maine Downtown Revitalization Plan. (2015, February). The City of Fort Kent, Maine. Retrieved from http://www.fortkent.org/maps_forms_ordinances/ordinances/index.php

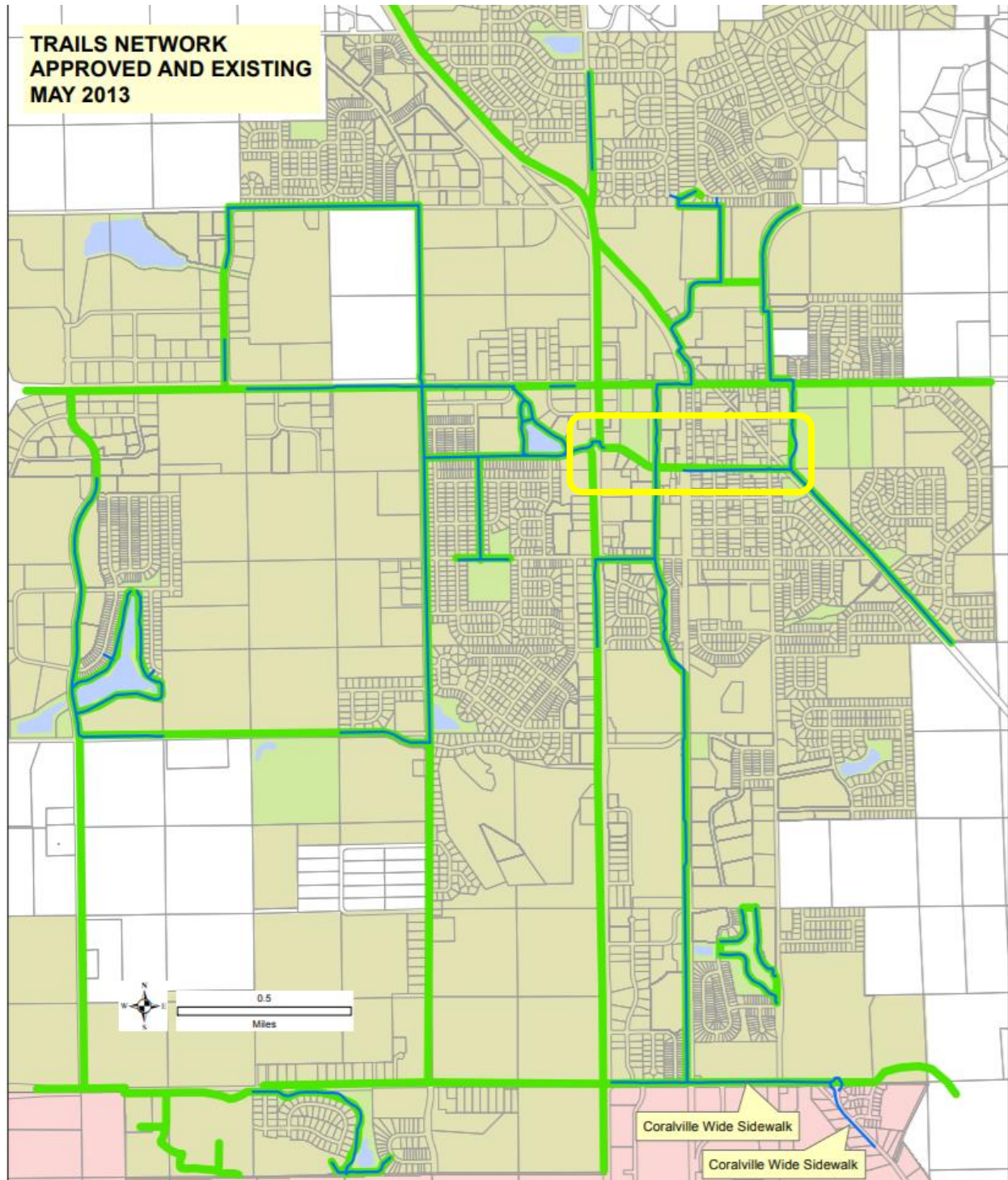
Henaghan, J. *Corridor Planning.* (2018, October). American Planning Association. Retrieved from <https://planning.org/publications/document/9159816/>

Hiawatha Comprehensive Plan 2036. The City of Hiawatha, Iowa. Retrieved from <https://hiawatha.metro-studios.com/>

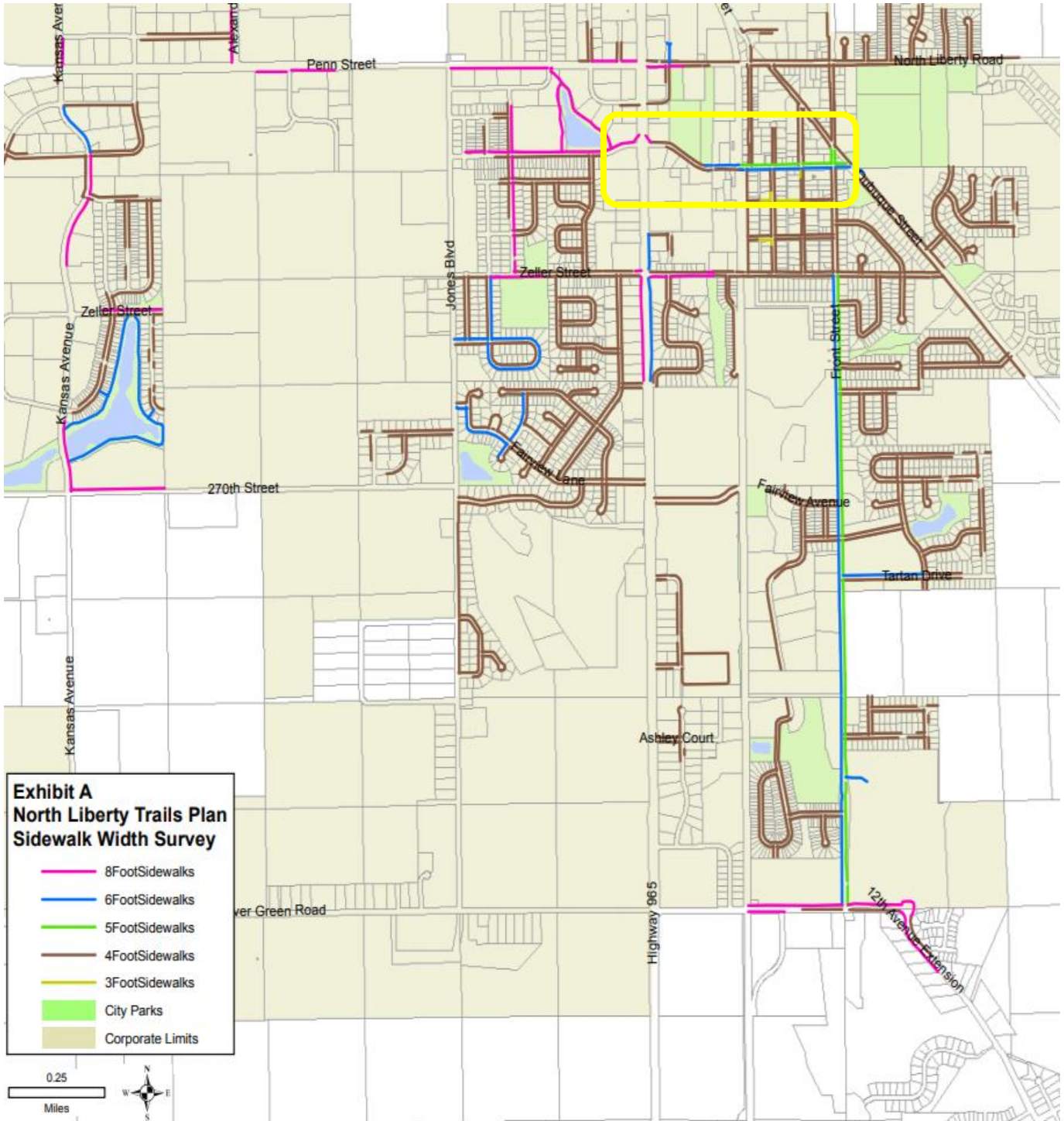
Merle Hay Road Redevelopment Plan. (2017, September). The City of Johnston, Iowa.

Appendix A (Sidewalks/Pathways):

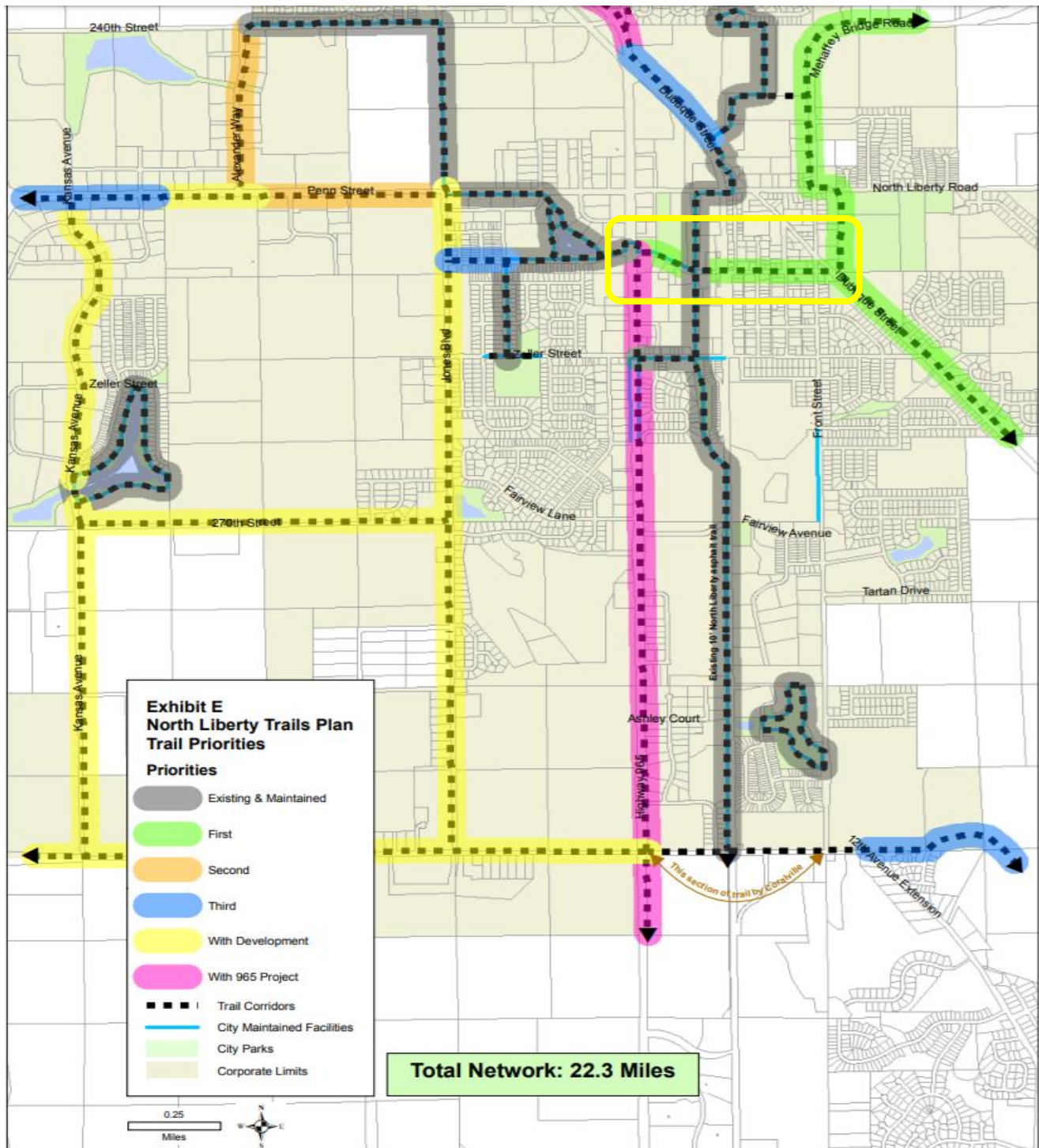
The map below displays the existing and approved trail network adopted in May of 2013. The area outlined in yellow represents the general project area as defined by this civic corridor plan.



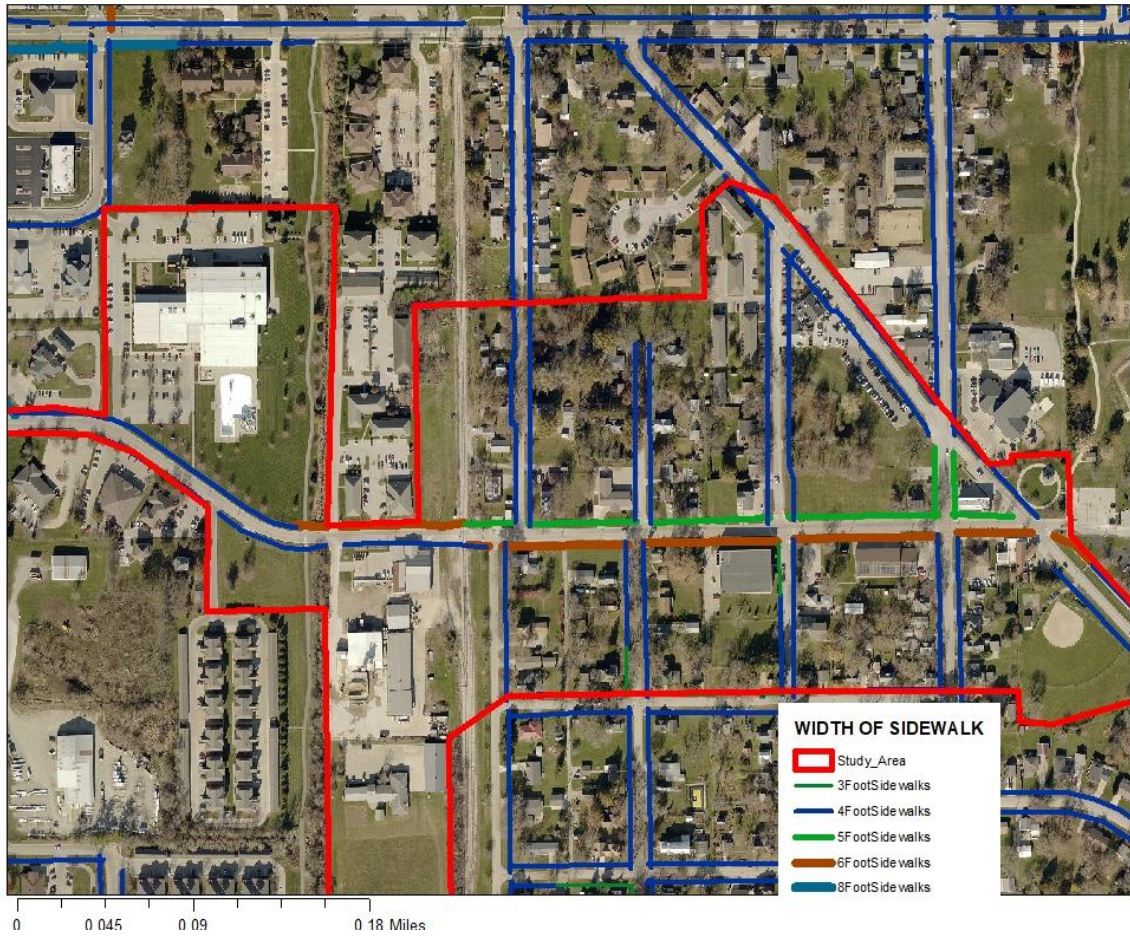
The map below displays the widths of sidewalks in North Liberty, according to the 2009 North Liberty Trails Plan. The area outlined in yellow represents the general project area as defined by this civic corridor plan. As seen in this area, the sidewalks along West Cherry Street vary ranging from 4-foot width to 6-foot width.



Cherry Street connection as a 'first priority' (highlighted by the green color), meaning this stretch of the trail network is expected to be modified according to the guidelines established and adopted in 2009 and 2013.

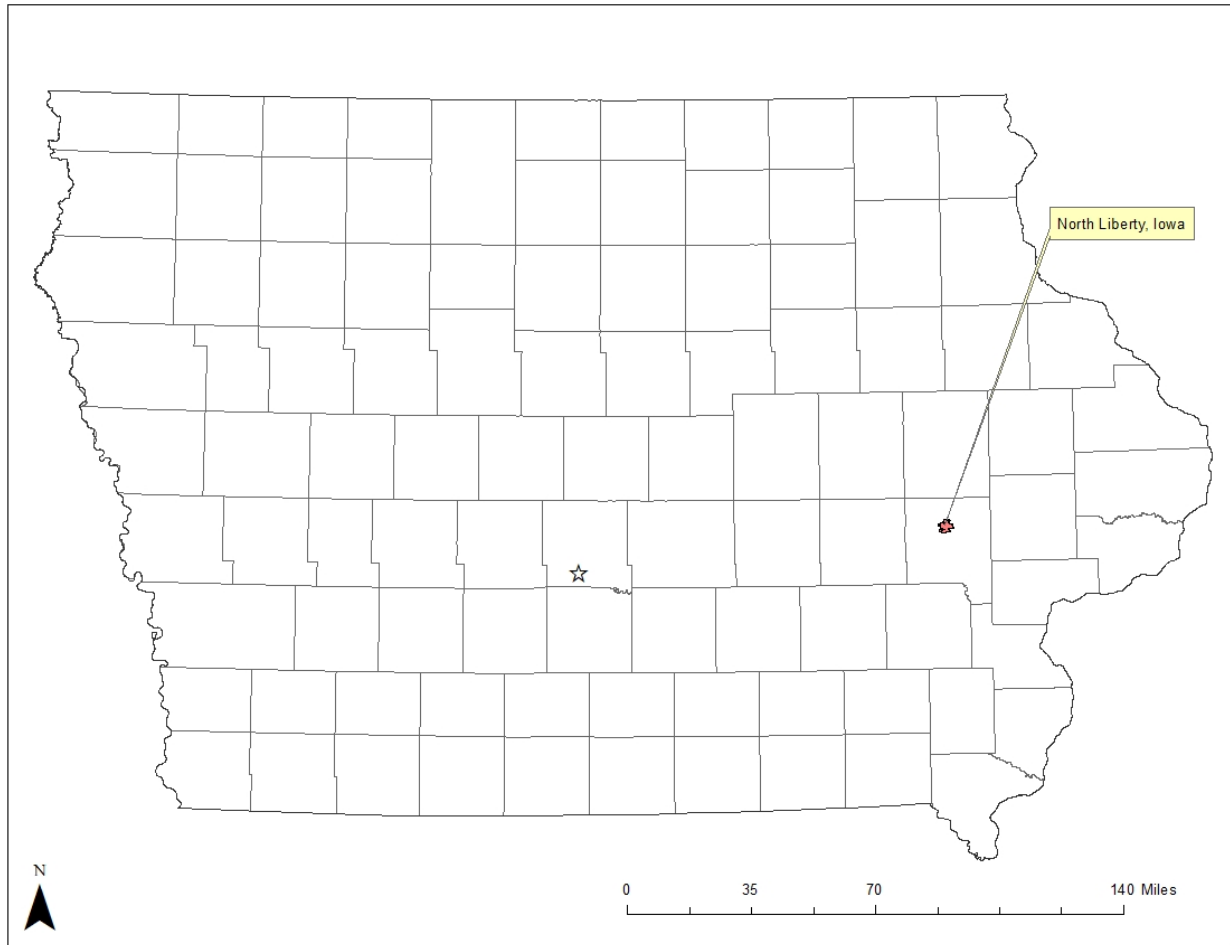


SIDEWALKS

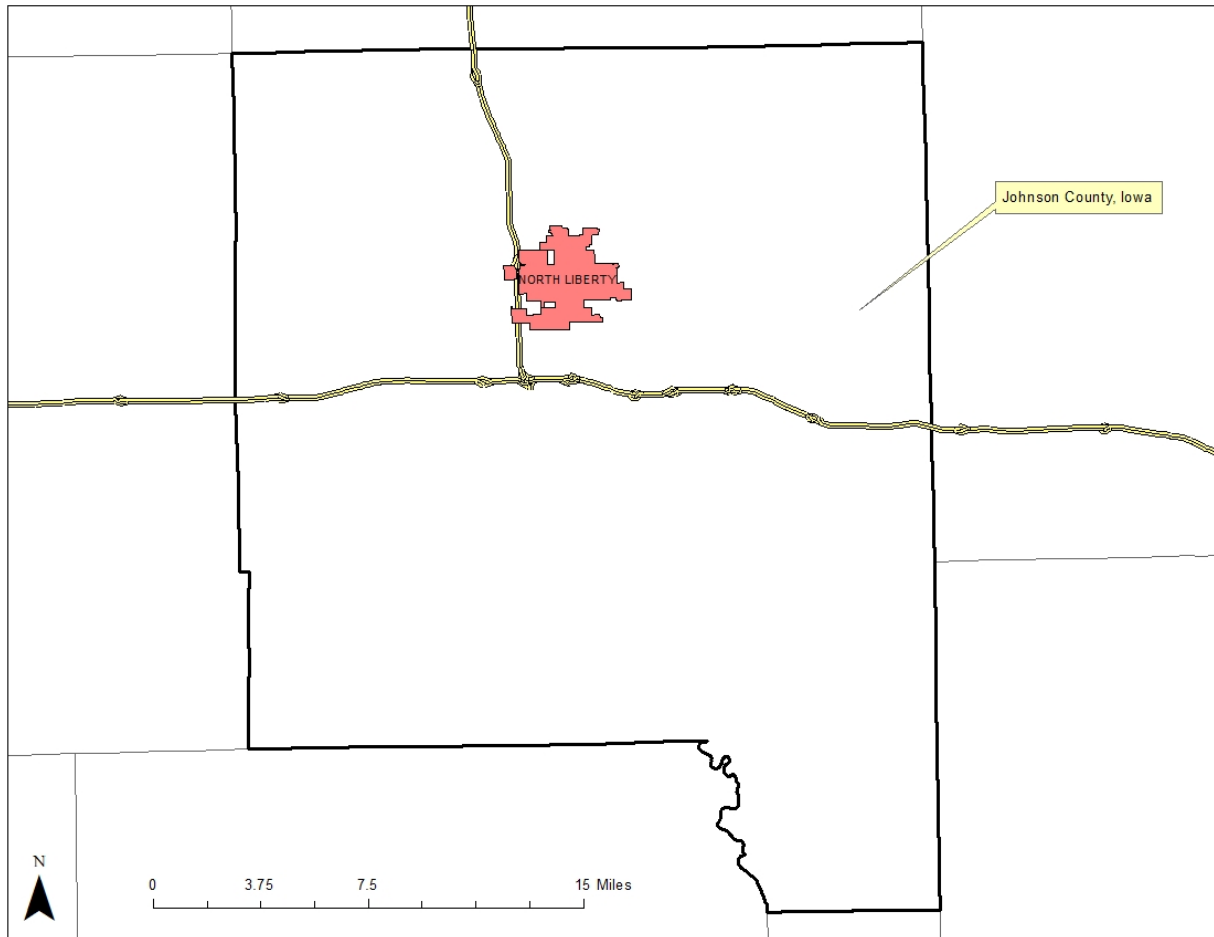


Appendix B (Additional Study Area Maps)

Below: Location of North Liberty, Iowa



Below: Location of North Liberty, Iowa within Johnson County, Iowa



Flood Hazard Areas

