



Come to
Downtown
Lexington

HARR & FLEMING

LEXINGTON
DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION PLAN

LEXINGTON



4 DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

This plan builds on the special features and resources of Lexington to create a more vigorous and vibrant downtown. The first three chapters of this plan address the people and economics of the city and its surrounding market area, potential markets, existing physical conditions, and the opinions and insights of the residents, businesses, and other stakeholders.

Downtown is Lexington's principal center for commercial and civic life that is experiencing a history of business change and development. While the district remains a major retail and service center, many local residents feel its primacy has declined through competition with its counterpart commercial district - the Plum Creek Parkway business corridor.

A development concept that is based on markets and realistic economic opportunities, new access, and the distinctive character of the community will strengthen the city's physical and economic assets, moving Lexington forward despite difficult economic times. Ultimately, a successful development effort for Lexington will:

- Add new energy to Downtown Lexington as a neighborhood and a renewed retail, service, and civic center.
- Knit separate parts of the area into a unified, mutually reinforcing, heart of the city.
- Provide value, variety, and customer service that expand the district's share of regional consumer spending.
- Expand markets by complementing basic quality and services with features and amenities that make the district both convenient and delightful.
- Encourage emerging markets, such as ethnic retail and restaurant niches.
- Assure that development in new redevelopment reinforces the business and investment climate in the traditional Downtown.

PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPMENT

The vision begins by establishing a development program, much like the architectural program for a building project. This program identifies the ingredients of development – the amount of space that markets can absorb, present and future community needs, current projects that are pending, and other opportunities. The program includes three separate agendas: development, community and functional.

THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

- **Retail Development.** Lexington serves both local residents and regional customers, and has a demonstrated ability to retain local customers and attract business from outside the city, yet it is still leaking spending to outside markets such as North Platte and Kearney. The analysis presented in Chapter One indicates a community-wide, ten-year potential for about 67,000 to 96,000 square feet of new retail and allied consumer space.
- **Office space Development.** Downtown Lexington has a limited amount of multi-tenant space. However, there is an abundant amount of upper-story space that could be retrofitted for offices, and vacant land that could be redeveloped for new office buildings. The development concept should provide the flexibility to accommodate an additional demand for office space.
- **Housing Development.** According to the 2008 Housing Market Study prepared by Hanna:Keelan Associates, Lexington needs 243 additional residential units by 2013. This projection assumes a 60/40 owner to renter occupied housing mix that anticipates a need for 155 owner occupied units and 88 renter occupied units. Downtown could accommodate a portion of this demand.
- **Vacancy.** Downtown is experiencing a growing vacancy. The Phillips Station closed in 2007, True Value and the Majestic Theater closed in 2009, and soon

Central Community College is planning to relocate out of downtown to the former Wal-Mart building.

- **Visitor Center.** A Visitor Center at Washington Street and Highway 30 would signify the arrival to Downtown Lexington and provide an opportunity for visitors to observe the railroad.

THE COMMUNITY AGENDA

- **NDED Phase II Financing.** The Plan should identify projects that will influence private market investment. NDED's Phase II revitalization funds (\$350,000) and local match (about \$150,000), allows Lexington to target improvements for their downtown.
- **Majestic Theater.** The closing of the Majestic Theater left Lexington without a theater, forcing residents to travel to neighboring communities to watch movies. A market may exist to develop a new theater on vacant land. However, reopening the Majestic Theater will attract visitors to downtown and reinforce the downtown's priority for business development.
- **Small Business Development.** Entrepreneurs seeking to start-up their own business need support and space for developing a business. The plan should consider spaces that allow for this business growth.
- **Open Space.** Green space and a community commons are major features of traditional town centers. Quality green space for events, recreation, and passive enjoyment would provide a welcome addition and incentive to future development.
- **Unifying the City.** Lexington's influx of immigrants has resulted in a number of businesses catering to various ethnic groups. This market continues to grow and could become a strong niche for Lexington.
- **Historic Theming and Interpretation.** The important history of Lexington and its multiple layers of thematic association are great interest to both residents and visitors.



THE FUNCTIONAL AGENDA

- **Alley/Pedestrian Safety.** Alleys can be redesigned to accommodate both pedestrians and motorists.
- **Downtown Streetscape.** The downtown streetscape project has proven to be a durable improvement that still serves well. Features such as the pedestrian lighting, trees and benches create a sense of place and human scale. However, even the best projects need a new look after a while, and relatively inexpensive improvements could add detail and visual interest to the street.
- **Crossing Highway 30.** The experience of crossing Highway 30 as a pedestrian to the overpass feels uncomfortable. Crossings at Washington Street and Lincoln Street could be upgraded to provide more security for pedestrians.
- **Traffic Volumes and Truck Movements.** The Nebraska Department of Roads anticipates upgrading the Highway 283 viaduct to four lanes of traffic and improving parallel streets to move trucks to and from Highway 30.
- **Private Investment.** Initial investments in the public realm can create conditions for economic growth that are unlikely to happen spontaneously. These investments will maintain property values, increase sales tax revenues, and create a central district that adds business to the city.
- **Capitalize on Key Business Niches.** While downtowns nationwide have struggled to preserve their traditional retail roles, successful districts capitalize on business niches that attract people to traditional business districts. Lexington has destination restaurants. Other niches include ethnic merchandise, specialty retailing, pharmacies, clothing, and eating and drinking establishments.
- **Improved Parking.** Parking is invariably seen as a top priority, particularly for Washington Street. Several factors contribute to this perceived shortage: parking is tight in the 600 block near the Courthouse, stalls are scattered and difficult to find, and pathways from available parking to destinations are sometimes indirect and unpleasant. Greening of existing parking lots, wayfinding, and better routes from car door to store door could all help improve the district's parking environment.

CENTRAL CITY CONCEPT

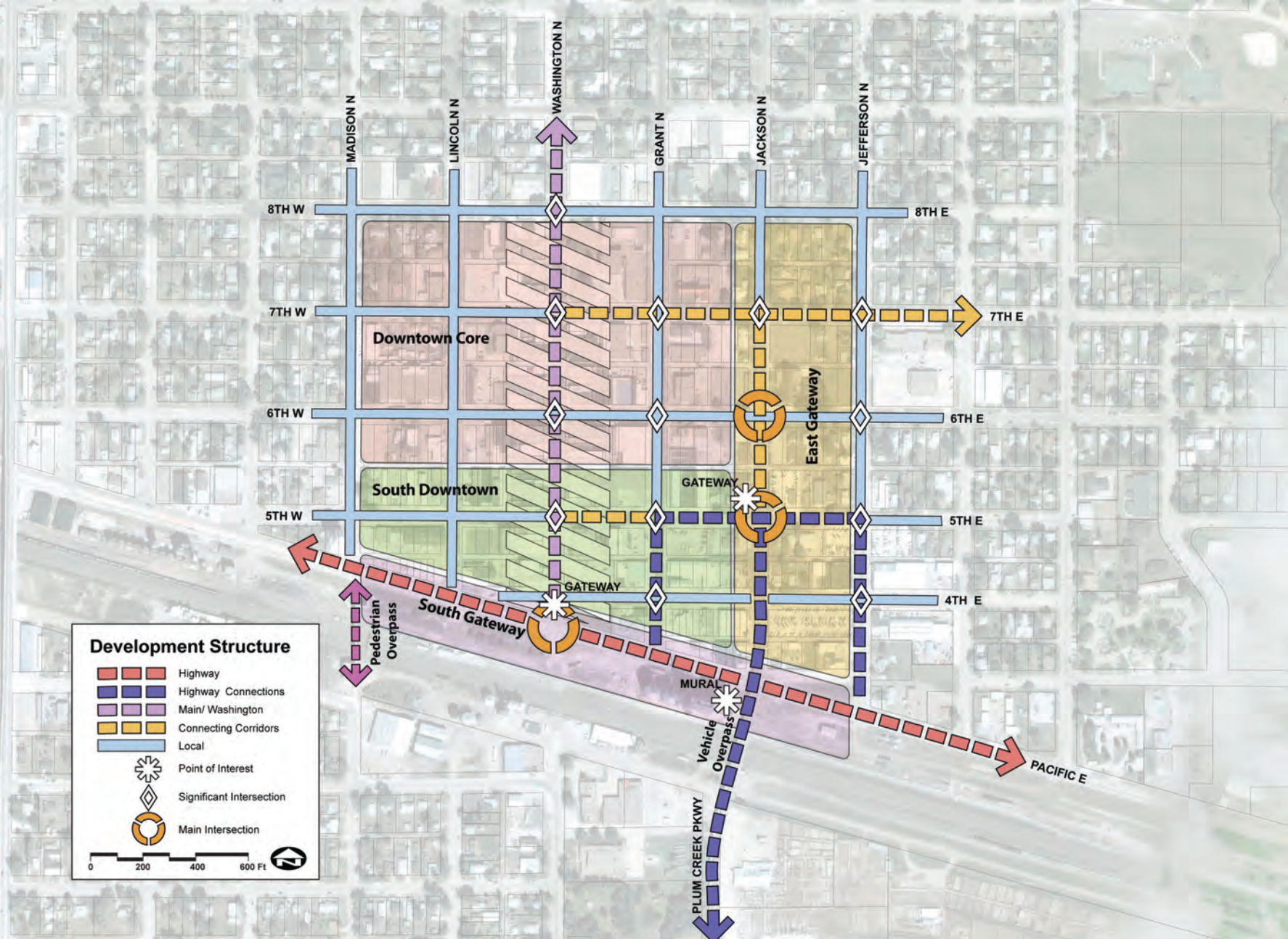
The vision for the Downtown plan emerges by following the program based on markets, existing projects and priorities, and community-wide needs. Map 4.1, Development Structure illustrates these concepts. The components of this vision include:

- **Major Project Areas**, self-contained projects that, together, create a transformed district.
- **Connecting Corridors**, address the fabric that links major projects together and links the study area to the larger Lexington community.
- **Policies**, describing in more detail methods that various needs and markets are met and projects are implemented.



Lexington - Early 1900s

Map 4.1: Development Structure



MAJOR PROJECT AREAS

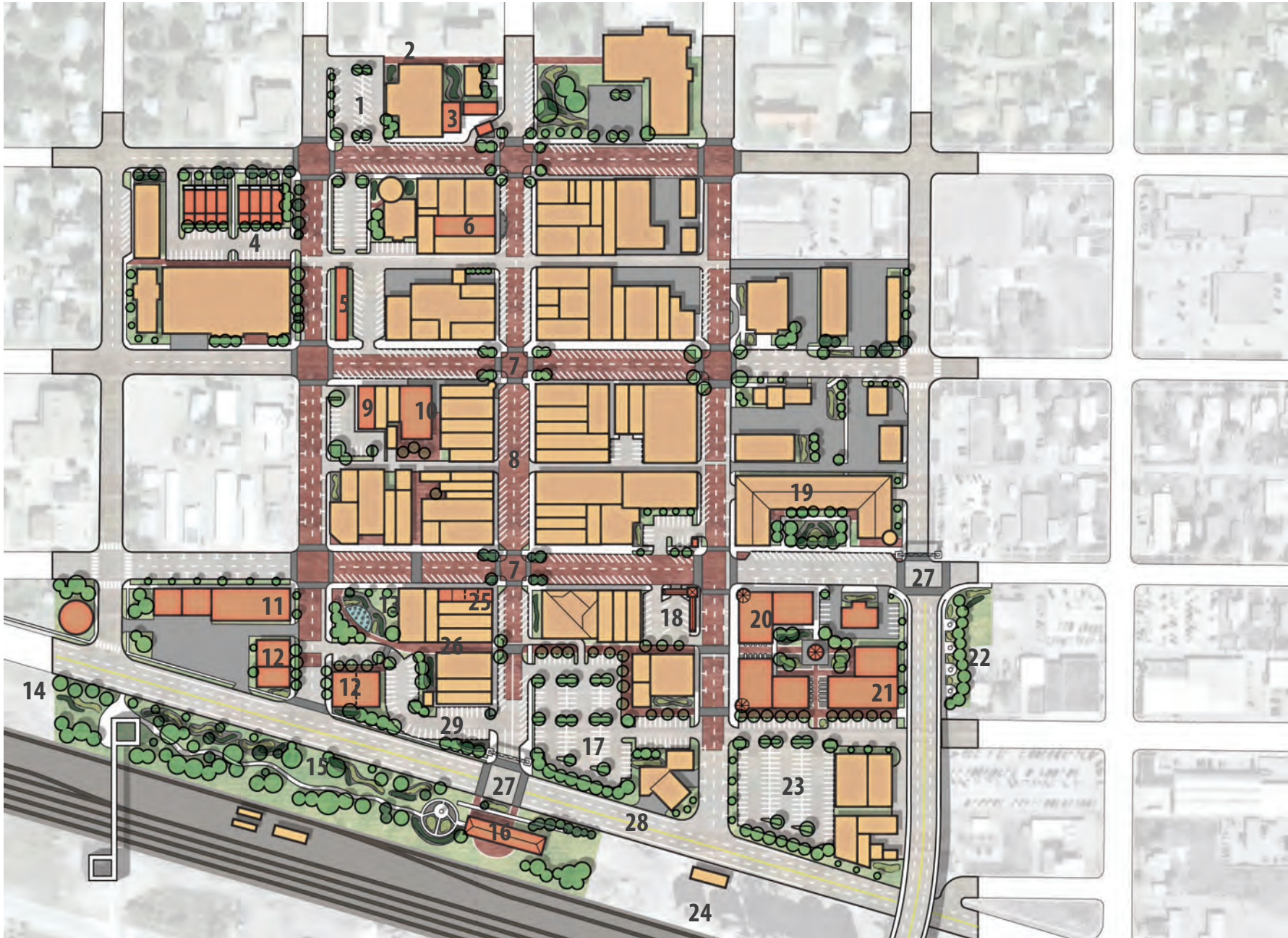
Map 4.2, the Development Concept, identifies individual projects within the study area. The downtown concept includes four major project areas:

- **Downtown Center**
- **South Downtown**
- **East Gateway**
- **South Gateway**



- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Parking Upgrades | 12. New Development | 23. Parking Lot Expansion |
| 2. Alley Connection | 13. New Platte Park | 24. Mural on elevator |
| 3. Phillips 66 Reuse | 14. Centennial Park Expansion | 25. 5th Street Redevelopment |
| 4. Townhouses | 15. Centennial Park Upgrades | 26. Lincoln Promenade |
| 5. Community College Building Reuse | 16. New Depot Visitor Center | 27. Gateway Arch |
| 6. Majestic Theater Rehabilitation | 17. South Parking Lot Expansion | 28. US 30 Corridor Enhancements |
| 7. Stop Signs | 18. Carscape at 5th and Grant | 29. Fourth Street Redirect and Parking |
| 8. Washington Street Upgrades | 19. Senior Housing Project | |
| 9. New Development | 20. Marketplace Development I | |
| 10. Business Incubator (Furniture Store) | 21. Marketplace Development II | |
| 11. Lumberyard Reuse | 22. Gateway and Light tubes | |

Map 4.1: Development Concept



DOWNTOWN CENTER

The concept for Downtown Center envisions incremental improvements to the public environment, enhancements to the parking supply, an improved business environment, and better utilization of public spaces.

Main Street is the traditional commercial core of Downtown Lexington. The concept for the Downtown Core targets strategic opportunities for improvement, while considering eventual investments to the streetscape environment. Often streetscapes are perceived as a flat plane, yet the reality of most streetscape environments is the vertical plane, the facades that frame the district.

PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Improve Traffic Circulation
- Rehabilitate and reuse existing structures
- Public realm improvements.
- Improve parking accessibility and availability



1. Remove Traffic Signals. Replacing traffic signals along Washington Street with stop signs may improve overall traffic circulation and safety. Planning participants commented that the signals do not move traffic through the district efficiently and can be difficult to see. Removing the signals will result in a cost savings to the city without the need for power. Traffic signals also encourage motorists to speed up to beat the red light, creating dangerous conditions for pedestrians, particularly for seniors, children and people with disabilities.



2. Rehabilitate the Majestic Theater. Restoring the Majestic Theater is a strategic investment for downtown development because it helps the district become a center for entertainment and performing arts. Since its closing in 2009, Lexington has not had a theater, and was listed by survey participants as the top priority for downtown investment. The restoration should be as historically accurate as possible, featuring the light and excitement of the past. The wall sign should be upgraded to possibly include neon and have a projecting neon sign.

Upgrades to the theater’s projection system, as well as its acoustics and audio system are critical to making the theater a premier facility for watching movies and performing arts. Seats and concessions should be upgraded, as well.

The plaza outside of the lobby should be improved. As shown in Figures 4.x-x, the sidewalk bumps out providing plaza space for queuing in front. The plaza allows for mitigating the grade change in front of the theater to allow for handicap accessibility. This also allows for removing the false front of the theater and revealing its historic architecture. The space should be well lit with places for seating and gathering.

Figure 4.1: Majestic Theater Rehabilitation





3. Streetscape. Streetscape improvements should build on the solid base of the 1990s streetscape project. Minor and relatively inexpensive enhancements such as flower baskets, permanent thematic graphic panels, special ornamental tiles, children’s art installations, interpretive historical installations, and new street furniture would update downtown and add color and interest. Pedestrian scale wayfinders, such as blade signs, can also inform and direct people to the district’s various destinations.

As underground infrastructure is upgraded, so should the streetscape. Elements of the streetscape improvement program includes:

- **Street, sidewalks and curbs.** Sidewalk paving should provide texture and visual character, but should use efficient and durable materials. Special surfaces should be focused at intersection and may include textured concrete or color conditioned concrete. Finer concrete scoring patterns also can add contrast and define amenity areas.

- **Streetlights.** The acorn fixture has a timeless look and is appropriate for the historic environment. Participants in the planning process perceive that existing streetlights are insufficient and present a security risk. The current fixture filters light from projecting upwards rather than reflecting the light towards the street. The city is experimenting with different bulbs, which may provide more light, but will not address the principal issue of the light not reflecting to the street surface. The city should commission a lighting study to determine if replacing or retrofitting fixtures is appropriate. The study should consider light levels along the street and connecting alleyways.
- **Benches, Trash Bins and Bicycle Racks.** Benches provide space for people to sit and watch people. Trash bins should accompany benches to reduce clutter along the street. Each block should have bicycle racks at corners and along the street. These features can be installed at intersections or mid-block.
- **Trees and Landscaping.** Existing tree wells are insufficient and prevent the tree from maturing, resulting in the trees needing to be replaced more frequently. Improving the tree wells with rec-

ommended street tree planting practices will allow the trees to mature and provide more shade along the streets and sidewalks. Shade from trees during the summer months also helps to improve energy efficiency of buildings. The expanded planting areas for trees will also create spaces for seasonal plantings which will add another layer of visual interest to the street.

- **Alley nodes.** The existing alley nodes are in poor condition and should be removed. They provide little benefit to the streetscape environment and are obstructions for snow plows and street cleaners.

4. Public Art. Intersections and planned open spaces throughout downtown provide spaces for public art, including sculptures, mosaics, wall art and two- and three dimensional installations. Many communities had great success with consignment programs, where local and regional artists submit sculptures in juried competitions that are displayed for specific periods of time. The art of children could also be incorporated into streetscape materials and concepts. The art that is installed throughout downtown should somehow relate to the surrounding environment, culture and history therefore adding to the sense of place.

Figure 4.2: Washington Street Streetscape Enhancements





5. Retail Incubator. Reusing the old furniture store on 6th Street to establish a retail incubator. This building could be a center for entrepreneurs wanting to sell local products, and provides an opportunity for collaborations between the city's businesses. The space behind the building could be improved as a small plaza for staff, and tie into a promenade to Platte Square. Parking is available off street and in the nearby surface lot.

Establishing a retail incubator or entrepreneur center was identified by public participants as a top priority (page 34).



6. Infill Development. The vacant site at Washington Street and 5th Street could be redeveloped with a multi-story building.

The site does not provide enough functional space for public gathering and is a very marketable site for new construction. Preferably the development would be two stories, although a single-story project with bays facing 5th Street would provide moderate space for retail uses.



7. Phillips 66 Station Reuse. The gas station closed in 2007 and has since remained vacant. Participants in the planning process consider the building iconic with its classic Phillips 66 sign. Preferably the reuse of the building will retain the sign or appeal to its classic character. The reuse should include landscaping in order to complement the greenspace of the courthouse thus providing a green gateway into the north side of downtown.

Figure 4.3: Washington Street Streetscape Proposed Section





8. Townhouses. Housing could be developed in the Lexington Business Center parking lot. Townhouses would front directly on 7th Street, with parking shared with the Lexington Business Center building.

9. Buildings. The life and economy of downtown takes place in its buildings.

- **Facades.** Lexington lacks an exemplary case of rehabilitation that sets the pace for other investment. In general, façade upgrades should restore windows to original scale, replace inappropriate storefronts, and include awnings, doors, and other features that add scale. However, diversity is important in an eclectic district, and absolute uniformity is neither necessary nor authentic.
- **Business Signs.** Desirable signage includes wall-mounted signs with individual letters, awning signs, and carefully designed projecting signs. Typically, flush-mounted cabinets, pole signs, and other “auto-strip” signs are not appropriate in the downtown district. Signs should not obscure large areas or major façade design features.

Financing incentives to encourage façade improvement and restoration should be part of the downtown program. However, these incentives work most effectively when building owners see an economic return from these investments. Often, improvements in the public environment create conditions that make these incentive-driven investments more attractive to owners.

- Exterior Mounted Lighting.
- Energy Efficiency Audits.
- Energy Efficiency improvements, including insulation, window upgrades, ceiling repairs, heating and ventilation system upgrades, and lighting.

10. Parking Improvements. Parking should be adequate and convenient, but should not dominate the feel of the district. The overall transportation system design should guide people to parking as directly as possible, and encourage them to experience the district outside of their cars. Parking is invariably seen as a top priority, particularly for Washington Street. Several factors contribute to this perceived shortage:

- Parking analysis for the 600 block area shows that the blocks are deficient by more than 100 stalls. This shortage is magnified by visitors to the courthouse park on Washington Street.
- Lack of a central parking for the courthouse.
- Strategies for improving parking availability and access include:
- Establishing a wayfinding program that identifies parking areas.

Figure 4.3: Facade Improvement Program



SOUTH DOWNTOWN

The concept for the South Downtown area focuses on identifying conditions to make underused property into marketable sites for redevelopment near the Washington Street commercial area.

PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Establish conditions to transfer underused property into developable sites.
- Leverage public investments to stimulate a private market response.
- Provide housing options in the downtown area.
- Define a public gathering space.



Boulder, CO

1. Platte Square. Public participants unanimously support the concept of defining a gathering space that can be bonded with the experience of visiting downtown. The vacant site at 5th and Lincoln Streets could be developed for a new public gathering space in the heart of downtown. Located adjacent to the Clipper-Herald Newspaper building, this site is conveniently located to Washington Street businesses and could become a catalyst for new commercial development surrounding the park.

The site concept is based on the braids of sand, water and vegetation of the Platte River. Meandering lines of color concrete and landscaping imitate this braided concept. Ground level spray fountains allow for a break from the hot summer months and also serve as an amenity that will attract people into the downtown daily. The open lawn defined by the paving and trees can be used for outdoor events and unscripted play, while trees define the space and provide shade. One such outdoor event could be a movie that is projected onto the side of the Clipper Building. Low native plantings throughout the park create a sense of place and are low maintenance. The openness of the space allow for clear visibility across the plaza for security purposes.



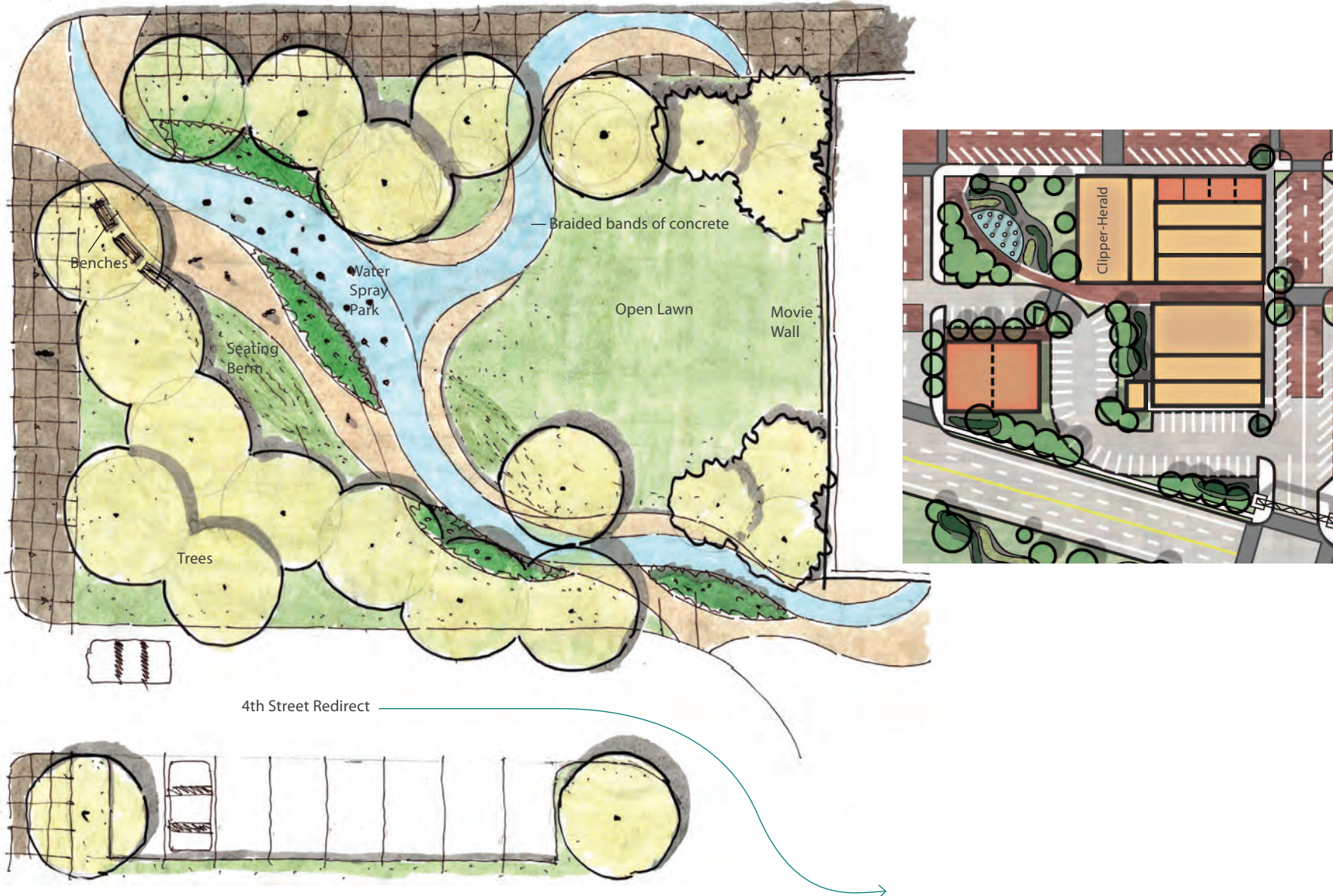
Shenandoah, IA

2. Lincoln Promenade. Pedestrians in Downtown Lexington are often found walking in alleys because they provide convenient access to parking and sometimes are the shortest distance between two points. Unfortunately, they are rarely pleasant environments, and pedestrians tend to be intruders among loading areas, dumpsters, trucks, and “alley-cutting” motorists.

This concept provides a continuous landscaped path from Lincoln Street to Grant Street, connecting the new Platte Square to the proposed Marketplace Development. This concept preserves service access to all buildings and parking lots while removing alley bump-outs. Lighting, pavers, landscaping, and archways could be installed at entrances and along the pathway. Specifically porous pavers could be used to help infiltrate water that comes from building downspouts. Alleyway concrete typically goes into disrepair after a short time because of water problems created by water exiting from the downspouts into the alley. Figure 4.x shows how the alley could be transformed to a pedestrian passageway.

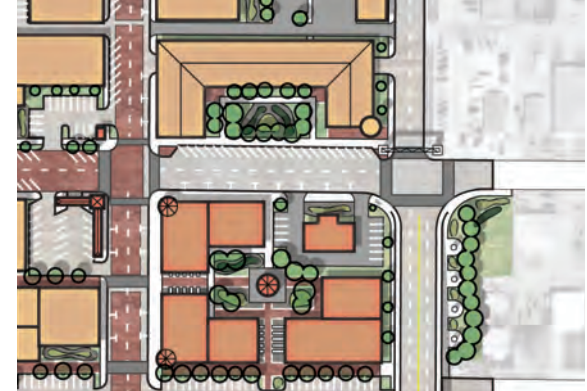
Informational kiosks installed at key points along the promenade could describe Lexington’s connection with transportation, including the Oregon Trail, railroad, Lincoln Highway and Interstate.

Figure 4.4: Platte Square





South Africa



- 3. Lumberyard Building.** The vacant lumberyard building could be reused for commercial use or possibly become a sheltered space connected to community activities at Platte Square.
- 4. New Commercial Construction I.** The development project has convenient access to Platte Square and Highway 30. Its location is ideal for marketing directly to traffic along US 30.
- 5. New Commercial Construction II.** The development project has convenient access to Platte Square and Highway 30. The two-story project frames the south edge of Platte Square and has space reserved for parking and outdoor seating overlooking the park. The building could be programmed to include commercial uses on street-level with possible walkup concessions and upper-story offices.

6. Marketplace. The redevelopment of the Downey Drilling, Inc. land takes advantage of a highly visible site to provide additional mixed use development. This project changes the formerly industrial character of this relatively underused area, and strengthens the quality of one of the city's higher profile areas. The Marketplace provides a central common area for public events, connected by the Lincoln Promenade to Washington Street and the New Platte Square.

The Selig Center for Economic Growth reports that Hispanics tend to live in smaller quarters, so they want to go to marketplaces where they can spend time. Albeit that these developers are building at a large scale, Lexington could develop a smaller version that has a mix of residential and commercial uses surrounding a common gathering space.

7. Senior Housing. The project would add senior living into the downtown neighborhood, and help to address citywide housing needs. The housing project includes urban density housing organized around a central square, with a capacity of up to 60 units (1,200 square feet per unit, 20 units per level). Parking is tucked a half-level below grade and accessible from Jackson and Grant Streets. The building concept can incorporate neighborhood retail use or common space at the corner of the quadrangle building. Small-scale commercial uses add convenience and vitality to the project.

Figure 4.5: Lincoln Promenade



Far Left: Existing alley in Lexington.
Left: Council Bluffs, IA



8. Upper-story Improvements. The development program should include new housing development and adaptive reuse of upper levels for residential development. Housing is a key element of most downtown revitalization programs and is important to this plan's vision of the future of business corridor as a lively mixed use neighborhood. Residential development makes downtown a living, 24-hour neighborhood.

Housing development policy in and near the downtown core includes both upper level adaptive reuse and new construction. Many upper-level units will initially be rental, although some may provide owner-occupied apartments for people who live over their businesses or otherwise seek equity settings. Existing tax-driven incentives such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and Historic Tax Credits are oriented to rental housing.

Public actions and policies necessary to encourage delivery of downtown housing include preservation codes and building permit policies that encourage upper level reuse, production financing programs including the use of available federal tax credits, and dedication of some spaces in off-street parking lots for residential use. In some cases, shared vertical circulation and cooperative development of several adjacent buildings can improve project feasibility.



9. Parking Improvements. Parking is clearly a significant issue for Downtown Lexington and the plan recommends several strategies to improve this important system. These include parking lot efficiencies, defined pathways between lots and destinations, and wayfinding signage. Specific improvements include:

- **Expanded Public Parking & Market.** The public parking lot located south of the Pinnacle Bank could be expanded south to provide 31 additional stalls and landscaping. This site is convenient to office employees and could free up on-street parking for customers along Washington Street. The design of the lot relocates access to the north near the alley, thereby picking up a minimum of 12 stalls and improving traffic safety at Washington Street. The parking expansion would still allow ample green space along Highway 30. The lot should provide landscaping islands to break up the pavement space and provide shade for parking.



- **Farmers Market.** Currently, the Farmer's Market is located in the parking lot of the Grand Generation Center. Participants in the planning process discussed the benefit of relocating the Farmer's Market closer to downtown to help generate additional retail spending in the downtown area. The expanded parking lot could be a premier location for hosting the event, while providing additional space for vendors and activities.
- **Grant Parking Shelter.** The public parking lot located on the southwest corner of Grant and 5th Streets could be improved to provide more convenient and attractive parking entering the downtown. The edge of the lot could be defined by a permanent shelter, continuing the building line on Grant Street and providing protected shade for downtown customers.
- **4th Street Realignment.** 4th Street could be realigned west of Washington Street by curving north a half block and then back west to reconnect to Lincoln Street. This shift eliminates a hazardous intersection at U.S. 30, while creating more efficient parking and traffic circulation in the downtown area.

Figure 4.6: Grant Parking Shelter



EAST GATEWAY

PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Improve circulation between Highway 30 and Interstate 80.
- Define the arrival to the district.
- Direct visitors to downtown and other community destinations.
- Communicate a community-wide theme through graphics and landscape design.
- Soften the harsh edge between the railroad and Highway 30.



1. Elevator Mural. Grain elevators, like water towers, are icons to travelers along Interstate 80 and Highway 30 seeking temporary refuge. Motorists approaching from the south could be directed toward downtown by painting a mural along the side of the elevator. The design of the mural should be simple and legible when approaching it. Likewise, the elevator facing Highway 30 could have a mural commemorating the Historic Lincoln Highway.



2. Traffic Circulation. The Nebraska Department of Transportation anticipates upgrading the viaduct from a two-lane viaduct to a four-lane viaduct. The expansion adds two additional lanes on the east side of the existing viaduct. This upgrade also calls for the improving the 5th Street landing, creating a dedicated left-turn lane and pushing curbs out to allow for better truck movements, effectively directing truck traffic to Highway 30 via Grant and Jefferson Streets.

Figure 4.7: Elavator Mural





3. Gateway Landing. The vacant lot on the northwest corner of 5th and Jackson Street could be redesigned to include landscaping and a new monument sign that welcomes visitors to Downtown Lexington. The development concept for this site also suggests the possibility of new Senior Housing. near the landing at 5th Street could be an arch over Jackson Street. Directional signage could be posted on the gateway element.

4. Light tubes. As motorists approach the viaduct's landing, a series of light tubes wrapped with art announces the arrival to downtown. The base and wrapping around the tube could be designed to reflect the community's history and culture. Possible themes include the Old Lincoln Highway or historic images of Lexington.



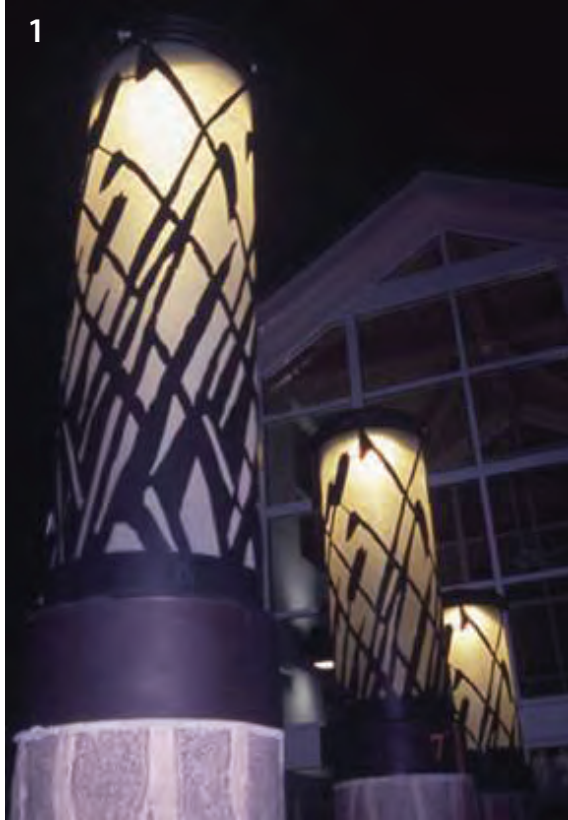
5. Wayfinding System. Directional signage to parking should be incorporated into an overall downtown wayfinding system. The system could be tailored to both motorists and pedestrians.

6. Mounted sign. A welcome sign mounted on top of the Marketplace development could attract visitors to the development project and downtown area.



7. Landscaping Pattern. Landscaping from property to property along Jackson Street should include a common planting pattern for trees, shrubs, flowers, grasses, and fencing. Intersections should receive special attention, preserving visibility while improving their appearance. Pedestrian crossings should be clearly defined to alert motorists of people crossing the street.

Figure 4.8: Light Tubes



1. Interstate Rest Stop in Adair, Iowa. Art interprets the depleting soil over time in central Iowa.
2. Downtown Ames, Iowa. Art interprets the City's historical connection to manufacturing implement tools.
3. Adair, Iowa.
4. School for the Deaf in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Alphabet is laser cutted in metal and displayed in Sign and English.

SOUTH GATEWAY

PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Strengthen connection between Centennial Park and Downtown.
- Develop a gateway feature into Washington Street.
- Establish a Visitor Center.
- Improve the experience driving through Lexington.



1. Depot Visitor Center and Railroad Overlook. A new building, resembling Lexington’s historic depot, could be built at the south end of Washington Street, next to the railroad tracks. This building would signify the arrival to downtown, and provide visitors a rest stop. The facility could be a visitor’s center with possibly a museum, art gallery and offices for the Chamber of Commerce. The backside of the building could have an observation deck overlooking the railroad.

As another option, the Depot could be an open shelter having a similar roof line as the historic structure and providing space for informational kiosks. A passenger car could be part of the plaza space.



Sioux Falls, SD

2. Gateway Arch Entrance Feature. The intersection to Washington Street from Highway 30 marks the main entrance into Downtown Lexington. A new gateway arch could establish a welcoming entrance to Downtown. The arch could include materials and forms found in the downtown architecture and allude to the transition to the historic town center. Materials should be consistent with other gateway elements in the community.

Figure 4.9 shows a structure arching over the entrance to Washington Street.

Figure 4.9: Gateway Entrance





3. Centennial Park. Centennial Park is a major community asset and establishes passersby's impression of Lexington. However, an improvement program could make this great green space even better. Components of a Centennial Park improvement program include:

- Depot Connection. Extending Centennial Park to the proposed Visitors Center. This will greatly improve the quality of the park's formal space and reinforce the connection to the pedestrian overpass to downtown. Interpretative panels, describing the community's history, could be installed in the park area.
- Greenway and Trail Extension. The new trail extension west of the pedestrian bridge should feel like a linear greenway that strengthens the impression to visitors and residents of Lexington. Landscaping would buffer the highway from the railroad, while still allowing occasional views of the rail. Trailside amenities such as benches, trash receptacles and wayfinding signage are recommended to enhance the trail.
- Crosswalk Improvements. Crosswalk improvements at 3rd Street, connecting Centennial Park and Downtown, are relatively inexpensive. Recommendations include defining crosswalks with

paint or possibly contrasting pavement material. Medians should be enhanced to reinforce the space as a pedestrian refuge.

4. Highway 30 Streetscape. Roadscape improvements along the corridor and at gateways should incorporate design elements that reflect the city's community theme. Considerations should be given to the established Plum Creek theme, while incorporating transportation elements, such as the Oregon Trail, Railroad, Historic Lincoln Highway, and Interstate System.

Adjustments to the streetscape should include native landscaping in the median and behind the curb. Trees could be planted beneath the power lines, presuming they do not grow to interfere with the lines. Table 4.x identifies trees that can be planted near power lines. Small trees can be planted adjacent to power lines, while, logically large trees should not be planted no closer than 50 feet horizontally to power lines.

If possible, improvements to Highway 30 should include the burying of overhead electrical wires in the City. Street lights should be upgraded to tear drop fixtures capable of holding banners and planters.

5. Elevator Mural. The elevator in the above image facing Highway 30 could have a mural commemorating the Historic Lincoln Highway. The mural should be simple to allow for easy maintenance. Images of the classic Lincoln Highway "L" with bands of red, white and blue in the background or a silhouette of Abraham Lincoln.

Table 4.1: Trees

Tree Type	Mature height in feet
Flowering Crabapple	20 - 25
Amur Maple	20 - 25
Goldenraintree	20 - 30
Black Hills Spruce	30-45
Northern Catalpa	60-70
Kentucky Coffeetree	60-70

Figure 4.9: Centennial Park Improvements



CONNECTING CORRIDORS

Motorists along Interstate 80 frequently stop to refuel, break from driving and visit communities. Lexington, like other communities along Interstate 80 and Highway 30, should capitalize on this market and create a strong economic and aesthetic link to downtown.

The City effectively attracts motorists to the Heartland Museum of Military Vehicles through its outdoor display along Interstate 80 and the nearby Wal-Mart. Travelers may drive up Plum Creek Parkway to visit other businesses, yet despite these attractions, travelers are unaware of Lexington's other major business district – Downtown. Plum Creek Parkway should be upgraded to provide a pleasant experience from the Interstate to Downtown. Likewise, Highway 30 should lead visitors to downtown and other cultural destinations.



Possible strategies include:

- **Upgrade Interstate 80 Connection.** Off-ramps from Interstate 80 to Plum Creek Parkway should be landscaped with a pattern of native perennials, shrubs and trees. This planting pattern should continue along Plum Creek Parkway.
- **Gateway Enhancements.** Lexington already has a community monument sign on Plum Creek Parkway near Heartland Road. Native perennials and low-lying shrubs could be planted around this monument that reinforces the planting pattern for the entire corridor. Additional gateway features could be built on the east and west sides of the city along Highway 30.
- **Wayfinding Signage.** Install directional wayfinding graphics to inform travelers of the many destinations that Lexington offers. Such a system should be integrated into the downtown directional program.
- **Pedestrian Pathways.** As previously discussed, pedestrian pathways should link destinations to each other and connect to parking areas.
 - Lincoln Promenade, connecting Platte Square to Washington Street and new Marketplace Development.
 - Dawson County Courthouse Pathway, creating a direct connection between available parking and the front door of the county courthouse.
- **Improve Streetscape.** The corridor needs to create a positive and memorable experience for everyone to attract visitors to the downtown. Clean streets, ornamental lighting, native plantings, shrubs, and community graphics can influence the impression of the corridor. Grand Island's South Locust Street is an example community that has upgraded the appearance of the business corridor. The planting pattern from property-to-property creates a pleasant and unifying streetscape. Specific recommendations include:
 - **Lighting.** Replace cobra head fixtures with decorative lights, while still maintaining proper light levels. Grand Island is a good local example of a community that has upgraded their light fixtures along the business district.
 - **Trees and Landscaped Intersections.** A continuous line of trees along the open areas the road help frame the corridor and focus the motorists attention on the road ahead.
 - **Trail.** The pathway on the west side of the road provides enough space for both pedestrians and bicyclists to share.

Figure 4.10: Highway 30 Corridor Enhancements



POLICIES

The previous elements of this vision plan establish the physical parameters of the Development Concept. This section addresses policy considerations for key issues and components of the plan, including:

- RETAIL AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT
- HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION POLICY

Some of these principles repeat concepts that have been discussed earlier. In these cases, they will simply be restated.

RETAIL AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

Overall Policy:

- Consolidate and strengthen the existing retail and service environment, stabilizing existing retailers, expanding the number of people who come Downtown for activities, filling available space, and expanding the supply of space.
- Concentrate new businesses in areas of demonstrated potential strength for the downtown: specialty retail, pharmacy or drug store, clothing stores, office support services, and restaurants, particularly ethnic foods.
- Increase the demand for retail space in the market by increasing the number of people who use Downtown as a destination, and creating spaces for people to gather.

Actions and Program Directions:

- Identify special niches and help put projects together that responds to these concepts. Projects may group a number of related, small retailers, artisan, or service providers in a single large space. The retail incubator space is an excellent opportunity for small retailers to establish themselves.
- Encourage retail, restaurant, and personal services in downtown storefronts with street exposure.
- Consider more involvement as being a Main Street Community. This program provides low-cost consulting services that advise retailers on marketing, window display, and merchandise presentation. In addition, engage Lexington's proven and innovative retailers, such as Barmore's, as mentors for potential new retail and service entrepreneurs.
- Aggressively market and recruit retailers in the Downtown area, matching needs with available space. Focus on areas of demonstrated potential for Downtown and in-town retailing, including opportunity "gaps" where local retail spending exceeds the locally-based sales.



- Reinforce the City's program of events with other special themes and promotions. Provide high quality ongoing events that complement traditional celebrations, and extend fun and festivity throughout the year.
- Promote high standards of customer service to strengthen the district's identification with local consumers. Publicize these standards through a Customer Commitment Contract, prominently posted in all retail and consumer service businesses. Assure that the most convenient parking in the area is reserved for customers.
- Take extra steps to put fun and festivity into the Downtown shopping experience. New amenities should enrich the experience of living and working in the District. Relocating the Farmer's Market to Downtown will have spin-off benefits to retail businesses.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION POLICY

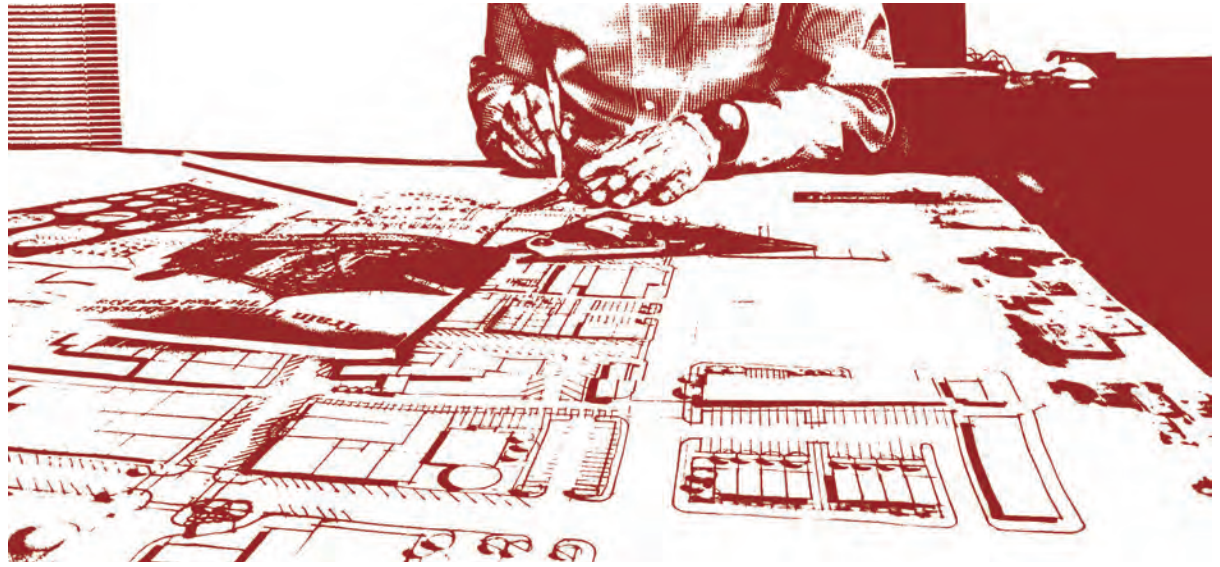
Historic preservation and adaptive reuse are important to downtown. This plan recommends a building development policy that encourages preservation and adaptive reuse.

Components of this policy include:

- Adopting flexible building codes that encourage upper level residential adaptive reuse.** Housing development has been a foundation of successful downtown revitalization around the country and has also been important to Lexington. Federal tax incentives, construction costs, the nature and preferences of residents in urban districts, and knowledge of successes in other Nebraska cities and historic districts can encourage residential use of upper levels. Lexington should review building codes to ensure that they encourage adaptive reuse without compromising health, safety and welfare. In addition, helping downtown property owners to rehabilitate downtown structures. The city should also consider reasonable design standards to guide reuse and rehabilitation projects.
- Using design guidelines.** The Secretary of the Interior's Standards provide an excellent starting point for evaluating downtown rehabilitation projects. Particularly important is restoration of buildings that have been "modernized" or severely modified with unsympathetic facades. New development in the downtown core should preserve the scale, materials, and character of traditional architecture in the District. Figure x.x shows potential retrofits for a building facade, as an example. Priority elements include display windows, upper-story window installations, restoration of façade materials, and awnings.
- Providing gap financing for major rehabilitation projects.** Appropriate historic rehabilitation may not be economically feasible without financing assistance or participation. Elements of a potential financing program for projects in Lexington include:
- Historic tax credits.** The historic tax credit provides a 20% investment tax credit against passive income for certified rehabilitation projects.
- Tax Increment Financing.** The city should consider TIF to leverage substantial rehabilitation efforts. Alternatively, a portion of other, energy-related revenue sources may be used to assist with financing of downtown projects.
- Community Development Block Grants.** CDBG funds can be used to provide gap financing for projects that meet statutory requirements for the program.
- HOME.** HOME Housing Investment Partnership funds may also be used for projects, including new construction ownership developments that are targeted toward low and moderate income households.
- Preservation Easements.** Donation of façade easements can provide meaningful tax advantages to building owners and can open some avenues of public financing for façade restoration. Typically easements expire after 10 years, returning the facades back to the owners.
- Other local public and private resources.** The public and private sectors could collaborate to offer financing that provides a real incentive to participants. The result could have major benefits to both property owners and the community's business community.



- Infill development that respects the existing character of the district.** Sometimes, rehabilitation is not feasible because of structural deterioration or economic issues. Downtown growth is a process, and natural growth includes change as well as preservation. However, new downtown construction should retain a strong street orientation and preserve the fabric and patterns of traditional Downtown buildings. This is especially important for the site on the southwest corner of 5th and Washington Streets.



5 IMPLEMENTATION

The Downtown Plan presents an ambitious and varied program for improving the heart of the community. This chapter considers several factors necessary for plan implementation, including

- Organizational Structure
- Priority Criteria
- Implementation Scenarios
- Opinion of Probable Costs & Implementation Schedule
- Funding Techniques

The Plan and its scheduling will inevitably change over time. Some projects may advance as opportunities or demands open, while others appear less important over time. This planning project, initiated by the City of Lexington from funding received from Nebraska Department of Economic Development’s Phase I Revitalization Program, identifies projects that may lead a combination of implementation projects.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

This section considers organizational aspects of the business district and offers recommendations that can strengthen the support structure for the Downtown. Successful development efforts require successful organizations and public/private partnerships. The City of Lexington can be a catalyst for major development efforts. Downtown also has a Main Street Organization, which operates primarily as an advisory role to improve building facades.

STAFF AND ORGANIZATION

The Downtown Development Program should operate under the City of Lexington and its Assistant City Manager. The Assistant City Manager should continue to be responsible for overall project administration and coordination. This ambitious redevelopment program has many moving parts – managing public improvement projects, marketing and administering redevelopment sites, coordinating transportation improvements, doing development deals, and seeking financing, to name a few.

Day-to-day plan implementation would be carried out by the Assistant City Manager with some marketing support from the Chamber of Commerce. The focuses of this new position should include:

City and Redevelopment Authority

- Business and retail recruitment efforts, in concert with Dawson Area Development
- Maintaining and managing Downtown improvements.
- Coordinating efforts of the Chamber, City, Redevelopment Authority and other agencies who play a role in downtown development.
- Preparing requests for proposals and administering the developer selection process for development sites.
- Writing grants for downtown projects, including transportation projects, and performing other necessary jobs as required by the Assistant City Manager.

Chamber of Commerce

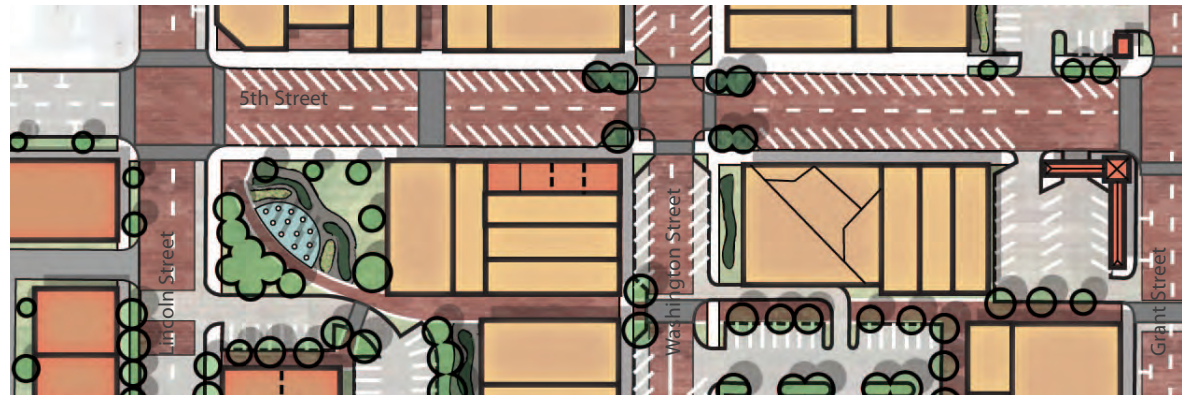
- Developing marketing material directed to attracting patrons to downtown.
- Developing joint marketing materials and expanding the program of events. Downtown should offer regular programming during the course of the year to maintain district activity.

The plan also recommends that the RDA expand its scope to include advocacy and possible funding for some projects that relate to parking lot access or joint development. Examples include the alley pathways in Lincoln Promenade. Ultimately, the RDA could also include a Business Improvement District (BID). This technique, used successfully in cities and business districts around the country, establishes a special assessment district to finance public improvements, district management, and promotions.

PRIORITY CRITERIA

The Downtown Plan establishes four project areas, including Downtown Core, South Downtown, East Gateway, and South Gateway. The plan, however, includes many projects that will be developed over time. The plan provides a master plan of a completed downtown. However, real implementation is an incremental process that requires setting priorities, completing initial steps, and evaluating new conditions along the way. Lexington is fortunate to become a recipient of \$350,000 of Phase II Downtown Revitalization financing from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

The City with coordinating agencies should maintain a five year Downtown capital program, updated annually, much as city and state governments do with their capital improvement plans. Table 5.1 identifies individual projects and provides a conceptual schedule for implementation. However, market demands and opportunities will inevitably affect this schedule. Annually, the Downtown capital development group should update the schedule, based on priority criteria. These evaluative criteria may involve applying the following questions to specific projects at the time of consideration:



- Does the project respond to specific or high-profile community issues or needs?
- Does the project generate maximum private market response?
- What is the project's potential to transform the image of the area and community?
- Does the project attract both local residents and visitors, increasing business traffic and creating new reasons for people to be downtown?
- Does the project support the growth of existing businesses?
- Does the project capitalize on established, but unmet, market needs?
- Can the project be realistically implemented within a reasonable time frame with potentially available resources?
- Does the project generate substantial community support or consensus?
- Does the project incorporate and leverage outside funding sources, such as state grants or charitable contributions?

The City should use the criteria above to develop specific project priorities. Initial public improvement priorities, some of which are relatively modest projects, may include three types of implementation scenarios that balances immediate improvement and sustained improvement.

OPINION OF PROBABLE COSTS & IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Financing of elements of Downtown projects will require both public and private participation. The next section describes available funding sources and techniques. Project staging is also likely to manage capital requirements.

An initial schedule is presented here to guide the public and private agencies in the process of making this plan a reality. The schedule establishes five time frames: Ongoing, Within 3 Years, 3-10 Years, 10+ Years. Priorities and opportunities will inevitably shift the schedule for some of some projects.

Table 5.1: Opinion for Probable Costs - DOWNTOWN					
Description	Cost Range	On-going	<3 Years	4-10 Years	>10 Years
Building Façade Improvement Program (\$25,000-\$40,000 per façade)	\$25,000		X		
Business Incubator (Furniture Store)	\$240,000-\$420,000		X		
Carscape at 5th and Grant (sw corner)	\$110,000			X	
Energy Efficiency audit and recommendations	\$0.20 -\$0.35 PER SF	X	X		
Community College Building Reuse (\$40-70 SF)	\$108,000-\$189,000	X			
Majestic Theater Façade	\$75,000-\$100,000		X		
Majestic Theater Rehabilitation (requires add'l study)	\$500,000+			X	
Majestic Theater Plaza	\$75,000-\$85,000		X		
Phillips 66 Reuse (\$120 SF)	\$65,000-\$156,000			X	
New Construction - Townhouses (8 units)	\$1,400,000				X
Business Signage Program (20 storefronts at \$4,000 each)	\$80,000		X		
Washington Ave Streetscape Upgrades I (reconstruction of sidewalks and lighting) per block	\$250,000-\$300,000			X	
Washington Ave Streetscape Upgrades II (amenities and landscape)	\$100,000-\$130,000			X	
Washington Ave Traffic Systems	SAVINGS		X		
General streetscape improvements (by block estimate)	\$350,000-\$430,000			X	X

Table 5.2: Opinion for Probable Costs - EAST GATEWAY

Description	Cost Range	On-going	<3 Years	4-10 Years	>10 Years
Gateway Site at 5th Street and Viaduct - signage and landscape	\$50,000-\$75,000		X		
Light tubes	\$90,000				X
Mural on elevator	PENDING			X	
Wayfinding (design and installation)	\$20,000		35%	65%	
U.S. 30 Connection (5th Street to Grant/Jefferson)	DOR - FUNDED			X	
Possible Roundabout and Sculpture	\$250,000-\$400,000				X

Table 5.3: Opinion for Probable Costs - SOUTH DOWNTOWN

Description	Cost Range	On-going	<3 Years	4-10 Years	>10 Years
Incubator Promenade - does not include utilities. Pavement, trash enclosures and lighting only	\$160,000-\$180,000			X	
New Platte Square (without acquisition)	\$250,000-\$300,000		X		
New Construction - Commercial (US 30, west of Lincoln)	\$500,000-\$1,620,000				X
New Construction - Commercial (US 30, east of Lincoln)	\$500,000-\$1,620,000			X	
Reuse - Lumberyard (@\$50 SF)	\$455,000				X
New Construction - Infill at 5th and Washington	\$250,000-\$312,000			X	
New Construction - Market Place Development (site work not included)	\$3,000,000				X
Pedestrian Promenade does not include utilities. Pavement, trash enclosures and lighting only	\$200,000-\$230,000			X	
South Parking Lot Expansion	\$300,000-\$360,000		X		
New Construction - Senior Housing					X

Table 5.4: Opinion for Probable Costs - SOUTH GATEWAY

Description	Cost Range	On-going	<3 Years	4-10 Years	>10 Years
Centennial Park Upgrades to Depot	\$115,000-\$140,000			X	
Centennial Park West Expansion - sidewalk, lighting and landscaping only	\$100,000-\$150,000			X	
Gateway Arch	\$75,000-\$95,000		X		
New Construction - Depot	\$1,338,500-\$1,548,500				X
U.S. 30 Street Trees and median plantings from water tower to gateway arch	\$70,000-\$90,000			X	

IMPLEMENTATION SCENARIOS

The Downtown Lexington Revitalization Plan proposes a long-term program for investment in this important and active business district. This program is built of many individual projects and recommendations that, over time, create an economically strong city center that offers customers, residents, and visitors a diverse and attractive environment. However, not everything can be done at once, and the downtown development is a process that moves forward in increments. In applying the Priority Criteria discussed earlier and examining options for Phase II Downtown Revitalization financing, the plan proposes several basic principles:

1. Public investments in early phases of the process should create a “chain reaction” - a strong and desirable private market response that leads to self-sustaining investment. Thus, the ability of initial projects to generate positive momentum is very important.
2. Projects proposed by this revitalization plan fall into three categories: catalytic, enhancement, and sustaining projects.
 - Catalytic projects, substantial efforts that are large and strategic enough to change an important part of the downtown economy or environment. These projects create conditions that encourage other people to make significant, if smaller, investments. Catalytic projects often combine an underused existing asset with a demonstrated need or market opportunity.
 - Enhancement projects, usually investments that improve the appearance, image, or function of the public environment.
 - Sustaining programs that encourage private businesses, developers, and property owners to respond to the improved environment that “catalytic” and “enhancement” projects create.
3. Different projects mature at different times during the downtown development process. Table 5.1, the Implementation Schedule, is based on this principle. The largest proposed project, the primarily private Market Place at 5th and Jackson, has the potential to change the image of downtown and create highly visible places for new business. However, the current market is not mature enough to support the project, and an effort to develop it prematurely is likely to fail. Other, equally important if more modest projects come first to create conditions that allow the Market Place to develop naturally.

The Phase II program should ideally include one of each type of project: a catalytic project that uses an existing demand to transform an underused asset; an enhancement project that makes a highly visible improvement in the district’s image or function; and a sustaining program that encourage private businesses to take advantage of new opportunities.

DEFINING PHASE II

The Implementation Schedule uses the priority criteria and Chapter One’s market analysis to sequence recommendations into three periods, with later projects building on the foundation established by earlier ones. The Phase II revitalization program will be drawn from projects proposed for the first period. Of these, the plan categorizes three initiatives as “catalytic” projects that combine underused assets and demonstrated opportunities to substantially change the character or investment climate of Downtown:

- **The Majestic Theater**, using this vacant, historic theater and community icon to restore an important entertainment use. A Majestic Theater project includes three components: the plaza along Washington Street to address accessibility issues, the theater façade, and building rehabilitation.
- **The Retail Incubator**, using a vacant commercial building to create a place for new entrepreneurs who can expand the economic base of Downtown Lexington. This project can create the conditions for continued high occupancy in the rest of Downtown and can help generate a demand for the more ambitious Market Place in later stages of downtown development.
- **The South Parking Lot**, adding to the district’s supply of convenient parking, establishing the east-west promenade that sets up the plan’s system of active public spaces, and tying Downtown to the historic Lincoln Highway.

Each of these projects addresses an important element of the downtown picture: the need for community entertainment and expanded evening activity; the potential for encouraging young businesses; and the importance of added parking and public space.

The plan classifies the following project recommendations as “enhancement” projects, improving the public environment to support private reinvestment:

- **Improving the “gateway site”** at 5th and Jackson (US 283), to strengthen the Downtown image and direct visitors to the district’s center.
- **Platte Square**, creating an active, multi-use public space that will encourage private development on surrounding sites and terminate the east-west promenade.
- **Corner node improvements**, upgrading and re-landscaping the key Washington Street intersections at 5th and 6th Street, and removing alley nodes along Washington Street.
- **Washington Street Gateway Arch**, defining the edge of Downtown along US 30 and reinforcing the regional entrance to the district.

Finally, short-term “sustaining” projects that would encourage existing or new businesses and property owners to take advantage of the momentum created by other actions include:

- Energy efficiency improvements. Sources other than Community Development Block Grant funds are available for these important purposes.
- Business signage improvements.
- Building façade improvements.
- Business microloans, a small capitalization program that would be used to assist businesses locating in a Retail Incubator.

Phase II should ideally assemble resources to accomplish at least one component from each of these complementary project categories, integrated to reinforce each other. Three alternative Phase II concepts are outlined below.

Concept One: The Majestic Scenario.

Many community residents and downtown stakeholders rightly consider re-opening the landmark Majestic Theater as a very important priority for the district. Lexington’s population and market area are clearly large enough to support a downtown theater which could be designed to accommodate other activities as well. However, this project is likely to require a public/private partnership that involves the current theater owner, or the sale of the building to a new owner. A scenario that could be advantageous to the present or future property owner includes the following features:

- Phase II funds would be used complete the sidewalk plaza proposed on pages 44-45. This would make the theater entrance compliant with accessibility requirements.
- Phase II funds would also be used to restore the Majestic façade. The owner could donate a façade easement to the City of Lexington, allowing an additional tax advantage.
- Interior theater restoration would be accomplished privately, with possible assistance from a Phase II com-

mercial rehabilitation program. Listing the Majestic on the National Register of Historic Places could provide a 20% investment tax credit on development costs to the owner. If the existing owner were interested in the project but not able to complete or finance the rehabilitation, the owner could be a member of a community-based limited partnership, with the existing value of the building constituting the owner’s equity in the overall development.

The Majestic rehabilitation is the central catalytic element of this scenario. Supporting elements include:

- Balancing the investment at the north end of Washington Street with a public enhancement project at the south end. Completing the Gateway Arch would both link downtown to US 30 and help integrate the south block more effectively into the downtown community – a key physical priority of this plan.
- Initiating the signage program and a façade rehabilitation fund. This may focus on Washington Street, using the projects at either end of the street to encourage building and sign upgrades between them.

Table 5.5: Concept 1 Majestic Scenario

Project Component	Project Category	Phase II Funding	Other Public Funds (Source)	Private Funding	Total
Majestic Plaza	Catalytic	85,000			85,000
Majestic Facade	Catalytic	100,000			100,000
Majestic Rehabilitation	Catalytic	50,000	75,000 (TIF)	500,000	625,000
Gateway Arch	Enhancement	95,000		30,000	125,000
Signage Program	Sustaining	60,000			60,000
Façade Rehabilitation	Sustaining	110,000		55,000	165,000
Total		500,000	75,000	585,000	1,160,000

Concept Two: The Retail Incubator Scenario

While the Majestic scenario may be a preferred priority, the building for a number of reasons may not be available. This equally valid concept is based on supporting entrepreneurship by creating a publicly financed, affordable retail environment. This concept can take advantage of Lexington’s increasing international character and should be combined with a microloan program to help capitalize business candidates. In addition to increasing economic opportunity and self-sufficiency, the incubator can create a future business base for other storefronts and ultimately for the Market Place. This concept in a diverse community may successfully attract foundation support. Ultimate ownership and operation by a nonprofit corporation is preferable to public ownership of the facility.

The plan identifies the vacant former furniture store on 6th Street between Washington and Lincoln as a candidate site for the Retail Incubator. This site fixes greater attention on the 6th and Washington intersection, as well as Washington Street. Therefore, enhancement and sustaining projects that both support and take advantage of the incubator initiative include:

- Intersection and node enhancement at 6th and Washington, linking the incubator to the main street.
- The business signage and façade rehabilitation programs identified above for the Majestic scenario.

Table 5.6: Concept 2 Retail Incubator Scenario

Project Component	Project Category	Phase II Funding	Other Public Funds (Source)	Private Funding	Total
Retail Incubator Shell and Façade	Catalytic	250,000		150,000 (Foundations)	400,000
Incubator Microloans (Grameen Bank Involvement)	Catalytic	100,000	50,000 (Other NDED programs)	50,000	
6th and Washington Enhancement	Enhancement	100,000			100,000
Business Signage Demonstration	Sustaining	40,000			
Façade Rehabilitation	Sustaining	110,000		55,000	165,000
Total		500,000	50,000	255,000	805,000

An alternative to the use of the 6th Street site is the construction of a new building on a vacant but highly visible corner site at 5th and Washington. Unlike the interior marketplace configuration of the 6th Street building, this site would include up to four shallow storefront spaces, oriented to 5th Street. It would develop an important site, but would accommodate fewer potential entrepreneurs than the 6th Street building. In this scenario, the intersection improvement would focus on 5th and Washington.

Concept Three: SouthPark Scenario

The south parking lot and promenade establishes momentum for the south edge of Downtown and adds substantially to the supply of convenient parking. It also forms the core of an east-west pedestrian spine that ultimately connects Platte Square and the Market Place. The SouthPark concept is more fully described on page 56.

This scenario also includes:

- The Gateway Arch at Washington and US 30 as an important project enhancement.
- The business signage and façade rehabilitation programs identified above for the Majestic and Incubator scenarios.

Table 5.7: Concept 3 SouthPark Scenario

Project Component	Project Category	Phase II Funding	Other Public Funds (Source)	Private Funding	Total
SouthPark parking facility	Catalytic	250,000		50,000 (Fund raising and surrounding businesses)	300,000
Gateway Arch	Enhancement	95,000		30,000	125,000
Business Signage Demonstration	Sustaining	45,000			45,000
Façade Rehabilitation	Sustaining	110,000		55,000	165,000
Total		500,000		135,000	635,000

FUNDING TECHNIQUES

Available financing tools to help realize the vision for the central business corridors include:

- Local Tools/Techniques
- State & Federal Resources

LOCAL TOOLS/ TECHNIQUES

- Business Improvement District
- Business Signage Grants
- Building Façade Easements
- Building Façade Loan Program
- City General Revenue Funds
- Downtown Bond Issue
- Estate Taxes
- Land Sale Proceeds
- Local Option Sales Tax
- Private and Foundation Philanthropy
- Revenue Bonds
- Revolving Loan Program
- Tax Increment Financing

STATE & FEDERAL SOURCES

- Brownfields Redevelopment Assistance
- Community Development Block Grants
 - Phase II Financing
- Historic Tax Credits (HTC)
- HOME Investment Partnerships Program
- National Trust Main Street Program & Loan Fund
- Nebraska Affordable Housing Programs
- Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation
- Small Business Administration
- Transportation Enhancements
- USDA Grants
 - Business
 - Energy conservation and renewable energy
 - Housing
 - Community Facilities
 - Rural Water and Waste

The following discusses the application of these individual techniques and how they apply to specific recommendations in the plan.

LOCAL TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

BUILDING FAÇADE EASEMENTS

Buildings fronting Washington Street and some side streets could be candidates for establishing a building façade easement. Façade easements could be dedicated to the City, protecting the façade from unsympathetic modifications and providing a tax benefit to the donor. In addition, various forms of public financing, including TIF, may be available as a result of permanent public easements. Typically, these easements last for 10 to 15 years, and then return to the owner of the property.

BUILDING FAÇADE LOAN PROGRAM

Buildings in the downtown could be eligible for a façade loan program where owners can apply for up to known amount with a matched percentage. A similar program was initiated in Gothenburg, Nebraska, where owners were able to apply for up to \$7,500 with a \$2,500 match. Their program resulted in 12 improved facades. Additional information available is below under Local Option Sales Tax (LB 840).



BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)

Business Improvement Districts (BID) are special assessment districts that permit businesses to finance public capital improvement projects and district management, promotion, and maintenance. BIDs are petitioned and approved by property owners and created by the City following a specific process established by Nebraska State Statutes Chapter 19 §4015 to §4038 and administered by a BID Board. While BIDs are a valuable tool, it is important that assessments not be so large that they create a burden to property owners. This plan recommends that the City adopt a policy of public financing of major capital projects, with required BID funding of maintenance and district management and promotion.

Grand Island's South Locust Business Corridor successfully adopted a BID for upgrades and maintenance of the area. A similar BID could be adopted by business owners along Plum Creek Parkway and the downtown area.



CITY GENERAL REVENUES

General revenues, appropriated through the city's annual budget process, can finance services, improvements, facilities and development projects. These appropriations are separate from general revenues devoted to debt service on bonds. Common uses of general revenues in downtown development programs include funding staff and organizational expenses, or projects that can be divided into smaller phases, such as streetscape improvements.

DOWNTOWN BOND ISSUES

General obligation bond issues are appropriate to finance major public projects or improvements, and are secured by general city revenues. These revenues typically include property taxes or, potentially, local option sales taxes. General obligation bonds require majority voter approval. In the downtown concept, bonds are most appropriate to finance all or part of the Majestic Theater project, assuming public ownership, and streetscape upgrades.



ESTATE TAXES

Estate taxes are collected by the county and may be appropriately be used to help finance capital improvement projects for gateway and corridor enhancements.

LAND SALE PROCEEDS

Proceeds from sale of land to development projects, such as the vacant lot at Main Street and 5th Street, could be allocated back to central city improvements and acquisition for other redevelopment activities.

LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX (LB 840)

Lexington voters approved a local option sales tax for economic development. Under LB 840, these funds can be used to finance public and private projects that support local development objectives. Lexington can and should use a portion of these funds to

sustain Downtown as a major community asset. This also become a way by which retail assets such as a Wal-Mart can help compensate for impact on the traditional downtown retail district. LB 840 proceeds may be used to help finance bonds for downtown public improvements, but should also be used to establish an enterprise fund to assist desirable private investment in the district – “a Downtown Fund.”

- Equity investments in targeted new businesses.
- Zero interest loans, blended with loans at prime rate from local lenders, for approved rehabilitation/storefront restoration projects.
- Loan guarantees for storefront rehabilitation and restoration.
- Loans for residential conversion/adaptive reuse projects on gap finance basis.

It is essential that such a Fund be administered with strong fiduciary accountability and careful project review.

PRIVATE AND FOUNDATION PHILANTHROPY

The Plan provides a variety of opportunities for individual or foundation contributions. Private philanthropy, with appropriate recognition and commemoration, is a critical part of the downtown implementation program, and is especially appropriate for park and plaza projects, community attractions such as the new Platte Square or Lincoln Promenade could be renamed to recognize an individual or group contributions.

- The Lexington Community Foundation (LCF), a 501c3 organization, focuses on enhancing the quality of life in the city. LCF has raised significant amount of money for past projects and many of the public improvement projects discussed in this plan could be eligible for their support.



REVENUE BONDS

Revenue bonds are debt instruments that are repaid all or in part from revenues generated by the project or by other associated revenue sources. For example, part of the capital cost of a retail incubator may be repaid through rent generated by that space. Revenue bonds typically are not secured by the credit of the community.

REVOLOVING LOAN PROGRAM

Yet to be established in Lexington, a downtown revolving loan program could provide low-interest loan funds granted by the city to cover any portion of costs to convert downtown buildings into more marketable assets. Those eligible to receive funds could include for-profit and non-profit organizations. The City of Gothenburg recently established a revolving loan program with a starting capital of \$100,000.



TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF)

Local Tax Increment Financing (Local TIF) permits the use of a portion of local property and sales taxes to assist funding the redevelopment of certain designated areas within your community. Projects pay their entire established tax obligation. However, taxes produced by the added value of the property caused by redevelopment or improvements may be used to finance project-related improvements or other public improvements in the district. TIF may be used to pay certain costs incurred with a redevelopment project. Such costs may include, but are not limited to:

- Professional services such as studies, surveys, plans, financial management, legal counsel
- Land acquisition and demolition of structures
- Building necessary new infrastructure in the project area such as streets, parking, decorative lighting
- Relocation of resident and business occupants located in the project area



Majestic Theater. If the Majestic Theater were privately redeveloped, then the added value could be eligible for Tax Increment Financing. The taxes paid on the original value of the building continue to be distributed to all taxing jurisdictions, including the city, county, school district, Natural Resources District and others. However the taxes collected on the added value are used to finance parts of the project that are necessary to make the project feasible, including:

- Façade upgrades.
- Interior renovations.
- Plaza improvements

STATE & FEDERAL

- Brownfields Redevelopment Assistance
- Community Development Block Grants
 - Phase II Financing
- Historic Tax Credits (HTC)
- HOME Investment Partnerships Program
- National Trust Main Street Program & Loan Fund
- Nebraska Affordable Housing Programs
- Neighborhood Stabilization Program (HUD)
- Retree Nebraska
- Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation
- Small Business Administration
- Transportation Enhancements
- USDA Grants
 - Business
 - Energy conservation and renewable energy
 - Housing
 - Community Facilities
 - Rural Water and Waste



BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

The former Phillips 66 Station Site should be evaluated for potential soil contamination from the storage tanks. The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) offers environmental assessments to properties at no cost through its Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP). These assessments are performed to provide preliminary environmental information to determine if there is contamination on a property.

4. The first part of the assessment examines the background, setting and past uses of a property. It includes a records review, site reconnaissance, interviews, and, as a final product, a report documenting the environmental conditions at the property.
5. The second part of the assessment examines and evaluates the environmental conditions identified in the initial assessment. Soil and groundwater sampling and analyses are conducted to determine whether contamination associated with any environmental conditions has occurred on the site. The results of the sampling and analyses are evaluated in the As-



essment Report. This is primarily a means of assessing contamination; no actual cleanup is involved with this Assistance Program.

This process helps to determine if the site is eligible for cleanup funding grants. For additional information, visit, www.deq.state.ne.us.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT

The Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) is administered by the Department of Economic Development. Phase II Downtown Revitalization Funds. The Nebraska Department of Economic Development offers a Phase II grant worth \$350,000 to assist cities with costs for improving downtown. The City of Lexington anticipates receiving this funding to pursue various projects identified in this downtown plan.

For additional information, contact City Manager of Lexington at 308-324-3241.

HISTORIC TAX CREDITS (FEDERAL)

The Historic Tax Credit program offers a 20-percent investment tax credit for certified rehabilitation of National Register or National Register-eligible buildings if:

- The building is used for income-producing purposes;
- Rehabilitation work follows the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation; and
- The project receives preliminary and final approval from the National Park Service.

Property owners, developers and architects must apply for the tax credit through the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and are encouraged to work with SHPO staff to ensure that appropriate rehabilitation measures are followed. The SHPO then passes its recommendations on to the National Park Service for approval.

HOME

HOME could possibly be used for the Senior Housing Project or other residential projects. HOME is the largest Federal block grant to State and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households. Each year it allocates approximately \$2 billion among the States and hundreds of localities nationwide. HOME provides formula grants to States and localities that communities use—often in partnership with local nonprofit groups—to fund a wide range of activities that build, buy, and/or rehabilitate affordable housing for rent or homeownership or provide direct rental assistance to low-income people. For more information, visit www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/affordablehousing/programs/home

NATIONAL TRUST MAIN STREET PROGRAM & LOAN FUND

Lexington is an Affiliate Member of the Main Street Program. The local organization has been less active in the past several years and anticipates participation to remain about the same in the foreseeable future. The National Trust Main Street Program was established in the 1970s as an approach to the special needs and circumstance of America's traditional downtown commercial centers. The program's innovative approach combines historic preservation with economic development in the revitalization of these districts, and has led to the creation of a network of more than 40 statewide, citywide and countywide programs with more than 1,200 active Main Street programs nationally. While the program relies largely on the efforts of individual communities to help themselves, the statewide program typically offers administrative and technical assistance. The program is based upon four points that work together to build a sustainable and complete community revitalization effort, these are; organization, district/community promotion, design, and economic restructuring.

Tax incentives may be available for your restoration project from the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office. The National Trust Loan Fund (NTLF) has more than 35 years of experience in supporting preservation-based community development projects across the country. As a certified Community Development Financial Institution, it has a mission of providing financial and technical resources to organizations that use historic preservation to support the revitalization of underserved and distressed communities.

NTLF specializes in predevelopment, acquisition, mini-permanent, bridge and rehabilitation loans for residential, commercial and public use projects. Eligible borrowers include not-for-profit organizations, revitalization organizations or real estate developers working in certified Main Street communities, local, state or regional governments, and for profit developers of older and/or historic buildings.

For additional information, contact Grant Landreth at the State Historical Preservation Office at 402-471-4788.

NEBRASKA AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAM

This program could be useful for financing the Senior Housing project or other residential development in the downtown area. The Nebraska Affordable Housing Program provides grants to nonprofits, local governments, and public housing authorities to:

1. Build new rental units for low to moderate income persons
2. Adapt old buildings from use as schools, hotels, etc., to rental housing
3. Rehabilitate existing rental properties owned by nonprofit or public housing authorities to meet local building codes and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development's rehabilitation standards
4. Administer homebuyer assistance programs
5. Develop new single-family housing (including infrastructure) for homeowners

6. Purchase homes, rehabilitate to meet local building codes and NDED's rehabilitation standards, and provide down-payment assistance to new homebuyers to purchase the homes
7. Administer programs that help homeowners rehabilitate their houses
8. Increase nonprofit organizations' capacity to develop affordable housing

There are several options for housing programs administered by the Department of Economic Development (see below). For more information, visit www.neded.org/content/view/90/174.

NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION PROGRAM (NSP) (HUD)

The Neighborhood Stabilization Program provides assistance to acquire and redevelop foreclosed properties that might otherwise become sources of abandonment and blight within their communities. The program is authorized under Title III of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008. HUD is treating Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds as a special allocation of Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 CDBG funding. Neighborhood Stabilization funds can be used to purchase foreclosed or abandoned homes and to rehabilitate, resell, or redevelop these homes in order to stabilize neighborhoods and stem the decline of property values of neighboring homes.

Downtown Superior used this funding to prepare site for redevelopment.

RETREE NEBRASKA

ReTree Nebraska includes a variety of grant opportunities to communities, as well as specific selected Nebraska communities. Target sites for Lexington are along Highway 30 and areas within the public right-of-way. Nebraska Community Enhancement Program (NCEP) Shade Our Streets (SOS), Trees for Nebraska Towns (TNT), ReTree Omaha Initiative, Shade Structure Program, Green America Awards are just a few.

For more information, visit www.nfs.unl.edu/ReTree/retreenebraskafunding.asp

RURAL LOCAL INITIATIVES SUPPORT CORPORATION (RURAL LISC)

The mission of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) is to provide assistance to community residents in transforming distressed neighborhoods into healthy and sustainable communities of choice and opportunity. LISC works to mobilize corporate, government, and philanthropic support to provide local community development organizations with:

- Loans, grants and equity investments
- Local, statewide and national policy support
- Technical and management assistance

LISC's support is geared toward building sustainable communities through the achievement of five goals in their support of local initiatives:

- Expanding investment in housing and other real estate



- Increasing family income and wealth
- Stimulating economic development
- Improving access to quality education
- Supporting healthy environments and lifestyles

For additional information and contact Rural LISC at 202-739-9283, or visit their website at www.rurallisc.org.

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has financial assistance programs which provide access to debt and equity primarily from banks or other private sources. SBA evaluates each loan application on two levels; the first is for eligibility, which varies by industry and SBA program, and second on credit merits of the application. SBA programs and services support small business owners, connecting businesses to loans, government contracting opportunities, disaster assistance and training programs to help your business succeed.

For more information, visit www.sba.gov.

TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS (TE)

The Transportation Enhancement (TE) program provides 80% federal financing for such projects as enhancements to major transportation corridors, trails and other non-motorized transportation projects, and the preservation of historic transportation structures. The program is administered by the Nebraska Department of Roads with the assistance of a project review advisory committee. TE funds are appropriate for financing such programs as:

- Street improvements from Highway 283 to Highway 30, including the intersection at 5th and Jackson Streets and connections to Grant and Jefferson Streets.
- Gateway arch to Washington Street
- Streetscape Improvements for Highway 30 and Plum Creek Parkway.
- Intersection and Crosswalk Improvements
- Trail extension along Highway 30.

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Rural Development, a division of the US Department of Agriculture, has many programs for businesses, energy conservation and renewable energy, housing, community facilities, and rural water and waste.

Business

- Intermediary Relending Program (IRP) loans are made by Rural Development to public bodies and non-profit community development organizations who then make loans to businesses and communities with the ultimate goal of creating and/or saving jobs. Individual businesses or communities can contact IRP participants for a revolving loan.
- Business & Industry Guarantee Loans (B&I) lenders (banks, etc.) apply for a guarantee from Rural Development in order to make sizeable loans to businesses (up to \$25 million for a business, up to \$40 million for cooperatives).
- Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants (REDLG) loans or grants to utility cooperatives who then can loan to businesses and/or community projects.
- Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) A farmer or producer group can apply for a grant to fund their feasibility study or working capital to add value to their raw goods.

Energy conservation and renewable energy

The Rural Energy for America Program awards grants and loan guarantees to small businesses for renewable energy projects and energy efficiency improvements. Examples projects for downtown businesses include geothermal heating and equipment upgrades.

For additional information contact the Lexington Assistant City Manager at 308-324-2341 or USDA State contact Deb Yocum at 402-437-5554

Housing

- Direct and Guaranteed loans to purchase a home in a rural area (20,000 pop. or less)
- Loans and grants to repair a home (Grants available to homeowners over age of 62)
- Subsidized rents for apartments or townhouses in rural communities

Community Facilities

Candidate projects include the Depot project on Highway 30. Loans and grants to nonprofits or public bodies such as counties, cities, community centers, day cares, senior centers, homeless shelters, fire halls, ambulances, fire trucks, emergency equipment, and much more.

Rural Water and Waste

Loans and grants to help cities replace or upgrade city water, sewer and storm water systems. For more information visit www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn/ or contact the local USDA Rural Development office in Kearney (308) 237-3118. Rural Development State Office (402) 437-5551.