



**COUNCIL
BLUFFS**

South Main
Cultural District

JANUARY 2015

LMN Architecture
Urban Design
Interiors

ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study was commissioned by the Pottawattamie County Development Corporation to explore the feasibility of creating a distinct and cohesive cultural district in the corridor flanking South Main Street.

SPONSORS

Iowa West Foundation
Pottawattamie County Development Corporation
City of Council Bluffs

PROJECT TEAM



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 / EXECUTIVE SUMMARY /	4
2 / INTRODUCTION /	12
3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /	30
4 / ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONTEXT /	74
5 / PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS /	88
6 / CONCEPTUAL PLAN /	96
7 / IMPLEMENTATING THE CONCEPT /	106



1 / EXECUTIVE / SUMMARY /



1 / EXECUTIVE SUMMARY /

Early in 2014, the PCDC contracted with LMN Architects to prepare a plan for the South Main Cultural District in Council Bluffs. This followed a selection process in which finalist submittals to conduct the work were received, evaluated, and interviewed.

LMN Architects headed a team of firms, including Webb Management Services, specialists in arts programming based in New York City, for an assessment of demand and feasibility. The team also included Walker Macy landscape architects based in Portland, Oregon for advice on the “cultural trail” concept. And it included Studio Cascade, Inc. for community involvement.

In late September of 2014, representatives from LMN and Webb interviewed several dozen stakeholders over a two day period. The list of stakeholders and the interview times were put together by PCDC staff. The interviews provided a broad perspective by many different people and organizations. This allowed the team to quickly gain an understanding of the resources, issues, and potentials inherent in a cultural district. As a result of this work and considerable research into demographics, Webb Management produced a Needs Assessment. That report has been incorporated into this plan.

In mid-November, the team conducted a series of workshops that were open to the public over several days. These were held in the community room of the Harvester live/work artspace building. Individuals were able to come in during the day and share their ideas. In two of the evenings, people could engage in more organized events in which specific questions were posed and discussed. By the end of this process, the team presented a number of preliminary ideas that have since been refined into concepts for the district. The concepts are described and depicted in this plan.

The team has recommended twenty specific actions that can contribute to carrying out the concepts over time. These include ten actions that involve capital investment and ten actions that involve organizational changes. The actions are also followed by a discussion of implementation methods and a suggested schedule over a then year period of time.

Carrying out these actions will require a concerted degree of collaboration and coordination over time between a number of different organizations in the community, including the City of Council Bluffs, the Iowa West Foundation, PCDC, and the Chamber of Commerce, as well as property owners, merchants, businesses and various arts organizations. But just as other cities and towns have created vibrant cultural districts, the planning team is confident that a unique one can evolve in Council Bluffs. Both the city and the regional will benefit from its presence.



CONTEXT MAP

- 1 / 100 Block
- 2 / Omni Center
- 3 / Council Bluffs Public Library
- 4 / Union Pacific Museum
- 5 / Squirrel Cage Jail
- 6 / Fairmount Park Lookout
- 7 / ConAgra
- 8 / South Expressway Street
- 9 / Rails West Railroad Museum

CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

1 / RELOCATION OF UP MUSEUM

Continue to pursue the relocation of the Union Pacific Museum to Harvester II, with expansion or addition as necessary to display its collection.

2 / COMMUNITY ARTS CENTER IN CARNEGIE BUILDING

Renovate the Carnegie Library to accommodate a range of arts organizations, along with small spaces for visual and performing arts.

3 / RESTORE SQUIRREL CAGE

Restore the Squirrel Cage Museum so that it can become a true center of interpreting that part of American history.

4 / INTERPRETIVE PLAZA

The space between the Carnegie and the Squirrel Cage should be developed into an interpretive plaza, with outdoor displays and interpretive signs, as well as space for events.

5 / LINK RAILS WEST WITH NEW UNION PACIFIC MUSEUM

Connect the rolling stock of Rails West with the UP Museum Harvester II so that visitors may be able to see actual full-scale restorations of railroad engines and cars.

6 / ENHANCE STREETScape

Improve the streetscape along the South Main Corridor with a visual connection between the 100 Block of Broadway, the Bayliss Park Area, and the area south of 9th Avenue. Screen parking lots and vacant parcels and expand wayfinding signs.

7 / NEW “FESTIVAL STREET”

Create a “festival street” on 10th between South Main Street and South 6th Street. The street would be designed to allow easy conversion to outdoor activities and events, as well as displays of art.

8 / CATALYST SITES

Identify strategic parcels for infill development around Bayliss Park, so that it is activated.

9 / STREET ANALYSIS

Re-examine traffic circulation on South Main and Pearl, as well as access from Broadway. One way couplets typically invite pass-through traffic rather than destination-oriented traffic.

10 / ACTIVATE GROUND LEVEL OF BUILDINGS

Find ways to enhance ground level uses all along South Main.

ORGANIZATIONAL ENHANCEMENTS

1 / NEW OVER-ARCHING ORGANIZATION

Create an umbrella organization, with a director and support staff that can promote and coordinate the wide range of arts organizations in Council Bluffs.

2 / INVOLVE CONAGRA

Work with ConAgra to ensure that its expansion is compatible with the directions for the South Main Cultural District. This should include creating an active edge along the street perhaps consisting of an interpretive center related to food.

3 / COMMUNITY OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Enhance community outreach with an emphasis on arts education. This should embrace a wide variety of artistic programs, especially those aimed at children.

4 / STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF HARVESTER I.

Ensure that active artists are producing and displaying their work. Invite new temporary or permanent artists to work and reside there.

5 / STREAMLINE REGULATIONS

Reduce regulations, permit procedures and fees that frustrate organizations wanting to host and operate outdoor cultural events, as well as sell products outside.

6 / ADD PERFORMANCE VENUES

Examine options for providing one or more venues for performances and music. These should include Harvester II, the Carnegie building, conversion of older buildings, exterior spaces, and new construction.

7 / STRATEGIC USE OF PROPERTY

Acquire, assemble and dispose of properties within the South Main District, through the PCDC, in a strategic manner. The intent should be to create a “creative quarter” – with many different kinds of uses and destinations.

8 / INCENTIVES FOR MIXED USE

Develop programs, incentives and projects to encourage incremental inclusion of residential and office uses on the upper floors of buildings, with prime storefront locations reserved for retail uses.

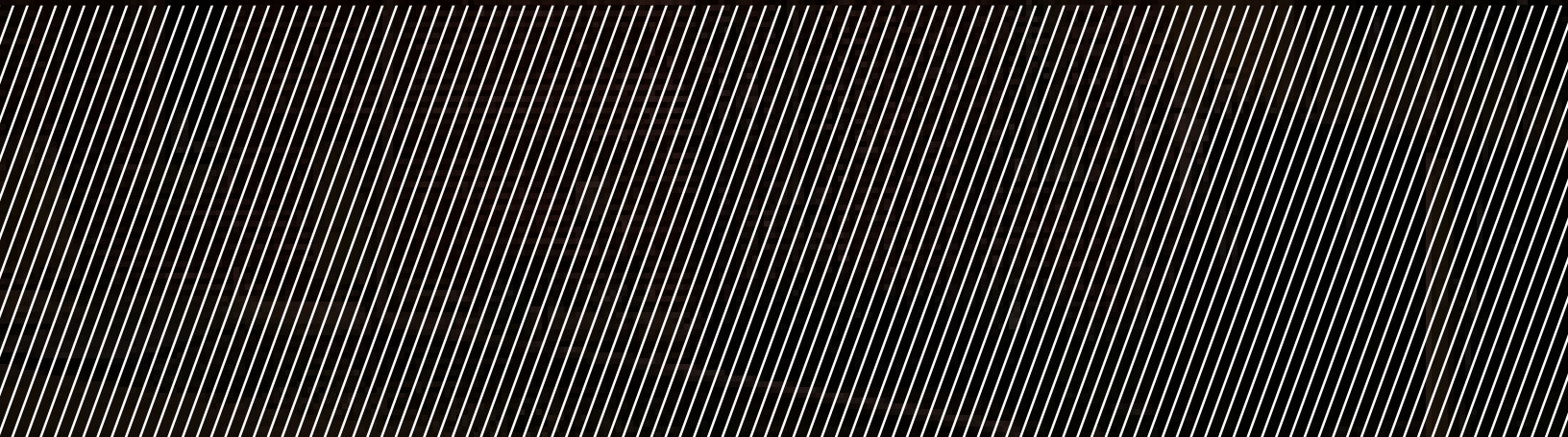
9 / COLLABORATE WITH OMAHA ARTS COMMUNITY

Develop a collaborative strategy with the arts community in Omaha to cross-market artistic activities on both sides of the river.

10 / MARKETING & PROMOTION

Develop a series of programs to coordinate, promote and market businesses and individuals that make and provide art.

2 / INTRODUCTION /



GOAL

Create a distinctive district in Council Bluffs that is known regionally and nationally for its wide array of places, programs, and people in the arts.

OBJECTIVES

- 1 / The district should evolve over time, adding choices and layers that increase its richness.
- 2 / Both public and private sector parties should promote and nurture the district.
- 3 / The district should be a place where people choose to create, display, perform, and live.
- 4 / The district should grow out of the inherent local attributes of history, culture, people, and place.
- 5 / People in the community and the metropolitan area should see the district as a place that they can enjoy frequently.

For a number of years, Council Bluffs has been struggling with how to strengthen and broaden its offering of artistic and cultural resources, both with respect to regional artists and local audiences. The result has been mixed. Some venues and organizations are well-established and have thriving programs. Others have suffered from a lack of a solid funding base and have had difficulty sustaining themselves over time with solid balance sheets. While there have been some notable achievements, such as the conversion of the Harvest building into live/work space for artists and the splendid Union Pacific Museum, other aspects of the cultural setting have been floundering.

Part of the reason for the struggling district may be due to there being many different and independent efforts. While well-intended, too many separate entities can cut into the funding base and create a sense that there is a lack of focus. There are also undoubtedly some institutional barriers that frustrate organizations from pursuing their missions. Very likely a lack of a consistent and continuing financial base prevents needed capital investments and a stable operating income.

At the same time, there are forces at work in the community and the region that promise a better future for arts and culture in Council Bluffs. A number of venues and organizations in Omaha have not only stabilized but expanded and attracted more people to participate; Council Bluffs can potentially benefit from an enhanced regional setting. People always look for fresh opportunities and places to experiment. Even lower rents can attract people who are looking to start up their careers or businesses. Moreover, in recent years, Council Bluffs has seen an influx of new people who bring not only their enthusiasm and past expertise but capital that results in investment in buildings and businesses. Finally, there has been a recognition of the value of making strategic

investments in key locations that draw other parties to the table.

This is the historic heart of Council Bluffs. It not only includes a wide array of destinations, civic structures, and heritage sites but it also contains multiple museums, a growing concentration of artists, and has begun to attract new businesses that reflect a unique, hand-crafted quality that many people are now actively seeking.

The district is blessed with having great bones. Numerous structures from the 1800's still exist, with many having been partially or completely restored.

There are open spaces containing unique public art. Indeed, the American Planning Association recently conferred the designation of a "Great Place" on Bayliss Park and featured it on the cover of its monthly magazine. To have a major national professional journal commend the efforts to create a unique place in Council Bluffs is affirming of the actions and initiatives of the community as well as the local government.

This report looks at a number of dimensions of the Council Bluffs in general and the South Main District in specific. We examine the

2 / INTRODUCTION /

physical setting to determine both constraints and potentials. We look at how the district does or can connect with other areas of the community. We look at the organizational history and capacity of various groups. And we identify demand within the city and the region for additional cultural venues.

We conducted a series of workshops and open houses in November 2014. We report on what we learned from that participation by people of different backgrounds and ages. We provide a conceptual plan for a district and subdistricts within it. Catalysts sites will be identified with possible uses. The overall notion of a cultural trail is also presented.

Finally, we lay out a series of recommended actions, along with an approach to implementation over time.

We hope that this plan will equip multiple parties with concepts and directions that are both aspirational and practical. The following goal and objectives were developed to lay the groundwork for the plan.

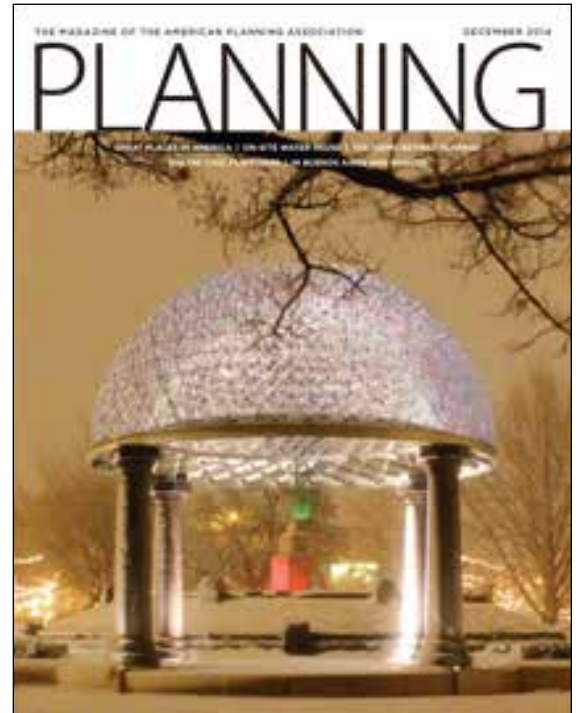


IMAGE Cover from December 2014 APA Planning Magazine



IMAGES Storefront Studio Workshop



IMAGE Storefront Studio Workshop

ROLES OF PARTNERS

Three entities came together to sponsor this plan. Each has a distinctly different role in the community and each brings to it a set of resources that can help carry it out.

POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (PCDC)

The Pottawattamie County Development Corporation is the official contracting agency. But its role goes well beyond managing the contract. It is empowered to acquire properties, assemble them, and find development partners who can build physical projects. Indeed, it has already established an impressive track record. It was instrumental in the expansion of local industry, retaining the business and its employment base. The PCDC has been involved in building renovations on the 100 block of Broadway and is currently completing a mixed use development there. And it owned the Harvester I building and worked with the non-profit artspace to convert it to live/work space for artists. It will be acquiring additional properties in the area of the Harvester. The PCDC is in a sense, the real estate development member of the three parties.

CITY OF COUNCIL BLUFFS

The City of Council Bluffs has multiple roles germane to an initiative to create a cultural district on South Main. It operates and maintains the streets and its signals, lighting and traffic channelization. It owns and operates parks, like Bayliss Park, and makes sure they are safe and clean. It regulates businesses, land uses, signs, building construction, and temporary permits for events. It determines the priorities and funding of capital improvements to streets, parks, utilities and publicly-owned buildings. It also guides long range planning for the city, determining the general pattern of development over time. The Parks Department also engages in some programming and events, however,

this is usually a role not well suited to local government to play.

IOWA WEST FOUNDATION

The Iowa West Foundation is a source of funding for certain purposes. It channels taxes collected from casinos to projects that benefit the good of the community. In a sense it is a non-profit funding source for many projects and programs that otherwise might require going to outside grant sources. Using its funding capacity, it can help stimulate certain improvements in the physical environment but it can also assist in making organizations make more efficient and effective uses of their resources. It is a powerful source of local control and financing so that the community can enjoy amenities and qualities that might not otherwise be available. In the case of the South Main Cultural District, it is willing to participate in helping fund both physical changes and organizational changes.

Established in 1994, the Iowa West Foundation is one of the largest non-profits in the Midwest. Funded by the Iowa West Racing Association, as well as through investment income, the Foundation is Council Bluffs' primary granting agency, awarding funds that support programs, operations, and capital improvements (facilities and equipment grants) to local non-profits. Iowa West's mission is "to improve lives and strengthen communities for today, and for future generations". In pursuit of this, the Foundation recently identified four areas of focus for the next three to five years: Place-making, Economic Development, Education, and Healthy Families. This project is of particular interest to Iowa West, as its results will have some impact on how it engages with each of those foci.

EXISTING STUDIES

CITY & RELATED STUDIES

In 2013, the Iowa West Foundation commissioned the firm ArtsMarket to conduct a broad assessment of the cultural facilities and organizations in Council Bluffs and to suggest some courses of action to strengthen the community. It also offered examples of similar efforts in other cities and towns elsewhere in the country.

In general, this previous study identified the need for a substantial infusion of funds to provide stability to the collection of museums, venues and organizations associated with arts, culture and history.

One arena of activity alluded to above is that of programming public spaces. This includes on-going aspects, such as food and security, as well as annual events that involve permits and street closures. Currently this is done by a variety of groups, along with the City. Some groups are well-organized, others less so. Usually, however, the most effective programming for a district or a place is done by a single entity with the staff and time to devote to all the tasks involved in events and activities. This ensures coordination and a smoother process, as there are protocols and procedures developed together with the City that can be repeatedly used. It is difficult for volunteers to do major programming, as they often are not aware of all of the steps and approvals involved.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Over the last decade, there have been multiple studies on arts and culture in Council Bluffs. These have included:

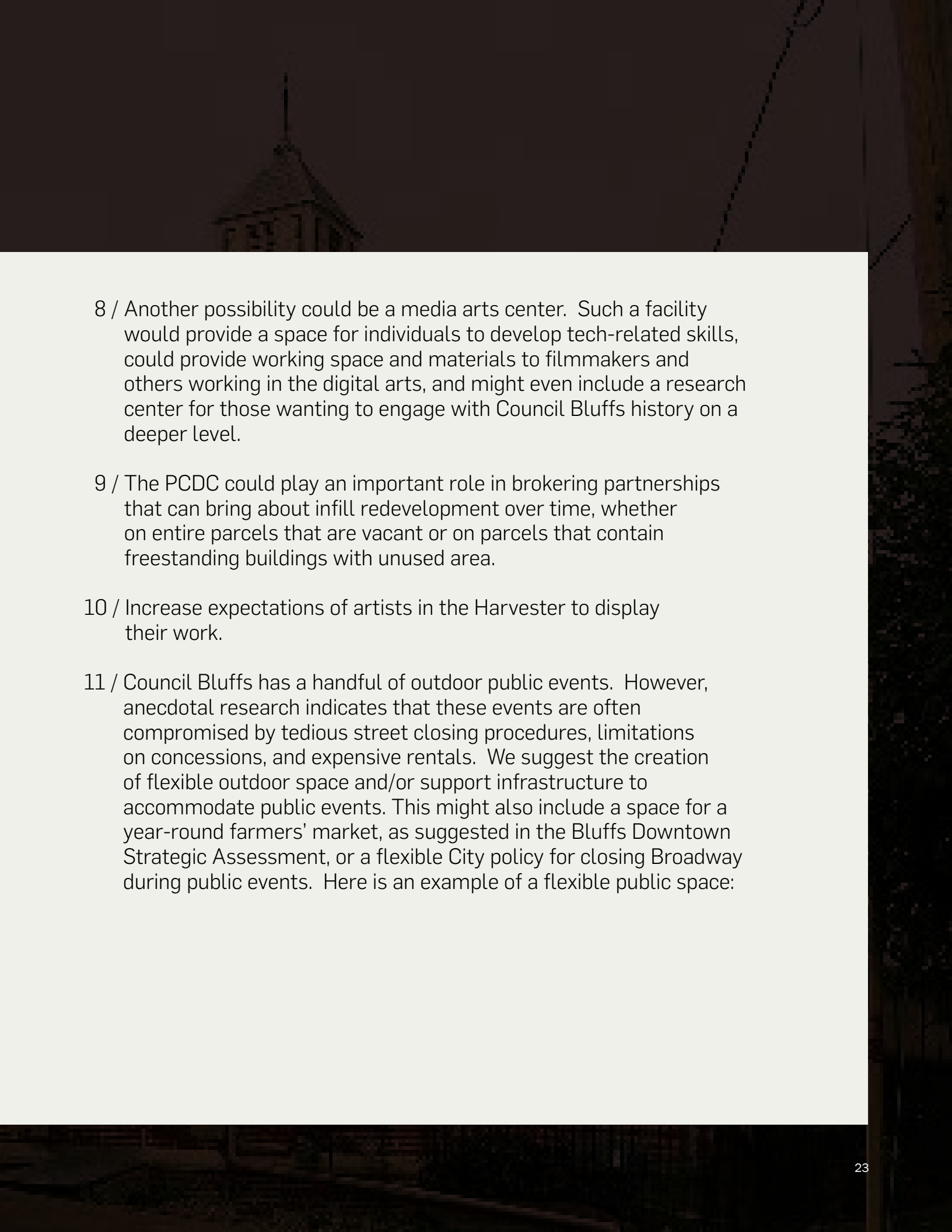
Public Art Master Plan for Council Bluffs (2004): A plan funded by the Iowa West Foundation that proposed the placement of public artworks in 51 locations across the City, leading to the creation of the Iowa West Public Art Initiative. In 2005, the Public Art Master Plan was formally adopted by the Council Bluffs City Council. As the plan was initiated and artworks were installed, it became apparent that the Council Bluffs community felt very strongly about the works that were selected and where they were placed. In response, the Mayor developed a committee responsible for creating a public art commission. The resulting report, titled “Establishment of a Public Art Commission: A Report to the Mayor and City Council” (2001), recommended the role, objectives, membership, and various other elements of a Council Bluffs Public Art Commission. The Public Art Commission became an official city board in 2012.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 / Museums and cultural venues are increasingly important to the public, especially households with children.
- 2 / Visitors seek out authentic places to visit and learn about history and artistic endeavors.
- 3 / Cultural tourists are very aware of available venues and seek out quality.
- 4 / With the city and the county, arts and cultural organizations are weak and lack strong organizational structure.
- 5 / The State of Iowa offers a variety of funding programs for cultural purposes, but they rarely see anything from Council Bluffs.
- 6 / The community undervalues what it has available in its multiple museums. But part of the problem is that there is neither unified story nor a cohesive, coordinating body to avoid overlap and present a compelling set of venues.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 / Consolidate all the museums under one umbrella organization that can manage facility needs, marketing and funding. Each would still have a degree of autonomy to present its offerings, but would have the benefit of shared resources and organizational skills.
- 2 / Relocate the Union Pacific Museum to the Harvester II building. This would allow more of the collection to be displayed and permit expansion as exhibits increase. With relocation and more complete interpretive center, the number visitors should increase significantly.
- 3 / Find ways to strengthen several local arts groups that have less substantial resources. Encourage them to expand educational programs aimed at children.
- 4 / Once the UP Museum is relocated, re-purpose the Carnegie Library as a community cultural center. This would become a shared home for a several community arts organizations it should also include spaces for galleries and performances.
- 5 / Add to the staff capacity of the City's Parks department to manage outdoor events in public spaces.
- 6 / Attract new artist-entrepreneurs and non-profit arts groups from other parts of the region.
- 7 / One possibility for a new cultural space in Council Bluffs might be a large flex space suitable for live music, performances, and other events. Through anecdotal research, we heard of a need for high quality meeting and event spaces. A flex facility could accommodate both.

- 
- 8 / Another possibility could be a media arts center. Such a facility would provide a space for individuals to develop tech-related skills, could provide working space and materials to filmmakers and others working in the digital arts, and might even include a research center for those wanting to engage with Council Bluffs history on a deeper level.
- 9 / The PCDC could play an important role in brokering partnerships that can bring about infill redevelopment over time, whether on entire parcels that are vacant or on parcels that contain freestanding buildings with unused area.
- 10 / Increase expectations of artists in the Harvester to display their work.
- 11 / Council Bluffs has a handful of outdoor public events. However, anecdotal research indicates that these events are often compromised by tedious street closing procedures, limitations on concessions, and expensive rentals. We suggest the creation of flexible outdoor space and/or support infrastructure to accommodate public events. This might also include a space for a year-round farmers' market, as suggested in the Bluffs Downtown Strategic Assessment, or a flexible City policy for closing Broadway during public events. Here is an example of a flexible public space:

KEY ISSUES

In order for this project to succeed, a number of key issues will need to be addressed.

- 1 / The City will need to establish policies and permitting that facilitate public events.
- 2 / Incentives must be developed to encourage the right kinds of development in this corridor, such as liquor license incentives and tax or other incentives that might attract creative industries and retail outlets to locate there.
- 3 / Significant street and physical connections will be required to encourage foot traffic, promote travel between the corridors (through initiatives like Heartland B-Cycle), and create public gathering places in and around the comprehensive district. The Haymarket Square area, in particular, should include a branch or trail that connects it to the Historic General Dodge House.
- 4 / The district will also require physical infrastructure (electric, water, storage, loading, parking) in order to facilitate additional community events.

- 5 / Most of these possibilities will require public and private partnerships to establish facility projects and programs. It will be particularly important to recruit a cross-section of partners for these projects, including Union Pacific, ConAgra Foods, the library, the Historical Association, local businesses, artists and arts organizations, and beyond.
- 6 / As it stands, Council Bluffs currently has a handful of small, financially unstable arts and culture organizations. It is imperative that a leadership organization be formed to provide guidance, professional development, and organizational and financial support to all of Council Bluffs' cultural entities. Such an organization might initiate an Arts Stabilization Project like in New Haven, Connecticut. As part of this program, eight organizations were selected to receive financial and technical assistance over a four-year period. Their management practices and needs were closely examined by a board, which then gave each organization operational advice. The results included improved financial record keeping and planning, increased endowments, established working capital reserves, and improved total working capital.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

CITY POLICIES, PROGRAMS, AND RELATED STUDIES

The City's comprehensive plan, called Bluffs Tomorrow 2030, sets forth a long term vision for the community. The plan covers many subjects from land use to recreation. The plan speaks to a general vision for downtown that has implications for the cultural district. It calls for a downtown that has a mixture of uses, including substantial amounts of housing in both mid-rise and high-rise forms. It suggests conversions of older industrial buildings into lofts and it indicates a need for market rate housing to serve younger professionals as well as seniors. It also calls for services and uses to support a downtown residential population. And it recognizes the need to retain the historic character that provides downtown Council Bluffs with a unique quality. A blending of older buildings and new buildings, if done sensitively, can result in a richly layered downtown setting that can appeal to a wide range of people.

With regard to the South Main District, the 2030 plan identifies a number of interesting opportunities. It recognizes the benefit of consolidating rail service to the main line at the far south end so that the spur south of 10th Ave, crossing and paralleling South Main Street can be abandoned. It indicates that this will open up a number of parcels for redevelopment, including both commercial and housing, along South Main and highlights them. It calls for a gateway feature at 9th and South Main. It notes the desire of ConAgra to expand and suggests the need for a treatment along South Main to address that expansion. Finally it suggests the need for a major green space somewhere in the south end of the district.

The plan also suggests several dramatic, longer-range ideas. One is for the north portion of the 192 Expressway to be lowered to grade and transformed into a boulevard. Another is for Main Street to be realigned to curve through the area and connect with 6th Street after tracks are removed. Finally it suggests that the current far south end of the existing Main Street be converted to a high speed rail terminus. It remains to be seen how and when these significant changes would occur. But any uncertainty associated with them should not prevent shorter term improvements and enhancements that can create a cultural district along South Main.

A Cultural District in the South Main area can help create attractions and destinations for people who choose to live there. Having a population residing in downtown can provide an underpinning for retail uses, restaurants, cafes, galleries and entertainment venues. As is already occurring in other Iowa cities, many people are beginning to look for places to live where many different choices are available.

In recent years, the City has been aggressively pursuing the development of a network of trails that connect various parts of the community and the region. With the opening of River's Edge Park and the Bob Kerry Pedestrian Bridge, there has been a keen interest in linking downtown Omaha to downtown Council Bluffs. The Mid-City trail is viewed as a capital investment that can add great amenity to the community. The City has identified Second Avenue as the alignment for a major east-west trail that can connect the park on the river and the pedestrian bridge with downtown Council Bluffs leading all the way to Bayliss Park, one of the major nodes within the South Main Cultural District.



IMAGE Map of Subarea from Comprehensive Plan

2 / INTRODUCTION /



IMAGE Council Bluffs Signage

Nonetheless, this grand vision for a regional urban trail system dovetails well with the notion of a cultural trail for the South Main area. The cultural trail component of the overall system would specifically tie together and interpret the museum venues and future spaces for the arts in many forms. A cultural trail can be an element of downtown that can draw both visitors and new residents.

The downtown is flanked by a number of neighborhoods as well as park spaces associated with the bluffs. A trail network that includes a cultural component could help solidify and strengthen the surrounding areas. The unique topographic and geologic aspects presented by the bluffs could also warrant interpretations and draw together many threads of the region's history.

Finally, the West Broadway Corridor is being studied for short term and long term changes that could make it a stronger entry into the city. Already marked by the new artfully-designed bridge on the east end, the bulk of the street seems chaotic and discordant with



IMAGE Carnegie Building & Squirrel Cage

scattered land uses, parking lots, older strip malls and signs. While not directly related to the South Main Cultural District, there is an important relationship. As many cities have discovered, it is not enough to just improve the downtown area - however historic it may be. The main corridors that people travel to reach the downtown are equally important with respect to how people perceive the community.



IMAGE Bayliss Park

RECENT INVESTMENT

PHYSICAL AMENITIES OF DISTRICT

In many ways, many ingredients of a cultural district are in place and awaiting actions that will tie them together and create a clear, collective ambiance. The 100 block of Broadway has had considerable new investment with respect to building renovations, new construction, new retail tenants, and street enhancements. While there is always room for even more improvement in any place, this area seems to be well on its way to becoming a solid destination, with a positive image both in the community and the larger region.

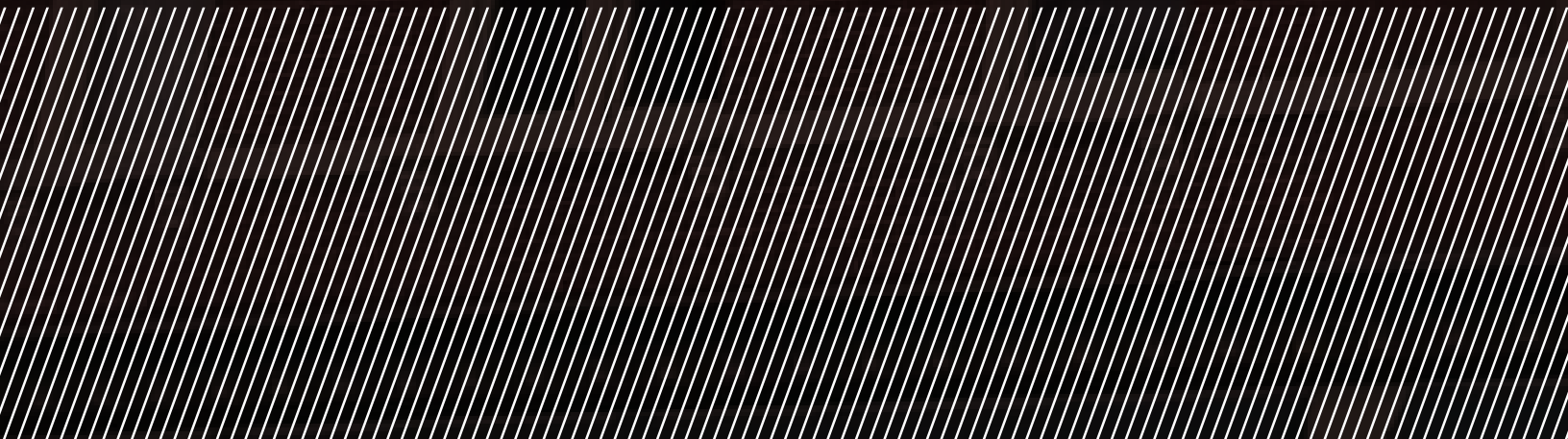
The area around Bayliss Park has also seen significant investment. The park itself is a gem of landscape design and art. It is heartening to have the park recognized as a “Great Place” by the American Planning Association. Located around the park are several solid institutional anchors. City Hall continues to occupy a prominent location. The library, with its distinctive building is alive with children and adults who avail themselves of its collection and activities. The Union Pacific Museum is a first class museum and even if it moves, the dignified Carnegie building can continue to have a useful life as a home for arts organizations. Numerous buildings along South Main have been renovated and Haymarket Square is a small, but significant public square. The Squirrel Cage museum could use some help in strengthening its facility and telling its story, but from the outside it presents itself as a unique architectural object in American history that could benefit from a better connection to the street.

The Harvester lofts is complete, occupied and ground level spaces are active. Nevertheless it may not be providing the full impact as originally intended and it can benefit from policies and programs to make it more of an active, varied center for artistic expression. Progress is already being made to revitalize the Harvester II potentially for the Union Pacific Museum and gathering space. The presence of senior housing has begun to alter the perception of the area from being industrial and suggest that it is suitable as a location to live. With more of a critical mass of venues and destinations at the far south end, coupled with the removal of the rail spur, it can be expected that there will be more interest by the private sector in this area. This is also an opportunity to invite ConAgra to be an active participant in reinvesting in the area and finding ways, both interpretive and artful, to tell its own story of food production.



IMAGE Harvester Lofts

3 / NEEDS / ASSESSMENT /





3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

For a number of years, Council Bluffs has been struggling with how to strengthen and broaden its offering of artistic and cultural resources, both with respect to regional artists and local audiences. The result has been mixed. Some venues and organizations are well-established and have thriving programs. Others have suffered from lack of a solid funding base and have had difficult sustaining themselves over time with solid balance sheets. While there have been some notable achievements, such as the conversion of the Harvest building into live/space for artists and the on-going and splendid Union Pacific Museum, other aspects of the cultural setting have been floundering.

Our findings and recommendations are based on an extensive set of interviews in Council Bluffs and four-day community workshop, along with facility tours, the collection of other relevant local information, and additional research on forces, trends, and models relevant to this assignment. We would take the opportunity to thank all of the people who have participated in the study to date. A list of those interviewed in a separate Appendix.

1. STUDY CONTEXT

Located on the western edge of Iowa just seven miles east of Omaha, Council Bluffs was once a leading rail center, serving seven railroads and functioning as the mail-handling terminal for the American West. Railroading, however, began to change in the mid-20th Century. With that, Council Bluffs saw a loss of jobs, economic stagnation, and a decline in population. In the period since, various community entities have worked to develop a

plan for the arts in Council Bluffs. While the City has seen some success with these efforts—particularly in regards to public art—the area known as the South Main District remains isolated and undeveloped. Additionally, many of the City’s arts groups are struggling to survive. The challenge, then, is to develop a plan that maximizes the potential use of the South Main District while supporting Council Bluffs’ pre-existing cultural assets.

Over the last decade, there have been multiple studies on arts and culture in Council Bluffs. These have included:

PUBLIC ART MASTER PLAN FOR COUNCIL BLUFFS 2004

A plan funded by the Iowa West Foundation that proposed the placement of public artworks in 51 locations across the City, leading to the creation of the Iowa West Public Art Initiative. In 2005, the Public Art Master Plan was formally adopted by the Council Bluffs City Council. As the plan was initiated and artworks were installed, it became apparent that the Council Bluffs community felt very strongly about the works that were selected and where they were

placed. In response, the Mayor developed a committee responsible for creating a public art commission. The resulting report, titled “Establishment of a Public Art Commission: A Report to the Mayor and City Council” (2001), recommended the role, objectives, membership, and various other elements of a Council Bluffs Public Art Commission. The Public Art Commission became an official city board in 2012.

SUSTAINING STRUCTURES FOR ARTS AND CULTURE 2013

In 2013, the Iowa West Foundation retained ArtsMarket to review Council Bluffs’ arts and culture organizations, outlining recommendations for strengthening and stabilizing them. The resulting report found that the arts and culture sector in Council Bluffs is in danger of disintegration and, as such, unable to grow. Two key critical issues were identified: First, that, like historical and heritage-focused organizations throughout the United States, Council Bluffs’ historical organizations are struggling due to a lack of interest in American history. Second, that Council Bluffs has extremely limited arts resources and offers limited year-round programming.

Given these issues, the report recommended the following:

- Consolidate current Council Bluffs museum operations into a single governance and management body;
- Develop the Harvester II building into a museum, potentially in partnership with the Union Pacific Railroad Museum (UP Museum);
- Encourage Bluff Arts Council and Chanticleer Theatre to relocate to, and program from, the Western Trails Center in effort to stabilize and strengthen both

organizations;

- Should the UP Museum move facilities, develop the Carnegie Library into a community cultural center;
- Balance the Public Arts Commission with an Arts and Civic Planning Commission that would be responsible for summer and outdoor programming;
- Encourage the Chamber of Commerce and its Community Economic Betterment Account Program to develop incentives to attract artists-entrepreneurs and non-profit arts groups to Council Bluffs;
- Turn the Harvester Artist Lofts into a Limited Liability Share; and
- Encourage Bluffs Arts Council to relinquish programming to the City in order to concentrate on developing classes and programs.

BLUFFS DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT 2014

Completed in August of this year, the Bluffs Downtown Strategic Assessment reviewed three key ideas:

- Creating an arts and culture cluster as a catalyst for downtown growth;
- The development of housing in Downtown Council Bluffs and adjacent neighborhoods; and
- Increasing the capacity and effectiveness of downtown revitalization efforts.

Of most relevance to this project is the first bullet point. For an arts and culture cluster to be effective, the report recommends the

3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

creation of the 100 Block Pop Up (the 100 Block is a section of Broadway, downtown Council Bluffs' main thoroughfare), a "collection of black box, pop-up, and/or incubator spaces that provide low-cost shared use space..." In Council Bluffs, such spaces might include pop-up restaurant spaces, a shared-use commercial kitchen, co-working space, maker space, and/or a year-round farmers' market space. A key theme throughout the report is inter-organizational collaboration. Whether the focus is downtown growth, housing, or capacity building, the report argues that collaboration will be key to success.

ARTSPACE

Based in Minneapolis, Artspace was founded in 1979 as an advocate for artists' space needs. Realizing that solving space issues required a more proactive approach, the organization went from advocate to developer in the late 1980s. Today, their services fall into three categories: Property Development, Asset Management, and Consulting. Property Development has the most relevance to Council Bluffs.

In the 1990s, Artspace began redeveloping older buildings in struggling neighborhoods into artist live/work spaces to great success. With space available in the blighted South Main District of Council Bluffs, Iowa West approached Artspace in 2006 wondering if it might be possible to convert the International Harvester Warehouse into an artists' live/work space. In 2010, the project was completed, transforming the one-time factory into a 36-unit, arts-friendly commercial space. The

results, however, have not quite been what Iowa West or Council Bluffs expected. The isolation of the South Main District has made it difficult for artists to attract visitors to shows, as has a bad perception of the area's safety. Additionally, Artspace—the building's owner/operator—has a hands-off management approach, which has impacted the quality of the artists selected to live in the building, as well as the building's activities.

OMAHA

Omaha has an active arts and culture scene that covers museums, galleries, performing arts, and the historic Old Market. Some of the city's major attractions include the Joslyn Art Museum, the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, the Holland Performing Arts Center, and the Hot Shops Art Center, a 92,000 square foot facility that features three hot shops, 50 art studios, four gallery spaces, and a number of exhibition spaces. When considering arts and culture in Council Bluffs, these assets need to be taken into consideration in order to determine how a cultural district can complement or contrast what is happening across the river. As one interviewee suggested, we might use history to help guide this thought, as Omaha has always been focused on the river, and Council Bluffs on the train tracks.



IMAGE 'Artspace' in Minneapolis, Minnesota



IMAGE 'Old Market' in Omaha, Nebraska

2. FORCES AND TRENDS

Before we consider the particular demand and supply issues in Council Bluffs, let's step back and look at some of the broader forces and trends affecting the sector.

ARTS AUDIENCES

First, we need to understand the general characteristics and patterns of audience participation. Here are the basic facts about arts audiences based on recently released highlights from the 2012 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, which can be downloaded here: <http://arts.gov/publications/additional-materials-related-to-2012-sppa>

- About one-third of adults attend live performance or visit museums or galleries each year. Over the last 20 years, participation within traditional arts disciplines has remained relatively flat. More specifically, a decline in levels of participation (percentages of adults attending various types of events) has been mitigated only by increases in the total adult population. The following chart shows the decline in percentage participation.
- The next chart shows the decline in participation by discipline. Other parts of the study suggest that attendance at traditional performing arts programs in more formal venues has been largely replaced by participation in a broader set of cultural and entertainment programs, including attendance at outdoor arts festivals, films, and other forms of live

music, as well as the significant increase in those consuming the arts through electronic media.

- Participation in the traditional performing and visual arts amongst adults under the age of 40 has been on the decline for over 20 years. The chart below shows the decline in participation for 18-24 year olds from 1982 to 2012. We do not yet have all of the results for 2012, but here again the trend is clear.
- Participation also varies tremendously by demographic characteristics. The following chart shows participation by gender, race, age, and education. There is some variation within the other disciplines, but the trends are clear.
- Educational attainment is by far the best predictor of arts attendance. The propensity to attend arts events among those who have completed college is exponentially greater than for those who have finished only high school. With each advanced level of education, there is an increased probability of arts attendance.
- Age also matters, but not nearly as much as education; older people tend to participate more, but only to a point.

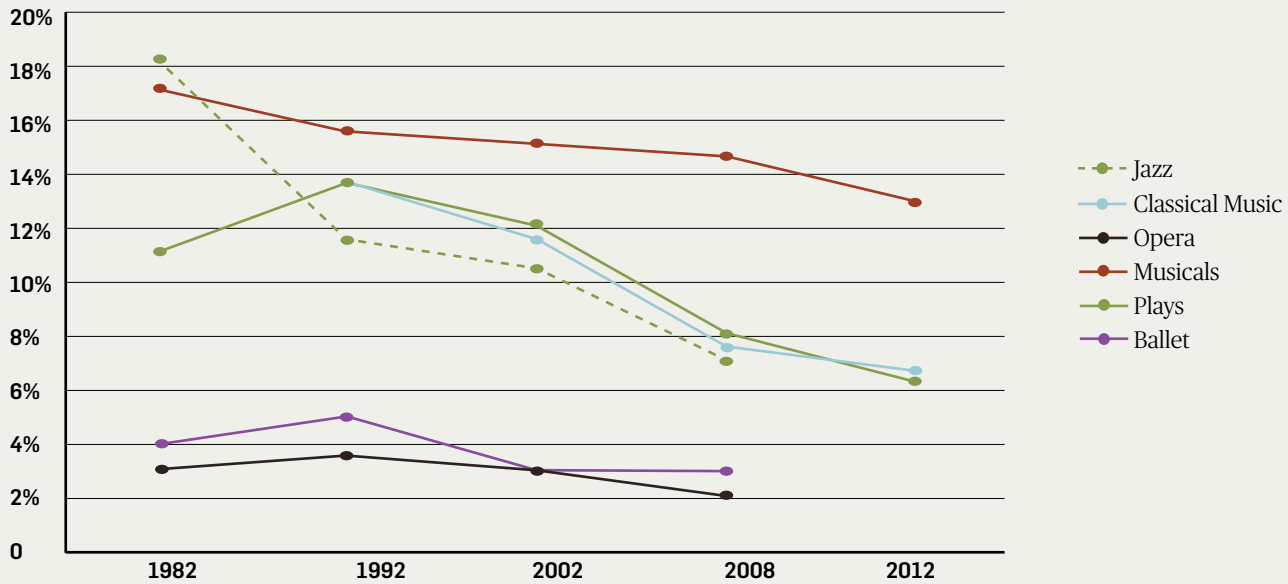
TRENDS IN PERFORMING ARTS CONSUMPTION + PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION

Next, we consider some of the more important and recent trends in consumption of the arts and how audiences choose to participate:

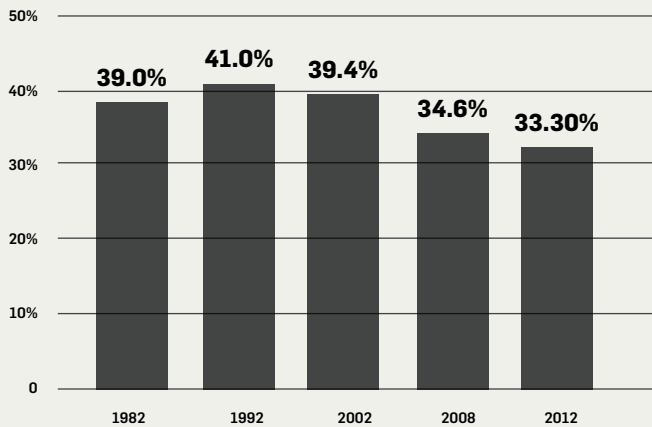
LESS TIME AND LESS PLANNING:

We are all busier today and less likely to make a significant investment of our precious

Young Adult Participation Proportion of Adults Aged 18-24 that Attended Live Performance At Least Once Annually



Percent of U.S. Adults Who Attended at Least One of Various Types of Arts Performance or Visited an Art Museum or Gallery: 1982-2012



Percent of U.S. Adults Who Attended a Performing Arts Activity, by Type (Excluding Musical & Non-Musical Plays): 2002, 2008, 2012.

	2002	2008	2012
Classical Music	11.6%	9.3%	8.8%
Jazz	10.8%	7.8%	8.1%
Dance other than Ballet	6.3%	5.2%	5.6%
Latin, Spanish, or Salsa Music	N/A	4.9%	5.1%
Ballet	3.9%	2.9%	2.7%
Opera	3.2%	2.1%	2.1%

N/A = This question was not asked before 2008.
Note: None of the changes between 2008 and 2012 are statistically significant.

3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

Percent of U.S. Adults Who Attended a Musical Play, by Selected Demographic Variables: 2008-2012

Musical Theater		
	2008	2012
All Adults	16.7%	15.2%
Gender		
Male	14.4%	12.9%*
Female	18.9%	17.3%**
Race & Ethnicity		
Hispanic	8.1%	7.3%
White	20.0%	18.4%**
African American	8.6%	9.2%
Other	13.4%	11.3%
Age		
18-24	14.5%	12.9%
25-34	16.0%	13.6%*
35-44	18.2%	12.9%**
45-54	17.4%	16.8%
55-64	19.5%	19.0%
65-74	18.0%	17.8%
75 and over	10.0%	12.0%
Highest Level of Educational Attainment		
Graduate School	1.7%	1.6%
Some High School	5.2%	2.9%
High School Graduate	8.1%	8.3%
Some College	17.1%	14.6%**
College Graduate	30.1%	26.6%**
Graduate School	37.9%	32.1%**

*change is statistically significant at 90%

**change is statistically significant at 95%

time into any activity, especially when we are asked to make that commitment well in advance of the event. This has led to the propitious decline in subscription ticketing, as individuals are less willing to commit early and more likely to keep their options open until the last moment. This also means that there are more consumers now who are willing to pay more later—the perceived premium of flexibility and the “on-demand” lifestyle.

THE DEMAND FOR MORE STIMULATION:

All consumers, and particularly younger ones, are acclimated to multi-sensory engagement. They are watching, hearing, and reading simultaneously (so they believe). This does mean that they have higher satisfaction thresholds and expectations for immediate rewards from the experience.

THE DEMAND FOR CONVENIENCE:

Audiences are also seeking convenience. There is less tolerance for the event with built-in hardships, whether that means an uncomfortable seat, poor concessions service, or bad traffic on the way home. This suggests a low threshold for opting out, and pushes facilities and presenters towards a higher level of customer service. It also inspires them to influence other factors that affect the audience experience, from parking to the after-show drink.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERPRETATION-RICH EXPERIENCES:

We have determined that the quality of experience for audiences is dramatically improved by properly preparing them for the experience with information and context; then, more importantly, by providing them with the opportunity to process and share

their experience with others. Secondly, we must now accept that audiences are less willing to accept someone else's interpretation of an experience, alternatively wishing (often demanding) to develop and provide their own interpretation of the experience.

THE DIFFUSION OF CULTURAL TASTES:

Because of advances in information and communication technologies, people are now interested in a much broader array of programs. This means a fragmentation and diversification of tastes, both narrowing and broadening at the same time. Related to this is the abandonment of old boundaries and behaviors on the part of audiences.

THE PARADOX OF CHOICE:

All consumers are now faced with an extraordinary range of choices—whether that relates to food, cars, or culture. With our hyperactive, consumption based economy, consumers are constantly being bombarded with these choices and exhortations to buy. For many consumers, there are simply too many choices being thrown at them, and they often shut down, making no choice at all. So, consumers are hungry for filters and enablers, people and services that will help them get past the paralysis brought on by too many choices. Word of mouth is the strongest version of this—a piece of one-on-one advice from a credible source. But, people are looking for other filters and influencers—curators who can help them make these decisions.

RISK VERSUS REWARD:

Because of the cost (time and money) of participating—and all of the other choices available—audiences are generally less willing to take risks, and more willing to

pay large sums for a guaranteed “home run” experience. This is consistent with a pervasive trend towards “trading up” and the rise of VIP culture, where there is an attempt to create an illusion of exclusivity, status, and prestige. The challenge is, the more everything becomes accessible, the more some people want to be separate—which suggests demand for value-added, premium arts experiences.

THE SOCIAL EXPERIENCE:

Research suggests that what is drawing audiences to the arts today is the opportunity for a social experience, as opposed to the more traditional attraction of intellectual stimulation associated with the performance. The good news is that this is a clear competitive advantage—the shared social experience not available to those at home, no matter the quality of their technology. The challenge is that presenters and facilities must deliver much more than what is on the stage, creating an environment in which the social elements of the experience are fully enjoyed.

THE ROLE OF MEDIA:

We now see the lower consumption of traditional media and the reduced role it plays in driving arts participation. At the same time, there is a proliferation of personal communications technologies and online word of mouth tools, including Facebook and the like. These tools are critically important as a means for consumers to spread word of mouth in a viral way. And, they are even more important for cultural suppliers to build a community of friends and supporters in a world where consumer loyalty is largely a thing of the past.

3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

EVERYONE'S AN ARTIST:

There has been a rise in self-directed, home-based arts participation, including everyday creativity like gardening, writing, crafting, photography, film production, cooking, and decorating through fashion, home décor, and art collection. Also, consumers are demanding more intense, “hands-on” arts experiences. This is evidenced by higher rates of personal and ‘amateur’ participation in community theatre groups, choirs, dance and movement classes, art and music classes, and more.

NONPROFIT ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

There are also significant changes occurring on the supply side, particularly around the health and sustainability of nonprofit arts organizations. Specifically:

BAUMOL AND BOWEN:

These two NYU economists published “The Economic Dilemma of the Performing Arts” in 1965, positing that the lack of productivity gains in the creation of art, plus the inevitability of cost increases, would essentially force all organizations to raise more contributed income every year. Though there have been marginal improvements in the administration of buildings and organizations, there is ample evidence of this cost squeeze, and increasing pressure on all arts organizations to raise more money to sustain operations. Even if an organization matches its prior year revenue targets and buys only what it bought the year before, the annual funding requirement will increase, year after year after year.

SUPPLY ISSUES:

According to the 2012 Arts Index report by Americans for the Arts, there were 113,000 arts and culture nonprofit organizations in the United States in 2010. The number of arts nonprofits has increased 49% in the past decade (76,000 to 113,000). This increase is greater than any other category of nonprofit organizations in the United States.

THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT:

It is also safe to say that we are now operating in a political environment in which direct support of the arts is controversial, difficult to justify with so many other priorities, and more often seen as an inappropriate role for government. The following chart shows the rise and then more recent decline in direct government funding of the arts.

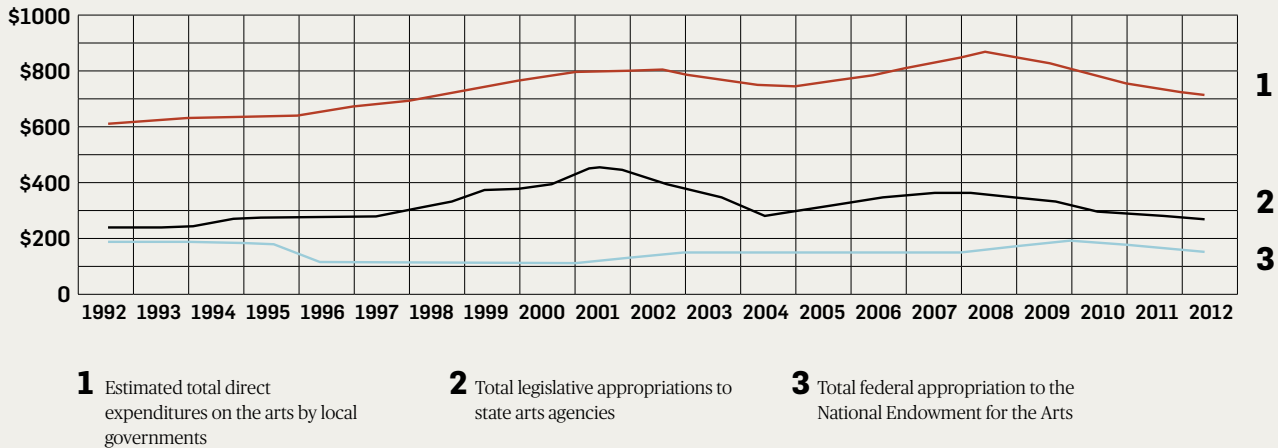
PRIVATE SECTOR FUNDING:

On the private side, there is a fully developed philanthropic sector led by skilled marketers, technologists, and communicators, raising the bar for arts fundraisers and bringing new competition for sectors like the environment. In addition, the new generation of funders are much more pro-active and engaged in their causes, expecting to be given the ability to direct the organization and the use of their funds in a much more personal (and often intrusive) manner.

CHILDREN AND THE ARTS

The biggest component of growth in the arts concerns active participation and children, at least partly the result of a declining commitment to arts education on the part of public schools. Shrinking education budgets, the increasing importance of testing, and an attitude that the arts represent a non-essential

Federal, State, & Local Government Arts Funding 1992-2012



part of a child's education have all led to cuts in programs, funding, and facilities for arts training—in some places more than others.

More recently, educators and their supporters have re-discovered the value of arts education, as well as the role of the arts in teaching all subjects. Grantmakers for Education (GFE) is the leading organization for private and public philanthropies that support improved education outcomes for students from early childhood through higher education. In 2012, GFE surveyed U.S. funders for its Benchmarking 2012: Trends in Education Philanthropy report, where funders were asked about funding strategies and priorities. High-interest funding areas included reading/literacy, specifically STEM and arts education. This category was noted as a high interest area by 71% of respondents.

Nevertheless, battles continue to rage as to the appropriateness and content of what is taught and how it is taught. What does seem to be clear is that schools, and programs within schools, can have an arts focus that attracts students, families, teachers, and funding, and that these programs and schools can effectively deliver a strong and well-rounded education.

Recent research has been focusing on the cognitive impacts of arts education on a student's overall academic performance and civic engagement. In 2008, the Dana Foundation released the Dana Arts and Cognition Consortium report, revealing results from several three-year studies by universities exploring the connection between early arts training and enhancements in other areas of cognition.

3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

The studies found:

- Interest in the performing arts yields high motivation, and produces the sustained attention needed to improve performance, and the training of attention that leads to advancements in other areas of thought;
- There appear to be specific connections between music practice and skills in geometric representation, reading acquisition, and sequential learning;
- Training in acting can lead to memory improvement; and
- Dance training through effective observation relates strongly to learning by physical practice, which both supports the organization of complex actions, and may transfer to other cognitive skills.

The acknowledgment of the arts as a vital and transformative subject of the 21st century is articulated in the STEM to STEAM movement, championed by the Rhode Island School of Design. STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) is a movement that continues to be integrated into other institutions and corporations in the United States. STEAM expands the traditional areas of innovation (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) to include Arts and Design. This movement is based on the belief that Arts and Design will transform the 21st century economy as science and technology did in the 20th century. Here are a couple of examples of STEAM in schools:

DREW CHARTER SCHOOL, ATLANTA, GA:

STEAM has been integrated into the school curriculum and encourages cross-discipline collaboration among students and teachers. This focus has yielded improvements in student test scores and success. Students at the Drew School exceed Georgia and Atlanta's public school averages in Reading, Language Arts, Science, Math, and Social Sciences.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY'S PROJECT ZERO

Developed in 1967 out of the belief that arts learning must be studied as a cognitive activity. Project Zero conducts research in the arts, intelligence, understanding, creativity, cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural thinking, and ethics. The Project Zero collective has collaborated with schools and organizations to develop arts learning curricula and projects. Artful Thinking is a collaboration between Project Zero and Traverse City Michigan Area Public Schools, developed as a model approach to integrating the arts into classroom instruction with a focus on experiencing and thinking about art, rather than the creation of art. The program creates connections between works of art and cultural topics. Teachers learn to use art to help develop students' thinking behaviors, and the Artist's palette is seen as a central metaphor comprised of six elements emphasizing thinking behaviors (i.e. asking provocative questions, careful observations, reasoning with evidence, etc.).

CREATIVE CLASSROOM:

Then, there is the Creative Classroom collaboration between Project Zero and Disney Worldwide Outreach. This project provides materials (Creative Classroom Videotapes and Guides) for teachers to explore the role and importance of creativity in teaching and learning, and methods of making classrooms more interesting and engaging for students.

The other big trend in this area has been the recognition of the role of the arts in helping at-risk youth. In 2012, the NEA commissioned Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth. The study revealed that students who participate in the arts are:

- 4 times more likely to participate in math and science fairs;
- 3 times more likely to have good attendance in school;
- 4 times more likely to be recognized for academic excellence;
- 3 times more likely to be elected to class office; and
- Average nearly 100 points higher on their SAT scores than students who take only one-half year or less of arts programming.

The report also revealed interesting results pertaining to work and professional experience:

- 50% of students who had high arts involvement obtained gainful employment vs. 40% with low arts education experience;
- 44% earned Associates Degrees vs. 27%;
- 37% earned bachelor's degrees vs. 17%;
- 72% of business leaders say creativity is their highest priority when hiring employees; and
- 56% of employers and 79% of superintendents agree that a college degree in the arts is the most significant indicator of creativity in a prospective job candidate.

3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

THE EMERGENCE OF CULTURAL DISTRICTS

Defined by Americans for the Arts as “well-recognized, labeled, mixed-use area[s] of a city in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as the anchor of attraction”, planned cultural districts began to emerge in the United States in the 1980s. Searching for solutions to the urban decay left behind by industrial decline, planners worked to recreate places now referred to as “Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts”, or NOCDs; places that have developed busy, pedestrian-friendly streets, repurposed historic buildings, welcoming public spaces, diverse food and retail options, and an arts presence on their own over the course of time. Typically, such communities have ethnically, educationally, and economically heterogeneous populations, and are often convenient places to live, offering residents all sorts of amenities.

In effort to recreate NOCDs, state and city governments began to adopt cultural district programs and policies, the simple logic being that a bit of planning guidance could lead to neighborhood revitalization. Currently, 13 states have cultural district programs, five of which offer tax incentives (income tax exemptions, property tax incentives, sales tax credits or exemptions, preservation tax credits, or admissions and amusement tax exemptions) for activities taking place within districts. We support such actions for the following reasons:

CIVICALLY COMPATIBLE:

Cultural districts can be developed over a period of time with a combination of new facilities and the adaptive re-use of existing structures. The cost of developing or

adapting these facilities is generally lower, and tends to be more inclusive and authentic than large, new buildings. This means that cultural districts can be developed within the parameters of a city or community’s financial means while highlighting key aspects of the community’s historic and/or cultural identity.

COMPLEMENT ADJACENT BUSINESS:

Cultural districts tend to be better at motivating commercial development, as they are relatively porous and accommodating of other building projects. The first challenge is defining an area in which a district is possible, then developing a plan in which existing structures and new facilities can be identified as being a part of a district.

ORGANIZE AND CATALYZE:

Partnerships—whether between arts groups or varying levels of government—play a large role in cultural district development. Such partnerships build consensus and cooperation between artists, community members, and business owners, potentially strengthening relationships across the non-profit, private, and public sectors along the way. As quoted from The Art Newspaper, “Successful cultural districts are [...] powerful policy tools. For planners they can help build community and social capital; for sociologists they keep at bay the forces of anomie; for economists, they incubate and inculcate creativity, and draw those fickle high-net-worth tourists; and for the politicians and the semioticians alike, they signify and calibrate complex aspirations and identities.”

IMPACT:

When it comes to cultural districts, one of the biggest challenges is assessing impact, be it economic or otherwise. Some state and city

governments, however, have been moderately successful at quantifying the overall impact of their cultural districts. The Maryland State Arts Council, for example, issues an annual report outlining the economic and fiscal impacts of its cultural districts. For the 2013 fiscal year, it is estimated that cultural districts lead to \$458.2 million in total state GDP and \$38.3 million in total tax revenues. It is also estimated that districts supported 5,144 jobs. In Pennsylvania, the Pittsburgh Cultural District generated \$33 million in public investment and \$63 million in private and philanthropic funds within its first decade, triggering \$115 million in commercial activity.

RESPONDING TO A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

So how should cultural facilities respond to these changes in audiences and users?

From Friday Night Lights to Community Living Rooms: The old image of the theater—where the lights come on at 7PM on a Friday night so that fancy people wearing formal attire can attend a performance—is gone. The new image is that of a community living room—a place that is always open and always active—with informal programming and an atmosphere that is buzzing and welcoming.

PROGRAM AFFECTS PLACE:

A place becomes known for the programs it hosts, which means that places with strong curatorial instincts have the ability to become associated with the quality and types of programming that goes on there, such that, ultimately, consumers can be drawn there without any knowledge of the program or performers, solving for them the paradox of

choice. Facilities must make programming choices that build and maintain a desirable and consistent image in the minds of existing and potential audiences.

FACILITATING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION:

Facilities and their users must support a culture of more active participation in the arts and arts experiences, including audience engagement before, during, and after the experience. Buildings must also provide more opportunities for everyone in the community to express creativity—whether that means joining a choir, learning to paint, or volunteering to build sets.

CONTROL OF THE EXPERIENCE:

Cultural norms of behavior around performances must change. Audiences (particularly younger ones) must be given more opportunities to decide how they would like to experience a performance, without disturbing those around them. Expecting younger patrons to give up all control of their experience of coming to a performance will only drive them away.

DON'T CUSTOM BUILD:

Arts organizations will come and go given their fragile balance sheets and the competitive pressures they face. Facilities should be able to accommodate multiple users at once, or successive users in quick order, so as not to be dragged down by any one user facing a dark future.

COST STRUCTURE:

The future of facilities that serve the nonprofit sector depends on their ability to provide ongoing affordable access to nonprofit users, and arrangements that motivate efficient use of space and the maximization of revenues for

both user and facility. Facility management organizations must be lean and nimble in their staffing, and embracing of technologies that drive operating efficiencies and economies.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Fundamentally, performing arts facilities must become deeply engaged and connected to the life of their communities. They cannot be seen as palaces of the arts, but rather the literal or figurative center of the community. In order to survive, performing arts facilities must make themselves indispensable to the future of their communities in ways that are understood and embraced by all, whether that means hosting community meetings or acting as emergency response centers.

FLEXIBILITY + TECHNOLOGY:

Technology changes rapidly. For an arts center to pass the test of time, flexibility and interchangeability are key. In new tech-oriented cultural spaces, wiring and HVAC systems are being placed in ceilings so that walls can be easily removed or placed elsewhere. And, extra emphasis is placed on flexible seating and natural lighting. Facilities need to be as adaptable as possible in order to accommodate any and all changes that come their way. To quote an architect in the New York Times, “committing to flexibility means committing to nothing.” This also means buying selectively. Instead of outfitting a space with a ton of equipment that will be out of date in just a few years, facilities and organizations are focusing on buying the essentials, allowing them to make purchases slowly as needs arise or rent whatever accessories are needed.

3. THE MARKET FOR CULTURAL ACTIVITY AND FACILITIES IN COUNCIL BLUFFS

DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

While it might seem like a simple exercise, defining the market for arts facilities and districts is rather complicated. In a fundamental sense, the market for a district in Council Bluffs is Council Bluffs. But, Council Bluffs is not an independent community; it is part of a larger region with visitors coming from far and wide. While those who live closer are likely to be more intensely involved and engaged in new facilities and programming, facilities will draw audiences, renters, and program participants from a larger area. The other definitional challenge is that Council Bluffs is a changing community. Plans for new facilities must succeed when they open (say, three to 5 years from now), but should also respond to changes in the community over the next 30 years.

MARKET SIZE, CHARACTERISTICS, AND POTENTIAL

Our first objective in assessing demand for

cultural arts facilities is to define the market and examine the potential to attract and service audiences. For Council Bluffs, we have chosen to look at the city itself, then Pottawattamie County, as well the 15-mile and 30-mile radii. Here is a map showing both radii. The red dot represents the Council Bluffs Mayor's Office.

Appendix B includes a set of demographic data highlights purchased from Nielsen, a marketing research resources company that expands and extrapolates Census data using a variety of inputs. These charts compare the characteristics of the City and County, the 15-mile radius, and the 30-mile radius. National numbers are also included for context where appropriate. These data, along with input from interviews, allow us to characterize the resident market as:

FLUCTUATING:

After a period of growth between 2000 and 2010, the population in both Council Bluffs and Pottawattamie County is declining. In 2010, the population of Council Bluffs was 62,230. By 2019, it is estimated to be 61,445, a change of -1.25%. Regionally, however, the population is growing. Within a 30-mile radius of Council Bluffs, the population is projected to grow at a rate of 4.5% between 2010 and 2019. This goes the same for the 15-mile radius, where the population is projected to grow from 589,609 to 625,299.

WORKING CLASS:

Compared to the County and radii, Council Bluffs has low household income distribution. While 27% of the population makes less than \$24,999, an additional 29% make \$25,000 to \$49,999. To compare, 24% of the 30-mile radius falls into this category. Conversely,

14% of the 30-mile radius population is represented in the \$1000,000 to \$149,999 category, while only 9% of the Council Bluffs population is. Looking at median household income, it is estimated at \$44,497 for 2014 in Council Bluffs. Within the 15-mile radius, this number increases to \$49,028; within the County, to \$50,316; and within the 30-mile radius, to \$57,530.

LOW EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:

Educational attainment is similar in Council Bluffs and the County. In both markets, 37% of the population is a High School Graduate or has a GED, 23% have 'Some College, No Degree', and 10% have an Associate Degree. In Council Bluffs, 12% of the population has a Bachelor's Degree, and 4% a Graduate or Professional Degree. Regionally, 19% of the 15-mile radius has a Bachelor's Degree, and 22% of the 30-mile radius does.

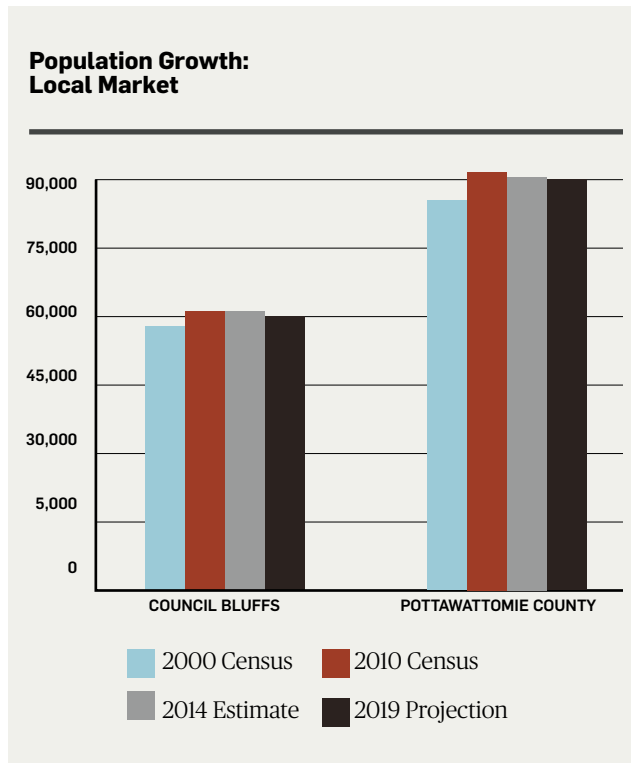
DIVERSIFYING:

Council Bluffs and its surrounding markets are predominately 'White', although the 15- and 30-mile radii have significant 'Hispanic or Latino' and 'Black or African American' populations. In Council Bluffs, the 'Hispanic or Latino' population is 8%. By 2019, this number is projected to increase by 1%, as are the numbers for 'Black or African American' and 'Other' populations. Linguistically, nearly 6% of the population in Council Bluffs speaks Spanish.

DIVERSE IN AGE:

When it comes to age, the populations in Council Bluffs and its surrounding markets are quite diverse. Council Bluffs and Pottawattamie County skew slightly older, but have large '17 and younger' populations. In the City and the County, 20% of the

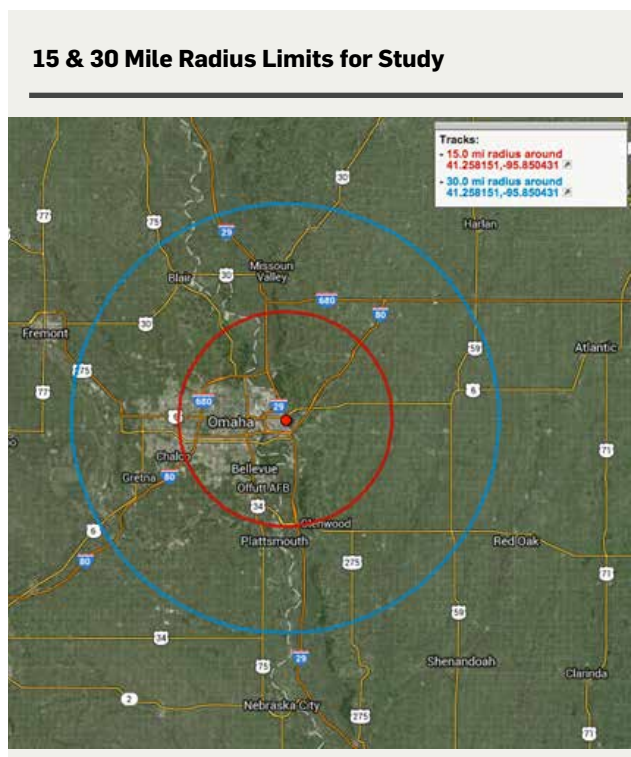
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population is aged 14 and younger. In the 15- and 30-mile radii, this number is 21% and 22%, respectively. At the other end of the spectrum, 27% of Council Bluffs' population and 29% of the County's population is age 55+. In both radii, 24% of the population is age 55+.

ATTRACTIVE FOR LIBERALS:

In 2009, Iowa became one of the first states in the country to legalize same-sex marriage, a right that has yet to be granted in Nebraska. Anecdotal research indicates that, given this disparity, Council Bluffs has become an attractive community for same-sex couples working in Omaha. Beyond same-sex marriage, Iowa is incredibly diverse politically, with an almost equal number of Republican and Democrat registered voters, and a number of unaffiliated voters capable of voting in either direction. This, it is argued, has made Iowa a much more liberal state than Nebraska.



KEY DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

There are a couple of important trends in the local and regional market.

- The Hispanic or Latino population in Iowa is small; but, it is growing very quickly. This holds true for Council Bluffs. In the 2012 Presidential Election, the Hispanic or Latino population was considered a key demographic, and was heavily courted by President Obama on each of his trips to Iowa.
- Iowa's liberal laws are attractive, especially to same-sex couples. Anecdotal research tells us that there is a growing LGBT population in Council Bluffs comprised of Omaha transplants, and that it is entrepreneurial.
- Brain drain is an issue in Council

Bluffs, although it is not yet endemic. Interviewees mentioned the difficulty of retaining young talent, particularly young artists.

- Multiple times in interviews we heard the phrase ‘Counciltucky’. Generally, there is a perception that the Council Bluffs community has a self-esteem issue generated by its proximity to Omaha.
- Property taxes are a deterrent to those with an entrepreneurial spirit in Council Bluffs. While in Omaha one would pay 2.2% in value, property owners in Council Bluffs pay 4.4%.

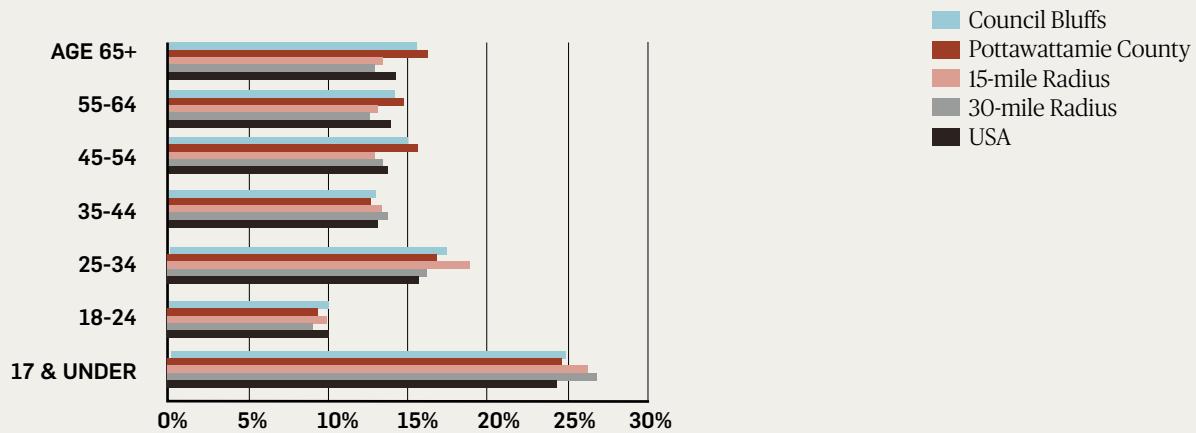
TOURISM

In addition to permanent residents, a new cultural district in Council Bluffs has the potential to attract non-resident visitors. These would include typical tourists, business travelers, and folks visiting friends and relatives in the region. Here are some facts and figures on tourism in Iowa:

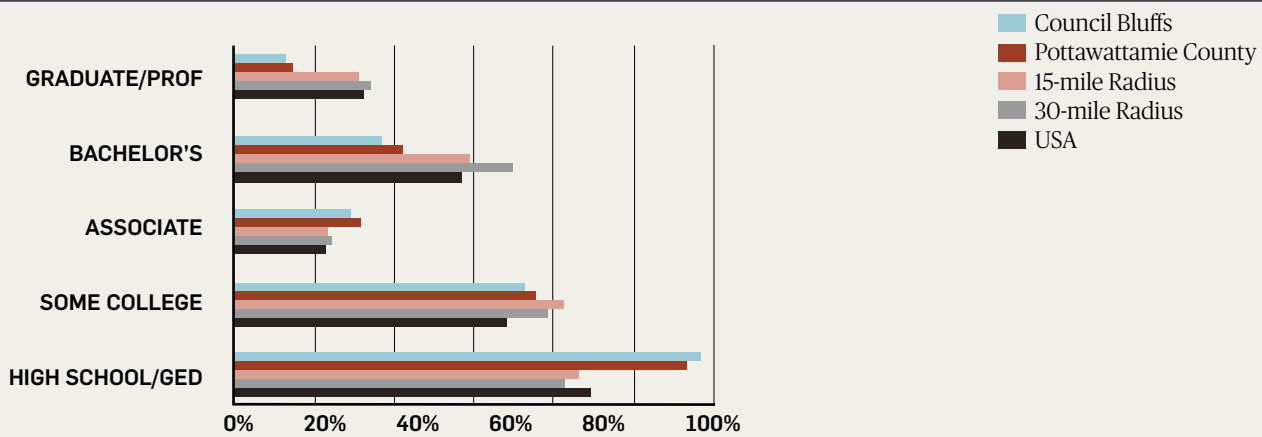
- Domestic travelers spent \$755.37 million on entertainment and recreation in 2013.
- According to the Western Iowa Tourism Region 2014 Annual Report, Western Iowa tourism had an economic impact of \$1.4 billion in 2012, the most recent year for which numbers were available.
- Individual travelers play a large role in Iowa tourism. The following information is taken from the Travel Iowa 2013 Iowa Trip Planning Survey: Adults - Individuals Traveling without Children Under 18.
- Adults make up 52% of all individuals traveling to Iowa, and have an average party size of 2.4 people.
- The average age of the adult trip planner is 56, and 60% of trip planners are women.
- Adult travelers travel to Iowa for leisure (82%), to visit family/friends (14%), and other (4%).
- Adult travelers stay in hotels/motels (76%), campgrounds (23%), at a bed and breakfast (22%), with friends/family (17%), or at a resort (13%). 22% of visitors are only making day trips.
- The top 10 activities for adult planners are historical sites, scenic byways, state parks, festivals and events, museums, outdoor land, wineries, picking and antiques, shopping, breweries.
- Families account for 48% of all individuals traveling to Iowa, and have an average party size is 4.2 people. The top 10 activities for family travelers are historical sites, state parks, water/amusement parks, museums, festivals and events, outdoor land, scenic byways, shopping, and outdoor wildlife.
- 41.8% of Iowa travelers are state residents, followed by residents from Illinois (16.1%), Wisconsin (12.2%), Minnesota (11.2%), Missouri (9.9%), Kansas (4.9%), Nebraska (3.4%), and South Dakota (0.5%).
- Iowa residents spent an average of \$393 per trip while traveling within Iowa in 2013, while surrounding state residents spent an average of \$514 per trip.
- Council Bluffs is home to a handful of casinos. According to the 2013 Annual Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission Report, attendance is on the decline: Horseshoe Casino saw a 7% decrease in attendance, and Ameristar an 8.2% decrease between 2012 and 2013. Harrah’s is an exception to this trend, however,

3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

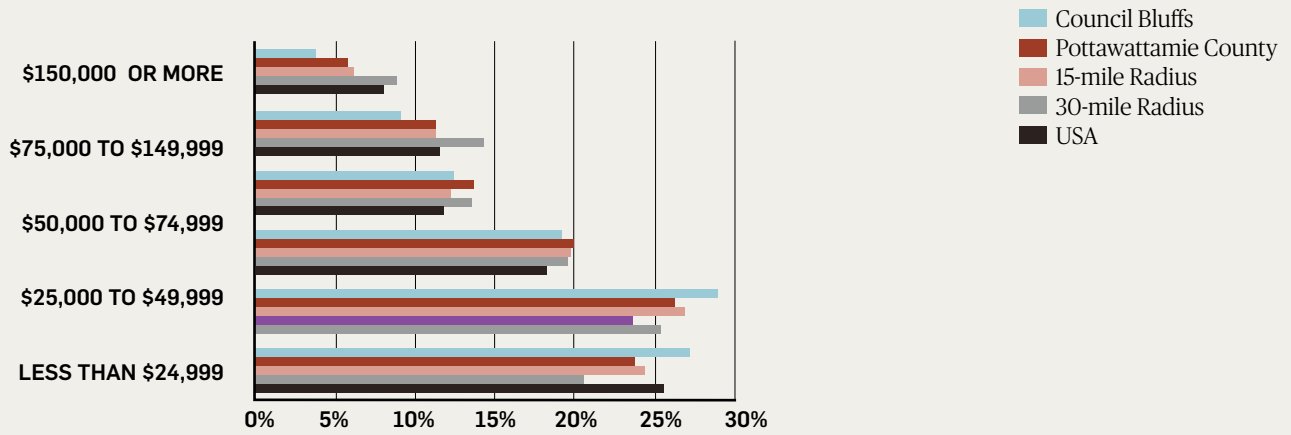
Age Distribution



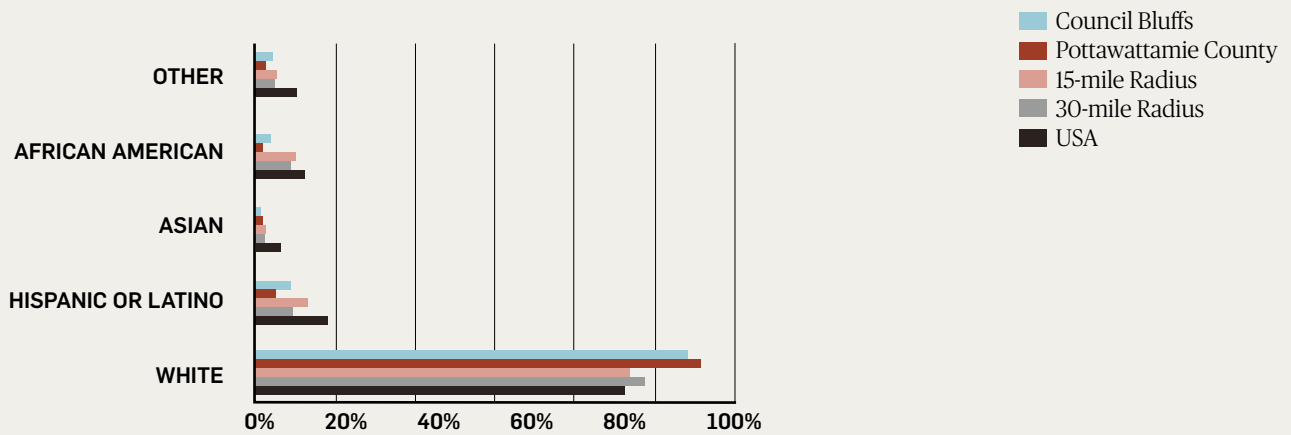
Educational Attainment



Household Income Distribution



Race & Ethnicity



3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

seeing a 6.8% increase in admissions between 2012 and 2013.

- For 2013, Horseshoe Casino, Ameristar, and Harrah's brought in a combined \$4.3 million in gross revenue, \$2.1 million in city taxes, and \$1.2 million in county taxes.

Because of the internet, information and tools are in place to help informed visitors purchase tickets to events and performances prior to arriving at their destination. The challenge for arts organizations and facilities, then, is having their information organized and available through popular channels that assist tourists with making purchase decisions. That generally means closely integrating with other information services, websites, brochures, and so on that are made available (if not pushed out) to visitors.

TOP TEN ACTIVITIES FOR ADULT TRAVELERS



4. POTENTIAL USES AND USERS

Over the course of our needs assessment, we reached out to local artists and organizations to see who might need and want access to cultural facilities in Council Bluffs. Here are brief summaries of key groups.

BEMIS CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS

Based in Omaha, the Bemis Center is recognized internationally for its Artist-in-Residence program. The residency gives artists time and space to create and exhibit work, and supports a community arts program that engages citizens in public art projects. The Bemis could imagine using a facility in a Council Bluffs cultural district to expand this program.

CHANTICLEER THEATER

Chanticleer Theater is Council Bluffs' community theatre organization. Started in 1952, Chanticleer is currently housed in a 270-seat theater that was built for company use in the 1960s. Structurally, the facility is deteriorating. Geographically, it is located on the outskirts of town. Both of these points have made audience building a challenge. Chanticleer currently produces five to six productions a year and provides a number of education programs. In addition to a new theater, the organization is interested in a rehearsal hall and dance studio.

COUNCIL BLUFFS COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT: The Council Bluffs Community

School District has strong arts programs of its own, but expressed interest in a media arts facility. A challenge to the school district's use of an off-site facility would be transportation—students would need to be responsible for getting themselves to and from the building.

HISTORIC GENERAL DODGE HOUSE

The Dodge House is a National Historic Landmark. The former home of General Grenville M. Dodge, the facility is open for tours, events, rentals, and some educational programming. While the museum is not in need of facilities, it would like to be included as part of a larger cultural trail.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY

The Historical Society oversees both the Squirrel Cage Jail and the RailsWest Railroad Museum. The Society has extremely limited space for exhibitions, and has interest in opening a proper Pottawattamie County history museum.

OMAHA CLAY WORKS

Omaha Clay Works is an Omaha-based facility dedicated to artists working with clay. In addition to classes, the Clay Works facility provides studio space and a small gallery. The facility's owner is very interested in moving Clay Works from Omaha to Council Bluffs.

THE WEST COAST OF IOWA

The West Coast of Iowa is a non-profit dedicated to developing a discovery center in Council Bluffs. The initiative is still in its early stages, but the proposed facility would include exhibits on natural and human history, early Council Bluffs' settlers, the Mormons, and the City's railroad past. A location for this facility has yet to be determined, although the group would like to see it in historical Council Bluffs.

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD MUSEUM

The Union Pacific Railroad Museum, or Union Pacific Museum, is the star attraction in Council Bluffs. As Union Pacific's only museum in the country, it attracts an average of 25,000 visitors each year from all over the world. Currently, the Museum is housed in a former Carnegie Library. While superficially the location is great—it's an historic building, they are near Bayliss Park, they are along parade routes—the building is too small to accommodate the Museum's needs. Additionally, its status as an historical building limits the Union Pacific Museum's ability to place signage out front, and prevents them from displaying equipment. The ideal facility would have parking and storage, would allow for them to exhibit equipment, would have an auditorium/lecture space, and would have facilities for visiting researchers. It might even have, or be in close proximity to, a model train shop.

Other individuals offered more general suggestions of uses and users. These included:

- More cohesion between arts and culture groups and organizations.
- Facilities and programming that highlight the history of Council Bluffs.
- A music venue presenting local and touring artists.
- More support from the City for developing and producing outdoor events.
- Higher quality food and beverage vendors at events.
- A space that could highlight young talent and bring in smaller, cutting edge performance groups.
- The need for a visual arts facility that would coordinate traveling exhibitions,

3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

exhibit local student work, provide visual arts education, and include artist-in-residence and art co-working spaces and studios.

- A facility and programming that could connect with industry, design, and job growth.
- Distinguish Council Bluffs from Omaha by offering what is not offered in Omaha, highlighting the lower cost of living in Council Bluffs, or by creating grittier, cutting-edge art works/facilities.
- Put more effort into integrating the Harvester Artist Lofts into the community.
- A rehearsal and performance space for start-ups and smaller organizations. This space could also provide support services and professional development workshops for new and smaller organizations and artists.
- Put effort into working with the growing Hispanic population.

5. EXISTING FACILITIES

In order to understand the existing stock of facilities and identify any gaps, we have developed an inventory of indoor spaces with a capacity of 1,000 seats or fewer that are dedicated to hosting live performance on an ongoing basis in Council Bluffs and the region. They are charted on the map below.

This inventory considers the physical features and types of activity hosted within each space, and is included in Appendix C. In addition, the condition and functionality of each facility has been rated using 8 variables.

These include:

1. Facility condition
2. Staff and support
3. Theatrical functionality
4. Room acoustics
5. Customer amenities
6. Performer amenities
7. Atmosphere and character
8. Suitability for users

Variables are rated on a scale of 1 to 4, higher being better. Building condition and staff and support categories carry the most weight. Some of these facilities have been visited by the consulting team, while other ratings are self-reported by facility managers or based on anecdotal information and interview input. Because of that, this exercise is somewhat subjective, but provides a good basis for comparison.

The inventory includes 52 spaces that are used on a regular basis for live performance.

Facility Programming + Activity: The first chart in the appendix, organized by seating capacity, shows presenting (when facilities buy touring shows), producing (when the art is created by the building operator), educational programs (again, those that are offered by the facility), and rental activity (in which case the work comes from another group that assumes the risk in using the facility).

Presenting at the 1,000-seat capacity range is limited. In Council Bluffs, the Western Historic Trails Center presents the most diverse activities, but is one of the least

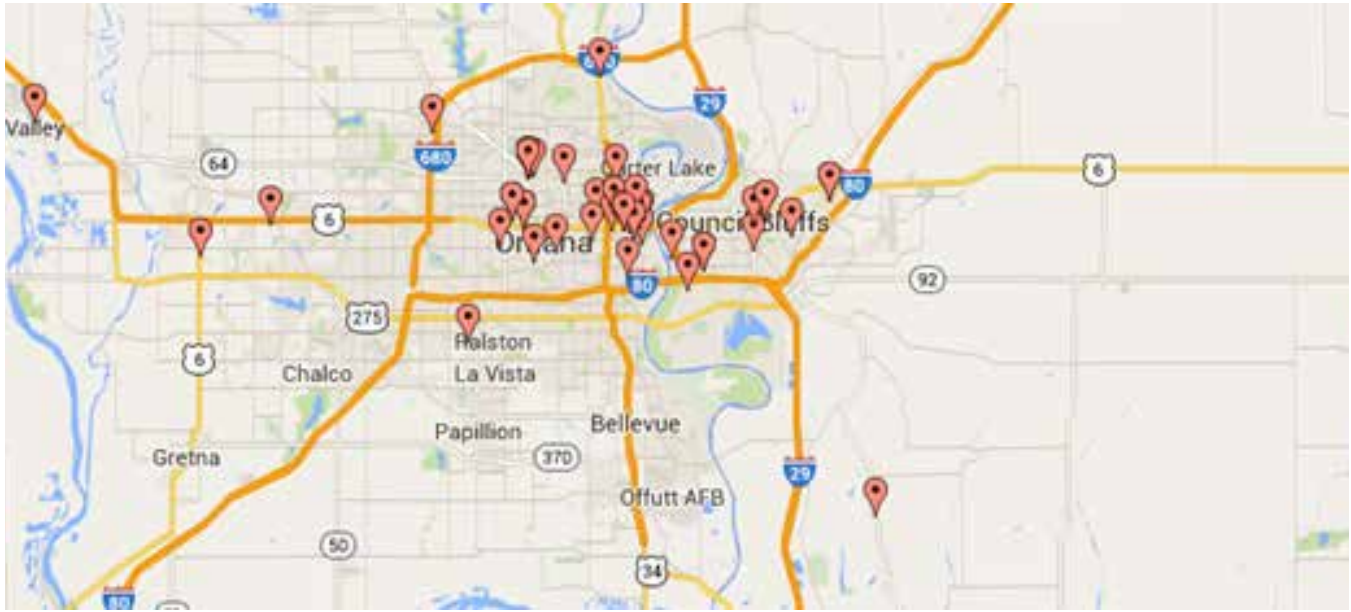


IMAGE Existing Facilities Inventory

conductive to live performance. The Main Theater at Iowa Western Arts Center, on the other hand, is the best-equipped facility, but produces a rather traditional mix of offerings that includes dance, music, theater, and student performances. In Omaha, a number of multi-use or repurposed facilities are doing the majority of presenting. Within these spaces, the work presented leans toward the Avant-garde, including a mix of more traditional arts, performance art, and emerging/local artists.

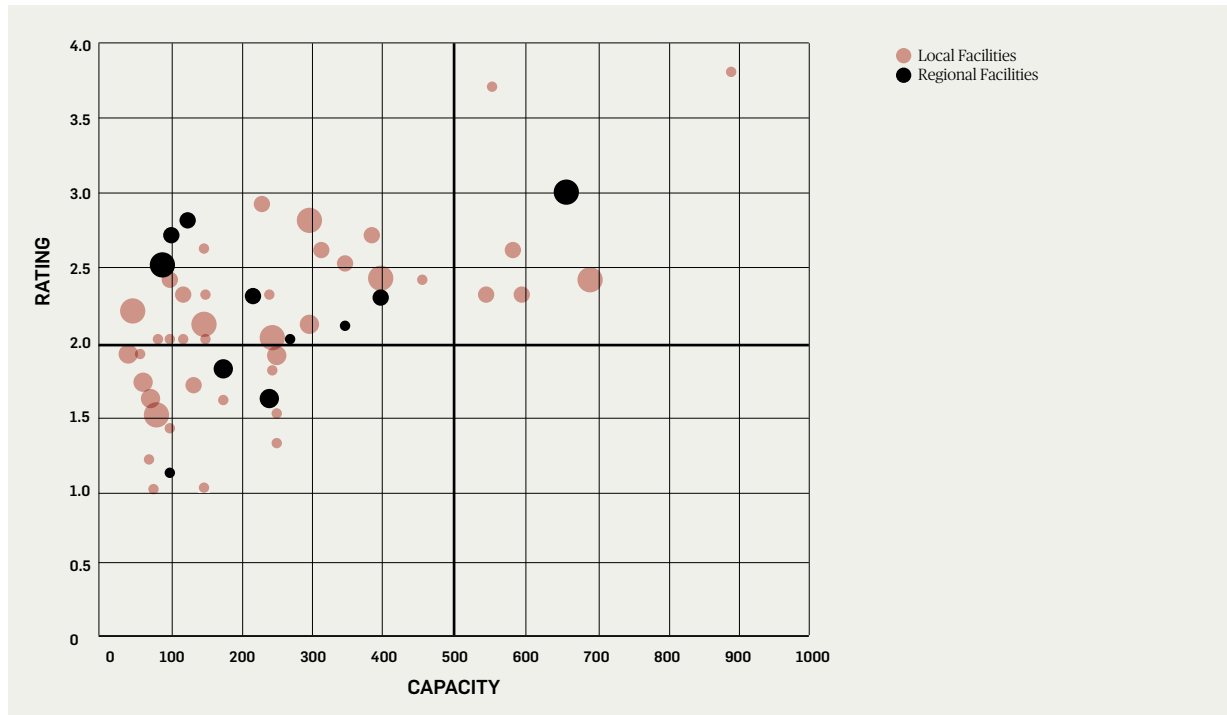
Within the region, there is a fair amount of rental activity, particularly for private events. In Council Bluffs, there are only three facilities available for rent to cultural organizations. Two of these facilities belong to Iowa Western Community College and, therefore, have low availability. The last facility is a Christian music venue.

FACILITY FEATURES

The next chart in the appendix shows facility features and amenities. Nearly 60% of the venues in Council Bluffs and the region have flexible seating, primarily because a large number are multi-use, repurposed venues, or music venues. Most facilities are equipped with sound and lighting equipment (87% and 69%, respectively), but few have projection equipment (23%). Fewer than half of the facilities in the inventory have a ticketing system (33%). While some venues require phoning or emailing ticket requests, a number use PayPal, an online payment and money transferring platform, to complete ticket transactions.

3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

Facility Rating vs. Capacity



FACILITY CAPACITY & QUALITY

The third of the appended charts shows capacity and our measure of quality, as previously described. This information allows us to visually present the inventory with a series of matrices. Each matrix shows the quality ranking on the vertical axis and the seating capacity on the horizontal axis. The size of the circle is an indication of how many types of programs the facility can support.

The first matrix, seen right, compares the quality and capacity of local facilities (the blue dots) to the regional facilities (purple dots).

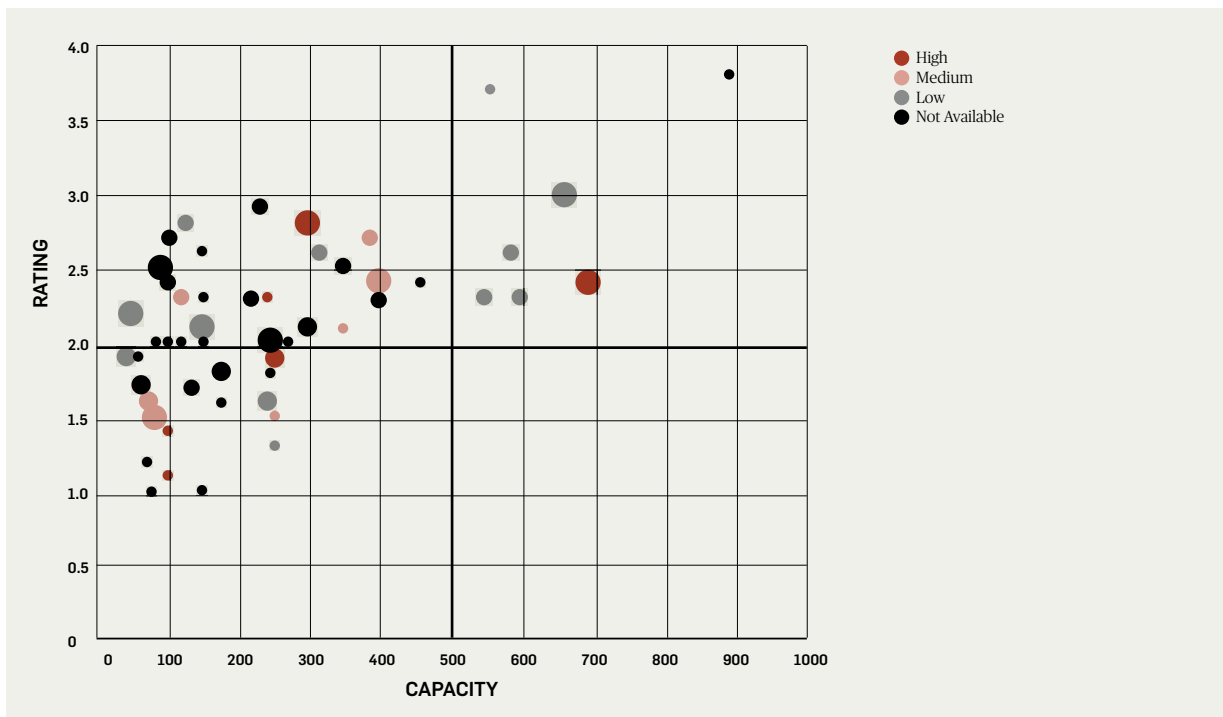
Looking at this chart, we can see that facilities in Council Bluffs tend to be of lower quality and capacity; and, that they support a limited number of program types. The case is similar in

Omaha, where there are only three venues with a quality rating above 3.0 (The Rose Auditorium, The Rose Hitchcock, and The Community Playhouse). The circle on this chart signifies where there is a gap in high quality facilities between the 300 and 500 capacity range.

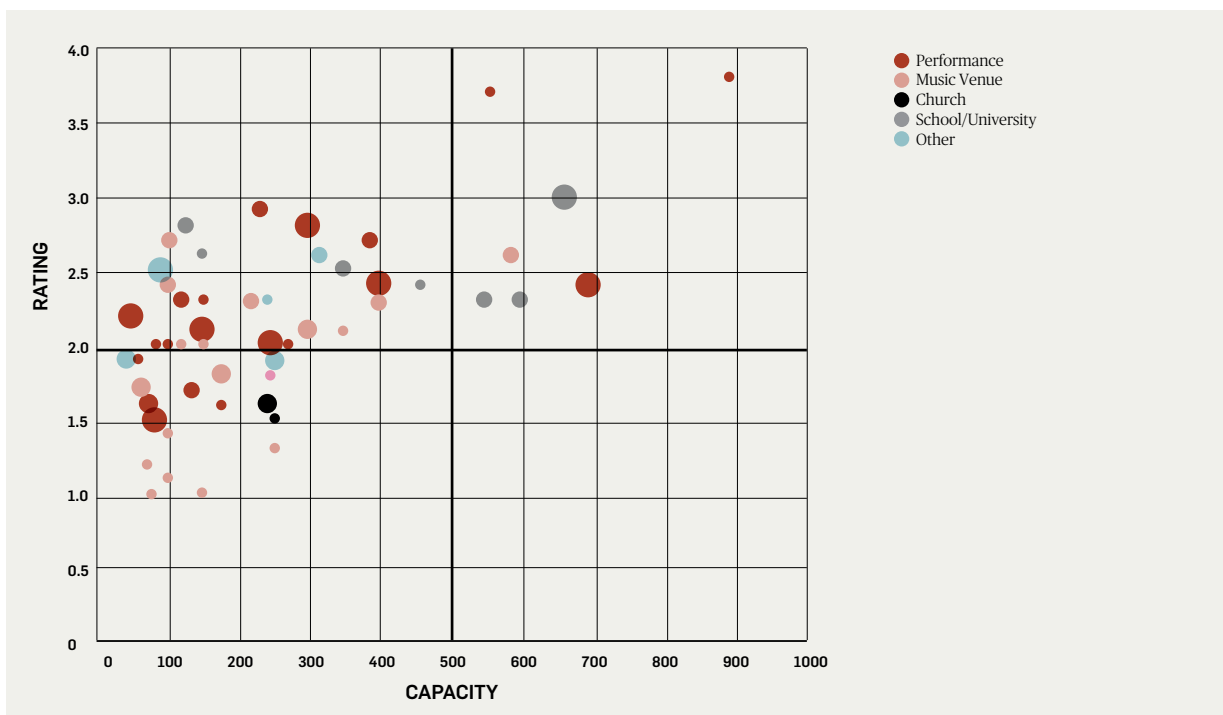
The next matrix compares the availability of Council Bluffs and regional spaces for outside rentals. From this chart, we can see that the majority of facilities have either low or no availability (meaning, it is difficult to book the space on a Friday or Saturday), as indicated by the orange and yellow dots. Few facilities have medium or high availability. Of the facilities with medium or high availability, only one, the Back Room at Barley's, is in Council Bluffs.

On the last matrix, the dot colors represent the type of space, comparing purpose-built performance spaces to those that are located

Facility Rating vs. Capacity Availability



Facility Rating vs. Capacity Type



3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

in schools or churches, for example.

This chart indicates that there are a number of music and performance venues in the Council Bluffs/Omaha area. It is important to note that many of these facilities have been repurposed from spaces like ex-industrial buildings, movie theaters, and storefronts. Facilities in the 'Other' category include two comedy clubs, two museum-type spaces, and a reception hall with a stage.

Overall, this exercise suggests the following:

- Below the 1,000-seat capacity range, the Council Bluffs/Omaha region lacks a high quality, mid-size performance venue.
- There is somewhat of a pioneering spirit in Omaha, with a number of artists/organizations repurposing non-traditional spaces in order to showcase work.
- With the exception of Barley's, there are few opportunities for cultural facility rentals in Council Bluffs.

VISUAL ARTS + CULTURAL FACILITIES

Despite the presence of the Harvester Artist Lofts, Council Bluffs has only one true gallery space: RNG Gallery. Owned and operated by the owners of Dixie Quicks, a well-known local eatery, RNG has rotating exhibitions and the ability to house hanging works, installations, and life-size sculptures. Other gallery spaces include Drips, which is located in the Harvester building, and functions both as a gallery and coffee shop; the Pottawattamie County Courthouse Lobby, which features artwork by Louis Grell, a Council Bluffs native

born in 1887; and 340 Print, a t-shirt printing shop with a gallery space.

What Council Bluffs lacks in art spaces, however, it beyond makes up for in historical facilities. In addition to a handful of historic sites (places having no physical structures but marked by plaques or markers), Council Bluffs has 10 historically significant museums and houses, and an historic jail. The focus of each of these museums varies, ranging from railroad history to Air Force and Mormon memorabilia. All of them have collections including cultural artifacts, some include artworks, and some have items like furniture and textiles. Programming activities are primarily geared towards families and children. None of these spaces were purpose built as museums; however, the Carnegie Library was renovated to accommodate the Union Pacific Museum.

REHEARSAL + PROGRAM SPACE

In total, 19 spaces with cultural programming were evaluated. The programs provided by these facilities include dance, floral arranging, adult education programs, history, and theater. Dance and history are the most commonly offered programs, both at 32%, followed by classes in do-it-yourself projects (21%), visual arts (21%), and food (16%). Only one facility, Chanticleer Theater, offers theatre programming. While there are a number of offerings available for children, adult programming is sparse, and is largely aimed towards a 55+ demographic. Program facilities vary in quality and amenities, although none are particularly conducive for arts programming.

6. COMMUNITY BENEFITS + IMPACTS

As described in the previous study context chapter, a lot of visioning and planning work has addressed the arts and downtown development in Council Bluffs. In addition, the City recently underwent a comprehensive planning process. A draft of the report, titled *Bluffs Tomorrow 2030: A Blueprint for Development + Growth of Council Bluffs*, was released in August. Among the subjects it considers are land use, transportation, parks and open spaces, community facilities, and community character. In the plan's vision statement, it imagines a Council Bluffs that is more prominent in the Omaha and Midwest region; has improved neighborhoods, commercial areas, entertainment options, and employment opportunities; and, serves as an example of how a community can work to build the future it imagines.

In addition to imagining a downtown area that is full of restaurants, shops, and galleries, the plan highlights a vision for the future of the community that supports, preserves, and emphasizes its historical assets. It is proposed they do this by:

- Encouraging the rehabilitation of historic or contributing sites and structures;
- Investing in the stabilization of neighborhoods around historic and contributing places;
- Enhancing the visibility of historic assets

through signage and wayfinding;

- Increasing awareness of programs sponsored by other agencies aimed at supporting historic preservation; and
- Connecting historic sites through trails, tour routes, signage, and marketing information that presents them as a larger and more impactful experience.

Lastly, the report dedicates a section to the future of the South Main District. It endorses the continued adaptation of warehouses into artist spaces, residences, and other 'local' uses, and suggests that the north end of the district, that which meets Downtown, be redeveloped for mixed-use.

Relating this past work to the possibilities inherent in a cultural district, we can make the case that such a district has the potential to help the City achieve the goals outlined in the 2030 plan, particularly those connected to Council Bluffs' history, increased mixed-use development, and increased entertainment options.

There is also potential for a cultural district to provide significant qualitative impact, as investment in cultural space is in line with the City's hopes of raising the profile of Council Bluffs within the region, and improving neighborhoods, commercial areas, and employment opportunities.

CULTURAL TOURISM:

A cultural district, particularly one that emphasizes the distinctive history of Council Bluffs as well as the Harvester, can provide unique, cross-disciplinary, and educational experiences that could support cultural tourism within the region. And, cultural

3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

tourists tend to spend more money and stay longer when traveling than other types of travelers.

SENSE OF PLACE AND QUALITY OF LIFE:

Spaces with programs that engage the public, particularly facilities for neighborhood arts, education, and outreach programs, have potential to contribute to the character and identity of a community. These types of programs and facilities provide opportunities for socialization, enhance the sense of community, and provide hands-on experiences attractive to regional residents—all contributing to the community's quality of life. The presence of arts districts, creative retail shops, distinct arts venues, and a vibrant community of artists who are living, working, and thriving in a particular area further contribute to, and communicate, cultural identity.

The economic development benefits can also be significant. Celebrity-economist and author Richard Florida has turned a simple idea into an empire. The simple idea is that people (particularly people with interesting jobs and skills) like to live and work in creative places, and that cities ought to promote culture and creativity as a means to recruit these desirable people, thus driving economic development. Cities all over North America (and not just big ones) are pursuing economic development goals by promoting the presence of arts and culture. The trick is to help artists in ways that don't stifle creativity, and then surround that creative core with a concentration of more commercially oriented industries (advertising, design, media) that benefit from and feed off of that creativity. Descriptions of specific elements of economic

development that stand to gain from increased arts investment follow:

QUALITY OF WORKFORCE AND CORPORATE RECRUITMENT:

Studies suggest that a strong arts and cultural community ranked among the top factors for decision makers when considering relocation for employment opportunities. The development and positioning of unique and diverse cultural opportunities is proof of a public commitment to maintain, and even improve, the quality of its workforce. Performing arts and cultural facilities are important amenities to offer to corporations considering where to locate their business. The presence of these facilities is often seen as an indicator of a community that has an educated workforce and offers a high quality of life.

NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

Arts facilities also serve as effective community and neighborhood development tools. Research has shown that community arts programs have enhanced and improved community development. The arts enable individuals and groups to express themselves, and in the process, become more involved in contributing to the development of their neighborhoods. Programs across the country that have had particular success in this regard have first focused on local youth.

TEACHING INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY:

Finally, we provide one last economic development benefit, which is that the teaching of the arts is now being recognized as a fundamental need for the North American economy and its workforce, given the automation of many jobs and growing competition from lesser-developed economies.

While there are many benefits to be realized, we would reiterate that economic development begins with investment in artists and arts organizations to create a creative core and critical mass of arts activity and programming that engages local residents and visitors on a variety of levels. This requires a strong infrastructure that provides support, services, and space to the arts community.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the following, there is a case for new cultural facilities within a cultural district in Council Bluffs:

THE MARKET:

Although the market is fluctuating in size, Council Bluffs has a large 55+ population, as well as significant '17 and younger' population. Regionally, the population is well educated with high household incomes, indicating a propensity to support the arts. We also know that Council Bluffs is beginning to seem more attractive to individuals who live and work in Omaha, particularly given the state's more liberal laws.

USER DEMAND:

There is demand for new cultural space in Council Bluffs. Chanticleer Theater is in need of updated facilities that are more centrally located. The UP Museum, a key local arts institution, has already outgrown its current home in the Carnegie Library. And, the Historical Society of Pottawattamie County has dozens of boxes and artifacts stored in a leaky attic above the Squirrel Cage Jail with no place to exhibit them.

EXISTING FACILITIES:

The facility inventory indicates gaps for flexible performance and other program space. The region lacks a high quality, mid-size performance facility. Locally, Council Bluffs stands to benefit from purpose-built arts education facilities that are centrally located, as well as gallery spaces for artists.

BENEFITS + IMPACTS:

A cultural district and any new facilities would capitalize and build on Council Bluffs' existing cultural assets, bringing cohesion and connectedness to the Downtown area. They would also support the City's goals around economic development, establishing a standout regional reputation, supporting and preserving historical assets, downtown revitalization, and corporate recruitment.

8. **RECOMMEN- DATIONS**

Council Bluffs has all of the pieces it needs to develop an active, bustling district: historic sites, museums, dedicated arts groups, and a building full of artist lofts. What it lacks, however, is cohesion and collaboration.

In November, the consultant team spent three days in Council Bluffs engaging with the community, exploring the city's various assets, and gathering information. That work resulted in the recommendation that Council Bluffs' cultural district be focused on two primary activities: making and doing. 'Making' would be concentrated in the South Main District, and 'doing' around Haymarket Square. With that in mind, we have made the following recommendations.

THE 100 BLOCK

Council Bluffs' 100 Block is already quite active, with the farmers' market and establishments like Dixie Quicks and Barley's attracting foot traffic. It is important that whatever is established along Haymarket Square and South Main Street complements and enhances the 100 Block's pre-existing amenities. To activate this section of Council Bluffs further, we suggest the following spaces:

FLEXIBLE PUBLIC SPACE AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO ACCOMMODATE PUBLIC EVENTS AND FESTIVALS



CELEBRATION SQUARE MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO

The 2011 opening of Celebration Square in Mississauga was the result of extensive community engagement to envision how to activate downtown and develop a stronger sense of place and community in the city. With the help of Project for Public Spaces, the City developed a vision for Celebration Square. The square is operated by the City as an outdoor community center with a range of programming and events, from farmers' markets and Canada Day celebrations to performances and festivals.

The square is located between the Central Library and the Civic Hall, and features gardens, a water feature that turns into an ice rink in the winter, a fully equipped main stage for large-scale performances, and a smaller amphitheater. The square hosts more than 100 free events, and attracts more than 500,000 visitors to downtown each year. All events at Celebration Square are free and open to the public. Professional organizations and not-for-profit community groups can submit an application to book the various facilities in the Square. All applications are reviewed through a competitive process.

Federal and Provincial governments partnered with the City to invest \$43 million in the reconstruction of the Square through the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund. The Square is operated by the City's Culture Department.

3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

INDEPENDENT FILM, COMEDY CLUB, AND/OR ALL-AGES VENUES

An independent film, comedy club, and/or all-ages venues have the potential to attract a diverse crowd, and specifically a younger demographic, to the 100 Block area. They could be small, flexible, separate venues, or combined into one multi-functional facility. A comedy club would fit well with the rest of the establishments on the 100 Block, but an all-ages venue might create new opportunities for young people to engage with and learn about music production and the music business.

THE VERA PROJECT SEATTLE, WA

The Vera Project is an all-ages venue based in Seattle, WA. Geared towards 14 to 24 year olds, Vera includes participants in all stages of music production. Programming includes concerts, audio engineering training, visual art exhibitions, live and studio recording, leadership training, silkscreen printing/classes, event production training, and internships. The organization is largely fueled by volunteers, but has a staff of 9 and a board.



Their venue features a 350-seat showroom with a full stage, sound, lighting, and projection; a gallery; and a conference room and greenroom, each with a capacity of 20.

EXPANDED ARTS AND MUSIC RETAIL

We would also suggest that Lidgett Music be expanded, or that new businesses that offer music technology equipment for sale and rent, music lessons, music recording facilities, and music production services for amateur and professional artists be recruited to complement it.



SWEETWATER FORT WAYNE, IN

Sweetwater Sound, Inc. is a full service music retailer and service business, with both an on-line and local presence in Fort Wayne. Its campus includes facilities that house a showroom with instruments, a studio section with equipment, recording software and live sound equipment, and a warehouse that houses the largest stock of music equipment for sale in the United States. The retail

outlet is also an authorized Mac retailer and provides audio and video software and training. Additional facilities include a recording studio, private lesson rooms, and programs. Sweetwater also hosts clinics and workshops featuring producers, musicians, and other music industry professionals. Offerings have included a recording master class, a live sound workshop for houses of worship, a songwriting workshop with a former member of the Eagles, a progressive rock performance workshop, and a weekly drum circle featuring Sweetwater drum students.

HAYMARKET SQUARE DOING

Bayliss Park is a Council Bluffs treasure. Recognized this year as one of the American Planning Association's Great Places in America, Bayliss is activated with movies, live music, and other events. Additionally, the area surrounding the park has a high concentration of historic buildings, including the Squirrel Cage Museum and UP Museum/Carnegie Library. Some activities and facilities that might further transform this part of town into a place for doing might include:

COMMUNITY ARTS CENTER

Plans are in the works to move the UP Museum into the Harvester II building. Should this happen, it is proposed that the Carnegie be turned into a community arts and culture center, an idea that would fit in with

the 'doing' aspect of the Haymarket Square area. Here is one example of an historic building turned community cultural center:



THE BANK OF THE ARTS NEW BERN, NC

The Craven Arts Council was founded in 1974 to promote countywide cultural initiatives. In the 1980s, it merged with a local art gallery, becoming the Craven Arts Council + Gallery. Today, the organization is housed in what is known as The Bank of the Arts, a former bank building donated by First Citizens Bank. The facility is used for art shows, music events, and community rentals. In addition, the Council provides programming that includes grantmaking and city beautification projects (banner hanging, murals, public art, and so on). They also facilitate an online store featuring the work of local and regional artists, and publish a bi-monthly publication sharing news about art-related activities in the community. The Council has a staff of six, and a board of 12.

3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

ARTS EDUCATION FACILITIES

The UP Museum's move also creates the opportunity for a facility, or set of facilities, that support arts education, partnering with existing arts organizations, regional schools, and others to design and deliver various programs in a central location as well as out in the schools.



MILWAUKEE YOUTH ARTS CENTER MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

In 2002, the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra and First Stage Children's Theatre formed a nonprofit organization with the goal of creating a home for rehearsal, administration, and performance. The Symphony and First Stage were previously housed in the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, one of Milwaukee's premier performance facilities. However, both organizations were expanding their relative programs, and required additional space. Following a \$12 million capital campaign (which included a \$1.5 million maintenance reserve), the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center (MYAC) opened in 2005. The building is

owned and operated by its own nonprofit organization, which is governed by a 6-member board appointed from each tenant board, and jointly owned by the Symphony and First Stage. The operating agreement between the two organizations requires that both partners make up the difference in MYAC's operations when there is a deficit. The organizations frequently share expenses for purchasing office supplies and services.

Located just outside of downtown Milwaukee, the MYAC has 86,000 square feet of useable space, 56,000 of which is currently dedicated to programming. The facility has five rehearsal halls, including a 3,800 square foot space that can also be used as a performance venue, administrative offices, a large lobby and public space, nine classrooms, and two small studio spaces which are used as practice rooms. MYAC also houses a costume shop, music library, and instrument storage.

ACTIVE STOREFRONTS

Within the community, there is a movement of historic home and building restoration and preservation. This should continue within Haymarket Square, with particular emphasis placed on storefronts. Ideally, arrangements would be made with some, or all, of the law offices currently based along South Main Street in effort to free up those spaces for retail or other cultural uses. Here is an example of a program that animates inactive storefronts with temporary art exhibitions related to community history:



PELHAM ART CENTER STOREFRONT PROJECT PELHAM, NY

Pelham Art Center's Storefront Project activates storefronts in downtown Pelham, NY by installing temporary, "pop-up" art exhibitions by emerging artists. These street-level exhibitions serve to energize both the space and the streetscape, continuously refreshing the cultural environment of downtown Pelham. Exhibitions of painting, photography, and other two-dimensional work, along with sculpture and installations, are shown for roughly one month. The Storefront Project is part of PAC's larger Public Art Program, which includes sculpture and installation exhibitions in the Pelham Art Center courtyard. Free arts programming positively impacts the neighborhood, stimulates local businesses, and builds community by attracting residents and new visitors to an arts destination.

An open call was published inviting artists to respond to one or more of the following criteria when submitting a proposal: site-specificity, community building, public

engagement, interactivity, history of Pelham/Westchester County/New York, and/or the importance of creating and sustaining public spaces. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis with 12 proposals accepted per year. All work is for sale.

ANIMATING BAYLISS PARK, STOREFRONTS, AND NEARBY FACILITIES WITH HISTORICAL PROGRAMMING

In effort to highlight Council Bluffs' past, present, and future, a concentration of historical programming should take place along the cultural district. This might involve incorporating historic features into the park, activating the park with an annual history festival, coordinating historic walking tours, or facilitating an oral history project that collects and archives stories and accounts of Council Bluffs residents, but also provides a place for all residents to access and discuss those stories.



3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

TENNESSEE BICENTENNIAL PARK AND HISTORY FESTIVAL NASHVILLE, TN

With just a simple walk in Bicentennial Park visitors can experience many facets of Tennessee's history, including a 200-foot granite map of the state, a World War II Memorial, a 95-Bell Carillon, a Pathway of History, and the Rivers of Tennessee Fountains. Eleven planters along the Walkway of Counties show native plant species from different regions of the state. Park rangers provide interpretive park tours for groups, historical presentations in period dress, and off-site programs by reservation. Program topics illustrate Tennessee's rich history from early settlement days to present time.

A variety of events are offered throughout the year, an annual highlight being Tennessee's History Festival. Held in the fall, this free event is a popular educational field trip for area schools. During the festival, historical interpreters provide hands-on demonstrations of period trades and activities, providing a glimpse of how people lived from day to day during the mid-19th Century. Schools and groups wishing to attend the festival make reservations with the park manager.

A visitor center, picnic tables, and restrooms are located under a train trestle. The Nashville Farmer's Market is located adjacent to the park. Open year-round, the market is home to restaurants and shops with a wide variety of offerings and cuisines.



BOISE VOICES PORTLAND, OR

Boise Voices is an oral history project developed out of a collaboration between Boise-Eliot Elementary School and the Albina Youth Opportunity School. Together, the schools partnered with a writer and independent radio producer to interview local elders. The elders signed up to be interviewed at a nearby store, and then had a 45-minute conversation with a team of two students. Recordings of the interviews were shared with interviewees and the Oregon Historical Society.

FORT LAUDERDALE HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS FORT LAUDERDALE, FL

Fort Lauderdale's Riverwalk Arts and Entertainment Consortium is a partnership between the Broward Center for Performing Arts, Nova Southeastern University's Museum of Art, Florida Grand Opera, Fort Lauderdale History Center, Bonnet House Museum, and

Photos



Gardens Historic Stranahan House Museum. Together, the organizations promote cultural tourism in Fort Lauderdale. As part of this, they've developed the Fort Lauderdale Historical Walking Tours, a series of history-based tours around the City, with a focus on the community's historic Riverwalk.

The Fort Lauderdale Historical Society also offers a series of guided walking tours of the Riverwalk, during which participants visit some of the oldest buildings in the city. Stories focus on Old Fort Lauderdale, the early Pioneers, and the Florida East Coast Railroad. Tours are offered once a month for no charge.

SOUTH MAIN DISTRICT MAKING

Finally, building on the presence of the Harvester, the last component of the district will focus on making. This portion of the district would highlight the working artist. Facilities might include:

FLEX SPACE FOR PERFORMING ARTS AND LIVE ENTERTAINMENT



GALAPAGOS ART SPACE BROOKLYN, NY

Galapagos Arts Space, New York City's first 'green' cultural venue, is a cultural arts center in Dumbo, Brooklyn. Galapagos originally opened in 1995 in North Williamsburg, but moved to a 102-year old horse stable in

3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

Dumbo in 2008, which it renovated to include a 1,600 square foot indoor lake, and a flexible, mixed use mezzanine and bar.

The space comes alive through a mix of produced regular events and parties, presented performances, rental performances, and corporate and private events. On any given week you could find a fashion show, a Filipino American dance concert, a play-in-a-day festival, family and children's events, and an aerial arts dance company. Galapagos also produces its own events, including Floating Kabarette, a weekly variety show that is advertised as "a fun, sexy night out." In addition to their programming, Galapagos provides event-planning services to rental clients.

Galapagos certainly sees itself as a force in the arts world. They do not accept any government grants or public funding of any kind, instead depending on revenue from their audience, believing that "if the work we present is strong, communicative, and effective, audiences will support us." Additionally, Galapagos sees itself as an "independent, evolved model for supporting the performing arts," an ethos that permeates everything they do. To that end, they are interested in supporting artists and projects. Functioning as an incubator for new ideas, a number of projects that Galapagos has helped launch have now spread to other venues and cities. These include happenings like Creative Mornings, a "breakfast lecture for the creative community", Nerd Nite NYC, and Opera on Tap. Galapagos also has a critic in residence, and sponsors an international residency in partnership with Residency Unlimited, which offers an NYC artist the opportunity to spend six-months in Switzerland. After nearly 20

years in New York, Galapagos will be moving headquarters to Detroit at the end of this year.



THE WELLMONT THEATER MONTCLAIR, NJ

The Wellmont Theater has seen many iterations since it opened in 1922 as a live theater. In 1929, it was converted to a motion picture theater. In the 1970s, it was modernized, and then, after closing in 2006, purchased by new owners. Two years later, in 2008, the facility re-opened as a concert venue. The \$3 million renovation included a new bar and a new orchestra and mezzanine area that makes it possible to use the space for seated, dance, and general admission shows. The venue now has capacity for 2,600 people standing and 1,500 for seated shows. A recent addition to the space is a lounge-like lobby, which includes a bar that will be open in the evenings, potentially serving as a venue for smaller music performances.

Originally managed by Bowery Presents, management switched to Live Nation in the summer of 2013. The building mainly presents popular music shows and comedy, and has succeeded in bringing an impressive

roster of headliners to the space. The space is also available, however, for meetings, graduations, award ceremonies, TV shows, benefits, fundraisers, concerts and fashion shows.

DIGITAL MEDIA FACILITIES



COMMUNITY MEDIA CENTER GRAND RAPIDS, MI

The Community Media Center started as a public access television station—Grand Rapids Cable Access Center—in 1981, and became a role model for the transformation from a traditional public access television station to a multi-disciplinary Community Media Center.

The non-profit center provides training in radio, television, media, and information technology as well as access to all the necessary equipment. The center also has a special program to assist non-profits with information technology needs and traditional and new media marketing tools.

With the successful completion of its \$1.2 million capital campaign in 1997, the Community Media Center integrated its services under one roof for the first time in a renovated, 1920s, neighborhood library. In 2005, the Media Center acquired the Wealthy Theatre, a struggling historic theater, with a plan to transform the space into a technically advanced theater for community use. A subsequent \$2.4 million campaign helped pay off the debts associated with the acquisition and raise additional funding to upgrade the Media Center's other programs.

CMC currently employs 30 full- and part-time staff members, and engages nearly 200 volunteers. Staff positions include key executive administrative positions (Executive Director and Director of Operations) as well as a New Media Planner, TV and Radio Station Managers, Production Managers, Operations Assistants, Music Director, Communications Relations Coordinator, Education Director, Education Project Manager, IT staff, and other positions for focused programs and publications, like The Rapidian and Wealthy Theatre.

The Center has an operating budget of \$1.7 million, nearly 60% of which is earned from contract revenue, venue, IT and media production services, and membership dues.

3 / NEEDS ASSESSMENT /

MAKER SPACES

Council Bluffs already has some maker/do-it-yourself programming. Most of this programming, however, is happening in more traditional learning spaces. A maker space could be designed to accommodate hands-on learning and making of all types—from knitting and weaving to die cutting and garden growing.



TECHSHOP MENLO PARK, CA

TechShop is a “maker space” that combines the concepts of co-working spaces with industrial design. The first TechShop opened in Menlo Park, CA, and has since expanded to San Francisco, CA; San Jose, CA; Detroit-Allen Park, MI; Austin-Round Rock, TX; Pittsburgh, PA; Chandler, AZ; and Arlington, VA.

These membership-based, do-it-yourself workshop and prototyping studios provide access to over \$1 million worth of professional light-industrial equipment, software, space, and instruction. Tools available include laser cutters, plastics and electronics labs,

machine shops, wood shops, metal working shops, welding stations, and water jet cutters. They have become community hubs for ‘idea people’—builders, hobbyists, artists, and crafters—to gather, share ideas, and connect around innovation and design. The open access model encourages creativity and exploration, the type of tinkering that can lead to prototypes and product design.

Membership is open to all who pay a monthly or annual fee and take a safety and basic use course. Fees vary by location, ranging from monthly fees of \$125-\$175 and annual fees of \$1,200-\$1,395.

ARTIST WORK/SHOW/SELL SPACE

Another option is to really hone in on the Harvester, developing it into a bustling and active artist live/work facility. Anecdotal research indicates that one of the Harvester’s primary challenges is the reluctance on the part of some residents participate in events and activities or display work. A potential solution to this problem would be to create a mandate requiring residents to have a certain number of shows each year. One example of such a space is as follows:



ARLINGTON ARTS CENTER ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

Arlington Arts Center (AAC) is a non-profit, contemporary visual arts center dedicated to presenting and supporting regional artists in the Mid-Atlantic States. Through their exhibitions, educational programs, and subsidized studios, they create a space that supports and cultivates the regional arts community.

Located in a renovated elementary school, the AAC has seven gallery spaces, education classrooms, and studio space for 12 resident artists and 1 visiting artist. The facilities include a lounge area, a kitchen, and a shower as well as gallery and exhibition spaces that are available for event rental.

AAC offers a Studio Residency program that provides a space where artists can grow, bringing them together with the community to encourage interaction, dialogue, and exploration. Artists apply and are selected based on criteria that include artistic merit, potential for collaborative outreach to the community, and diversity of artistic representation. Selected artists are granted a 2-year residency, with the ability to renew twice, for a total of 6 years. Visiting artists come from around the world for one to 6-week residencies. Artists are not required to keep their studios open on a regular basis; but, rather, are required to open them to the public at least five times a year.

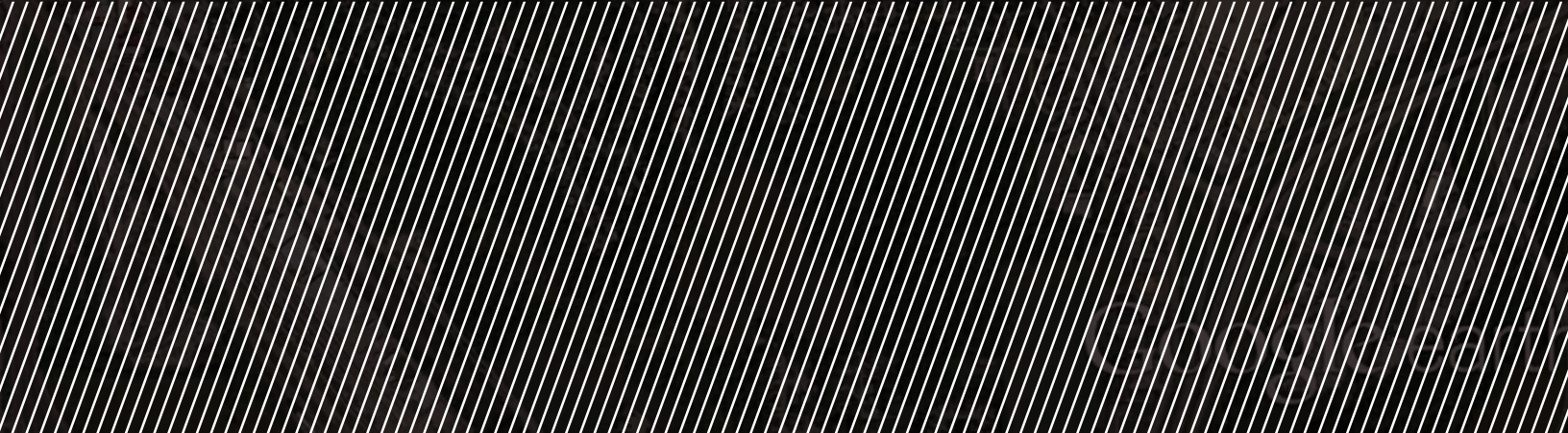
Resident artists are also supported through exhibition opportunities. Each artist has a solo or 2-person exhibit every other year in one of the galleries. In addition to these resident artist exhibitions, the AAC curates exhibitions of emerging contemporary artists in the Mid-Atlantic region. They issue an annual call for proposals, which is reviewed by a committee. Selected artists mount self-

contained shows in one of the seven separate gallery spaces. The AAC also presents themed invitational shows, generally around contemporary topics, and offers related lectures, workshops, and panel discussions.

The AAC has a staff of five, which includes an Executive Director, a Director of Administration and Education, Outreach, Marketing, and Advertising positions. They also run a volunteer program.

An aerial photograph of a city grid, likely Los Angeles, with a dark, semi-transparent overlay. The grid pattern of streets and buildings is visible. The bottom of the image features a decorative pattern of white diagonal lines on a dark background.

4 / ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONTEXT /



4 / ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONTEXT /

This assessment is to establish if there is a need and opportunity to develop a cultural district in Council Bluffs. We do this by looking at potential demand for facilities (on the part of audiences and users), the current supply of facilities, and how a cultural district might serve the broader goals of the community. The analysis leads to a series of recommendations as to what might be included in a new cultural district in Council Bluffs, along with a unifying vision and purpose for the District.

The study area associated with a potential South Main Street Cultural District is both typical and unusual in comparison to most urban centers. First, it has a tight network of gridded streets. The area is relatively compact; it is possible to walk to many parts and destinations fairly quickly. Secondly, there are good connections to adjacent neighborhoods; many people can walk into the downtown within less than 10 minutes. This all makes for the potential of a cultural district that exhibits a high degree of connectivity within the area between places and destinations.

STREET NETWORK / CONNECTIVITY

On the other hand, there are some aspects of the street system that could work against a cohesive and dynamic cultural district. There are relatively few east/west through streets that tie the district to other parts of the larger community and region. At the north end, West Broadway performs that role. However, the land uses and visual character of that corridor do not lend themselves to a gracious, high quality introduction to Council Bluffs. Fortunately, the City is engaged in a planning process that will identify strategic actions and capital investments that can turn that image around.

At the south end of the district, South 9th

Street provides a generally good connection between destinations along the river and downtown. But that street, too, has some visual issues that do not reinforce the amenities, attractions, and heritage of the community. As an example the roadside display of the giant golden spike does not speak fully to the rich history associated with the building of the transcontinental railroad. Moreover, where 9th intersects with South Main, there is an absence of anything that refers people to the array of activities available in the district. The presence of a gas station at that corner presents a less than elegant gateway effect.

The visual impact of the intersection of 9th and South Main might be greatly enhanced if Con Agra were to celebrate its presence at that location. As a major employer and mainstay of the local economy, it could tell its story through a dramatic and engaging marking of that corner.

Finally, there is an unusual aspect to the potential district that could work against its coming to full fruition. There are two pair of streets that operate as couplets. One set is related to the elevated expressway and serves to expedite traffic into and out of the downtown. The other set is Main Street and Pearl Street. While there might have been a solid rationale for this at one time, it is commonly observed in many communities throughout the country that couplets do

not support local retailing very well. Shops, services and restaurants depend upon a customer base that is continually reminded of their presence and access is easy at all hours of the day. Couplets tend to serve through traffic during peak hours, less so local destinations. This situation could have combined with other forces to lessen the role of South Main Street as a retail destination. With the exception of the library, it seems to have evolved into more of an office location.

On a positive note, the look and feel of the 100 Block of Broadway represents almost the ideal set of physical elements that support restaurants and other retail. The sidewalks are generous and well-appointed. Parking lots are screened with elegant masonry walls. Lighting is called to pedestrians. Outside seating is encouraged. On-street parking is prevalent. And storefronts are designed to present visible activity inside. Some of these same principles could be applied over time to South Main Street.

PUBLIC REALM / STREETScape

The City has done a good job in its initial improvements to the public realm in downtown. The improvements to Bayliss Park and the streetscapes all express the city's care and commitment to creating public places in downtown. The challenge is now to re-invigorate downtown street level uses to bring life to the public realm. By encouraging ground floor uses such as restaurants, shops, coffee shops and pubs, the investments in downtown streets and parks can be leveraged to activate the city and bring even more people downtown. Allowing and encouraging outdoor seating and display along building frontages will greatly help to enliven the area. Allowing the temporary use of on-street parking stalls as parklets for seasonal seating and café use is an inexpensive way of adding vitality to downtown when sidewalks

are not sufficiently wide for pedestrians and seating. Screening of surface parking lots and loading areas will provide visual continuity to the streetscape and encourage pedestrians to walk past areas that would otherwise be uninviting. The addition of planting strips along the street and perhaps additional street trees at the middle of each block will further enhance the pedestrian experience with shade and separating cars from the sidewalk. And extending streetscape improvements to the south in order to connect the downtown core to the Harvester Lofts area will expand the perceived extent of the arts district in Council Bluffs.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

The map in this section illustrates the pattern of development that has emerged over time within the corridor. As with many moderate-sized towns within metropolitan areas, the downtown area of Council Bluffs has been somewhat fractured over the decades. There are certainly blocks within the South Main district that have intact buildings. Many of these have been renovated and continue to contribute to the historic character of the area. However, there are also examples of more suburban patterns of the development, such as the OMNI office complex on Broadway that was initially a retail center. Suburban patterns generally involve buildings set back from the street behind parking lots. Whenever, this happens, it breaks the continuity of the retail activity and makes it increasingly less convenient or appealing to walk within the area. Studies in human behavior have shown that people will walk many blocks if there are interesting things to see and do adjacent to the sidewalk. When those aspects are not present, a place tends to be mainly about moving through and storing cars.

4 / ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONTEXT /

The southern portion of the South Main Street corridor has less of this pattern, but it still shows up in structures such as the senior center. The façade along the Main Street side does little to contribute to the character or liveliness as it almost totally turns its back to that street. For downtowns with a fragile historic character, it is vitally important that codes be employed to prevent a gradual eroding of the very qualities that make older streets more charming and dynamic.

It should be noted that along South Main Street, although many buildings are splendid with regard to architecture, the street level uses in some do not contribute much to an economic vitality. There may be storefronts, but closed blinded and office uses present a distinctly inanimate frontage along the street. It is understandable that the few attempts by retail businesses to locate their have failed; a store essentially would feel isolated. Retail thrives when there are other retailers close by.

At some point, the City might benefit from have the South Main area looked at by the Main Street Program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. That program has a set of clear principles that can be applied to nurture and bring back classic main streets. It does take time; change doesn't happen overnight. But many cities have seen their main streets come back alive after following those principles.

At the south end of the study area, there is another set of issues with respect to development patterns. That area contains remnants of structures that were actively used for functions related to the processing, storage and distribution of products which were largely related to railroad access and



IMAGE Existing Facilities Inventory

IMAGE Main Street Activation



4 / ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONTEXT /

the agricultural industry. Of course, ConAgra continues to operate with an expansive plant; indeed, they wish to expand their operations. But the smaller buildings in the area are no longer in industrial use.

In some cases, such as the Harvester I and II buildings, this has opened up opportunities for adaptive re-use to artistic and cultural functions. In other cases, older industrial structures have been minimally used and contribute little to the character of the district. Undoubtedly some of these could lend themselves to creative re-designs and other, more active uses. But this will take time, as leases and ownerships turn. A related issue is that in the early era of industrial activity, some of these buildings were surrounded by areas for outside storage, truck maneuvering, loading and access. Consequently, the predominant pattern involves big gaps of space between buildings. This works against a cohesive district in which people park once and then walk between different destinations. Some of these underused properties might lend themselves to forms of infill development that take place on the empty portions of the properties but fold in the older structures. This can make for a rich interplay of old and new and continues to exhibit the unique local character that people expect to find in such areas.



IMAGE Logo of ConAgra Foods



IMAGES Union Pacific Museum (top), Veterans Plaza (bottom)

NEIGHBORHOODS

The South Main Street Cultural District area is flanked by neighborhoods on both its east and west sides.

To the west, there are numerous blocks that contain many modest homes, some on good repair, others not. Clearly, households there have moderate incomes and there are likely many residents who are older. Nonetheless people in these areas could take advantage of activities and events in the cultural district. This could include food trucks, farmer's markets, flea markets, seasonal celebrations, and the like. In addition, if there were arts education programs, children in the neighborhood would benefit.

If the City does not have a no-interest or low-interest rate home rehabilitation program, it could develop one as have other cities and towns. This can help bolster the housing stock and encourage reinvestment and expansion.

To the east, there are a group of overlapping mini-neighborhoods nestled into the sloping terrain of one of the bluffs. Several parks of varying sizes are also located there. In these neighborhoods, there are numerous homes that have historic value and most of those have been well-maintained. The general impression of these areas is that they are mature, settled and well-cared for. They benefit from views, open space, lots of mature trees, and proximity to the historic downtown. There is evidence that other people from the metropolitan area are buying homes and investing in their upgrades, finding the surroundings gracious and appealing. This population is a great fit for a cultural district, as they have more disposable income and



IMAGES Carstens Farm Days (top), Bayliss Park Fountain (bottom)

4 / ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONTEXT /

preferences for performing and visual arts.

The South Main Cultural District could offer venues, programs and services that attract a broad cross-section of people. The key is to provide many different types of events, activities and on-going programs. One untapped resource is the senior center. It could be fruitful to examine ways to infuse their programs with forms of art and perhaps engage local artists in some of their activities. One easy and low-cost change would be to transform the space between the senior center structure and South Main Street into a temporary sculpture garden, with pathways and sitting areas. This could draw the senior out for exercise and lingering and present more of an active side to the street.

PRESENCE OF THE RAILROAD

The influence of the railroad on the growth and development of Council Bluffs has been profound. Track still lace through the community to remind people that it is still very much a potent driver of the economy. Fortunately, two museums have taken on the role of documenting, describing and interpreting the contributions and stories of rail transportation.

Rails West has a museum, including rolling stock displayed outside at the extreme south end of the cultural district corridor. The UP Museum, now housed in the Carnegie Library building with sophisticated exhibits and a helpful staff, considering a move into the Harvester II building where it can significantly

expand its displays and curatorial efforts.

An unused railroad spur that cuts across the district will be abandoned, allowing land in that area to be made available for development. This could involve keeping some visual remnant of the alignment or the tracks so that people can be reminded of its role in the community. There are examples of public spaces that retain old tracks as part of the design. Or, at least include interpretive signs. One community that vacated old rails commissioned an artist to fabricate a piece out of old railroad signal poles and arms as a visual recall. There are many ways, both obvious and subtle, to recognize the history of a place.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

The cultural district area is infused with a richly layered history. There is the role of the railroad as mentioned previously. There is the Dodge House, with all of its stories and people. The Squirrel Cage has itself multiple layers from penology to eye care hidden in its walls. There is the Carnegie building and the various stages of the city and the county as they evolved. Abundant architectural heritage from the late 1800's is found in multiple locations. There is even the geologic history in the form of the bluffs which shapes the community even today.

All of these aspects could find themselves being curated, explained, and interpreted in multiple ways. Not all of the information needs to be portrayed in a didactic manner. It should be possible for artists to creatively express elements of the past and weave them into expressions about the present. Some

references could be obvious and dramatic; others could be subtle and referential.

Skillful presentations of the wide range of historic resources in the district can illuminate aspects of contemporary society. The railroads are formidable force even today. Fostering artistic expression is a fundamental foundation of our culture, raising core issues in our culture of freedom of speech. We often see ourselves in the present more clearly when we look through the lens of the past. The multitude of stories, facts, artifacts, and artistry can provide many platforms in which to build and sustain a cultural district.

previously demolished. They can help people understand what is not immediately evident. While these kind of display signs are immensely informative, they need not be everywhere. A handful of strategically located signs throughout the district could even be part of a mapped, self-guided walking route.

WAYFINDING & INTERPRETATION

The City already has developed a full scale system of wayfinding signage. It is well-designed kit of parts that have application to different types of locations and uses. Some signs have already been installed in locations around Council Bluffs as funds have been available. More signs, strategically located, in the district could help visitors get oriented and realize where destinations are. These signs are principally intended to be directional and indicative of a location in space.

But there is another kind of signage that should be considered at some point. This is interpretive signage. Typical interpretive signs in the public realm are oriented to people on foot rather than vehicles. They contain a combination of photographs and brief text that can quickly convey the highpoints of a place, a person, or a location. These are especially useful for buildings that are no longer around, having being

4 / ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONTEXT / NORTH OF 9TH AVENUE



**BROADWAY
FOUNTAIN
PARK**

RECOMMENDATION:
Infill activating uses
around Bayliss Park

**BAYLISS
PARK**

SQUIRREL CAGE JAIL

RECOMMENDATION:
Restore the Squirrel Cage Museum

NEW INTERPRETIVE PLAZA

RECOMMENDATION:
Create a space for outdoor displays,
interpretive signs and events.

**HAYMARKET
SQUARE**



RECOMMENDATION:
Enhance streetscape
and encourage activating
ground levels uses

MUSIC
VENUES

RNC
GALLERY

BROADWAY 100 BLOCK

RECOMMENDATION:
Enhance streetscape with catenary lighting

RECOMMENDATION:
Consider converting Pearl
and Main into 2-way streets

CARNEGIE LIBRARY BUILDING

RECOMMENDATION:
Relocation of UP Museum and
convert into a Community Arts Center

RECOMMENDATION:
Enhance streetscape
and encourage activating
ground levels uses

**KIRN
PARK**

4 / ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONTEXT / SOUTH OF 9TH AVENUE

SQUIRREL CAGE JAIL

RECOMMENDATION:
Restore the Squirrel Cage Museum

NEW INTERPRETIVE PLAZA

RECOMMENDATION:
Create a space for outdoor displays,
interpretive signs and events.

PCDC OWNED CATALYST SITES

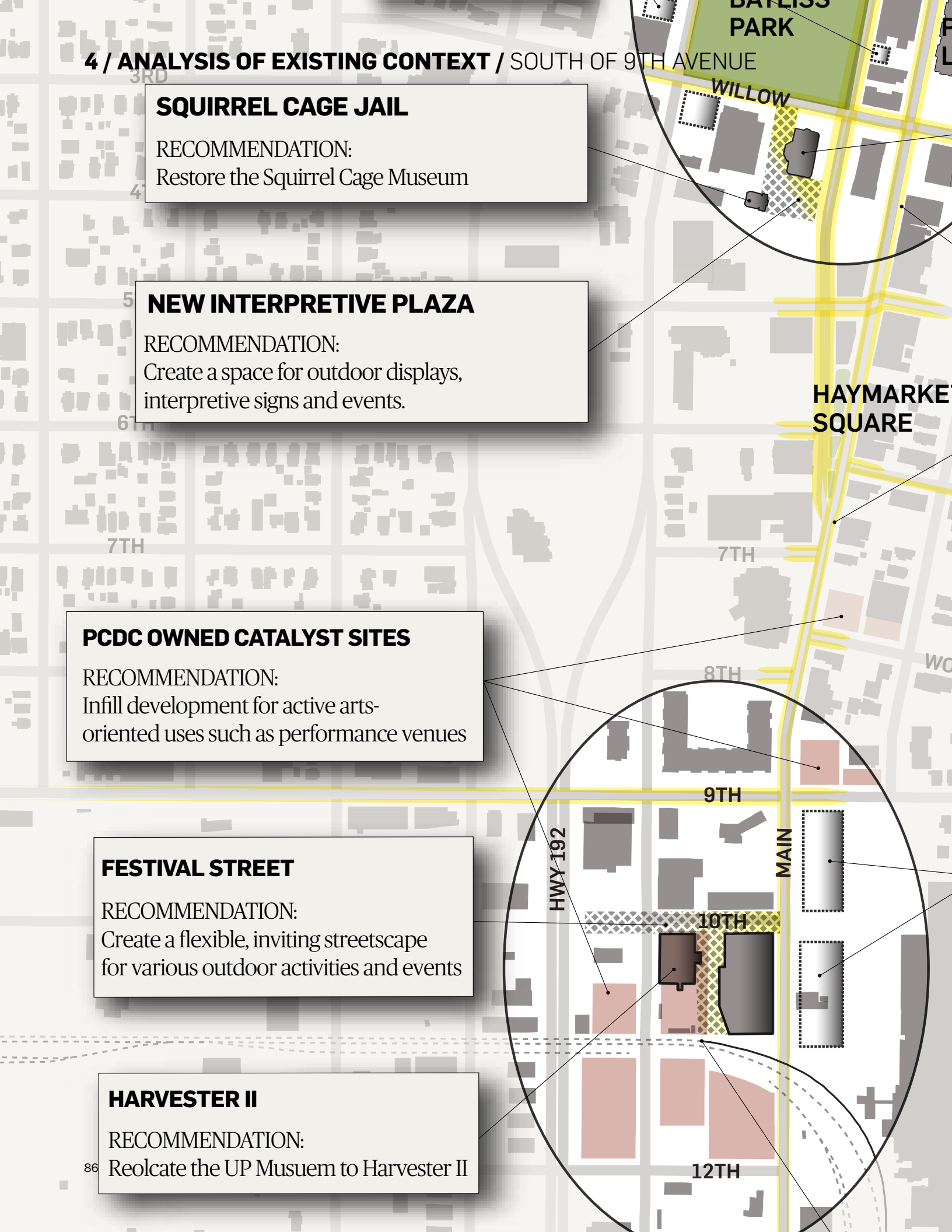
RECOMMENDATION:
Infill development for active arts-
oriented uses such as performance venues

FESTIVAL STREET

RECOMMENDATION:
Create a flexible, inviting streetscape
for various outdoor activities and events

HARVESTER II

RECOMMENDATION:
Relocate the UP Museum to Harvester II





CARNEGIE LIBRARY BUILDING

RECOMMENDATION:
Relocation of UP Museum and
convert into a Community Arts Center

RECOMMENDATION:
Enhance streetscape
and encourage activating
ground levels uses

**HISTORIC
DODGE
HOUSE**

**BERESHEIM
HOUSE**

CONAGRA

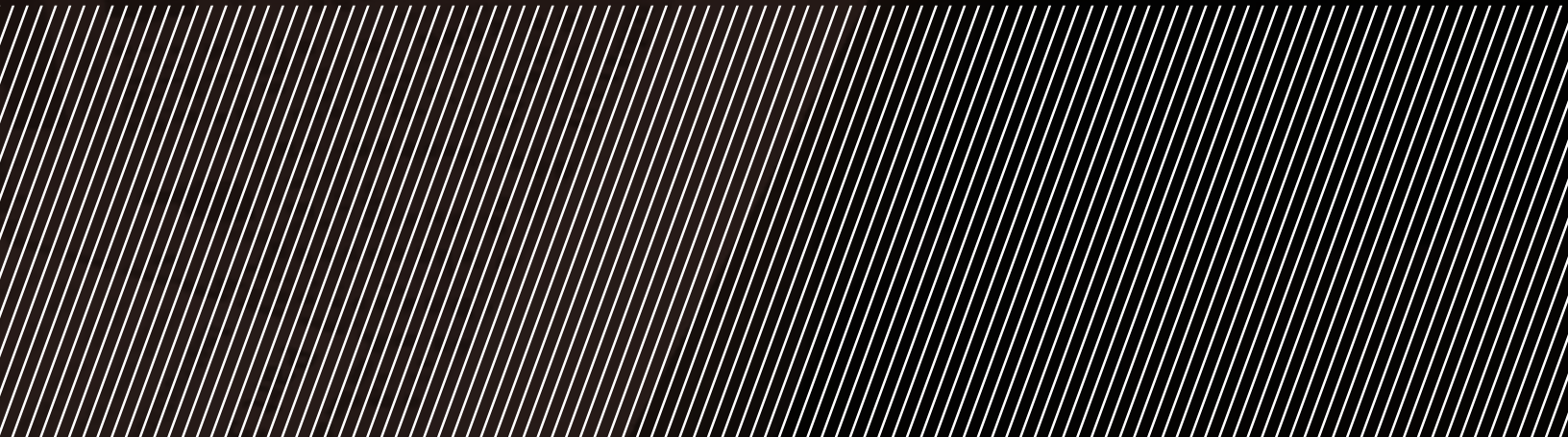
RECOMMENDATION:
Encourage furture ConAgra
expansion to activate street edge

**KIRN
PARK**

FAIRMOUNT PARK



5 / PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT / PROCESS



5 / PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS /

The South Main Arts and Cultural District planning process included a Storefront Studio concept, where anyone in the community interested in the process was invited to meet the consultant team, share thoughts and ideas, take part in exercises, and join the design team in considering approaches. The studio included two evening workshops on November 18th and 20th, with presentations and activities to advance the plan. The sections below summarize the thoughts, ideas, activities, and workshops for the Storefront Studio.

COUNCIL BLUFFS MINI POLL

Studio Week included an informal questionnaire seeking participant input on both the direction and strategy for the South Main Arts and Culture District plan. A table showing complete results and verbatim responses is included at the end of this document.

REFINING DIRECTION

The “Refining Direction” portion of the mini-poll asked participants to weigh in with a “yes,” “no,” or “don’t know” choice on eight key issues. Figure 1-A below provides a graphical representation of the participants’ answers. The key messages from this part of the mini poll are:

- Participants overwhelmingly support the idea of diversifying activities within the South Main District, encouraging repeated and spontaneous visits.
- Participants desired a programed set of diverse activities and events.
- Participants supported big changes

within the district, establishing a new identity and involving significant initial investment.

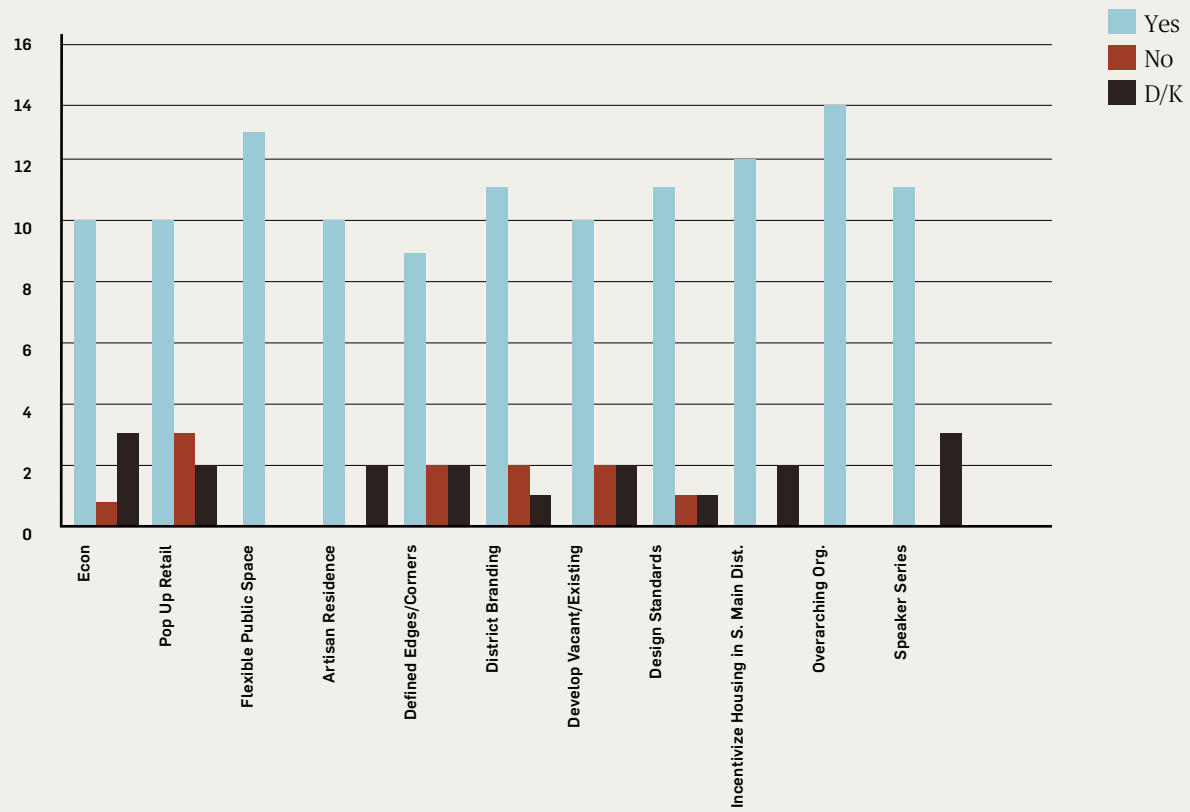
- Participants generally favored a more active partnership between public and private agencies, agreeing that a greater degree of collaboration will benefit the district’s efforts.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

On the other side of the mini-poll were a series of questions asking participants to think about the character of successful arts and cultural districts and what Council Bluffs might do to incorporate them in South Main. Participants were prompted to offer specific suggestions on what they would do in the district. A “word cloud” - projected during the storefront studio and included at the end of this report - displayed the frequency of individual words in the answers to these questions. Some of the key features of participant responses are:

- Participants indicated a desire for an inclusive, local, family-oriented, arts and culture destination including unique eating establishments.
- Participants indicated a desire for

Survey



5 / PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS /

more organization of non-profit, arts-related groups within the community.

- Participants favored increased investment in the area, with a streamlined and affordable permitting process for using public right-of-way for special events or temporary commercial activity.
- Participants indicated that engaging people in the district is important for the district's success, and that activities and spaces should invite families and young people.
- There was a general sense that the district needs better branding and overall organization of activities, more public art, more housing, and more spaces for informal gathering.
- Participants identified an arts festival, an art swap, sidewalk art, the promotion of young artists, tax credits for businesses, and an art cooperative as additional thoughts for events or specific programs.

COUNCIL BLUFFS WORKSHOP 1

At the first workshop, Council Bluffs residents considered assets and opportunities in the South Main district through the lens of entertainment activities, historic resources, and creativity. These three categories are derived from Webb's report on the district and its strategic positioning, referencing the "entertainment corridor," "historic corridor," and "creative corridor." The consultant team also introduced participants to the elements

that help make a cultural and arts district successful, helping them identify those assets and opportunities that may be important to the district's success.

The same workshop was run twice on November 18. The first session included students from Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln high schools. These students were self-selected and identified themselves as being interested in artistic expression and practice. The second session, held in the evening, attracted adult participants, many of whom are deeply involved in Council Bluff's arts scene. The key messages from the first workshop are:

- Bayliss Park is a key asset for the district and acts as a regional draw for visitors and residents.
- Harvester I is a good example of bringing residents to the area and holds promise as a potential site for an artist-in-residence program.
- There are several organizations within the district that appear to be working toward the goal of bringing people and business to the district for culture and the arts, but they can be better coordinated in their work together.
- There is a general desire to focus energies on what makes Council Bluffs a unique component of the larger Council Bluffs/Omaha arts and culture environment.
- There is a general desire to incentivize market rate housing within the district.

DESIRED

CRITICAL

NOW

LATER

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Economic investment in core areas | 7 Develop vacant land surrounding Bayliss Park, encourage ground-floor retail or civic use |
| 2 “Pop-up” retail, with super short-term leases | 8 Design standards to make sidewalks busy, active spaces |
| 3 Flexible public space for multiple uses | 9 Incentive market-rate housing within the District |
| 4 Develop artist-in-residence programs | 10 Create an overarching arts organization |
| 5 Defined edges and corners, buildings adjacent to the street | 11 Sponsor an arts-related speaker series |
| 6 Develop and implement a district branding program | |

5 / PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS /

COUNCIL BLUFFS OPEN HOUSE

The final evening of the Storefront Studio was an open house to share the week's efforts. The open house included three-part presentation by the consultant team and a comment sheet with three activities. The comment sheet asked participants to:

1. Comment on the spatial strategy discussed in the presentation, using a map on the comment sheet to help participants reference their thoughts
2. Review 11 specific implementation proposals, responding with a "yes," "no," or "don't know" choice for each, and
3. Prioritize proposed implementation actions based on relative urgency and relative importance.

The key messages from each of these sections are provided below. A transcript of the responses is attached.

SPATIAL STRATEGY

A large-scale spatial strategy map hung on the studio wall, and a smaller-scale copy was included in the participant comment sheets for ease of reference. Participants considered the strategy as a composition of a physical, institutional, political, economic, and social influences, using this particular exercise to comment on proposed physical improvements. While only the key physical topics are presented below, the

whole categorized list can be found in the "Council Bluffs Open House Spatial Strategy Comments" section attached. The key spatial strategies are:

- Create busy active sidewalks and public spaces by encouraging street level activities like galleries, retail, and services like restaurants.
- Allow for pop-up retail either as stand-alone or short term leased space.
- Provide for a publically adaptable space like a festival street on 10th Ave.
- Encourage focused investment and infill in the Bayliss Park and Maker nodes.
- Encourage the development of a black box theater or other preforming arts center.
- Ensure that multiple modes of transit are accommodated, especially bike paths.

Several participant comments on the spatial strategy were not directly related to the spatial environment. They are included in the attached summary and offer insight into other strategies the plan may incorporate.

IMPLEMENTATION AND PRIORITY

The open house comment sheet invited participants to consider their agreement with 11 sample proposed implementation actions, prioritizing them. The 11 actions were based on participant recommendations from the

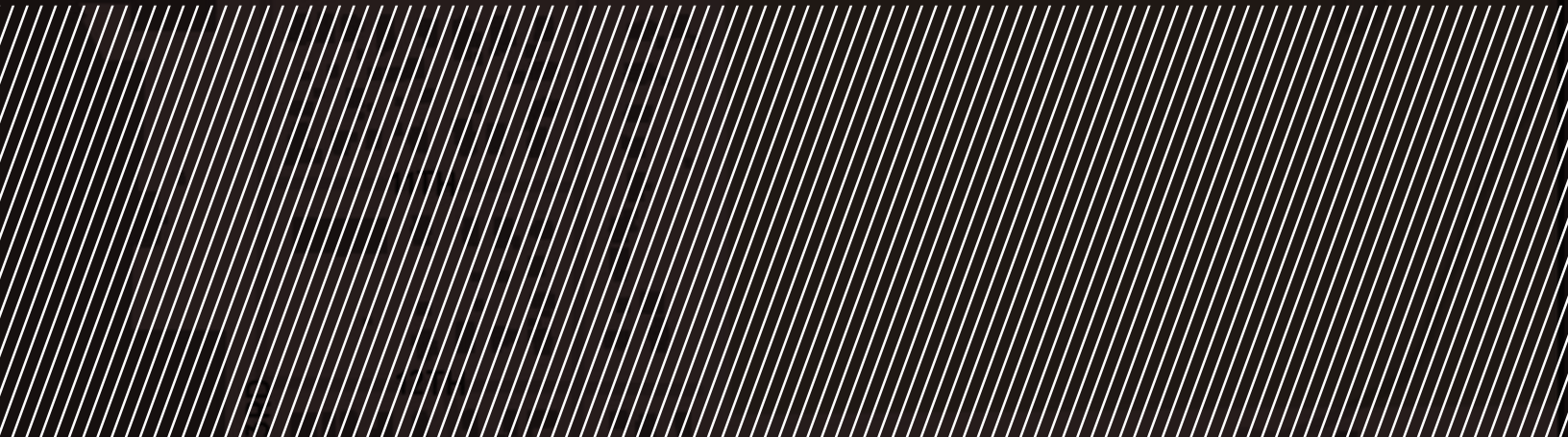
first workshop and from discussions during the studio days, reflecting potential responses to address the institutional, economic, political, social, and physical issues the Arts and Culture District faces. Figure 1-B shows the participants' levels of agreement with those 11 proposed implementation actions, and Figure 1-C shows how participants prioritized them based on relative importance and relative urgency.

Not all participants completed the full exercise. For example, six participants identified priority responses for implementation action number 10, but only two did so for implementation action number 5. The complete results and verbatim comments are attached. The key messages from these exercises are:

- Participants had the highest level of agreement on the creation of an overarching arts organization.
- The creation of the overarching arts organization was also identified as the most critical and urgent need.
- Participants had very high level of agreement in creating flexible public spaces that can accommodate multiple uses, but they had little consensus over its priority and urgency.
- There was a high level of agreement about focused investment in small core areas and developing a district brand, and participants felt that these actions were critical but split on their urgency.
- Both artist-in-residence programs and

incentivized market-rate housing in the South Main District had high levels of support, but participants differed on their recommendations on how they should be prioritized.

6 / CONCEPTUAL / PLAN



FOCUS EFFORTS INTO THREE NODES

One of the mistakes that many communities make is trying to distribute their limited resources with respect to time and money into too many different projects and programs. Because all cities have limited resources, this is rarely effective as no one effort has enough devoted to it to both ramp it up and maintain it over time. All redevelopment efforts take time; parties involved have to be prepared for some initiatives to take years for tangible results.

Therefore, our overall concept involves focusing efforts into three areas. Activities within each would not be exclusive but rather form a basis of creating a particular image and identity in the region. People look for different choices at different times. Although a Council Bluffs Cultural District would be promoted as a whole, these parts would be nurtured as having particular destinations and activities.

1. 100 BLOCK OF BROADWAY ENTERTAINMENT AND FOOD

This area would emphasize entertainment, such as live music, food and nightlife. Already, this area has begun to gravitate in that direction. It also has a number of fine buildings from the Victorian era that help foster a particular ambiance. This area is rapidly evolving into a stable node with new restaurants, housing, and sidewalks that are conducive both to walking and to lingering when the weather permits. We believe this area is so far along on its way to becoming a widely-recognized destination in the region that not much more needs to be done. Of course, it's always possible to reinforce its image by collective marketing efforts and regular events that bring a wide range of people to the place.



IMAGE Map of Focus Areas

2. BAYLISS PARK AREA HISTORY AND COMMUNITY

This area is already the center of local government as well as the library. Bayliss Park is well-recognized for its dramatic artwork and community events. The park is a classic, town square in the Olmsted tradition. It is surrounded by buildings. It is a full block in size. One can easily see into it and across it in advance of walking through it. The Carnegie building and the Squirrel Cage jail building add elements of history, as does the nearby Dodge House. There are some “missing teeth” around the park, which could be excellent sites for infill development. There are several blocks of historic commercial buildings, some of which have been renovated. This area has many ingredients for a fine sub-district. However, it would benefit from having a well-designed public space between the Carnegie Building and the Squirrel Cage better linking the two and connecting the Squirrel Cage to the street. Additional housing and commercial space would also bolster the area. Events in the park could also be more frequent to maintain a loyal following.

3. NINTH & SOUTH CREATIVITY AND CRAFT

This area stretches between South 9th Avenue and South 16th Ave, along South Main Street and South Sixth Street. It includes the Harvester I building, as well as the Harvester II building, which may likely be the new home of the Union Pacific Museum. This area is the least formed of the three, in part because of the prevalence of older industrial structures, many of which no longer serve their original purpose and open areas. Currently this area is fractured by its being bisected by a wide railroad spur line, which will be removed in the near future. This area has the greatest potential for dramatic change. Some of the sites could accommodate artists, whether in work spaces or live/work situations. There is a potential for market rate housing. And it is in need of a central public space for events, markets, displays, and temporary and permanent art. The streetscape could also benefit greatly from a design that recognizes its agricultural/ industrial past while adding better lighting, vegetation, and identity as a destination.

5. CONCEPTUAL PLAN



IMAGES Concept: Parklet & Flex-Space



IMAGE Concept: Pacific Ave in Tacoma, WA

GIVE EACH AREA A UNIQUE EMPHASIS WITH A BOLD MOVE

During the workshops, there was widespread consensus among participants that the three areas identified deserved something more than merely incremental development. Each should be “marked” with an element that is visually bold and speaks to the character of the area. What follows are suggestions for bold moves for each of the three areas.

The 100 Block has been evolving into an area with nightlife. There are restaurants and venues that have music. Outside tables and chairs suggest that, in good weather, people enjoy being outside in public space. The block is evolving into a kind of a shared outdoor living room. Similar to a living room, there is gracious “flooring” in the form of masonry sidewalks. The facades of older buildings form the walls of this outdoor room. What is missing is a ceiling with accent lighting.

Therefore a bold move for this area would be to create a ceiling of lights, permanently suspended over the street. Of course, they must be suspended at an appropriate height to allow trucks to pass. LED technology allows this to be done with a high degree of energy efficiency and longevity. The overhead lighting adds to the evening ambiance. Even during the day the wires and lights define the top edge of the room. At night, it creates a lively atmosphere. This has been done with some other streets with great success as indicated in the photos.

For the Bayliss Park area, the large artwork within the park already present a sense of drama and bold expression. However, there is the potential of a complimentary element in a plaza that could be created between the Carnegie Library building and the Squirrel Cage. This could take a number of forms. It could be a unique paving design, perhaps incorporating LED lighting. Or it could involve dramatic accent lighting on both buildings. Another possibility would be a large scale installation of an art piece on the plaza. This might be a column. It could be an interactive piece of sculpture. It might be a light tower. It could be an artfully designed object that subtly reflects some aspect of history or geology. There are likely stories about the region and the community that haven’t been told in three-dimensional form. For example, this could provide an opportunity to commemorate early settlers. The symbolic piece should have both visual and emotional impact.

Finally, for the area at south end, the vicinity of the Harvester buildings, we see a bold move consisting of the conversion of 10th Avenue to a special type of outdoor space. It would be re-designed to be extraordinarily flexible. At times, it would continue to provide access to parking and deliveries. At other times it would be converted to accommodate displays of art. Yet other times, it could be filled with market stalls vending crafts and food. It could be used for outdoor concerts, theatrical performances, seasonal celebrations, and hands-on events for children. There might be a tie with the senior center a few blocks to the north for certain types of events. The idea is to have a public space that many different people find interesting throughout the year.

A combination of elements should be used to define and mark the space. This could include unique lighting that has an artful form. It could include special paving to create a floor. There might be vegetation. Movable seating would be important so people can arrange their own gathering places. Perhaps a regular location for a food truck could be provided. Until it is lowered, the elevated expressway structure could serve as a lively backdrop, with color and lighting. At the intersection with South Main, there could also be a large scale, distinct “gateway” that announces the space to passerby. Ideally, Con Agra would do something with its property across the street to compliment this bold move, with a presentation of food as art. The combination of elements should be varied, unique and inviting and embrace a wide range of events and activities throughout the year. It could also provide an outdoor venue for artist in the Harvester to display their work and think about how to manipulate the space is creative ways.

CONNECT THE AREAS TO EACH OTHER AND THE ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS

All three areas are part of the cultural district, as well as downtown. There are a number of ways to link them together, both physically and perceptually. A unique cultural district

marker could be designed that would show up in all areas. This could be a sign, a type of street furnishing, a type of lighting, an appendage to existing lighting fixtures, a color, or a repetitive symbol/logo. Sidewalks could be signed with a self-guided walking tour route map, tied to an interactive website. There could be inlays in the sidewalk or along the curb that denote a district. Another method is to fabricate frames for street name signs that include a logo.

Strategically-located large maps, with the classic “you are here” button could help people be familiar with the offerings of all three areas and what else is available in the area.

Certain corridors could help make connections between the cultural district and nearby neighborhoods. 5th Ave is an obvious candidate as it serves neighboring areas both to the east and to the west. 9th is yet another candidate; that street could include a signed route for bicycles as it connects all the way over to the river. The Mid-City Trail presents another opportunity to make connections.

Many parts of the central area of Council Bluffs have historic buildings, including homes. Not all of these structures could be part of a cultural district, but there could be a distinctive curbside marker that indicates a few facts about various properties. The total effect would be a central city area with many dimensions and manifestations of history.

CATALYST SITES

There are a number of properties that can serve as sites for development that jumps starts other private investment. For the most part, this has already occurred on the 100 block of Broadway. But this plan indicates possible locations for both the Bayliss Park area and the far south end, near the Harvester buildings. Obviously, vacant property and property acquired as a result of removing railroad lines would be the easiest to work with. But there may be other opportunities for adaptive re-use of existing structures.

Most of these will likely require some involvement by the PCDC is acquiring them or partnering with existing owners to develop them. Specific financing programs that offer incentives to include space for the arts or artist live/work spaces could be developed. Offering assistance with infrastructure could also be an inducement. This could be especially useful where soil conditions are saturated; solving drainage problems through the installation of green infrastructure could attract private investment.

Some benefits of catalyst sites go well beyond reinforcing a cultural district. Providing space for start-up businesses and market rate housing can elevate the economic vitality of the downtown and the city as a whole. Therefore, attracting certain forms

of development fit into a broader economic development strategy. However, it is evident from other cities around the country that some people enjoy living in a place with proximity to cultural choices; likewise, some businesses enjoy being surrounded by creative endeavors. Indeed, sometimes that is important to attracting a younger workforce.



IMAGES Catalyst Site Areas

WAYFINDING AND INTERPRETATION

The City has already developed a system of signs for wayfinding. A number of signs have been installed in various locations. The cultural district should take advantage of that system and install additional signs to direct visitors to the three areas. This would likely make sense at several gateway locations, such as West Broadway, the northbound off-ramp of the 192 Expressway, and along E. Kanesville Blvd. near the intersection with East Broadway. Another location might be where Pearl and South Main Street connect with West Broadway. Some of these gateway locations were previously called out in a 2009 map.

Equally valuable and informative would be interpretive signs. These would be designed to be appreciated by people walking. Often they have photos of buildings previously demolished or show depictions of people, events, and historic dates. There are many stories that could lend themselves to display signs. Such signs could include a QR code that would give viewers access to even more information.

CULTURAL TRAIL CONCEPT

The cultural richness of Council Bluffs is not widely known. The City has a rich history and the seeds of a thriving artists' community that can provide a new identity and a draw for visitors. The City would greatly benefit from an interconnected communication system of that links the City's historical



IMAGES Concepts for Cultural Trails & Wayfinding

elements and today's cultural components together. This system should be thought of as a web rather than a specific trail that physically and electronically links the cultural elements.

Physically, a comprehensive way finding system should be developed whereby a pattern of signs, art, pavement types and colors are used throughout downtown visually connecting cultural elements together. Through this system, visitors and residents will learn how the district's elements are interconnected and can be drawn to places they might not otherwise visit. This system should be directly linked to web based information about the individual places and their relationships to other cultural elements so that trail users can learn additional details via their phones while using the trail. This system approach will support all of the elements by helping them gain visibility and help visitors recognize the variety of places to visit downtown.

The district will also benefit from activities focused within the district so that the public learns that this is "the place for culture". Organizing an on-going series of events indoors and outdoors will bring life to the area and re-enforce its importance in people's minds. Temporary transformation of streets and parking lots into event spaces and places to gather and eat is an inexpensive method of using existing infrastructure for new active use. Developing a series of identifiable physical elements within the district such as distinctive lighting, seating or planting will further identify the place.

This Cultural District approach should be

extended south to the Harvester Lofts area to incorporate active artists in the downtown's cultural life. It was noted that artists are attracted to Council Bluffs given its affordability and welcomeness. More opportunities should be provided to resident and visiting artists to make and show their work within the public realm in both organized and informal ways. This too will add greatly to the district's identity and enable the area to be known as a cultural location in the region.

7 / IMPLEMENTING / THE CONCEPT



COMPARABLE DISTRICTS AND THEIR OPERATION

With the completion of our preliminary research, we can begin to consider exactly how a cultural district in Council Bluffs might be implemented. To help ignite this thought process, we have looked at three comparable districts and how they are operated. Although there are some obvious differences between each of these examples, they are nonetheless helpful to understanding what is required to animate, operate, and sustain a cultural district in Council Bluffs.



DOWNTOWN BRYAN CULTURAL DISTRICT BRYAN, TX

Programming + Activities: Programming and activities include Art Step First Fridays, a series of artist demonstrations, live music, and free, outdoor movie screenings; Second Saturday Movies held at The Palace Theater; Terrific Tuesdays, a weekly series in August

in which participating merchants and restaurants offer discounts and specials to customers with ‘Terrific Tuesday’ tickets; and festivals, parades, and other community-oriented events.

DESCRIPTION + UTILIZATION:

The Downtown Bryan Cultural District extends for seven blocks along Bryan’s Main Street. Twenty-one restaurants and dozens of shops (including galleries) can be found throughout the corridor. Cultural spaces include the Carnegie Library History Center, the Clara B. Mounce Public Library, The Grand Stafford Theater, Palace Theater, StageCenter Theatre, and a handful of artist studios.

DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO:

The Downtown Bryan Cultural District is the 26th district to be recognized by the Texas Commission on the Arts’ Cultural District Program. The program, which is hinged on the belief that “districts can become focal points for generating businesses, attracting tourists, stimulating cultural development, and fostering civic pride,” awards the distinction to cities that have shown quality in the arts, administrative capability, and impact in the areas of public service, audiences or participation, education, outreach, and the economy. After applying last year, Downtown Bryan—along with The Greater East End of Houston—was granted cultural district status this past fall.

OPERATING SCENARIO:

The Downtown Bryan Association (DBA) oversees the Downtown Cultural District. A non-profit organization, DBA “create[s], cultivate[s], and showcase[s] the commerce, culture, and community of [the] Downtown District by preserving the past and building a vibrant future.” The DBA does this through

public programming and a membership program. The membership program is comprised of local merchants located throughout the District. As members, they receive marketing assistance (shout outs on the DBA website, Facebook page, and Twitter; a listing in the DBA brochure; and, access to the DBA Advertising Co-op), can participate in networking opportunities, and have access to various databases and services. The DBA has a staff of three that includes an Executive Director, Programs and Events Manager, and Director of Operations, as well as a Board of Trustees.



ACE DISTRICT CEDAR RAPIDS, IA

Programming + Activities: Largely city beautification projects, including banner art, streetscape improvements, public art works, business recruitment, and fundraising.

DESCRIPTION + UTILIZATION:

Cedar Rapids' Arts Culture and Entertainment (ACE) District is a cultural district overlay that extends along Third Street SE. The District was developed to connect the City's multiple districts, downtown core, and NewBo Main Street.

DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO:

In 2007, the City of Cedar Rapids underwent

a visioning process. The study found that Cedar Rapids has a number of distinct districts defined by their use, and suggested a plan for creating better seams between them. A 2009 Urban Land Institute study supplied further recommendations for the ACE District. The over-arching goal of the ACE is that it connect Cedar Rapids' various pieces to allow for collective promotion and to create a concentration of assets and future development.

OPERATING SCENARIO:

The ACE is overseen by The ACE Steering Committee, a volunteer committee responsible for taking action on projects that will impact the district. The Committee's 12 members represent a variety of local businesses, including Theatre Cedar Rapids and the Visual Arts Commission. Officially, the Committee is part of the Cedar Rapids Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. The Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, however, is responsible for moving projects forward, and for providing resources and support for the district.



CARMEL ARTS + DESIGN DISTRICT CARMEL, IN

PROGRAMMING + ACTIVITIES:

Programming and activities include Festive

7 / IMPLEMENTING THE CONCEPT /

Fridays, gallery walks, Holiday in the Arts District, the Carmel International Arts Festival, Paint Outs, and music events.

DESCRIPTION + UTILIZATION:

The Arts and Design District extends from 4th Avenue NE to 4th Avenue SW, an area of approximately eight blocks. Two large gates and a trail of 15 public art pieces define the District, which includes artist galleries, restaurants, the Museum of Miniature Houses, the Carmel Clay Public Library, the Midwest School of Voice, the Carmel Clay Historical Society and a number of other shops and businesses (93 entities in total).

DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO:

The Art and Design District began as an initiative of Mayor Jim Brainard. Located in what was once a run down and neglected part of town, the Mayor worked with the Carmel Redevelopment Commission to transform the area into a vibrant arts district. As a first step, \$10 million was invested into the district to add storm sewers, curbs, brick-accented sidewalks, historic-style street lighting, and improved water mains.

design and installation of banners, furniture, and other streetscape elements. Functionality adds to the landscape while reminding visitors and residents of a district's significance. Although some organizations have the resources to administer and fund such a project, it is also appropriate to coordinate with a City Department or Agency to align scheduled infrastructure improvements with the needs and atmosphere of a district.

Authenticity to the community is important. All of the districts above took advantage of historic buildings, narratives, and other assets, being sure to include elements of local culture in the design of the district.

CONCLUSIONS

The arts districts above are diverse in composition. Government, however, played a significant part in the development of all three. Additionally, each of these districts effectively address community issues, promotion, and governance on behalf of their relative constituents. Following are a number of factors that our research indicates are critical to the facilitation of a successful district.

- Support from the local, and in some cases state, government is key to the development and success of a district
- Addressing the safety of visitors and residents assures repeat visitors, lower crime, and a healthier neighborhood. This includes concern for pedestrian safety in addition to crime prevention.
- In all districts, partnerships and the involvement of local businesses, cultural anchors, and commercial property owners is key. Comparable districts engage constituents through voluntary membership programs, board of directors' appointments, joint marketing initiatives, façade improvement programs, and more.
- Outdoor programming, particularly cultural festivals and arts events, can attract visitors to the region, create a sense of a vibrant neighborhood, and enforce the brand of the district as a cultural destination.
- A lasting, memorable branding campaign can be generated through the creative

The City then focused on branding the area by creating a district logo, hanging flower baskets, putting flower boxes on windows, placing benches on sidewalks, and creating opportunities for curb dining. To encourage investment, the City created public-private partnerships, identifying the best areas for redevelopment and prepping them for private sector purchase.

OPERATING SCENARIO:

Today, the District is operated and supported by the Carmel Redevelopment Commission Board, which funds projects through tax increment financing.

7 / IMPLEMENTING THE CONCEPT /



IMAGES Concepts of Steetlife & Activity

BRINGING THE COUNCIL BLUFFS CULTURAL DISTRICT TO LIFE

Let's now identify how a Council Bluffs cultural district might be brought to life in terms of programming, operations, and sustainability.

PROGRAMMING

The first element of any district is its programming and how that is managed. There are a series of components to this:

PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAMS:

First of all, there is the development and execution of informal programs in Bayliss Park and other public spaces within the district, such as the proposed festival street and interpretive plaza. This might include tours, street performers, buskers, painting/drawing classes, demonstrations, and/or speakers' corners. Here, someone must book the artists or programs, schedule them into particular places and times, promote the event or program, ensure that the program is delivered, clean up after, and settle any fees and charges.

NEW INDOOR SPACE PROGRAMS:

Our first round of work lent support to the Carnegie Library's transformation into a community arts and culture center. Activities that take place will most likely be comprised of more traditional arts events, including Library-presented and rental performances and activities. Outside of performances, classes and community meetings should activate the space. Management of this facility, then, will require flexible skills in marketing, event management, booking and rental procedures, staffing, care and maintenance, finances, and fundraising.

MUSEUM MAINTENANCE, MANAGEMENT, AND PROGRAMMING:

We have suggested that the Squirrel Cage Museum be restored, and that the rolling stock of RailsWest and the UP Museum's Harvester II location be connected. For the later to work, a cordial and collaborative relationship will be required, as will a clear understanding as to which entities are responsible for maintenance and upkeep. Additionally, the Squirrel Cage might become a meeting place for historic walking tours, increased paranormal investigations, or research trips. Management of the facility will not only require the skills outlined above, but also an intimate knowledge of Council Bluffs history and a broad understanding of railways and historic prison systems. In general, all of Council Bluffs' historic facilities should have friendly, knowledgeable docents capable of answering visitor questions, pointing them towards the City's other sites, and contributing to an overall positive and memorable experience.

THE HARVESTER:

Within the cultural district, the Harvester

7 / IMPLEMENTING THE CONCEPT /

should be a wellspring of activity. Both informal and formal programming should be developed so that visitors can make plans to attend an event, but also know with certainty that, if s/he shows up on a random Tuesday afternoon, the gallery will be open, an artist will be working in a studio, and/or a group of high school art students will be touring the space. Getting the Harvester to this point will require strong leadership; and, perhaps, a conversation with Artspace that explores alternative operational and organizational structures. Harvester tenants, PCDC, and Iowa West might want to consider the possibilities of hiring a programming and events manager to develop and oversee programs.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICES:

The delivery and management of food and beverage services is fundamental to the animation of the district, with the opportunity to support programs described above and also to be programming, especially as gardening and farm-to-table cooking become increasingly popular.

MARKETING ACTIVITY

Significant skills and resources are required to market the district to the community, visitors, and other key constituents, including funders.

DISTRICT BRANDING:

A person or group must work on the development and maintenance of a brand identity for the district. This is likely to require the employment of outside specialists, but there must still be a “client” for that exercise and the resources to maintain brand identity over time.

WEB SITE AND MATERIALS:

The brand of the district must be clearly identified and advanced with a strong website and supporting materials that promote programs, facilities, and activities to regional residents and visitors.

EVENT CALENDAR:

It will be critically important to develop and maintain a calendar for all programs and events occurring in the district, as well as for programs and events occurring in the region. This will require calendar software, the time and energy to maintain it through regular communications with programmers and partners, and the ability to keep the calendar available to all interested parties, both online and offline.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL PROMOTION:

Events and programs in the district should be promoted to local and regional audiences with a combination of online and offline advertising, direct and email marketing, and other promotional activities. This is a fairly intense and specialized skill-set that requires creative staff, business skills, and relationships with the key outlets in the region. This also means developing relationships with Omaha’s arts community in order to cross-market and promote activities.

TOURIST PROMOTION:

Similarly, events and programs should be marketed to visitors. The skills are the same, but the message is slightly different and requires a different set of relationships, starting with the CVB.

EVENT TICKETING:

Event ticketing is critical for a range of events in outdoor, indoor, and new facilities in order

to manage access to drive revenues. The world of event ticketing is changing rapidly, with sophisticated systems and services now available to facilities, producers, and presenters. The process of selecting a ticketing system is complicated, the expense can be significant, and it can require extensive training and maintenance.

MANAGE CUSTOMER DATABASE:

Finally, we would stress the importance of collecting information on those who attend and participate in district programs as the basis for more focused and effective marketing programs, from email blasts to direct mail promotions.

COMMUNICATIONS

Related but distinct from the marketing effort is the need to build and maintain an effective communications program, including the following elements:

COMMUNITY RELATIONS:

The district must make ongoing efforts to stay in touch with the community surrounding it, advising of coming events and programs, staying in touch with community issues, and responding to criticisms and other comments about the operation of the district.

ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONS:

There are multiple non-profit, arts-oriented organizations in Council Bluffs. These groups must work better at creating complementary programming and cross-promoting. An umbrella organization should be formed to assist organizations with these things. This organization should include a director and staff capable of balancing and coordinating the needs of multiple organizations, applying for grants, and providing some of the marketing services outlined above.

PROMOTING LOCAL BUSINESSES:

A related challenge will be to stay in touch with businesses in and around the district, providing promotional support to those enterprises relative to district programs and related activities. This must also include developing a relationship with ConAgra. As they consider expansion, it is important to work with them to ensure that this growth is compatible with the direction and development of the cultural district. It might even be possible to work with the company to create an interpretive center describing its role in food production and distribution.

MEASURING SUCCESS:

Finally, we would stress the importance of measuring and communicating the success of the district over time to key constituencies, including the City, Iowa West, PCDC, and civic and business leaders. This should include periodic measurements of economic impacts.

7 / IMPLEMENTING THE CONCEPT /

OPERATIONS

Now, we will consider the nuts and bolts of basic operating functions necessary to maintaining a cultural district:

PUBLIC SAFETY:

Success in the district depends on a strong focus on public safety. There is a perception that the South Main District is unsafe. Anecdotal research also indicated a feeling of unease, caused by a local bar, in the area surrounding Bayliss Park. These feelings might be combated by the presence of security at large events, as well as by efforts to beautify the City's streetscape, including opportunities for restaurants to have outdoor seating.

CLEANING AND UPKEEP:

Parks, sidewalks, and other public areas must be maintained. This will be most intense during and after larger events; but, again, it is critically important to build a reputation for the district as being clean and well maintained, all of the time.

Building cleaning and maintenance:

Existing, temporary, and new facilities must be clean and maintained over time, most importantly in relation to programs and events.

PARKING OPERATIONS:

It is very important that there be good parking that is safe, close, and affordable for large events and non-event based visitations. Parking operators must anticipate and staff operations for peak requirements, consider discounts and packages built around programs, and also consider a valet parking option for certain events.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT:

Larger events might require traffic control to move cars and people in and out of the area, which would require working closely with City police.

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT:

There might be an opportunity to build a volunteer base to support operations of the district, with individuals providing additional event staff, leading tours of the district, and acting as guides and ambassadors for the community. We believe strongly that volunteers must be well trained, closely monitored, and properly evaluated. We would advocate for uniforms for both on-site staff and volunteers to enhance its image as a safe and professionally managed area.

EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE:

Finally, specialized equipment for performances (sound and lighting) and more basic equipment such as displays, tables, chairs and more, must be maintained and stored in close proximity to event hubs.

FINANCE

There is a set of roles and responsibilities relative to the financial management of the district, including:

FUNDING SOURCE:

The key financial question is, ‘Who or what organization is able to give or get the funds necessary to sustain the district and its programs?’ Iowa West is an incredible community asset. But, it cannot be the District’s sole financial contributor. We would advocate for multiple funding sources from both the public and private sectors, reflecting the benefits of the district to regional audiences and artists, local businesses, and taxpayers. The skill-set likely includes the ability to design and execute ongoing funding campaigns.

MEMBER FEES AND DUES:

This is really a sub-set of the funding task above, but we would want to stress the importance of having someone able to organize and maintain a membership program for businesses and individuals that provides significant ongoing funding for the operation of the district.

BANKING AND ACCOUNTING:

There will be the need to maintain bank accounts and also manage the income and outflow of funding through a set of accounts to sustain the district.

REAL ESTATE

Finally, there are duties related to the development and management of the real estate in the district:

TEMPORARY SPACE MANAGEMENT:

Some of our recommendations have suggested and encouraged that existing under-used spaces be inhabited and programmed as arts spaces. This will require a person or group that is able to match up spaces with needs, negotiate deals, and manage multiple spatial uses.

SPACE RENTAL ARRANGEMENTS:

For all indoor and outdoor programmable spaces, a person or group must take responsibility of soliciting bookings, negotiating deals, collecting rent, and managing the relationship.

RE-PURPOSING AND DEVELOPING NEW SPACES:

Finally, we have recommended that existing Council Bluffs facilities be considered for conversion into performance spaces, and that, in the long run, flexible, multi-use spaces be considered for development. Both of these would require that an individual or group take on the job of leading the planning, design, construction, and operation of new spaces. In the operating phase, key skill-sets include the programming of spaces with a combination of rentals, programs, presented and produced events, their physical maintenance, financial operations, and ongoing fundraising to sustain operations.

7 / IMPLEMENTING THE CONCEPT /

Responsibility	Role	City Parks	Chamber	Public Works	City Police	Bluffs Downtown	Iowa West	PCDC
Programming	Public space programs	■				■	■	
	Outdoor programs	■				■	■	
	Temporary indoor space programs		■				■	
	New space programs						■	
	Festival production	■					■	
Marketing	Food + beverage	■	■					
	District branding	■	■	■		■	■	
	Website/materials					■	■	
	Event calendar					■		
	Local and regional promotion		■			■		
	Tourist promotion		■					
	Event ticketing							
Operations	Manage customer database							
	Public safety				■			
	Park cleaning	■						
	Horticulture	■						
	Building cleaning			■				■
	Building maintenance			■				■
	Parking operations			■				
	Traffic management			■	■			
	Volunteer management					■		
Communications	Equipment maintenance			■				■
	Measuring success					■	■	
	Promote local businesses		■			■		
Finance	Community relations					■		
	Funding source		■				■	
	Member dues collection		■					
Real Estate	Banking + accounting						■	
	Temporary space management	■						
	Space rental arrangements	■						
	New space development							■

BUILDING AN OPERATING ORGANIZATION FOR THE CULTURAL DISTRICT

The descriptions in the previous chapter make it clear that the organization or organizations needed to run the project must be skilled and experienced in many areas. We do not believe that Council Bluffs' cultural organizations currently have the capacity to oversee or operate a cultural district. But, there are other possibilities:

Bluffs Downtown is a "private-public partnership dedicated to creating a unique, vibrant, well-connected village within a community of Council Bluffs, utilizing the Main Street Approach." Already, the organization is working towards a number of the goals outlined in this report. Their approach is four pronged and focuses on: organization—getting the community involved in a successful downtown program; promotion—selling a positive image of downtown Council Bluffs; design—beautifying and repairing downtown; and economic restructuring—strengthening economic assets. Currently, the organization is responsible for the Farmers' Market and the 100 Block's hanging flower baskets.

The City of Council Bluffs itself is involved in many of the functions and roles described

above, from the maintenance of parks to overseeing the Public Art Commission and assuring public safety. The challenge for any city relative to a cultural district is that they are often large and complicated bureaucracies not easily navigated by those seeking to program the district or further develop its resources. The challenge to the district is that the City, with the exception of some Parks and Recreation programming, has largely taken a hands-off approach towards arts and culture in Council Bluffs.

Council Bluffs Chamber of Commerce is organized into four entities: the Pottawattamie County Growth Alliance, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Public Policy and Leadership, and Membership Development and Services. A non-profit organization, the Chamber provides a number of services in the areas of leadership development, community building and networking, and sponsors Council Bluffs Day at the Legislature, an event in which community leaders spend a day working with elected state officials to influence legislation and project funding.

The Iowa West Foundation has been the driving force behind a number of Council Bluffs' arts initiatives and is the City's primary granting organization. Although the organization is invested in the success of a cultural district in Council Bluffs, it would like to see a strong and capable entity running it. Already, Iowa West has met with the area's arts and culture organizations and is in the process of developing a plan for some sort of leadership structure.

RECOMMENDED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Pottawattamie County Development Corporation is focused on the redevelopment of Council Bluffs' underutilized and contaminated properties. They are responsible for a number of the City's redevelopment projects, and were the owners of the Harvester Artist Lofts building prior to its Artspace transformation. Their ownership of other South Main District buildings, and interest in using them for arts and cultural purposes, was the impetus for this study.

What is apparent from these brief descriptions is that each of these groups has some particular skills that might be brought to bear on the operation of a district, but that no group has all of the skills and experience necessary to do it all. At right is a chart that attempts to show what might be done to run the district by each of the partners we've identified. Our approach has been to note tasks that are currently performed by these groups or could be performed given relevant skills and experience there already.

In some cases, there is more than one organization able to provide the necessary skill or service. We are encouraged by the fact that there is at least one organization or department able to take on the majority of the tasks needed to program, operate, the sustain the district. Marketing is where there is the most need, especially as there do not appear to be any groups with event ticketing or customer database management experience. We should be clear that the level of service required to program and maintain the district will be higher than other public

or private facilities. It is to be an intensively programmed area that shows off the best of the community to the world. It must be absolutely safe, absolutely clean, and absolutely unique.

Given the above, we would make the following recommendations:

1. Fundamentally, the City should be in charge. They own the public spaces and control departments that would provide important services to a cultural district. And, they are the largest beneficiaries of an active and branded district. However, the City should not go it alone. As can be seen in the comparable cultural district examples, all of the projects were initiated by governments, but were operated by separate entities—in one case a downtown association; in another, a steering committee overseen by the CVB; and the last, by a redevelopment commission. Options, then, could be to develop a commission like that created for the City's public art program; create a position within Parks and Recreation that would manage the delivery of City services to the cultural district, outside contractual relationships with other organizations, and the delivery of programs and services to the district; work on bolstering the operational strength and capacity of Bluffs

- Downtown, preparing it to become the district's operator; or, developing a business improvement district, a public-private partnership in which businesses pay an additional tax to ensure the maintenance, development, and promotion of a specific area.
2. Strong leadership will be critical to the success of the district. Whether a non-profit, City, or committee role, being in charge requires significant talent and past success in areas such as programming, marketing, fundraising, operations, and all of the effort of negotiating and delivering services working with internal City departments and outside contractors.
 3. With the move of the UP Museum to the Harvester II facility, Iowa West should focus its energy on developing an organization that will have the ability to sustain a community arts center and provide services and programs that will contribute to the health of the community's non-profits. This organization could be incubated within Iowa West until it has the ability to be spun out and operate on its own. Feasibly, this would remove some pressure from Iowa West for supporting the arts and culture in Council Bluffs in the future.
 4. As the cultural district is developed, PCDC could take the lead on identifying specific facilities or spaces that might be converted into temporary or permanent performance spaces, working to acquire the appropriate permissions and identifying parties to activate and/or operate them.
 5. Requests for Service Proposals from local and regional service providers in such areas as food service and ticketing should be issued.
 6. There should be an additional advisory group made up of artists and cultural organizations in and around the district that encourages and coordinates their use of the district and its facilities.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

CAPITAL INVESTMENTS:

1. Continue to pursue the relocation of the Union Pacific Museum to Harvester II, with expansion or addition as necessary to display all of its fine collection.
2. Renovate the Carnegie Library to accommodate a range of arts organizations, along with small spaces for visual and performing arts. Develop spaces at the ground floor to support events and activities at Bayliss Park
3. Restore the Squirrel Cage Museum so that it can become a true center of interpreting that part of American history.
4. The space between the Carnegie and the Squirrel Cage should be developed into an interpretive plaza, with outdoor displays and interpretive signs, as well as space for events in good weather. This could help create a synergy between these two unique structures and their heritage.
5. Connect the rolling stock of Rails West with the Union Pacific Museum Harvester II so that visitors may be able to see actual full-scale restorations of railroad engines and cars. This may require preserving some track or adding a spur.
6. Improve the streetscape along the South Main Corridor so that there is a visual connection between the 100 Block of Broadway, the Bayliss Park Area and the area south of 9th Avenue. The area south of 9th should be particularly enhanced, including ways of retaining and slowly absorbing storm water runoff through “low impact development” techniques. Include methods to effectively screen parking lots and vacant parcels. The distinctive wayfinding system that has already been designed should be a part of these improvements.
7. Create “festival street” on 10th between South Main Street and South 6th Street. The street would be designed to allow easy conversion to outdoor activities and events, as well as displays of art - both temporary and permanent. This would provide an on-going outdoor public place where the public can always count on something different. The capacity for outdoor display could be occasionally expanded by using space under the elevated expressway for exhibits, fairs, and markets.
8. Identify strategic parcels for infill development around Bayliss Park, so that it is activated and framed by structures, with residents and workers who can keep their “eyes of the street.”
9. Re-examine traffic circulation on South Main and Pearl, as well as access from Broadway. One way couplets typically invite pass-through traffic rather than destination-oriented traffic.
10. Find ways to enhance the ground level uses all along South Main. Many of the buildings contain users that do not contribute to activating the sidewalk. There may be ways of accommodating new users by reallocating tenant spaces.

ORGANIZATIONAL ENHANCEMENTS:

1. Create an umbrella organization, with a director and support staff that can promote and coordinate the wide range of arts organizations in Council Bluffs. Staff should include someone who is skilled at seeking out and applying for grants. This will provide a more cost-effective, stable and sustainable way of sharing resources, funding and capacity.
2. Work with Con Agra to ensure that its desired expansion is compatible with the directions for the South Main Cultural District. This should include creating an active edge along South Main Street, which could consist of an interpretive center describing the company's role in food production and distribution. It could also relate to the festival street on 10th adding a food or perhaps culinary arts dimension. Con Agra could contribute to a unique entry to the festival street that reflects their presence in the district.
3. Enhance community outreach with an emphasis on arts education. This should embrace a wide variety of artistic programs, especially those aimed at children.
4. Strengthen the role of Harvester I. Ensure that active artists are producing and displaying their work. Invite temporary or permanent artists with an established reputation to live and work in spaces as they become available. Find ways of displaying art to the public outside, including the idea of the festival street above.
5. Reduce regulations, permit procedures and fees that frustrate organizations wanting to host and operate outdoor cultural events, as well as sell products outside. The City should view these kinds of activities as promoting the livability and appeal of Council Bluffs.
6. Examine various options for providing one or more venues for performances and music. Options should include Harvester II, the Carnegie Library building, conversion of older buildings along the street, exterior performance spaces, and perhaps new construction. Each of these has different operational and physical aspects that should be compared.
7. Acquire, assemble and dispose of properties within the South Main district, through the PCDC, in a strategic manner. Future development should include flexible spaces for creative start-ups, live/work spaces for additional artists, cultural venues, market rate housing, public spaces, and trail connections. The long range intent should be to create a living district --"a creative quarter" - with many different kinds of uses, users, and destinations.
8. Develop programs, incentives and projects to encourage incremental inclusion of residential and office uses on the upper floors of buildings, with prime storefront locations reserved for retail uses.
9. Develop a collaborative strategy with the arts community in Omaha to cross-market artistic activities on both sides of the river.
10. Develop a series of programs to coordinate, promote and market businesses and individuals that make and provide art.

REGULATORY APPROACHES

In order to help implement a Cultural District, the regulations governing development in the area might need to be modified to reinforce its image and identity. This can involve a range of approaches.

MINIMAL APPROACH: RETAIN THE EXISTING ZONING BUT ADD DESIGN STANDARDS:

This approach would keep the current regulations but add an element that addresses the quality and character of development and redevelopment. Illustrated design standards would address a number of aspects:

- Orientation of Buildings to the Street
- Pedestrian Connections
- Architectural Treatment of Ground Floor Facades
- Landscape Design
- Screening of Parking
- Pedestrian Lighting
- Visual Relationships with Surrounding Context
- Pedestrian-oriented signs

MODERATE APPROACH: RETAIN EXISTING ZONING BUT ADD OVERLAY DISTRICTS AND DESIGN STANDARDS

Overlay Districts can allow for a more tailored application of regulations. For one, it would be possible to have several different overlays for various parts of the district that would reflect different conditions and desired outcomes. This would require highlighting the presence of the overlays so that development expectations are clear and evident. Currently, the City has one overlay district that governs redevelopment along the West Broadway Corridor.

Overlay districts can be used to introduce departures from the underlying zoning regulations in various subjects to allow outcomes that are either more restrictive or more permissive:

- Uses
- Building Height
- Set-backs or set-to lines
- Parking
- Architectural Character
- Signs

BOLD APPROACH: CRAFT A NEW ZONING DISTRICT FOR THE SOUTH END OF THE DISTRICT

Currently the south end of the district is zoned for industrial use and development. As this part of the district evolves, that designation may no longer be appropriate to accommodate the full range of desired uses and building types, some of which will include residential. When the railroad was active in serving that area, industrial zoning certainly made sense. But once tracks are removed south the Harvester I Building, the land will become valuable for development.

It would be useful for the City to craft a mixed use zoning designation that could allow for a wider range of uses but perhaps limit certain types of industrial functions. As people begin to live in a place that offers cultural amenities, having uses that emit noise and odor - sometimes during night time - is generally incompatible. However, one of the attributes of the area that attracts artists is that one can do fabrication, welding, printing, dyeing, electronics, and other activities that would fall into a “light” industrial classification. The ability to engage in these activities unimpeded is necessary. It might be worthwhile requires new residents to acknowledge that they are in any area where such activities, including delivery of raw materials, is going to be present.

Industrial zoning rarely provides standard that support an expectation of visitors and residents. So a mixed use district would need

to balance various needs. It could also include some design standards, which, while not as wide-ranging as those for commercial areas, nonetheless can ensure activation of streets and public spaces.

RECOMMENDATION:

The City should consider a hybrid regulatory approach, involving approaches 2 and 3 above. A wholly new district should be developed for the south end of the district - a Mixed-Use Zone - and design-focused standards and guidelines should be applied in all portions of the district through the technique of overlays.

COROLLARY RECOMMENDATION:

The downtown area of Council Bluffs is essentially governed by two zoning districts; C-3 and C-4. Both of these districts basically only control uses. Few other quantitative standards are found in the regulations (expect for the 100 foot height limit in C-3). While some people might prefer a zoning ordinance that essentially has not standards, this also can discourage higher quality development from occurring. One of the purposes of land use regulation is to assure that new investment will not be detracted from by poorer quality development that comes later. Many developers depend upon land use regulations to key everyone at the same, high level of expectations.

Therefore, one future work item for the City that would help bolster a cultural district would be the development of a code for downtown that reflects current best practices in land use regulation.

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

Short Term 1-3 Years

CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

- 1. RELOCATION OF UP MUSEUM TO HARVESTER II**
Architectural/Engineering Design, Interior Design/Exhibit Design, Construction, Logistical Plan, Occupancy
- 2. RENOVATION OF SQUIRREL CAGE BUILDING**
Assessment of Physical Conditions and Costs, Study of Programming and Operations, Architectural/Engineering Design, Interior Design/Exhibit Design, (Construction Post 3 years, see Mid Term below)
- 3. IMPROVE THE STREETScape ALONG SOUTH MAIN STREET BETWEEN BROADWAY AND 12TH AVENUE**
Landscape Design, Lighting Design, Low-Impact Development Design (Stormwater Catchment, Filtering and Release), Wayfinding Elements, Interpretive Signs
- 4. ACTIVATE SOUTH MAIN STREET BUILDING FRONTAGES**
Sidewalk Improvements: Landscaping, Seating, Etc., Food Vending, Public Art, Agreements with Owners and Tenants

ORGANIZATIONAL ENHANCEMENTS

- 5. CREATE AN UMBRELLA ARTS ORGANIZATION**
Multi-party Agreements, Director, Staffing, Sustainable Business Plan
- 6. WORK WITH CONAGRA ON A PLAN FOR THE 10TH AVENUE AND MAIN STREET AREA**
Coordinated Development Plan, Cooperative Agreement
- 7. EXAMINE REGULATIONS, PERMITS, PROCEDURES AND FEES ASSOCIATED WITH CULTURAL EVENTS**
Code Audit, Fee Audit, Recommendations for Change
- 8. WORK WITH OMAHA ARTS GROUPS ON CROSS-MARKETING STRATEGIES**
Reach Out to Counterparts, Determine Shared Needs, Develop Methods of Increasing Awareness Throughout the Region of Cultural Venues, Identify Multiple Venues
- 9. DEVELOP JOINT PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR COUNCIL BLUFFS ARTISTS AND THEIR WORK**

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

Mid Term 3-5 Years

CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

- 1. RE-PURPOSE CARNEGIE BUILDING FOR COMMUNITY CULTURAL USES**
Interior Design, Demolition, Construction, Tenanting
- 2. RENOVATION OF SQUIRREL CAGE BUILDING**
Construction, Occupancy
- 3. DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC SPACE BETWEEN CARNEGIE AND SQUIRREL CAGE**
Landscape Design, Funding Package, Programming Plan, Construction
- 4. DEVELOP 10TH AVENUE INTO A FESTIVAL STREET**
Landscape Design, Lighting Design
Civil Design, Construction, Programming
- 5. ASSESS CATALYST DEVELOPMENT SITES NEAR BAYLISS PARK AND HARVESTER BUILDINGS**
Market Analysis, Conceptual Program/Design, Secure Development Partners
- 6. ANALYZE COUPLET OF SOUTH MAIN STREET AND PEARL**
Conversion to Two-way? Enhancements, Intersections / Crosswalks
- 6. STUDY OPTIONS FOR PERFORMING ARTS VENUES**
Market / Feasibility Analysis, Size and Type of Programming/ Operations, Locations -- attached and Free-Standing, Preliminary Concept, Financing

ORGANIZATIONAL ENHANCEMENTS

**7. DEVELOP A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR
HARVESTER I**

Expectations of Artist Tenants, Marketing
Space to New Artists

**8. DEVELOP A COMMUNITY OUTREACH /
EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Work with School District, Identify Multiple
Venues

**9. DEVELOP INCENTIVES FOR MIXED
USE, ESPECIALLY WITH RETAIL ON
THE GROUND FLOOR**

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

Long Term 5-10 Years

CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

1. **PROVIDE FOR DISPLAY OF ROLLING STOCK FOR UP MUSEUM**
Develop Plan to Retain/Replace Tracks, Design Exterior Display Area, Construction
Occupancy
2. **CONTINUE TO DEVELOP CATALYST SITE(S)**
Partner with Private Developer(s), Develop One or More Sites with Mixed Use

