



DUBUQUE DOWNTOWN
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
FINAL REPORT | June 18, 2026

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Front Cover: 2nd Street Cathedral Promenade.

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INTRODUCTION

Downtown Dubuque is large. This effort focuses on a specific geography defined by the highway, the bluff, 14th Street, and 1st Street. But connections beyond the core are essential.

A Development Strategy differs from a Master Plan in that it isolates key catalytic initiatives. While Master Plans describe a holistic vision, Strategic Plans seek to answer the question: “What can be done in the near-term to enable development that supports the long-term vision?” A Development Strategy recommends targeted actions that will generate the greatest benefits. This effort is physically-based. It visualizes change and is not a policy document. Comprehensive Plans are policy guides.

This Development Strategy describes public realm investments that reinforce a sense of place and cultivate a pedestrian environment around which new private development can occur. Improved streets, sidewalks and infrastructure encourage the emergence of a more attractive development climate. Investments in the public realm will result in a physical environment that is more attractive and safe. In aggregate, the recommended improvements will forge a network. By linking existing districts together through the connective tissue of calmer streets, shaded sidewalks and resilient public spaces, a stronger identity for downtown Dubuque will emerge and barriers will be diminished.

Above: Focus Area.

OVERVIEW

Downtown Dubuque exhibits a strong sense of place. Like many American cities in the 20th century, the city struggled to keep residents and businesses downtown when suburban amenities became an alluring alternative. However, in the last few decades, the city has surged, capitalizing on its dramatic topography, remarkable architecture and passionate and committed citizens. A palpable positive momentum can be felt through the hard work of many and the collaborative partnerships that have been forged. However, Dubuque’s downtown is also at an inflection point. **Cities are never done, and if the core doesn’t get more attention, it will struggle and stagnate.**

This Downtown Core Development Strategy builds on the Envision 2030 Initiative and anticipates a city-led Master Plan in Fall 2026. The Strategy leverages the University of Dubuque’s new John and Alice Butler College of Osteopathic Medicine (hereafter referred to as the College of Medicine) and the Dubuque Museum of Art (DUMA) expansion that will stimulate mixed-use development and amenities downtown. This work situates growth to maximize economic impact, foster connectivity, and enhance quality of life.

WHY NOW?

American cities and downtowns find themselves at a crossroads once again. After decades of automobile reliance, suburbanization, and segregation—often met with counterproductive countermeasures—recent pandemic-induced economic and social shifts again confront downtown America. The seemingly infallible role of downtowns as places to work and meet is being shaken by the rise of remote and hybrid work, social media, and upheaval in the retail and restaurant sectors that depended on a strong commercial core. To complicate matters, amplified fiscal austerity measures at the local, state, and federal levels are increasing tensions as urban cores seek to reposition themselves and compete for talent.

Amidst these disruptions, downtown Dubuque is fortunate to have two catalytic projects emerge close to one another. Locating the new College of Medicine and the new Dubuque Museum of Art in the heart of the city provides a catalyst for thinking about how that area may grow. Thoughtful consideration is needed to determine how the area around them will transform over time as a result of the investment, and how they might better connect to other institutions and downtown destinations.

IMPLEMENTATION

In reviewing this Development Strategy, it is important to state that while recommendations are targeted to specific geographies, the overall concept is to strengthen the entire downtown. Implementation of recommended investments will require careful consideration and coordination by the entire community before they can be fully embraced. For example, certain initiatives can best be made by an **institution** due to growth stemming from transformations in health care education or clinical care. Other projects are best advanced by the **public sector**. The City of Dubuque sets the stage for redevelopment through infrastructure investments that make a street safer and more attractive.

Private sector investments arise - and are most impactful - when risks for development are reduced through careful dialogue and coordination across sectors. **Philanthropic and non-profit partners** can advocate for and support equitable, community-driven revitalization that drives lasting change. Dubuque has demonstrated successful cross-sector collaboration many times over. The priority order for implementation will ultimately be informed by the City Council goal setting process, which creates the annual budget priorities and land use decisions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Dubuque is a community where people care and a strong culture of civic participation and engagement exists. This Development Strategy builds on themes that emerged through prior engagement efforts and Envision 2030, a community-wide visioning process led by the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque and the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce in 2025. Many community partners, like those listed above, have marshalled community sentiment around established priorities to ensure a diverse, healthy, vibrant, equitable and resilient city.

The following themes from Envision 2030 fit perfectly into this Development Strategy. These “transformative initiatives” could find a home between the bluff, the highway, 14th Street and 1st Street:

- All-Ages Sports Hub
- Center for Senior Well-Being
- Children’s Museum
- Community-Centered Housing
- Community Aquatic Center

The other half of the Envision 2030 initiatives reside outside of this Development Strategy’s focus area. The Mississippi Riverfront Reimagined, Dubuque South Port Revitalization, Expanded Library Services, Access to Healthy Food, and Collaborative Brain Health Services categories are

all excellent community-based ideas and should be advanced as the city’s Master Plan emerges.

Over nine months, more than 40 meetings were conducted in small group sessions. The conversations represented a wide range of public, private, non-profit and cross-sectoral organizations. Both private and public sites were considered, as well as the necessary investments to overcome gaps between them. The focus group conversations were augmented with community-wide public forums. The large community meetings took place in September 2025 (Voices Studio), January 2026 (Steeple Square) and June 2026 (Roshek Building). Please refer to the Appendix for a full list of participants.

A primary goal of this Development Strategy is to anticipate the impact that the enhanced institutional presence of art and medicine will have downtown. A second goal is to prioritize themes that emerged through the Envision 2030 effort and channel Dubuque Forward’s Passion Teams towards maximum impact. A third goal is to rally support around specific investments that will best position the city’s future Master Plan for success.

Below: Community workshop and forum.

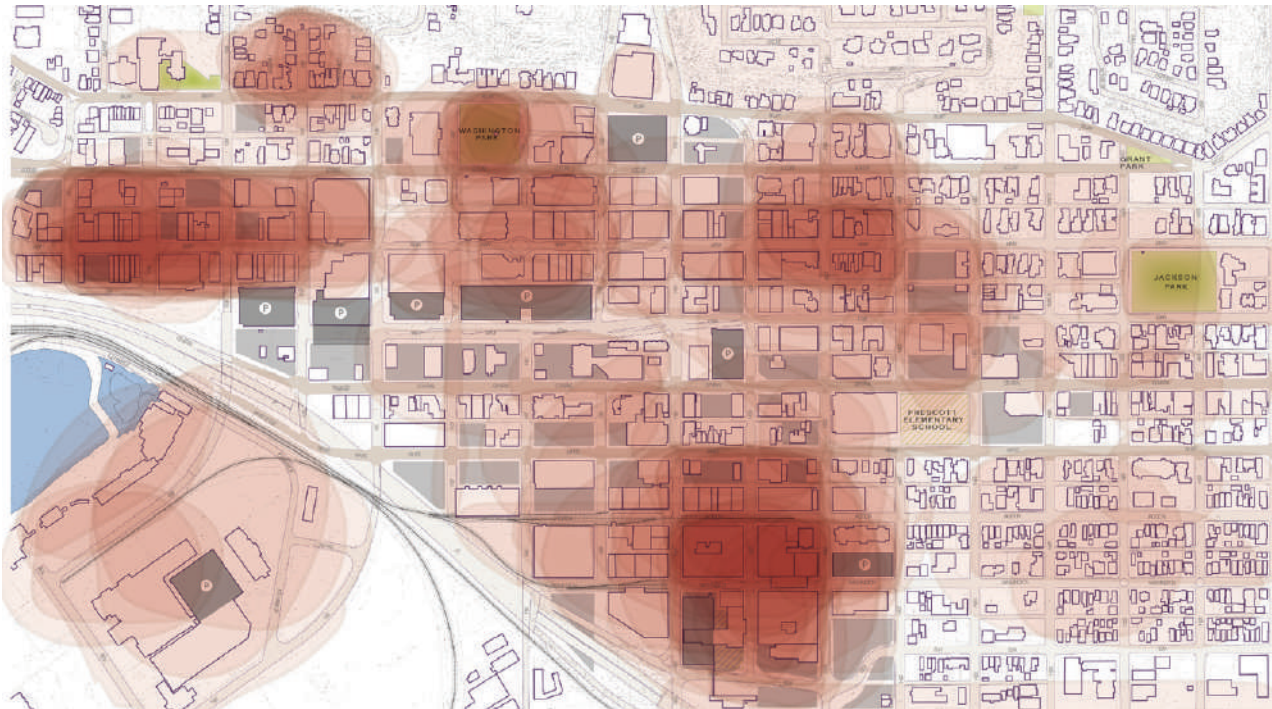


ANALYSIS

At the January 2026 public meeting, Dubuque residents were asked to identify the areas of downtown they consider to be the most vibrant and record them on a map. An overlay of each response reveals the diversity of opinion as well as zones of consensus. Darker tones indicate more overlap in opinion and the more perceived vibrancy. Equally important, the graphic illuminates the spaces between where less color emerges. These zones can be connectors between the existing areas of vibrancy and are candidates for new development.

From the participatory exercise, definitive areas of vibrancy emerge. A pattern forms along Main Street. The first is the southern end, between First and Fifth Street. The second cluster is around the Town Clock and nearby Washington Park. The third Main Street cluster is between Tenth and Thirteenth Street. These zones highlight the continued importance of Dubuque’s Main Street as the primary commercial core. Another clear concentration exists around the Millwork District, commensurate with its role as a successful, mixed use historic district with distinct boundaries. The blocks around the Fourth Street elevator are also highlighted and lighter tones reveal the importance of the River Museum/ Port area and the Washington neighborhood and Historic District near Jackson Park.

When asked to identify areas of the downtown core that were vibrant, consensus emerged around existing districts that have a strong identity. The areas in between them (the areas without tone) need attention. Therefore, the development strategy proposes focusing on four specific East-West corridors that hold the most promise for transformation, and can link the districts together.

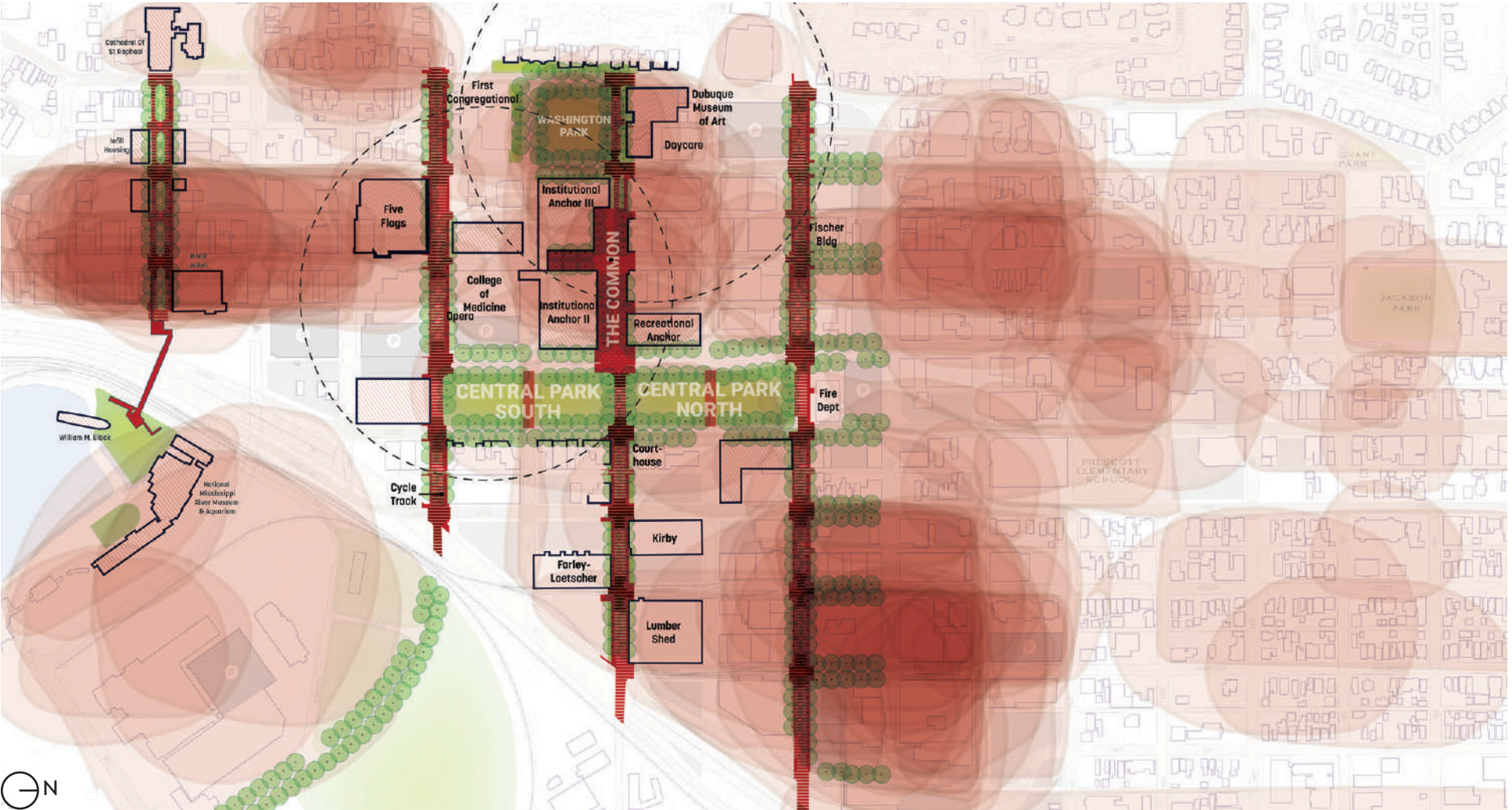


Above: Workshop participants identified the areas they feel are vibrant in downtown. An overlay of 55 maps by January 2026 workshop participants.

Second Street
A new “Cathedral Promenade” links Cathedral of St. Raphael with Main Street and Hotel Julien. A reconstituted historic bridge spans the highway, providing pedestrians and cyclists additional access to the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium.

SYNTHESIS

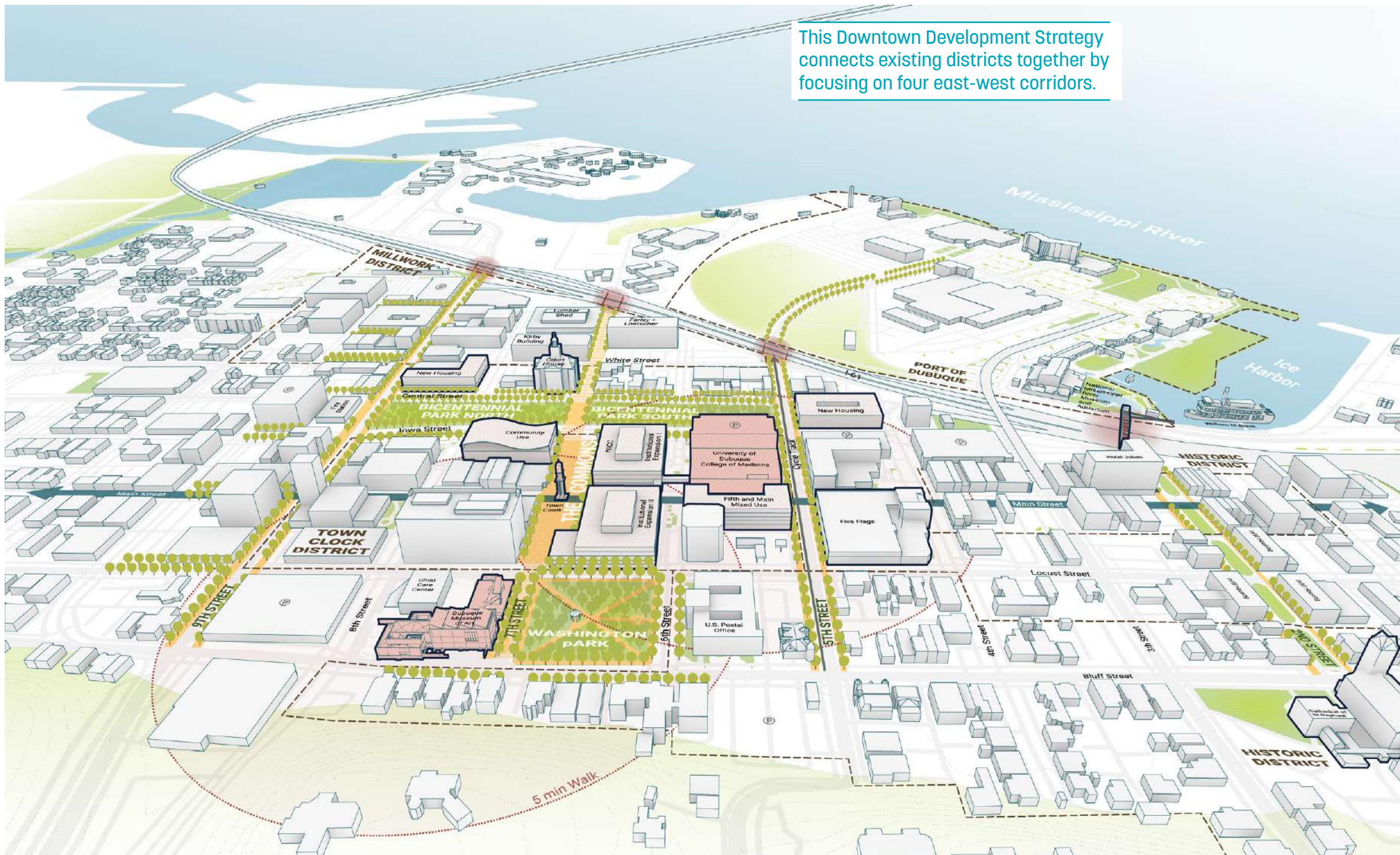
Below: Asset map with proposed development strategy.



Fifth Street
A new cycletrack and streetscape enhancements reinforces the connection between the bluff and waterfront. A renovated Five Flags Event Center across from the new College of Medicine enlivens Main Street.

Seventh Street
Removing the foreboding and underutilized Iowa Street parking ramp creates an opportunity for a new central park downtown, linking the new Dubuque Museum of Art, Washington Park and the Town Clock with the vacant former industrial buildings of the Millwork District.

Ninth Street
Streetscape enhancements increase safety along the corridor connecting the Fischer Company’s 901 Main Street, the Henry Stout Senior Apartments, and the Dubuque Intermodal Transportation Center.



This Downtown Development Strategy connects existing districts together by focusing on four east-west corridors.

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The strategy is divided into themes that neatly align with Dubuque Forward’s passion teams.

1. MOBILITY: Forge community connections between districts. Enhancing connections between existing nodes will encourage walking and cycling and improve air quality. Superlative pedestrian environments that are well maintained, shaded, clean and enlivened by a mix of uses will incentivize physical activity.

2. RECREATION + NATURAL AREAS: Create a Green and Resilient Core. Downtown has too much concrete and asphalt. There is a lack of green space. The quality of the public realm - its lighting, tree canopy, surface treatment, street furniture, wayfinding and, most importantly, interface with adjoining private properties - makes an enormous difference in how people get from place to place. The creation of a 2nd Street “Cathedral Promenade” and a 7th Street Central Park forge a resilient core that encourages movement and diminishes heat island effects.

3. MIXED USE (FORMERLY HOUSING): Increase Housing Supply for All. A well-designed public realm will reposition vacant historic properties and diminish the perceived distance between destinations. In addition to adaptive reuse, many surface parking lots are opportunities for infill housing and retail. Downtown needs more people living there.

4. ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTIVATION: Promote Good Jobs and Local Businesses. The College of Osteopathic Medicine at the University of Dubuque will be a transformational economic and community asset for the City of Dubuque, Dubuque County, the State of Iowa, and the broader Tri-State region. The institutional presence will serve as a catalyst for sustained downtown revitalization and regional economic growth. It will generate a stable, year-round economic base that supports small businesses, stimulates private investment, and enhances the vitality of the downtown core, with more “third-spaces” for social interaction.

5. CULTURE + CREATIVITY: Enhance Placemaking and the Public Realm. The Dubuque Museum of Art will be more than just a traditional art museum. It will be a place to experience well-being and connection. The cultural venue reimagines what is possible for a 21st century museum and for downtown through an immersive, indoor/outdoor campus. Nearby on Main Street, creative design will reinvigorate the Five Flags Center, while artistic lighting will turn foreboding highway underpasses into engaging places.

Above: Four East-West green corridors. (Dashed ovals represent a five minute walk from the center of the two catalytic projects.)

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

STRATEGY AND ACTIONS

Community conversations revealed the following themes:

- 1. MOBILITY:** Forge community connections between districts
 - 1.1 Construct Pedestrian Bridge To River Museum
 - 1.2 Advance Micro-Mobility and a Cycletrack
- 2. RECREATION SPACES AND NATURAL AREAS:** Create a Green and Resilient Core
 - 2.1 Establish A “Cathedral Green”
 - 2.2 Envision A Central “Bicentennial Park”
- 3. MIXED USE:** Increase Housing Supply for All
 - 3.1 Anchor The Millwork District
 - 3.2 Increase “Missing Middle” Infill Housing
- 4. ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTIVATION:** Promote Good Jobs and Local Businesses
 - 4.1 Grow Downtown’s Institutional Presence
 - 4.2 Create More “Third Spaces”
- 5. CULTURE AND CREATIVITY:** Enhance Placemaking and the Public Realm
 - 5.1 Reclad Five Flags Center Elevation(s)
 - 5.2 Implement Highway 61 Underpass Lighting



01

MOBILITY

Forge community connections between districts





02

RECREATION SPACES & NATURAL AREAS

Create a Green + Resilient Core





03

MIXED USE

(Formerly Housing)

Increase Housing Supply for All





04

ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTIVATION

Promote Good Jobs + Local Business





05

CULTURE & CREATIVITY

Enhance Placemaking + the Public Realm





01 Mobility

**VISION: FORGE COMMUNITY
CONNECTIONS BETWEEN DISTRICTS**

STRATEGY:
1.1 CONSTRUCT PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE TO RIVERFRONT
1.2 ADVANCE MICRO-MOBILITY AND A CYCLETRACK

Above: Vassar Street cycle track, Cambridge MA

Below: Second Street pedestrian bridge.



STRATEGY 1.1 CONSTRUCT PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE TO RIVER MUSEUM

Currently, it is easier to drive between destinations in Dubuque than to walk. This can be said for many American cities. Part of the urban design challenge in Dubuque has to do with the highway and rail line which cut the city off from the waterfront.

At the water's edge, the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium is a major tourist destination, drawing nearly 200,000 visitors per year. Unfortunately, to get to the museum as a pedestrian from downtown, one must cross over the four-lane highway and span multiple rail tracks. While there is a sidewalk along West 3rd Street, it is narrow and uninviting. In order to capture the high volume of tourists who visit the River Museum and foster greater connectivity downtown, a new link between Second Street and the Ice Harbor is warranted.

A new pedestrian and bicycle bridge is proposed over the highway and rail line. Spanning nearly 300 feet, the bridge takes advantage of a change in grade, providing a direct connection between Hotel Julien and Main Street with the waterfront. Part sign and part path, the structure forms a celebratory entry into the city. Dubuque's "Gateway Bridge" connects Main Street and the end of Second Street with the

River Museum for pedestrians and cyclists.

Rather than building an entirely new bridge, the Development Strategy advances a more sustainable approach of reusing something that already exists. The State of Iowa maintains a website that lists old bridges which have outlived their initial purpose. There is a rare, Rigid-Connected Camelback Through Truss bridge still in existence in rural Adair County. The bridge was built in 1949 to carry vehicles and is in good structural condition. The steel bridge was fabricated with rivets and bolts and assembled on site in sections. The initial construction method used for the bridge makes it a good candidate for disassembly and relocation to Dubuque.

The span of the historic bridge is 160' long with a 16' wide roadway. Adair County is in the design phase of replacing the existing bridge. This old infrastructure can be repurposed for pedestrians and bikes. It has a wood deck, and both bolts and rivets are used as connection points, which make it feasible for transport and relocation. The World War II-era steel bridge can be dismantled, stored, cleaned, and (eventually) relocated and reassembled in Dubuque. New ramps and stairs can be added to complete the span.

Dubuque's new "Gateway Bridge" connects Main Street and Second Street with the River Museum for pedestrians and cyclists.

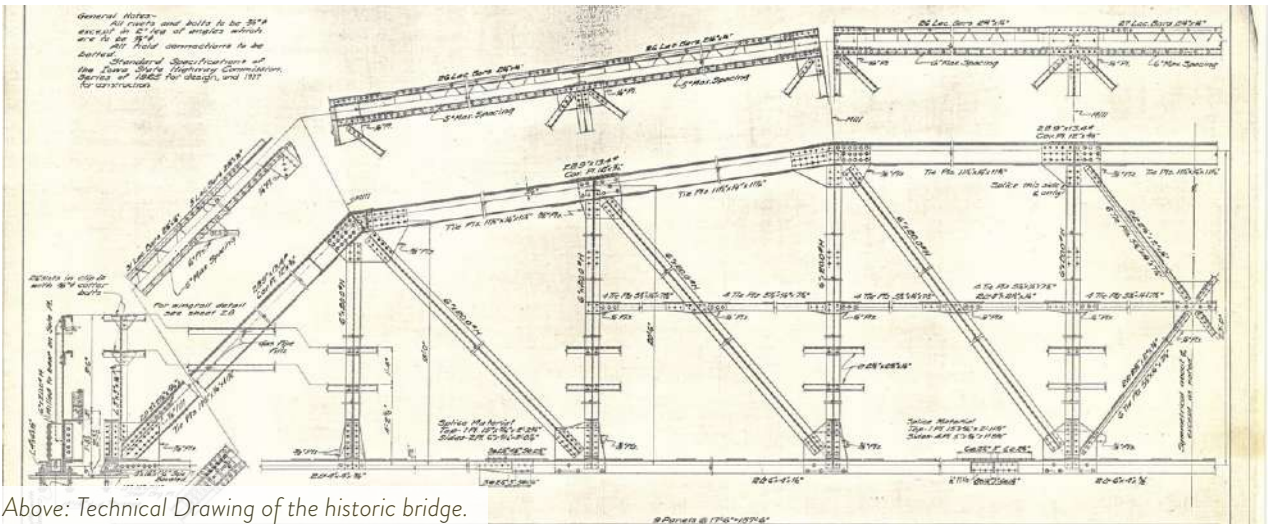
Below: Third Street bridge existing condition.



Above: Second Street pedestrian bridge proposed view.

The bridge is a specific structural type unique to this period. Because the bridge is a unique type with few remaining similar examples, all of which are younger than the current bridge in Adair County, previous studies have suggested that the bridge may be eligible for designation on the National Register of Historic Places, increasing potential access to Federal and State grants.

Other bridges in the State of Iowa have been relocated, including one in Dubuque’s Bergfeld Park. Relocating a bridge with historical significance not only preserves history but also provides a valuable public service. **The relocation and reconstruction of the bridge, together with contemporary access ramps and stairs, enables the first of the east-west “green fingers” to emerge along Second Street.** The historic infrastructure overcomes the rift of the highway and rail line and links the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium with Hotel Julien, Main Street and the Cathedral of St. Raphael along Second Street.



Above: Technical Drawing of the historic bridge.



Above: Image of 1949 historic bridge FHWA 055380. (Adair County)



Above: Telekom Bridge, Germany



Above: Telekom Bridge, Germany



Above: Van Leesten Memorial Bridge, Providence RI



Above: Bridge of Flowers, Shelburne Falls, MA



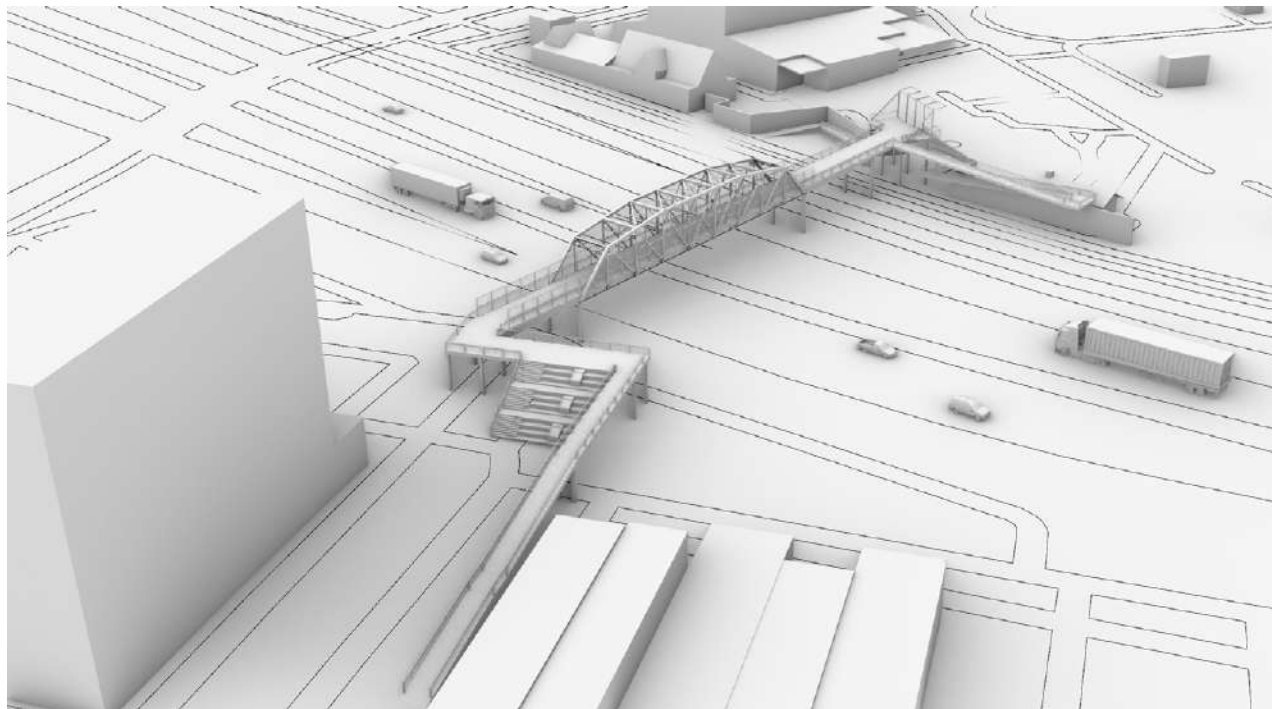
Above: Millennium Bridge, London



Above: Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook Bridge, Amsterdam NY

All images: Pedestrian bridge precedents.

Bridges are iconic downtown gateways.



NEXT STEPS

1.1 Construct Pedestrian Bridge To River Museum

- Convene a stakeholder / project team (Dubuque Forward / Iowa DOT / City / Railroad / ECIA / GDDC / River Museum / Art Commission)
- Historic Bridge Assessment and Relocation Analysis
- Schematic Design Drawings and engineering for the bridge

All images: Proposed Second Street Bridge spanning the highway and railroad.

The historic infrastructure overcomes the rift of the highway and rail line.



Above: Second Street Bridge at night.

STRATEGY 1.2 ADVANCE MICRO-MOBILITY AND A CYCLETRACK

Dubuque has a compact block structure, but it's streets have always been wide. The first streetcar lines were installed in 1868 and the right-of-way accommodated trolleys in addition to people, horses, wagons and cars. The streetcars eventually yielded to buses that ran on the same lines, but the right-of-way remained the same. More space was just given over to cars. Streetcars ran for the last time in 1932. Evidence of wide streets can be seen throughout downtown today.

In the mid- to late-twentieth century, a number of downtown corridors were converted from two-way to one-way, increasing the speed with which traffic can circulate into and out of the city. Suburbanization accelerated with the construction of the federal Interstate Highway System, which eased traffic, at least for a time. Such transportation improvements, while intending to stimulate redevelopment, have had the opposite effect. Coupled with urban renewal, which sought to eliminate inadequate living conditions and revitalize the decaying core, an aging swath of downtown Dubuque, like many other American cities, was demolished. Businesses and residents were displaced.



Below: Downtown Dubuque map, 1852
Source: A City Like And Unlike All Others, An Album Of Images, Book 2.



Below: Main Street Dubuque in the 1890s
Source: Dubuque on the Mississippi 1788-1988.



Above: Main Street Dubuque today.

As a culture we need to rethink how people travel. More space can be devoted to walking and biking. More trees can be planted along sidewalks to increase shade and reduce stormwater runoff. Particularly post-COVID-19, towns and cities of all scales need to invest in pedestrian environments that are well maintained, shaded, clean and enlivened by a mix of uses. Such investment incentivizes physical activity and attracts private investment. The challenge in downtown Dubuque is that the distances between destinations are a lot closer than they seem because the experience of walking or biking is unremarkable. It's easier to drive to and park near your destination.

However, dedicating public resources to infrastructure is more difficult than it may seem. Cities need to be strategic about which roads to fix or reinvest in because needs always exceed budgets. There are also challenges associated with implementation. Existing businesses and residents, for example, have to endure long periods of construction with lane closures and the temporary loss of parking. Moreover, transportation decisions about street space and traffic management can also be contested, as different constituents want different things. Advocacy groups, business associations and

residents may mobilize to prepare network plans and technical standards. However, in practice, implementation of cycling infrastructure is shaped by power relations. Conflicts over space allocation in American cities are not new and date back to the role that cyclists played in originally lobbying for better roads at the turn of the century (the 19th century!).

Nevertheless, Dubuque needs to rededicate city streets away from cars and act quickly with short-term changes. The increased population of students as a result of the new College of Osteopathic Medicine and more downtown residents from infill development warrants a reassessment of the street right-of-way. Advancing policies in favor of cycling and pedestrian infrastructure requires the reduction of space for cars and some on-street parking. A good way to test the efficacy of these improvements is through a "safety demonstration project".

During the COVID-19 pandemic, wide streets in Boston's Downtown Crossing area were painted for short-term outdoor dining. A number of these have remained as cherished outdoor spaces once people realized that traffic impacts of reducing the asphalt were less than feared.



Below: Safety Demonstration Project, Boston Downtown Crossing.

ADVANCE MICRO-MOBILITY AND A CYCLETRACK

The Downtown Strategy recommends two safety-demonstration projects that encourage walking and cycling, improve air quality and can lead to longer term infrastructure improvements. On Fifth Street, space for a separated cycle track can be acquired by removing on-street parking on the north side and slightly narrowing the existing travel lanes. Fifth Street is the second “green finger”. Nearby, Second Street’s right-of-way is excessively wide for the level of traffic it carries. The two-lane street is 62 feet wide. Second Street’s improvements envision a central walkway that expands the park east in front of the Cathedral of St. Raphael. Access for cars and parking are maintained on each side of the green. (Refer to the Recreation Space & Natural Areas section for more information on Second Street.)

Full implementation for street reconstructions will be easier once short-term demonstration safety projects have been tested. As public support is created, that support can be turned into political support and ultimately legislation and funding. It is important to draft network plans, design standards and schematic designs for these corridors so that the menu of options can be acted upon. For the city council and other legislative authorities, it is easier to adopt



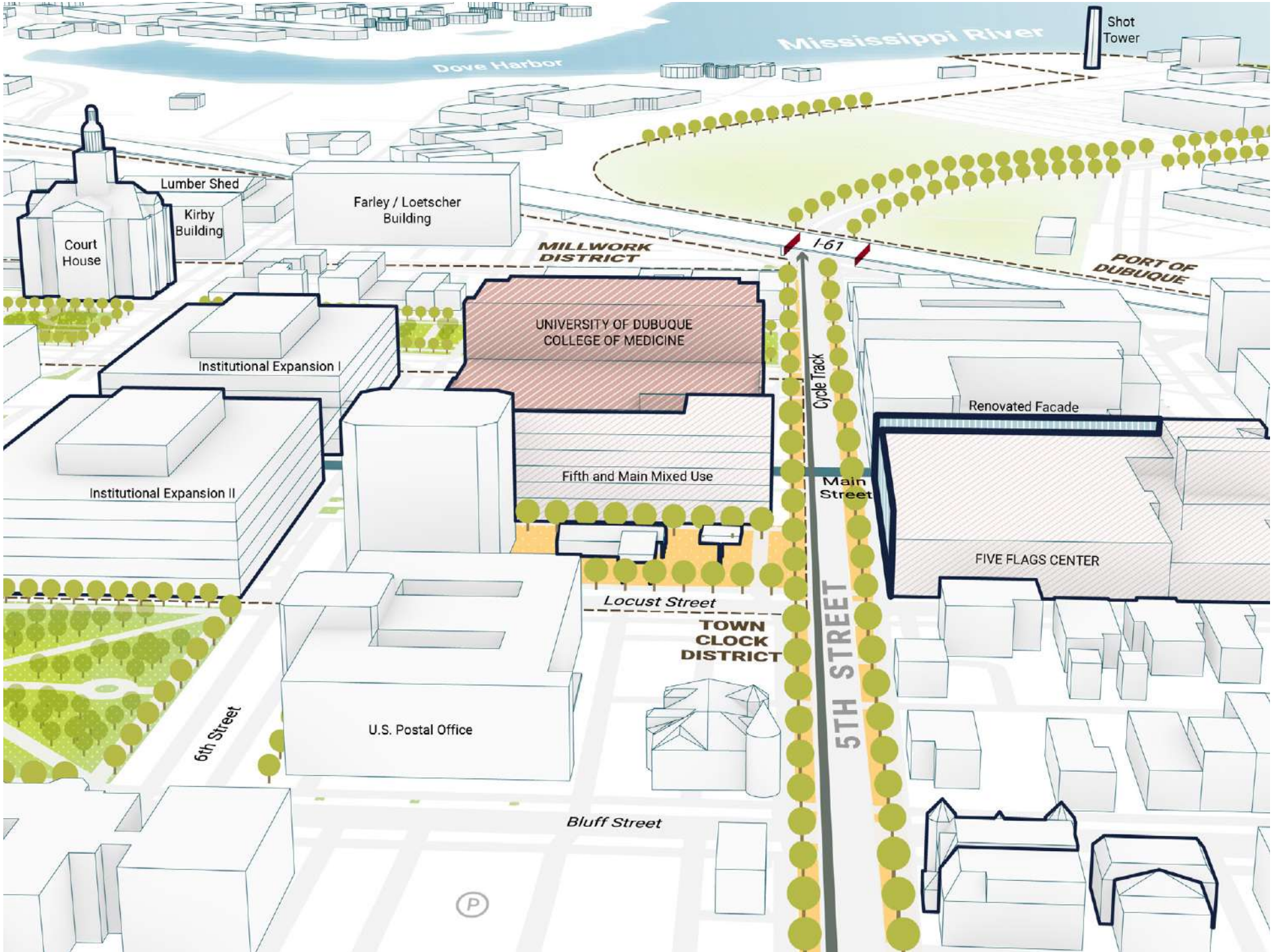
Below: Fifth Street Corridor proposed plan.

plans that have been fully engineered than to get new ones developed. Good progress has been made in the last few years incorporating bike lanes downtown. Fifth Street was chosen as a viable street to incorporate a separated cycletrack given its proximity to the College of Osteopathic Medicine and the fact that it continues west up the bluff and east to the Port.

NEXT STEPS

1.2 Advance Micro-Mobility and a Cycletrack

- a. Convene bike advocacy groups to determine best network
- b. Layout street right-of-way section
- c. Identify funding opportunities / Capital Improvement Plan timing



Above: Fifth Street corridor view with proposed cycletrack and future infill development.

ADVANCE MICRO-MOBILITY / CYCLE TRACK

Categorization of cycling infrastructure

- (CT) Cycletrack
- (MP) Stand-alone multi-use paths
- (SBL) Separated bike lanes which run on a roadway or on the sidewalk but are physically separated from traffic
- (BBL) Buffered bike lanes which only have a buffer but no physical separation from the traffic
- (BL) Conventional bike lanes without separation
- (SS) Shared Streets

There is more capacity in Dubuque’s road system than is needed. One tends to think of each mode of transportation as independent and discrete. In actuality, the systems need to be integrated. Walkable and multi-modal streets will leverage the presence of Dubuque’s downtown institutions. Enhanced streetscapes will stimulate more commercial activity on the ground floors of mixed-use buildings which will, in turn, foster more vibrancy along Main Street and in the core.



Left: Vassar Street cycle track, Cambridge MA.

The Downtown Strategy recommends two safety-demonstration projects that encourage walking and cycling, improve air quality and can lead to longer-term infrastructure improvements.





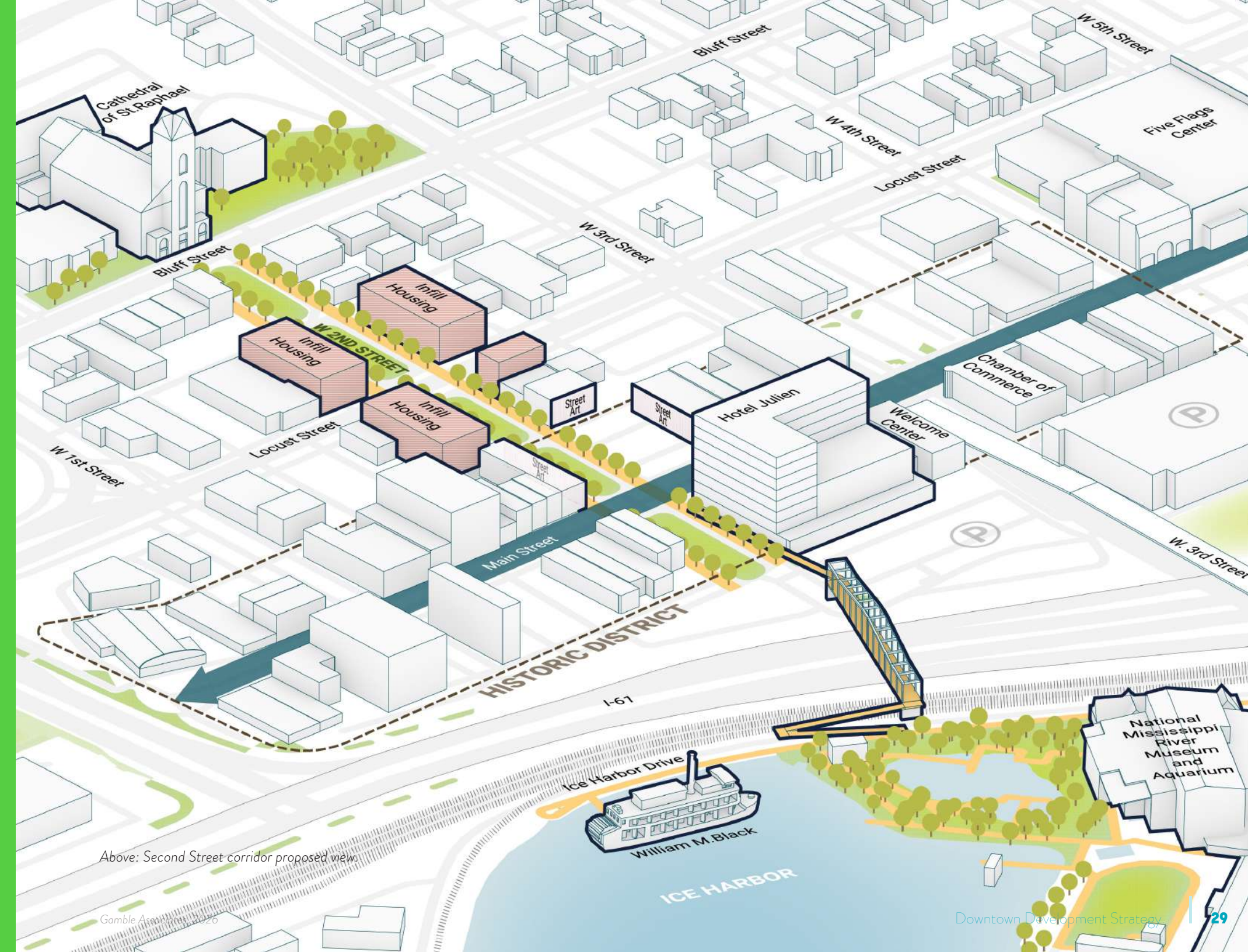
02 Recreation Spaces & Natural Areas

**VISION: CREATE A GREEN AND
RESILIENT CORE**

STRATEGY:

2.1 CREATE A "CATHEDRAL GREEN"

2.2 ENVISION A CENTRAL "BICENTENNIAL PARK"



Above: Second Street corridor proposed view.

Gamble Associates, 2026

Gamble Associates, 2026

Downtown Development Strategy

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Above: Harvard Square walkway, Cambridge MA

STRATEGY 2.1
CREATE A “CATHEDRAL
GREEN”

Historically, the Mississippi River was closer to downtown Dubuque than it is today. In prior eras, the iconic St. Raphael’s Cathedral drew people up Second Street from the paddle boats that arrived on the riverfront. The path between the river and the church was a short, leisurely stroll. A streetcar also travelled on Second Street, which explains why the street is so wide.

A street right-of-way is the distance between property lines. It includes the travel lanes, on-street parking and sidewalks. At 86 feet wide, Second Street’s right-of-way is excessive for the amount of traffic it handles. There are two travel lanes and diagonal parking on both sides of the street for much of its length. A proposed promenade is made possible by changing the diagonal parking to parallel parking. The lane width is also reduced from 13 feet to 11 feet in each direction. The central green or pedestrian mall aligns with the small pocket park in front of the cathedral.

A great street is a safe, comfortable and desirable place to be. It can be a model for others. It should be shaded and resilient. Most importantly, a great street is memorable.



Below: Images of America, Dubuque The 19th Century.



Above: Second Street’s existing right-of-way.



Above: Second Street proposed view.

CREATE A “CATHEDRAL GREEN”

MOBILITY

RECREATION

MIXED USE

ENTREPRENEUR

CULTURE

Second Street is currently unremarkable. The excessive pavement increases the speed of car traffic, and makes crossing the street more dangerous for pedestrains. There are overhead utilities but no bike lanes and few, if any, street trees. There are no crosswalks for pedestrians trying to cross Locust or Main Streets. Yet the corridor connects the Cathedral of St. Raphael - one of Dubuque’s most significant landmark buildings - to Main Street and Hotel Julien.

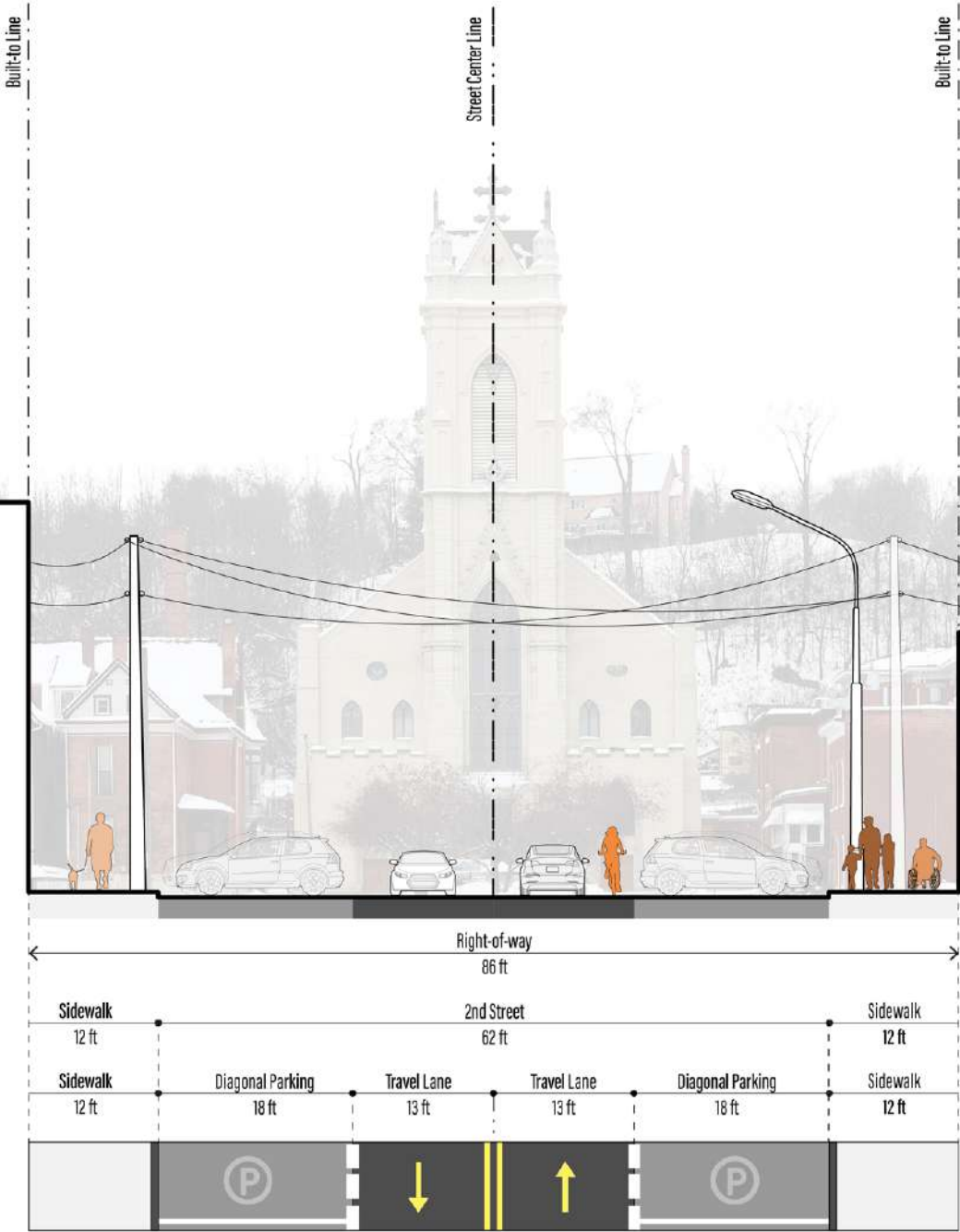
Removing excess pavement and installing new street trees, curbs, lighting and a central landscaped median will radically alter the character of this right-of-way. Second Street serves as a gateway and first impression for people entering the downtown from the south. It warrants infrastructure and open space investment. It deserves to be memorable.

Right: Second Street existing condition.



A great street is a safe, comfortable and desirable place to be. It can be a model for others. It should be shaded and resilient. Most importantly, a great street is memorable.

Right: Second Street existing section.



CREATE A “CATHEDRAL GREEN”

The idea to create more green space in this area is not coming out of thin air. In the Fall of 2025, the Bluff Street Neighborhood Association petitioned the city for a pocket park adjacent to St. Raphael’s Cathedral. Increasing safety for the residents, fostering community cohesion, raising quality of life and increasing tourism are goals that can be accomplished with an investment in an open space such as the one proposed. The neighborhood proposal recommended closing a portion of Second Street to create the park, however, that is not necessary. One can have a longer, linear walkway down the middle of the street, access for cars on both sides of the green and parallel parking on the edges.

The Bluff Street neighborhood’s aspirations make a great deal of sense. Extending the small park in the island of the right-of-way in front of the Cathedral also helps to achieve the open space goals from the 2026 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan by “fostering community, promoting healthy lifestyles, and preserving natural resources for all people and future generations”.



Below: Second Street Corridor proposed plan.

NEXT STEPS

2.1 Establish a “Cathedral Green”

A feasibility study would entail:

- Site and Archeological survey
- Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment(s)
- Utility analysis and conflict assessment
- Schematic Design Drawings for West Second Street, including civil engineering, storm sewer

- improvements, sidewalks, curb and gutter, curb ramps, alley tie-ins, intersection designs, decorative lighting, conceptual landscape design for Cathedral Promenade and Second Street cross sections, surface parking relocation analysis
- Cost estimating of roadway, sidewalks, curb ramps, alleys, utilities, elevated pedestrian bridge
- Public outreach

Right: Second Street proposed section with Cathedral Promenade.



STRATEGY 2.2
ENVISION A CENTRAL “BICENTENNIAL PARK”*

The city must preserve the existing tree canopy, plant more new trees, and cultivate greater stewardship for the greening of the downtown core for future generations. Increasing naturalized areas in an urban core enhances everyone’s health and quality of life. This starts by planting more trees. Trees are critical infrastructure. They cool neighborhoods, provide carbon storage, remove air pollution, address stormwater runoff, and establish wildlife habitat.

In addition to a lack of trees, Dubuque has very few public parks for a downtown of its size. Less than 5% of the land downtown includes parks and open spaces. By comparison, more than 30% of downtown is covered with surface or structured parking lots, most of which are visually unattractive. Basically, the vast majority of the city is asphalt and concrete. When rooftops are included, the percentage of permeable surfaces in the city plummets.

A key strategy for Dubuque’s downtown is to increase connectivity between existing destinations. Investing in landscape infrastructure achieves this goal. Greening the downtown and enhancing connections can be accomplished incrementally by



Below: Roofs, streets, and sidewalks create a great deal of impervious surfaces.

introducing street trees, landscape buffers or smaller pocket parks. The objective can also be accomplished more ambitiously.

Many cities in the United States have successfully activated their downtowns with the development of urban parks. These initiatives range from small urban plazas to large public spaces for festivals and events. Creating a contemporary destination

open space in the city’s core will complement historic Washington Park. The proposed central park will increase tourism, stimulate economic development and reinforce the city’s image with both its peer cities and nationally. When placed in the right location, a new open space downtown can also remove a barrier at the same time.

But where should such an open space go?

* Dubuque was was officially opened for legal U.S. settlement as a city on June 1, 1833, although Indigenous cultures occupied the area well before. (Meskwaki Tribe, or Mesquakie, which is formally recognized as the Sac & Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa, and Winnebago Tribe / Ho-Chunk Nation)

The city’s prosperity isn’t just reflected in the architecture; it’s expressed. The downtown is comprised of many beautiful buildings in a wide variety of architectural styles, with much of the city’s history still visible today. Fortunately, urban renewal in Dubuque in the 1960s and 70s was not as widespread as in other American cities. **The demolition that did occur was concentrated, resulting in the interstitial areas between districts that need the most help today.**

Each generation sometimes sees the ideas of those before them as misguided. The aspiration of urban renewal was to remove blight and revitalize downtown by wiping the slate clean in dilapidated areas and starting anew. Drastic measures were called for. In Dubuque, a 15-block area bounded by Fourth, Ninth, Locust and Central was proclaimed a “blighted area” and targeted for urban renewal. Unfortunately, the demolition disproportionately impacted vulnerable and minority populations which were forced to relocate.

Following this area’s demolition, the first new construction within the urban renewal zone began in 1969: a two-block long parking ramp

The Downtown Strategy recommends introducing a high-profile signature destination park.

along Iowa Street that ran from West Sixth to Eighth Street. Nearing six decades old today, the ramp is low-density and requires considerable upkeep, and its location removed the critical east-west axis of Seventh Street. It is no small irony then that this Development Strategy reconsiders accommodating structured parking in this location downtown and the closing of Seventh Street that ensued.



Below: 1970s Urban Renewal.
Source: Dubuque the Birthplace of Iowa Vol.III

ENVISION A CENTRAL “BICENTENNIAL PARK”

Older American downtowns face many challenges. Outdated sanitary sewer systems receive storm water runoff, resulting in overloads that impact water quality. Severe weather associated with climate change exacerbates flooding and increases its frequency. Outdated rail infrastructure rings downtowns and renders large swaths of land inaccessible or difficult to redevelop. Highways in nearly every U.S. city divide and crowd adjoining neighborhoods, diminishing air quality that disproportionately impacts lower income areas.

Former industrial areas frequently suffer from environmental degradation resulting from manufacturing or distribution. Remediation efforts can be formidable and require sustained efforts over longer periods of time. While most of these challenges in Dubuque relate to the Port or South Port areas, downtown itself needs to be healthier.

Often, the best opportunities for establishing landscapes for passive or active recreation exist in the seams between districts or in the residual areas where industry and transportation networks once flourished. It is the vast rail yards, overgrown canal basins, surface parking lots or shadowed spaces under highways that offer opportunities to stitch places together in an improved physical environment.

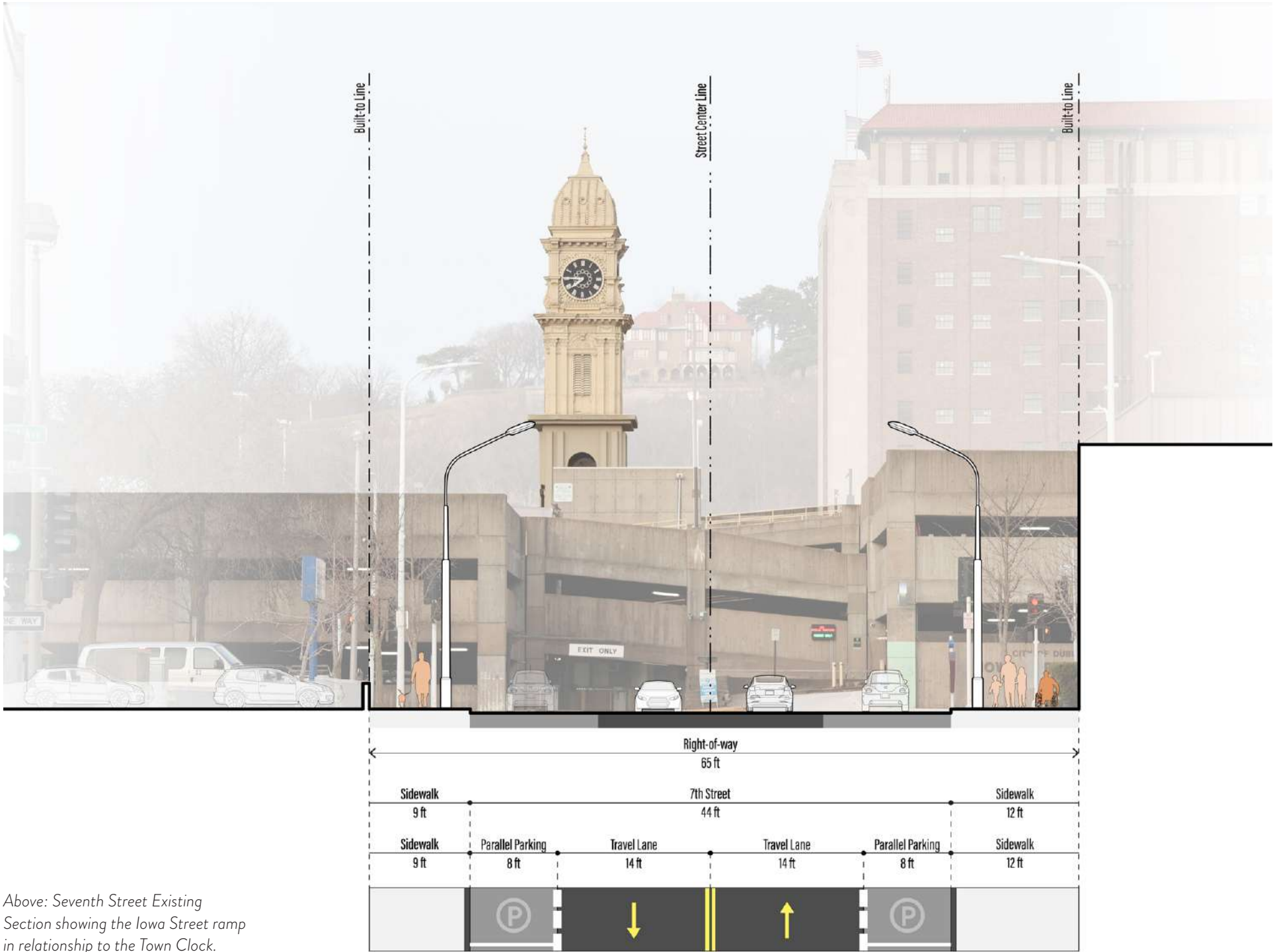
Establishing a new central, urban park for Downtown Dubuque provides multiple synergistic benefits. The site itself becomes cleaner and more livable and the landscape’s rehabilitation enables connective networks to extend to adjoining areas. In downtown settings where access to open space, clean air and water is more difficult, these landscape corridors matter. All planning impacts health in some way, and with greater investment in urban parks, opportunities for environmental remediation are combined with new places for physical activity for people of all ages and mobility. Both the public and private sectors demonstrate a greater committment to public health through the enhancement of open space networks.

Amid a national obesity epidemic and growing health disparity crisis, expectations of “return on investment” are shifting away from financial gains alone toward community health. **Why not put a park on the site of an outdated and underutilized parking structure?**

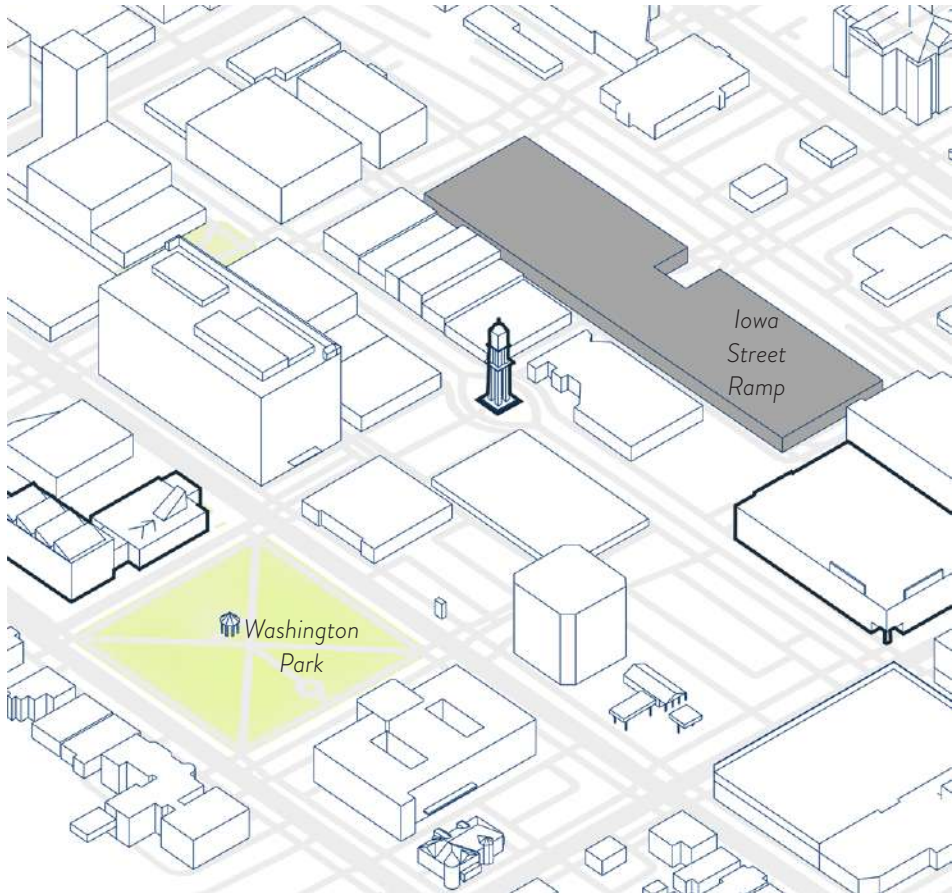
Although there are many locations where an open space will add value to surrouning real estate and be a magnet for residents, office workers and tourist, establishing a park east of Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) and the Town Clock has the added benefit of removing a low-density parking structure whose upkeep will require intensive investment in the future.



Above: Railroad park, Birmingham AL



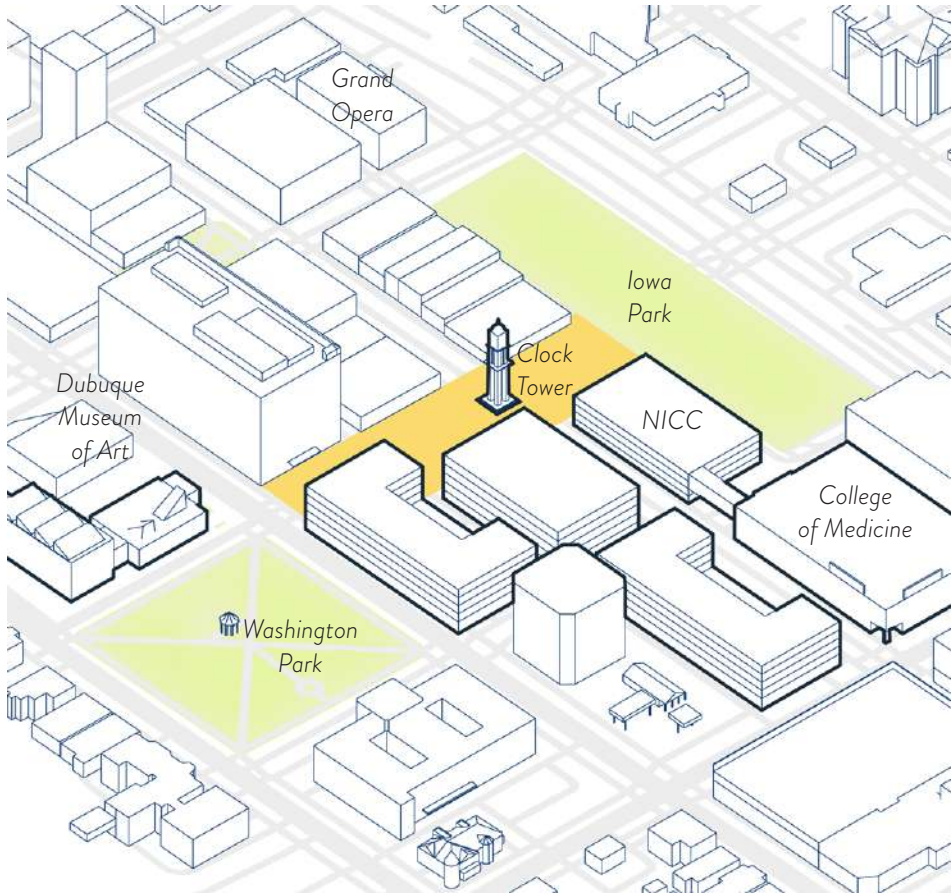
Above: Seventh Street Existing Section showing the Iowa Street ramp in relationship to the Town Clock.



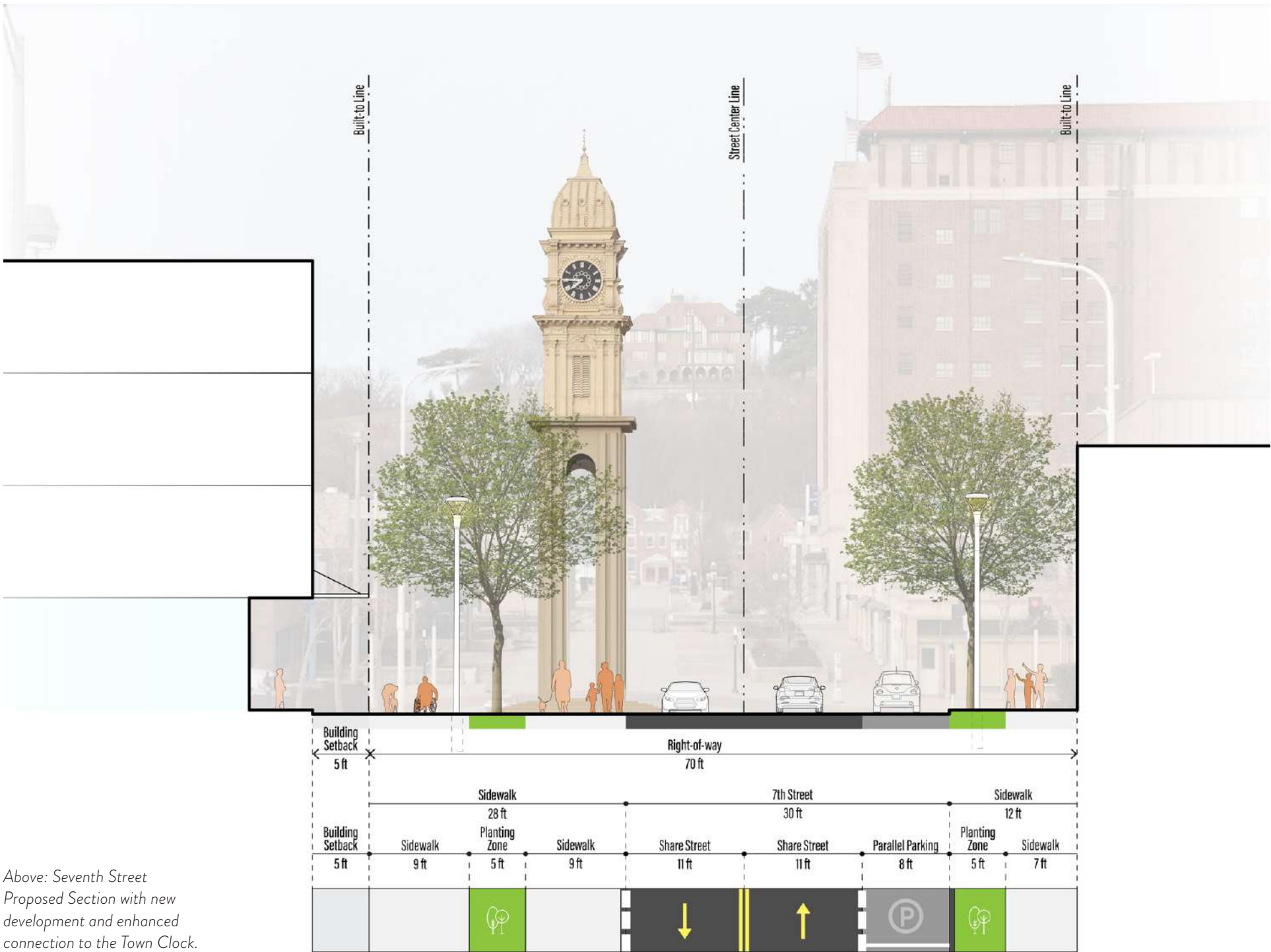
A downtown park is just one of several critical layers necessary to create a vital downtown. A destination green space will address residents' needs and encourage commercial investment. A new park will contribute to the identity of downtown and could emerge as the city's most imageable public space, enhancing the relationship with the Grand Opera House, County Courthouse and Town Clock.

Admittedly, there are barriers to implementation. The Iowa Street ramp is currently undergoing repairs and technology enhancements. A new

A new, two-acre park is proposed on the site of the existing Iowa Street ramp



open space must be well programmed, designed and funded. Champions are needed. However, no strategic investment will have a bigger impact on the character and quality of life in Dubuque than creating a new destination park downtown. The removal of the Iowa Street ramp opens up a view to the Town Clock from all four directions. Considered by many to be the center of downtown, the Town Clock takes its rightful place in a new central plaza. The plaza links historic Washington Park to contemporary Iowa Park. A larger facility for Northeast Iowa Community College emerges, stimulating additional residential development.



Above: Seventh Street Proposed Section with new development and enhanced connection to the Town Clock.

ENVISION A CENTRAL “BICENTENNIAL PARK”

As parking structures go downtown, the Iowa Street ramp is the most problematic. The low-density structure is aging and hinders east-west connectivity. While it is centrally located downtown, the two-story structure creates an impenetrable wall between the Town Clock District and the Millwork District. Moreover, the parking garage is one of four in a row on Iowa Street, creating an enormous barrier for other forms of mobility.

Across the country, parking demands are changing. First, the rise of remote and hybrid work is altering commuting patterns and parking demands. Fewer people are commuting. Second, improved streets and sidewalks are enticing people to walk more when the experience is safe and pleasant. Third, many of the existing downtown garages in Dubuque are nowhere near capacity. Fourth, within the next generation, the increase in ride-sharing and self-driving cars will reduce the space needed for automobiles by approximately 25%-30%.

Open spaces are an essential ingredient for a healthy downtown, and public parks are some of the most important contributions to the establishment of a sense of place. When well-designed and programmed, they drastically improve the economic value of adjacent real estate. Environmentally, a well-landscaped park improves air quality, reduces stormwater runoff,

lessens the burden on underground infrastructure, and lowers heat islands effects. Most importantly, parks improve the quality of life for residents and visitors through landscaped environments for gathering and celebration. Now more than ever, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to linger and impact our lifestyles, outdoor spaces are essential to good health and well-being.

Potential park programs could include plazas for seasonal food trucks and ample seating for lunchtime or after work crowds. A lawn could be created for outdoor performances that augment those that have taken place around the Town Clock for years. A portion of the south-facing space could include fountains to provide a cool, shaded micro-climate in the summer. Gateway features could mark entries.

Two spaces have been identified for a new downtown park. Whichever site is selected, they are both strategically located between districts and redevelopment sites on their periphery will strengthen the open space. Should development pressures dictate, the area is large enough to accommodate one level of underground parking that could hold more than 250 cars below the park. **It’s not that parking is not needed downtown, it’s that the form of it should not come at the expense of walkability and connecting districts.**

Iowa Park is a 2.5-acre open space on the site of the existing Iowa Street ramp. Removal of the ramp and construction of the park opens up the third east-west “green finger” of Seventh Street from Washington Park and the Town Clock District to the Millwork District.

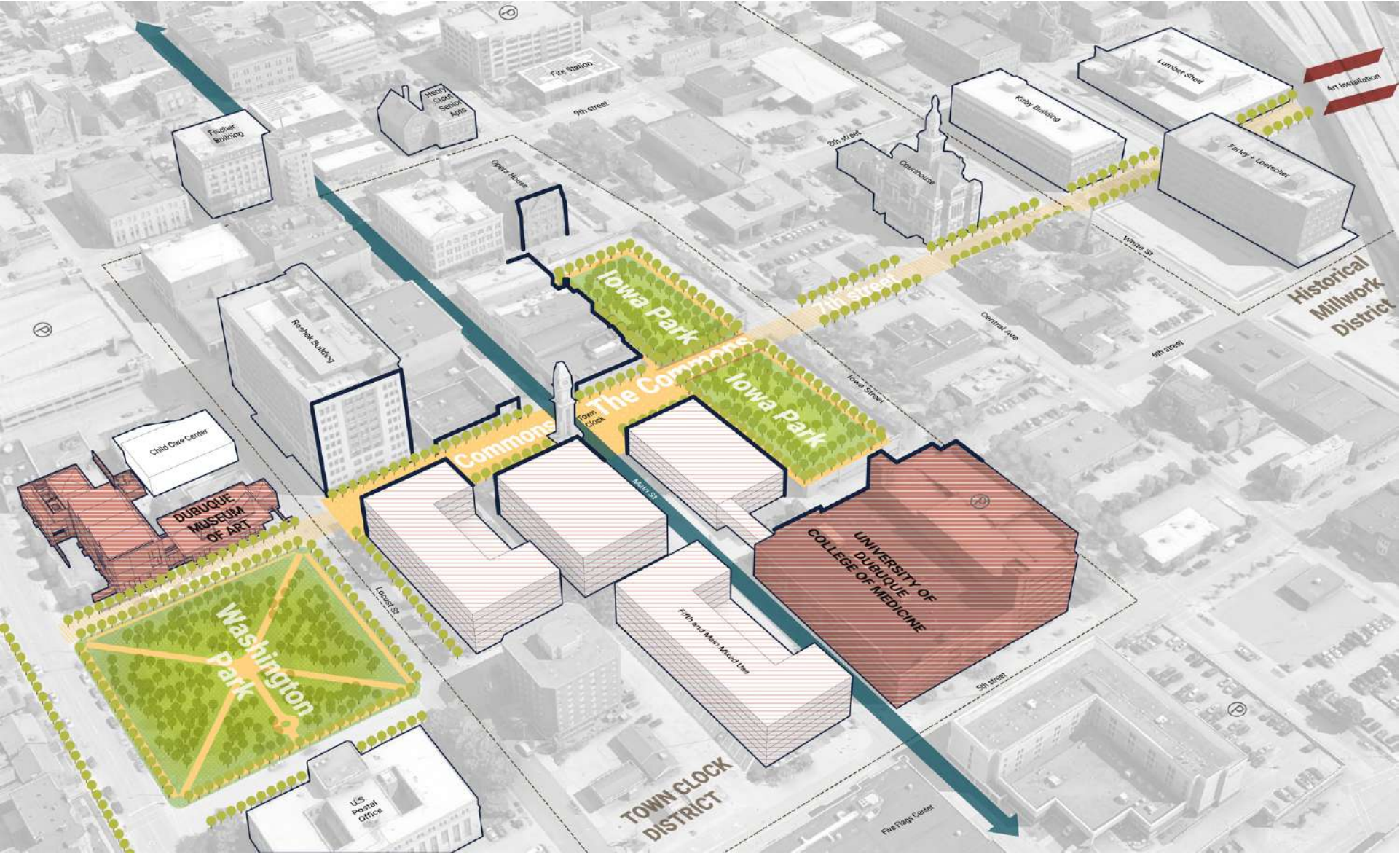
Bicentennial Park is a more ambitious undertaking. It is, admittedly, a longer-term vision, based on the same premise that open spaces catalyze areas around them. The five-acre park would span four full blocks. It would only be possible with the relocation of the Dubuque County Sheriff’s Department and the Police Station (which do not have current plans to relocate!). Other buildings defined by Iowa, Central, Fifth and Seventh Street like the McDonalds would also be replaced. This multi-use open space would offer the greatest potential to recast the image of Downtown. Should community support arise quickly, its design and construction could coincide with Dubuque’s 200-year anniversary in 2033.

NEXT STEPS

4.2 Envision a Central “Bicentennial Park”

- a. Probe viability of Iowa Street Ramp removal
- b. Advance conversations with Police Department and County Sheriff
- c. Assemble team to program open space opportunities downtown

ALTERNATIVE 1 - IOWA PARK ON THE SITE OF THE IOWA STREET RAMP

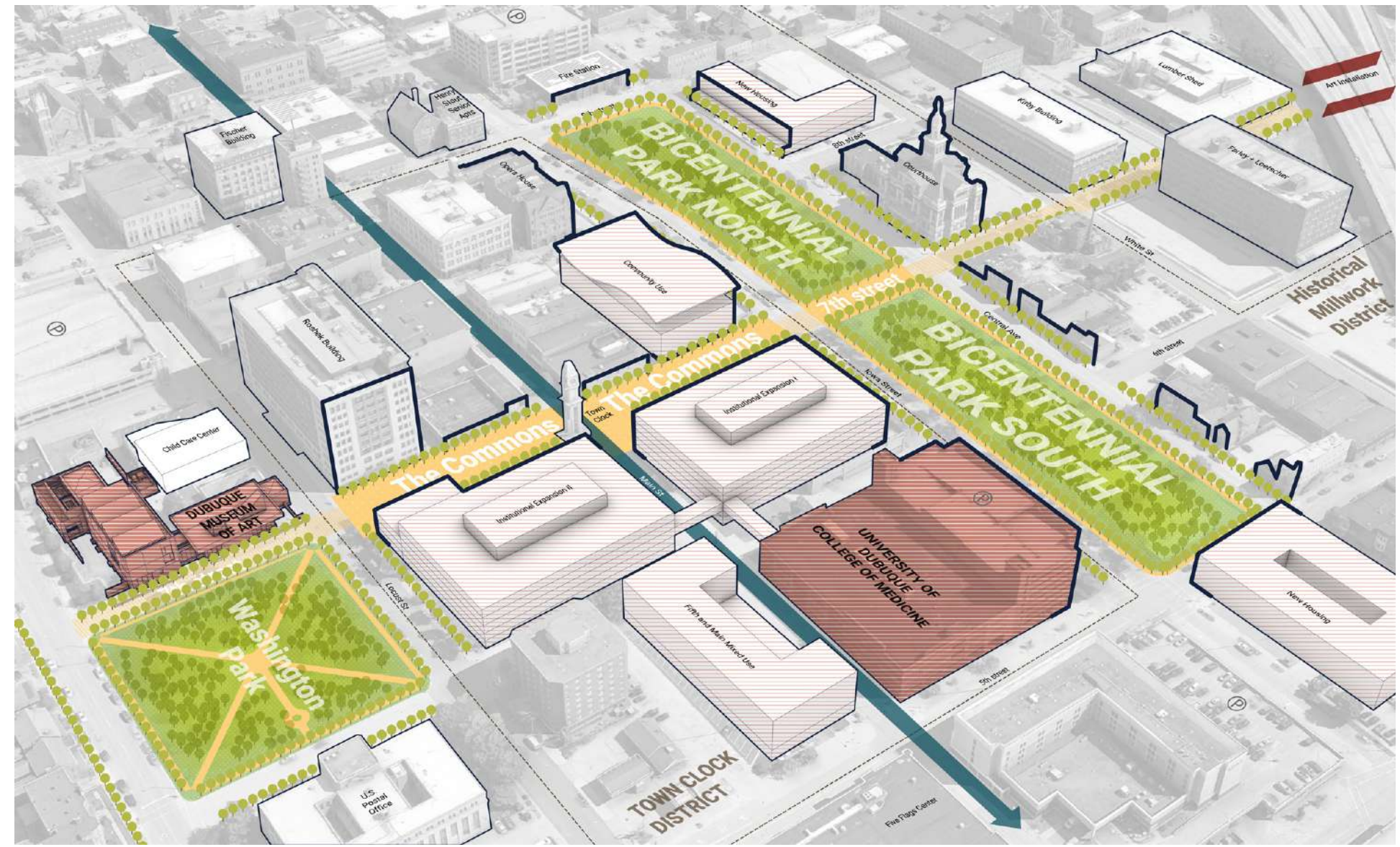


Above: Seventh Street corridor proposed view - Iowa Steet option. This aerial perspective shows a new two-acre park on the location of the Iowa Street ramp. New institutional and residential development fills in the space between the College of Medicine and the Museum of Art.



Above: Seventh Street proposed view.

ALTERNATIVE 2 - BICENTENNIAL PARK



Above: Seventh Street corridor proposed alternative view - Bicentennial Park option. This alternative shows a larger five-acre park on the location of the Dubuque Law Enforcement Center and the adjacent blocks to the south that include the McDonald's drive-thru.



03 Mixed Use

VISION: INCREASE HOUSING SUPPLY FOR ALL

STRATEGY:

3.1 ANCHOR THE MILLWORK DISTRICT

3.2 INCREASE “MISSING MIDDLE” INFILL HOUSING

MIXED USE: INCREASE HOUSING SUPPLY FOR ALL

The most vibrant places in a city are areas where there are different things to do for all kinds of people at all times of the day. Generations ago, cities branded Central Business Districts (CBDs), downtown districts with a high concentration of commercial activity (but not much else). While CBDs demonstrated the advantages of density and proximity, they were not compelling destinations to visit or live. Mixing uses is good for urbanism. Central Business Districts should be rebranded as Central Social Districts.

Traditional zoning differentiates areas by land use – residential, recreational, institutional, etc. But while uses change, building forms endure. What were once older places of manufacturing work well for many different things today. Dubuque’s Millwork District is a good example. The renovated buildings have offices, restaurants, shops and apartments inside the shells of former manufacturing. The separation of industry from non-industrial uses is less critical than in the past because the nature of industry itself is changing.

Downtown Dubuque has a number of successfully branded districts. The Port of Dubuque, the Historic District or Town Clock District are just a few of them. While these descriptions provide coherence and assist with wayfinding, they are also bounded. Their delineation excludes adjacent areas that lack a name. It is in these non-branded zones where infill mixed use development is possible.

This Development Strategy recommends focusing investment in the areas between the existing districts. More than a third of Dubuque’s downtown doesn’t have a brand because either too much historic fabric has been lost, there is a prevalence of parking that erodes it’s character, or both. The areas that aren’t branded thwart connectivity and undermine downtown’s overall allure. The underserved areas between existing districts and along the one-way streets, like Central and White, need the most attention.



Above: Dubuque Districts Map and the in-between spaces.

Above: Infill Housing precedent.

The Downtown Strategy recommends both adaptive reuse and new infill construction to increase the housing supply for all.

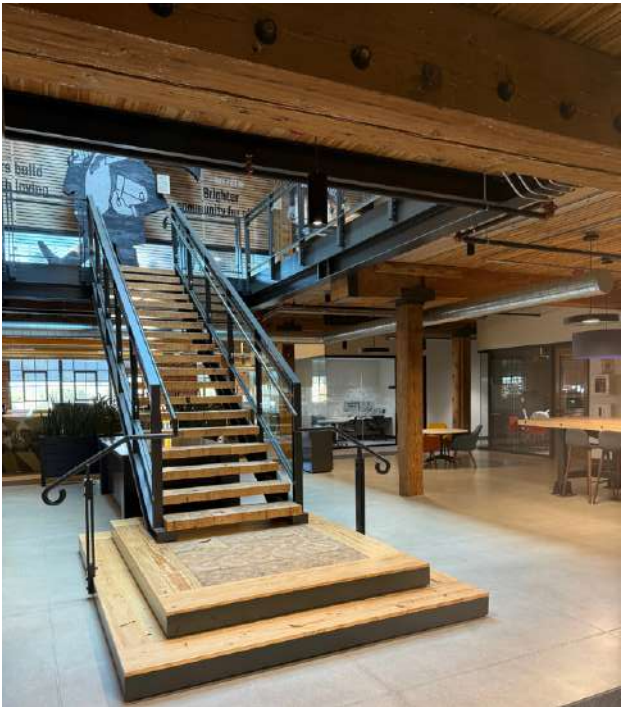
What happens to areas of downtown that lack a compelling identity but are bounded by others that do? Answer - they languish. These interstitial zones are well-positioned for new development. Increasing the downtown population will support existing businesses and bring in new ones, expand the need for parks and open spaces and fill vacant ground floor commercial space. As articulated in the Envision 2030 effort, increasing the number of downtown residents is a primary goal. More people bring more amenities.

A 2024 Market Study identified a demand for 1,200 units of market-rate rental housing over the next five years (Demand Assessment for Market Rate Rental Housing in Downtown Dubuque, Viewpoint Consulting Group, 2024). Absorption will be spread across the Primary Market Area (PMA), but a portion is likely to be downtown and specifically in the Millwork District. This study was completed prior to the announcement of the College of Medicine, so one can assume the need for housing is even greater than 1,200 units.

Increased residential demand downtown was also clearly stated in the recent Economic and Community Impact Report for the College of Medicine by Tripp Umbach. “From an economic

development perspective, the medical school will serve as a catalyst for sustained downtown revitalization and regional economic growth. The planned location in downtown Dubuque will generate consistent demand for housing, retail, dining, and services driven by a growing population of medical and health professions students, faculty and visiting clinicians” (page 30, Tripp Umbach, April 2026).

Reusing what is already there is often the most sustainable development approach. The first strategy for housing echoes the Millwork District Master Plan update by recommending the adaptive reuse of vacant former industrial buildings. While the last fifteen years has added more than 200 residential units and occupied 400,000sf of commercial development in their historic shells, there is much left to do. While the “sheer size and age of these buildings make redevelopment complicated and expensive”, their repositioning will build on the successful public/private partnerships that enabled implementation of the first phase (page 3, Historic Millwork District Master Plan Update, 2024). The second housing strategy recognizes that there are many surface parking lots downtown that would work well for infill mixed use development.



Above: Successfully renovated Millwork District Buildings.

In order for downtowns to thrive as places of 24/7 activity, a residential component is essential. In communities the size of Dubuque, this need does not comprise a vast number of units, but it needs to be large enough for a “neighborhood” residential community to form a critical mass. While some people - especially young professionals - often like to be considered urban pioneers, this entrepreneurial spirit needs to be buttressed by a confidence that over time a residential community will take hold.

Downtown residential communities often feature a mix of demographic characteristics and unit types. A diversity of income, race, gender and creative interests or occupations is generally more desirable than the more homogenous enclaves typically found elsewhere in town or the region. A downtown with a high degree of one sector will diminish the ability to attract others.

New construction is important, but rehabilitating the existing housing stock is just as vital for growing the residential population. Therefore, adaptive reuse of the existing housing stock should be prioritized. This can be done in tandem with targeting large, formerly industrial buildings for adaptive reuse and developing new residential infill on surface parking lots. Downtown has a considerable number of empty buildings and upper floor vacancies in historic buildings.



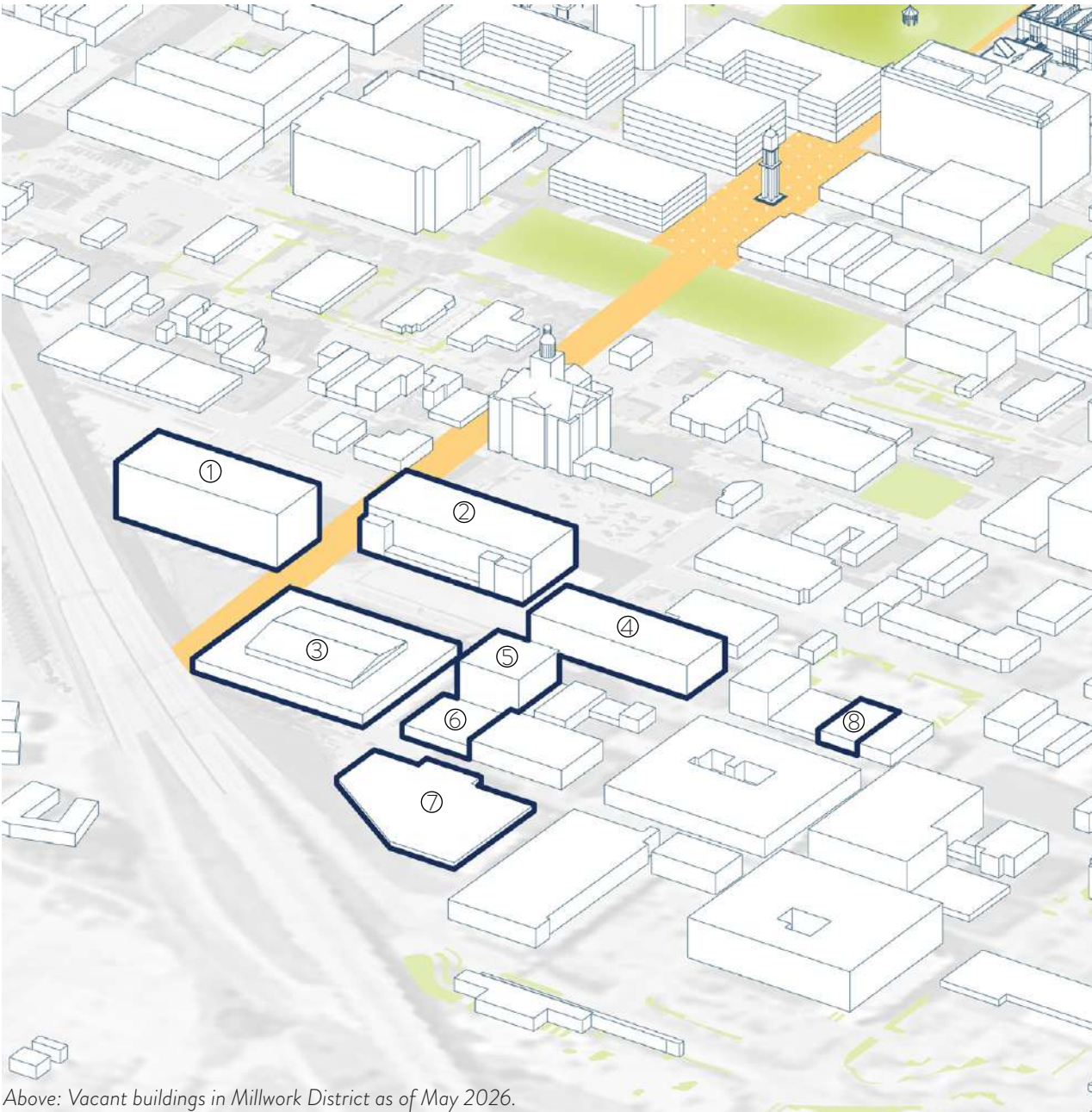
Above: Infill housing along Central Avenue.

STRATEGY 3.1
ANCHOR THE MILLWORK DISTRICT

The adaptive reuse of the remaining vacant buildings of the Millwork District represents an essential component of a stronger downtown economy. The reuse of historic assets, like the Farley Loetscher, Kirby or Wilmac buildings, will add needed residential inventory as well as some commercial space. Conversion of the Farley Loetscher Building alone would create approximately 120 units (Demand Assessment for Market Rate Rental Housing in Downtown Dubuque, Viewpoint Consulting Group, 2024).

Completing the remaining blocks will require creative financing and the same strong public-private partnerships that enabled the first phase of the Millwork District to come to fruition. Other historic buildings like the Lumber Shed, Klauer, Radiator, Kiln and Power House are not easily adapted for residential, but their shells offer unique opportunities for other uses that enliven the core.

The southern end of the Millwork District will be more enticing for redevelopment with streetscape enhancements to the Seventh Street corridor, and the removal of the Iowa Street Ramp. New sidewalks, crosswalks and street tree planting will enhance the appeal of walking. As stated in the previous section, removing the Iowa Street ramp, provides a direct connection to the Town Clock, Washington Park and DUMA from the South End of the Millwork District.



Above: Vacant buildings in Millwork District as of May 2026.



Above: Farley + Loetscher Building (Bldg. 1)



Above: Wilmac Building (Bldg. 4)



Above: Klauer Building (Bldg. 7)



Above: Kirby Building (Bldg. 2)



Above: Radiation Building (Bldg. 5)



Above: Power House (Bldg. 8)



Above: Lumber Shed (Bldg. 3)



Above: Kiln Building (Bldg. 6)

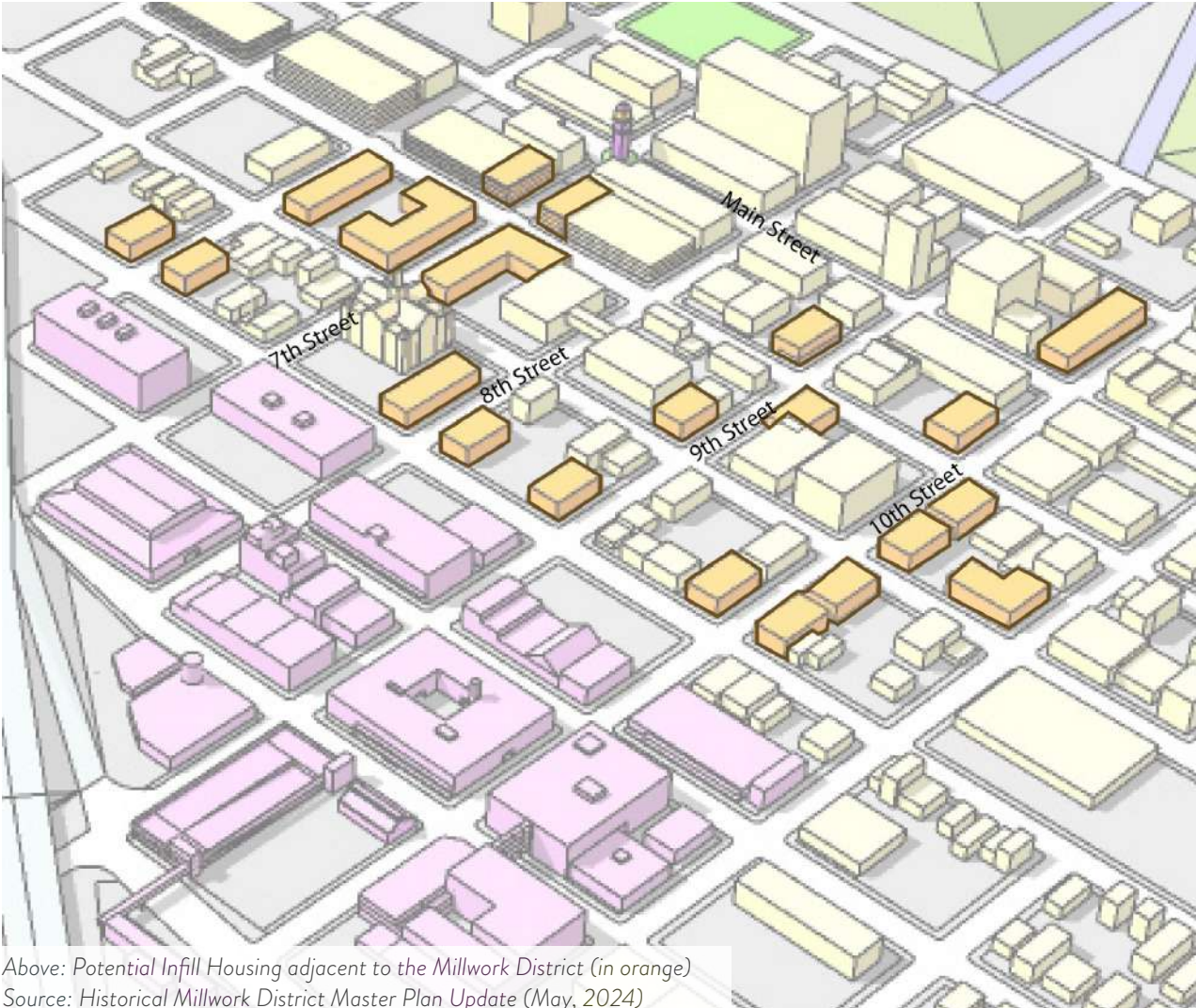
Completing the remaining blocks of the Millwork District will require creative financing and the same strong public-private partnerships that enabled the first phase to come to fruition.

STRATEGY 3.2
INCREASE “MISSING MIDDLE” INFILL HOUSING

Dubuque Forward is a convener. It brings people together around shared passions to build a better place. If Dubuque is to be “the most inspired city of its size,” then the downtown needs more housing and more housing of *all* types. Affordable, workforce, market rate and upper-income housing is needed. Renovating the existing housing stock is essential, as well as the adaptive reuse of former industrial buildings and new infill construction. **While Dubuque Forward itself does not develop housing, it plays a role in bringing together people who do.**

The best laid plans build off and advance previous efforts. The 2017 *Imagine Dubuque Comprehensive Plan* provides a solid foundation for livable neighborhoods and a focus on housing, recognizing that “expanding opportunities for workers to live close to their jobs”, “continuing to improve access to quality, affordable housing” and “enhancing the existing housing stock” are key community recommendations (Comprehensive Plan, pages 0-3).

As referenced in the 2023 *Historic Millwork District Master Plan Update* (Bolton&Menk), there are many opportunities for infill housing around the Millwork District. Development on these (mostly vacant) lots offers opportunities to build a smaller scale of infill housing. When compared to the adaptive reuse of the large former industrial buildings, these sites will be more attractive for development geared towards



Above: Potential Infill Housing adjacent to the Millwork District (in orange)
Source: *Historic Millwork District Master Plan Update* (May, 2024)

a different demographic, thereby diversifying the market. When coordinated with public realm improvements to the streets that front them, the redevelopment impacts will be extended.

NEXT STEPS
3.1 ANCHOR THE MILLWORK DISTRICT

- a. Fischer Co. coordination - reposition Kirby, Farley / Loetscher Buildings
- b. Rekindle discussions about Lumber Shed for a cultural / museum use
- c. Initiate streetscape design concepts for Seventh Street

3.2 INCREASE “MISSING MIDDLE” INFILL HOUSING

- a. Property / parcel analysis and ownership
- b. Test building typologies and density
- c. Identify potential development partners



All images: Infill housing precedents.



04 Entrepreneurial Cultivation

VISION: PROMOTE GOOD JOBS AND LOCAL BUSINESS

STRATEGY:

4.1 GROW DOWNTOWN'S INSTITUTIONAL PRESENCE

4.2 CREATE MORE "THIRD SPACES"

Above: Collaboration Center,
Midtown Cleveland OH.

The sites for the Dubuque Museum of Art and the College of Osteopathic Medicine are just two blocks from one another, yet they seem much farther away. Once construction is complete in the next few years, the two institutions will create a ripple effect of new development in the surrounding area. The College of Osteopathic Medicine anticipates ramping up to 800 students, faculty and staff when the program is in full swing by 2030. The art museum will be a true community space, blurring the boundaries between building and landscape. Next to the College of Osteopathic Medicine, Northeast Iowa Community College is making improvements to its facility and curriculum and envisions greater collaboration with the University of Dubuque. These concurrent developments and improvements point towards a bright and evolving future for the Town Clock District.

Downtown Dubuque needs a critical mass, and increased density and proximity encourage collaboration. The combined institutional presence downtown even opens up possibilities for future expansion or new interdisciplinary partnerships with other institutions. Increased dialogue not only sets the stage for these future collaborations, it also guards against short-term real estate decisions that might stymie more ambitious plans for the future. As the area around the Town Clock fosters a more robust environment for the arts, medicine,

education and living, the possibilities of new hybrid models may emerge. Added density from Gronen Development's Fifth and Main project (102 units) and the adaptive reuse on Main Steet by Hodge will add needed inventory to the area's residential base.

Thriving downtowns have a strong mix of residential, office and commercial uses. However, vibrant downtowns also contain a mix of other uses that attract and sustain activity, especially during evenings and weekends, thereby "extending" the markets that exist. Such activity generators tend to be event centers, hotels, tourist attractions, theaters/performing art centers, museums and galleries, libraries, historic resources, sports venues, farmers markets, special events (festivals, parades, car shows, etc.), specialty/unique retailers or food and drink venues. Dubuque has many of these activity generators downtown. The Five Flags Center and the Dubuque Museum of Art have served the community well for generations. The Fenelon Place Elevator is a one-of-a-kind seasonal attraction and Cable Car Square has enticing local shops.

Below: The College of Osteopathic Medicine and Northeast Iowa Community College share a territory around the Town Clock.



STRATEGY 4.1
GROW DOWNTOWN'S
INSTITUTIONAL PRESENCE

This Development Strategy anticipates future construction between the institutional anchors that leverages the adjacent activity generators. Filling in the gaps between them will require time and dialogue with the United Way and U.S. Bank, both of which were in the 1960's urban renewal district. The United Way is a remarkable non-profit that has been improving communities around the globe for over 135 years. And our economy cannot function without



banks. The question is the form that these uses take in a dense, downtown environment and the possibility that while their general location may remain unchanged, they could relocate to ground floors of newer developments.

Tripp Umbach's 2026 Economic and Community Impact Report for the University of Dubuque's College of Osteopathic Medicine states that the facility will create "opportunities for

interdisciplinary collaboration and program expansion, including potential development of additional health education and research initiatives." Indeed, these dynamics are already in play even before the college has officially opened.

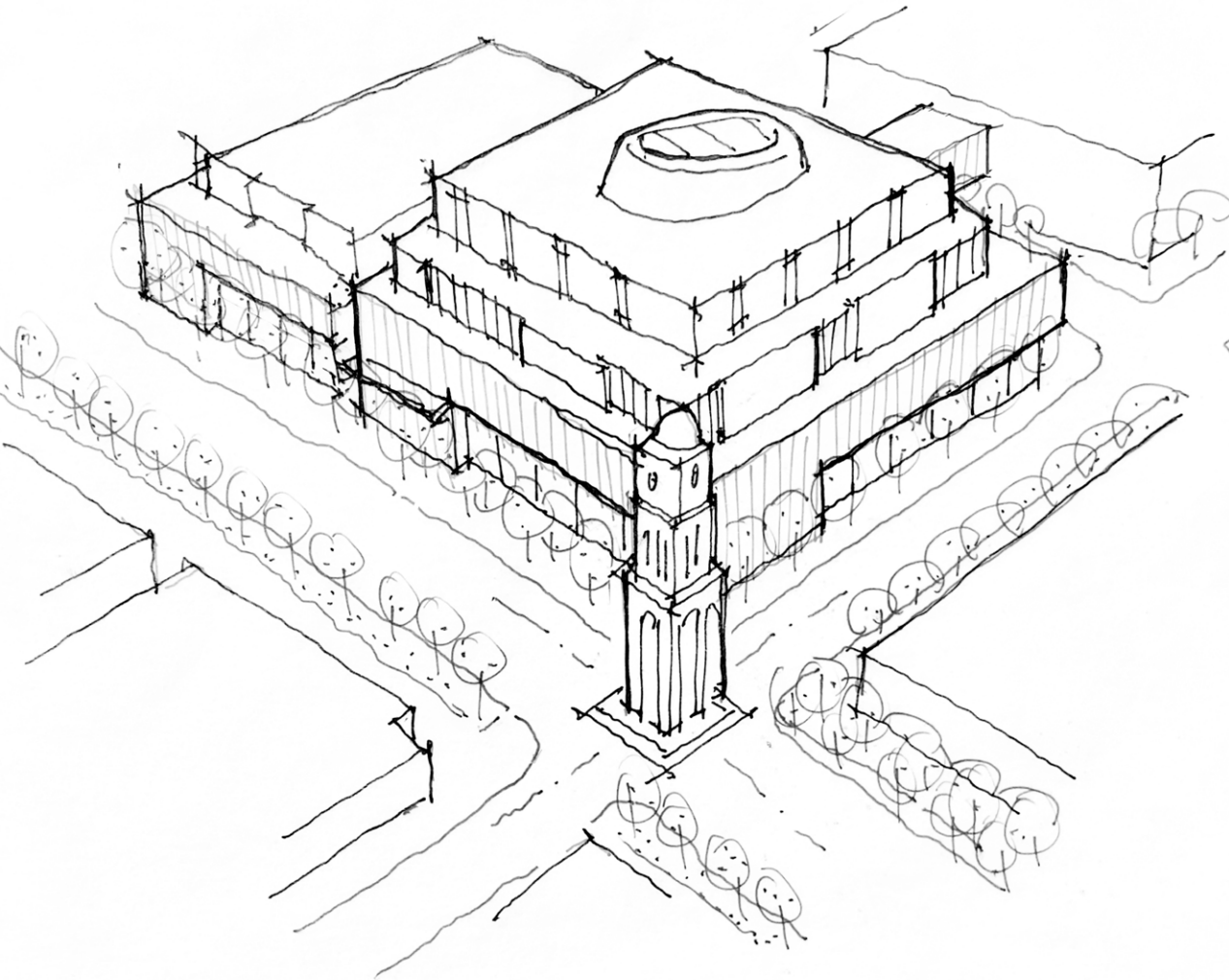
*Below: Dubuque Museum of Art
Source: Schulhof Rashidi Architects / MVVA*



In Knowledge Towns (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2023), co-authors David Staley and Dominic Endicott highlight the significance of colleges and universities as economic and innovation engines for their respective communities. They recognize that proximity to an academic culture, affordable living, access to nature and a destination's attractiveness will be key factors for many knowledge workers. Fortunately, the Dubuque region possesses all of these qualities.

With five major colleges and universities, the city has great potential to become a "talent magnet" and "knowledge enterprise". This Development Strategy envisions a pathway for downtown growth that leverages the symbiotic relationship between town and gown, strengthening partnerships with both industry and other institutions. The area best positioned for this is adjacent to the College of Medicine in the core of the Town Clock District.

This Development Strategy anticipates future construction between the institutional anchors that leverages the adjacent activity generators.

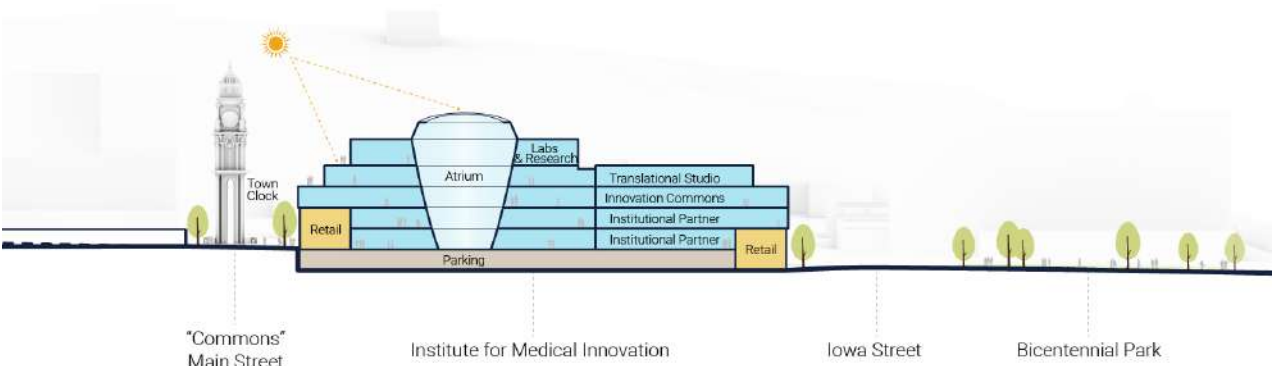


Above: Potential future Institute of Medical Innovation at Main Street and Seventh Street.

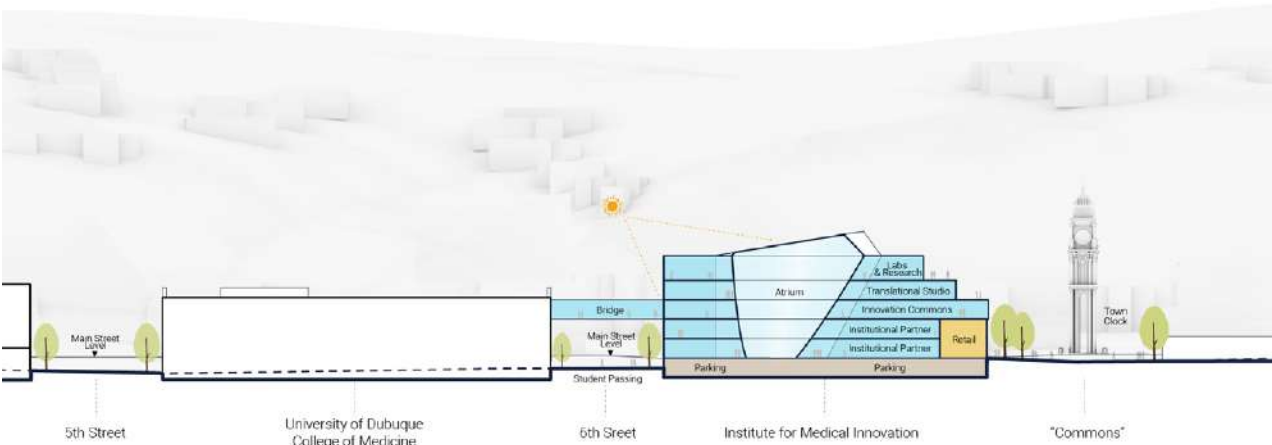
Northeast Iowa Community College, located adjacent to the University of Dubuque College of Osteopathic Medicine, views strategic partnerships as a key driver of future growth. Many of NICC’s healthcare programs dovetail nicely with the research, training and collaboration opportunities that could be created through a new innovation or laboratory facility.

One possible configuration for the growth of both institutions involves a shared facility on a portion of the property made available by the removal of the Iowa Street ramp. An “Institute for Medical Innovation” building would be a multi-story mixed-use building directly connected to the College of Osteopathic Medicine. In addition to ground level cafes, workshops and community engagement spaces, upper floors dedicated to clinical and experimental research would create a platform where students, clinicians, researchers, community partners and visiting experts could move between public convening, interdisciplinary work, computational discovery and controlled experimental research.

The existing grade change between Main Street and Iowa Street would enable one level of parking partially below the building.



Above: Institute for Medical Innovation Building vision - East-West section



Above: Institute for Medical Innovation Building vision - North-South section

NEXT STEPS

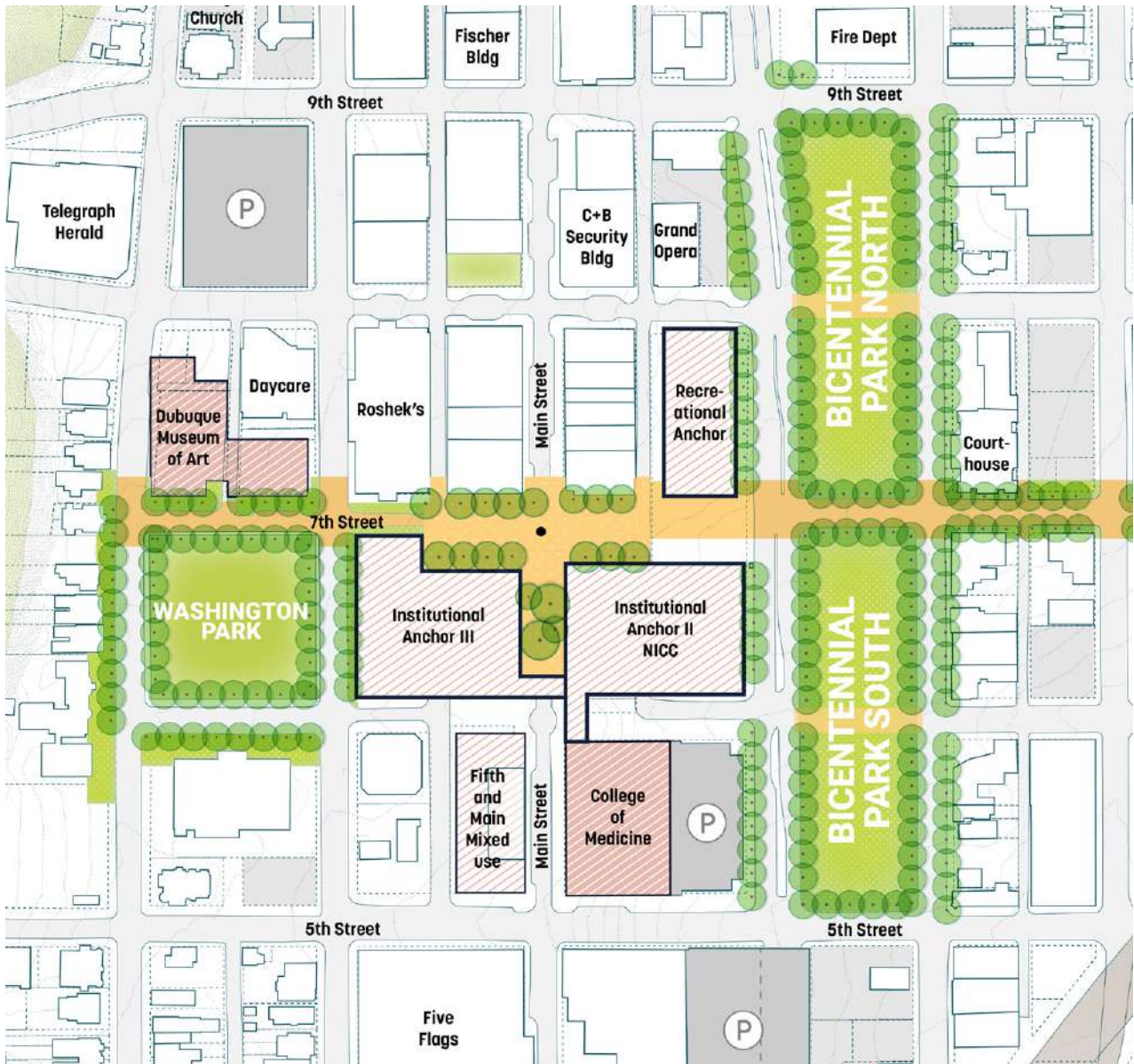
4.1 Grow Downtown’s Institutional Presence

- Convene intra-institutional visioning and long-range planning
- Assess U.S. Bank / United Way properties and ownership
- Create team around downtown amenities / “third space” concepts

Below: Existing condition.



Below: Development strategy showing future growth and open space.



STRATEGY 4.2
CREATE MORE “THIRD SPACES”

Below: River Lights Bookstore on Main Street.



The desire for a downtown experience—where shopping and accessing services are part of the overall environment, rather than just a one-stop errand—is growing stronger. Equally important is the rising popularity of “third places” for congregation, interaction, and “hanging out” as an alternative to work or home. These third spaces have become a strong trend, embraced by national retailers and local independent shops alike. While a chain operation such as Starbucks often provides this third place, more and more people desire a local operation, as a more authentic experience and expression of local culture.

Third places like River Lights Bookstore already exist on Dubuque’s Main Street downtown.

Other downtown third places include diners, cafes, barbers and beauty salons, where local residents and workers gather as a part of daily life. Building other such third places for congregation and interaction will contribute to increased activity and support community building.

Third spaces can emerge in the shells of older buildings where the use matters but the form of the space doesn’t. For example, downtown has quite a few auto-dependent businesses like older gas stations or repair shops that are ripe for reinvention.

Downtown Dubuque’s current retail inventory consists primarily of small, local entrepreneurs serving a generally localized customer base. Food and personal services businesses cater to the daytime market of workers in government and professional services centered on the courthouse or to a younger demographic in the evenings and on weekends. The Grand Opera House, Five Flags Center, and the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium have a significantly wider regional draw, which brings in much-needed business from out of town.

NEXT STEPS

4.2 Create More “Third Spaces”

- a. Survey potential buildings for candidates
- b. Perform Environmental Site Assessments (Phase I - Phase II if needed)
- c. Advance program and design concepts, form “third space” committee

Below: Existing gas station on Second Street.



Above: Gas station reuse vision as a potential third space.



05 Culture & Creativity

VISION: ENHANCE PLACEMAKING AND THE PUBLIC REALM

STRATEGY:

5.1 RECLAD FIVE FLAGS CENTER ELEVATION(S)

5.2 IMPLEMENT HIGHWAY 61 UNDERPASS LIGHTING

Above: Schüco Parkhaus
with Facid 65.

CULTURE AND CREATIVITY: RECLAD FIVE FLAGS CENTER AND UNDERPASS LIGHTING

In downtown revitalization efforts, attention focuses on the impacts of density, traffic, parking, the rising cost of living, gentrification, displacement and climate change resiliency. Yet, we miss a critical component of a city and citizen's well-being; the human connection, wonder and innovative thinking that arises from bold, contemporary art.

Dubuque's new Museum of Art will be more than just a traditional art museum. It will be a place to experience well-being and connection. The cultural venue, now under construction, reimagines what's possible for a 21st century museum and for Dubuque's downtown through an immersive, indoor-outdoor campus. The plan integrates gardens, sculptures, makerspaces, screening and performance spaces, a coffee bar and cutting-edge galleries. As an integrated building and landscape, it will connect great artists to one another and reinforce the relationships between downtown destinations.

In addition to the Dubuque Museum of Art, the city is fortunate to have other cultural/ educational institutions. Main Street's Five Flags Center, the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium, and the Grand Opera House are extraordinary destinations for a city Dubuque's size. Creating opportunities for more engaging art in the public realm around and between these cultural venues can highlight aspects of the city that make Dubuque unique.

The Downtown Strategy recommends two initiatives that enhance placemaking and the public realm. The first reimagines the Five Flags Center, from a light-touch on the exterior to more ambitious revitalization efforts of the block. The concepts are intended to initiate community conversations around future possibilities, including the possibility of retaining the 1920's historic Theater but demolishing the 1970's era Arena.

The second strategy acknowledges the barrier that the highway created between downtown and the riverfront but turns the rift into an

opportunity. Streetscape enhancements and artistic lighting below the highway celebrate the dark and lonely thresholds as contemporary canvases for cultural expression. Dynamic LED lighting is proposed at three locations where the downtown street grid passes under the highway - Fifth, Seventh and Ninth Streets.

Below: Beyond Walls:
Building Vibrancy, Lynn, MA



STRATEGY 5.1
RECLAD FIVE FLAGS CENTER ELEVATIONS

As a cultural venue, the Five Flags Center brings people to Main Street for a wide variety of events throughout the year. However, all the “action” is indoors. The facades provide little evidence of the interesting performances happening inside. Reinvestment is needed to improve the functionality of the theater and arena on the inside. The systems are outdated. However, considerations should also be given to exterior improvements that improve environmental performance and the public realm interface.

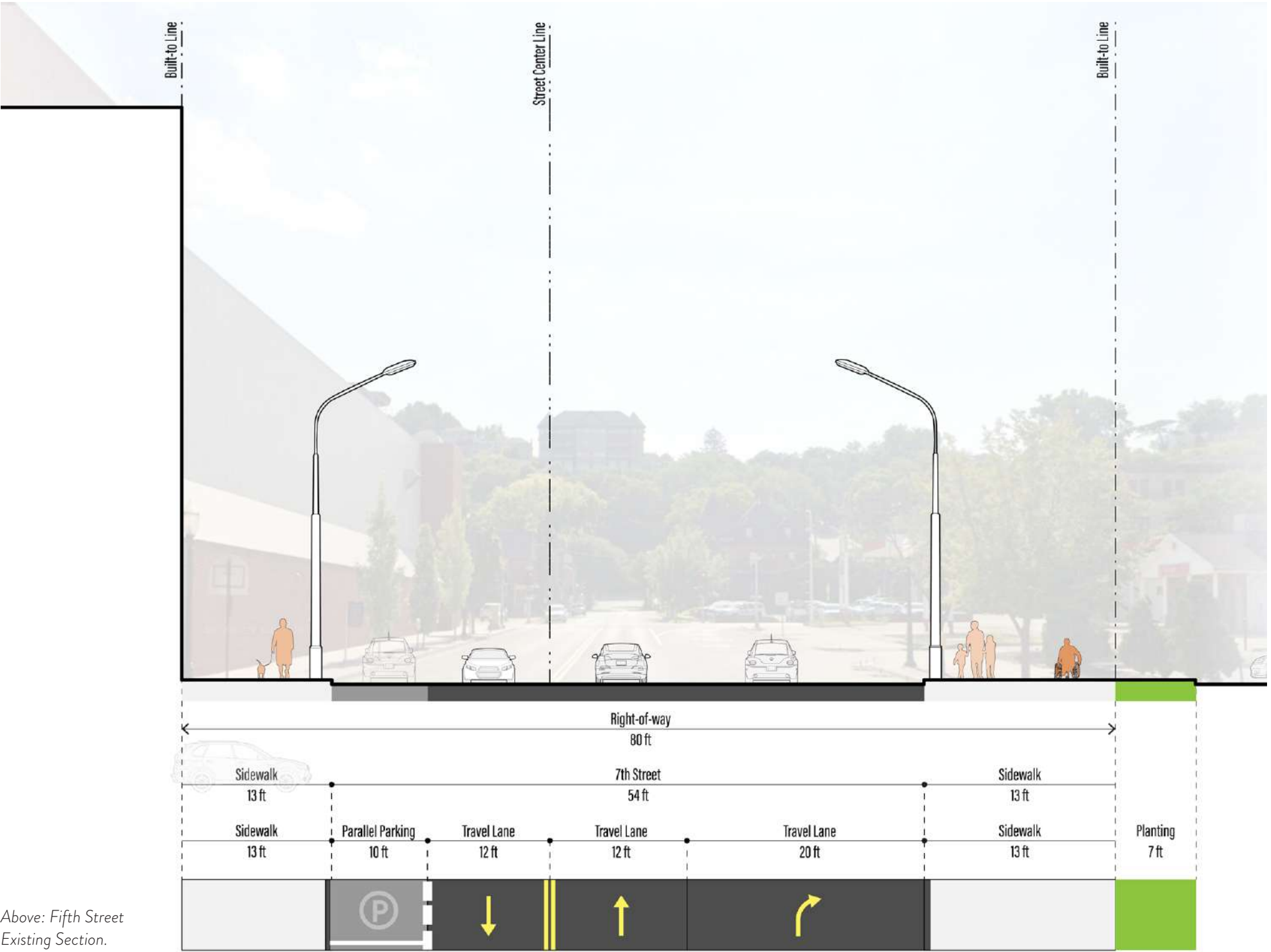
Simply put, the Five Flags Center is showing its age. The arena spans three hundred feet along Main Street, but lacks a graceful connection to the street. The Fifth Street façade is even longer and harsher. The north side of the building services the arena. There are no windows and therefore no transparency.

Recladding the building’s east and north elevations achieves a number of goals.

- 1. It provides enhanced environmental benefits by providing an energy-efficient envelope that decreases the load on mechanical systems;
- 2. It signals that the complex is once again a cherished destination and that the architecture that wraps it is worthy of celebration;
- 3. It makes a statement about the city’s values - an appreciation for history but also a passion for innovation and invention in a contemporary urban environment.

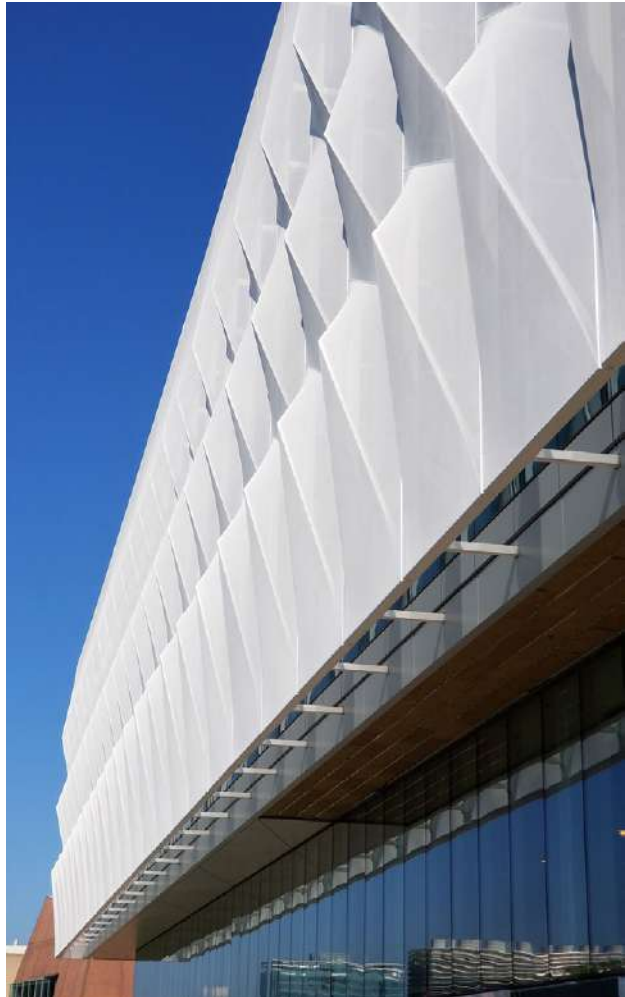


Above: Five Flags Center from Fifth Street view looking west.

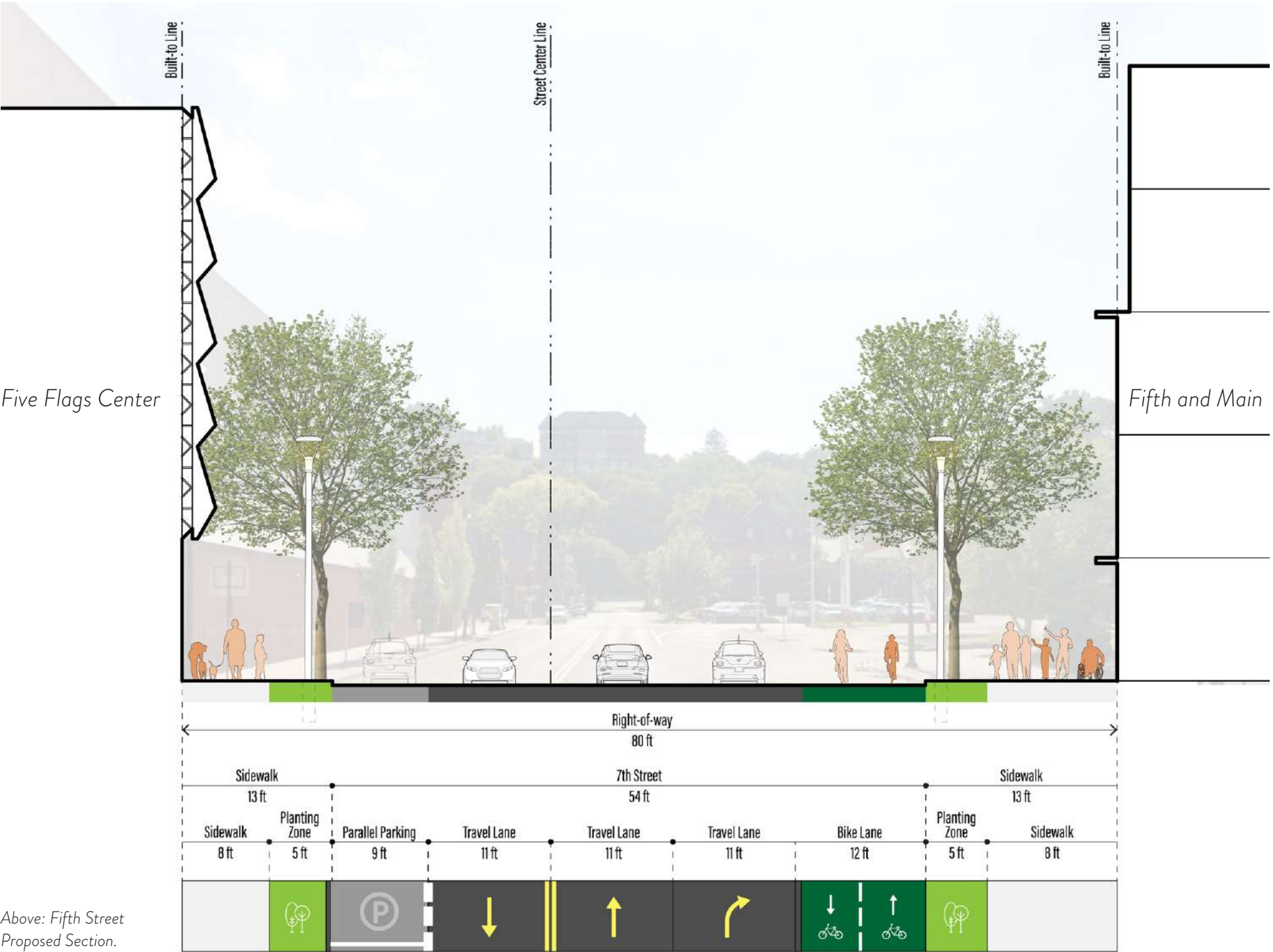


Above: Fifth Street Existing Section.

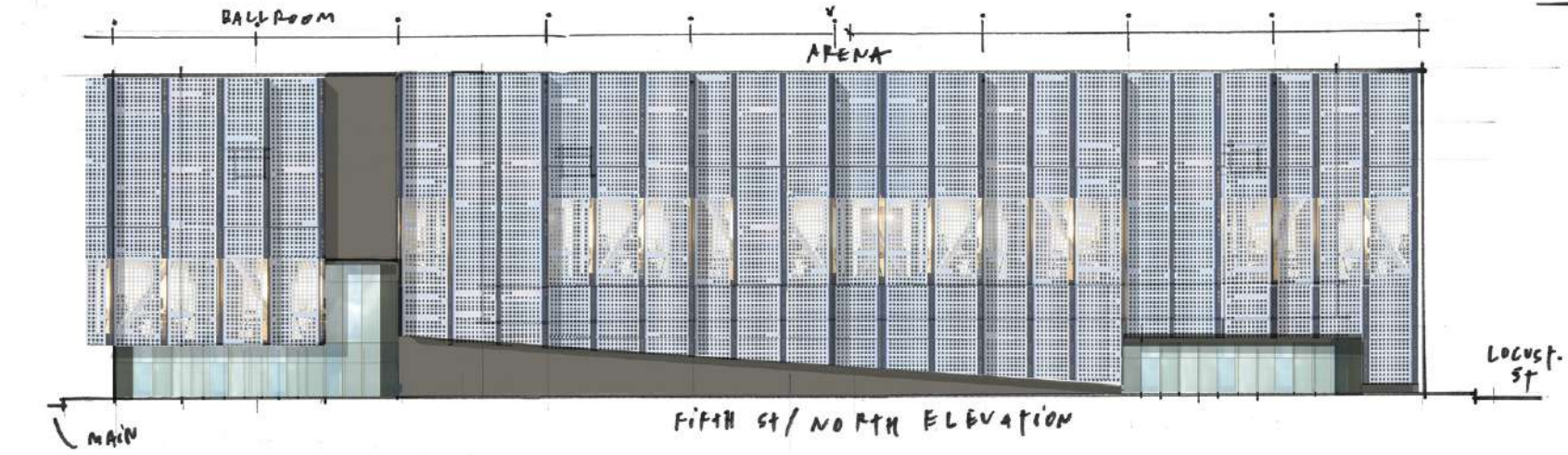
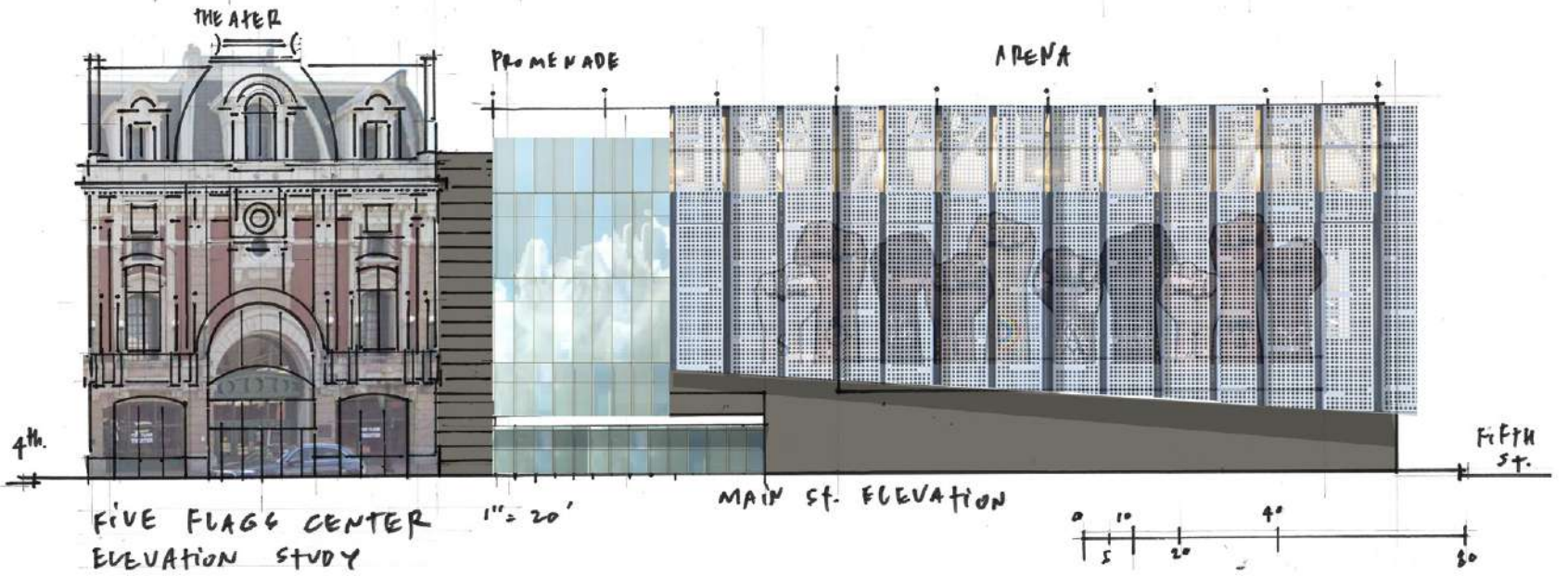
RECLAD FIVE FLAGS CENTER ELEVATIONS



All images: Schüco Parkhaus with Facid 65.



RECLAD FIVE FLAGS CENTER ELEVATIONS



Above: Concept for recladding the arena portion of the Five Flags Center.



Above: Five Flags Center recladding proposal.

FIVE FLAGS CENTER REIMAGINED

The passage of time (and decades of deferred maintenance) have rendered the Five Flags Center vulnerable. Significant financial investment is needed to replace older mechanical systems, and the arena portion is experiencing competition from contemporary venues outside of downtown. Therefore, a spectrum of redevelopment options for the Five Flags Center are shown to stimulate conversation.

The high-level concepts range from applying a new facade to the existing arena portion to a more aggressive intervention requiring selective demolition on the block. In all cases, the historic Theater remains intact. Regardless of the fate of the facility, the College of Osteopathic Medicine across the street from Five Flags will create a clustering effect on surrounding properties, increasing the appeal of adjacent sites and advancing downtown’s revitalization.

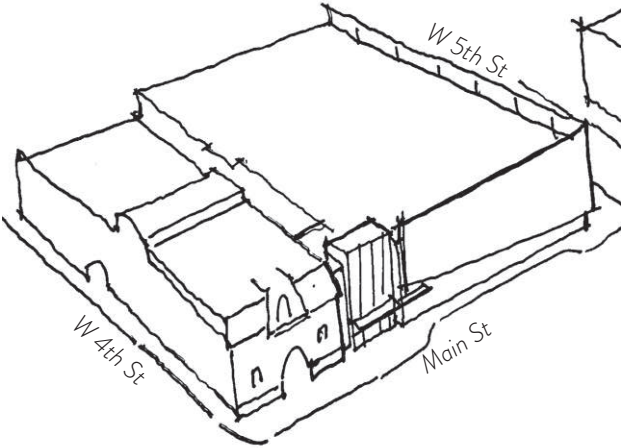
A spectrum of redevelopment options for the Five Flags Center are shown to spark conversation and debate.

Below: Simmons College Residence Hall, Boston MA



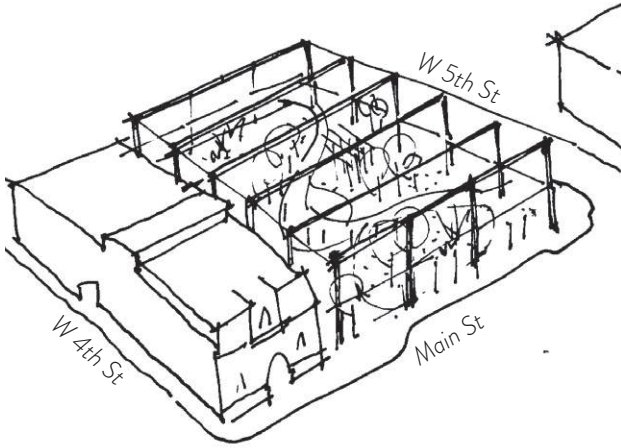
Above: Steel Yard, Providence RI

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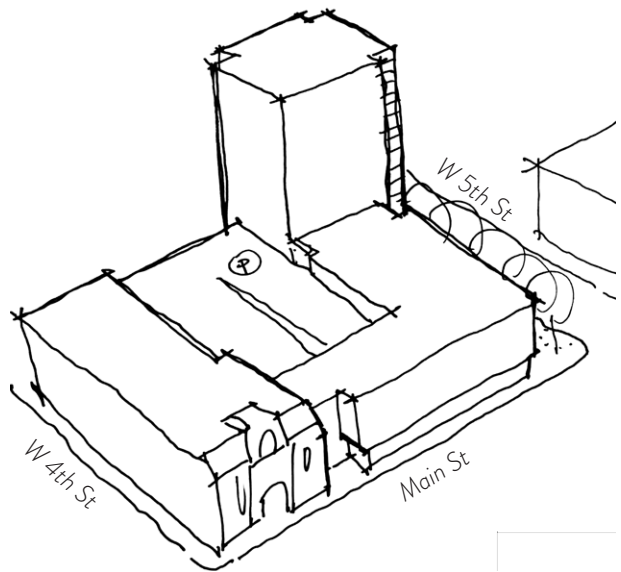
A lightweight tensile fabric mounts directly onto the existing façade and enhances the performative characteristics of the building. The new elevation transforms the monotonous Main and Fifth Street elevations into a three-dimensional, textured surface. A wide choice of fabrics, digital printing, and lighting systems creates endless design possibilities. The system is durable and easily adapts to changing architectural visions over the life of the building.

II OPEN-AIR PARK



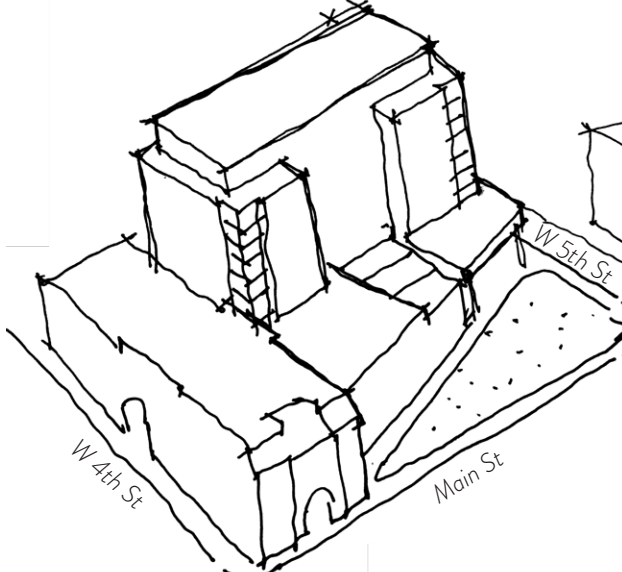
Removing the arena envelope exposes the steel skeletal structure. The space below is reimagined as an engaging outdoor public room. Keeping the steel frame structure defines a landscape for events, performances and gatherings below it. The site is reimagined as an open air park, activating the surrounding area and reengaging the historic theater in a new way as the downtown evolves.

III ARENA REDEVELOPMENT



Taking advantage of valuable Main Street real estate, higher density development replaces the arena and creates a new public entrance to the historic theater. The ground level is activated with new retail and restaurant uses compatible with the performing arts and residential uses that emerge as a result of the increased institutional presence. Additional residential units are constructed above the ground floor in a tower configuration.

IV LARGE-SCALE CHANGE



A larger scale redevelopment of the arena is setback from Main Street to form a corner “pocket park” at Fifth and Main. The triangular-shaped garden creates a forecourt to a new hotel and event venue for the hotel, theater, residents, students and faculty. Conference functions, meeting rooms, and a restaurant enliven Main Street. The addition of a hotel in this block serves as a catalyst for further downtown revitalization.

A great downtown is a place where engaging art enhances the public realm.

STRATEGY 5.2 IMPLEMENT HIGHWAY 61 UNDERPASS LIGHTING

Below: Existing condition under the Highway.



Sometimes it's not necessary to create new spaces for public arts - existing spaces can be reinvigorated. Dynamic underpass lighting recognizes that the surfaces of the highway's underside can be canvases for architectural expression. Just as downtown's mural project has transformed dozens of bland building elevations into compelling works of art, so too can these thresholds create place. Activating public spaces like the underside of Highway 61 reinforces connections and provides flexible outdoor spaces where people can safely gather.

Louisville, Kentucky has been incrementally transforming its Main Street for three decades with engaging artistic treatments. Large sculptures, whimsical streetscape furniture, unique paving and landscaping have attracted cutting-edge museums which have driven private investment and forged a critical mass of activity. Compelling art in public spaces is the ultimate manifestation of civic engagement. It allows participants to create new strategies, processes and collaborations to support and sustain downtown Dubuque.

Above: Undercurrent mural by WERC, 2017



NEXT STEPS

5.1 Reclad Five Flags Center elevation(s)

- Attain as-built drawings of Five Flags Center / building tour
- Advance concept designs for facade improvements (north / east)
- Create preliminary cost estimates / city funding integration

5.2 Implement Highway 61 underpass lighting

- Create program for LED projection lighting
- Identify and convene lighting designers to evaluate costs/barriers
- Collaborate with DOT and seek local, state and federal funding

Below: Artistic lighting and design elements below the highway foster the connectivity between downtown and the Port of Dubuque, an important area of the city that will be further studied in the Master Plan.



ACTION PLAN

STRATEGY		NEXT STEPS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME / PRIORITY
01 MOBILITY Forge community connections between districts	1.1 CONSTRUCT PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE TO RIVERFRONT	a. Convene a stakeholder / project team b. Historic Bridge Assessment and Relocation Analysis c. Schematic Design Drawings for the bridge	Dubuque Forward / Iowa DOT / City / Railroad / ECIA / GDDC / River Museum / Art Commission	Short-term / High Priority
	1.2 ADVANCE MICRO-MOBILITY / CYCLE TRACK	a. Convene bike advocacy groups to determine best network b. Layout pathways and relevant street right-of-way sections c. Identify funding opportunities / Capital Improvement Plan timing	Iowa DOT / City / Public Works / Bike advocacy organizations	Long-term
02 RECREATION SPACES & NATURAL AREAS Create a Green + Resilient Core	2.1 ESTABLISH A “CATHEDRAL GREEN”	a. Survey corridor and neighborhood meeting b. Assessment of existing conditions / infrastructure diagnostic c. Concept design / estimation of capital cost: landscape, lighting, etc.	City / Green Dubuque / Neighborhood Associations / Trees Forever / Hotel Julien / St. Raphael’s / ECIA	Short-term / High Priority
	2.2 ENVISION A CENTRAL “BICENTENNIAL PARK”	a. Probe viability of Iowa Street Ramp removal b. Advance conversations with Police Department and Sheriff c. Assemble team to program open space opportunities downtown	Dubuque Forward / Foundations / City and County / GDDC / Green Dubuque - Branching Out Initiative	Long-term / High Priority
03 MIXED USE Increase Housing Supply for All	3.1 ANCHOR THE MILLWORK DISTRICT	a. Fischer Co. coordination - reposition Kirby, Farley / Loetscher Buildings b. Rekindle discussions about Lumber Shed for a cultural / museum use c. Initiate streetscape design concepts for Seventh Street	Fischer Companies / ECIA / Gronen Construction / Foundations / City / Millwork Dist. Stakeholders	Short-term / High Priority
	3.2 INCREASE “MISSING MIDDLE” INFILL HOUSING	a. Property / parcel analysis and ownership b. Test building typologies and density c. Identify potential development partners	Private Sector / Community Foundations / Habitat for Humanity	Medium-term
04 ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTIVATION Promote Good Jobs + Local Business	4.1 GROW DOWNTOWN’S INSTITUTIONAL PRESENCE	a. Convene intra-institutional visioning and long-range planning b. Assess U.S. Bank / United Way properties and ownership c. Create team around downtown amenities / “third space” concepts	University of Dubuque / NICC / Loras College / Dubuque Forward / Chamber / GDDC / DUMA / ECIA	Short-term / High Priority
	4.2 CREATE MORE “THIRD SPACES”	a. Survey building and site b. Perform Environmental Site Assessments (Phase I - Phase II) c. Advance program and design concepts, form “third space” committee	Fischer Co. / Private Sector / Dubuque Main Street / UD / NICC / Gronen Construction / ECIA / DUMA	Short-term / High Priority
05 CULTURE & CREATIVITY Enhance Placemaking + the Public Realm	5.1 RECLAD FIVE FLAGS CENTER ELEVATION(S)	a. Attain as-built drawings of Five Flags Center / building tour b. Initiate concept design for facade improvements (north / east) c. Create preliminary cost estimates / city funding integration	Five Flags Center / City	Short-term / High Priority
	5.2 IMPLEMENT HIGHWAY 61 UNDERPASS LIGHTING	a. Create program for LED projection lighting b. Identify and convene lighting designers to evaluate costs/barriers c. Collaborate with DOT and seek local, state and federal funding	Arts and Culture Commission / Voices Studio / Museum of Art / Dubuque Forward / City / Foundations	Short-term / High Priority

The Action Plan requires the coordinated effort of many entities, but outcomes will be far more effective through this shared approach.

SUMMARY

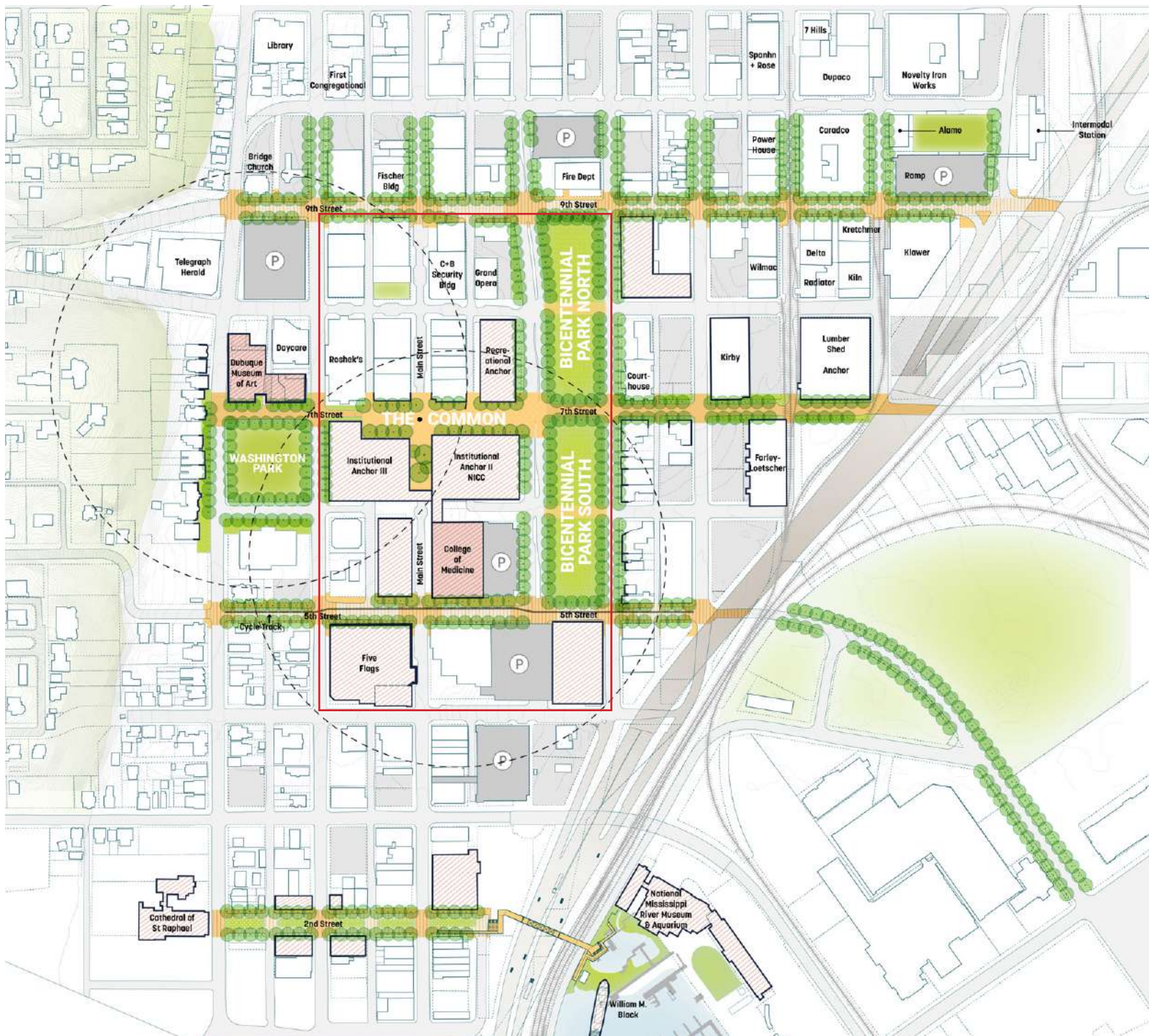
This Action Plan for the Development Strategy focuses on east-west connections that will unite existing districts and stimulate economic development around the University of Dubuque’s new School of Osteopathic Medicine, the Dubuque Museum of Art and throughout downtown. The actions are organized according to four corridors: Second Street, Fifth Street, Seventh Street, Ninth Street.

These four east-west corridors in the downtown core were selected because of the community-based assets that lie along them, their potential to spark adjacent catalytic impacts and their capacity to extend across or below existing infrastructural barriers. **Emphasis on east-west linkages does not undermine north-south corridors but rather enhances them, leading to greater economic impact in the downtown.**

The actions are broken down into specific steps with assigned responsibilities and/or lead agency or partner. They also estimate likely time frames and level of priority. All in all, the Action Plan requires the coordinated effort of many entities, but outcomes will be far more effective through this shared approach.

The time frame reflects the relative importance of the effort but also ease of implementation. Some projects may not be implemented for years, but because they are a high priority, they should begin immediately.

The time frames are:
Short term: one to two years (high priority – begin critical path actions right away)
Medium-term: two to five years (high priority – begin critical path actions right away)
Long-term: five to ten years (high priority – begin critical actions right away)



Back Cover: View of Cathedral Promenade from the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium.

Left: Plan view of four green corridors with 1960s Urban Renewal area outlined in red.

APPENDIX

This Development Strategy resulted from a highly collaborative and iterative process involving citizens, officials, civic leaders, and downtown businesses - all concerned with the health and vitality of downtown Dubuque.

In addition to those listed here, hundreds of people provided input and guidance through public meetings, focus groups, and individual discussions. Some of these were formal meetings and presentations seeking input, but many were informal discussions over coffee, lunch, or while sitting in a downtown business. We are grateful for the time and effort provided, and we salute the “stakeholders” of Dubuque for their passion, optimism, and investment in downtown.



Above: Base map brainstorming.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Anna Their Interior Design
Bard Materials
Bicycle World
Branching Out / Trees Forever
Brazen Restaurant
Capra Bank
Cathedral of St. Raphael
Center for Dubuque History
City of Dubuque
Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque
Conlon Construction
Cottingham & Butler
Crocus Foundation
Dimensional Brewing Company
Driftless Consulting
Dubuque Chamber
Dubuque County Board of Supervisors
Dubuque Forward
Dubuque Main Street
Dubuque Museum of Art
Dubuque Property Group
Dupaco
Edwards Creative
Equity Real Estate
Geisler Brothers Company
Gigantic
Greater Dubuque Development Corporation
Gronen
Heritage Works
Hodge

John Deere
L . May Restaurant
MidWest One Financial
Miller Companies
Mindful Bites
Northeast Iowa Community College
Origin Design
Portzen Construction
Property Solutions
Rauen Capital
Refinery Design Co.
Restoration & Renovation Services
Steele Capital Management
Stickley Morton Architects
Tertium Development
The Fischer Companies
Travel Dubuque
Tri-State Mountain Bike Riders
TRICOR Insurance
UMB Bank
University of Dubuque
Voices
Volv Fitness
Woodward Communications
7 Hills Brewery

