

Walcott, Iowa

July 24 & 25, 2012

Consultant Team:

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PURPOSE & INTRODUCTION OF DOWNTOWN ASSESSMENT TEAM

The City of Walcott, in partnership with the Walcott Visioning Committee, contracted with the Iowa Downtown Resource Center, Iowa Economic Development Authority (*IEDA*), to conduct a Downtown Assessment Visit in Walcott, IA on July 24 & 25. The two day assessment visit entailed participation in a community familiarization and downtown walking tour, interviews with 72+ local leaders and stakeholders representing public and private sectors in the community of Walcott. The oral report provided at the culmination of the visit and the report's contents are based upon a review of relevant community materials prior to the visit, the two-day onsite familiarization activities and local input, and the Team's extensive working knowledge in downtown economic development.

The Iowa Downtown Resource Center Assessment Team was comprised of two downtown revitalization development professionals:

Janet McCannon C.M.S.M. Consultant, Burlington, IA McCannon is a former Director of Main Street of Burlington, Downtown Burlington Business Association and of Downtown Partners, Inc. She earned the designation Certified Main Street Manager (*C.M.S.M.*) through the Certification in Professional Main Street Downtown Management Institute, National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center in Washington D.C. McCannon is a graduate of the University of Illinois and has taken graduate studies from the University of Iowa. A wealth of information and passion for downtown redevelopment has resulted from varied professions/occupations/ vocations, such as: ten years as a social studies/history teacher in the Burlington Community School system; a small business (*bridal shop*) owner in downtown Burlington; fifteen years as a downtown department store buyer; ten years as director of downtown redevelopment organizations; two terms on the Burlington City Council; tour guide trainer for the Burlington Convention and Tourism Bureau; local liaison for MetroPlains Development in the rehabilitation of a vacated for almost 20 years hotel into 75 housing units; served on the State Historical Society Board of Trustees; and as a contract consultant for the Iowa Department of Economic Development. McCannon remains active in many community committees and boards.

Debi Flanders C.M.S.M. Main Street District Specialist, Iowa Downtown Resource Center, Iowa Economic Development Authority, Des Moines, IA. Flanders began her career at IEDA in 2000, serving in the capacity of Community Consultant for three years. She worked with economic development organizations and city and county governments in a 34 county region, providing technical assistance and guidance in tourism, commercial and industrial economic development. In her present capacity as Main Street District Specialist, her responsibilities entail working with Main Street communities and providing assistance related to downtown commercial development and revitalization to cities throughout Iowa. Flanders' previous economic development experience includes serving nine years as the Main Street Sigourney Program Director and four years as Director of the Sigourney Area Development Corporation. She is a graduate of the Heartland Basic Economic Development Course and the Economic Development Institute and earned her Certified Main Street Managers' (*C.M.S.M.*) credentials through the Certification in Professional Main Street Downtown Management Institute, a National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Center course. Flanders graduated from Truman State University with a Bachelors degree in Science Education and a Master's in Art Education. Past occupations include teaching, cottage business owner, and downtown retail. Flanders continues to call Sigourney her home and resides in Des Moines during the work week.

OVERVIEW

The Downtown Assessment Visit report and recommendations for Walcott, Iowa are based on the familiarization process and the Team's professional experiences, totaling over 46 years. The Team's beliefs are grounded by the philosophy that if the community stakeholders want to re-establish the historic commercial district as the social and commercial center of the community – *the physical heart and soul of the city* – the district must become more valuable physically, economically, socially, and politically. The community has to make the final decision in establishing the priorities of the community and decide if downtown revitalization is a priority.

Standard dialogue with the community begins with an introduction to the fundamentals of downtown revitalization, why downtown is important, as well as an explanation of some of the forces that have influenced present day viability.

- ❖ Downtown serves as the symbol of the community's economic health. The commercial activity and vibrancy of downtown is a reflection of the health and investment within the entire community.
- ❖ The viability of downtown is important to both public and private sectors. Government officials and taxpayers have a vested interest in the health of downtown and the valuation of its commercial properties. Since the welfare of downtown is both a public and private concern, it is in everyone's best interest to form a partnership to address its revitalization. Both sectors have resources and expertise to contribute to the revitalization process.
- ❖ The local quality of life (*livability*) is reflected through the condition of downtown. The trend today is that workers will change their employment and careers multiple times in their lifetimes. Many of the younger members of the workforce will base their location decisions upon where they prefer to live. Quality of life is a key factor in industrial, commercial, and professional business, as well as employee recruitment.
- ❖ Downtown reflects local pride and the values of the community. Much can be learned about a community and its values by exploring its downtown.
- ❖ Downtown is a functioning, living museum. It speaks volumes about how the community began developing, how it has evolved and influences that have been instrumental in its development. Walcott is unique – with its own character and history that sets it apart from any other place.

Downtown revitalization is economic development. 1) Downtown is a prime location for incubating small business. 2) It is an affordable location for independent businesses and one of the community's major employers. 3) The commercial center provides a compact environment with multiple stories for commerce and living spaces. 4) Maximizing the functionality of downtown properties through rehabilitation and adaptive use reduces sprawl and the costs associated with extending city services and infrastructure. 5) Preservation and rehabilitation eliminates demolition costs and substantially reduces landfill usage. 6) The pedestrian friendly environment is convenient and accessible, reduces energy costs associated with vehicular destinations, and serves as the center for not only commercial trade but also cultural, social, and civic engagement. 7) Historic downtown districts are heritage tourism attractions. 8) A building's condition, the business' viability and maximization of the building's square footage for income generation affects not only the property's value, but also the value of the neighboring properties and real estate in the entire community. When the downtown is healthy and vibrant, it can "*pay its fair share*", thus lessening the tax burdens on residential and industrial property owners. The health of downtown is directly related to the entire community's economic well being and sustainability.

Downtowns everywhere look and function much differently than they did even a decade ago. External forces have had gradual dramatic effects upon business viability and the character of our nation's historic commercial districts. Increased mobility, commuter trends, and technological connectedness have significantly altered retail business. Increasing regional and global competition (*big box retail and lifestyle centers, e-tailing, shopping networks, and*

catalog sales) have expanded consumers' options. Nationwide, competition for the consumer dollar is at an all time high. In 1960, there were 4 sq. ft. of retail space per person in comparison to today's 40 sq. ft. per person. Women make 83% of the household purchasing decisions. Working men and women are forced to make the majority of purchases on weekends and after work on weekday evenings, with Sundays reaping the highest sales. Predictably, commuters make purchases before heading home after work. Different generations of consumers have different spending habits and expectations. Most consumers expect quality and exemplary customer service and they want to be entertained, educated, and discover unique offerings. They like to be mentally and physically engaged and "experience the place".

In addition to the changing business climate, cities across the U.S. share common concerns associated with the physical dynamics of the commercial properties and downtown environment. Some of those challenges include deferred maintenance as well as inappropriate building modifications, use of materials and applications, demolition, and infill development. Covered, boarded up, and scaled down display windows have reduced product advertising space and created barriers the decrease or eliminate the opportunity to visually entice potential customers into the stores. Business signage is an advertising billboard and directly influences customers' expectations of the value of goods and services. The overall physical appeal of the exterior storefront and directly influences customers' decisions.

Physical modifications in downtowns were not made with malicious intent to harm the historic character of a particular building. Owners were seeking possible solutions in reaction to the external influences that were changing commerce in downtowns. They did not realize by removing, disrupting, or concealing the unique, character-defining elements, these changes altered the charm of entire districts, affected marketability, and contributed to its eventual decline.

Other common concerns regarding our nation's downtowns include disinvestments occurring in the form of the relocation of government facilities, post offices, libraries, banks, and retail stores to the outskirts of town. This decentralization reduces the reasons people have to come downtown and eliminates the opportunity for those customers to shop conveniently at multiple locations during the same trip. Add to this list of concerns, the conversion of first floor retail into residential space and the under-utilization of buildings (*vacant multiple stories and properties used for storage*). Once retail space is altered into residential units, it is unlikely the space will be converted back to retail. Under-utilization of multiple floors reduces the potential for property owners to maximize their income and substantially impacts the amount of capital available for reinvestment. Deferred maintenance is generally, leading to deterioration, eventual demolition, and gaps are created. Maximizing the use of the multiple stories of properties is one of the "greenest", most sustainable practices.

As a downtown's physical and economic values diminish, the district's social and political values are also affected. The more varied the functions of downtown, the more often people will frequent the district at different times of the day. Promotional venues that attract people to downtown for social, cultural, recreational, and retail experiences increase the appreciation of downtown through positive associations. These become an emotional connector and participants will value the district more, feel they have a stake in its future, and be more likely to support it.

The focus of the assessment was on downtown and the intent of this process was to help Walcott determine their potential from the standpoint of local interest, commitment, and whether there is sufficient historic infrastructure to warrant a downtown revitalization initiative. This assessment process occurred in a relatively short span of time. The Assessment Team interviewed approximately 72+ individuals representing a cross section of stakeholders in the community and learned about the downtown's history, present condition, and the stakeholders' aspirations for the future. This report cannot and does not provide all of the answers. Community stakeholders must decide what is relevant, realistic, and explore their options.

**"Never doubt that a small group of committed dependable citizens can change the world.
Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."**

-Margaret Mead-

"ONE WORD" DESCRIPTIONS

**indicates responses voiced multiple times / boldfaced responses indicate frequency was significant*

The Assessment Team asked interviewees for "one word" descriptions of Walcott.

- **friendly***
- **quiet***
- welcoming*
- caring*
- bedroom*
- safe*
- peaceful*
- sleepy*
- small*
- home*
- quaint*
- pride*
- community*
- united
- bedroom community
- fun loving
- diversified

- fragmented
- neat
- adaptive
- well-maintained
- close knit
- cliquey
- beautiful
- family
- futuristic
- lucky
- local community
- helpful
- small town
- cozy
- conservative
- failing
- outspoken

- constant
- supportive
- moving back
- comfortable
- great
- warm
- active
- having a blast

Student Responses (10 students)

- friendly*
- safe*
- small*
- quiet
- closer
- well knit

The Assessment Team asked interviewees for "one word" descriptions of Walcott's downtown.

- **nonexistent*** / none exists
- small* / smaller / very small
- desolate*
- dead*
- dwindling*
- deteriorating*
- void*
- needs updating*
- declining*
- hidden
- lacking
- decentralized
- splintered
- aged
- died away
- nearly dead
- isn't one

- define it?
- what downtown?
- where is downtown?
- where?
- quiet
- none
- modern (infrastructure)
- typical
- peaceful
- post office
- struggling
- tired
- needs rejuvenating
- out of date
- sparse
- empty
- vacant
- old

- bank
- run down
- veterans' memorial
- welcome park
- little scarce
- convenient
- lifeless
- could be more
- fragmented
- disappointing
- sad
- uninviting
- Coliseum
- Pattern Building

Student Responses (10 students)

- dark

ASSETS

Interviewees were asked to identify Walcott and/or their downtown's assets.

Quality of Life

- Community
 - Wayfinding signage installed
 - Welcoming & attractive entrance with memorial, park & sign
 - Wealth of heritage & railroad history
 - Family oriented / wonderful families / wonderful support / community spirit / sense of community
 - Small town living / small town feel / small town qualities / small town atmosphere / rural America
 - Smaller stress factors / slower pace / calm / quiet
 - Clean
 - Delightful place to live / will always be home
 - Best kept secret / great place to be
 - Vitality
 - Neat / tidy / pride in property
 - Low crime rate / very safe / safe to raise children
 - Volunteer fire department / younger volunteers involved
 - EMTs
 - Highway 6 historic highway signage
 - Church / beautified building / very open & welcoming / church wants to be involved
 - Cemetery
 - Location factors
 - Potential to grow – land & population / plenty of space for residential & commercial growth / community supports development
 - Geographic location – close proximity to Davenport & smaller towns only 6 miles away / 10 minutes from everything we need
 - Convenient location & services close
 - I-80 transportation link
 - Highway 6
 - Government / Operations / Infrastructure
 - City purchased property & is relocating offices, & the police & fire departments
 - Strong & fiscally responsible city government / conservative government leaders / financially stable / not much debt / forefathers conservative & financially responsible
 - Strong tax base / rely on taxes from Truck Stop / have tax base other towns envy
 - Lower taxes
 - Public works department
 - Police department / full time officers that live in Walcott
 - Very good infrastructure / streets & curbs
 - Water & sewer treatment facilities
 - Repaved highway
 - Library / mobile unit
 - Still have post office / meet & visit with lots of people at post office regularly
 - Education
 - School system K-8 / excellent / the best school in district
 - School addition
 - Caring teachers
 - Less peer pressure in smaller school
 - School support / parents involved
 - We're considered the "rich" town in district
 - Great education
 - More opportunities in larger system / better preparation & transition to college
 - Industry / Businesses outside downtown district
 - Some investments taking place – businesses & properties
 - Some beautiful new businesses
 - All businesses we have are great
 - All businesses supportive
 - Can attract light commercial industries
 - Farmers successful
 - Housing
 - Courtyard Estates
 - Good housing stock
 - Houses hold their value
 - Newer housing stock / new residential development
 - Walcott Mobile Home Estates
 - Recreation, Health & Wellness
 - Parks / Welcome Park inviting
 - Ball fields & food shack
 - Summer parks & recreation program / lots of activities
 - Great fast pitch field & attracts tournaments
 - Trail
 - Tennis
 - Youth clubs
- ### Tourism / Promotions / Marketing
- New farmers' market / awesome farmers' market
 - Walcott Day celebration (38 years) / relative visiting was amazed with event / best parade anywhere
 - Willie Walcott
 - Truck museum at I-80 Truck Stop / Welcome Center located at I-80 Truck Stop now (*formerly in LeClaire*)
 - Historic Highway 6 signage & marketing potential
 - Legion's collection of German memorabilia

Downtown Businesses / Physical Environment

- Chamber newsletter
- Downtown revitalization would attract people
- Open lot for activities like Farmers' Market in district
- Buildings
 - Infill opportunities
 - Unique buildings
- Businesses
 - Great businesses located in district
 - Businesses supportive / care / contribute to community
 - Some investments being made
 - Job creation important
- Specific downtown & outlying businesses cited
 - Truck Stop
 - Bank / unbelievable & locally owned / phenomenal
 - Coliseum / lots of community events & entertainment
 - Lampliter
 - Insurance Company
 - Chiropractic Clinic
 - Courtyard Estates
 - All businesses in community
- Downtown's physical environment
 - Easy parking

People/Volunteerism

- People / the people is what defines Walcott
- Friendly / people wave / everyone knows everyone +/-
- Helpful / Willingness to help
- Caring people / kind hearted / wonderful
- Generous
- Open minded
- Good head on their shoulders
- Volunteers / strong volunteerism / everyone pitches in
- Young core group of volunteers
- "Hearts & Hands"
- Camaraderie
- Lots of clubs & service organizations
 - Cub Scouts
 - Visioning Committee
 - Lions
 - Legion
 - Community Club
 - 2 sororities
 - Walcott Women's Club
- Tightness
- Togetherness
- Organized

Students' Responses

- School K-8
- Church
- Parks
- Trail
- Bank
- Ball park
- Redid railroad tracks
- Streets – some really nice
- People can meet up
- Everyone knows everyone +/-
- Casey's

CHALLENGES AND / OR DESIRES

The Assessment Team asked interviewees to identify the challenges and/or their desires for change regarding Walcott in general and downtown.

Quality of Life

- Community
 - Used to be pristine, tidy & no junk on properties
 - We need identity / people think Truck Stop is Walcott & don't know there is a town / want to be more than Truck Stop
 - Bedroom community / retirement community
 - Status quo is fine to most residents / always done it this way / nobody wants change / complacent
 - Split opinions about community vision & direction / no common consensus about future / no aggressive group working on development challenges
 - Stagnant – no population growth / some don't want growth
 - Landlocked
 - Need to retain population we have
 - Need to recruit young families
 - Aging population
 - Don't know neighbors anymore
 - Have to take care of our kids and elderly
 - Sustaining volunteer fire department
 - Difficult to fund special projects
 - Cost of cemetery maintenance
 - East & west entries not inviting / entrances not favorable first impression / need nice signage & landscaping at entrances / need a gateway
 - Need pedestrian & bike friendly way to get to truck stop
 - Need to establish endowment fund / foundation
 - Didn't find church welcoming
 - Location factors
 - Disconnect with I-80 exchange / 3 mile separation between I-80 & town +/-
 - Davenport is moving west – even closer
 - Government / Operations / Infrastructure
 - Limited city resources
 - Limited city staff
 - Need city administrator
 - Council sometimes has tunnel vision / need forward thinking council members
 - City Hall – location of facilities is controversial
 - Planning & zoning board needs training
 - Zoning – both residential & commercial need to be changed / retail changed to residential & residential to commercial / need to protect use of land / need to decide where types of developments should occur /
 - need enforceable standards in entire town
 - Mail delivery to home if you are located on route – prefer getting mail at post office
 - Library needs to be twice the size / cost associated with affiliation with Scott County library
 - Schools
 - 9-12 go primarily to Davenport – want K-12 system in Walcott
 - No junior achievement program in Walcott school / aren't receiving some of the resources we should have access to through Davenport school district / ugly stepchild of school system
 - Lacks high school so lacks identity & spirit
 - Divided – some go east some west in high school
 - No high school so lose potential residents
 - Industry / Ag Businesses
 - Lost jobs
 - Need manufacturing
 - Nitrogen plant – controversial
 - No incentives for industry
 - Shouldn't provide incentives for industry
 - Housing
 - Mobile park has undeserved negative connotations
 - Rundown apartment buildings / no available rental / need to tear down apartments buildings
 - Rundown residential
 - Room for housing development
 - No recent housing needs assessment
 - No new homes built in 6 or 7 years
 - Recreation
 - Splash pad or pool
 - Skate park
 - More youth activities / need something for youth
 - Use ball fields more than few times a year
- Promotions / Marketing / Tourism**
- Figure out how to share German heritage & memorabilia
 - Limited historic resources
 - Need centralized bulletin board
 - Disappointed in number of vendors at Farmers' Market
- Downtown—Businesses / Physical Environment**
- Need to revitalize downtown – building & businesses
 - No more main drag / Main Street isn't what it used to be / no downtown / corridor is where development should occur / lost downtown / used to be more vibrant /

- properties have been repurposed
- No reason for traffic to come to Walcott & downtown
- Business wants to be located where traffic is along corridor & not downtown / growth should be on corridor
- Buildings
 - Neglected properties / some demolished or lost / dilapidated buildings
 - Not used to their potential
 - Get rid of run down apartments in downtown
 - City could buy downtown properties & redevelop
 - Allowed apartments in commercial spaces & wouldn't easily be converted back to retail space
- Businesses
 - No place to congregate (*kids or adults*)
 - Drying up / few retail businesses / lack retail
 - Run down businesses
 - No vacant buildings for business – could build
 - Lack population to sustain & support most businesses / risky / size versus what we can realistically support
 - Potential business afraid no one will support them
 - No loyalty – don't support businesses / more than 50% of clientele from out of town / didn't support grocery, doctor & lost those businesses
 - Want to support businesses
 - Need to be more self-sufficient & have basic businesses
 - Need to retain businesses we have
 - Too close to business competition / too close to Quad Cities to support basic businesses / too mobile
 - Off street parking is barrier to establishing business downtown
 - Difficult to market services & businesses
 - Need to recruit businesses / unable to attract & recruit retail businesses
 - Need full & part time jobs / need job opportunities for young
 - Lack business resources / no incentives / nothing to entice business / caution about providing too many incentives
 - Commuters shopping before coming home
 - Mail home delivery & online banking affects reasons for people to need downtown

- Business wish list
 - Grocery store
 - Café / family restaurant
 - Ice cream shop
 - Coffee shop
 - General store / Dollar General
 - Hardware store
 - Medical services
 - Dentist
 - New Casey's
 - Dependable car wash
 - Quality lodging facilities
 - Gym / Curves or gym could go into Breezeway building / lots of empty buildings for gym facility
 - Need community center for kids & elderly – play cards, exercise, etc.
- Physical environment
 - Railroad – noise factors & blocks traffic / impedes development / trains are a pain

People / Volunteerism

- Volunteer burn out
- People busier & volunteer less
- Complacency
- Don't put money where mouth is
- No desire to change
- Need to recruit volunteers
- Organizations aren't getting younger volunteers
- Fractured community
- Everyone knows everyone +/-

Students' Responses

- Would like community pool / splash pad
- Need gym or fitness center
- Open gym at school during summer
- Inappropriate graffiti & language at playground
- Need stores
- Need Subway or restaurant
- Kids without licenses have no way to get anywhere
- Need grocery store or place to buy food
- Sidewalk repair (*especially parade route*)
- Maybe a movie night

“COMMUNITY QUOTES”

The following are some of the comments shared during the interview process:

“Walcott enjoys the revenue from the Truck Stop but want to be known for more than a truck stop.”

“The Truck Stop can exist without Walcott but Walcott would not exist without the Truck Stop.”

“Without the Truck Stop, we wouldn’t survive. It is how we can pay for sanitary sewer project, etc”

“We take advantage of I-80 Truck Stop but disassociate from it at the same time.”

“I understand both sides of the nitrogen plant issue. The jobs would have a big economic boon for 3 years and after it’s built, any new job is a plus. It would be a life changer – the traffic on highway 6. Do I think they can overcome those obstacles? Most definitely.”

“You’re a Walcottian if you live here but a TRUE one if you keep your place cleaner than your neighbor’s.”

“Once you become a part of the town, there is a deep camaraderie.”

“This is a bedroom community of the Quad cities.”

“We are perceived as a bedroom community – a retirement community. A real challenge to attract families.”

“There is no common consensus that we need to grow, how we should grow, what we want to be...”

“If someone is driving into town – where is the first favorable impression? How long does it take?”

“You can leave your bike outside or forget to lock your door. It’s safe.”

“The mobile park has undeserved negative connotations. It’s very nice and needs positive recognition.”

“Smart decision to extend city limits to I-80.”

“City should be careful in jump-starting projects.”

“It’s disheartening that support and investment didn’t happen a few years ago with development initiatives.”

“Many opportunities are available through the Davenport schools.”

“Once you’re accepted here, you’re included.”

“This is the least welcoming town I’ve ever lived in.”

“A lot of people SAY they want something but do not step up to the plate.”

“It’s more and more challenging to get volunteers.”

“We’re a volunteer town.”

“I think you have to be involved where you live.”

“We need to move on – it’s not the 40s or the 60s.”

“Breaks my heart to see what has happened to Walcott.”

“Blue Grass – now it’s the booming town – the ideal city. It used to be Walcott.”

“Development here is reactive not proactive.”

“Why would someone go downtown to make purchases? What small businesses would want to come here?”

“People that work elsewhere – they shop Wal-Mart, grocery stores, etc. before coming home.”

“I really don’t know where downtown is....there really isn’t one.”

“Downtown is where the heart is but not where the growth area will be.”

“Where should the growth be – location? Businesses want to be located where there is traffic – not downtown.”

“I want to see more businesses but difficult to recruit the desired businesses when they don’t feel they get support like the former grocery store.”

“I want to support town. I support towns nearby because we don’t have it here and I want those businesses close by.”

"We need to be more self-sufficient & have basic businesses. The elderly community doesn't want to drive out of town for basic needs."

"Perception is 'we are the truck stop'. We're handicapped since we don't have a highway artery coming through town so there's no reason for traffic to come to or go through Walcott."

Comments from residents who have relocated or returned to community:

"I grew up here, loved it and wanted my kids to have that same experience."

"One reason we stayed – a little more relaxed – less intense atmosphere."

"We wanted to raise our kids in a small town – looked here and Blue Grass. Chose Walcott – it felt right."

"I knew if we were going to have children, I didn't want to live in Davenport."

"It would be more convenient to live in Bettendorf. It's the relationships we have here..."

"Growing up here was an awesome experience. We wanted that for our family and chose to come here."

"Very safe – as safe as you can get for raising children."

"I'd never go back to the city."

"It's my town...I moved here because of my husband's roots."

"Seemed like a nice community. I kept coming back and checking it out. Seemed friendly. You do become a part of it when you live here – whether you like it or not."

"Moved here because of its central location in relation to where my grown kids live."

Students' remarks:

"It's just Walcott...safe."

"Is there a downtown in Walcott?"

"South side of tracks is less populated."

"North side has more of the stuff – there's nothing there (downtown)."

"Trail is nice – makes people want to come here."

"Need some place to buy food and eat food."

"This is the first meeting I've ever been to asking my opinion."

"I've never been invited to a meeting."

"We're old enough to do things alone but can't drive and are stuck here watching TV."

Students' responses when asked if they'd consider staying or coming back to Walcott.

"Yeah – it's a fun, safe place to raise kids."

"Yes – it's safe and has the parks and school."

"It depends upon where I'm working – if there are stores near where I live."

"Yeah – safe and good area to raise kids."

"Me personally – I've wanted to live in a big community. But it is a good place to grow up in."

"I want to live in a big town – it's really boring. You have to drive for groceries."

"Both yes and no. It's a good place to educate family. No – not a lot of stuff to do for your family."

"Yes. I've loved living here. If we got a gym and pool, it would be the perfect community."

"If you can't drive, there's nothing to do."

ASSESSMENT TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS

The following are some of the Team's discoveries as a result of the familiarization process and interviewee input.

- The Team was supplied with the following community materials and resources for review: Which Way Walcott, Revisited Community Forum", Walcott Phone Directory, "City of Walcott" brochure, American FactFinder census information, City of Walcott Comprehensive Plan, City of Walcott Building Codes, City of Walcott Chapter 165 Signs Ordinance, City of Walcott Chapter 167 Zoning Ordinance, and City of Walcott Zoning Map 2010 and maps.
- Prior to the visit, the Team conducted an on-line search. The city website (www.cityofwalcott.com) was informative. U.S. Census data was obtained through www.recap.iastate.edu/2010census/city. Additional information was acquired from the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI).

- 1) The Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) Retail Market Profile indicates provides market share information. In gasoline station sales alone, the retail potential is \$2,453,477 and actual retail sales are \$71,784,075 – which is a \$69,330,598 surplus in actual sales. The ESRI traffic count map indicates more than 30,000 vehicles travel I-80 each way and an excess of 10,000 vehicles exit daily at the Y 40 exit.

- 2) Demographic information based upon 2010 U.S. Census (www.recap.iastate.edu/2010census/city):

- Population 1629. The chart below is the % of population within specific age categories:

Under 18 – 24.9%	18-44 – 32.7%	45-65 – 26.7%	65+ 15.8%	Median age 40.3
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- 19.8% bachelor's degree or higher
- 97.5% White / Non-Hispanic 2.5% Hispanic / Latino / Other
- Median household income \$52,548. Chart below is % of population within income categories.

8.6%	9.8%	10.9%	16.7%	25.3%	20.8%
below \$14,999	\$15,000-24,999	\$25,000-34,999	\$35,000-49,999	\$50,000-74,999	\$75,000 or more

- Mean travel time to work is 22.6 minutes / 40% of commuters drive less than 20 minutes & 61 % drive more than 20 minutes

- The following are some of the Team's quick first impressions upon their arrival the evening before:
 - 1) Walcott Mobile Home Estates – nice and very tidy. Was not sure if it was a mix of rental and owner occupied properties.
 - 2) Welcoming entrance from north – runners on the trail, attractive pond and gazebo, veterans' memorial and nice landscaping. Assorted types of businesses (*chiropractor, Casey's, and light commercial*) are located along corridor. Newest development is on main corridor, north and east borders and I-80 exit.
 - 3) Mixed assortment of residential and light commercial properties throughout community.
 - 4) Vast majority of lawns and properties well manicured and maintained, indicating pride in properties.
 - 5) Bank located downtown and substantial investment to property – nicely done.
 - 6) Minimal historic building fabric remaining downtown. The two properties purchased by the City appear to be the oldest buildings in district. The Team was told they will probably be razed.
 - 7) A substantial amount of first floor downtown commercial space has been converted to residential.
 - 8) Tidy elevator & River Valley Co-op grounds.
 - 9) Rail line runs adjacent to downtown district.
 - 10) Curb and gutter throughout most of community.
 - 11) Only one church – with preschool and childcare.
 - 12) Did not see wayfinding signage to city hall, parks, ball fields, or school.

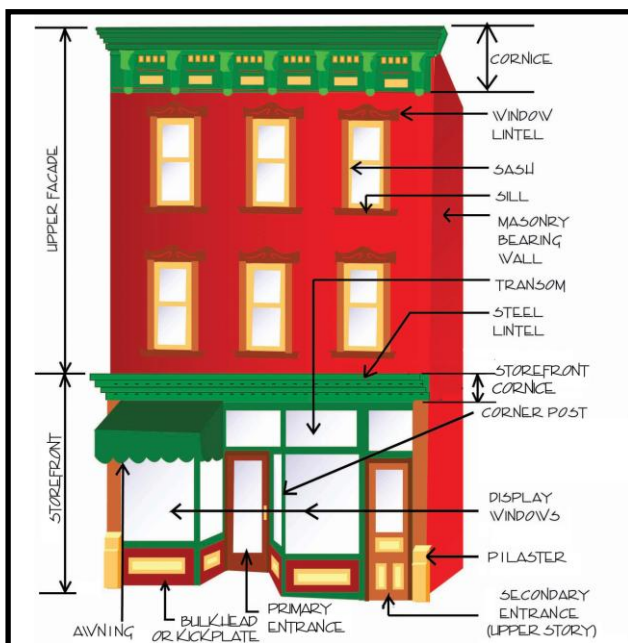
- Economic development organizations include: Walcott Vision Committee, Chamber of Commerce, and Economic Development Committee. The Walcott Vision Committee and University of Iowa intern coordinated the downtown assessment visit with buy-in from the business community and City of Walcott.
- Community events presently include Walcott Day and the new addition of a Farmers' Market.
- The Team interviewed 72+ individuals representing a cross section of downtown's stakeholders, including a focus group of 10 students (*7th grade to sophomore*).
 - 1) Participants were asked to describe the community of Walcott in one word.
 - The descriptions voiced with significant frequency were friendly and quiet.
 - Students responded with friendly, safe, small, quiet, closer, and well knit.
 - 2) Interviewees were asked to describe downtown in one word.
 - Descriptions of downtown were more problematic. There was often hesitation and the vast majority of answers were not complimentary. Some individuals asked the Team to clarify what they meant by downtown. A description for downtown voiced with significant frequency was nonexistent.
 - One student described downtown as dark. None of the other students offered an answer. Like some of their adult counterparts, the youth questioned what exactly the Team meant when referring to downtown. In their lifetimes, a traditional downtown district has not existed in Walcott. They have no point of reference.
 - 3) Interviewees were asked to share what they considered were the community's or downtown's assets. It was obvious participants cared about their community and they readily shared a variety of answers.
 - They appreciate the small town qualities and were complimentary of the past and present government operations and infrastructure. Their location and the I-80 Truck Stop are viewed as mixed blessings. They are proud of their K-8 school system, the businesses in the community, housing stock, recreation opportunities, and the people and their values. The Coliseum and bank were mentioned numerous times as downtown assets specifically.
 - The students responded with positive opinions about the school system and recreation and were appreciative of the city's infrastructure and the people.
 - 4) Regarding the community's or downtown's challenges, interviewees' responses were consistent.
 - They voiced concerns about the community's identity and the need to build consensus about their vision for Walcott's future. Concerns were raised the community lacks an identity because of the truck stop and competition is so conveniently close that no one really sees it as an imposition to shop elsewhere. Directly related is the need they expressed about their future development priorities, land use decisions, and zoning. They recognize they have challenges regarding the viability of their existing small businesses and they seriously question whether they can realistically support additional retail and service businesses. Concerns were raised about the condition of apartments in downtown and elsewhere. They also generated a wish list of business ventures they would like to see established somewhere in community.
 - The students responded with opinions about wanting more to do, places they can interact with friends, and they would like a grocery store and restaurant. The students interviewed were not old enough to have a driver's license, which limits their mobility.
 - Adults and students would like to have a pool or a splash pad.
 - 5) Based upon the input of 72+ interviewees, it is the Team's impression that there is little interest in the economic and physical condition of downtown – now or in the future. There were a few pictures of the lumberyard that burnt down and a handful of individual properties in the centennial book at city hall. Therefore, the Team's knowledge about the district in regard to businesses and architecture that existed in the past is extremely limited. Only one or two interviewees reminisced about the district. Discussion revolved around other livability and residential aspects of the town and commercial development along the corridor areas.
 - 6) The ten students were in agreement with one another when asked if they would be interested in

volunteering to plan and implement projects. They enthusiastically said they would.

- 7) When students were asked if they would consider living in Walcott after high school, they all agreed they have had positive experiences. The majority would definitely consider making Walcott their home.
- 8) Residents who have relocated back home in recent years were asked why they chose to reside in Walcott. Primarily they said they moved home because of their fond memories.

• Additional Team observations as a result of the familiarization process and interviews:

- 1) There are mixed opinions regarding a \$1.5 billion fertilizer plant between Walcott & Davenport. People interviewed did express both pros and cons about the location.
- 2) There is a strong German heritage.
- 3) Downtown is not included in the TIF district. The City does receive hotel / motel tax revenue.
- 4) Today there are just a few remaining commercial buildings in the downtown and little historic building fabric remains intact. Since limited insight was provided in regard to physical changes that have occurred to the properties, the Team does not know what remains under siding applications. It is obvious over the course of several decades, buildings have undergone varying degrees of alteration that have significantly compromised the historic integrity of the properties and the district as a whole. The traditional, historic turn-of-the-century building depicted below does not exist in Walcott.



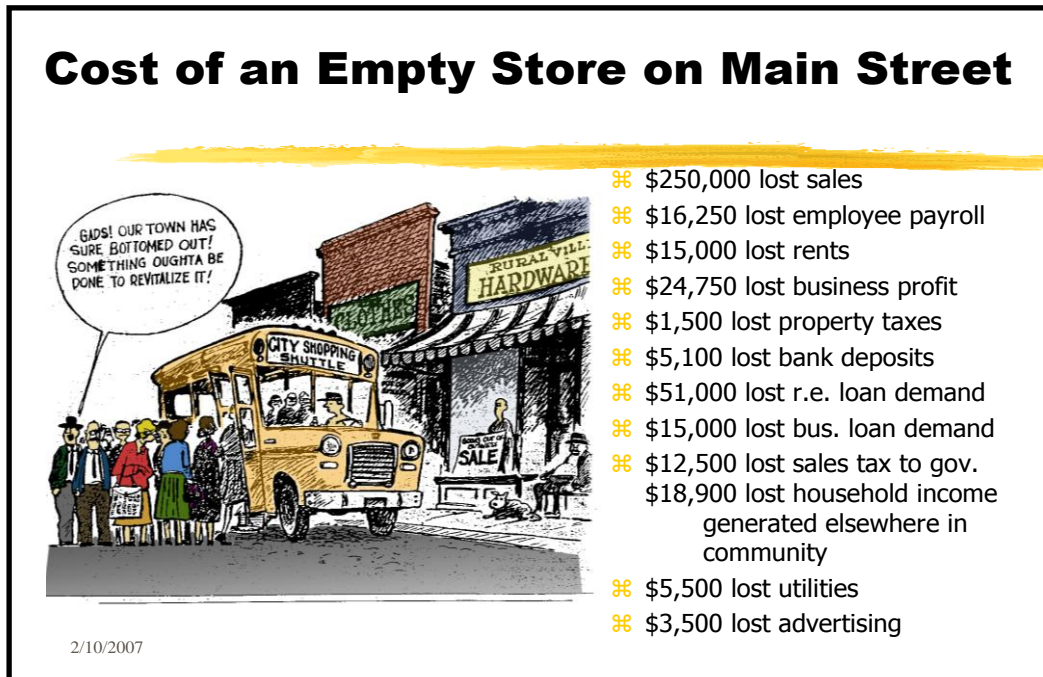
FEATURES OF A TRADITIONAL BUILDING ON MAIN STREET

The diagram illustrates the basic architectural elements of a traditional turn-of-the-century commercial building. Individual properties possess basic qualities with unique and distinguishable architectural elements – a unified visual composition from storefront to rooftop. Adjacent properties built in the same era complement each other with consistency in the use of the same fundamental architectural features and construction materials. Through variations of patterns, rhythms, balance, elements, color, and signage, each building possesses its own unique, distinctive, and identifiable qualities and contributes to the overall physical character of downtown.

ARCHITECTURE - You can live without her, but you can't remember without her.

- 5) Traditional storefronts do not exist so display areas for showcasing products and services are nonexistent. There is inconsistency in business signage. Both serve as advertisement – billboards. There is a direct correlation between the aesthetic appeal of the properties, the attractiveness of the district and environment, and decisions people make about shopping in a district. What a potential customer sees on the outside is what they expect in product and quality on the inside.
- 6) Unfortunately first floor residential development has been allowed and retail space has been converted into housing. The condition of those apartments is unknown.
- 7) Even though there is evidence of recent investments in the bank property and the Coliseum draws people to various entertainment opportunities, there was no interest expressed about making additional building investments in the district. Interviewees talked about the best location for business was along the corridor and perimeters.
- 8) There are vacancies and occupied vacancies (*properties used for storage purposes*) within the district. There does not appear to be a property downtown that would be readily available if there was a serious retail start-up inquiry. See diagram below for estimated losses related to vacancies. Multiply the number of vacancies by the estimated financial loss of \$419,000.

The value of a commercial property is directly related to its use and income producing potential. When a commercial building's multi-stories sit idle or are under-utilized, the owner is not capitalizing on its taxable sales and rental income generating potential. As the viability and value of individual a property decreases, the value of the district as a whole declines. Citizens must then make up for the tax deficit since downtown is not paying its fair share. All residents should be interested in downtown's state of condition as they all have a personal and financial stake in its use and vitality. Donovan Rypkema, Place Economics, developed the following chart itemizing the potential financial loss of a vacant traditional 25 foot storefront in the Midwest. Estimated total of cost of one empty store is \$419,000.



- 9) Interviewees voiced concerns over present zoning and discussed the need to plan and manage residential and commercial / industrial development before it gets out of control further. From interviewees' perspectives, residential and commercial is intermingled without clear, defined areas for planned development. It is a fact, all communities experience sprawl to some degree. Walcott has to be proactive about their development decisions and take into consideration long term ramifications. Environmentally sound practices and smart growth are present day economic development strategies.
- The city hall, the post office, and the bank are located downtown and continue to provide a reason people have to come to the district periodically. The city office, fire department, and police department intend to relocate to the property purchased along the corridor. Studies indicate people want to be active, less reliant on the automobile – they want to live in a pedestrian friendly community. This is one reason the new trail in Walcott is so popular.
 - Sprawl directly impacts downtown's viability. Retail and service business owners benefit from being located in close proximity so customers and downtown employees can conveniently access others.
 - Maximizing the use of existing properties, infill development, and adaptive use of existing properties within the compact environment of downtown are common sense sustainable tactics that protect the investment in the existing infrastructure (*buildings, sidewalks, streets, and utilities*). There is a financial burden as well as long term maintenance costs associated with extending services.
 - There are infill opportunities for appropriate development purposes. At a quick glance, there are areas inside the city limits that appear to be logical spaces for residential construction (*i.e. field between the manufactured home park and B & D Automotive*) and other areas more conducive to light commercial and industrial sites. Development's visual impact / statement / natural transitions should also be a consideration when making zoning decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS – VERY SHORT TERM

Very short term recommendations generally consist of basic, fundamental processes to help establish the foundation for implementation. Many of those recommendations are organizational, self-awareness, and discovery” processes.

- The Vision Committee should take the initial lead in following through with the very short term recommendations addressed in this section and take the steps to determine if there is interest to proceed.
 - 1) Distribute copies of the report to the Vision Committee, mayor, and city council. Meet to talk about the report, review the “Which Way Walcott” priorities, and decide if the assessment visit recommendations are relevant. Discuss how these recommendations complement the “Which Way Walcott” initiative. Ascertain if there is commitment to proceed from within this leadership level.
 - 2) Have copies of the report available at City Hall, the library, and consider posting on the website. Encourage the public to review the report.
 - 3) Schedule a town meeting. Everyone who lives and / or works in Walcott has a vested interest in the community and should have the opportunity to take part in this discussion. Extend personal invitations to those who participated in the assessment visit and all business and property owners. The following are questions they should address with participants during the meeting:
 - What is their development – investment “vision” for Walcott? Is there any interest in investing and focusing attention on revitalizing downtown into a vibrant, traditional commercial district? Or should they prioritize the residential center aspects of their community and concentrate their efforts on enhancing that potential?
 - Does or does not downtown revitalization fit into the overall community development plan – “Which Way Walcott”?
 - How do they intend on managing the commercial, light commercial and industrial, and residential development? Where do they want the development to take place? Zoning?
 - Who will support the efforts? Can they find the necessary resources to implement a plan?
 - 4) Discuss the report recommendations from the standpoint of relevancy and decide what Walcott’s vision is for the future. What does Walcott “want to be when it grows up”?
 - 5) Identify who will take the lead and identify the partners that should be involved in key roles.
 - They need to determine how they plan to proceed – whether the lead entity remains the Vision Committee, the Chamber, or combination of entities that takes on the responsibility. Depending upon what they decide is the best approach, they may want to incorporate and set up non-profit status. They should seek legal expertise to decide which tax status is the most suitable.
- The Downtown Assessment Team analyzed interviewee’s responses and concluded from the opinions expressed, a comprehensive downtown revitalization initiative is not one of their priorities at this time. Walcott’s livability from the standpoint of a bedroom – residential center perspective and commercial / light commercial development along the corridor areas surfaced clearly as priorities. The vast majority of persons of all ages had difficulty defining downtown. Participants questioned whether they could realistically support retail and service businesses.
 - 1) It is a fact, not every community has the traditional retail commercial resources still intact to warrant a full-scale downtown revitalization initiative. In Walcott’s case, significant alterations and loss of properties have occurred that have substantially altered the physical and historic integrity of the entire downtown district. The Team agrees with the interviewees and thinks they should devote their energies on their residential assets and quality of life priorities identified in the “Which Way Walcott” process. Enhancements and improvements to downtown should be an integral part of the initiative.
 - 2) Directly related to the residential center focus, is the need they expressed regarding identifying development priorities, development and land use decisions, and zoning.
 - 3) They conducted the “Which Way Walcott” process and have now completed the Downtown Assessment in an effort to substantiate and validate their position regarding future course of action. They repeatedly said during interviews they want to build consensus and focus on the community’s

identity and vision for the future. If they come to the conclusion they are going to concentrate on building their residential center capacity, then they should verbalize, formalize, and commit to being the “very best” bedroom community they can be.

RECOMMENDATIONS – SHORT TERM

It was apparent to the Team that Walcott’s priorities are residential and light commercial/industrial oriented. The following short term recommendations are based on the assumption they decide to focus on the “Which Way Walcott” residential priorities. Although the Downtown Assessment Team’s expertise is downtown revitalization and focus of this assessment process was downtown revitalization, the Team will provide several basic, fundamental recommendations applicable to any type of development initiative. They will include downtown enhancement strategies that would complement their broader community development focus.

- Based upon the “Which Way Walcott” and the Downtown Assessment report, decide what committees need to be established to address the varied components they have prioritized (*residential, beautification, commercial development, retail and downtown development, recreation, housing, etc.*).
 - 1) Clearly define the group’s mission, goals, and committee objectives. (*Refer to the enclosure “Elements of an Action Plan” for guidance and Central City Rocket.*)
 - 2) Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the committees.
 - 3) Start recruiting volunteers for specific committees.
 - The most effective recruitment approach is to personally ask individuals.
 - Strive for broad representation from stakeholder groups. Everyone brings different perspectives, skills, knowledge, and resources to the table.
 - Involve youth in planning and implementation capacities. The students interviewed said they would be very receptive to participating. Adults cannot assume they know what the students will support without their involvement in the discussion and implementation.
 - 4) Get into the habit of using action plans / workplans for every activity undertaken. (*See enclosure “Elements of an Action Plan” for workplan example.*) Workplans are extremely effective tools for planning and implementation, accountability, annual organizational budgeting, fundraising, and volunteer recruitment purposes.
 - With the creation of action plans, committees and sub-committees will not have to recreate activities and projects from scratch each year.
 - People are also more willing to chair and serve on committees if they do not have to re-invent the projects each year.
 - Individuals, businesses, and government entities are more likely to support a group that is organized and has a plan.
 - Committees can more effectively work on multiple projects simultaneously.
- Consistent and regular communication is a key factor in building support and commitment. The challenge is determining what form of communication works best for specific messages and targeted audiences. Today, a mix of traditional methods, as well as internet and social media, are most effective. Try to reach all the various constituents – including absentee owners and corporate entities.
 - 1) The chamber newsletter is a great tool. Make sure copies of these are available in waiting areas in offices, city hall, the library, school library, and employee lounges.
 - 2) Feature interviews of why someone moved to Walcott. Recognize volunteer involvement. Include testimonials on your website.
 - 3) Social media is a powerful tool and an effective way to engage everyone with deep rooted emotional connections to Walcott. Use Facebook to connect and encourage people to share their memories about the community. Ask them to post pictures of events and historic photos of properties.
 - 4) Provide regular updates at city council meetings.

- Consider scheduling a visit to Central City, population 1,257. This small community has lessons to share in regard to their impressive downtown revitalization successes and they are presently promoting themselves as a residential center.
 - 1) They worked with a marketing consultant and have developed a comprehensive marketing campaign using the variations of the tagline “Where People/History/Home/Kids/Etc. Are Central”.
 - 2) Visit with Central City about the splash pad they installed in their city park. Walcott youth talked about wanting a pool or splash pad.
 - 3) Inquire about their farmers’ markets. They have expanded their vendor numbers by inviting home based businesses to participate.

- Evaluate Walcott’s physical components and inventory the commercial and residential stock. Invite city council members to take part in the assessment process.
 - 1) Conduct a community-wide physical assessment using the “Downtown Conditional Assessment Guide”. Although this example focuses on downtown, it includes a section for evaluating gateways, signage, and first impressions. They can use this guide as the base and expand the evaluation criteria to include additional components of the town. In addition to the opinions of those who participate in this assessment activity, incorporate the input from this report.
 - Take pictures while conducting the assessment. These images can be used for prioritizing projects as well as a variety of constructive discussions later.
 - 2) Inventory the community’s commercial and apartment buildings using the “Building Inventory” form. Ask the property / business owners to help fill out the form. Missing information can be acquired through the county assessor’s website. This will serve as a database of occupied and available properties as well as the apartment complexes. (*Refer to the “Building Inventory” form.*)
 - While conducting the assessment, ask to tour available properties. The information will be useful in future business recruitment and residential development.

- Formally evaluate Walcott Day and the new farmers’ market. (*See “Event Evaluation Form”.*) Consider establishing a family centered quarterly event. Discuss ideas for additional weekend activities for families / residents.
 - 1) Establish a small town Christmas holiday event – Christmas Carols, Cookies, and Cocoa. Incorporate carriage rides, Santa’s visit, decorated trees, music, and food. Consider other holiday or heritage events. Consider a German heritage festival that incorporates elements of events their sister city Bradenbeck, Germany does.
 - 2) Consider adding entertainment (*music, tournaments, local talent*) during the farmers’ market or host an outdoor movie once a month. Movie nights could be expanded into Wii Game nights.
 - 3) Identify individuals that are representative of the targeted group they want to attract to the event and ask them help plan and implement the activity. If you want to attract families / youth / senior citizens, they also need to be a part of the planning and implementation group. The students interviewed are more than willing to participate on that level. Someone just needs to ask.

RECOMMENDATIONS – LONGER TERM

The following longer term recommendations are made based on the assumption the organization / task force group has recruited adequate numbers of volunteers, committees are functioning, and they are addressing multiple projects simultaneously.

- Refer to “Keokuk’s 2010 Timeline / Action Plan”. This is a helpful tool that can be adapted and used as an operational guide for the organization. Refer to the “Promotion/Business Improvement/ Design/Organization Committee Activities Checklists” as these are also helpful tools they can use when planning downtown and business development projects.

- Identify a clean-up project that could be completed in a short time span and draw attention to the initiative. This could entail cleaning up sidewalks, alleys and trail area, weed removal, and park improvements. Invite the community, including youth, to be involved. Contact Colfax about their “Pride Where You Reside” project and Mount Vernon regarding their “Polish It, Plant It, Paint It” project. (See “*Contacts and Resources*”.)
- If Walcott is going to focus on being the best residential community in the state, then they should be the most welcoming community in the state.
 - 1) Conduct exit interviews of people who are leaving the community. Decide if there is some consistency in the reasons people move and address the issues if possible.
 - 2) Conduct focus groups with new residents and find out why they chose Walcott as their residence. Strategize ways to use this information in marketing efforts to attract new residents. Be realistic about your targeted market for a campaign. Former residents and persons living in a 20 to 30 mile commuting radius would likely be the most receptive audience.
 - 3) Contact local employers and investigate the commuter patterns. Is there potential in attracting some of the commuters to move to Walcott? This may entail surveying employees to find out what the housing voids are from their perspectives.
 - 4) A resident of the Mobile Home Estates is an enthusiastic community supporter who takes it upon herself to welcome and provide helpful information to new residents in the complex. Enlist this person’s help and conduct this activity on a community wide basis for all new residents.
- Begin building stronger relationships with existing business owners – retail, service, light commercial, and industrial. Business retention should be a priority.
 - 1) Conduct formal business visits. Meet with the business owners to learn more about their operations, property investment plans, their challenges, and opportunities. They need to understand business from the business owners’ perspectives in order to develop retention and recruitment strategies and effectively work with them. (Refer to “*Business Visitation Program*” and “*Existing Business and Industry Call Program*”.)
 - The visitation program survey includes questions about the establishment, employment, commuting patterns, and plans for future investment.
 - The business visitation process is based upon building trust over a period of years. Information should remain confidential. Once all businesses are visited, the process repeats itself and they start strengthening the relationships.
 - 2) Acquire and analyze demographic information. Compile and share with all existing business owners. They need to understand the present economic forces in order to help the business owners understand the present climate and potential. This is also useful information for prospect inquiries and for encouraging entrepreneurial ventures. (Refer to *Walcott’s ESRI MarketPlace Profile* and see “*Contacts and Resources*” for sources of information.)
 - 3) Identify local retired business owners and managers that would be willing to serve as mentors for existing, transitioning businesses, and prospects.
 - 4) Publicly recognize businesses with ribbon cuttings and anniversary recognitions as well as building and business investments.
- Contact Susan Skora, Great River Bend Foundation, and inquire about her assistance in explaining the process of establishing a community foundation. (See “*Contacts and Resources*”.)
- Decisions need to be made regarding future residential, retail, and light commercial and industrial development. Interviewees’ opinions vary widely about how and where different types of development should occur. The City and Planning and Zoning Commission need to address this in the very near future before the community becomes a patchwork of development.
 - 1) If Walcott is a member of the League of Cities or Bi-State Regional Commission, inquire as to what type of zoning and land use planning assistance they offer. (See “*Contacts and Resources*”.)

- 2) The city council needs to revisit the ordinance that requires downtown businesses to provide off-street parking. If off-street parking restrictions are really a necessity in a community, the responsibility is generally one of the apartment building owners and not the business owners. The Team questions if there is a perceived or real parking issue and encourages them to evaluate off-street parking options, including behind buildings. Contact Elkader regarding their residential parking requirements. (See “*Contacts and Resources*”.)
 - 3) Investigate examples of ground floor residential restrictions. These ordinances are established to protect first floor retail space from being converted into residential use within traditional downtown districts. Refer to “*Restriction on Ground Floor Restrictions*” and investigate communities’ ordinances (i.e. *Ames, Belle Plaine, Burlington, Cedar Falls and Charles City*).
- Investigate the Trees Forever Iowa’s Living Roadways Community Visioning program www.treesforever.org/content/Affiliate-Resources/Programs/Iowa-Living-Roadways-Community-Visioning.aspx. Iowa State University leads a team of architects, students, and faculty and assists communities in creating concept plans that include roadside landscaping, entranceways, and trails. Refer to “*Iowa’s Living Roadways Community Visioning*”.
 - A communication and public relations strategy is important in building support both from the financial and volunteer standpoint. Consistency in the design and message is important in building the initiative’s identity.
 - 1) Design an informational piece for distribution to various groups and individuals. The same information needs to be in a printable format on the website. Design the content with the intent to inform and build understanding of the initiative, recruit volunteers, and fund raise.
 - 2) Document the activities – take pictures and videos of people engaged in activities, projects, and investments that occur as a result of the initiative. These can easily be used for public presentations when sharing progress to date.
 - 3) Once they have achieved some tangible successes, host a community gathering and provide an update about the revitalization initiative plans and recognize the volunteers’ efforts to date. Celebrate the successes. Thank volunteers consistently and frequently by sending thank you notes, feature them in news articles, and post their pictures on the website.
 - Should owners of the downtown historic commercial properties become interested in historic preservation techniques and resources, refer to the “*Contacts and Resources*” section for information regarding the State Historical Society of Iowa’s (*SHPO*’s) resources, Secretary of Interior Standards and the Preservation Briefs, National Trust for Historic Preservation resources, and other helpful tools. It would be extremely useful if they could find vintage photographs of the properties for reference if and when someone decides to invest.
 - Utilize Iowa Economic Development Authority’s (*IEDA*) resources.
 - 1) Make an appointment and visit the Iowa Downtown Resource Center (*IDRC*). Explore the files full of design, business improvement, promotional, and organizational examples acquired through the Main Street network of communities. Examples and ideas are intended to be shared. An extensive collection of resource books and training tools covering a wide range of design, promotions, business improvement, and organizational topics can also be checked out from the Center’s Lending Library. (See “*Contacts and Resources*” for the Resource Center’s Lending Library list.)
 - 2) Stay informed about the Iowa Economic Development Authority’s programs and resources. Visit the website http://iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/subscriptions/access_form.aspx and sign up to receive IEDA’s electronic newsletters. (Click on “*Register*” in the upper right hand corner to make your selection from the subscription listing.)

There are many influences at work in every community – unique differences and dynamics. The recommendations listed in the report will be most effective when personalized further and adapted to fit Walcott’s personality. Ultimately, it is the people who live, work, and play in Walcott that truly understand its uniqueness and its possibilities.

SUMMARY

Communication, public-private partnership development, and education are critical keys to the success of community development initiatives. The Downtown Assessment is a self-discovery process and serves multiple components – raising awareness, education, recommendations, and empowerment. Walcott leaders and citizens stepped out of their comfort zones and participated in this process. This assessment visit provided the opportunity for people to share their opinions. Now it is time to make some decisions based upon the “Which Way Walcott” visioning and the Downtown Assessment.

Whatever course of action they decide, it is time for the City leaders and citizens to come to a consensus and take steps to address Walcott’s future. Action is necessary to improve the climate for reinvestments and stimulate growth. Once they formalize their vision, they can accomplish their goals with creativity, hard work, and an incremental approach. The content of this report will help them make decisions based upon input from the public and private sectors. Participants shared what they consider are Walcott’s assets. They have asked themselves “what kind of place Walcott is now” through this assessment. They need to ask themselves “what kind of place do they want Walcott to be when it grows up”. Whatever their decision, Walcott needs to make a commitment to be “the best”. Attitudinal and physical change will be incremental.

This is an exciting time. They face many challenges and obstacles ahead. There are lessons to be learned and rewards to reap. Walcott did not change overnight. A great deal of planning, patience, and persistence will be required, along with courage, vision, and conviction to embark on this journey. The citizens can either choose to sit back and watch as change continues to occur and accept the consequences or they can take a proactive stance and guide their future in a more productive fashion. If they have the commitment, they will find the human and financial resources to make it happen. Walcott stakeholders are the only ones that can make that decision.

CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

CONTACT INFO:

Ames	Tom Drenthe, Main Street Cultural District	515.233.3472
Belle Plaine	Sheila Hlas, Belle Plaine Community Development Corporation	319.434.6481
Burlington	Steve Frevert, Downtown Partners, Inc	319.752.6365
Cedar Falls	Carol Lilly, Community Main Street.....	319.277.0213
Central City.....	Julie Renberg, Central City Mainstreet	319.438.1761
Charles City.....	Veronica Litterer, Community Revitalization	641.228.2335
Colfax	Julia Kern, Colfax Main Street	515.674.9071
Conrad.....	Darla Ubben, Conrad Chamber-Main Street.....	641.366.2108
Elkader	Roger Thomas, Main Street Elkader.....	563.245.2770
Mount Vernon	Joe Jennison, Mount Vernon/Lisbon Community Development.....	319.210.9935

RESOURCE INFO:

Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA):

Website	www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com	
Iowa Downtown Resource Center		
Thom Guzman	515.725.3058	thom.guzman@iowa.gov
Lending Library	www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/community/community/downtown.aspx	
Iowa Tourism Office 888.472.6035	www.traveliowa.com	
Volunteer Iowa programs	www.volunteeriowa.org	
Publication subscriptions	http://iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/subscriptions/access_form.aspx	
Green Streets & Sustainable Community Initiatives		
Jeff Geerts	515.725.3069.....	jeff.geerts@iowa.gov
Going Green assistance / programs	www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/community/green_initiatives.aspx	
CDBG Community Sustainability Downtown Revitalization Fund		
Derek Lord	515.275.3072	derek.lord@iowa.gov

Department of Cultural Affairs / State Historical Society of Iowa, preservation services, programs, cultural arts, tax credits and Sanborn maps:

Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs website	www.culturalaffairs.org	
State Historical Society of Iowa	www.iowahistory.org	
Certified Local Government program		
Paula Mohr, State Historical Society of Iowa ...	515.281.6826	paula.mohr@iowa.gov

National preservation services and programs, National Trust for Historic Preservation, National Main Street Center Resources, National Park Service, and federal tax credit programs:

National Trust for Historic Preservation	www.nthp.org
National Main Street Center	www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/the-center
Secretary of Interior Standards & Preservation Briefs	www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/standards_guidelines.htm
National Park Service	www.2.cr.nps.gov
State Library of Iowa, Sanborn maps	www.statelibraryofiowa.org
National Trust for Historic Preservation Cultural Heritage Tourism	www.culturalheritagetourism.org
National Trust preservation education	http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/teaching-preservation

Business, retail analysis, sales tax data, census information, and consumer characteristics:

Iowa Small Business Assistance Gateway	www.iowa.gov/business
Census 2010 American Fact Finder	http://factfinder2.census.gov
U.S. Census data comparisons by Zip Code	http://zipskinny.com
Iowa State University Regional Economics and Community Analysis Program	www.recap.iastate.edu
Rutgers University Center for Urban Policy Research	www.dataplace.org
ESRI www.esri.com and Claritas	www.claritas.com
Consumer Expenditure Survey	www.bls.gov/cex

Bureau of Economic Analysis www.bea.gov
State Data Center www.iowadatacenter.org
Entrepreneur www.entrepreneur.com
American Independent Business Alliance www.amiba.net

Other:

League of Cities...515.244.7282.....www.iowaleague.org.....mailbox@iowaleague.org
Bi-State Regional Commission...309.793.6300www.iarcog.com.....iarcog@iarcog.com
Great River Bend Foundation www.cfgrb.org
 Susan Skora 563.326.2840.....info@cfgrb.org
Trees Forever Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning program
www.treesforever.org/Content/Affiliate-Resources/Programs/Iowas-Living-Roadways-Community-Visioning.aspx

ENCLOSURES:

Elements of an Action Plan
Central City Rocket
Event Evaluation Form
Promotion/Business Improvement/ Design/Organization Committee Activities Checklist
Keokuk 2010 Timeline / Action Plan
Downtown Conditional Assessment Guide
Building Inventory
Business Visitation Program
Existing Business and Industry Call Program
Walcott ESRI MarketPlace Profile
Restriction on Ground Floor Restrictions
Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning