

# YORK DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION MASTER PLAN







# MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT

*September 26, 2017*

On September 21, 2017, the York City Council voted to approve the York Downtown Revitalization Master Plan with the following amendments.

On page 68-70, under Long Term Recommendations/ Secondary Priority, remove all references to the following:

1. Recommendation #10 Entry Roundabouts
2. Recommendation #11 Two-Way Traffic Conversion

# YORK DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION MASTER PLAN









Image 1. Historic York, Courthouse Square

# 1 chapter one

## Introduction & Overview

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## Project Background

In 2016, the City of York and Chamber of Commerce conducted a community survey to assess public support for a Phase 1 funding application to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development for Downtown Revitalization (DTR). The results, indicated strong support for downtown revitalization and pursuing the Phase 1 matching grant.

Survey respondents highly rated the quality of York's historic buildings, street conditions, the adequacy of parking and potential for tourism, arts and entertainment. Respondents gave low ratings for overall appearance of the downtown, building conditions, signage, and both the north and south entries to the city. Mixed ratings were given to the idea of downtown housing.

Many respondents commented on the unsightly "slip-covered" building façades, the number of vacant buildings, and the inconsistency of

quality from block to block. Respondents mentioned the need for more greenspace and special event areas, as well as streetscapes and signage that express the community's identity and character.

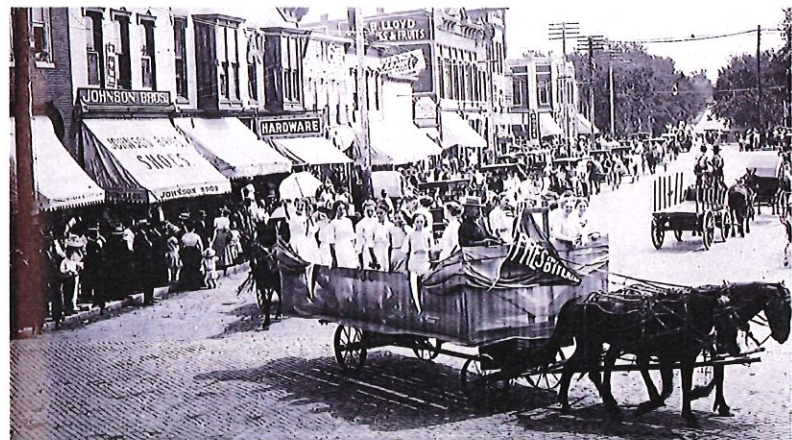
Respondents also expressed the desire to see longer business hours in the downtown, more diversity in business types, and the need to capture more customers from the visitors who come to the York area. Parking control was perceived as a problem and many suggested one-way streets were a problem for retail businesses.

Following the study, several community leaders and business/property owners raised the necessary match to apply for DTR Phase I funding. The grant proposal was successful and in early 2017, The Clark Enersen Partners was hired to prepare a Downtown Revitalization Master Plan for York.

## City of York

The City of York was founded in 1869, and incorporated in 1870 as the county seat of York County. As a bustling town on the Burlington Railroad, it gradually became known as both the "Crossroads of the Midwest" and the "Crossroads of America," as it offered lodging to settlers migrating west. Later, the city benefited from the expansion of the railroad, becoming an agricultural trading hub, surrounded by some of the most fertile farmland in the region. Its status as a regional crossroads was further expanded by the coming of vehicular transportation systems moving north/south and east/west on Interstate 80, US Highway 81 and US Highway 34.

Over the years, the city grew to 8,000 residents. Epworth Village and the Nebraska Center for Women were constructed in the community, as were a large number of commercial, industrial and manufacturing businesses. York is home to regional health care facilities, a four-year college and many innovative agricultural-based businesses and industries.



Top, Image 2. Courthouse Event, 1894; Bottom, Image 3. York Parade 1911

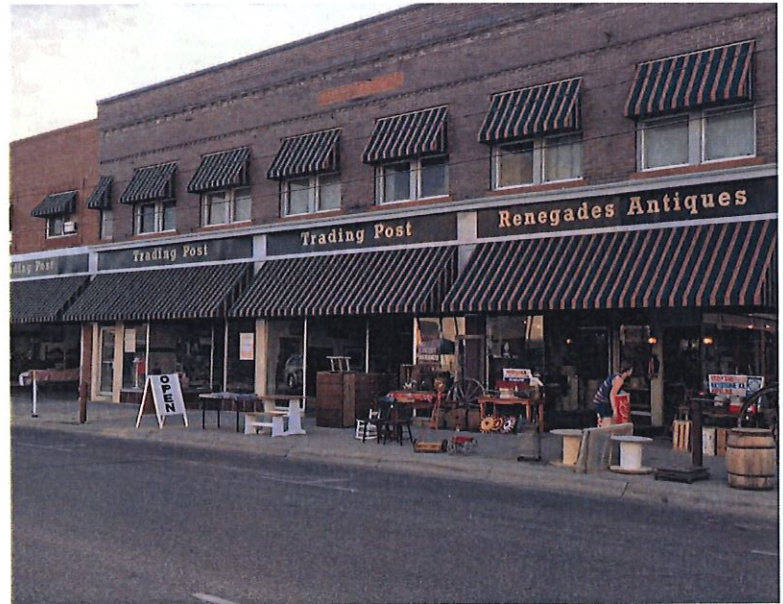




## Master Plan

At the outset of the master planning process, four goals were confirmed by the Steering Committee to guide the process. They are as follows:

1. Encourage local economic growth and re-investment
2. Reduce building vacancies
3. Improve the appearance of downtown York, including building façades, streetscapes and public spaces
4. Reinforce a sense of community and identity



Top: Image 4. York Town Centre; Middle: Image 5. Historic Apartment Building  
Bottom: Image 6. East Sixth Street, 1910

Top: Image 7. Renegades Antiques; Bottom: Image 8. Wagner's





Top, Image 9. City Auditorium; Middle Left, Image 10. New Years on 6th Street; Middle Right, Image 11. York Masterplanning Process; Bottom Right, Image 12. Courthouse Square Food Vendor; Bottom Left, Image 13. Courthouse Square Vendor





Image 14. Music on Courthouse Square

## Master Planning Process & Participants

In the spring of 2017, the master planning team began gathering background data, maps, reports and studies relevant to downtown York. They met with representatives from the York Chamber of Commerce and York County Development Corporation and conducted a tour of the study area. The team then met with the Steering Committee to identify the principles and goals that would drive the revitalization plan. A public engagement plan was developed to facilitate the involvement of key stakeholders, community/business leaders and the general public throughout the process. Public meetings and interviews were held to get input from business owners, community leaders, public officials, and the general public.

A team of landscape architects, traffic engineers, real estate professionals, design professionals and planners conducted an inventory and assessment of existing conditions in the study area. Assessments addressed building vacancies, land use, general conditions, historic significance, façade appearance, streetscape aesthetics, and public gathering areas in the downtown area. Assessments also included transportation and circulation conditions, pedestrian routes, street crossings, bicycle routes, trail connections, parking and roadway systems within and surrounding the study area.

Based on an analysis of the gathered data and assessments, the team identified key areas of focus with potential to create the biggest impact on the downtown. The team concluded that the strategies that would likely have the most impact were:

1. increasing walkability (enhance pedestrian-orientation)
2. increasing customer stops (diminish vehicular-orientation)

3. encouraging housing near and within the downtown
4. upgrading the appearance of building façades
5. enhancing the north and south entries to the city
6. creating public spaces for community gatherings
7. enhancing the overall appearance and branding of downtown York

Strategies and preliminary recommendations were presented to the Steering Committee and the community over several months for feedback and input. Recommendations were refined and presented at a final public open house on August 1, 2017. Implementation strategies were explored with the Steering Committee in August and a final presentation will be made to the York City Council in September, 2017.

The masterplan could not have been completed without the leadership of the Master Plan Steering Committee. Members include: Rhonda Veleba (Master Plan Project Coordinator) and Madonna Mogul, York Chamber of Commerce; Jill Koch, York General; Beth Erikson, York Public Schools; Craig Vincent, NPPD; Tony North, York Printing Co & North Office Supply and YCDC Board of Directors; Nancy Davidson, J & R Heating; Randy Obermeier, York Boot and Repair and County Supervisor; Sue Curran, downtown resident; Cindy Naber, C. Naber & Associates; Lisa Hurley, YCDC; Cindy Weber, property owner and resident downtown; Ray McKenna, Cornerstone Bank; Pat Eichinger, Baer Furniture; Orval Stahr, City of York; Bob Hose, Retired State Farm; Steve Eckman, York College; Bre Goben, YCDC; Chantel Redman, Midwest Bank; Allison Graham, Ginny's Hallmark; Joseph Frei, City of York; Stephen Postier, Henderson State Bank; Ron Mogul, Jr, Mogul's Auto Repair & Towing; Jim Ulrich, York General; Judy Ronne, Mr. Dukes; Pat Hanrahan, NPPD; Mitch Doht, City of York.







Image 15. Existing Building Conditions

## 2 chapter two Existing Conditions Analysis

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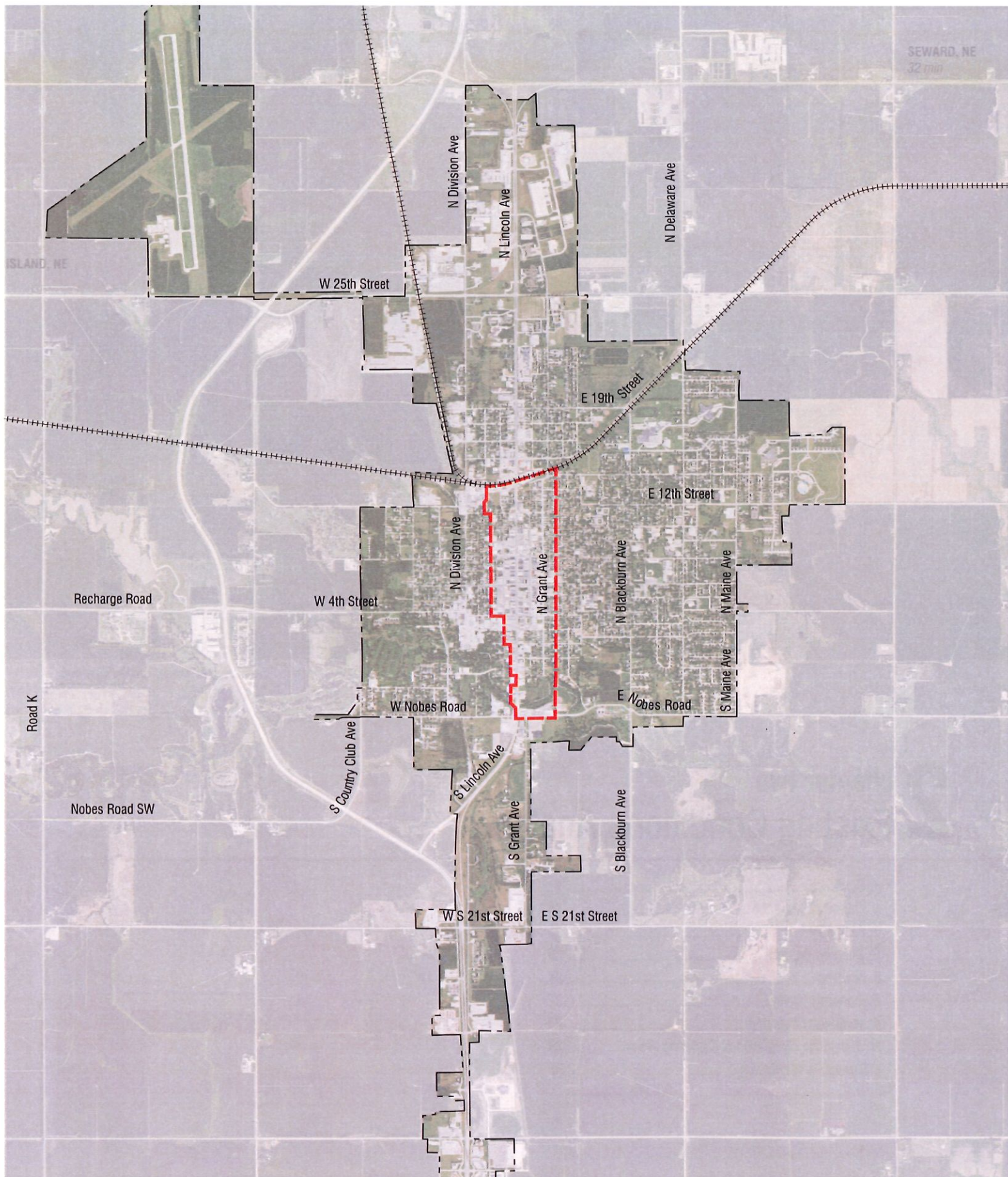


Figure 1. Vicinity Map





Image 16. Existing Façade Conditions Along Lincoln Avenue

## Existing Conditions Analysis

### Study Area

In the City's Request for Qualifications, 2016 York Downtown Revitalization Planning Phase, Planning Services (CDBG #16-DTR-011), the study area in downtown York was defined generally as 14th Street on the north, Nobes Road on the south, Nebraska Avenue on the east, and Beaver Avenue on the west. Land uses are primarily commercial, civic and residential with some light industrial in limited areas.

While this study included analysis of the entire study area, the recommendations presented in Chapter III and IV focus primarily on the core downtown because the study team believes revitalization efforts will have the greatest impact in the area which has historically been identified as the heart of York. Centered around the York County courthouse, this area includes the primary retail and restaurant zone, public buildings and gathering areas, and major vehicular and pedestrian pathways that act as the connective tissue of the city core. Historically, this is the area where York citizens have regularly gathered for holiday celebrations, parades, farmers markets, and special events. While the vibrant Thursday-evening retail environment that existed decades ago has waned and the old courthouse has been replaced, citizens still acknowledge this as the downtown center – figuratively and literally. But they also recognize that as development continues to take place on the edges of town the downtown center's identity as the heart of the city is less apparent and vulnerable to further decline.

Specifically, several developments on the edges of the City have had a significant impact on downtown York. The highest impact occurred

in 2002 when Highway 81 Bypass was constructed to divert pass-thru north-south traffic on the highway from downtown York, decreasing average traffic counts significantly. Similarly, traffic from Interstate 80 stopping at the York exit have less need to come into downtown York as a result of rising numbers of restaurants, hotels, and convenience stores constructed south of downtown. The new 40,000 SF Holthus Convention Center, which opened in 2014, has also likely decreased the number of visitors coming to downtown York for meetings, conferences, and events.

CITY OF YORK  
BLIGHT/SUBSTANDARD DETERMINATION  
REDEVELOPMENT AREA #4



ILLUSTRATION 2

Figure 2. Study Area

New ballfields, which opened on the east side of town in 2017, are attracting baseball games and tournaments from throughout the region. The fields are expected to draw hundreds of new visitors to the York area annually, creating a new source of potential customers to the downtown. In addition to the east ballfields are the City's soccer fields located north of the city, which also generate significant visitor traffic and are a potential source of customers to the downtown.







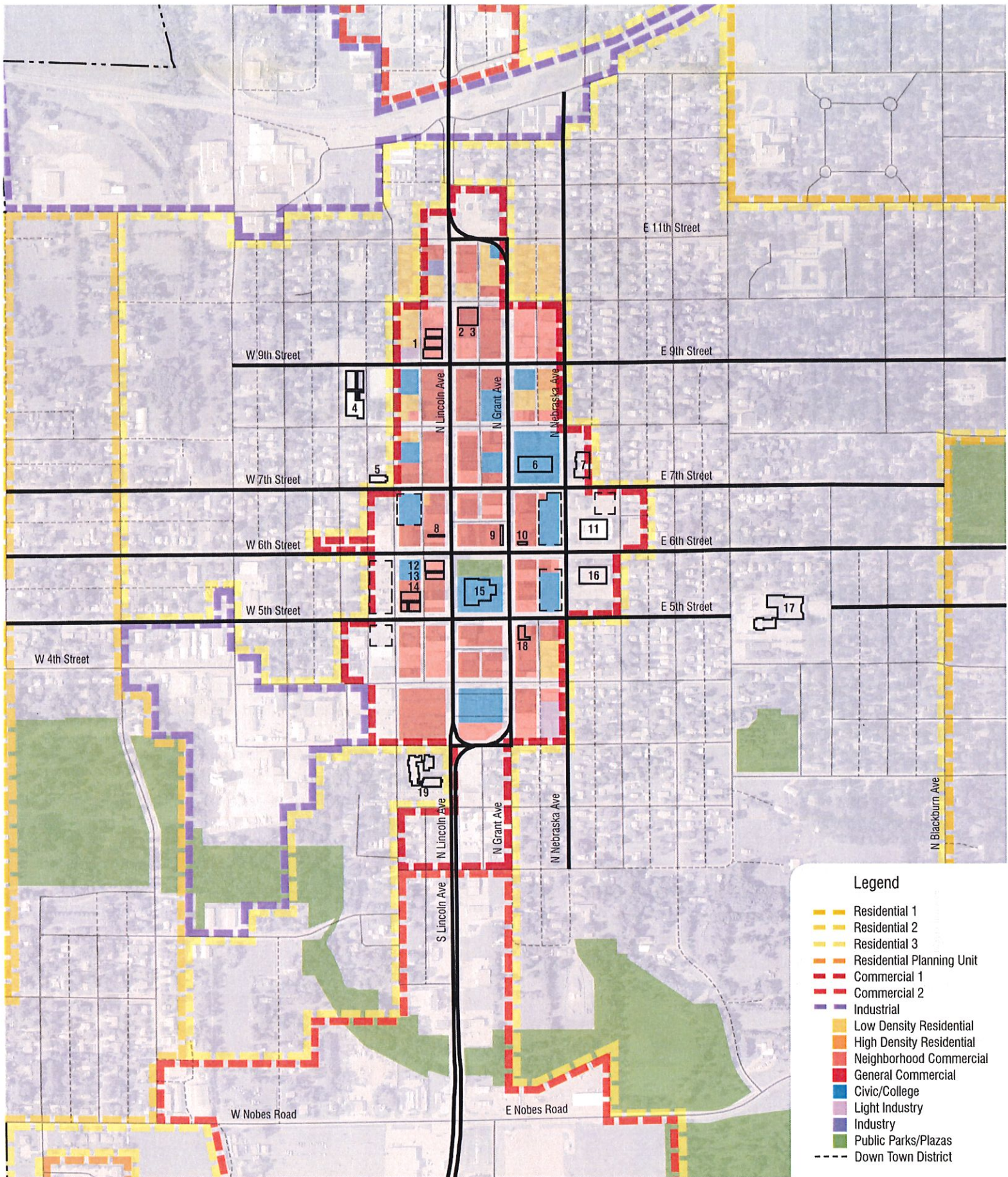


Figure 3. Land Use Map





Image 17. South Entry View

### Existing Conditions Analysis

## Overall Appearance

The visual appearance of downtown York is dominated by two primary factors – minimal landscaping and maximum pavement. This is apparent as you enter the downtown from the south where you are greeted by a concrete median separating traffic into one-way streets on Lincoln and Grant. This continues as you drive down the wide, treeless streets. You will also notice the lack of pedestrian amenities which discourages people from stopping as they move through the downtown. These two factors alone give downtown York the appearance of a pass-thru zone rather than a destination. Correcting this visual imbalance is at the heart of our recommendations for revitalizing the appearance, functionality and economic success of the area.

Another deficiency in the overall quality of downtown is the lack of a cohesive and identifiable district. A clear district conveys the importance of the downtown as a destiny location, its character, and the values of the people who live there. Another word to describe this factor is “sense of place” which includes all aspects that help articulate the specific uniqueness and significance of a locale.

In general, a successful downtown district has these traits:

- It is penetrated by pathways that can comfortably accommodate a wide range of users – pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles.
- It is structured by gateways and nodes -- focus points where people understand they are invited to enter/exit, cross over, or move through.
- It is sprinkled with landmarks – visual points of reference that reflect a community’s history, values, and resources.
- It has defining edges – visual elements that establish clear “you-have-arrived” reference points.





Image 18. Vacant Building, Lincoln Avenue

### *Existing Conditions Analysis*

## **Land Use**

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Land uses in the study area include a mix of commercial, residential, light industry and civic, as illustrated by Figure 3 on the left. The primary zoning in the downtown is C1 Commercial. This collection of land uses provides a good base and desirable mix that can attract a wide variety of commercial and residential development. Furthermore, the presence of quality, single-family housing directly east and west of the downtown and the presence of strong public institutions like the Kilgore Library, York Community Center, and the York County Courthouse indicates high potential for supporting a walkable downtown that is attractive to young families who can easily walk and bike to downtown.

Unfortunately, there are examples of land use that discourage reinvestment in the downtown. Examples include industrial land use directly across from residential areas with no screening or landscaping. Changes to the zoning code and adoption of downtown design guidelines are things to consider in future comprehensive planning efforts. The city should consider eliminating industrial land use in the downtown area.

The York Zoning Code requires that business signs in the C-1 district "shall be affixed flat against the face of the building" (Ord. No. 1966, § 1, 8-3-06). This requirement discourages pedestrian-oriented signs that extend over the right-of-way perpendicular to a building. These small scale, shop-style signs can have more visual interest than flat signage on a building.



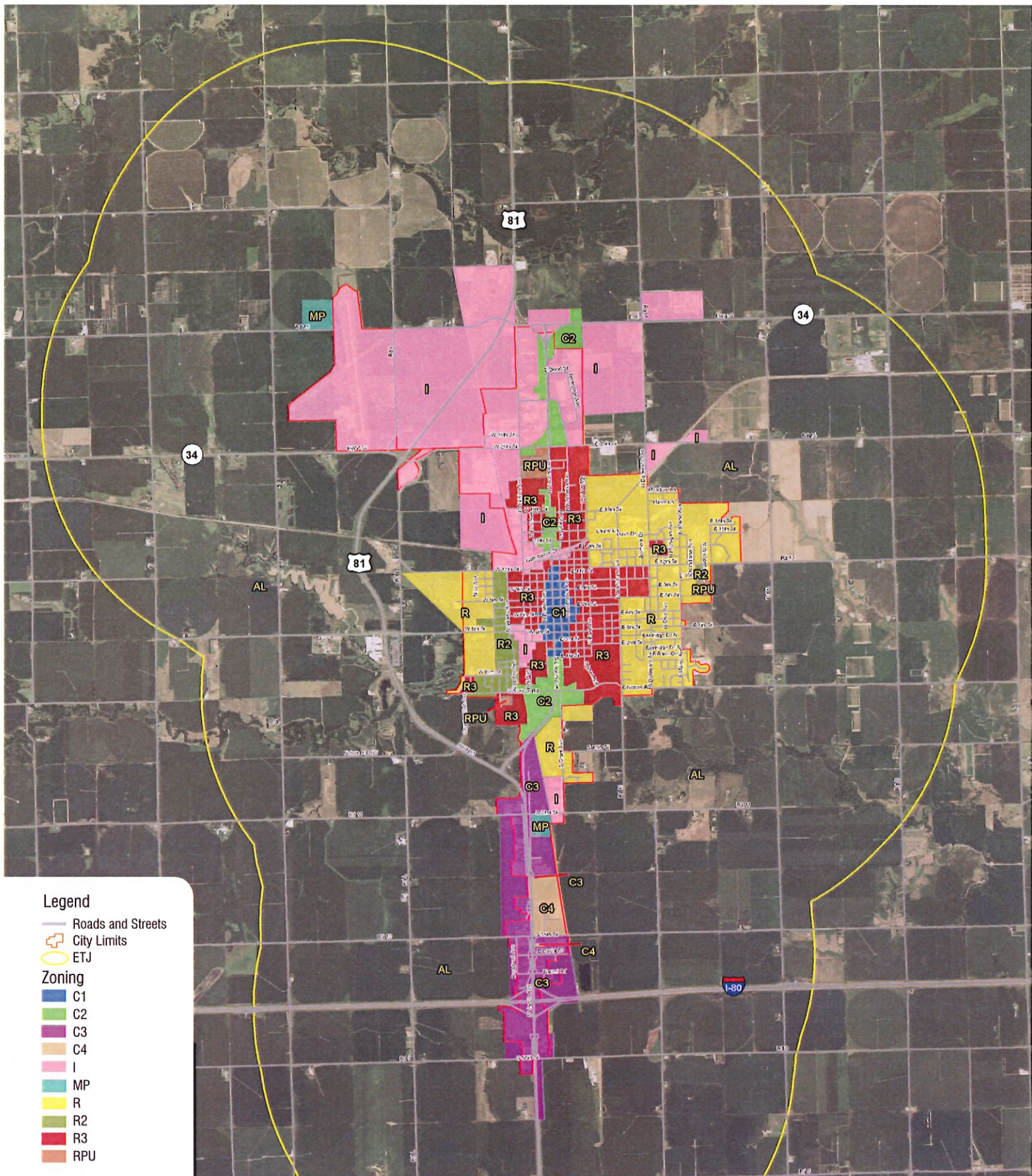


Figure 4. Land Use Map



[illegible]

*York Downtown Revitalization Master Plan*





Image 21. Existing Commercial Façades in York





Image 22. Sixth Street Building Façades

### Existing Conditions Analysis

## Building Façades

It is clear that York residents have always taken great pride their historic buildings and streetfronts. Like many communities, over time many of these beautiful historic buildings have been lost to fire or demolition and others have been severely compromised by deterioration or regrettable façade “modernization” efforts over the years. On the other hand, many historic buildings remain in downtown York in various states of condition. Property owners should be given encouragement and incentives wherever possible to preserve these community assets and return them to vibrancy.

Existing building facades in downtown York exhibit a wide variety of building materials, including masonry (brick, stone, and stucco-over-brick); applied siding (metal, wood, and composite); tile; and aluminum “slip-covers” which became popular in the 1970’s. This range of materials and quality is evident throughout the downtown which detracts from a cohesive downtown architectural image.

As part of our analysis, we identified an area of downtown York that exhibits the greatest potential for preservation and façade enhancements. This area, bounded by 4th Street on the south, 8th Street on the north, Platte Avenue on the west, and Nebraska Avenue on the east, became a focus areas in this plan for which we conducted a more detailed assessment of building facades. All the properties within this twenty block area were categorized according to one of four categories based on the following criteria. Properties in the three categories requiring work are illustrated in figure 6 on page 20.



Top, Image 23. Historic Lincoln Avenue; Bottom, Image 24. Historic Carnegie Library



**No Work Required.** Properties in this category have facades that are either new or have been preserved or refurbished. These properties are positively contributing to downtown revitalization. Exterior materials are either original or have been repaired and are in excellent condition. Painted Facades are clean and well detailed and windows have generally been updated. Facades are welcoming and contribute to the vitality of the businesses they house. Those that have awnings or canopies are using them successfully.

**Good Condition.** Properties in this category have facades that are in generally good condition with the exception of their awnings. Exterior façade materials are in good condition and paint and finishes have been generally updated. However, existing awnings are not necessarily of appropriate quality for downtown or they are missing altogether. Some of these properties also require window replacement or refurbishment.

**Fair Condition.** Properties in this category have deficiencies in both their facades and awnings. Among the repairs and improvements needed are painting, minor façade repairs, new windows and new canopies/awnings. New window glazing should be selected for transparency so that it is clear to passersby what activities are housed in the buildings. Some of the properties in this category require removal of foreign building materials such as aluminum-covered windows and street level façade covers.

**Unsuitable Condition.** Properties in this category have major deficiencies in the appearance of their facades. Many of these have been obscured by unauthentic "slipcovers" which should be removed. This creates an "unknown condition" which makes project planning more challenging. In some cases, major façade repairs may be needed but in other cases property owners may find the original facades have been protected by the covering. Properties in this category have missing awnings or poor quality, canopies. Street level façade and base walls are in poor condition in some of these properties and window upgrades or replacement are needed.

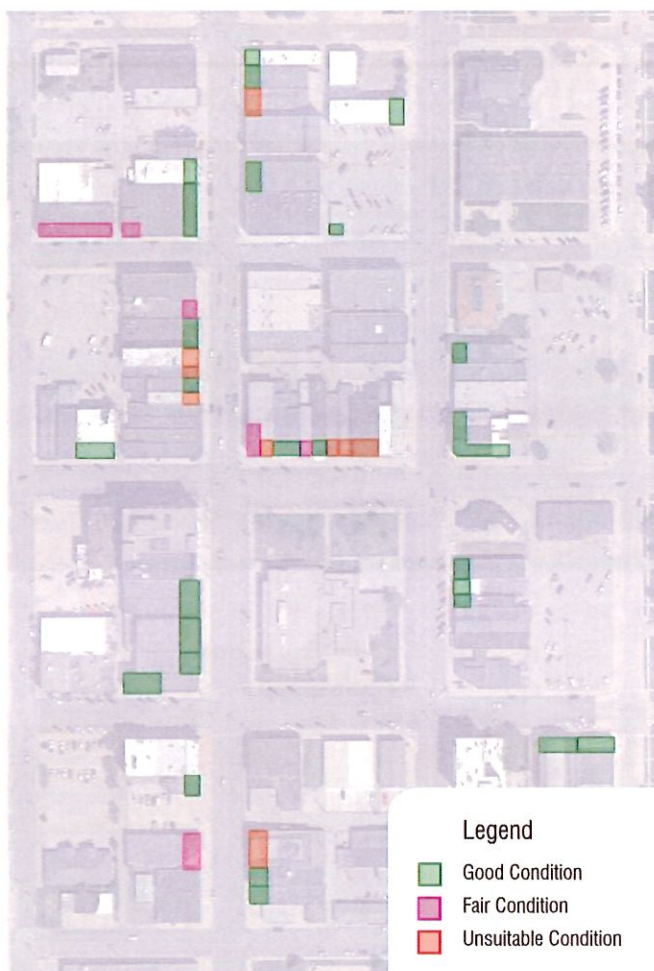


Figure 6. Façade Assessment Plan

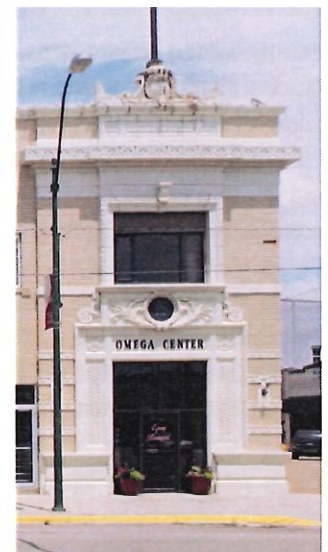


Image 25. Existing Commercial Façades in York



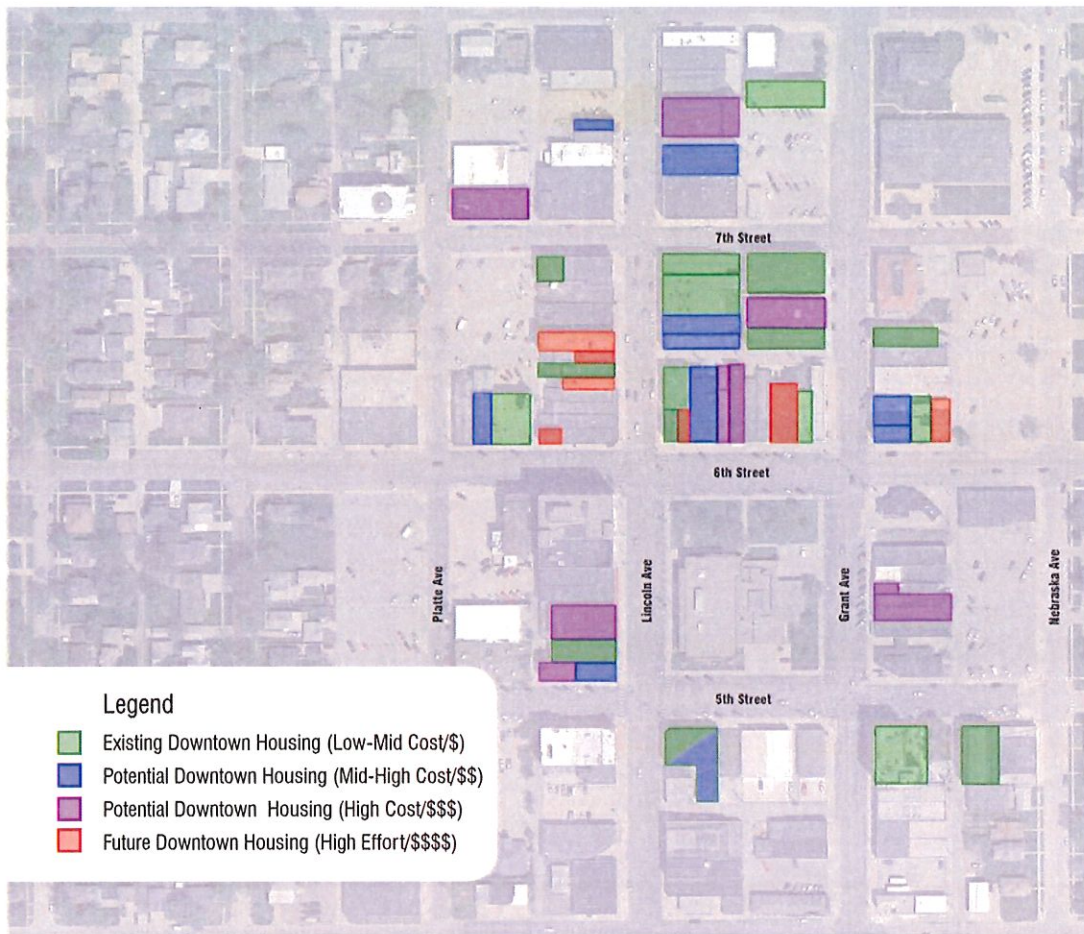


Figure 7. Existing Housing Map

Image 26. Existing Housing & Apartments in York

## Existing Conditions Analysis

# Housing

According to the York Housing Study completed in 2016, York is experiencing a housing shortage, particularly for households with incomes greater than \$50,000. Demand is projected to be 35 units per year over the next ten years, or 350 total units. Approximately 126 additional rental units are also needed over the same period of time. The study noted that downtown housing has become popular in communities of all sizes and is an effective strategy to “enliven and energize a downtown district.” It states that downtown housing projects must meet fire/life safety codes, including possible egress additions, but may be able to take advantage of incentives such as historic tax credits.

At this time, there are approximately 95 living units in 17 properties in downtown York, with a majority of these currently occupied. See figure 7. The largest density of existing downtown housing reside within 3 properties: McCloud Hotel (25 units), Opera House (18 units), Trading Post (8 units).

Although some segments of the existing downtown housing stock meet current life safety and code standards, several occupied properties are in violation of existing fire/life safety and codes. In some cases, corridors

and paths of egress are too long to meet standards. In other cases, a second egress required for the number of allowable units in a building is not provided. Secondary egress measures leading to alley ways do not meet life safety codes and have most likely been grandfathered in if no recent renovations having been made.

Several downtown properties exhibit some potential for a housing retrofit. All will require mid-level to substantial renovation to create suitable housing. Ensuring street level access, adequate egress, fire separation/protection from adjacent occupancies, and life-safety code upgrades are top priorities when considering a property for potential housing. Even properties that have previously contained living units will require an in-depth code review before residential occupancy conversion can proceed.

New housing around the perimeter of the study area may be more feasible than upper level housing. New housing could include both owner-occupied or rental units and may include low to mid density, single family housing, multi-family conversion apartments, multi-dwelling apartment buildings, and high density affordable housing.





Image 27. Holthus Convention Center

## Existing Conditions Analysis

# Economic Vitality

The City of York has a population of approximately 8,000 people. As the county seat of York County, it draws from a larger population of 20,000 within fifteen miles and 62,000 within thirty miles.

(Source: <http://econdevtools.nppd.com/aedc/CitySearch.asp>)

York is a relatively young community with a median age of 40 years. Twenty percent are age 19 or under; 21% are age 20 to 39; 19% are age 40 to 59; and 21% are age 60 or over. The population is 90.7% white. Median home values in 2016 were \$117,364 and is estimated to reach \$131,781 in 2021. Average home value was \$148,665 in 2016 and is estimated to reach \$153,943 in 2021. (Source: ESRI, 2017-03-03)

The city has experienced a relatively steady population over the years, as shown in Table 1, with an average rate of decade change of 3.6% over 85 years.

This rate of change is generally in line with other Nebraska communities of similar size, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 1. City of York Population Change**

Census Year	Population	10 Year Change	% Change	Ave rate of change
1930	5,712			
1940	5,383	-329	-6.1%	
1950	6,178	795	14.8%	
1960	6,173	5	-0.1%	
1970	6,778	605	9.8%	
1980	7,723	945	13.9%	
1990	7,940	217	2.8%	
2000	8,081	141	1.8%	
2010	7,766	315	-4.1%	
2016 (Est.)	7,860	94	1.2%	3.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2015 American Community Survey)

**Table 2. Population Change, York & Similar Communities**

	1990	2000	2010	2016 (est)	Annual Growth 2010-2017
York	7,940	8,081	7,766	7,860	0.2%
Seward	5,641	6,319	6,964	7,219	0.6%
Hastings	22,837	24,064	24,907	24,991	0.1%
Grand Island	39,386	42,940	48,520	51,517	6.2%
McCook	8,112	7,994	7,698	7,526	-0.4%
Gering	7,946	7,751	8,500	8,360	-0.3%
La Vista	9,840	11,699	15,758	17,143	1.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2015 American Community Survey)





Image 28. Existing Downtown Businesses

As Table 3 indicates, residents of York are primarily employed in sales and office (23%), followed by service (21%), management/business (16%), production/transportation (12%), construction (8%), and farming (2%).

**Table 3. York Employment By Occupation**

	Employed	Percentage
Management, Business, and Financial Operations	666	15.54%
Professional and Related Occupations	882	20.58%
Service	840	19.60%
Sales and Office	984	22.96%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	65	1.52%
Construction, Extraction and Maintenance	338	7.90%
Production, Transportation and Material Moving	510	11.90%

*\*Employment and Percentages are exclusive.*

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2015 American Community Survey)*

The median income of York residents has risen 22.9% in ten years, from \$36,069 in 2000 to \$44,344 in 2010. In 2016 it reached \$47,685 and is estimated to reach \$54,979 in 2021. The average household income in York in 2016 was \$65,754 and is estimated to reach \$71,549. (See Table 4).

**Table 4. York Median Household Income**

Census Year	
<b>2000</b>	\$36,069
<b>2010</b>	\$44,344
<b>2016</b>	\$47,685
<b>2021 (Est.)</b>	\$54,979

*Source: ESRI 2017-03-03*

Market and demographic analysis indicates that York has potential for economic growth in the downtown, particularly to meet the demands of its most productive residents who are in their 20's, 30's, 40's and 50's. This collective group represents 40% of the population who are largely raising families, buying homes, and patronizing businesses in the community. This group shares many of the same characteristics with visitors to York, such as families attending youth sports events at the soccer fields or new ballfields. This points to potentially market demand for family-oriented, affordable activities and sports-related entertainment and retail.



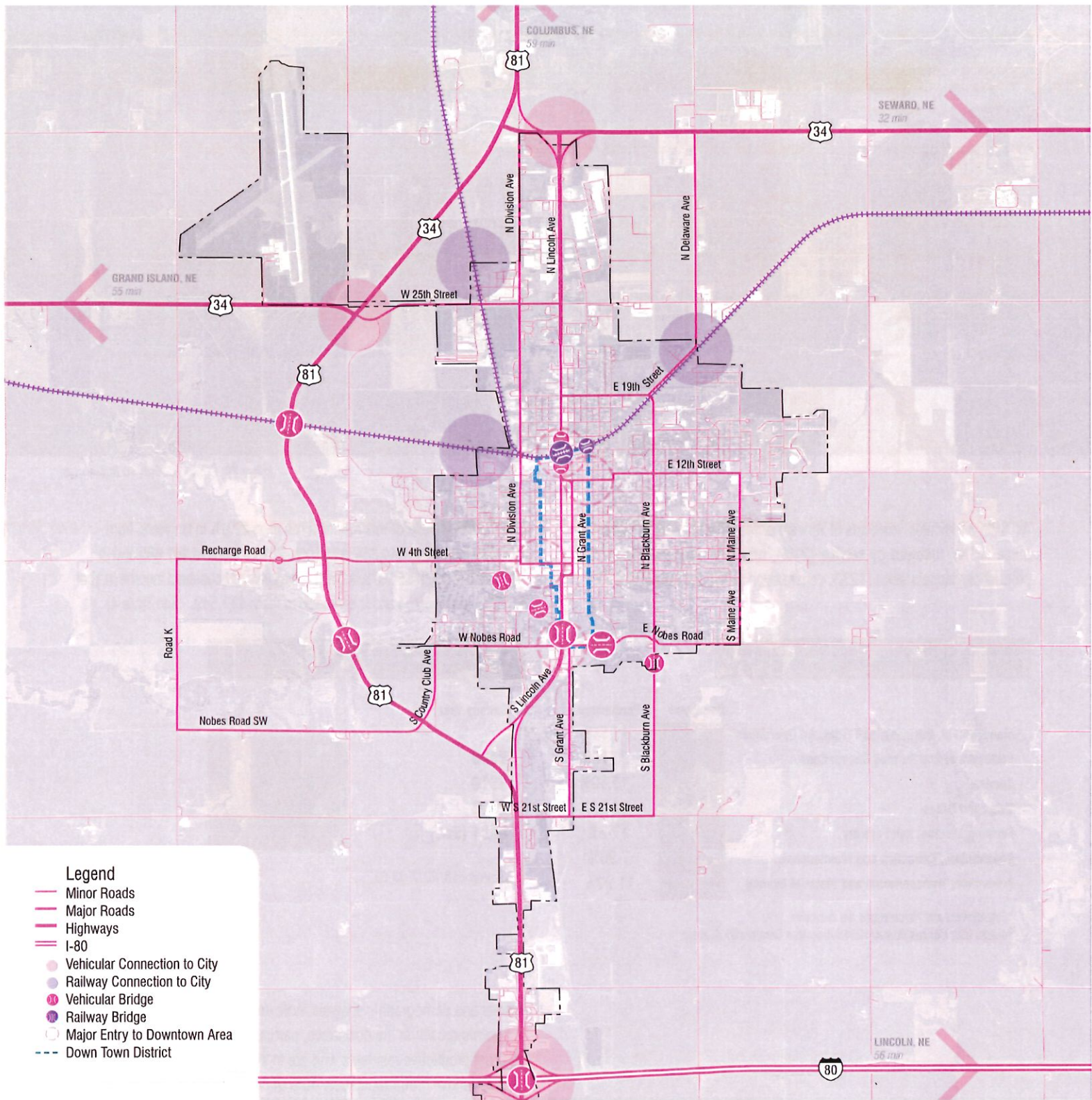


Figure 8. Vehicular Circulation





Image 29. North Entry View

### Existing Conditions Analysis

## Vehicular Circulation

The defining feature of downtown York's vehicular circulation system is a one-way street pairing of Lincoln Avenue (southbound) and Grant Avenue (northbound). Lincoln Avenue is a four-lane undivided facility with a posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour (mph) south of 3rd Street. Between 3rd Street and 11th Street, Lincoln Avenue is one-way southbound with a posted speed limit of 25 mph, and has two travel lanes and parking on both sides. Grant Avenue is one-way northbound with a posted speed limit of 25 mph, and has two travel lanes and parking on both sides. The width of Lincoln Avenue and Grant Avenue vary throughout the study area, although travel lanes are generally 14 to 17 feet wide. There are sidewalks throughout the downtown area and curb ramps and crosswalks are generally provided.

The one-way pair terminates at 3rd Street on the south and 11th Street on the north. Intersections with large sweeping curves are provided on both Lincoln Avenue and Grant Avenue to allow for continuous north-south traffic movements. This configuration, in place for over 50 years, was originally designed to accommodate traffic levels when US Highway 81 was routed through downtown York. US 81 was re-routed to the west of

York when a bypass was constructed in 2002.

Several of the downtown intersections are controlled with traffic signals, operating with pre-timed 50 second cycles with 10-second offsets in the northbound and southbound directions. The 1960's-era signal equipment with truss-style mast arms and signal heads centered over the middle of the intersections is found throughout the downtown with the exception of a modern traffic signal at the intersection of Lincoln Avenue and Nobes Road.

As figure 9 on the following page illustrates, traffic counts through downtown York have dropped considerably since Highway 81 Bypass was opened in 2002. Traffic has decreased 32% on Grant Avenue (north bound) and 46% on Lincoln Avenue (south bound). As a result, the existing traffic controls are no longer warranted at many of the existing downtown intersections at this time. The volume review indicated that both of the intersections of Lincoln Avenue and Grant Avenue with 6th Street should remain signalized as traffic levels are close to meeting warrants, and fluctuations in traffic may occur. Other locations should be evaluated by the City for removal.



Image 30. Existing Street Parking on 6th Street





Image 31. Existing Parking Lot

If traffic signal removal occurs, a side street stop control or possibly four-way stop should be implemented at intersections with sight-line restrictions.

Other streets of note in the downtown area include north-south routes on Platte Avenue and Nebraska Avenue and 6th Street which serves as an east-west travel to the east, connecting to York College. These streets all provide two-way travel and generally have adequate width and capacity for their intended use. Lincoln Avenue and Grant Avenue are currently operating under capacity during the AM and PM peak hours. This indicates that up to one lane of extra capacity is provided for the northbound and southbound movements on Lincoln Avenue and Grant Avenue through downtown York. Both streets would have adequate capacity to handle traffic demands as two-way streets, and in some locations operations would be expected to improve with provision of exclusive left-turn lanes and stop control.

The one-way pairs of Lincoln Avenue and Grant Avenue terminate at 3rd Street on the south and 11th Street on the north. Intersections with large sweeping curves are provided on both Lincoln Avenue and Grant Avenue to allow for continuous north-south traffic movements. A conceptual design of alternative configurations for the transitional intersections on Lincoln Avenue was completed as part of this study. The alternative configurations could include roundabouts or some other form of traffic control to provide a more inviting entrance treatment to downtown York, particularly from the south at 3rd Street. An example is shown in Image 30, above.



Image 32. Example Roundabout

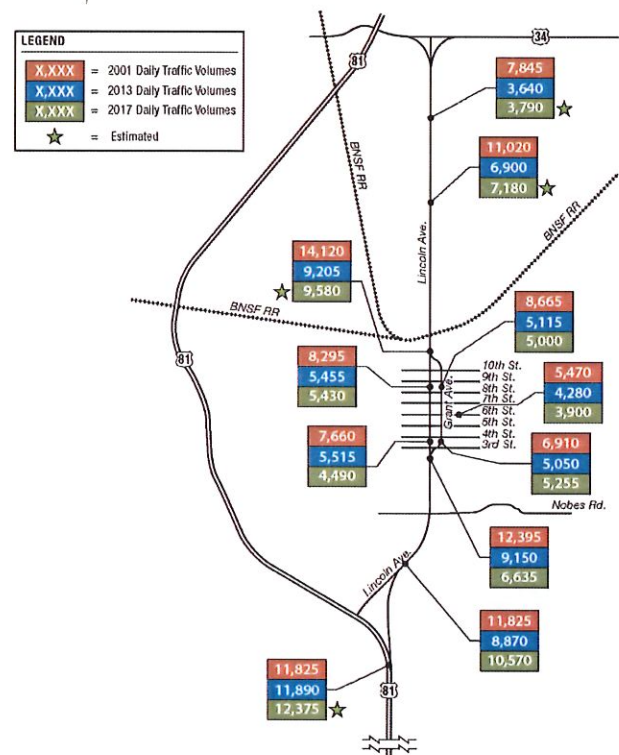


Figure 9. Traffic Counts Comparison Map







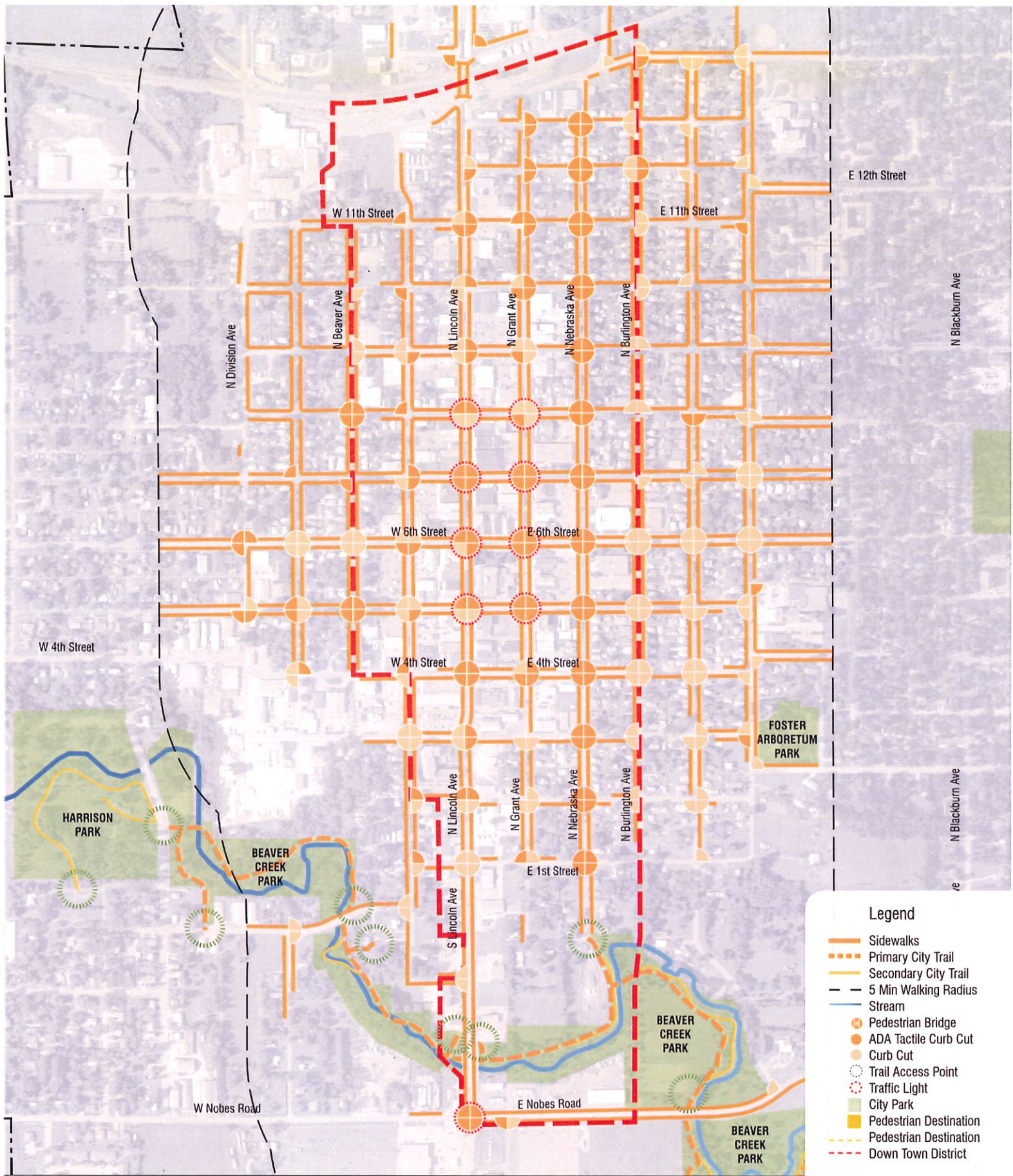


Figure 10. Pedestrian Circulation Map





Image 33. Historic Courthouse Square

### Existing Conditions Analysis

## Pedestrian Circulation & Gathering Areas

It could be argued that the vehicle is more welcome than the pedestrian in downtown York. The system is designed to move vehicles efficiently through the downtown on north-south routes, forcing pedestrians to take extra care crossing streets. While sidewalks in the core downtown are wide, there is no buffer between the pedestrian and the street to provide comfort and protection from vehicles. In other areas, there are sidewalk gaps, with the pathway sometimes jumping from one side of the street to the other, although recent sidewalk improvements have been made on Nebraska Avenue. Throughout downtown, many intersections have curb ramps that do not meet ADA requirements.

For bicyclists and users of mobility devices like wheelchairs, walkers and scooters, the sidewalk system is particularly challenging in certain areas of the downtown. The original brick streets are attractive features but are challenging for these users. A complete and well-planned sidewalk system is especially important to serve this population and ensure that the downtown maintains a walkable character. One particularly difficult area is around the affordable housing high-rise near the south entry to the downtown where many disabled residents live. Basic pedestrian circulation has not been addressed in this area, creating an island-effect for residents of the building and unsafe street crossings. This is very unfortunate considering the building is immediately across from a grocery store and near Beaver Creek Park and Trail and Harrison Park, which cannot be easily and safely reached.

Downtown York has traditionally been the place where citizens come together for public gatherings and special events. In the past, two large

open spaces served this purpose – a public park on the current site of the York Community Center and the historic Courthouse Square. The old courthouse, razed in the 1970's, was built in the center of a city block, surrounded by expansive open space. Today, the new courthouse building has a much larger footprint including parking and service areas, and offers a much smaller amount of public open space. This loss of open space is regrettable because it weakens the status of the downtown as the primary destination and public "heart" of the city. Also, it is less effective for downtown activities which in turn can support retail trade. Adequate downtown open space creates community-affirming opportunities that entice residents of all ages looking for low-cost, simple activities that bring people together.

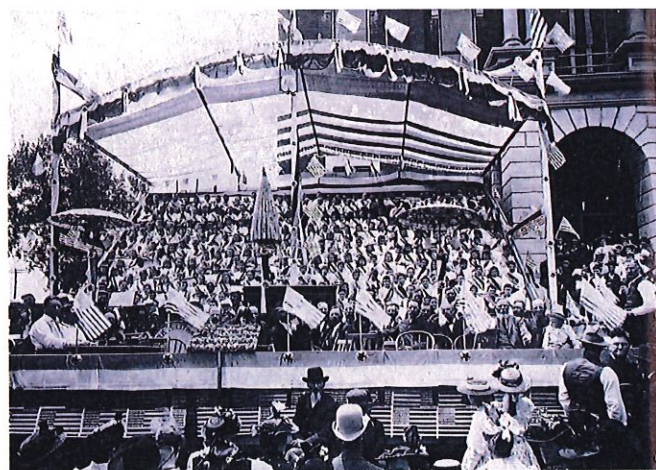
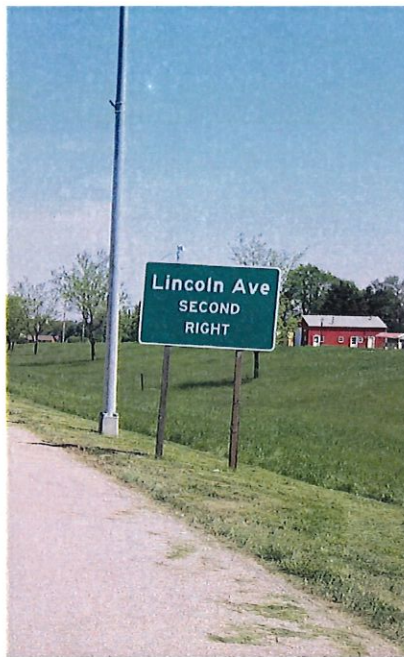


Image 34. Historic Courthouse Square, 4th of July 1894









Left, Image 35. Existing branded banner in downtown; Middle, Image 36. Existing sign for downtown from Hwy 81; Right, Image 37. Existing sign for downtown from Hwy 81

### Existing Conditions Analysis

## Signage & Wayfinding

The current signage for downtown York is minimal. One of the biggest challenges that downtown faces is getting people to exit the bypass and drive through downtown. Many residents travel around downtown via the bypass and many visitors don't realize that they are missing the downtown due to a lack of signage. The current signage on the bypass are official U.S. Highway signs that direct traffic to the business district. However, the signage that is currently located at the north and south of downtown entry points is easy to miss and does not elicit any excitement about what the downtown offers.

Within the downtown, signage is more prevalent but it is still lacking uniformity or excitement. There are three main types of signs currently used downtown: branded banners, on-street parking signs, and directional signs. The current branding signage in the downtown are the "York Town Centre" banners that are located on street poles along the main downtown corridors. The current locations of the street banners provide the opportunity to be a prominent feature of the downtown streetscape. However, the current banners seem dated and lack excitement.

Downtown parking signs are also minimal. On-street parking signs are present in most locations but they do not give enough information and look dated. Signage for the public parking lots is difficult to see and understand. This lack of clear signage has made it difficult for the both residents and visitors to know where they are allowed to park and for how long. The directional signage in downtown is currently targeted toward vehicular traffic and often directs traffic to areas outside the downtown.

Currently there are no directional signs that target pedestrian traffic toward landmarks within the downtown area.

Downtown lacks gateways or entry points. This lack of gateway signage does not allow for a formal entry or welcome into the downtown area for both residents and visitors.

### Existing Downtown Brand Identity

The existing downtown brand refers to the downtown as the "York Towne Centre". This branding treats the downtown with an old world, European feel that has no real connection to the history and culture of downtown. It also struggles to capture any of the specialness of York and is not appealing to the younger audience that York is currently trying to attract. Further, the "Towne Centre" branding is only evident in the downtown banners. There does not seem to be an online presence for the downtown itself.

The city of York also lacks a strong brand identity. When searched online, the websites given are for the city of York and for the York County Visitors Bureau. Both of these brands use the water tower as their logo. Neither of these brands seem to be heavily associated with downtown or have a strong strategy to market downtown York to either current residents or visitors.









Image 38. Example Mural Recommendation

## 3 chapter three Opportunities & Recommendations

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Figure 11. Façade Assessment Plan



## Façade Improvements

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During stakeholder workshops and public open houses, it became clear that the citizens of York care passionately about their existing, older buildings downtown and would like to see them preserved. They value redevelopment efforts by property owners and are eager to see more re-investment in the downtown.

Based on this input, we set about to recommendations that focused on building façades with sufficient improvement potential to make a significant impact on the downtown. These include recommendations to remove “slipcover” façades as well as modest projects that are attractive in their authenticity, even if they don't aim for perfection.

The importance of upgrading building façades cannot be overstated. According to Convenience Store News, 95% of shoppers are influenced by the appearance of a shop in their shopping decisions. Individual building appearance is a critical building block in the overall aesthetics of a downtown. Furthermore, the appearance of buildings has a direct relationship to the economic success of business and customer behavior. (Source: [www.csnews.com/industry-new-and-trends/expert-insights/floor-maintenance-more-important-retailers-think](http://www.csnews.com/industry-new-and-trends/expert-insights/floor-maintenance-more-important-retailers-think) and [www.retailcustomerexperience.com/articles/report-consumers-influenced-by-a-retailers-physical-appearance](http://www.retailcustomerexperience.com/articles/report-consumers-influenced-by-a-retailers-physical-appearance)).

The master planning team conducted a block-by-block assessment of building façades in the core downtown area to determine what level of work is needed to make a significant impact on the appearance and quality of downtown. The team assigned properties to one of three categories of recommended work, which are noted in figure 11, on the left.

Categories include:

1. Awning/Canopy Addition/Replacement (Green)
2. Awning/Canopy Addition/Replacement plus Minor Refurbishment (Magenta)
3. Major Rework/Slipcover Removal (Red)

### Awning/Canopy Addition/Replacement

Recommendations for this category are modest in scope and involves adding canopies where they are absent. Missing canopies are undesirable from a pedestrian standpoint as there is no cover/shelter as one approaches a business. The absence of a canopy or awning also exposes portions of a façade that may be unsightly and creates an appearance of a flat, unwelcoming business. Other façades have existing canopies/awnings that are unsightly or detract from the overall scale and intuitive variety desirable for a successful downtown environment. Long, continuous, rounded awnings along multiple storefronts dilute store individuality and are more suited to a suburban shopping center. Aluminum canopies that were prominent in the 1950s and 1960s attract birds and often leak on pedestrians below. While these canopies do provide some sense of scale and cover, they do not enhance the visual presence of the business and invoke an industrial feel.

Adding or replacing awnings presents a low-level investment opportunity and provides a large improvement value for minimal cost.

Twenty-nine properties have been identified that could easily take advantage of this improvement opportunity. Angled awnings would provide a cost-effective solution for covering some existing building conditions that may be deemed unsightly such as metal or wood clad windows above a storefront's entrance.





Figure 12. Before and After 6th Street Recommendations



Awnings should promote individuality along the street front and create opportunities for highly visible signage for businesses, both facing the street on the awning face, and under-signage placed perpendicular to the storefront, capturing the attention of pedestrians. Note: this will require a revision of the sign ordinance as described in Section IV.

#### **Awning/Canopy addition/replacement plus Minor Refurbishment**

Recommendations for this category involve the addition or replacement of a canopy plus some additional reworking of the existing façade. This work may include the addition of paint that may accent some of the building's existing features (cornice, sills, ornament, etc). Some minor repairs may be required such as masonry tuckpointing and sealant work. Minor window repairs to glass and frames are recommended with full replacement of windows being an option. This type of work will constitute a mid-level of investment.

Six properties have been identified that could effectively take advantage of these improvements. Windows that require repair or replacement should be treated with both energy efficiency and transparency in mind. Tinted windows should be avoided because they reduce pedestrian comfort level and detract from business vitality.

#### **Major Rework/Slipcover Removal**

Recommendations for this category involve removal or refurbishing of a large portion of a façade. Many of these properties have "slipcovers", or aluminum screening façades that have been added over-top the existing building façade. This practice was fairly common in the mid-20th Century as a method to modernize older buildings. Often the historic façade that exists behind these slip covers has been preserved due to the lack of exposure to the elements. However, the true condition of these façades cannot be determined without first removing portions of the aluminum cover to assess what lies beneath. These buildings have been categorized as requiring a substantial investment for revitalization as it is difficult to ascertain the true condition of the façade. Items that may require attention include window repair/replacement, masonry repair/replacement, façade deterioration around slipcover attachment locations and hazardous materials (i.e. asbestos at window caulking/sealant).

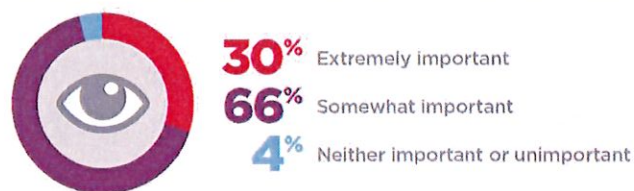
Nine properties have been categorized for major rework in the downtown study area network. They all have slipcovers to some degree, and the inherent unknown condition of the original façade indicated the potential for a large investment requirement for façade rehab. In certain instances, the appearance of these façades could be improved by either painting the cover or providing an awning or canopy to enhance the perceived scale of the façade. Such improvements would thus place these façades into one of the prior categories and require a reduced investment.

### **Summary of Recommendations**

It is our recommendation that the city of York take an incremental approach to downtown façade improvements commensurate with available funding and highest potential return on investment. Initial efforts should focus on modest façade improvement projects such as the replacement of appropriate awnings to improve the vitality of the downtown environment. Efforts should also focus first on Lincoln and Grant Avenues, closest to Courthouse Square.

Higher cost façade improvement projects, such as "slipcover" removal and major renovations should be encouraged in subsequent phases. This approach reflects York's style and values which lean toward authenticity and conservatism.

#### **IMPORTANCE OF BUSINESS APPEARANCE**



#### **SHOPPERS SAID...**



Figure 13. Importance of Business Appearance from Shopper Perspective



## HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- CAPITALIZE ON **EXISTING DOWNTOWN HOUSING** (LOW/MID EFFORT - \$/\$\$)
- PRIORITIZE **NEW UPPER-LEVEL HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES** (MID/HIGH EFFORT - \$\$/\$\$\$\$)
- IDENTIFY PROPERTIES WITH **FUTURE POTENTIAL** (HIGH EFFORT - \$\$\$/\$\$\$\$)
- MAKE USE OF **EXISTING PERIPHERY HIGH-USE HOUSING/PROPERTIES**
- **INFILL/REDEVELOP** CONFLICTING-USE/UNDERUSED PROPERTIES



Figure 14. Downtown Housing Opportunities



## Housing

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Workshop participants indicated that for housing to be successful, the downtown must be walkable and bikeable and offer amenities such as restaurants, entertainment, and open space. Downtown dwellers want a variety of choices, ranging from upper level apartments to apartment and townhome redevelopment on the edges of downtown. Our team's response was to identify areas within a walkable zone that are viable for immediate redevelopment and to conduct an analysis of potential upper level housing.

### Upper Level Housing

Renovation to create upper level housing can be problematic due to building code requirements and restrictions. The presence of external walls and windows within potential living units dramatically affects their viability. Living units cannot be completely contained in the interior of a structure, and must have access to windows for fire safety.

In analyzing the existing and potential housing in downtown York, properties have been identified based on their ability to contain upper-level residential units and the implied investment required to achieve said housing. These properties have been divided into four categories:

- Existing Downtown Housing (Green)
- Potential Downtown Housing – Mid-level Investment Probability (Blue)
- Potential Downtown Housing – High-level Investment Probability (Purple)
- Future Downtown Housing – Initial Prohibitive Cost Potential (Red)

### Existing Downtown Housing (Green)

Currently in York, approximately 95 living units exist within the downtown study area in 17 existing properties. Most to all of these living units are currently occupied. The goal would be to maintain these units as residential (rental or condominium) and ensure that the existing buildings meet life-safety code requirements. In some

instances, minor investment may be required to complete safety projects such as installing fire-sprinklers or improving methods of egress.

### Potential Downtown Housing – Mid-level Investment Probability (Blue)

Ten properties have been identified as having good potential to support additional housing at a mid-level investment. The size and condition of these locations, as well as their potential for multiple points of egress prove favorable for upper level housing. These properties exhibit façades that require minimal upgrades and could prove attractive to prospective tenants. Street access to an upper level also appears to exist for these buildings, which is a favorable amenity. Depending on the property owner's desire/ability to sub-divide their buildings, potential exists for an additional 15 to 20 living units.

### Potential Downtown Housing – High-level Investment Probability (Purple)

Nine properties have been identified as having marginal potential to support additional housing at a high-level investment. Many of these properties would require a large amount of work to provide livable residential units. Several of these properties may only be able to accommodate one or two units which may reduce the economic viability for the owner. These properties either exhibit a marginal or low-level opportunity for street frontage access, and secondary means of egress may prove problematic. These issues can be overcome with the appropriate investment but it may again prove unfeasible for the property owner. If all of these properties were to see the required improvements realized, an additional 15 to 30 living units could be accommodated.





Image 39. Proposed Housing Examples



### **Future Downtown Housing – Initial Prohibitive Cost Potential (Red).**

Seven properties have been categorized as having a potential for future housing. These properties could, with the appropriate investment, be converted into living units. Several of these properties have existing slip-cover façades. To maximize the opportunity for housing in these properties, the removal of the slip-covers would be recommended. This carries a large unknown with regard to cost, which has largely impacted this classification.

### **Housing Infill and Redevelopment**

The areas directly adjacent to downtown contain a variety of existing housing. What lacks is an appropriate amount of higher density living units. In examining properties within the downtown study area, several locations show potential for supporting infill or redevelopment projects. These projects could manifest in the following forms:

- High Density Single Family Housing
- Multi-Family/Senior Living Apartment Buildings
- Multi-Family Row House Developments
- Multi-Family Row House Developments with Integral Parking
- Mixed-Use/Live-Work Developments

Properties identified as having potential for such developments exhibit the following characteristics:

- Extreme low-density existing development
- Properties exhibiting blight
- Properties deemed uninhabitable or hazardous
- Adjacencies to favorable land uses – retail, grocery, playgrounds, existing parking, Senior Center, etc.
- Current Land Use is not favorable for Downtown Environment
- Current Land Use is undeveloped or partially undeveloped
- Properties are considered “walkable” – close proximity to downtown

By redeveloping these properties, housing numbers and density will improve. Developments with a higher level of investment have the potential to inject new vitality in prominent/highly visible properties.

### **Block 50 Redevelopment**

Block 50 (bounded by Lincoln Avenue, Grant Avenue, 6th Street and 7th Street) in conjunction with alley improvements to create a new downtown residential district centered around Wall Street. This area has existing housing on both ends of the alley and may have the highest potential future housing in downtown York.

### **Summary of Recommendations**

Housing's role in downtown revitalization is both a cause and effect. Early efforts to increase downtown housing help populate and activate the downtown. But generally people will choose to move downtown only when it becomes more activated and populated. This dichotomy points to the need for strategic prioritization to get the ball rolling forward. Our recommendations are to:

1. Focus first on locations that are most suitable and can be more easily retrofitted to create new housing stock. Make use of existing periphery housing.
2. Encourage growth within existing residential areas on the edge of downtown and supplement with new redevelopment projects such as renovations, new apartments or townhomes, and mixed use developments.
3. Capitalize on existing downtown housing, beginning with Block 50.

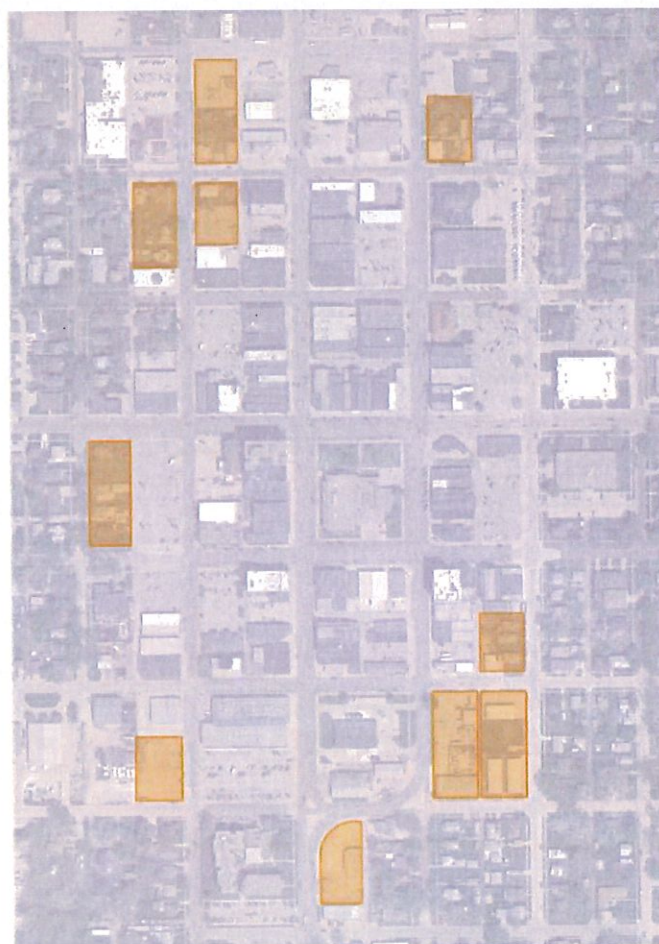


Figure 15. Potential Areas for Infill



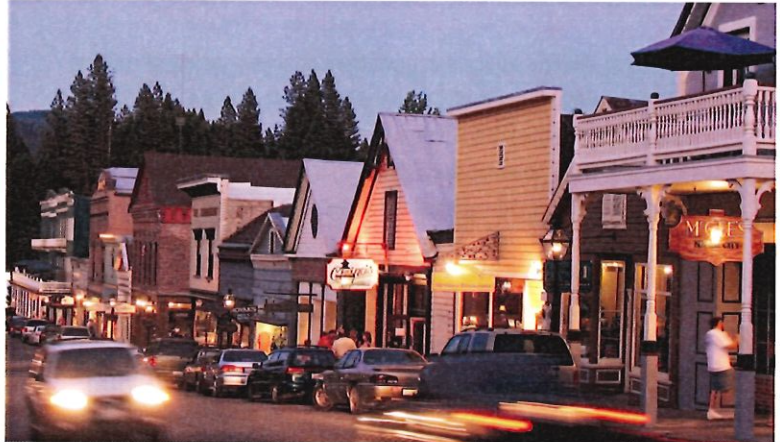


Image 40. Economic Development Examples



## *Opportunities & Recommendations*

# **Economic Development**

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In developing strategies for improving the economic vitality of downtown York, it is important to recognize what market segments are reflected in its customer base. Market segmentation identifies what are the needs, wants and demands of a primary market in order to establish strategies that meet customer expectations.

Based on the demographic analysis described in Chapter II, we have identified two of the largest market segments that apply to York. The largest segment, which captures approximately 17% of York households, can be described as “Small Town Simplicity.” This includes young families and senior householders that are generally bound by community ties. Their lifestyle is down-to-earth and semi-rural. Entertainment comes mostly from television and convenience is a high priority. Hobbies include computer games, scrapbooking and outdoor activities such as hunting and fishing. This group lives simply, spends frugally, and avoids debt.

The second largest market segment represented in York can be described as “Traditional Living,” which captures approximately 14.5% of York households. This group includes married couples and singles living in low-density, settled neighborhoods. Many of them are second generation York residents (or greater) and hope that their children can be as well. This segment is primarily employed in the sectors of manufacturing, retail trade and health care. This is a younger market, many living on their own for the first time and retaining their youthful interests in style and fun.

In order to appeal to these customers, downtown improvements should create an authentic and attractive pedestrian experience in the downtown. The downtown should feel genuine and welcoming, providing places that provide simple enjoyments that become part of people’s routine. These might include ice cream and coffee shops and sidewalk cafes, with inviting storefronts and signage that convey what activities are happening inside. This market also wants to find public amenities

when they come downtown – an attractive streetscape, benches, plant material, pedestrian lighting, and bike racks.

Young families represented in this market segment are particularly interested in activities and entertainment for their children. In particular, involvement in youth sports dominates many families’ schedules. Because of the soccer and baseball fields in York, the youth sports market expands dramatically on tournament weekends throughout the year. This represents a strong target market for retail and entertainment centered on active families with athletic interests. We recommend that the city identify some specific businesses that will appeal to this market and develop recruitment or incentive strategies to draw them to York.

Potential businesses include a family-oriented sports-themed restaurant and a sporting goods store. One specific example to consider is a facility like Spikes Beach Bar and Grill which provides volleyball courts as well as food and beverage service. This type of facility could be a place where locals and families visiting the ballfields for a tournament can go before or after games. Potential sporting goods retail concepts to consider can be found in national retail chains like Hibbets Sports and neighborhood stores like Play it Again Sports (Grand Island, Lincoln, Omaha). Another concept to consider for a market that enjoys games and competition is a locally-owned café like Spielbound Board Game Café (Omaha) – a coffee/beer/wine café that features a vast assortment of board games to play.

In order to attract any of these targeted out-of-town customers to downtown York, this strategy must include expanding awareness through signage, special promotions, and an active on-line presence. Signage and way-finding from the ballfields and other sites to the downtown are addressed at the end of this chapter.





Figure 16. Roundabout Recommendations



## **Vehicular Improvements**

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As described in Chapter II of this document, the existing vehicular circulation system in York is a significant impediment to creating an attractive, pedestrian-oriented downtown. The wide, one-way streets, lack of streetscape, and unattractive entryways require a dramatic transformation to achieve the biggest impact in revitalizing the downtown. Toward that end, the master planning team proposed several traffic-related recommendations at community workshops and invited the public to provide feedback. Many of the recommendations received both support and opposition. Below is an overview of the public comments received.

### **Entry Roundabouts**

The team proposed roundabouts to replace the large curves at 3rd Street and 11th Street. The roundabouts will slow incoming traffic and communicate that motorists have entered a district where the pedestrian has precedence over the vehicle. Roundabouts have been found to reduce vehicle speeds, improve vehicle and pedestrian safety, and provide smoother travel with less stopping and starting. The proposed York roundabout will visually mark the north and south entrances to the city and could feature landscaping, signage or art to reinforce the branding of downtown. The south roundabout will improve access to adjacent businesses such as Grand Central Foods. It will also improve pedestrian crossing safety and solve the “island” problem for disabled residents who live in the highrise and have difficulty crossing streets in that location.

The primary concern of residents was the high level of unfamiliarity with roundabouts among York residents, despite the recent introduction of roundabouts near the new ballfields. Similar resistance was expressed in other communities when roundabouts began to appear 15-20 years ago. However as people get use to them, they have been embraced by communities of all sizes across the country. For instance, the City of Carmel, Indiana, population 87,000, has been aggressively removing

traffic signals and has installed at least 90 roundabouts in the last decade.

### **Street Configuration**

Downtown York streets are very wide which make them intimidating for pedestrians to cross and encourage high speed among vehicles. We recommend narrowing streets at the intersections by creating curb extensions or “bulb-outs” that narrow the crossing distance at key intersections on Lincoln Avenue and Grant Avenue. This recommendation, which was well-received by York residents, will improve pedestrian safety and comfort and promote traffic calming. With curb extensions, the vehicle stop position on the side street approaches to both Lincoln Avenue and Grant Avenue would be 8 to 10 feet closer to the street, thereby improving intersection sight distance if traffic signals are removed. The narrowing of the crosswalks would also provide improved visibility for pedestrians beyond parked vehicles.

### **Designated On-street Marked Bike Routes**

The master plan recommends creating designated on-street marked bike routes in the downtown. Research has shown that bicyclists and pedestrians in a downtown are more likely to become paying customers than those who arrive by vehicle. Designated bike routes can help increase the visibility and safety for cyclists through signage and striping as well as concentrating use to particular streets. Vehicular users are more likely to look for cyclists on designated routes. Bicycle routes can be planned and constructed in conjunction with other infrastructure or street projects in order to reduce costs and accommodate future community improvement projects.

### **On-Street Parking**

The configuration of on-street parking in York is not consistent from block to block. For instance, it jumps from diagonal to parallel in some places and the curb line moves back and forth between other blocks. The team recommends that a consistent approach to on-street



blocks. The team recommends that a consistent approach to on-street parking be established as part of street reconfiguration. Furthermore, on-street parking should be signed and enforced to serve customers of local businesses. Employees and longer term parkers (greater than 90 minutes) should be encouraged through signage and enforcement to use the public parking lots. Design guidelines specific to urban areas such as those found in the AASHTO Green Book and NACTO Urban Street Design Guide should be reviewed as part of street reconfiguration design to determine where additional parking could be allowed along Lincoln Avenue, Grant Avenue, and 6th Street. The public was generally supportive of reviewing each block for possible adjustments to parking layouts to increase both the number and uniformity of parking downtown.

### **Public Parking Lots**

York is fortunate to have several public parking lots east and west of Lincoln Avenue and Grand Avenue which serve the downtown. However, the availability and location of public parking is not clearly communicated. New signage and branding strategies are needed to guide visitors to public parking lots from Lincoln Avenue and Grant Avenue. These should reinforce the establishment of downtown as a shopping and restaurant district with convenient nearby parking. Signage for both on-street and off-street parking should be clear that only short-term parking is permitted on the street. They should also be reconfigured to separate pedestrian walkways from vehicles and should carry on the aesthetic established in the new streetscape.

### **Traffic Signal Removal**

The traffic volumes on both Lincoln and Grant Avenues have reduced significantly since the opening of the US 81 bypass to the west. The master plan recommends converting unwarranted intersections from signal to side street stop control. This would reduce delay and potential crashes (generally rear-end type) since stopping and starting would be less frequent on Lincoln and Grant Avenues. This would also reduce going maintenance costs for the City. Where traffic volumes are higher, such as at 6th Street, rebuilt signals should be installed.

While some members of the public expressed concern about potential traffic delays on side streets and safety for pedestrians crossing Lincoln Avenue and Grant Avenue, many expressed support for the idea eliminating traffic signals if the traffic counts do not warrant them.

### **One-way to Two-way Conversion**

In the opinion of the master planning team, one of the most effective strategies in revitalizing downtown York would be to convert the existing one-way traffic pairs on Lincoln Avenue and Grant Avenue to two-way. This would promote slower traffic, improve walkability and create a more cohesive downtown destination that would encourage

motorists to stop. While the two-way conversion may result in an initial drop in traffic volume drop on Grant Avenue, the overall increase in activity within the downtown would likely offset it in time.

This proposal received the greatest amount of concern from the public who feared that potential businesses on Grant Avenue would experience a decrease in drive-by traffic that would result in a decline in customer traffic. Some also expressed concern that emergency response from the hospital north of downtown going to the interstate would be hindered by congestion on Lincoln Avenue created by the two-way traffic. However, the conversion from signal control to side street stop control along Lincoln Avenue would offset any concerns that the York Fire Chief would have in response times towards I-80.

It appears that it will take time to build public acceptance for two-way traffic conversion. In the short term, we recommend any curb, street and parking modifications be designed and constructed to accommodate future two way traffic on Lincoln and Grant Avenue. In the future, the conversion can take place by merely re-striping diagonal parking to accommodate the two-way configuration.

### **Summary of Recommendations**

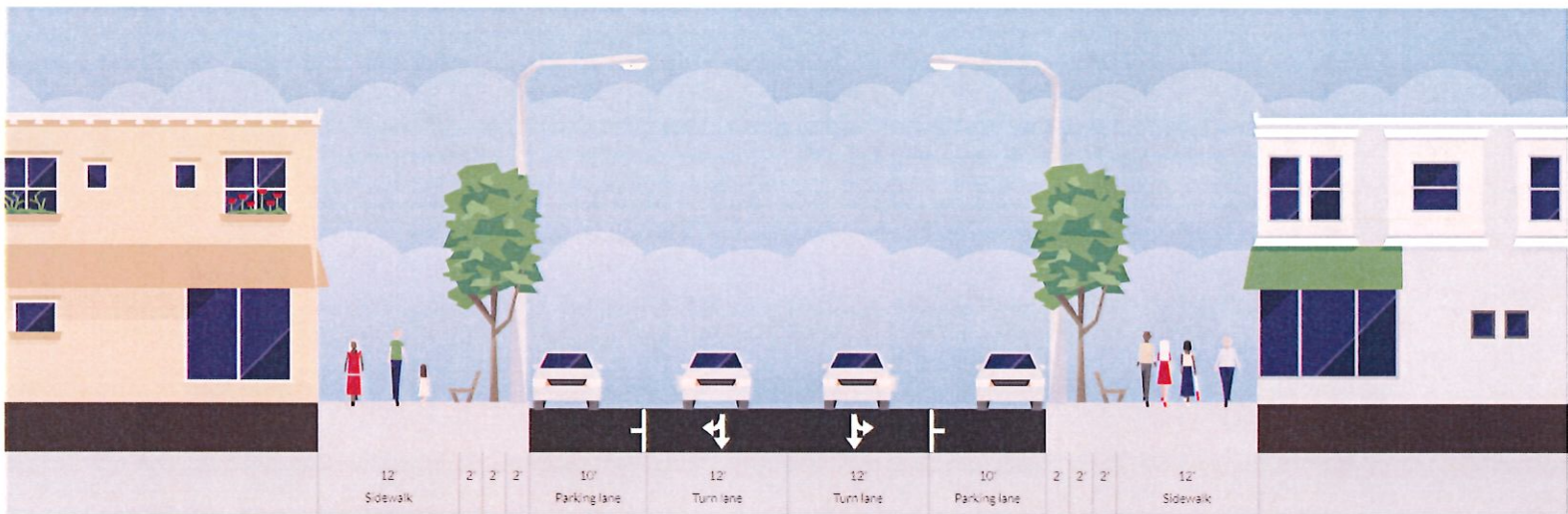
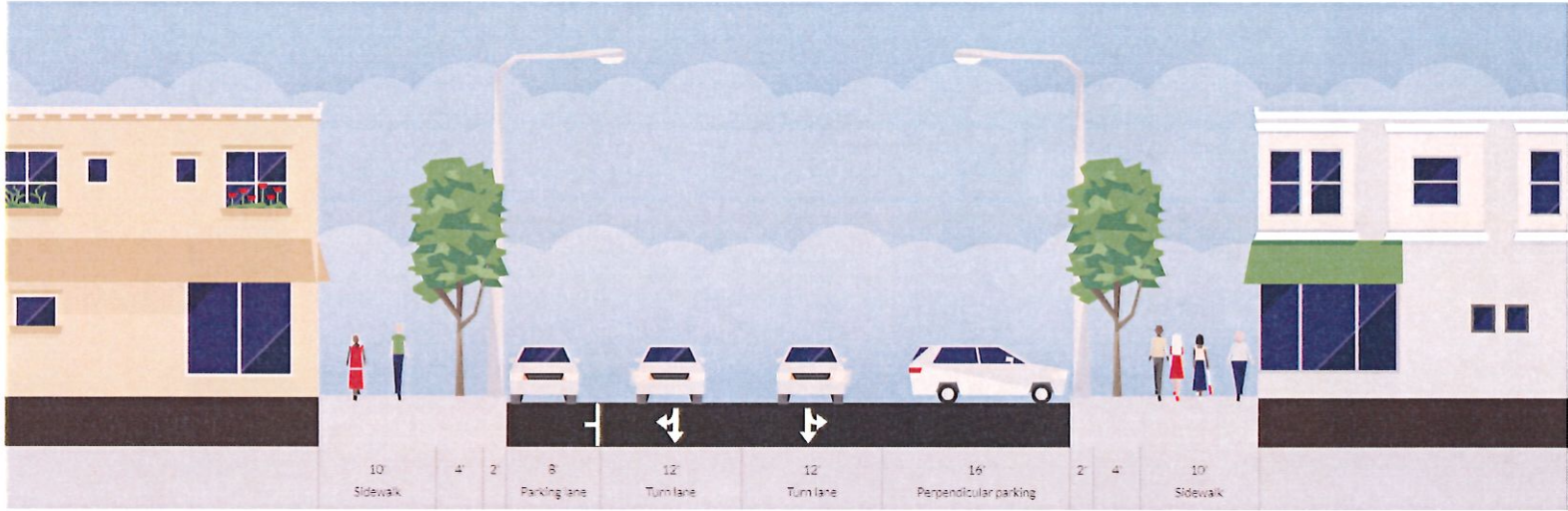
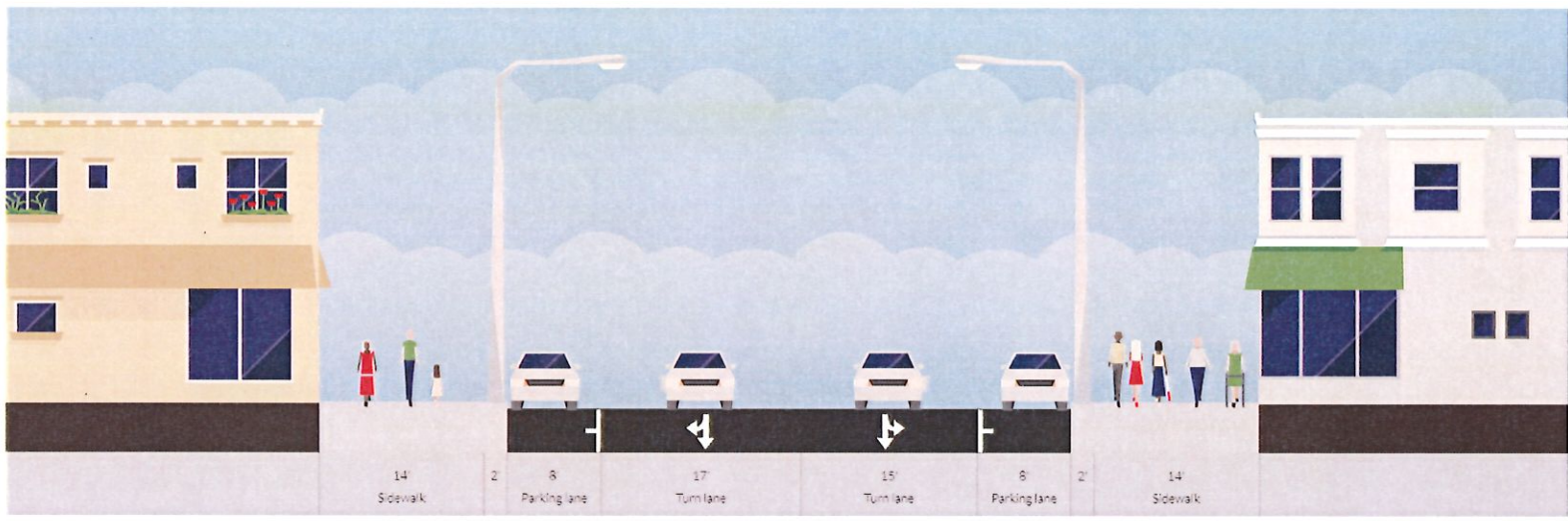
The vehicular circulation recommendations in this master plan are:

1. Create curb extensions (bulb-outs) to narrow pedestrian crossings at intersections
2. Improve signage, parking layout, and landscaping for public parking lots
3. Reduce lane widths to provide additional on-street parking
4. Designate on-street bicycle routes on Nebraska Avenue and 6th Street
5. Remove Traffic Signals that are no longer needed
6. Install roundabouts on Lincoln Avenue at 3rd and 11th Streets
7. Convert one-way traffic to two-way traffic on Lincoln Avenue and Grant Avenue.









Top: Figure 17. Existing Streetscape in downtown York.

Middle: Figure 18. Streetscape in downtown York with enhanced pedestrian experience.

Bottom: Figure 19. Streetscape in downtown York with increased pedestrian experience.



## **Pedestrian Improvements & Gathering Areas**

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As has been stated, at the heart of all the recommendations offered in this document is the notion that the first priority in revitalization downtown York is to make it a more walkable, pedestrian-oriented place. In addition to changing the vehicular circulation system to accommodate this transformation, changes to the pedestrian circulation system are needed. These involve street modifications, such as curb extensions at pedestrian crossings, described above; streetscape improvements, such as street lighting, landscape and amenities; bicycle routes, also described above; activating open space and gatherings areas, such as Courthouse Square; and seizing opportunities for redevelopment of unique areas like alleys and Wall Street.

### **Streetscape Improvements**

Improvements in the quality and aesthetics of the streetscape make a significant impact on a downtown. We propose modifications to the sidewalks that include adding planting beds and street trees, new amenities such as seating, trash receptacles, pedestrian lighting and bike racks. This creates an identifiable pedestrian zone which in turn enhances community interaction. It creates multiple stopping places for people to stop and meet, like a living room in a home. The pedestrian zone offers the experience of being downtown among others, rather than simply a path to move from location to location.

We also recommend planting beds and raised planters, offering color and texture throughout the seasons. The streetscape should provide places for people to stop and sit on benches in nodes and provide practical street furniture like trash receptacles and bike racks.

To improve upon the quality and aesthetics of the streetscape and public spaces we recommend adding planting areas at the intersection and along the streetscape including over-story trees which can be limbed up as they grow allowing visibility to the storefronts and signage. Research

has shown that trees offer numerous benefits such as increasing property values and the amount shoppers are willing to pay for goods and services. Trees also increase the comfort ratings of an area by 80% compared to non-shaded streets.

Public amenities play a critical role in the vitality of a downtown. These streetscape features have a bigger impact on occupancy rate than even arterial connections.





Figure 20. Before and After Courthouse Improvements



## Bicycle Routes

As mentioned previously, designated bicycle routes encourage activity downtown. They help connect people with primary destinations. Downtown is THE primary destination for residents of York which makes the establishment of a safe, visible bicycle route a high priority recommendations. Bike-friendly infrastructure has been linked to an increased in retail sales. It creates the opportunity for people to combine their leisure, fitness, social and economic needs in one activity -- going downtown. This is especially appealing to today's active families.

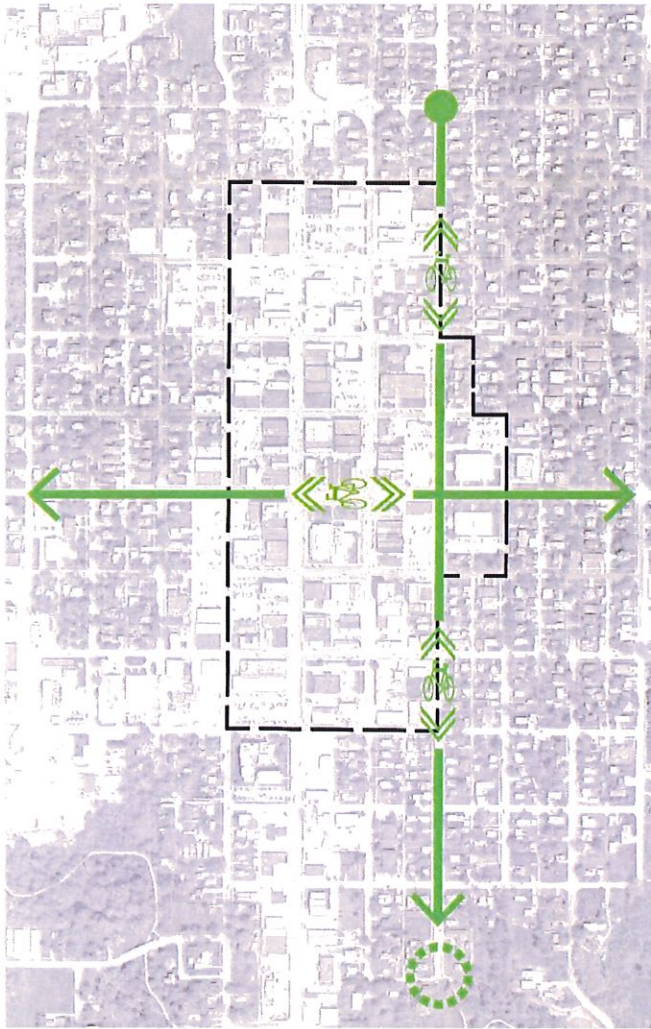


Figure 21. Bike Route

## Open Space & Gathering Areas

York residents have been gathering downtown for special events, celebrations, festivals, parades, business promotions and community gatherings for over 100 years. Downtown streets, sidewalks, and open spaces are regularly converted to pedestrian gathering space that brings community together. We recommend the strengthening of this tradition by enhancing key spaces like Courthouse Square, improving the aesthetics of surrounding streetscapes, and enhancing other open spaces like parking lots so they can be more functional and inviting public spaces. New public parks may also be created by developing existing open space where buildings have been removed or purchasing blighted properties.

Not all public gathering spaces need to be dedicated for that purpose. Some spaces can be designated multipurpose and used for "soft programming" of public events. Examples include parking lots that are designed with minimal amenities (e.g. shade, access to nearby utilities, trash collection areas) that can become event space for special occasions. For instance, the parking lot located between Courthouse Square and the Kilgore Library can be upgraded with lighting and landscaping so it can become a public event space. Closing streets and using parking lots for festivals can help maximize the City's resources. It allows for the occasional larger gathering while still functioning on a day-to-day basis.



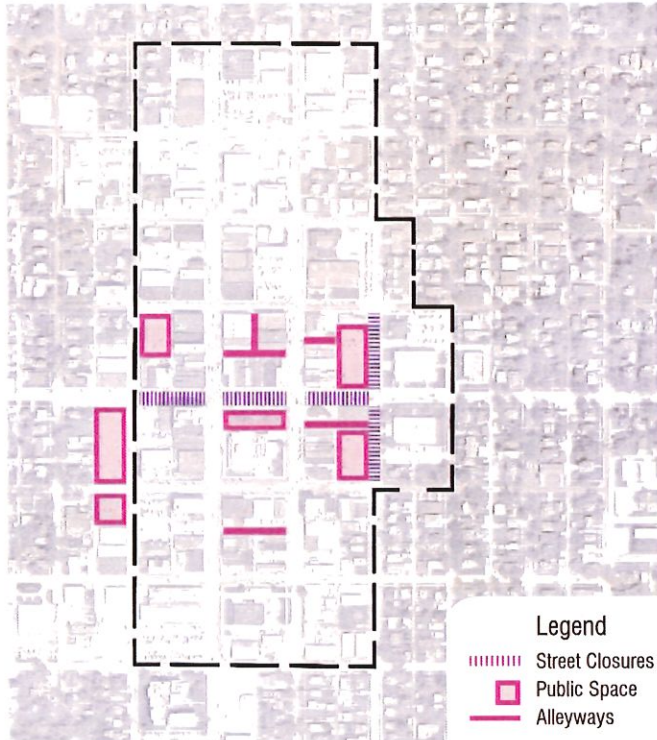


Figure 22. Soft Programming Map

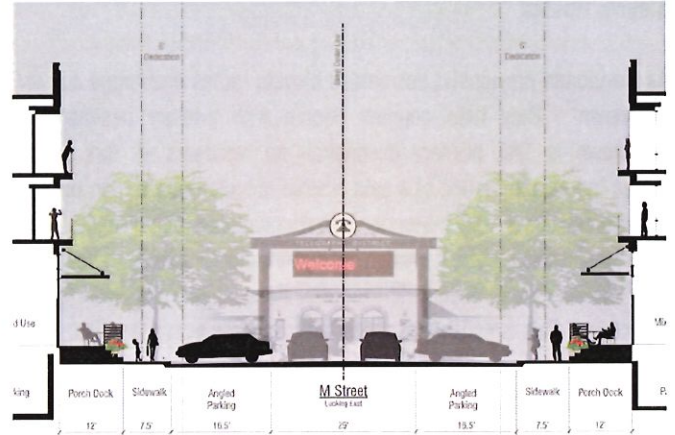


Figure 23. Example Proposed Streetscape

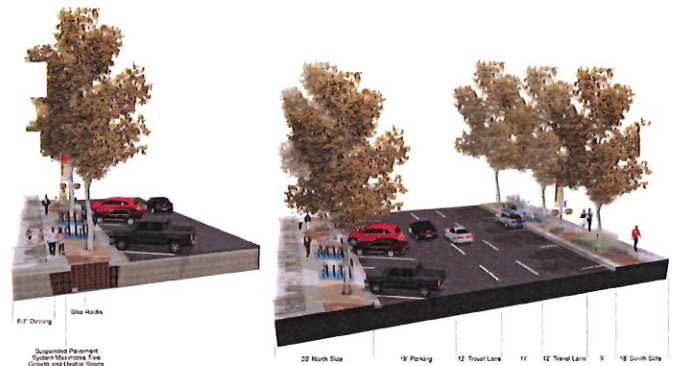


Figure 24. Example Proposed Streetscape

## Alleys & Walls Streets

While people enjoy large open space for festivals and larger gatherings, they are also drawn to intriguing and intimate spaces that pique curiosity. York has at least two of those areas: open space between buildings on the block bounded by 4th Street, 5th Street, Lincoln Avenue and Grant Avenue. This area, perhaps as result of the 1970's fire that leveled the north side of that block, offers potential locations for pocket parks. These small parks invite casual users to take lunch breaks, meet friends, and provide visual interest in the downtown.

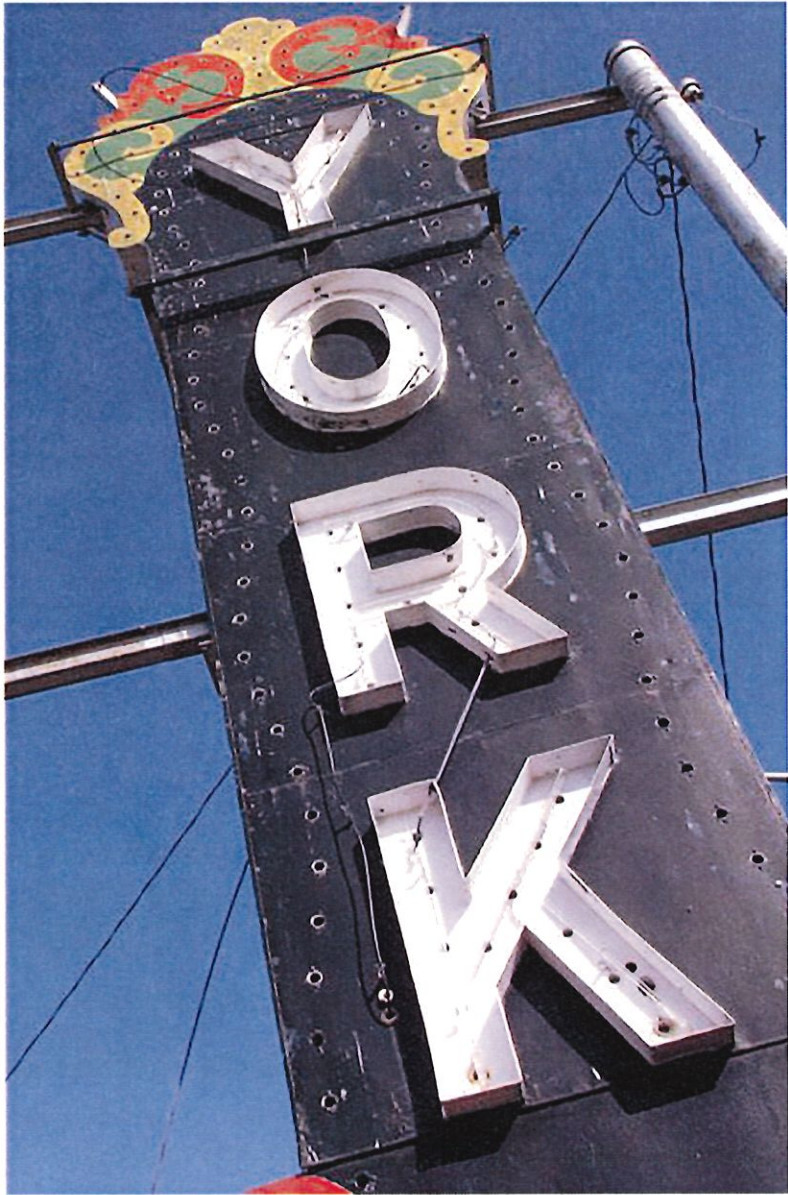
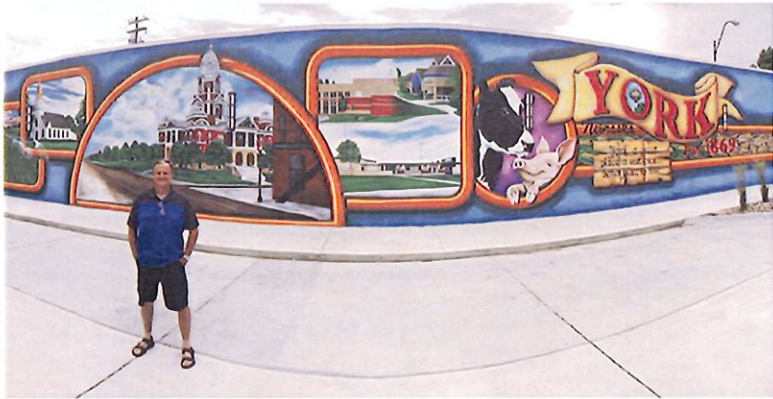
Alley-ways can be enhanced through partnerships with other art or community projects. Businesses should be encouraged to embrace their alley side with public entrances and outdoor seating. Streetscape amenities should be included for any publicly-owned portion of an alley redevelopment project. These unique areas of town can allow visitors to see York "behind the scenes" and can become a distinct reason to go to downtown York – because you will experience something you can find nowhere else.





Figure 25. Before and After Lincoln Avenue Recommendations







## Branding

A brand is the nucleus around which all communications, marketing, and revitalization efforts should revolve. A brand is much more than a design or logo. The brand is the core of all other efforts and should be deeply investigated and personal to the city of York. Before developing a brand for downtown York, we must understand where downtown is now and how it wants to evolve.

The City of York was founded in 1869 and has a population of 8,000 people (7,957 people in the 2014 census). York has a rich history of art, theater, agriculture, and manufacturing. York has pushed for innovation while maintaining a nostalgic reflection of its rich history. These elements have come together over the years to create a unique cultural hub. The City of York has continued to grow, however that growth has not always occurred at the heart of the city: the downtown. Rather, many of the newest businesses, restaurants and points of interest have

located near Interstate 80. Many of the businesses that used to make the downtown exciting and vibrant have gone out of business or have moved. The city is now working to reverse this trend and revitalize the downtown by identifying the special things downtown York has to offer.

There is great potential in beginning the process of developing a brand identity for downtown York. The new brand can bring youth and excitement to the downtown and can help to be a catalyst for all other downtown revitalization efforts. Now is the time to dive into the current culture and identify where the downtown wants to be in 10 years and how a brand identity can help to achieve this. This process can be very linear and our recommendation is that the brand identity for York start by identifying the target audience and then downtown York's promise, and finally identify the look, the voice, and the symbol.

### Target Audience

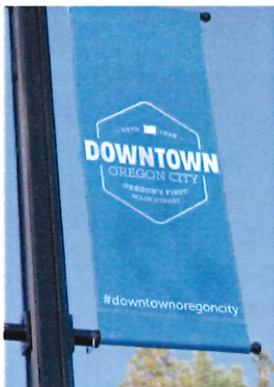
York is hoping to increase both local traffic and tourism to the downtown area. The target audience of the project is very broad and can be broken down into four categories:

- York Resident
- York County Resident
- Event Visitor (athletics, event center, etc.)
- I-80/Traveling Visitor

The primary focus should be on the current residents of York. The first step to building the downtown York brand is to get buy-in internally.

1. The primary focus of the project is to increase attendance of full-time residents to the downtown and develop a place where residents want to be that instills a sense of town spirit. Downtown revitalization also hopes to encourage young people to stay in York and encourage young families to make York their hometown.
2. The secondary focus would be to encourage tourism and out of town visitors to make a stop in downtown York. This includes creating festivals that entice people to travel to York. It would also include encouraging people that are traveling through York to stop downtown. The downtown must look to attract people from the baseball fields, the event center and from neighboring smaller towns in York County.





## Promise | What is the heart of downtown?

The downtown York brand is what people think of downtown York. It is a perception. Logos, slogans, and promotional pieces are not brands. They are support material that promote a larger brand identity. The first step in building the brand is identifying the tangible benefit that makes downtown York desirable. Identifying that feature will lead to the heart of the brand, or the brand promise.

The current focus on the "Crossroads of America" is a statement that points out something unique to York, yet it puts too much emphasis on the coming and going along two paths. A vehicular crossroads is a tangible benefit but it does little to make downtown York a desirable place to gather, shop and socialize. The brand promise should focus on the 140 years of history and culture that have made York what it is today. The downtown's promise should celebrate more of York's small town qualities and its potential as a thriving city. An example of effective branding is Nebraska City's recent re-brand. Their focus was to celebrate a rich history of Arbor Day and Kimmel Orchard. Their branding and marketing efforts rally around the special aspects of these places including events, products sold downtown and even their logo, 'Red to the Core'.

In York, there is a strong push in the community to return the downtown to it's former glory and bring back several events and elements that have made it a great place. The brand promise should take advantage of the immense pride and nostalgia people have for York, while also focusing on how the brand can make downtown the best for the future. Once the brand promise has been identified, all other elements should work to support it. Other brand elements are the look, the voice, and the symbol.

## Look | What is the graphic style and appearance used by the branding?

The new brand should be fresh and youthful, without being trendy. It should be unique to York and should not be something that could be transferred to any town. The current colors of York are blue, gold, and white and the brand should have an emphasis on gold and yellow. The use of gold and yellow will help the new branding be cohesive with the current town branding and has been studied in branding to represent youth, energy and happiness. These are all qualities to be achieved in downtown. Yellow has also been proven to be the most eye-catching color, which will be key in catching the attention of visitors to the downtown's brand. The new look of York should be easily transferable to many platforms including print material, website, social media, signage and more. The brand also needs to be able to work around the multiple events that occur in downtown York. These events need to be able to be built and marketed within the downtown York brand. The downtown brand should use these events to further push the new brand identity.



**Voice | What is the tone or character to be portrayed by the branding?**

The voice of downtown York should focus on the hometown pride of York citizens. The people of York have an immense pride in the history of their downtown. Nostalgia should be present in the voice of the brand and it should reflect the rich history of downtown. The brand's voice should also focus on what is next for downtown York and should be innovative and forward thinking.

**Symbol | What is the symbol of York? Symbolically what does it represent?**

The water tower is the current most recognizable symbol for York. The water tower directly represents the pride that the citizens of York have in their town. The tower was originally planned to match the current tower - grey with blue lettering. However, a citizen wrote in to the local paper and suggested that the city should push for something more unique and memorable. The city of York rallied around this idea.

The city of York has stood behind the water tower and supported it as a symbol of the city. This same admiration seems to be present within the downtown, but York residents need something to rally behind. The symbolism of the water tower should be taken advantage of by the downtown brand. This does not mean that the symbol needs to be the water tower. Rather the brand should focus in on the meaning behind the tower—hometown pride, artistic expression, innovative/unique approach—and how it represents the York in a more symbolic way.

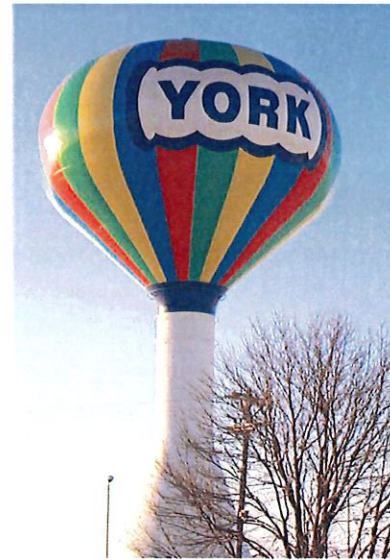
**Focusing the Branding Effort**

A brand can be more than promotional pieces. A brand should include events and organizations that can further push the overall brand promise. The first campaign effort should be to engage our primary target audience, current York residents. Events or organizations could include:

- Local Artists or York students create murals or art for downtown
- "Corporate Movie Night"
- Downtown Improvement Squad

The second campaign effort should be to build positive awareness around the downtown revitalization efforts. Tactics to build positivity and excitement could include:

- Develop plans to get buy in from downtown businesses
- Create events and promotional material focusing on the benefits of revitalizing the downtown.









## Signage & Wayfinding

A new wayfinding program in downtown York would provide great opportunities for the downtown revitalization. A successful wayfinding system for downtown York will allow the downtown to be more visible throughout the city. The signage system will also work to make it easier to navigate to the downtown from other areas of town for both current residents and visitors.

The first step in the branded wayfinding system should be to integrate it with the new brand identity of downtown York. A successful wayfinding package must be inspired by and integrated within a community's brand strategy. A wayfinding system is put in place for an obvious result or function - to help people navigate their way to and within the downtown. However, there are many more benefits if the brand is successfully integrated into the wayfinding package. A cohesively branded wayfinding system can help to introduce the brand identity and promise to the community of York.

The brand and the wayfinding system should form a unified relationship and should work to boost each other. By integrating the brand identity and the wayfinding system you introduce the brand to the physical environment. A strong cohesion within the signage package can also help to make the signage more effective and recognizable for the user. Branded wayfinding helps to build familiarity and comfort within current residents as the downtown revitalization is carried out.

As mentioned in Chapter II, the York Zoning Code requires that business signs in the C-1 district "shall be affixed flat against the face of the building" (Ord. No. 1966, § 1, 8-3-06). We recommend that the City of York consider modifying this ordinance to allow small-scale, shop-style signs in the public right-of-way which have more visual interest than flat signage on a building. York may want to consider language similar to that adopted by the City of Norfolk which allows "architectural canopy signs" in the C-1 District with restrictions for size, illumination, minimum setback line (3 feet), and minimum clearance above a

a sidewalk or driveway (7 feet). (Source: Norfolk City Code Ord. No. 4603, § 1, 9-16-02).

An architectural canopy sign shall not extend above the top of the wall of the building to which it is attached, and shall have a minimum clearance of seven (7) feet above a sidewalk or driveway where said sign is located directly over said sidewalk or driveway

### Signage Types & Hierarchy

The Wayfinding system for the downtown York revitalization may be spread throughout the town of York and consists of many different types of signs. The system can be organized into 3 core signage types:

- **External Wayfinding Signage**
- **Internal Wayfinding Signage**
  - Pedestrian*
  - Parking & Vehicular*
- **Branding Signage**

Each of these categories has multiple sign locations that are ordered based on their importance to downtown York's success.

1. Imperative Locations  
*These locations are critical for the success of the downtown and should be created within the first phase of signage.*
2. Primary Locations  
*These locations are also important to the success of downtown but can be implemented in the future or in the second phases of signage.*
3. Secondary Locations  
*These are locations that would be beneficial to the downtown but can be implemented further in the future.*



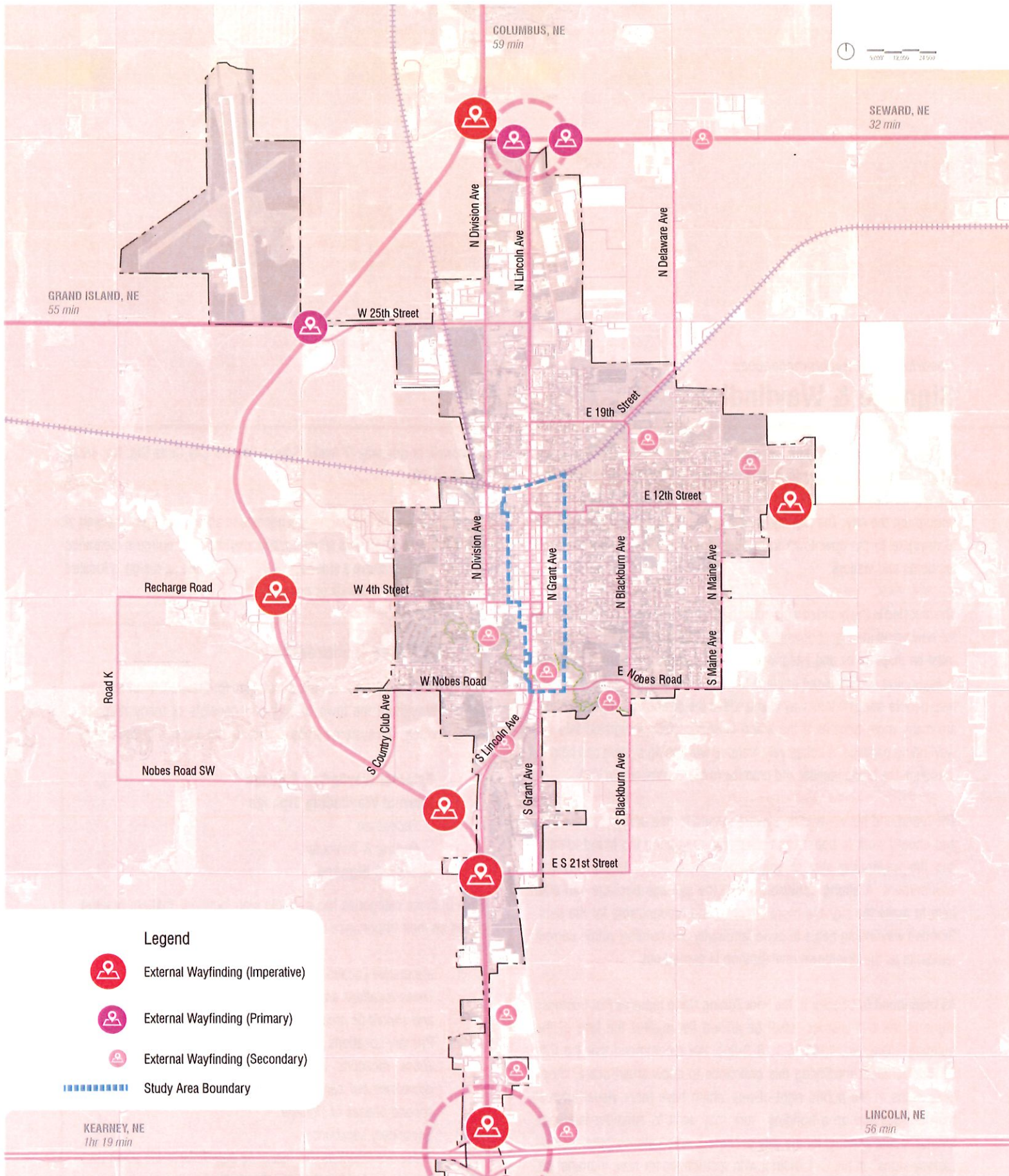


Figure 26. Proposed External Wayfinding locations map





## External Wayfinding | *Directing traffic to the downtown*

External Wayfinding will be used to direct traffic to the downtown from other highly visited roads and areas of York. This includes signage off Hwy 81 to bring attention to the exit for downtown. Directional signage at the ballfields and high school to bring visitors to downtown instead of to the interstate.

### Imperative locations:

- Directional Sign on HWY 81  
North Entry  
South Entry
- Directional Sign at Baseball Complex
- Directional Sign at I-80 exit
- Directional Sign at Recharge Lake

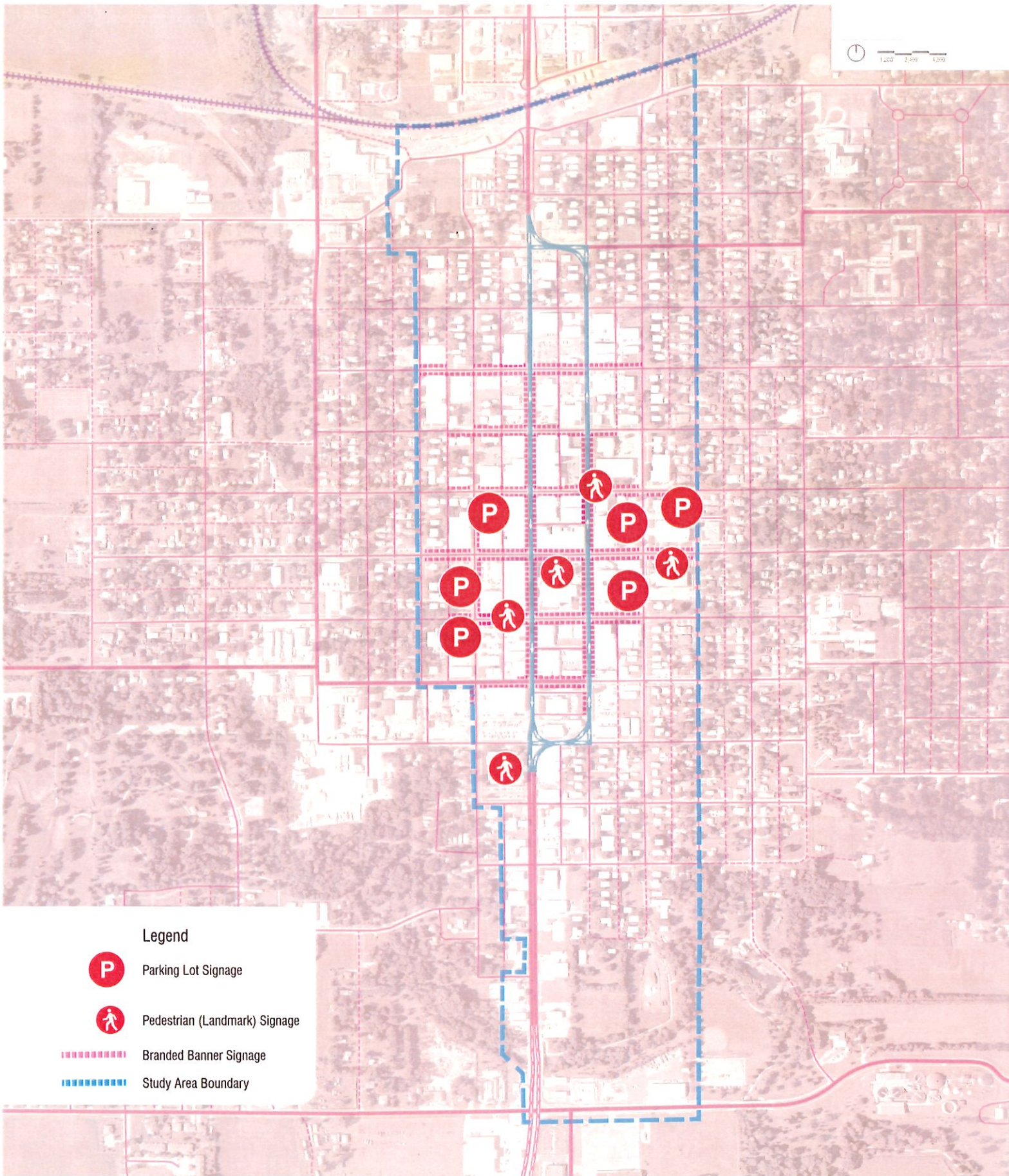
### Primary locations:

- Directional Sign at intersection of HWY 34 & HWY 81  
(West of York)

### Secondary locations:

- Directional Sign at York High School
- Directional Sign at York College
- Directional Sign at Aquatic Center
- Directional Sign at Campground (South of Town)
- Directional Sign at Event Center
- Directional Signage along bike trails
- Directional Sign at Wal-Mart









## Internal Wayfinding | Directing traffic within downtown

### Pedestrian

Internal Wayfinding will be located within the downtown core study area. The internal signage focused on pedestrians will encourage foot traffic in downtown from gathering points or landmark buildings. Having people walk in downtown will build a stronger downtown both culturally and economically.

#### Imperative locations:

- Directional Signs from Landmark to Landmark  
     Courthouse  
     New gathering spaces and Parks  
     Library  
     Chances 'R'

#### Secondary locations:

- Directional Signs for pedestrians to and from public parking lots



### Parking & Vehicular

Internal Wayfinding focused on parking and vehicles will allow for easier recognition of public parking lots. Parking signage will also allow for an easier transition from vehicle to foot and will allow for easier access to downtown businesses for both current residents and visitors.

#### Imperative locations:

- Identification Signs within Public Parking lots

#### Primary locations:

- Identification Signs from street to Public Parking lots
- Identification Signs for On-street parking



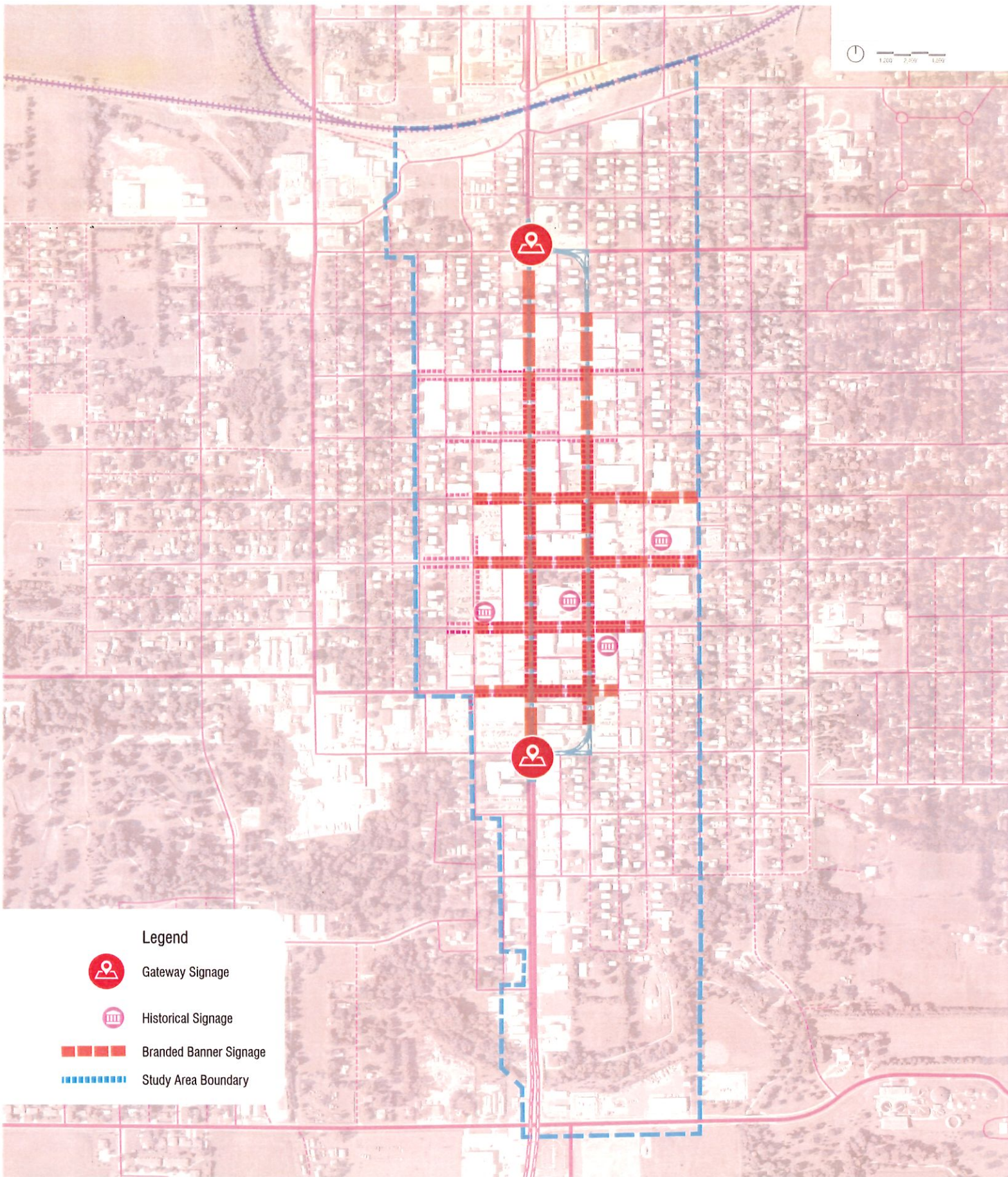
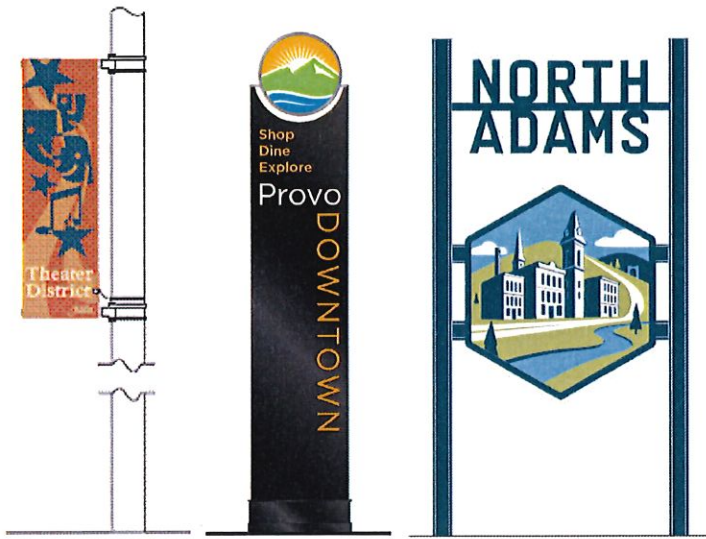


Figure 28. Proposed Internal Branded signage locations map





## Branded Signage | *Creating a sense of place*

Branded signage will be located within the downtown core study area. Branded signage can introduce the new brand identity to the community and the physical landscape. Branded signs can help to beautify the downtown and can include both historical and informational signage that work with the overall look and feel of the brand.

### Imperative locations:

- Branded Street Pole Banners on main street corridors
- Branded Gateway Signage
  - North Entry - 11<sup>th</sup> & Lincoln
  - South Entry - 3<sup>rd</sup> & Lincoln

### Primary locations:

- Branded Banners announcing upcoming events
- Historical Building Signage









Image 41. Chances R Restaurant and Lounge in York

# 4 chapter four Implementation

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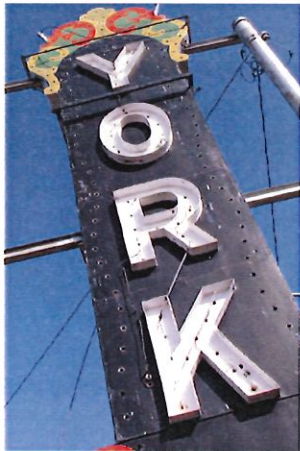
## Proposed Projects

The master planning team recommends eleven specific projects for the revitalization of downtown York. The list of projects below is in order of highest to lowest priority based on each project's potential impact on the downtown. *(Projects are in order of priority)*

- |                                                 |                                |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Courthouse Lawn & Intersection Nodes Project | 6. Marked Bike Route           |
| 2. Brand Identity Program                       | 7. Parking Lot Improvements    |
| 3. Signage & Wayfinding Program                 | 8. Façade Improvements Program |
| 4. Streetscape Improvements                     | 9. Downtown Housing            |
| 5. Block 50 Alley & Wall Street Project         | 10. Entry Roundabouts          |
|                                                 | 11. Two-way Traffic Conversion |

### Catalyst Projects (Immediate Priority)

1. Courthouse Lawn & Intersection Nodes Project
2. Brand Identity Program
3. Signage & Wayfinding Program



These three projects have been identified as catalyst projects and are immediate priorities. We believe they have the greatest impact potential for downtown revitalization and they set the foundation for subsequent projects.

Courthouse Lawn & Intersection Nodes Project. This project will transform the heart of the city and will reactivate the downtown. It will create a flexible and inviting space that can allow for events to be held while still allowing for day

to be held while still allowing for day to day activities like week-day lunches and family activities in the evening.

The City is considering applying to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development for Community Development Block Grant for Downtown Revitalization (DTR) Implementation (phase II funding.) The maximum grant amount for eligible activities is \$350,000.

**Branding Identity Package.** This should begin as soon as possible because it will establish key guiding elements that will influence all the proposed projects, including downtown character. To help launch this effort, a Creative Brief is included as Appendix A to this document. The Creative Brief can be turned over to the selected branding consultant or advertising agency so they can make rapid progress toward producing a Branding Identity Package.

**Signage and Wayfinding Package.** This package can begin as soon as the Branding Identity Package is completed. The products of this exercise can be used in creating all forms of signage as well as promotional materials, banners, and logos.

The City should consider establishing a Business Improvement District (BID) beginning in 2018 to generate funding that could be used to hire branding and signage consultants for these two projects. These projects will generate enthusiasm in the community and will provide the BID with a strong focus immediately. (See description of BID on page 73 of this document.)

### High Impact Projects (High Priority)

4. Streetscape Improvements
5. Block 50 Alley & Wall Street Project
6. Marked Bike Route
7. Parking Lot Improvements
8. Façade Improvements Program

These four projects are considered high priority, but are stand-alone opportunities that can be implemented whenever funding is available. The first four projects are high priority because they will visually transform the downtown and will enliven the environment by creating pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, alleys and pedestrian connections. A Façade Improvements Program offering incentives for property owners to upgrade the appearance of downtown buildings would have a significant impact on downtown. However, unless a large pool of grant funds can be created to fund numerous projects, it would likely take many years to see much visual impact of the program on the downtown York.

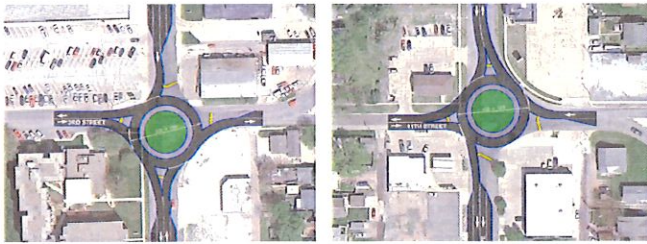




## Long Term Projects (Secondary Priority)

9. Downtown Housing
10. Entry Roundabouts
11. Two-way Traffic Conversion

While these three projects will certainly have a dramatic and positive impact on downtown, we have identified them as a secondary priority because they will take a much larger financial investment than the other proposed projects. Downtown housing development and upper-level apartments should be an ongoing community goal because it will continue to populate and activate



## Implementation Timeline

This list of eleven projects is consistent with the principles promoted by the Nebraska Main Street Program and its “Main Street Four Point Approach®.” These principles call for downtown improvements that are comprehensive (rather than singular in focus), incremental (building on each other), draw on local resources, forge effective partnerships, capitalize on existing assets, strive for quality over quantity, ignite change, and demonstrate visible results. (See <http://nebraskamainstreet.org/>)

For greatest impact, the eleven projects should be planned and designed to build on each other, demonstrating tangible outcomes as projects are completed. By maintaining a steady stream of small successes, the residents of York will be repeatedly reminded that revitalization efforts are under way and the process is working. Confidence will build, community participation will grow and revitalization will begin to take shape.

Project implementation can occur over a ten-year period, as illustrated in the timeline below. The first two years (2018-2019) should focus on the three catalyst projects: Courthouse Lawn & Intersection Nodes (Project #1), Branding Identity Program (Project #2), and Signage & Wayfinding Program (Project #3). These three projects will create excitement and the basis for all the revitalization efforts that follow.

During the next four year period from 2020 to 2023, focus should turn to the High Priority projects. The most important and highest impact of

the downtown, making it increasingly vibrant.. However, the market for downtown housing will be much stronger in the future after some of the other downtown recommendations are implemented.

In the case of the Entry Roundabouts and Two-Way Traffic Conversion, the master planning team believes these would have a transformative impact in revitalizing downtown York. However, they will be the most costly to implement and potentially controversial. By designating these projects as long term priorities, it provides adequate time for York to evaluate these recommendations further and begin a public dialogue that will assure eventual acceptability.

these is Streetscape Improvements (Project #4) which should begin as soon as funding can be arranged, but no later than 2020. Following this project, work should begin on Block 50 Alley & Wall Street (Project #5), the Marked Bike Path (Project #6) , and Project #7 Parking Lot Improvements. Each of the projects in this category will transform the appearance of downtown, and establish the pedestrian-friendly quality that is such an important ingredient of a dynamic downtown.

The last three years of the ten-year plan, from 2024-2027 is a final push to enhance and increase downtown housing (Project #9), design and construct two entry roundabouts (Project #10), and the conversion of traffic on Lincoln Avenue and Grant Avenue from one-way to two-way (Project #11). While these two final projects have some of the greatest potential for positively impacting the downtown.

Leadership, follow-through, and development of an ongoing financing program will be critical elements in the success of the York Downtown Revitalization Plan. The City and the Chamber of Commerce should meet as soon as convenient to discuss how to staff and support the implementation of this plan and report progress to the City Council and Chamber of Commerce Board.



They should consider establishing an oversight committee (which could also be the board of a new Business Improvement District) to identify specific goals, objectives, resources, schedule, and budget for each of the eleven projects. Quarterly progress reports on each project may include items such items as:

- financial support / obstacles / opportunities
- political support / obstacles / opportunities
- private support / obstacles / opportunities
- partnership support / obstacles / opportunities
- professional assistance (design, legal, real estate, marketing)
- volunteer assistance
- schedule & budget update

While leadership of the implementation effort should come from City, Chamber and the downtown York business community, ultimate success will be dependent on community-wide engagement and financial support. All the citizens have a stake in upholding the vitality of the downtown York.

Priority	York DTR Project	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Catalyst Projects	1. Courthouse Lawn & Intersection Nodes										
	2. Brand Identity Program										
	3. Signage & Wayfinding Program										
High Priority Projects	4. Streetscape Improvements										
	5. Block 50 Alley & Wall Street										
	6. Marked Bike Route										
	7. Parking Lot Improvements										
	8. Façade Improvements Program										
Secondary	9. Downtown Housing										
	10. Entry Roundabouts										
	11. Two-way Traffic Conversion										





Figure 29. Courthouse Lawn Improvements

## Courthouse Lawn and Intersection Nodes Project - Catalyst Project

The Courthouse Lawn and Intersection Nodes project involves improvements to the City of York's primary public gathering area in the heart of downtown York. The project involves an open lawn with a gazebo or band shelter and a variety of seating opportunities such as benches and tables. Pedestrian lighting and intersection improvements can also be included in this first phase to allow for a safer and more accessible community space.

A mural on the north wall of the Courthouse is proposed to tell the story of York and York County. Seating areas provide opportunities for other communities in York County to be recognized. Future phases of this project could include public involvement in the construction of site furniture or planting trees or flowers.

The project also involves design and construction of the first two intersection bulb-outs at 6th and Grant Avenue and 6th and Lincoln Avenue. Modifications to these two intersections (eight corners) include curb extensions, ADA ramps, new planting beds, new crosswalk striping and concrete replacement as necessary. The nodes should be designed to minimize loss of existing parking and to accommodate future traffic changes from one-way to two-way on both streets.

As a catalyst project, the Courthouse Lawn & Intersection Nodes project establishes the basic elements of the future streetscape improvements in the downtown. It also begins to establish a visual connection between civic institutions and community resources (e.g. York wall mural, Courthouse, Library, City Auditorium, city parking lot) which can be strengthened in the future with additional greenspace improvements.

Future renovation of the city parking lot can make it useable for "soft programming" of community events such as festivals. The Courthouse Lawn & Intersection Nodes project also paves the way for temporary closures of 6th Street for events such as the Farmers Markets and other special events which can extend the gathering area created by the Lawn into the rest of the downtown community.

Costs for the project are based on a range which will be affected by the ultimate choice of materials and the extent of the project that's included in the DTR phase 2 project. The preliminary estimate below indicates a total project cost of approximately \$545,000.



## Courthouse Lawn Cost Estimate

### Site Demolition

General Cleaning & Grubbing	1 lump sum		\$2,750.00
Traffic Control for Construction	1 lump sum		\$10,000.00
Construction Entrance Surfacing	1 lump sum		\$5,000.00
Pavement Demolition	2,500 SF @	\$1.50	\$3,750.00
Street Pavement Demolition	12,150 SF @	\$2.00	\$24,300.00
Curb & Gutter Demolition	680 LF @	\$2.50	\$1,700.00

### New Construction

5" Thick Concrete Sidewalk	4,580 SF @	\$7.00	\$32,060.00
6" Curb & Gutter	880 LF @	\$15.00	\$13,200.00
Street Pavement	5,880 SF @	\$10.00	\$58,800.00
Brick Veneer Walls	464 SF @	\$50.00	\$23,200.00
Mural	1 lump sum		\$10,000.00
Trees B&B 2 1/2" Cal.	33 EA @	\$350.00	\$11,550.00
Shrubs #5+	10 EA @	\$50.00	\$500.00
Shrubs #2-#3	300 EA @	\$40.00	\$12,000.00
Sodding	16,500 SF @	\$0.30	\$4,890.00
Irrigation	1 lump sum		\$25,000.00
Site Furnishing	1 lump sum		\$20,000.00
Gazebo or Band Shelter w/ Powder	1 lump sum		\$100,000.00
Site signage/ wayfinding signage	1 lump sum		\$10,000.00
Ornamental pedestrian lighting	8 EA @	\$4,500.00	\$36,000.00

This estimate is a preliminary study of the assumed costs for the design shown above for the Courthouse Lawn. All estimates are approximate and are for information purposes only.

Total	\$404,700.00
10% Contingency	\$40,470.00
General Conditions & Mobilization	\$50,000.00
Total Construction Cost	\$495,170.00
10% Professional Services Fees	\$49,517.00
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$544,687.00</b>

## Policy & Program Recommendations

### Zoning Code Modifications

The City of York should consider adopting or revising certain existing zoning regulations, city policies and design standards to assist in downtown revitalization efforts. Policies and standards that may be considered include:

- adopting Downtown Design Guidelines that discourage adding non-complimentary materials to façades and encourage removal of false façades
- strengthening zoning language to protect the integrity and quality of residential neighborhoods adjacent to downtown from industrial land use expansion
- adopting Downtown Design Guidelines that encourage transparent glazing, historic-style awnings and canopies
- modifying the City sign ordinances to allow for perpendicular signage on building façades

The York Zoning Code requires that business signs in the C-1 district "shall be affixed flat against the face of the building" (Ord. No. 1966, § 1, 8-3-06). We recommend that the City of York modify this ordinance to allow small-scale, shop-style signs perpendicular to the building façade. These will help reinforce the pedestrian zone, have more visual interest than flat-face building signage. If business owners are then encouraged to modify their signage, it can help establish a distinct and cohesive character for downtown York. Sample language can be found in the Norfolk City Code which allows for perpendicular "architectural canopy signs" in the C-1 District with some restrictions for size, illumination, minimum setback line (3 feet), and minimum clearance above a sidewalk or driveway (7 feet). (Source: Norfolk City Code Ord. No. 4603, § 1, 9-16-02).



Norfolk Downtown

## Facade & Signage Improvement Program

Nearly  
**\$36,000**  
 Available\*

This program was created to assist property owners and tenants with facade improvements and signage in the historic downtown district. The goal is to accentuate the historic elements of the district through restoration, renovation, replacement or reconstruction of facades.



All applicants must meet approval of Norfolk Vehicle Parking District #1 Design Advisory Board (DAB).

If you have questions, please contact Sheila Rios at 402-844-2027.

\* Fund balance as of 10/15/14. Please note, a lack of participation in the downtown facade program may result in decreased funding with possible reallocation of program funds.


- This program is designed as a **forgivable loan** (forgiven over a five year period).
- Maximum forgivable **loan is 49%** of the cost of improvements.
- It is available to **property owners and tenants** within the Vehicle Parking District.
- Funds will be awarded up to **\$7,500 for facades, storefronts & awnings**.
- Up to **\$1,000** will be awarded **for signage**.
- Applicants may **apply for both** facade improvements and signage.
- The program now allows **more than one** forgivable loan **per property**.

For applications and additional information visit:  
[http://www.ci.norfolk.ne.us/administration/Vehicle\\_Parking\\_District.htm](http://www.ci.norfolk.ne.us/administration/Vehicle_Parking_District.htm)

Figure 30. Norfolk Brochure

## City Tax Programs

**Business Improvement Districts** In order to fund projects and events that support downtowns, many cities have established Business Improvement Districts (BID). Property owners within the BID are assessed annually, either on properties owned within the BID or a general business occupation tax in the district. Tax revenue can be used for a variety of projects including promotional materials, banners, lighting, landscaping, benches, planters, plantings, trash receptacles and signage parking areas, development and promotion of public events, employing or contracting personnel for programs, and other uses. See <http://law.justia.com/codes/nebraska/2012/chapter-19/statute-19-4034/>



Will You  
Partner With  
Main Street  
Beatrice?

**Your Contribution  
is important.**

If you believe in an ongoing commitment to sustaining and supporting a healthy downtown district, and you want to be a contributing partner of Main Street with all associated advantages, please return this form with your tax deductible donation.

Business Partnerships (We send requests quarterly)	
Contributing Partner	\$20 Monthly
Main Street Legacy	\$500 Annually
Main Street Cornerstone	\$1,000 or more

Ask us about our individual partnership or non-profit rates.

Main Street Beatrice also accepts tax deductible donations for those who prefer not to be considered Contributing Partner, but still wish to contribute to the future of Downtown Beatrice.




Figure 31. Beatrice Main Street Brochure

**Special Assessment Districts** can be formed to fund specific improvements such as parking facilities and sidewalk improvements by taxing property owners for a portion of the costs incurred by the City for the improvement.

**Tax Increment Financing (TIF)** can use the post-improvement, added property tax revenue created by a specific project to finance improvements with a designated redevelopment area under the authority of a Community Redevelopment Authority (CRA) or Community Development Agency (ADA). 100% of the tax increment (difference between taxes generated and before and after redevelopment) can be captured for up to 15 years by the CRA and used for public improvements.

**Voluntary Donation Programs** are an easy and effective way to generate community financial support from an ongoing source – utility customers bill payments. Utility companies across the country have begun to provide customers with the opportunity to support local community programs and facilities like parks, libraries, and emergency services by adding on a fixed amount (\$1 to \$5 generally) to their bill. For example Lincoln Electric System (LES) sponsors “Lincoln Cares,” a voluntary donation program that offers customers the option of adding \$1 each month to their electric bill payment to a fund that supports local parks projects, libraries, senior programs and other programs not supported by the city budget. The program has generated over \$1 million since it began in 2003. (See <https://lincoln.ne.gov/city/donate/lincoln-cares.htm>)



The City of York and NPPD should discuss the potential for creating a voluntary donation program in association with utility billings (including online payments) to support downtown revitalization efforts such as streetscape improvements.

Other communities in York County or the NPPD service area may want to participate as well which could help build a groundswell of support for the idea.

## City Incentive Programs

York should consider creating façade and signage improvement programs that encourage property owners to upgrade building façades and enhance business signage, thereby helping to revitalize the downtown. Several Nebraska cities have created façade improvement programs through the CDBG Downtown Revitalization Program. Examples include:

**Fremont Downtown Revitalization Façade & Building Improvement Program** Grant funding for up to 75% of the cost of façade improvements not to exceed \$100,000 is available to restore, improve or create historic architectural features to façades of commercial buildings anywhere within Fremont’s Downtown District. Funds are allocated on a competitive basis for a maximum up to 75% of cost of improvements, not to exceed \$100,000 per project. <http://fremontne.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1539>



### Wayne Façade Grant Program

Grant funding for up to 50% of eligible project costs not to exceed \$10,000 are available as reimbursement to property who undertake historically sensitive façade improvements projects. <https://downtownwayne.org/business/grant/>

Other examples of façade and signage programs (not DTR funded) include:

### Norfolk Façade & Signage Improvement Program

Forgivable loans for an amount up to 49% of the cost of improvements are available to Norfolk property owners and tenants in the Riverpoint Vehicle Parking District of Norfolk. Maximum awards of \$1000 for business signs and \$7,500 for façades, storefront and awnings, are loans forgiven over a five year period. See <http://www.riverpoint.com/about-us/facade-signage-improvement-program>

### Hastings Façade Improvement Program

The purpose of the Hastings Façade Grant Program is to restore, improve or create historic architectural features to façades of commercial buildings anywhere within the downtown Central Business District. Applicants may be awarded up to \$7,500 for façades, storefronts and awnings or up to \$1,000 for signage with a matching dollar for dollar expenditure by the owner/tenant. Funds are allocated on a first come, first serve basis and applicants may only apply in one category. Tenants may qualify if the building owner provides written consent. Applicants may be awarded up to \$7,500 for façades, storefronts and awnings or up to \$1,000 for signage with a matching dollar for dollar expenditure by the owner/tenant. Grant applications are handled by the Community Redevelopment Authority office. <http://www.hastingsdowntown.com/development/licenses/facade-improvement-program.html>

## Potential Funding Sources

The following is a list of potential sources for funding the projects recommended in this master plan and related efforts to support downtown revitalization.

### Grant & Loan Programs

**Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)** is federal funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development available to non-entitlement programs such as York which can be pursued with assistance from the Southeast Nebraska Development District (SEND). Grants are available from multiple programs, including the [Downtown Revitalization Program Phase I](#) (which funded this study) and [Phase II](#) for implementation of recommendations identified in Phase I. This program is intended to encourage reinvestment in Nebraska communities and revitalize or redevelop downtown infrastructure, increase capacity for growth, and address existing health and safety concerns. Other CDBG grant programs include the [Comprehensive Revitalization Category](#) which provides flexible investments in housing and infrastructure for people of low and moderate income, and the [Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund](#) which provides loans to local business for job creation and private investment leveraging. CDBG grants for projects that create tourism attractions are available through the [Tourism Development Initiative](#). These may include historic restorations, museums, sports facilities and convention centers. <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/program/community-development-block-grant/>

**Certified Local Government Program (CLG)** is a grant and technical assistance program administered by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) of the Nebraska State Historical Society to pursue community preservation activities and invest in existing historic assets. See <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/histpres/clg/>

**Housing Preservation Grants Program (HPG)**, administered by the US Department of Agriculture, provides grants for qualified public agencies, private non-profits, and other eligible agencies for the repair and rehabilitation of rental units that are available to low income persons. Grant term periods run from 1 to 2 years. See <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/housing-preservation-grants/ne>

**HOPE VI Main Street Program**, offered through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, provides grants to small communities for the rejuvenation of an historic or traditional central business district (i.e. "Main Street"). Eligible projects include vacant building renovations to create affordable housing, preservation of historic architecture or design features, redevelopment of Main Street areas, and enhancement of economic development efforts. Grants for up to \$1 million are available with a cash or in-kind match of 5%. [https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/ph/hope6/grants/mainstreet](https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/hope6/grants/mainstreet)

**Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants** from the US Department of Agriculture are awarded for the promotion of job creation and rural economic development. Eligible costs include business start-up costs, business expansion, economic development services, and telecommunications services and assistance for medical, education, and job-training. Maximum awards are \$300,000 with a 20% match requirement. See <https://www.rd.usda.gov/ne>

**Federal Home Loan Bank** provides low-interest loans for families at or below 80% of median income to finance home ownership or the creation of rental property in which 20% of the units are occupied by very low-income households. See <http://www.fhlbanks.com/>



## Tax Credit Programs

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**Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program** (Department of Housing and Urban Development) provides developer tax credit incentives for projects in which 20% of residential units are constructed or renovated for persons with incomes at or below 50% of area median income adjusted for family size (or 40% of units for persons with incomes at or below 60% of AMI adjusted for family size. Projects must be retained as low-income housing for at least 30 years with loan terms of up to 40 years. See <https://nhlp.org/lihtcoverview>

**New Market Tax Credits (NMTC)**, administered by the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, provides tax credits against Federal income taxes for equity investments in designated Community Development Entities (CDEs) in low-income communities. The investment basis is 39% of the cost of the investment claimed over a seven-year period. The investor receives a credit equal to 5% of the total amount paid at the time of purchase during each of the first three years and 6% annually over the final four years. See [http://nifa.org/programs/index.html?topic=desc&ovr\\_ov=-over&prog\\_name\\_sent=New+Markets+Tax+Credits](http://nifa.org/programs/index.html?topic=desc&ovr_ov=-over&prog_name_sent=New+Markets+Tax+Credits)

**Community Development Assistance Act (CDAA)** provides for a 40% state tax credit through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development for eligible community betterment project, including employment training, human and medical services, physical facility and neighborhood development services, recreational and educational activities and crime prevention. Eligible applicants for the tax credit include businesses, corporations, insurance firms, financial institutions, and individuals who make contributions of cash, services or materials for community betterment projects. See <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/program/community-development-assistance-act/>

**Historic Preservation Tax Credits**, a federal program with oversight from the Nebraska State Historical Society Preservation office, is available to owners of historic resources for reuse and renovation projects that support the integrity and heritage of Nebraska communities. Renovation of buildings that are listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places qualify an owner for a 20% Historic Preservation Tax Credit against his or her personal federal income taxes. Buildings that are not deemed eligible but are contributing to a historic district are eligible for a 10% tax credit. See [http://www.nebraskahistory.org/histpres/tax\\_incentive/index.shtml](http://www.nebraskahistory.org/histpres/tax_incentive/index.shtml)

**Valuation Incentive Program (VIP)** is a program managed by the Nebraska State Historical Society Historic Preservation Office which allows an owner of a National Register-listed property to receive a temporary tax "preference" or hold on any additional valuation created by improvements made to preserve a historic property. See <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/histpres/vip/index.htm>

**Nebraska Advantage Microenterprise Tax Credit Act**, administered by the Nebraska Department of Revenue, provides investment tax credits up to 20% of the investment for applicants who create expand eligible businesses of five or fewer employees. Eligible businesses must contribute to the revitalization of economically depressed areas through job-creation. See <http://www.revenue.nebraska.gov/incentiv/microent/microent.html>

**Midwest Housing Development Fund** provides pre-development loans through nontraditional financing for the creation, development and rehabilitation of affordable rental housing in our communities. Contact Lara Huskey at 402-334-8899. See <http://www.mhdfinc.com/aboutus.htm>

## Other Government Programs

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**Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act (LB840)** Nebraska cities and villages to collect and appropriate local tax dollars (sales and/or property taxes) approved by local voters, for economic development purposes. Eligible activities include projects for the purpose of housing, business expansion, job training, purchase of real estate, economic development staff support, and direct loans or grants to qualifying business for working capital and fixed assets. See <https://www.neded.org/files/assist/LB840Guide.pdf>

**Small Business Administration (SBA)** provides multiple programs offering guaranteed loans through participating lenders for small businesses that cannot obtain financing on reasonable terms through normal lending. See <https://www.sba.gov/loans-grants>

**United State Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA-RD)** has several grant and loan programs to assist in developing community facilities in towns of less than 20,000 population. <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services>



## Sustainability Grants Programs

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**Rural Energy for American Program Grants**, offered through the US Department of Agriculture, provides assistance to farmers, ranchers and rural small businesses to reduce energy use and increase savings in the areas of lighting, insulation, and renewable energy sources. Grant maximums range from \$250,000 for energy efficiency improvements to \$500,000 for renewable energy systems. Grant minimum range from \$1,500 for energy efficiency projects to \$2,500 for renewable energy systems. See <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy-efficiency>

**Low Income Weatherization Assistance Program**, offered through the Nebraska Energy Office, enables low-income Nebraskans to lower their energy bills by improving the energy efficiency of their homes. The program provides funding for adding insulation, improving heating/cooling systems, and window replacement. Weatherization funding is available for York projects through the Blue Valley Community Action Partnership ( <http://www.bvca.net/>).

**Enterprise Green Communities**, a program funded by a non-profit affordable housing organization, provides planning and construction grants for the costs of implementing green components of affordable housing developments and monitoring the costs and benefits of those improvements. Eligible costs include design, HVAC systems, green materials and energy efficient appliances. See <http://www.enterprisecommunity.org/solutions-and-innovation/green-communities>

**Dollary Energy Saving Loans**, offered by the Nebraska Energy Office, is a revolving fund that reduces interest payments for energy-related projects that meet minimum efficiency standards. Loans are made for half the cost of eligible projects at 0% interest with a commercial lender providing the other half of the funding at market rates. Eligible projects include insulation, high efficiency heating/cooling equipment, lighting, building controls, window and door replacement, and renewable fuel projects. .See <http://www.neo.ne.gov/loan/index.html>

## Private Foundations

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**Peter Kiewit Foundation** seeks grant applications for projects consistent with their designated “areas of impact,” including Community Empowerment, Quality of Life Amenities, and Economic Development, among others. Contact: Jennifer Olds. See <http://www.peterkiewitfoundation.org/impact-areas>

**Sherrwood Foundation** seeks grant applications for project that align with their mission, which includes support for Rural Community Partnerships that promote Community Collaboration utilizing locally-controlled assets. Contact: Matt Rezac. See <http://www.sherwoodfoundation.org/>





*Figure 32. Proposed Courthouse Rendering*

## Appendices

- A. Brand Identity Creative Brief*
- B. FHU Full Traffic Study*



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