CONTENTS

Executive Summary ........................................................ 3
Downtown Today.......................................................... 7
What has been accomplished?.......................................... 9
Downtown Framework Plan
  1  Invest in Impact Opportunities.............................. 11
  2  Energize the Connectors........................................ 15
  3  Activate Mays Island ............................................. 19
  4  Embrace the River.................................................. 23
  5  Champion Urban Living ......................................... 27
  6  Create a Cultural Quad.......................................... 31
  7  Distinguish the Downtown...................................... 35
  8  Establish District Coordination............................... 39
Vision Downtown Cedar Rapids .................................. 41
Acknowledgements..................................................... 43
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency. Remember that our sons and our grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty”.

-Daniel Burnham, 1907

It is an exciting time for the community of Cedar Rapids. Downtown, in particular, has experienced a myriad of changes in the last ten years. The historic flood of 2008 has forever changed this city, but under strong leadership, the people of Cedar Rapids have turned this disaster into possibility – a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reinvent the downtown. Inspired by the ensuing transformation, Downtown stakeholders have commissioned this “Vision Cedar Rapids” update to continue to advance a framework for investment that honors the past while maintaining focus on the future.

In 2007, the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance commissioned the first “Vision Cedar Rapids” study to review, coordinate, merge, and prioritize over a dozen independent studies that had been completed in order to help mold a clear, unified vision for downtown, which directly informed the planning efforts in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 flood event. With the framework for flood recovery in place, the study was updated in 2012 and served as a guide for project implementation. And now, in 2017, with many of the recommendations realized and much of the downtown and surrounding districts transformed, Downtown Cedar Rapids is at an inflection point, prepared to launch to an even bigger and brighter future as the result of some significant factors that set this study apart from the rest:

1. **Impact sites.** To a large degree a result of flood protection planning, but also – significantly – due to the foresight and vision of City leadership, there exists approximately 23 acres of City-owned, undeveloped property in the heart of the downtown. This includes the parcels assembled in Kingston Village, along the Riverfront south of 8th Avenue and the former Sinclair site, and collectively they represent an unprecedented opportunity for the community to do something remarkable for Cedar Rapids and for Iowa. In addition to these impact sites, over two dozen privately-held sites have been identified as opportunities for improvement and investment throughout the downtown core.

2. **District leadership.** Perhaps stimulated by the district areas suggested in the 2007 Vision Plan, but certainly catalyzed by the strength and success of the downtown SSMID, the formation of new Self-Supporting Municipal Improvement Districts in Cedar Rapids has spurred organized efforts for improvements and has brought a stronger definition to the character of these unique areas. Moving forward, a more focused and coordinated effort between the different districts will help unify and strengthen the goals of the greater downtown and community.

3. **Momentum.** The phenomenal belief in, commitment to, and real investment in the priorities identified in the earlier plans has resulted in coordinated projects that have yielded material results. There is still work to be done, but the energy generated from these successes will provide the fuel for downtown’s continued evolution, challenging us to not just consider, but to **champion big ideas.**

Impact sites, district leadership, and momentum are three over-arching opportunities that set this 2017 study apart from previous ones, and are opportunities that must be leveraged towards a vision for at least the next five years.

And so we approach this study from a new vantage point. It has become more and more clear, as we have listened, observed, and engaged, that the focus is shifting from implementation to experience. What priorities, if implemented, would best contribute to creating a **vibrant downtown experience**? If the focus is on experience, then how can Downtown serve as the consummate host? The Vision Downtown Cedar Rapids stakeholder committee has considered this question through the following lenses:

1. **Ease.** How do we remove barriers and better welcome, guide, and transport our guests?
2. **Energy.** How do we continue to bring more life to the streets, to accommodate signature events, and to encourage an 18-hour dynamic?
2. **Emotion.** How do we, as host, honor our past, share our stories, and celebrate our unique identity?
The answers to these questions has found common language around the ideas of **connections**, **opportunity investments**, **culture**, and big ideas, and these themes permeate the eight priorities that have been established in this vision plan:

1. **Invest** in Impact Opportunities  
2. **Energize** the Connectors  
3. **Activate** Mays Island  
4. **Embrace** the River  
5. **Champion** Urban Living  
6. **Create** a Cultural Quad  
7. **Distinguish** the Downtown  
8. **Establish** District Coordination

It has been very important that, as we narrowed in on these priorities and strategies, the hallmarks of past planning efforts not get lost. This plan, like past efforts, needs to be relevant, thoughtful, and actionable. But building on current momentum, it also cannot be a vision plan that is timid, afraid to suggest big ideas.

As experience started to reveal itself as a central theme, the committee became inspired by the image below. Conversations and brainstorm centered around visions of how a vibrant downtown experience might be expressed on a postcard. In five, ten or twenty years from now, what are the big ideas that will inspire that image? And so this “postcard concept” is woven throughout this study as a way to think boldly about the future and remind us to make big plans.
| COMMON THEMES |

Connections
Opportunity Investments
Culture
Big Ideas

| PRIORITIES |

1. Invest in Impact Opportunities
2. Energize the Connectors
3. Activate Mays Island
4. Embrace the River
5. Champion Urban Living
6. Create a Cultural Quad
7. Distinguish the Downtown
8. Establish District Coordination
DOWNTOWN TODAY

It is an exciting time for the community of Cedar Rapids. Downtown, in particular, has experienced a myriad of changes in the last ten years. The historic flood of 2008 has forever changed this city, but under strong leadership, the people of Cedar Rapids have turned this disaster into possibility – a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reinvent the downtown. Inspired by the ensuing transformation, Downtown stakeholders have commissioned this "Vision Cedar Rapids" update to continue to advance a framework for investment that honors the past while maintaining focus on the future.

In 2007, the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance commissioned the first “Vision Cedar Rapids” study to review, coordinate, merge and prioritize over a dozen independent studies that had been completed in order to help mold a clear, unified vision for downtown that directly informed the planning efforts in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 flood event. With the framework for flood recovery in place, the study was updated in 2012 and served as a guide for project implementation. And now, in 2017, with many of the recommendations realized and much of the downtown and surrounding districts transformed, Downtown Cedar Rapids is at an inflection point, prepared to launch to an even bigger and brighter future.
(Statistics are reflective of growth within Downtown SSMID Boundary. Courtesy of Downtown SSMID Commission Report, 2017)
2007 & 2012 FRAMEWORK PLAN INITIATIVES MOSTLY COMPLETE:

2007 FRAMEWORK PLAN INITIATIVES MOSTLY COMPLETE:

1. CREATE A RIVERFRONT PARK
   1. Convert the Riverfront to a Public Park
   2. Redevelop Prime Riverfront Lots
   3. Reorient Buildings to Front the River
   4. Link the East to the West
   5. Host Community Events
   6. Create a Continuous Pedestrian/Bike Path
   7. Solve the Traffic/Pedestrian Conflicts
   8. Location for Future Civic Facilities
   9. Provide Connections to Downtown Housing
   10. Follow Lead of GreatAmerica Building
   11. Redevelop the Federal Courthouse
   12. Create Public Space along River at Ingredion

2. NEW DOWNTOWN HOUSING
   1. Renovate Former Warehouses into Housing
   2. Redevelop Underutilized Lots
   3. Redevelop City-Owned Parcels
   4. Remove Overhead Utilities
   5. Identify & Celebrate the Downtown Districts
   6. Create a Whistle & Switching-Free Zone
   7. Create Walkable Neighborhoods
   8. Architectural Design

3. RESTORE NEARSIDE NEIGHBORHOODS
   1. Develop a Revitalization Program
   2. Develop a “Replacement & Infill” Program
   3. Define the Edge of Medical Park

4. CREATE A WALKABLE DOWNTOWN
   1. Create a Pedestrian Environment
   2. Remove the First Street Parkade
   3. Relocate the GTC
   4. Hide New Parking behind Mixed-Use

5. STREETS & PARKING
   1. Convert One-Ways back to Two-Ways
   2. Streetscape Improvements
   3. Provide On-Street Parking where Possible
   4. Reopen Second Street at APAC

6. RESTORE MAYS ISLAND
   1. Repair & Update Infrastructure
   2. Renovate Building Site Work
   3. Finish the Tip of the Island
   4. Renovate the Parking Structure

7. SINCLAIR SITE
   1. Restore the Brownfield
   2. Reserve for a Corporate Park
   3. Create a Mixed-Use Sustainable Neighborhood
   4. Follow Smart Growth & New Urbanism Principles

2012 FRAMEWORK PLAN INITIATIVES MOSTLY COMPLETE:

1. IMPLEMENT FLOOD PROTECTION
   1. Implement City’s Preferred Flood Management
   2. Gain Riverfront Access through Ingredion
   3. Flood Protect West Side
4. Preserve Historic Structures

2. **CREATE A RIVERFRONT PARK**
   1. Convert the Riverfront to a Public Park
   2. Redevelop Prime Riverfront Lots
   3. Reorient Buildings to Front the River
   4. Link East to West
   5. Host Community Events
   6. Create a Continuous Pedestrian/Bicycle Path
   7. Solve the Traffic/Pedestrian Conflicts
   8. Develop Sport & Recreation Opportunities
   9. Provide Connections to Downtown Housing
   10. Follow Lead of GreatAmerica Building
   11. Continue Public Improvements to Mays Island
   12. Location for Future Civic Facilities

3. **NEW DOWNTOWN HOUSING**
   1. Renovate Former Warehouses into Housing
   2. Redevelop Underutilized Lots
   3. Redevelop City-Owned Parcels
   4. West Side Housing
   5. Continue to Remove Overhead Power Lines
   6. Create a Whistle-Free Zone
   7. Identify & Celebrate the Downtown Districts
   8. Architectural Design

4. **PARKING**
   1. Minimize Surface Parking in Downtown Core
   2. Develop Mixed-Use Buildings with Parking
   3. On-Street Parking as Premium Amenity
   4. Investment in Downtown Development

5. **RESTORE NEARSIDE NEIGHBORHOODS**
   1. Implement Neighborhood Planning Process
   2. Encourage Owner-Occupied Housing
   3. Identify & Celebrate Neighborhood Centers
   4. Respect Existing Neighborhood Character
   5. Keep Neighborhood Schools Open
   6. Connect Neighborhoods with Walkable Routes
   7. Establish & Enforce Property Standards
   8. Define Edge of Medical Park (Physical Boundary)

6. **WEST SIDE REDEVELOPMENT**
   1. Provide Flood Protection & Build Responsibly in Flood Plain
   2. Take Advantage of Geography
   3. Embrace History where Possible

7. **CREATE A WALKABLE DOWNTOWN**
   1. Design for People
   2. Streetscape Improvements
   3. Hide New Parking behind Mixed-Use
   4. Follow the Lead of Czech & New Bo

8. **THIRD STREET AS SIGNATURE STREET**
   1. Redevelop Surface Parking with Urban Density
   2. Streetscape Improvements
   3. Encourage Pedestrian Interaction
   4. Invest and Encourage Local Galleries, Studios & Shops

9. **THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE**
   1. Cedar Lake as an Amenity
   2. Reroute Downtown Switching Operations
   3. Interstate 380
   4. Cedar River Use

---

Denotes accomplished / partially accomplished
Denotes items unaddressed
Cedar Rapids is at an important inflection point. The availability of over 23 acres of City-owned, undeveloped land in the heart of downtown is a game-changer for Cedar Rapids and should change the way we think and act about the future. In addition to being publicly held, the sites are cleared and in the position to be acted upon immediately – this is the place for big ideas and should be reserved for those opportunities rather than parcelled out. There are also over 25 individual opportunity sites that have been identified through the planning process as either underutilized or able to make a significant positive impact on the downtown through redevelopment. As opportunities for these sites become available, the City and downtown business owners need to understand how all of these individual sites can be developed to their greatest individual or collective potential.

KEY IMPACT SITES
1. Kingston Village site(s) – the properties situated between 3rd Avenue SW and I-380 to the north, and the river and I-380 on the west. This area has great visibility from and access to I-380, is situated on the riverfront, and includes within it the major connectors of 1st Avenue, 2nd Avenue, and 3rd Avenue that link it to Mays Island and the downtown core. With the original casino proposal for this site now very unlikely to ever happen, other big and outside-the-box ideas that could create a postcard opportunity for Cedar Rapids should be explored.

2. 8th Avenue parking site south of the Federal Courthouse. This four block stretch along the riverfront has approximately eight acres of developable area, not including the area dedicated for flood protection. This property has amazing potential, with proxim-

3. Sinclair site. This site is one of the first phases in the flood control plan that will be completed, so long-term plans for the area can begin to be realized. With its location at the south terminus of Signature 3rd Street in the New Bohemia District and some limitation on major traffic access, it is a prime location for development of owner-occupied and high-end multifamily housing or other neighborhood-centric functions.

OTHER OPPORTUNITY SITES
4. Pepsi warehouses/3rd Street warehouse district. Lack of housing is still a top issue in Downtown Cedar Rapids to provide the vitality that it needs to create 18-hour neighborhoods. As described in the 2007 and 2012 Framework Plans, this area is ideally situated between the MedQ District, the Central Business District, and New Bohemia, all of which can generate the employee base to support it. The warehouse district contains several outstanding and underutilized warehouse facilities that are primed for conversion to housing, as well as opportunity lots that could bring new multistory mixed-use developments. A well-planned mixed-use downtown neighborhood is an ideal transitional land use to the Oak Hill Jackson neighborhood.

This eight-acre site in Kingston Village is City-owned and should be preserved for a game-changing opportunity like a mixed-use development, casino, or a sports stadium.

This City-owned property has amazing potential for a high-density development that could serve as an anchor investment, bridging adjacent districts.
1. **INVEST IN IMPACT OPPORTUNITIES**

3. **Sinclair Site**

The Sinclair site features include access to the river, recreational trails and activities, the arts corridor, and proximity to the emerging New Bohemia neighborhood.

4. **Pepsi Warehouse/3rd Street Warehouse District**

The warehouse district, situated between the commercial district and medical park, is a perfect location to support rehabilitation of industrial buildings for rental and owner-occupied housing.
INVEST IN IMPACT OPPORTUNITIES

5. Five Seasons parking ramp east of DoubleTree (1st Avenue SE and 4th Street). With a potential connection to the US Cellular Center, its proximity to Cedar River Trail and the “Cultural Quad” located near Greene Square Park, Signature 3rd Street, and access to I-380, this site is positioned well for uses that would attract and actively engage visitors to the downtown, such as a casino or a hotel.

6. Infill, redevelopment and gateway sites.
   - 1st Avenue infill and redevelopment sites. These parcels include the US Bank parking lot, the Skogman Realty parking lot, Albert Auto site, Verizon Tower and parking ramp, and the 600 Block between A Avenue and 1st Avenue (also a gateway site). Even though most are privately-owned and in use now, their prime locations along 1st Avenue make them strong candidates for improvement. Any chance to increase density, improve streetscapes, and elevate exterior aesthetic appeal should be explored if these properties can acquire financing or experience transitions over time.
   - Signature 3rd Street improvements and redevelopment sites. As properties are improved or the potential for redevelopment explored, such as the Guaranty Block and the parking lot a few blocks over on 3rd Avenue, density and street-level activity should be primary design drivers. Although we might suggest first floor residential in a live-work development in the adjacent warehouse district or first floor office in other parts of the Central Business District, it is important to replace first floor office and residential on this Signature 3rd Street with retail, art, culture, entertainment, and service functions to activate the corridor.

7. Implement Form-Based Code. Planning efforts to move towards a form-based code have already begun in Cedar Rapids, which will be a beneficial change for downtown. Conventional zoning sought to separate uses that interfered with one another such as industrial uses next to a residential neighborhood. However, some relationships, like a commercial use adjacent to residential areas, encourage healthy neighborhoods because daily needs are met within walking distance or a short drive. When properly executed, a form-based code limits sprawl by populating neighborhoods with retail, office, recreational, and residential uses – creating denser development areas.

8. Postcard - “City within a City.” The Kingston Village site currently held by the City presents unique opportunities for massive development. The “City within a City” idea aims to charge Cedar Rapids to think outside of the box when future development is proposed. State-of-the-art living, energy independence, and 21st century transportation can put this area downtown on the map, and define Cedar Rapids as a progressive city.

5. Five Seasons Parking Ramp East of DoubleTree

With a potential connection to the US Cellular Center and its proximity to other key amenities, this site is positioned well for development such as a casino or a hotel.

6. Infill, Redevelopment, & Gateway Sites

There are a number of privately-held infill and redevelopment opportunity sites along 1st Avenue and Signature 3rd Street and at the five key gateways to the downtown.
7. Implement Form-Based Code

This image from the Congress of New Urbanism shows three of the seven zones that can be used when determining character areas for form-based code. Each of these would all be found downtown.

8. Postcard - “City within a City”

The large, publicly-owned impact sites located in Downtown present an unprecedented opportunity for the community to do something remarkable.
Connectors are any pathways that link people and places together for various reasons (industry, work, recreation, dining, shopping, sport, etc.). Downtown Cedar Rapids is unique in that it already has the basic infrastructure to make these connectors diverse and iconic. Streets are obvious connectors, but the Cedar River and Lake, Cedar River Trail, the railways, and the riverfront all start to form a comprehensive system that not all cities are in the position to explore.

1. **Address 1st, 2nd and 3rd Street SE priorities.** The 2007 and 2012 Framework Plans established recommendations for these streets, and since then many of those improvements have been made.

   The 2007 Framework Plan recommendation was to create an intact, walkable center along 1st Street; this should still be the priority, as an active “people zone” with access to the riverfront. Since 2007 there has been new development on this street, such as CRST Center and Smulekoff’s mixed-use. As more mixed-use sites along this corridor are developed, parking and inactive functions should be prohibited on the first level to promote activity and walkability.

   At 2nd Street, reopening the street at Plaza 425 is still the top priority. The Federal Courthouse did close off 1st Street, so now 3rd Street is the only street that connects through the heart of Downtown. Although there are ways to improve traffic flow on 3rd Street, there may need to be other routing options in order to improve mobility in the downtown core. Relocating the GTC to improve the 2nd Street connection should also be considered a high priority.

   The priority for 3rd Street is to still be the “Signature Street” for Downtown Cedar Rapids. A “signature street” is the distinguished street in a community or downtown that includes amenities, programming, and targeted uses like food, beverage, and retail. A “Signature Street” is your most active street, which doesn’t exclude vehicular traffic.

   Even though 3rd Street has been reduced to two-car lanes to allow for more pedestrian activity (bike lanes, parklets), it has the potential to move vehicular traffic more efficiently and effectively by creating better intersection control. In the 2012 Framework Plan update, it was suggested that 3rd Street be closed for programs such as the downtown farmers’ market and other events. Today, keeping 3rd Street open during big events rather than shutting down traffic is advisable, due to the fact that this is one of the primary vehicular streets through downtown. Events like the farmers’ market that take place on the street frequently could be relocated, as recommended in Section 3, “Activate Mays Island”.

2. **Create Continuity at Cedar River Trail.** Also part of the American Discovery Trail, this connector loses its luster as it transitions from Cedar Lake and past the yard at Cargill/Quaker Oats, and then becomes a game of Frogger through downtown, crossing

---

**1. Address 1st, 2nd and 3rd Street Priorities**

The priorities established in previous studies remain: create a walkable center along 1st Street, re-open 2nd Street, and create a “Signature Street” at 3rd Street.

**2. Create Continuity at Cedar River Trail**

Improving safety as the Cedar River Trail moves from Cedar Lake and through the downtown will enhance this amazing amenity and elevate its status as a component of the America Discovery Trail.
2 ENERGIZE THE CONNECTORS
2 ENSERGE THE CONNECTORS

the train tracks at 4th Street numerous times. The trail should be reconstructed as a continuous, clear, and principal pedestrian pathway through Downtown, with protected intersections at high-volume connectors such as 8th Avenue SE.

3. Create signature gateways. What are visitors’ first impressions as they enter downtown? Signage and wayfinding improvements are currently underway by the City to help navigate and welcome people, and the next step is to explore opportunities to improve the physical entrances into downtown. The four key gateways entering from I-380, in particular, should be the first to be addressed, and the gateway at Signature 3rd Street and 8th Avenue should be addressed as those properties are redeveloped in the future.

4. Address the “Understate.” This area below the interstate highway that intersects the public realm should be improved in order to create a feeling of safety for pedestrians as well as make a clean and presentable impression on visitors. Immediate and low-cost solutions for the “Understate” should be explored, including: planting hearty vegetation to buffer unsightly areas and soften views; cleaning and/or painting the supporting infrastructure; engaging local artists to provide creative installations; and installing City branding and signage elements to encourage pride and unity. Discussion with the Iowa Department of Transportation will need to be initiated before improvements can proceed.

5. Reimagine modality. Modality means that people have multiple transportation choices to reach the downtown, and options that are affordable, safe, and easy to use. Accessibility is an important component of a dynamic downtown. Once Downtown, navigation between destinations and adjacent districts needs to be easy, obvious, and enjoyable. There are no limits to creativity in this regard, and some popular ideas include city bike rentals, bus trolleys, cycle rickshaws and playful kiosks and signage that encourage and reward walking.

6. Postcard - Connect CR and the Sleeping Giant Bridge. The Connect CR Master Plan (work done by Shive-Hattery) aims to emphasize the connection of Cedar Lake to Mt. Trashmore with the addition of a pedestrian bridge, which should be prioritized for implementation. The city is making great strides in becoming an iconic bicycling community, and if Cedar Rapids can strengthen the connection of these two assets through the city with a bike path it will only further this distinction.

This image at the I-380 off-ramp on 1st Street SE highlights the importance of first impression and directional cues; in this case they contribute to anxiety and confusion for visitors.

Below I-380, the condition of the understand creates a barrier. We encourage immediate improvements such as lighting, paint, and landscaping, but also encourage creative solutions that turn these from areas of blight to delight.
Provide varied modes of affordable, safe, and easy transportation to and through the downtown; be creative when considering modality and don’t forget your unique opportunities - rails, trails and river.

Connecting Cedar Lake to Mt. Trashmore will be a game changer for downtown. The Sleeping Giant Bridge connecting to Mt. Trashmore is already in progress.
Mays Island has undergone extensive improvements since the historic 2008 Cedar River flood. Both the Veterans Memorial Building and the Linn County Courthouse have been renovated in the last five years. The site work around these buildings has been upgraded to provide more friendly entrances, and the below-grade parking structure on the island has been renovated to provide better access and be more inviting to visitors. Much of the infrastructure (sidewalks, signage, landscaping) is also in process of being improved to celebrate and better connect this unique asset to Cedar Rapids.

Although improvements have been made to the island over the last several years, its potential is simply not being realized. Mays Island is the ultimate “postcard” for Cedar Rapids; it is the aspect of downtown that is the most recognizable and unique. One of the main reasons it is so unique is because of the original vision that John May had in the 1850s. At that time, the majority of people thought the island was a useless swamp, but May envisioned it to be a perfect location for the government and civic center - like Paris, France - and took critical steps to transform the landmark.

The civic functions remain, but the four-acre island is underutilized for the potential it could bring to the community and visitors. Here are some opportunities for reimagining John May’s vision:

1. Make a Signature Event Space in Downtown

Integration of structures, landscaping, and plaza space can help make this an event space that can be utilized at all times of the year.

The ground floors of the existing buildings should be evaluated much like the exterior, where additional programming and brainstorming could lead to more activity to and through the buildings.

2. Activate the Ground Floor of Buildings

The future development of Mays Island should be tackled holistically, as if it was all built at once. This includes integration of inside and outside, and the user experience throughout the site. The ground floors of the existing building should be evaluated much like the exterior, where additional programming and brainstorming could lead to more activity to and through the buildings.

3. Activate public space on Mays Island

Because of its location downtown and position on the Cedar River, it provides the perfect setting for a gathering spot and a place that all can enjoy. Mays Island has the opportunity to be the premiere public events space in all of Iowa. Geographically, it is also significant because it represents a hinge point between the east and west sides of downtown. The future uses on the island could bring people together at this historically significant site for various events and purposes, celebrating its civic past. The public space between
3. Activate Public Space on Mays Island

Provide easy access to the island for visitors and pedestrians, and reasons for the community to gather (views, gardens, coffee shop, farmers’ market, etc.).

Mays Island is a beacon for the city and provides an impression on visitors. What does it look like from all vantage points in the city? Landscaping, signage, and lighting improvements will elevate its allure.
Veterans Memorial Building and Linn County Courthouse could be a great location for the farmers’ market and annual community events, and providing easy access to the island for visitors and pedestrians will be important to make these activities successful.

4. Consider views of Mays Island. Mays Island is a beacon for the city and provides an impression on visitors. Views of Mays Island are important to promote and to elevate this unique feature in the City. Landscaping, signage, and lighting improvements at the streets are already underway, but this could be extended to address some of the “eyesore” spots on the island.

5. Move the jail off the island. One of the civic functions on Mays Island is the county jail that has been there for decades. The location of the jail on the island is not ideal for the “big idea” of making this a premiere public events space. Initial steps should be taken to consider the long-term planning of moving the courthouse functions and jail off of the island, so that additional investments to the courthouse and jail align with the future visions of Linn County and Cedar Rapids.

6. Implement a pedestrian bridge. A pedestrian bridge at the southern tip of the island will not only serve as a connector to the greenway and to the east and west sides of the river, but a convenient access point to the island for locals and visitors. Finishing the tip of this island and constructing the bridge, although challenging, can be accomplished even before the potential removal of the jail.

7. Consider compatible uses of buildings. The Veterans Memorial Building and the Linn County Courthouse are two valuable assets on the island because of their historic character, uses, and aesthetic beauty. These buildings should not only continue to be preserved, but they also present opportunities to be repurposed. Some of the future uses that could be integrated into these buildings include museum space (ideas like a “Cereal Museum” or “Engineering Museum”), a visitor center, and a boutique hotel. This island could be the first place travelers go to discover the treasures and activities that Cedar Rapids has to offer.

8. Postcard – Iconic Mays Island. By fully utilizing and celebrating this unique asset, Mays Island can be transformed from a landmark to an iconic place in the United States. Mays Island will then become instantly recognizable on a postcard.

In addition to the City of Cedar Rapids and Linn County, there are other interest groups that are invested in Mays Island. It will be crucial that all of these entities work together to advance this big idea.
Some of the future uses that could coexist in the Linn County Courthouse and Veterans Memorial Building include museum space, a visitor center, and a boutique hotel.

Mays Island is the ultimate “postcard” for Cedar Rapids. It is the aspect of downtown that is the most recognizable and unique.
Formal design work began on the flood control plan in 2014, after the necessary property acquisition was completed along the banks of the Cedar River. This resulted in a formal Flood Control System Master Plan in 2016 that has integrated the Riverfront Park concept into its implementation strategy. The Flood Control System Master Plan also identifies a comprehensive priority analysis in determining an anticipated timeline for when certain sections of the Flood Control System should be complete. In that analysis, because of technical, economic, and neighborhood factors, the downtown area between I-380 and 8th Avenue has an anticipated timeline for completion in ten or more years. The report also acknowledges that the actual timeline will be determined through available capital and City discretion prior to starting these specific projects. The Cedar River is a great amenity that doesn’t necessarily require a full flood control plan to start enjoying. Here are some ways that the river can be embraced now:

1. **Improve the river edge.** With the importance of riverfront access to downtown and the opportunity to connect and develop the Cedar River Trail, there should be consideration of short-term options for improvement along the downtown riverfront. The parking lots between 3rd Avenue and 5th Avenue along the east side of the river are ideal candidates for these intermediate improvements. Any efforts to advance the idea of the Riverfront Park will need to be carefully balanced with the operational needs of these buildings, infrastructure, and the spirit of the promenade. For example, it is important to maintain close proximity parking alternatives for retail and office viability along this corridor. There should also be investigation into riverbank plants that can survive a major flood, so that the river edge views and experience can be enhanced as much as possible.

2. **Utilize the river as recreation.** Explore connecting to the river through recreation like kayaking, canoeing, and trail activities to take advantage of this amenity through all of the seasons. This will also add value to the river and change people’s perception about this untapped amenity. Cedar Rapids can become an image for people and not just a name.

3. **Engage the buildings to the riverfront.** Many buildings were constructed with their backs to the river. Every effort should be made to create an additional front door for these structures, which would face the new audience as the Riverfront Park evolves. As new and existing buildings are developed, there should be further exploration into riverbank plants that can survive a major flood, so that the river edge views and experience can be enhanced as much as possible.
4 EMBRACE THE RIVER

NEW POSTCARD IDEA
CEedar Lake To Cedar River Canal
5.1 &/or Southend Dams

WHAT'S BEEN COMPLETED?
Riverfront Parks
Flood Control
Cedar River Trail
Development Along River
A. City Hall
B. CRST Center
C. Smuckeroff's
D. North-Western Mutual
E. Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance
F. Federal Courthouse
G. AOIT Lofts
H. The Chelsea (InnSuites Building)
I. The Metropolitan
J. Kingston Commons

4 EMBRACE THE RIVER
River As Recreation
River As A Connector
Greenway Parks Master Plan
Redevelop Prime Riverfront Lots
Buildings To Engage River
(3rd Ave. To 7th Ave. At 1st St.)
Poor Cedar River Trail Continuity
Pedestrian Bridges

CEedar River
review and guidance by the City on how this should be executed both architecturally and programmatically.

4. Redevelop prime riverfront lots. There are some key parcels (including existing parking lots) along the riverfront that should be a top priority for development. The CRST Center, City Hall, housing developments at Kingston Village, Mott Lofts, and The Chelsea (Knutson Building) all have been great additions to the riverfront over the last ten years. And as previously mentioned, there exists approximately 23 acres of City-owned, undeveloped property in the heart of downtown that has the immediate potential to be developed. This is amazing!

5. Implement the City’s Flood Control System. As specific projects get developed, close collaboration should continue with flood protection planning. This will ensure that these projects are maximizing potential and prioritizing for the long term.

6. Use the river as a connector. One way that the river can act as a connector is the experience of crossing it via bridges and roadways. There should be a priority on improving the existing links between east and west, specifically at 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Avenues, so that east and west feel like a cohesive downtown. This focus should be primarily on the pedestrian experience across the river, and in conjunction with programs and events that can be incorporated on both Mays Island and the river’s edge in the future. In addition to this, there has already been great excitement around the “Sleeping Giant” pedestrian bridge connection across the river south to Mt. Trashmore. This river connection is part of a greater trail system plan through downtown and up to Cedar Lake.

The river itself is another important connector that is largely being ignored in the downtown. Ideas should be explored to better connect Cedar Lake to Cedar River for recreation and access, and awareness that the lake and river are both amazing assets to the downtown. The two postcard ideas below explore this further.

7. Postcard - Remove the 5:1 Dam. The Greenway Park Plan developed by the City and Confluence suggests an idea to retrofit the west dam gate wall on the 5:1 Dam to open a connection at the river and bring some of the rapids back into downtown. To take that idea even further, what if the 5:1 Dam was removed, and a dam was installed on the south end of the Cedar River past Mt. Trashmore to allow for future downtown expansion to the south? This could bring controlled water up around the core of downtown for easier access, use, and a presence downtown.

8. Postcard - Create a usable canal. A usable canal could connect Cedar Lake to Cedar River for recreation and access. In the winter, this could be frozen for an ice trail. Other communities have developed these man-made interventions, including cold weather communities like Indianapolis and Pueblo, Colorado. As shown in the adjacent image, these canals can create development opportunities for growth downtown.

3. Engage the Buildings to the Riverfront

Many buildings were constructed with their backs to the river. Every effort should be made to create an additional front door, which would face the new audience as the Riverfront Park evolves.

4. Redevelop Prime Riverfront Lots

Prioritize parcels along the riverfront, including the existing parking lots bordering the river. The CRST Center, City Hall, and Kingston Village developments all have been great additions to the riverfront over the last ten years.
5. Implement City’s Flood Control System

As specific projects get developed, close collaboration should continue with flood control planning. This will ensure that these projects are maximizing potential and prioritizing for the long term.

6. Use the River as a Connector

Use the river as a connector. Focus on improving the existing links between east and west, specifically at 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Avenues, so that east and west feel like a cohesive downtown.
In the last ten years, much has been done to make the focus for downtown on people and not vehicles. Streetscapes have been improved with the implementation of trees and parklets, implementation of bike lanes, reduction of vehicular lanes, and one-ways converted to two-ways. There has been implementation of revived urban public space (Greene Square, for instance) and momentum for more live, work, and play in the downtown area.

The key link that is missing in all of the positive improvements is the critical mass of people that has the potential to enjoy this extremely dynamic and lovely downtown. Below are some actions to help promote and champion urban living:

1. Create 18-hour downtown energy. This will be dependent upon creation and expansion of urban neighborhoods, otherwise it will remain largely a business district that stays relatively quiet at night. Without people living there, a downtown cannot be vibrant. An 18-hour downtown neighborhood is one that is active with business during the day, and is energized with shopping, dining, and entertainment at night.

2. Develop mixed-use infill projects. Mixed-use, urban infill projects should be one of the top development prioritons in the Downtown core, along with expanding on the existing features to get people to want to live and visit there. Housing developments have exploded in Kingston and in New Bo, but there is still a great capacity to have more housing types in the core. As previously mentioned, a great location for concentrated urban living is the 3rd Street warehouse district. This would be the premiere downtown neighborhood with a combination of different types of housing units and concentrated mixed-use, with tighter walkable neighborhood streets that will encourage the downtown community to blossom. This is also a key transition zone to the single-family, nearside neighborhoods of Oak Hill Jackson that could improve the connections of those neighborhoods with a safer and accessible way to get to the core.

3. Focus on transition zones. Transitions, at a micro-scale, are also very important when thinking about having a safe and exciting living experience in the downtown. The streetscape (area between the building and the street) is the most important transition space to making a downtown safe, livable, and pedestrian friendly. Elements of a successful streetscape are as follows:
   - Design and placement of signs and lights for people, not cars.
   - Separate people from cars with a combination of planters and on-street parking.
   - Wider sidewalks to incorporate plazas, parklets, and other spaces for people to meet.

The design of the street is also essential in providing and supporting a safe and vibrant downtown. Generally, streets tend to focus on moving vehicles as the primary function. Successful streets, however, are “living streets.” These streets have a stronger emphasis on pedestrian movement. “Living streets” accommodate multimodal

---

**1. Create 18-hour Downtown Energy**

An 18-hour downtown neighborhood is one that is active with businesses during the day, and is energized with shopping, dining, and entertainment at night.

**2. Develop Mixed-Use Infill Projects**

Housing developments have exploded in Kingston and in New Bo, but there is still a great capacity for more housing downtown. Mixed-use, urban infill projects should be one of the top development priorities downtown.
3. Focus on Transition Zones

- Design and placement of signs and lights for people, not cars.
- Separate people from cars with a combination of planters and on-street parking.
- Wider sidewalks to incorporate plazas, parklets, and other spaces for people to meet.

4. Provide a Flexible First Floor

Urban residential areas adjacent to the Downtown core, are great places for live/work options. This project in Seattle is a great example of residential combined with retail or office storefronts.
transportation, incorporate route options to move traffic, institute public spaces that are active and add value to nearby properties, and support compact, mixed-use development.

4. **Provide a flexible first floor.** Another element of positive transition is the correlation between different uses in downtown neighborhood buildings. Live/work options at the first floor should be encouraged in these downtown neighborhoods, so that dwelling, retail, and work are in close proximity of each other. The result is more activity and pedestrian engagement at the street level.

5. **Bolster a sharing economy.** Downtown neighborhoods can be a desirable place to live if communal and outdoor amenities are nearby. Communal gardens, dog parks, bike paths, and outdoor spaces provide places for chance encounters and social interaction with fellow downtown neighbors and patrons. Ideas like urban agriculture, are already being implemented by organizations like Matthew 25 in and near downtown. The Greenway Parks Plan developed by the City and Confluence also expands on this idea by including spaces like community gardens, dog parks, and a variety of activity and sports areas.

6. **Build Communal Character.** There are opportunity areas in Downtown Cedar Rapids that provide the basic infrastructure to build dense urban neighborhoods. 6th Avenue SE between 3rd Street and 5th Street is a great example of this. The characteristics of these dense neighborhoods have narrow streets, landscaping, and density and diversity of different buildings. Once established, they can become their own small communities within the urban fabric of downtown.

7. **Renovate the former warehouses into housing.** The warehouse district is ideally situated between the Central Business District and the Medical Quarter. It is a perfect location to support rehabilitation of its former industrial buildings into both rental and owner-occupied multi-family housing.

8. **Postcard – Downtown Neighborhood.** A “woonerf” is a living street, and derived its origins in the Netherlands. Low speed limits and shared space are characteristics of these streets. If these environments can be implemented at locations such as 6th Avenue SE and in the warehouse district, it could form a unique and vibrant Downtown neighborhood.
7. Renovate Former Warehouses into Housing

The warehouse district is ideally situated between the Central Business District and the Medical Quarter. It is a perfect location to support rehabilitation of its former industrial buildings into both rental and owner-occupied housing.

8. Postcard - Downtown Neighborhood

A “woonerf” creates a unique sense of place through natural building features such as narrow streets, landscaping, density, and diversity of buildings.
"Life is the sum of all the seasons with which it is filled. And if we have time to enjoy the things most important to us, life is rich and full indeed. In Cedar Rapids there is time enough... time to enjoy the seasons as they pass. Extra time. Precious time. A fifth season."

This was the explanation behind the logo and branding of Cedar Rapids as the City of Five Seasons when it was created by Bill Munsell and Gary Anderson in 1968. The monument for the “Five Seasons” was built along the river in Downtown Cedar Rapids in 1996 to call major attention to the City, to build positive attitudes about Cedar Rapids worldwide, to build pride among residents, to recognize the work of folks who make a difference here, and to focus increased attention downtown.

The spirit of the “Five Seasons” is apparent today in greater downtown, with diverse celebrations of culture and history that are very unique. There is an opportunity for the downtown itself to be a more deliberate extension of the spirit of this monument. This can be accomplished by creating strong connections to this collective history and culture, while extending this link beyond Cedar Rapids.

1. Recognize and develop the American Discovery Trail. The American Discovery Trail is a trail system that connects the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean through the middle of the United States. It also happens to pass through Iowa along 4th street to the heart of Downtown Cedar Rapids, and down to the river. This historical link should be recognized through marketing, signage, and wayfinding. There is already an emphasis on a portion of this trail with the Connect CR Master Plan, and this perspective only fuels the desire to develop and strengthen this connection. There is potential for 4th Street to become its own signature pedestrian pathway downtown.

2. Create and celebrate a “Cultural Quad.” The location of the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art and the Public Library that both face Greene Square provides an epicenter for a “Cultural Quad.” Cultural uses around this area should be explored and developed. The adjacency to the 4th Street Cedar River Trail (as part of the American Discovery Trail) also provides a logistical advantage into strengthening this idea as a destination point for locals and visitors.

Part of this quad should include the celebration of the famous local artist Grant Wood. The Grant Wood Studio Museum is located a few blocks northeast of Greene Square. Ideas to connect the quad to the Grant Wood Studio Museum should be explored, to help elevate this area as an art and culture destination. For example, could the museum be relocated closer to Greene Square? What if a replica of the iconic “American Gothic” house in Eldon, Iowa was also created and adjacent to the museum?

The American Discovery Trail is a 4,834 mile hiking and biking trail system that spans coast to coast. The north route trail passes right through Downtown Cedar Rapids.
CREATE A CULTURAL QUAD

WHAT'S BEEN COMPLETED?
EXAMPLES OF EXISTING CIVIC USES
A. Linn County Sheriff's Office
B. Veterans Memorial Building
C. City Hall
D. Cedar Rapids Fire Station
E. Linn County District Court
F. Linn County Jail
G. Ground Transportation Center
H. Cedar Rapids Police Department
I. Federal Courthouse
J. Linn County Properties
K. Linn County Public Health Building

EXAMPLES OF EXISTING CIVIC USES
1. Convention Center
2. St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
3. Grace Episcopal Church
4. Cedar Rapids Scottish Rite
5. Theater Cedar Rapids
6. Iowa Masonic Library & Museums
7. Grant Wood Studio & Visitors Center
8. Cedar Rapids Museum of Art
9. First Lutheran Church
10. St. Paul's United Methodist Church
11. Paramount Theatre
12. First Presbyterian Church
13. Immaculate Conception Catholic Church
14. Westmoreland Presbyterian Church
15. McGregor Amphitheater
16. Veritas Church
17. Cedar Rapids Public Library
18. Bethel AME Church
19. New Jerusalem Church of God in Christ
20. Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church
22. African American Museum of Iowa
23. New Bo Market
24. St. Wenceslaus
25. Oak Hill Jackson Community Church

6 CREATE A CULTURAL QUAD

CULTURAL QUAD
DEVELOP OPPORTUNITY SITES
AMERICAN DISCOVERY TRAIL
3. Develop opportunity sites around the “Cultural Quad” and the American Discovery Trail (Cedar River Trail). There is a great opportunity now to develop the Guaranty Bank block on 3rd Street and 3rd Avenue. Art and cultural uses should be explored with the adjacency of this block to the quad. The Post Office to the east of the quad would be another great building and large site for redevelopment, in collaboration with compatible uses around Greene Square.

4. Get Union Station back. Unfortunately, Union Station was demolished in 1961 and now is the site of a multi-story parking ramp. This is such a key location in Downtown Cedar Rapids, and has the potential to become a strong connector from the quad to downtown and to the Cedar River Trail. The existing parking ramp creates a physical barrier that has limited these connections and deterred utilization of the Cedar River Trail. Recreating the atmosphere and aesthetic of Union Station with a mixed-use project, that includes parking and defined circulation paths, will be an important step in making these links viable.

5. Connect the arts and Signature 3rd Street. There are synergies evolving around the quad, with the MedQ Greenway being master planned to the east that starts to bring a natural terminus point at the quad. Extend that line west, and there can be a connection to Signature 3rd Street. A nucleus and system of theater, arts, museums, and the library begins to form in the heart of downtown with different modes of transportation to get there. The Visual Arts Commission will be an important group in spearheading this idea of connecting the arts in downtown. The Charter’s goals are:
   • To improve the appearance and cultural climate of the city, so as to enhance the quality of life and community prestige.
   • Involve the public in the selection and dedication of public art.
   • Use eligible funds wisely to incorporate public art in our city.
   • To use art as an aid in economic development.
   • To encourage local artists by supporting their works and efforts.
   • To incorporate visual arts in the design process of qualifying projects.

The ultimate “postcard” of the charter is that Cedar Rapids is the undisputed center for art in Iowa, and the collaboration with arts and culture in downtown could help solidify that.

6. Postcard - American Discovery “Museum” Trail. Imagine that the trail through Downtown Cedar Rapids was considered the highlight of the entire American Discovery Trail through the United States! The connections to all the museums and civic uses along/adjacent to the Cedar River Trail could enhance this idea as well as the marketing efforts to bring this place to life. The museums could also be connected through a central “brand” to bring a much grander scale to the visitor experience.
5. Connect Arts and Signature 3rd Street

Encourage connections between the “Cultural Quad” and adjacent opportunities like the Signature 3rd Street and future MedQ Greenway.

6. Postcard - American Discovery “Museum” Trail

The iconic Freedom Trail in Boston attracts visitors from all over the world. Cedar Rapids has its own celebrated history that could be experienced through the American Discovery “Museum” Trail.
Downtown Cedar Rapids has expanded its reach in the last ten years. The creation and growth of districts surrounding the core downtown, such as New Bohemia, the Medical Quarter, and Kingston Village, have contributed much to the success of urban development within Cedar Rapids. However, the Downtown core has unique characteristics that distinguish it from these surrounding districts: strong and intact high-density infrastructure, mixed-use buildings, and an urban feel. And so there is an opportunity to elevate the richness and prominence of the original Downtown, and to restore its position as the heart of the community.

1. Brand the Downtown District. Follow the lead of MedQ and other surrounding districts and create a brand strategy for the core Downtown District. Clear and effective branding in the form of signage, lighting, and streetscape elements not only enhances and unifies the Downtown District’s character, it creates a differentiated experience and also makes it easier for guests to navigate within and across districts. Be creative and consider multiple viewing perspectives: the street, I-380, the river, and the 16th floor of the DoubleTree, are some examples.

2. Activate the street. Vibrant downtowns have robust activity on the street level. Public uses on the first floor, mixed-uses within single buildings, good lighting, safe roadways, and opportunities for spontaneous and planned interactions all contribute to an energized downtown environment. Future development and building improvements should all incorporate retail, restaurant, service, or public uses on the first floor with office, residential, and other similar uses on upper levels. Mixed-use parking structures should continue to be encouraged, but parking exposed to the first floor sidewalk should be strictly avoided. The CRST Center and Convention Center Ramp incorporated portions of retail space in front of parking, which is positive, but both examples also have exposed parking on the street level, which should be precluded in future downtown projects.

3. Incorporate lighting. While lighting is an effective way of creating an inspirational downtown environment, the side-benefit of improved pedestrian lighting is often overlooked. Automobile-focused lighting is different than pedestrian-scaled lighting; the former illuminates the road for visibility, and can compromise sidewalk lighting. Pedestrian-focused lighting is smaller in scale and provides lighting directly for sidewalk and facade illumination. Emotive lighting on building facades gives the streetscape more energy at night, and also a heightened feeling of security for people engaging the downtown. Work is already planned for a conversion of street lighting in the Downtown core and Kingston Village, and opportunities for using lighting to enhance the environment and evoke a unique experience are encouraged.

4. Calm traffic. Regarding street improvements, the downtown has seen numerous changes in recent years. These changes include reducing one-way streets, minimizing multi-lane roads to single-lane and adding on-street bicycle paths. The result has been a more positive balance between people and cars downtown. However, there are arterial streets, such as 1st Avenue and 8th Avenue that exist to move large volumes of vehicular traffic through the downtown. While these will remain multi-lane roads and prominent truck traffic routes, actions should be taken to calm traffic at strategic pedestrian zones. First Avenue between 1st Street and the 4th Street rail crossing should be a pedestrian-focused stretch, with consideration given to extending that to the east or to the west.
Pedestrian-scaled lighting adds beauty, branding, and security to the downtown environment as shown here in the Kansas City Power & Light District.

First and 8th Avenues will remain multi-lane streets, but actions should be taken to calm traffic at key pedestrian intersections and zones.
7. Distinguish the Downtown

west as bookend gateway and infill developments are constructed. Curb extensions at intersections and medians in the roadway, along with pedestrian-scaled streetscape improvements, all help to reduce speeds by narrowing the width and scale of the street, which naturally causes traffic to slow down. This provides a safe environment for downtown users to cross 1st Avenue and serves to further strengthen and distinguish the core downtown.

First Avenue is a state highway and the Iowa DOT has identified it as a potential candidate for a road diet, so this recommendation is not without at least some initial state support and the City should proceed with negotiations. In addition, the intersection of 8th Avenue and 3rd Street should be similarly addressed, specifically when construction of the new 8th Avenue bridge proceeds. Third Street serves as a major connector between downtown and New Bohemia and currently 8th Avenue is a barrier to that corridor.

5. Make parking easy. Parking always will be a differentiator in the public’s perception of their downtown experience. The “park once” model should be embraced in Downtown Cedar Rapids as a strategy to identify centrally located parking facilities that allow users to keep their cars parked all day and enjoy the extents of downtown without having to move their vehicles. Consistent signage and wayfinding should be implemented that confirms the accessibility of downtown in just a two-minute walk. Downtown Cedar Rapids has made impressive strides in the last few years on implementing on-street parking meters to encourage high-volume use. These on-street parking spaces should continue to be viewed as convenient spaces, while parking structures can serve the “park once” model. Other improvements like the Parking Ambassadors system, which is made up of a team dedicated to helping downtown users and their parking experience, should be continued and well-communicated to citizens and visitors.

6. Address train switching. When cities were established, their downtowns were most often centered around rail activity to accommodate long-distance transportation and support commerce. Today, the negative impacts of trains in the downtown outweigh the positive impacts, specifically in Cedar Rapids where whistles and train switching are both inconvenient and potentially dangerous. Discussions on a whistle-free zone have already begun for the rail stretch from 1st Avenue to 5th Avenue and so progress towards a whistle-free downtown is gaining traction. Unfortunately, train switching is a much bigger task, so planning should begin immediately.

7. Embrace “Cedar Rapids.” Working with arborists and horticulturalists, make big plans to introduce cedar trees back into the downtown landscape in a significant way. Maybe the public amenities recommended for Mays Island in Section 3 include a “Cedar Park”, a sort of city forest. And a really big idea would be to reintroduce the rapids to the Cedar River, but short of that, there may be creative ways to play on the idea, like moguls on Mt. Trashmore, or a themed skate-park. Embracing “Cedar Rapids” reinforces downtown’s position as the heart of the community.

8. Postcard – 18-hour neighborhood. A mix of uses, including rental and owner-occupied housing, entertainment, food, retail and services, and activity at the street level are among the necessary ingredients for a successful 18-hour neighborhood, which is in turn a core element of a vibrant downtown experience.
7. Embrace “Cedar Rapids”

The name of Cedar Rapids originated from the rapids on the river and the abundance of Cedar trees; reintroduce Cedar trees into the downtown landscape and consider initiatives to reintroduce rapids to the Cedar River.

8. Postcard - 18-hour Neighborhood

Successful implementation of the Downtown Framework Plan will ultimately manifest itself in an 18-hour neighborhood, a diverse, dense, and vibrant core with activity at all times throughout the week.
Implementation of such a large percentage of initiatives from the 2007 Downtown Vision Plan and the 2012 update can be attributed, in part, to strong ownership of the plan. The City of Cedar Rapids, Linn County, 2001 Development Corporation, the Downtown SSMID, and the Economic Alliance all endorsed the plan and actively worked on its priorities. Plan details were part of public debate during several critical post-flood decisions. Several things should be considered to ensure the same level of success for this edition of the plan.

1. Funders of the plan and other critical community stakeholders should officially approve and endorse the plan. Endorsements from all current SSMID (Self-Supporting Municipal Improvement District) Commissions is important to the plan’s success.

2. The City of Cedar Rapids should maintain a liaison to each of the current and future SSMIDs and Linn County should also be considered to facilitate involvement.

3. The existing and future SSMID Commissions should be leveraged for funding and decision-making. Property owners with “skin in the game” should be consulted on the importance and timing of initiatives. Coordinated direction from the current and future SSMIDs can help public policy makers discern where to direct resources and how to prioritize competing interests.

4. An organization with representation from each district and all original Downtown Framework Plan stakeholders should be convened periodically to provide accountability and transparency on all aspects of executing the plan. That accountability and transparency should include annual progress reports on the plan, and potentially an annual event to focus on progress and priorities. Such a stakeholder group could also be leveraged to ensure all districts are using best practices to improve communication, consistency, and performance. Shared goals beyond this plan could be launched from this group.

5. The City of Cedar Rapids needs to leverage this district organization structure. The City will benefit greatly from clarity and unity of such a structure, and ultimately progress will be accelerated if the community can streamline and coordinate the number of groups trying to speak on behalf of a neighborhood. Broad-based input is critical and should never be muted. But that has to happen in concert with a sensible means to take action and not be delayed and bogged down by multiple, fractured, inefficient, and sometimes contradictory voices. The City can ensure this by committing to this structure.

An intentional and deliberate structure for multidistrict governance will benefit Cedar Rapids by producing a unified vision for future growth and progress.

The City of Cedar Rapids should leverage the district coordination structure to help decide what is important and what should be invested in downtown.
ESTABLISH DISTRICT COORDINATION
Over the last ten years, focused commitment, hard work, and strategic investment have transformed Cedar Rapids’ downtown community. The new residential, commercial, and civic uses that infused much needed population and activity into downtown, the conversion of streets from vehicle-centered to people-oriented, and the growth of surrounding districts have all contributed to the development of a strong downtown character for Cedar Rapids. But moreover, by focusing efforts on advancing connections, opportunity investments, culture, and big ideas, Cedar Rapids has the potential to evolve from this thriving, healthy downtown to an iconic regional hub.

Throughout this document, we’ve recommended specific strategies for creating a vibrant downtown experience:

- **Investing in Impact Opportunities**, like the 23 acres of City-owned property located in the heart of downtown, will be a game-changer for Cedar Rapids. These sites are owned by the public, and are in a position to be acted upon immediately - this is the place for big ideas, and tolerating anything less than distinguished, postcard-worthy development on these sites will be a failure.

- **Establishing coordination between the downtown SSMID districts** will drive a unified vision and assure progress by leveraging common interests.

- **Embracing the River and Activating Mays Island** will allow Cedar Rapids to differentiate itself by capitalizing on and uplifting its unique and natural character-defining features.

- **Energizing the Connectors and Creating a Cultural Quad** will showcase downtown as a top destination for visitors coming to the state and region. Creating welcoming gateways and friendly corridors for visitors and providing unique experiences - like Signature 3rd Street, American Discovery “Museum” Trail and Grant Wood heritage - will start to distinguish downtown Cedar Rapids as a host community.

- **Distinguishing the Downtown through initiatives such as intensified activity on the street level, pedestrian accommodations, and brand consistency** will build up the vital heartbeat of the city. And Championing Urban Living will provide a unique neighborhood environment for residents who will in turn support and invigorate the downtown.
VISION DOWNTOWN CEDAR RAPIDS
2017 DOWNTOWN FRAMEWORK PLAN
Acknowledgements

The future of Cedar Rapids is unimaginable - as have been the accomplishments of the last ten years. This Downtown Framework Plan applauds the City of Cedar Rapids, focused & visionary downtown leaders, hard working citizens, and all those who have contributed to overcoming adversity to create the downtown that Cedar Rapids has today.

2017 Vision Cedar Rapids Stakeholders:

Tom Aller ........................................ 2001 Development Corporation
James Houser.....................................Linn County Supervisor
Bill Micheil.....................................City of Cedar Rapids
Doug Neumann ..................................Economic Alliance
Jennifer Pratt.................................City of Cedar Rapids
Casey Prince................................. Economic Alliance/Downtown SSMID
Randy Rings................................. Downtown SSMID Past Chair
Fred Timko................................. Downtown SSMID Chair
Stacey Walker.............................Linn County Supervisor

The stakeholder group acknowledged in the 2012 report:

Larry Helling .................................2011 SSMID Board Chair
Jon Dusek ................................. 2012 SSMID Board Chair
Tom Aller ........................................ 2001 Development Corp.
Jim Hoffman .................................2001 Development Corp.
Ron Corbett ..................................Mayor
Jeff Pomeranz ..................................City Manager
Monica Vernon ..................................Mayor Pro Tem
Christine Butterfield .......Community Development Director
Dee Baird ....................................Economic Alliance
Doug Neumann ................................Economic Alliance
Barry Boyer .................................2012 Economic Alliance Chair
Tom Anderson ............................2011 Downtown District Chair
Nancy Kasperek ............................2011 Chamber of Commerce Chair
Chuck Peters ............................2011 Priority One Chair
Brent Oleson ...............................2012 County Board Chairman
Ben Rogers ...............................2011 County Board Chairman

The stakeholder group acknowledged in the 2007 report:

Tom Aller.............................................SSMID Board
Bruce Anderson .........................Liberty Bank & Chamber Chair
Lu Barron.......................................Linn County Supervisor
Lee Clancy .................................CR Area Chamber
Jon Dusek .....................................SSMID Board
Steve Emerson ...............................SSMID Board
Brian Fagan .................................Attorney & City Council Member
Kris Gulick ................................. CPA & City Council Member
Kay Halloran ...............................Attorney & Mayor
Dick Johnson ............................Past Exec Director, Downtown District
Doug Neumann .........................Executive Director, Downtown District
Jim Prosser ................................. Cedar Rapids City Manager
Carroll Reasoner ...Attorney & Chamber Infrastructure Chair
Pat Shuy .................................CR Bank & Trust & City Council Member
Tom Slattery ...............................SSMID Board
Vanessa Solesbee ...... Program Director, Downtown District
Monica Vernon ......Vernon Research & Past Chamber Chair

IMAGE CREDITS:

Introductory Photos
Contents: Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance
Downtown Today & 2007/2012 Initiatives:
Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance

1 Invest in Impact Opportunities
3 Activate Mays Island
4 Embrace the River
5 & 6: Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance

1  Young + Dring Landscape Architecture
3 (Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette) Sept. 9th, 2017 “How Mays Island got its name, place in Cedar Rapids history”
4 Anthony Doudt “Cedar Rapids Mays Island at Sunset”
7  http://www.minneapolishotel.com/
8 Anthony Doudt “Cloudy Sunset Over Mays Island”

2 Energize the Connectors
5 Cedar Rapids Flood Control System Aesthetic Guidelines
Shive-Hattery, Confluence, HGreen, Stanley Consultants, Inc.
Postcard: Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau. Bricktown Oklahoma City

3 Cedar Rapids Flood Control System Aesthetic Guidelines
Shive-Hattery, Confluence, HGreen, Stanley Consultants, Inc.
Postcard: Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau. Bricktown Oklahoma City

5: Cedar Rapids Flood Control System Aesthetic Guidelines
Shive-Hattery, Confluence, HGreen, Stanley Consultants, Inc.
Postcard: Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau. Bricktown Oklahoma City

6: Cedar Rapids Flood Control System Aesthetic Guidelines
Shive-Hattery, Confluence, HGreen, Stanley Consultants, Inc.
Postcard: Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau. Bricktown Oklahoma City

3 & 6 Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance
BLANK POSTCARD:

What would be your vision of a postcard for Downtown Cedar Rapids? Use the postcard above to write, draw and create your wildest visions for Cedar Rapids. Many great ideas lie in the imaginations of the citizens who live, work, and play downtown everyday!

IMAGE CREDITS:

5 Champion Urban Living
4: H2O Apartments, NK Architects
5: SCAPE. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/charles-a-birnbaum/from-parking-lot-to-parad_b_2897676.html
Location: Groningen, Netherlands

6 Create a Cultural Quad
1: http://www.discoverytrail.org
4: “Union Station was hub of downtown Cedar Rapids” The Gazette. June 17, 2012
6: houstonianmag.com/Shutterstock

7 Distinguish the Downtown
1: Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance
3: Visit Kansas City (www.visitkc.com)
7: Cedar Rapids/Linn County Solid Waste Agency
8: Go Cedar Rapids.com (@williampbuckets)
Postcard: http://www.bellarivierasb.com/santa-barbara.cfm

8 Establish District Coordination
1 & 2: Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance