

# Riverfront Renaissance Master Plan

prepared for  
Ottumwa Regional  
Legacy Foundation

by  
Studio C Rusting, LLC



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for

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## Table of Contents

|                                  |    |
|----------------------------------|----|
| Vision                           | 2  |
| Project Boundaries               | 2  |
| Executive Summary                | 3  |
| Process                          | 4  |
| Website & Social Media           | 5  |
| Existing Conditions              | 6  |
| The Charrette                    | 8  |
| Stakeholder Input                | 10 |
| Plan Recommendations             |    |
| 1.0 Oxbow                        | 12 |
| 2.0 Greater Ottumwa Park (South) | 14 |
| 3.0 Greater Ottumwa Park (North) | 16 |
| 4.0 Turkey Island                | 18 |
| 5.0 Downtown                     | 20 |
| 6.0 Bridge View District         | 22 |
| 7.0 Grey Eagle                   | 23 |
| 8.0 Mobility Framework           | 24 |
| Appendix A: Implementation Plan  | XX |
| Appendix B: Inventory            | XX |

## Riverfront Renaissance Vision

The following principles were distilled from community input throughout the Riverfront Renaissance process. These principles helped guide the planning process and should be used to help inform the implementation of the plan.

**Honor the rich history of Ottumwa.** All project work should acknowledge, preserve and celebrate the linkages and legacies that tie the community to this place through time.

**Be authentic.** No other place has Ottumwa's distinctive history and geography. Ensure that every project embraces and contributes to the uniqueness and authenticity of the community.

**The riverfront is a place for everyone.** The riverfront should be inviting and safe for all- young and old, residents and visitors.

**Embrace synergy.** The areas along the riverfront should work both individually and as a whole. Each of the parts should contribute to making a greater whole.

**Respect the natural environment.** Elements of the plan should reflect the community's role as steward of its natural assets.

**Be of top quality.** Every element of the built environment and of the public realm should exude quality and permanence. The public realm is an outward expression of community values, and as such it should be of the highest quality.

**Contribute to the prosperity of the community.** Ottumwa's riverfront should be an economic development engine. It should attract private and public investment and increase value.

**Be achievable.** The ultimate purpose of the plan is action. The implementation of aspirational but achievable goals is the cornerstone of the planning process.

## Project Boundary

The study area includes the three-mile stretch of the Des Moines River that lies within the city boundary of Ottumwa. In addition to the river frontage, the study area includes the area referred to as the oxbow, Greater Ottumwa Park, portions of downtown, the Church and Richmond Street commercial corridors, and the Grey Eagle Wildlife Preserve.



## Executive Summary

The Riverfront Renaissance plan is a community-based vision for the future of Ottumwa's most important natural resource- the Des Moines river. The plan considers land adjacent to the three-mile length of the river as it flows through the city limits and addresses issues such as recreation, mobility, economic development and conservation. The process includes a consensus community vision, recommendations for specific projects and improvements, and a plan for the implementation plan of the vision.

The history and development of the City of Ottumwa is inextricably linked to the Des Moines river. The river as a means of transportation, drinking water, and power generation influenced and shaped the early development of the town. For all of the benefits that the river conveyed, it was also an inherent source of danger. Catastrophic flooding of the Des Moines in Ottumwa happened in 1851, 1903, 1947, 1993 and 2008. This history of flooding led to the channelization of the river in the city core which itself created a number of challenges and opportunities. The task at hand is to create a vision for how the community can engage with the Des Moines River to improve quality of life and expand opportunities for all Ottumwans.

The daily life of the city of Ottumwa is currently disconnected from the river. As an example, in the town of roughly 25,000 there is but one restaurant where one can eat and see the water. Downtown is separated from the river by a number of elements: a very active rail line, undeveloped properties and parking lots, and the levee system. The river is channelized through the city core, and downtown sits approximately 20 feet above the water level below the dam. The dam makes boating near downtown and Ottumwa Park challenging at best. Directly across the river from downtown is a well used, but awkwardly programmed 350 acre public park. The best river-related usage is the system of levee trails. This is used extensively and is valued by the community. The showpiece of that system is an old railroad bridge that has been converted to a pedestrian connection across the river. On the whole, the areas surrounding the river in Ottumwa are underutilized and present a tremendous opportunity for the future.

"...the best way to revitalize the city is to build on the assets that exist within the community."

The Riverfront Renaissance plan seeks to build on Ottumwa's rich history, strengths, and unique characteristics to create a blueprint for the revitalization of the community. A multi-faceted approach was taken to engage a broad spectrum of citizens in sharing their ideas, concerns, hopes and aspirations for the riverfront. This process is

grounded in the principles of inclusion and participation, with a public process extended over several months. The work of the design team was guided by a citizen task force and way highlighted by a multi-day public charrette in July of 2014. The work produced by the citizenry during the charrette formed the basis for the development of this plan document and implementation plan. This plan represents a principle-based, consensus vision derived from community input.



Greater Ottumwa Park comprises 350 acres of passive and active public park in the middle of the city. The planning process has highlighted the fact that Greater Ottumwa Park is a unique community asset that has the potential to drive the revitalization of city. The park is currently divided into four quadrants by large-scale roads. Unfortunately, there has never been an overarching plan for the programming of the park, and as such, elements have been added ad hoc and placed arbitrarily throughout. This plan highlights the need for a cohesive park plan to bring order to the programming, and a vision for the future.

The plan seeks to maintain the current balance between active and passive uses. To accomplish this, the goal is maximize the intensity of use in areas that already given over to programming and to maintain

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and preserve the areas that are passive and undeveloped. In some cases this entails trading pieces of land to maintain that proportion. The large swath of land south of the railroad tracks between Ottumwa Hydro and the Jefferson Street viaduct has the greatest potential to serve as a signature piece of downtown/riverfront redevelopment. This site represents the best opportunity for a large-scale private development in the project area. The proposed buildings would provide active and animated ground-level uses with opportunities for residential in upper floors. This mixed-use redevelopment of the site could take advantage of the unparalleled river views, benefit from existing downtown development, bolster ongoing downtown revitalization efforts, and provide activity nodes for the trails system. In the public process, one of the biggest issues identified was the unsightly appearance of the downtown area when viewed from the south bank of the river. In addition to the economic development potential inherent in the site, the improvement of this area would mitigate those views and give a new face to Ottumwa's riverfront.

"...Greater Ottumwa Park is the unique community asset that has the potential to drive the revitalization of city."

During the charrette, there was a particular focus on creating a network of transportation and mobility choices for residents and visitors to the riverfront. This includes a better connection between the various attractions and assets such as the riverfront, downtown, and Ottumwa Park. The potential repurposing of excess pavement provides an opportunity to balance vehicular needs with the needs of other users. The goals is to create a complete and varied transportation system that affords users real choices for how they move to through the Riverfront.

While the riverfront holds the potential to revitalize the city, there is no silver bullet. Rather than hope for an outside investment, the best way to revitalize the city is to take advantage of existing assets in the community. Ottumwa's considerable assets include a massive public park and a downtown has been the driver for Southeast Iowa for the past century. While the provision of parks, open space and amenities is a good thing, the area is also in desperate need of development and investment opportunities to help pay for public improvements, provide jobs and contribute to quality of life. The plan strives to create a balance between public realm improvements and economic development.

## Process

The Riverfront Renaissance plan seeks to build on Ottumwa's rich history, strengths, and unique characteristics to create a blueprint for the revitalization of the community. A multi-faceted approach was taken to engage a broad spectrum of citizens in sharing their ideas, concerns, hopes and aspirations for the riverfront. This process is grounded in the principles of inclusion and participation, with a public process extended over several months. The work of the design team was guided by a citizen task force and way highlighted by a multi-day public charrette in July of 2014. The work produced by the citizenry during the charrette formed the basis for the development of this plan document and implementation plan. This plan represents a principle-based, consensus vision derived from community input.

### Inventory and Analysis

The process began with a detailed analysis of the project area. This analysis served as a starting point for the development of this integrated plan. Site analysis entailed an investigation of natural conditions such as hydrology, topography and vegetation, as well as elements of the built environment such as buildings, bridges, streets and other transportation facilities. The team also undertook research and analysis of the historical development patterns that led to the existing conditions within the site. Opportunities and constraints of the various districts that make up the study area were established, as were the identification of strengths and weaknesses. This inventory work formed a basis for design team deliberations, stakeholder interviews, the charrette, and the on-going work of the task force.

### Task Force

The Riverfront Renaissance Task Force was established in early 2014 to guide the work of the consultants and to act as a proxy for the community. The twelve member task force met monthly to discuss issues related to the plan, to give input on the process, and to serve as a sounding board for the consultant team. As work of this magnitude requires the input and participation a broad spectrum of stakeholders, partners and players, the task force worked to ensure that all voices in the community had the opportunity to be heard. Members of the task force also served as facilitators during the community design charrette, and were instrumental in disseminating information about the process to the community.

### Stakeholder Engagement

Property owners, potential developers, users of various riverfront spaces, elected officials and the general citizenry all have a stake in the future of the riverfront. A process was established to engage these groups to solicit input on the future of the community. Identifying and engaging these groups at an early stage also helped to engender buy in for the process, and helped to identify opportunities and challenges that otherwise might have been missed.

In addition to participant-driven conversation, the stakeholders were asked to engage in an exercise wherein each participant identified their three favorite places on the river, three least favorite places along the river, and the three places they believed had the most potential. The results of all of the exercises across all of the stakeholder groups were compiled and used as a basis for on-going work. While this is by no means a scientific survey, the results do highlight areas of the community that resonate with the citizenry. The resulting maps provided a valuable insight into community self-image, and helped refine the scope for the planning and design work in subsequent stages.

Riverfront Renaissance - Master Plan - DRAFT March 8, 2016 11:35 AM

### Public Process

The ultimate success of the effort to return to the river hinges on public support and ownership of the ideas. Toward that end, the general public and community stakeholders were involved throughout the process to cultivate that support. A wide variety of input techniques were employed in order to engage as broad a segment of the community as possible.

### Design Charrette

With opportunities and constraints established, stakeholders primed, and the public engaged, a design charrette was held to facilitate a community vision. The purpose of the charrette was to bring the community together in the process of producing a consensus vision, identifying opportunities for specific projects, and envisioning the future of the community.

The charrette kicked off on July 22nd with a community design workshop at the Bridge View Center. The evening began with a brief presentation by the consultants followed by a facilitated public input process that solicited ideas and visions for the future of the community. It is estimated that almost 200 Ottumwans attended. In keeping with the spirit of inclusion, facilitation and translation was provided for both English and Spanish speakers.

Following the community design workshop, the design team conducted a two-day open house design workshop. During this time, the team set about distilling and consolidating public comments and testing design concepts. Over the course of the open house, dozens of citizens stopped in to provide further comments and to watch the work in progress. The products of the workshop were a series of conceptual design diagrams and maps, as well as renderings of potential plan components.

On the evening of July 24th, a second public meeting was held at which time the design team presented the plan "in progress". This draft plan represented the community's vision for their future on the riverfront. After a presentation of the draft by the consultants, the public was invited to review the plan drawings and ask questions of the design team in an open, one-on-one setting.

### Plan Development

With the rough components of the plan established through stakeholder meetings and charrettes, the design team developed a more thorough, cohesive plan of a singular vision. Plan development entailed a more in-depth investigation of design concepts, and consistent back-checking of potential ideas against public input. The resulting plan embodies the spirit of public comment and provides a framework for achieving the community vision.

### Implementation

A plan is only as good as the action taken to make it a reality. Ottumwa has a range of resources that can be employed to implement the recommendations of this plan. While the plan recommends a broad range of ambitious projects, they can be achieved by creating a strong implementation structure that engenders effective public and private partnerships. The implementation plan includes cost opinions, suggests phasing and time lines, identifies parties responsible for implementation, highlights needed partnerships, and attempts to identify potential sources of funding and other resources.



## Website & Social Media

The public process for the Riverfront Renaissance process was augmented by robust online and social media components. These novel approaches to community input are in keeping with the plan principles of inclusivity and transparency. As the way in which society accesses information shifts, so must the strategies for engaging people in community visioning exercises. OttumwaRiverfront.com provides timely information on the process, access to process information, and provides opportunities for community input.

The website features:

- A homepage with information on upcoming meetings,
- An information page with links to inventory information, a gallery of public meeting and process photos, and updates from the results of all public meetings,
- A calendar of events,
- A survey/input page, and
- A contact page.

The survey page of the website provided an on-going opportunity for the community to share their vision for the riverfront. The survey questions were updated during the course of the process and included:

- What is your favorite place on the river?*
- What is your least favorite place on the river?*
- Which place on the river presents the greatest opportunity?*
- What is the most important element of the riverfront to preserve?*
- What characteristic of the riverfront is most in need of improvement?*
- What element or activity would you most like to see incorporated into a new riverfront?*

The results of the online surveys were compiled and reviewed by the design team as part of the input process. This information was then made available on the website in order for users to see what their neighbors had to say about the various questions posed.

To supplement the website, a Facebook page was created for the project: facebook.com/ottumwariverfront. This account was instrumental in helping to get to word out about the resources on the website, and advertising upcoming public meetings. Due to the social nature of the platform, the page also provided the opportunity for citizens to converse with one another about riverfront related topics.

The Twitter handle @RiverfrontPlan was created to broadcast information about the process. These tweets helped to spread the word about the project, conveyed links to relevant online information, and helped to drive traffic to the project website and Facebook page.

Each of the three web presences remain live and will continue to operate as the process moves from visioning and planning to implementation.



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## Existing Conditions

The city of Ottumwa is, in essence, disconnected from the river. For example, in the town of roughly 25,000 there is but one restaurant where one can eat in a waterfront setting. Downtown is separated from the river by a number of elements: a very active rail line, undeveloped properties and parking lots, and the levee system. The river is channeled through the city core, and downtown sits approximately 20 feet above the water level below the dam. Directly across the river from downtown is a well used, but awkwardly programmed 350 acre public park. The best river-related usage is the system of levee trails. This is used extensively and is valued by the community. The showpiece of that system is a railroad bridge that has been converted to a pedestrian connection across the river. On the whole, the areas surrounding the river in Ottumwa are underutilized and present a tremendous opportunity for the future.

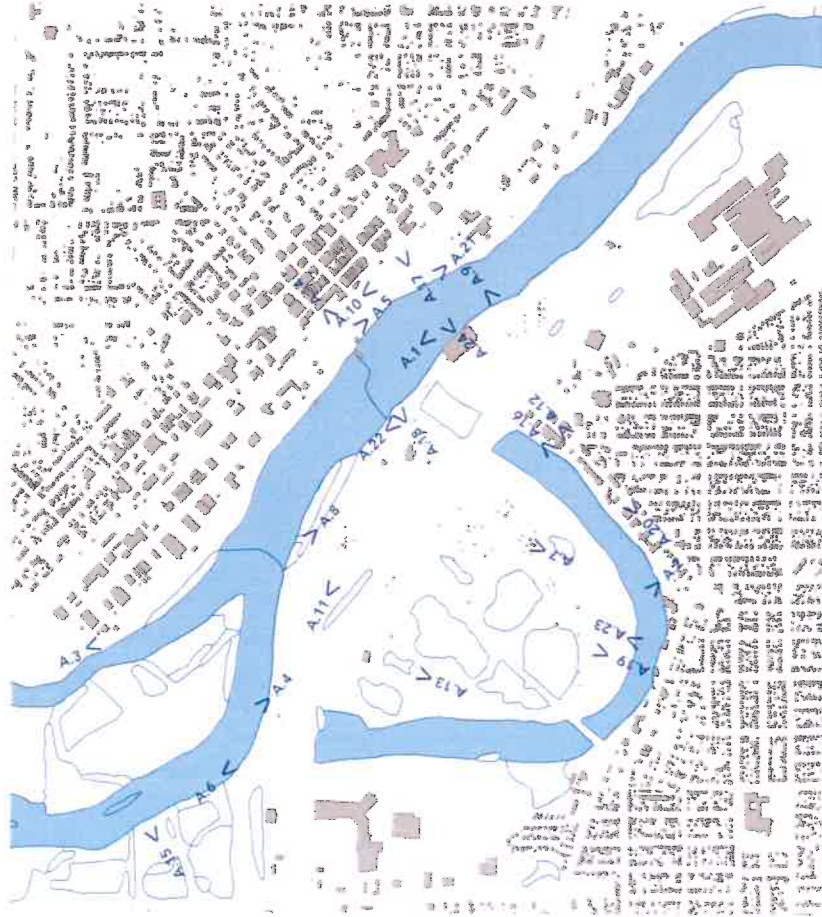


Figure A.1



Figure A.3



Figure A.5



Figure A.7



Figure A.2



Figure A.4



Figure A.6



Figure A.8



Figure A.9



Figure A.13



Figure A.17



Figure A.10



Figure A.14



Figure A.18



Figure A.22



Figure A.11



Figure A.15



Figure A.19



Figure A.23



Figure A.12



Figure A.16



Figure A.20



Figure A.24



## The Charrette

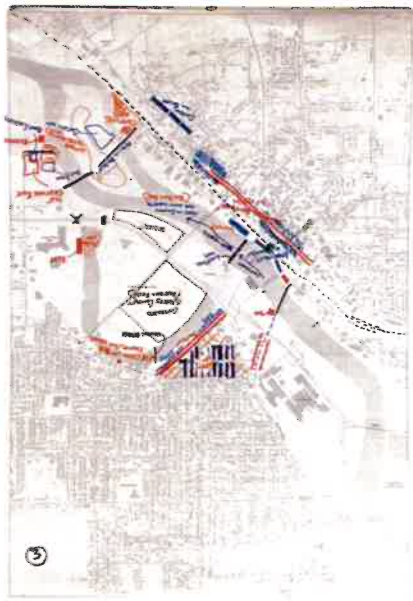
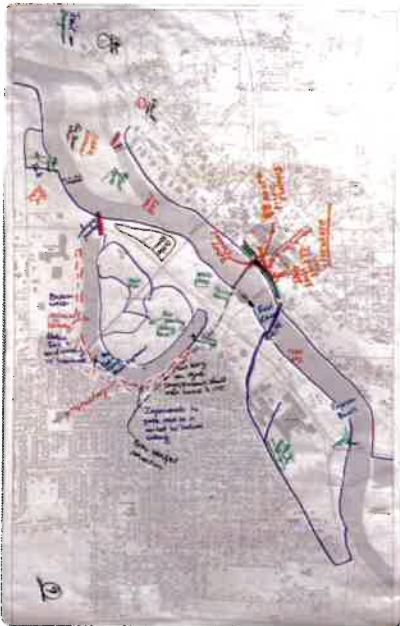
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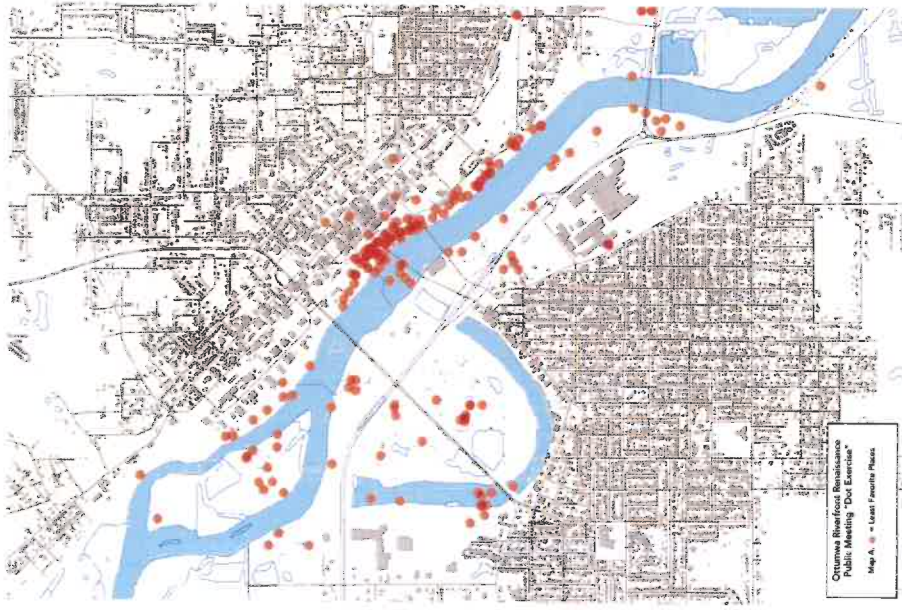
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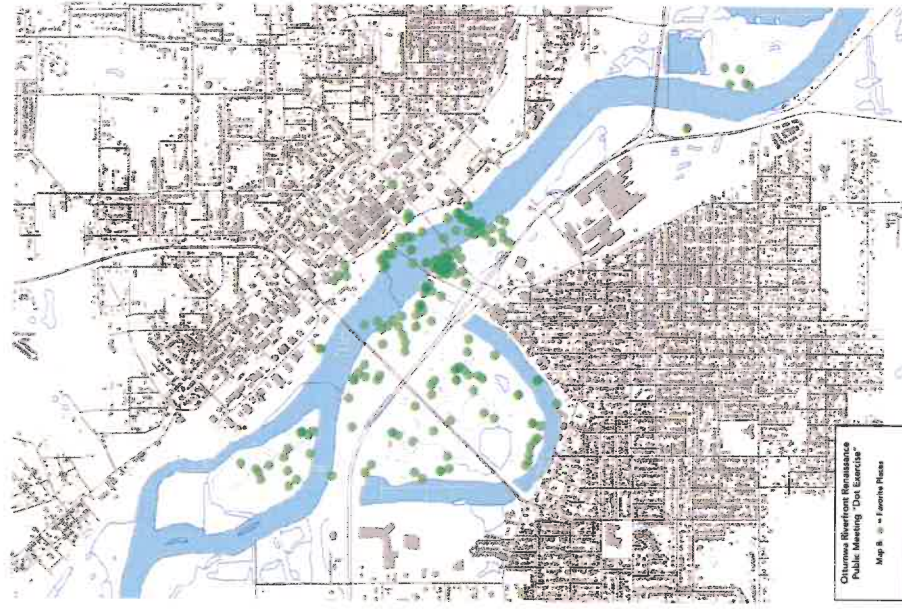
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## Composite Stakeholder Input Maps



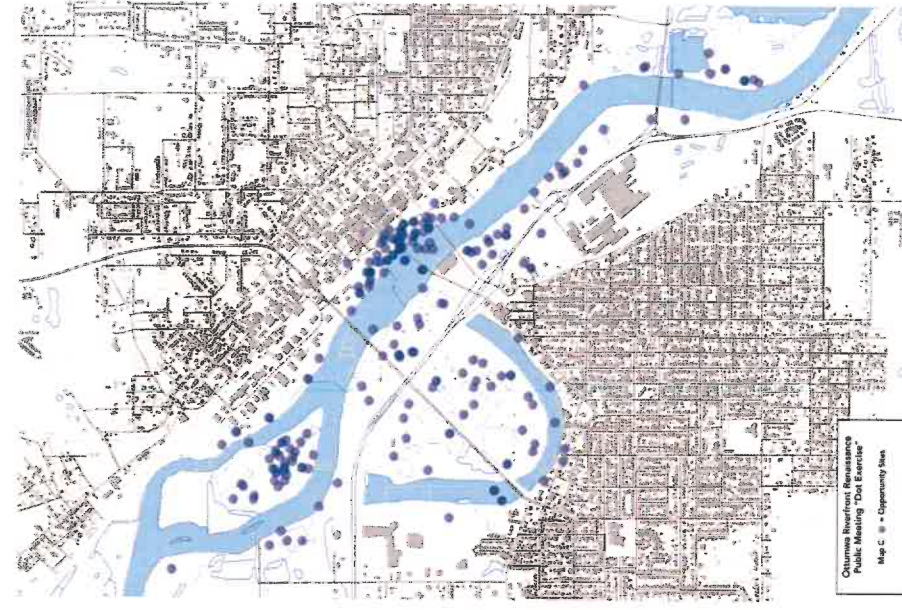
### Least favorite places along the river:

- Municipal parking lot - |||||
- Turkey Island - |||||
- Back of downtown buildings - |||||
- Hydro area - |||||
- Power substation - |||||
- Under Jefferson St Viaduct - |||||
- Silted area of cobow - |||||
- Stagnant lagoon in park - |||||



### Favorite places along the river:

- Trails - |||||
- Bridge View Center - |||||
- Greater Ottawa Park - |||||
- Wabash Bridge trail - |||||
- Turkey Island - |||||
- Hydro area - |||||
- The Beach - |||||
- Antrak - |||||



### Places along the river with the greatest opportunity

- Turkey Island - |||||
- Municipal lot - |||||
- North side of river - |||||
- Oxbow - |||||
- Greater Ottawa Park - |||||
- South of Bridge View - |||||
- Richmond Ave/Church Street - |||||
- Grey Eagle area - |||||



## Project Districts

Due to the large size of the study area, the whole can be considered as a series of distinctive districts, each with its own unique character. While each district has a unique character, they should be designed in a way that creates a coherent whole. The study area comprises seven discrete districts:

- A** The Oxbow - this district comprises the outside shore of the oxbow that encircles Ottumwa Park, including the development along Richmond and Church Streets.
- B** Ottumwa Park (South) - this is the portion of the park that lies to the southeast of Wapello Street/149.
- C** Ottumwa Park (North) - the portion of the park to the northeast of Wapello Street/149.
- D** Turkey Island - the large island and the western shore of the river that includes Blackhawk access.
- E** Downtown - the area on the river side of the railroad tracks between Ottumwa Hydro and Wabash Bridge.
- F** Bridge View District - the area between US 34 and the river from Wapello Street Bridge to Vine Street.
- G** Grey Eagle - the acreage contained in the Grey Eagle Wildlife Preserve, just outside of the southern city limits.

## 1.0 The Oxbow

The Oxbow, a body of water that surrounds Greater Ottumwa Park, is a former part of the Des Moines River. This area was essentially cut off from the main channel of the river when it was channelized in the 1950's. A series of valves still provides the opportunity to divert water into the oxbow as needed. The oxbow is clearly one of the underutilized assets in the study area as it presents one of the few opportunities where people can get close to the water in a more or less consistent and safe way. The outer banks of the oxbow are developed, while the inner banks are a part of Greater Ottumwa Park.

Currently, the businesses that front Church Street and Richmond Avenue "turn their back" on the Oxbow. The view from the back of these businesses of the oxbow with Greater Ottumwa Park beyond is one of the great vistas in all of Ottumwa. Virtually none of the existing establishment take advantage of that tremendous amenity. The lots between the businesses and the oxbow provide needed parking, however, there is sufficient space for potential improvements in many such spaces along the corridor.

There exists a small section of trail in the northeast portion of the Oxbow. This trail comprises a paved sidewalk and several jetties that extend into the water. The trail serves a blueprint for the potential extension of this condition along the edge of the oxbow. The majority of the property within this district is in private ownership. However, there appear to be a number of easements

in place that would allow for some type of trail element on the southern edge of the oxbow. Unfortunately, the oxbow currently provides overflow for the city's combined sewer overflow (CSO), and as such presents water quality issues. Consequently, the city passed an ordinance that forbids swimming or otherwise engaging with the water. The city is currently working on a series of sewer separation projects that will hopefully mitigate this issue.



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### Recommendations

#### 1.1 Oxbow Trail

The outside bank of the oxbow provides an excellent opportunity for the extension of the community's trail system. The trail would take advantage of some of the best views of Greater Ottumwa Park, while providing connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods and businesses. Within this corridor are a number of areas that would be suitable for use as pocket parks or interpretive stations.

#### 1.2 Commercial Opportunities

The land between the oxbow and the existing businesses on Church Richmond Street present a number of opportunities.

The parking lots behind the Church Street businesses currently provides needed capacity. The area is large enough, however, to accommodate other programmatic elements. The businesses in this section should consider providing services in this area to take advantage of the spectacular views and to serve potential customers that may use the proposed oxbow trail.

While the larger parking lots on the northern portion of the oxbow have the greatest capacity for trail-related commercial, there are a significant number of unimproved spaces adjacent top the oxbow that provide excellent opportunities for trail related commercial activities.

#### 1.3 Facade Improvement Program

In conjunction with expanded commercial opportunities behind the Church and Richmond Street businesses, work should be undertaken to improve the physical appearance of these areas. A grant program to help existing businesses improve and repair their oxbow-facing facades would contribute to the overall quality of the area, and bolster efforts to induce commercial activity.

#### 1.4 Dredge Silted Areas

The current flow characteristic of the Oxbow has created a situation where the southern portion of the west leg of the oxbow has become silted and choked with vegetation. The root cause of the situation concerns how water is allowed to flow from the Des Moines river through the oxbow and discharging below the dam. The recommendation is that the flow characteristic be adjusted to prevent future sedimentation, and that the existing sedimented area be dredged in order to reclaim the existing character of the oxbow.



The parking lot adjacent to the oxbow provides the opportunity for existing Church Street businesses to take advantage of this tremendous resource



## 2.0 Greater Ottumwa Park (South)

Greater Ottumwa Park comprises 350 acres of passive and active public park in the middle of the city. The planning process has highlighted the fact that this is the unique community asset that can drive the revitalization of Ottumwa. The park is currently divided into four quadrants by large-scale divided roads - Highway 34 and Wapello Parkway. The City of Ottumwa owns the park land, and the programming and most of the maintenance of the facilities are under the purview of the Parks Board. Unfortunately, there is no overarching vision plan for the programming of the park. As such, various programs and elements have been added ad hoc and placed arbitrarily throughout the park over time. The current situation highlights the need for a cohesive park plan to bring order to the programming and to plot a future course for making park improvements.

At approximately 108 acres, The southern quadrant of the park is the largest. This is one of the most heavily programmed areas in the park. The dominant use for this portion of the park are baseball/softball fields. There are currently a total of eight fields that range in size from youth softball to American Legion baseball. Other sports facilities in this area include basketball courts, tennis courts, and a volleyball pit. The southern portion of the site is largely passive, although there are a number of active playgrounds, as well as facilities for scouts and campers. This area is also home to many magnificent, mature trees. The park is well served by a number of roads, trails and parking areas. The facilities exist in a wide variety of conditions and states of repair.

The quadrant is also home to two large lagoons that provide wildlife habitat and add to the aesthetic quality of the park. While the southernmost lagoon is typically healthy, the lagoon to the north often dries and becomes clogged with algae and vegetation. A third lagoon that was once home to seasonal ice-skating was filled and converted to programmed space. The banks of the oxbow form the southern edge of the park. This edge is one of the more picturesque areas in Ottumwa. While there is a small landing for kayaks and other small crafts to put in to the oxbow, the legal of this activity is questionable due to city ordinance.



There are currently nineteen baseball and softball fields scattered throughout the community. These facilities should be consolidated into a single, first-class facility in Ottumwa Park.

## Recommendations

### 2.1 Baseball/softball complex

This quadrant provides to best possible opportunity to create a facility to serve the needs of the baseball and softball communities. The plan proposes consolidating the facilities that are currently scattered throughout the community and locating them at a single new facility. This single facility would be a far more efficient use of land, would result in cost savings, and presents opportunities for organizational and performance improvement. From a local perspective, a new high-quality facility will help establish an identity for the sport centering on a single place that has meaning to the community. From a visitors standpoint, such a facility is an economic development engine as it affords the community the opportunity to host large tournaments. These tournaments would bring visitors and their dollars to downtown Ottumwa, and showcase the tremendous assets of Greater Ottumwa Park.

The complex as envisioned in the plan includes fourteen fields (including the existing American Legion field). The complex would also incorporate more than 600 parking spaces, as well as all of the requisite items necessary for hosting high-level regional tournaments. Items such as lighting, storage facilities, restroom facilities, concessions areas, press boxes, bull pens and batting cages should be considered in the planning of the new facility.

### 2.2 Ice skating facility

The northernmost lagoon in this portion of the park often runs dry and becomes overgrown with vegetation. When healthy, the lagoon is an asset to the park, however, in its current state it is often seen as a blight. The plan calls for the improvement and reconfiguration of the lagoon. A portion of the existing lagoon footprint could be in-filled to provide space for the ball fields, while it can be extended north to provide essentially the same amount of surface area as currently exists. The promise of the reconfiguration is that it provides the opportunity to create an area purpose-built for an ice skating rink when the weather permits. The park once had an ice skating area, but it was subsequently removed. An ice-skating rink is a complimentary use as it will encourage activity in the park while other sporting activities are dormant.

### 2.3 Improved tennis courts

Currently, the community tennis courts exist in two separate quadrants of the park. A reconfiguration of this area provides an opportunity to consolidate these facilities into one larger complex. This complex would be able to share parking with the new baseball/parking complex making the most efficient use of that resource. The facility should be designed in such a way that it could host regional-scale tournaments while also serving the day-to-day needs of the community.

### 2.4 Improved basketball courts and volleyball pits

As the park is reconfigured to accommodate the other elements of the plan, the current basketball courts and volleyball pits will need to be relocated. The courts and pits will be redesigned and improved as part of the larger sports complex scheme. As with the tennis courts, this affords the opportunity to utilize a shared parking resource.

### 2.6 Trail connection

As planning and design for other improvements in the park progresses, care should be taken to create a high-quality trail system that connects to the larger community trails system.



### 3.0 Greater Ottumwa Park (North)

The Northern portion of the park comprises a wide variety of uses both active and passive. This area is currently divided by Highway 34, and there is no formal or safe pedestrian access between the north and south. Plans are currently underway for a pedestrian tunnel underneath Highway 34 to link this portion of the park to the south. This plan assumes that this connection will eventually be completed. The park is separated from the river by the levy system to the north, and is bordered by the oxbow to the west. The park is connected to the Quincy Place district by a trail that runs across the oxbow parallel to Highway 34.

The center of the area is a festival lawn that extends south from the Jimmie Jones Shelter to a stand of mature trees. The lawn is currently crossed by a number of internal roads. The large open space plays host to the annual Balloon Races, Winter Nights and Lights, and a variety of other community gatherings. An intermittently used horse corral occupies a small area on the western part of the site. The Jimmy Jones shelter is a well-used and functional

facility. This facility, however, has poor acoustical qualities and its design creates issues with nesting bird populations. While the facility is a useful amenity for the park, the existing structure leaves much to be desired. During the public input process, there was no sentiment expressed for the existing structure itself, only the activities that occur there.

A campground for recreational vehicles is located in the northeast corner of this area near the intersection of Wapello Parkway and Highway 34. The campground, despite being adjacent to a highway, is well used. Campground fees are currently the major income producer for Greater Ottumwa Park. A primitive camping area is located in a stand of mature trees on the southwestern portion of the site.

The site has two large lagoons that front Wapello Parkway. The lagoons serve as wildlife habitat and are periodically stocked with fish by the DNR. The annual fish release typically draws a number of recreational fishermen from across the region. There is no formal access from the park into the oxbow.

The northern portion of the site is currently home to a number of active recreational uses. The western portion of the site is home to the Bark Park- an outdoor recreational facility for dogs and their owners. The eastern portion of the site is given over to two adult softball fields. While well-used, the modest softball facilities are constrained by roads, rights-of-way, and the levy. Between the two is an international sized adult soccer field. The field has no supporting facilities, is not well-managed, and the playing surface is in poor condition due to over-use. On the northern portion of the site, the trail system runs along the rivers edge atop the levee.

The "back yard" of Quincy Place Mall lies directly across the oxbow from this quadrant of the park. Between the mall and oxbow are a massive parking lot, and a sizable swath of undeveloped land. This large parking lot is linked to the park by a paved pedestrian trail, providing potential overflow parking for both of the western quadrants of the park. The vast majority of the unimproved property in this area is owned by the City of Ottumwa.



The land between the oxbow and Quincy Place Mall could be the site of a high-quality, mixed-use development.

**Recommendations**

**3.1 New festival lawn**

The plan calls for the festival lawn to be improved by removing some of the superfluous vehicular paths and better defining the edges. This improved lawn and accompanying redesign of the Jimmie Jones shelter will make this lawn the premier place for large community gatherings and festivals.

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### 3.2 Redesigned Jimmy Jones pavilion

### 3.3 Development near Quincy Place Mall

### 3.4 Soccer Complex

### 3.5 Redesigned Bark Park

### 3.6 Trail connection

As planning and design for other improvements in the park progresses, care should be taken to create a high-quality trail system that connects to the larger community trails system.

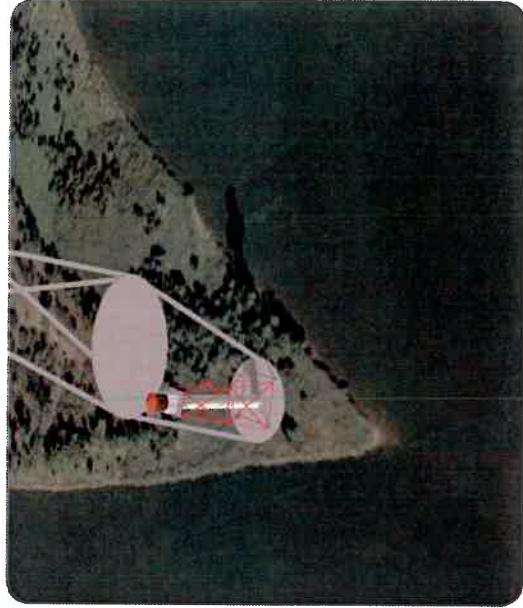
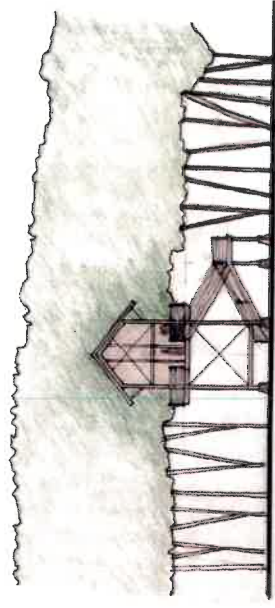


## 4.0 Turkey Island

Turkey Island is a large city-owned property with proximity to both downtown and Greater Ottumwa Park. Throughout the stakeholder input process, the island was identified as an area with tremendous potential. While the island was once developed to some extent, it is completely undeveloped now. Bridges that once allowed for automobile access to the island have been demolished. There are two active railroad bridges that currently provide rail passage across the river. The lack of connectivity renders the island inaccessible and the potential of the area remains untapped. While commercial development of the island is possible, it would require significant infrastructure investment.

The island is bisected by the DM&E Des Moines River Bridges (1&2). The northern portion of the island comprises approximately 53 acres of heavily wooded areas with mature trees. This area also includes a large inlet that once served as a marina/boating facility. The southern portion comprises about 31 acres consisting of a number of open fields and scattered stands of trees. This portion of the island was home to most of the prior development. There are no extant buildings, and little remaining evidence of the prior development save for the remains of some abandoned roads.

To the west of the island, at the terminus of Blackhawk Road is the Blackhawk access. This area comprises a modest boat ramp and an unimproved parking area. This area is one of the few boat access points within the study area. The existing ramp extends directly into the river channel. Consequently, the challenge of putting boats into the river with its strong current means that only the most skilled boaters typically use the current facility. There exist a number of inlets around the current facility that could be used for more convenient boat access to the river.



## Recommendations

### 4.1 New "Point Park"

The southern tip of Turkey Island is a prominent point in the river corridor. The plan suggests creating a passive park to celebrate this privileged position. A strong vertical element such as a lighthouse or sculpture could serve as a focal point and a signature element of the Riverfront Renaissance project. The point park would be accessible by a series of trails within the island, and connected to the broader community trail system via pedestrian bridges onto the island.

### 4.2 Trail extension & Pedestrian bridges

While Ottumwa is blessed with a robust trail system, it is in need of a western connector across the river. The plan proposes a series of pedestrian bridges to link Turkey Island to both the north and south shores. The bridges should be designed in such a way that they accommodate boat traffic on the river. These linkages would create a continuous trail loop. The pedestrian bridges also provide a needed pedestrian connection between residential areas to the north and the commercial areas along Quincy Street. It is suggested that the bridge over the north fork of the river be located to the south of the DM&E Des Moines River Bridges to avoid the creation of a new railroad crossing. The bridge over the south fork of the river should be located to tie in with new improvements in Greater Ottumwa Park, including the new pedestrian facility under Highway 34.

### 4.3 Tree house camping

Due to physical and psychological separation created by the river, Turkey Island seems miles away from development while remaining in the heart of the city. This creates an opportunity for a unique camping experience. The creation of a series of tree houses on the island would provide the opportunity for a semi-primitive camping experience with the benefit of being minutes away from the heart of the city. A nominal fee could be charged for use of the facilities, enabling them to pay for themselves over time.

### 4.4 Zip lines

It would be possible to connect the tree houses by a series of zip lines. These zip lines could be part of the tree house camping experience, as well as a recreational attraction unto themselves.

### 4.5 Blackhawk boating facility

This area represents the best opportunity for boat access to the river within the study area. The challenges presented by the current ramp precludes a large number of recreational boaters from using the facility. A new facility that takes advantage of the existing inlets would make the process safer and more accessible for a broad range of boaters. In addition to the improved ramp, the facility should also include upgraded facilities for outfitting and supplies, as well as fish cleaning stations and an improved parking area.



## 5.0 Downtown Edge

The large swath of land adjacent to downtown and south of the railroad tracks has the greatest potential to serve as the centerpiece for downtown/riverfront redevelopment. During the public input process, however, this land was identified as the least attractive place in the city. The City of Ottumwa is the major property owner of this area, although a number of parcels are owned by various railroad interests. In addition to the challenges involved in dealing with the railroads, development of the site may be constrained due to the large number of water and sewer lines that converge at the adjacent Ottumwa Hydro site. Despite these challenges, the strategic importance of the site as the downtown connection to the river cannot be overstated.

The northernmost portion of the site is a municipal parking lot that is traditionally the site of a number of community gatherings, in addition to providing overflow parking for the downtown area. Moving south across Market Street, the site is the current location of a skate park that is administered by the Parks Board. Further south, the majority of the land is owned by rail concerns, and is unimproved. The site is separated from the downtown by an active rail line. Connection between the site and downtown is limited to two access points- one at Market Street and one at Green Street. On-going discussions concerning quiet zone improvements at these intersections will greatly enhance the viability of potential development on the site.

The site is elevated above the level of the river and is separated from the water by a flood wall and levee. Below the dam, the separation between site and river level varies due to fluctuations in the river and dam operation, but is typically greater than 10 feet. The existing trail system runs through the site from Wabash Bridge to the skate park atop the levee, but has no formal expression as it enters the municipal parking lot. There are a number of modest public areas near the dam and the former pump house that serve as public space for the community. These areas are not, however, connected to the broader trails system and open space network. The areas do, however, offer some amenities such as bench seating and access to the river for fishermen.

While the river and the railroad largely constrain access to the site, there are a number of connections to the south side of the river. The renovated Market Street bridge (currently under construction) provides pedestrian and auto access and at-grade connection to the middle of the site. To the south, the Jefferson Street bridge runs through the site, but is elevated and does not directly access the site. The southern edge of the site is the landing of the Wabash Bridge- a pedestrian bridge that is a major component of the trails system. To the north, the dam spans the river and physically connects the north and south banks. The dam, currently off-limits to pedestrians, was identified as a desirable pedestrian connection during the public input process.

### Recommendations

#### 5.1 Mixed-use riverfront development

This site represents the best opportunity for large-scale private development in the project area. A mixed-use redevelopment of the site could take advantage of the unparalleled river views, bolster downtown revitalization efforts, and provide activity nodes for the trails system. The goal for the development should be to create an attractive and animated area that mixes commerce with a celebration of the city's position on its most important natural resource.

The proposed development incorporates active and animated ground-level commercial uses with opportunities for residential in upper floors. The development proposed in the charrette includes roughly 84,000 sf of commercial spaces and 200 residential units. Proposed parking spaces should be configured to serve new development as well as existing overflow downtown parking needs.

In the public process, one of the biggest negative issues identified was the poor appearance of the rear areas of downtown buildings. In addition to the economic development potential inherent in the site, improvements in this area would mitigate views and give a new face to Ottumwa's riverfront.

#### 5.2 Improved trail facilities

The trails system currently extends through the site along the levee. New development in the area provides an opportunity for the trail to be upgraded to a more robust riverwalk facility. A public promenade that is fronted by private development provides the opportunity for outdoor dining and entertainment, as well as interpretive public space amenities. This active and animated portion of the trails system has the potential to be the signature element of the riverfront.

#### 5.3 Relocated skate park

The current skate park is a well-used recreational facility. However, it's proximity to a busy road and rail line detracts from the potential of this amenity. The plan recommends relocating the park within the site. Input from the process led to the recommendation that they facility be relocated to a site under the Jefferson Street viaduct. Moving the park away from the Market street allows for an expansion and upgrade of the skate facilities. There are several recent precedents of skate parks that have been built in reclaimed public space under existing transportation facilities that can serve as a model for new facilities.

#### 5.4 Rotary Park

The Ottumwa Rotary Club has procured funding for the creation of a Rotary Park. There are a number of sites within this district that would be appropriate for such community-sponsored public space improvements. Two alternate sites have been identified: near the intersection of Market Street and the Railroad, and the proposed park along the Court Street axis. It must be noted, however, that the location of such facilities should complement the community vision for the district, and not be administered in an ad hoc fashion.

#### 5.5 Reconfigured Parking

The existing site provides needed overflow capacity for downtown parking. As plans for the redevelopment of the area are fleshed out, it is imperative that broader parking concerns in the district be considered. New development in the area will require parking to support commercial and residential uses.



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**5.6 Court Street Park extension**  
 One of the key urban design maneuvers in the plan is the expression of the axis from Central Court Street to the river. This makes the connection between the civic heart of community and its birthplace- the river.

The plan calls for a public open space that runs through the existing municipal lot between the terminus of Court Street and the dam. The plan also calls for a pedestrian bridge over the rail lines to make a literal connection between Court Street and the new park. In the event that a pedestrian bridge is not feasible, the visual connection of the axis is sufficiently powerful to express the concept.



## 6.0 Bridge View District

To the east of Bridge View Center is a large area of recreational use and river frontage. The site is divided by the levee that runs parallel to the river. The sliver of land on the river side of the levee contains a sandy beach, a very modest boat ramp, and a few parking spaces. To the south of the levee is a large recreational area. While the trail system provides pedestrian access to the site, automobile access is very constrained. There is no direct auto access from the Highway 34 off ramp or the Jefferson Street Bridge. The sole access point to the site is located under the Jefferson Street Bridge. The Bridge View Center parking lot. The site, however, has the benefit of being located next to Bridge View Center and the southern terminus of the Wabash Bridge—one of the most popular features of the trails system. Access constraints aside, this area has the potential to support surrounding development and be an important contributor to riverfront development.

This section of river frontage represents one of the few opportunities for the community to interact with the river. Unfortunately, the water level below the dam is typically too low to make this a viable access point. While there exists a boat ramp, it is in a poor state or repair. Additionally, the challenges presented by putting directly into the river channel makes this a difficult proposition for all except the most experienced boaters. The sandy area adjacent to the boat ramp, however, suggests opportunities for recreational use on the site.

South of the levee is a twelve acre site that is largely given over to active recreational use. This site is the home of the National League youth baseball program and comprises a number of small ball fields with supporting parking areas. The western portion of the site also serves as an overflow parking facility for large events at the Bridge View Center.

### Recommendations

#### 6.1 New hotel

One of the goals of the plan is to create places that will draw visitors to Ottumwa for a variety of activities. To fully realize that potential, the community needs to expand its hospitality capacity. New uses in Ottumwa Park and the existing attraction of the Bridge View Center would benefit greatly from a new, high quality hotel located in close proximity. The areas directly adjacent to the Bridge View Center provide a couple of potential sites with high visibility and accessibility.

The first is located on the Bridge View property at the far end of the parking lot. While the parking lot provides needed capacity for large events at the Center, a portion of the parking lot would be a suitable site for a hotel. A new building can reinforce the character of Church Street, and create a shared parking arrangement with the Bridge View Center.

The second site is across Church Street from Bridge View where tennis courts are currently located. The plan recommends the consolidation of tennis courts into a single facility in Ottumwa Park. This surplus land would be another suitable location for a new hotel. The new building should reinforce the character of Market Street and take advantage of extant lagoons and trees on site. Some parking could be accommodated on site, with overflow capacity available at both the Bridge View Center and The Beach.

#### 6.2 River access for boats

The river access point to the southeast of Bridge View is not ideal, but it still presents one of the few places within the city limits that boats can access the river. A new facility should be considered that would provide easier and more convenient access when the river level allows.

#### 6.3 "Beach" facility

Adjacent to the boat landing is a sandy area along the river bank. This area could be cleaned and more formally established as a river "beach" that would allow for recreational activities, both passive and active, in close proximity to the water's edge.

#### 6.4 Amphitheater

The fields south of the levee, currently occupied by youth baseball fields, provide a range of opportunities for the districts. Assuming that the baseball operations can be accommodated within the new facility in Ottumwa Park, this land would be available for other uses. This space is primed to be an outdoor adjunct to the Bridge View Center. This would give the Center the opportunity to program outdoor festivals and events to augment or complement their current offerings.

#### 6.5 Parking

Big events at the Bridge View Center generate parking pressures within the district. The plan recommends that a portion of the unimproved property to the east of Jefferson Street Bridge be graded and prepared for parking use. This parking can serve as overflow for Bridge View Center and as a primary source for events in the adjacent open space.





## 7.0 Grey Eagle

Grey Eagle Wildlife Preserve comprises 142 acres along the river, just outside of the Ottumwa city limit. The area is a prime location for birding as it attracts migratory waterfowl, songbirds, and shorebirds. The area is also home to a wide variety of wildlife and native vegetation. The preserve is connected to the trails systems by a number of paths. A parking area for the trails system is currently located in the preserve as well.

### Recommendations

#### 7.1 Strengthen connections

While the preserve lies outside of the city limits, its prominent position on the river makes it a key element in the greater riverfront corridor. Due to this location, however, special effort should be made to ensure that the connection between the preserve and the rest of the riverfront areas are generous and accessible. The existing trail paths that lead to and through the preserve should be upgraded where appropriate to strengthen these connections.

#### 7.2 Establish trailhead

Due to the location and nature of the attraction, Grey Eagle presents an excellent opportunity for the creation of a significant trailhead for the trails system. The area serves as the southern gateway for the trails system as it enters into Ottumwa. The site affords the opportunity for ample parking, support facilities such as restrooms, and for interpretive exhibits and displays.

#### 7.3 Create Interpretive stations

Due to the rich variety of flora and fauna in the preserve, there exists an excellent opportunity for education and interpretation. Appropriate areas in and around the preserve should be identified as potential locations for interpretive stations or informational kiosks.

#### 7.4 Improved trail facilities

The trails system currently extends through the site. This initiative provides an opportunity for the trails to be upgraded and connected to a more robust riverwalk facility. This natural and preserved portion of the trails system has the potential to be a signature element of the trails system.

## 8.0 Mobility Framework

During the charrette, there was a particular focus on creating a network of transportation and mobility choices for residents and visitors to the Ottumwa Riverfront by better connecting the various attractions and assets such as the Riverfront, Downtown, and Greater Ottumwa Park. By balancing vehicular needs with the opportunity to re-purpose excess pavement for other users, a plan was formulated that achieves the goal of a complete and varied transportation system. That system will afford users real choices for how they move about and around the Ottumwa Riverfront while adding value and creating place.

Traffic volumes have declined on many of Ottumwa's streets, and within the Downtown and Riverfront area this gives ample opportunity to re-purpose pavement that is no longer required to move cars. To support the various area proposals developed during the charrette, a mobility plan was developed that focused on moving people and not just cars, while creating places that give Ottumwans choices for how they move about Downtown and the Riverfront. The recent one-way street conversions in Downtown are an example of how streets can be re-purposed when traffic volumes no longer dictate a need for the amount of pavement that is currently built.

A series of mobility initiatives were developed, and the recommended mobility framework is illustrated in the framework diagram. This mobility framework will enable the plan to come to fruition, while creating an interconnected network of multi-modal choices for Ottumwa.

### Recommendations

#### 8.1 Retrofit Complete Streets

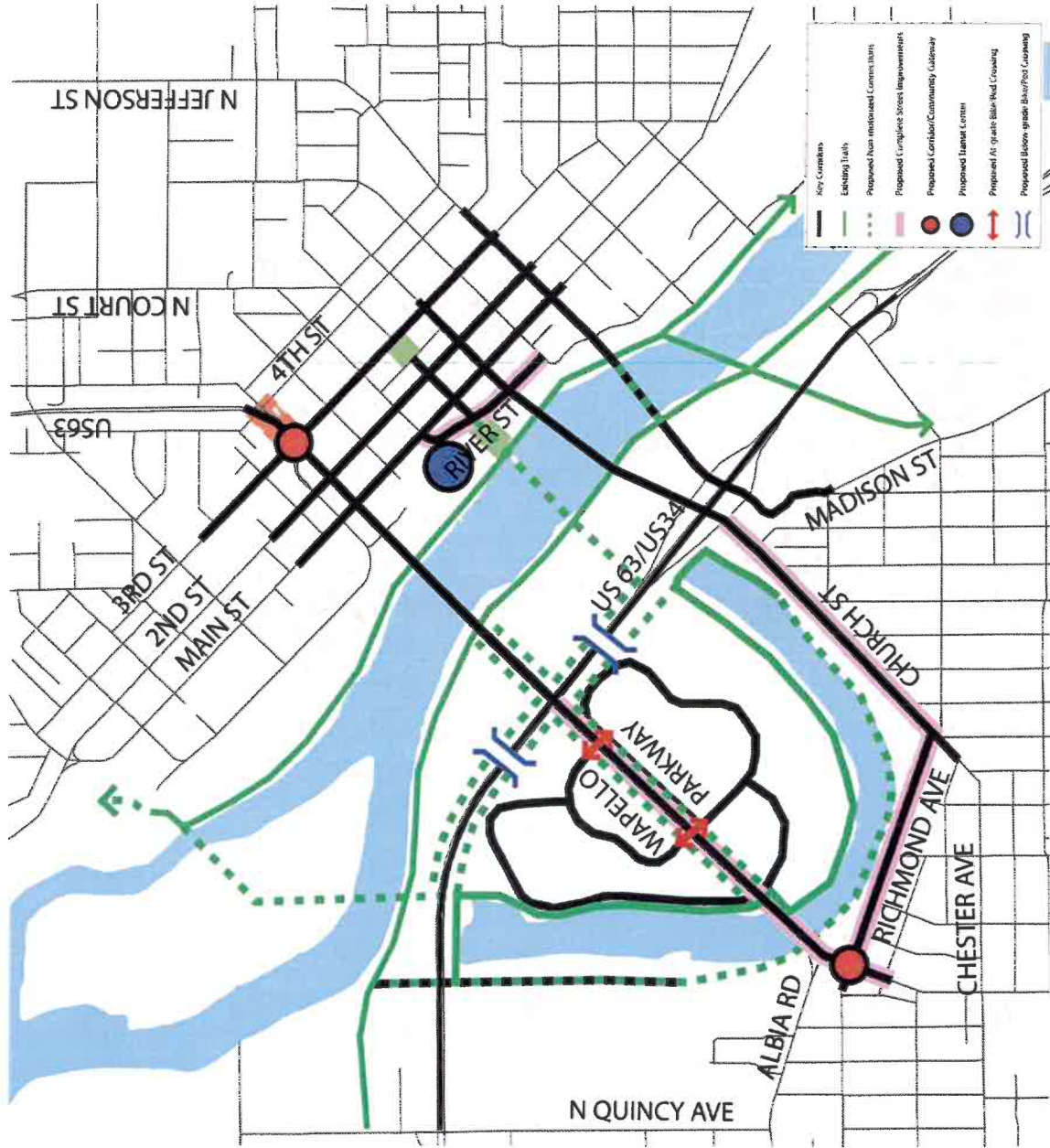
Many streets in Ottumwa serve car movement extremely well, but are seen as barriers to pedestrian and bicycle movement. Traffic volumes do not warrant the number and width of lanes in many cases, affording an opportunity to rebalance the streets to move people better, and not just cars. By adhering to the principles of complete streets, in which streets are designed to afford people choices in how they move about, many Ottumwa streets can be rebalanced. Three major "complete the street" initiatives developed during the charrette.

#### 8.2 Transit Hub at Train Station

Ottumwa is fortunate to have daily Amtrak service; however, the current location of the train station is disconnected from the transit serving Downtown Ottumwa. During the charrette, a scheme was developed to relocate the existing bus shelter from its current location in the heart of downtown to the area of River Street adjacent to the train station. This would enable visitors disembarking from Amtrak to use the transit system to access Downtown and beyond. A linear bus transfer could be accommodated along River Street by reducing the number of travel lanes from four to two, and the pavement reallocation could also accommodate a bicycle facility along River Street. By placing the main transfer point along this segment of River Street, the system could be better connected for all potential users, while maintaining the current bus shelter as a local transit stop in Downtown Ottumwa.

#### 8.3 Pathway and trail system within Greater Ottumwa Park

Concurrent with the reorganization of the park access road system, a perimeter trail system could be created that allows access around Greater Ottumwa Park.



In addition, new access streets within the park will accommodate on street parking, pedestrians, and cyclists as well.

#### 8.4 Trails System

The trails system is a tremendous asset and is highly used by the community. This facility has the potential to not only be a top-notch recreational facility, but a viable mode of transportation for large segments of the population.

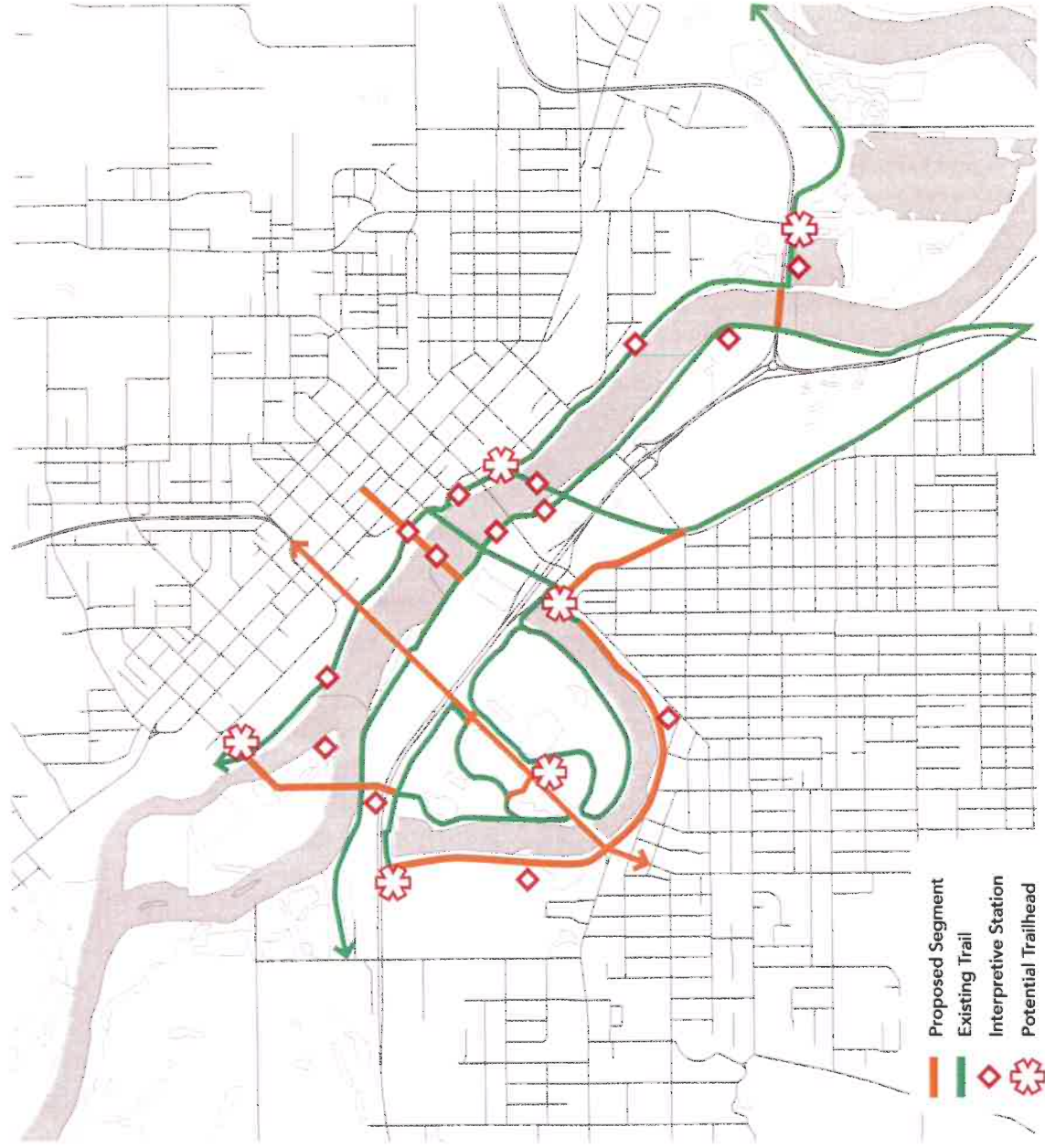
The primary connections across the Des Moines River are provided at the Wabash pedestrian bridge and the Market Street bridge. There is, however, no cross-river connection to the north. This prevents cyclists and pedestrians from using the system as a loop. This situation also inhibits accessibility from Greater Ottumwa Park to the train station and Downtown proper. Two new connections are proposed.

A pair of pedestrian bridges are proposed to connect Turkey Island to the north and south sides of the River. This will create a viable pedestrian route from the northern parts of Ottumwa to Greater Ottumwa Park and the commercial areas along Quincy Street.

A second trail connection is proposed across the dam. This will provide access from Greater Ottumwa Park and the south shore directly into the heart of Downtown Ottumwa. While there are some security and maintenance concerns associated with public access to the dam, there are design solutions that can mitigate those issues.

In addition to the loop connections a number of new trails segments are proposed. A path along the southern edge of the oxbow would take advantage of this scenic asset and unlock opportunities for economic development along that edge. As Ottumwa Park is re-envisioned, special attention should be paid to how those pedestrian facilities link to the broader trails system.

The plan also recommends that the character of trail be adjusted based on location. Segments of the trail that are located in less developed areas can be minimalist in order to fit the character of the area and conserve resources. Segments of the trail in highly visible and urbanized places (downtown for instance) should be more highly detailed and appointed. This expression of a high quality public realm amenity will draw users and contribute to the overall quality of the community.





### 8.5 Wapello Parkway

Greater Ottumwa Park is a fantastic community resource, but has the disadvantage of being divided into four quadrants by Wapello Street and US 63/34. Traffic volumes on both US 63/34 and the segment of Wapello Street north of US 63/34 are high enough (in the range of 20,000 vehicles per day) to warrant the current cross section, and the conclusion of the charrette was to pursue connections under US 63/34 to connect the four quadrants of Greater Ottumwa Park (the existing levee trail connects under the northern section of Wapello Street), efforts are underway to develop one crossing west of Wapello Street and this study recommends another to the east. However, traffic volumes drop considerably on Wapello Street south of US 63/34, affording an opportunity to reallocate pavement to serve more users and to physically narrow the divide between the east and west sections of Greater Ottumwa Park. It is recommended that Wapello Street be narrowed from four travel lanes to two travel lanes between US 63/34 and Richmond Avenue; concurrent with this narrowing, the existing 6-foot grass strip in the median should be widened to 24 feet, and planted with a "parkway" level of streetscape with appropriate decorative lighting. The two travel lanes should also incorporate parallel on street parking, and a one-way cycle track should be developed to provide a high-level bicycle facility through the park. Finally, Wapello Street should be renamed "Wapello Parkway" through this segment, in keeping with the idea of a grand parkway serving Greater Ottumwa Park. Two HAWK signals are proposed to provide at-grade pedestrian crossings on this segment as well. Wapello Parkway has the potential to be a signature Complete Street not only for Greater Ottumwa Park, but for the City of Ottumwa as a whole.





#### 8.6 Church Street

Church Street forms an important commercial spine on the south side of the Des Moines River. While some on-street parking is available along the street, it is not geared toward supporting non-motorized forms of travel such as biking or walking. While the commercial core is very close to the River and levee trail, it feels very distant if you are on foot or a bike.

Since Church Street currently carries fewer than 5,000 vehicles per day, there is an opportunity to rebalance the street and create opportunities to reallocate space and asphalt for other uses. The proposed reconfiguration re-purposes the second northbound travel lane into a combination turn lane and spot medians, adding green space and streetscape opportunities while physically and visually narrowing the street. It is also recommended that sharrows be installed in the travel lanes to indicate a shared condition between vehicles and bicycles; this treatment is appropriate given the lower travel speeds expected with the re-balancing of the street. Finally, on-street parallel parking is retained to serve the emerging commercial district along the corridor.



#### 8.7 Richmond Avenue

Similar to Church Street, Richmond Avenue forms an important corridor link between the Church Street commercial district and Greater Ottumwa Park. Like Church Street, Richmond Avenue has excess width that could be re-purposed to enhance the quality of travel service for all modes of travel, and can be enhanced to incorporate complete streets principles. Richmond Avenue carries approximately 9,000 vehicles per day, dictating the need for two through travel lanes. The current pavement width on Richmond Avenue is 31 feet, affording opportunity for reallocation of pavement for other uses.

During the charrette, the concept was developed to create two 10-foot travel lanes and an 11-foot landscaped median. The median could be broken to provide for a left turn lane where needed. Similar to the recommendation for Church Street, sharrows will be provided in the travel lanes to indicate a shared condition for cyclists, and to provide a critical link between Church Street and the southern end of Greater Ottumwa Park.



