Program Overview

The city of Mount Vernon is one of 12 communities selected to participate in the 2011 Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program. The program, which selects communities through a competitive application process, provides professional planning and design assistance along transportation corridors to small Iowa communities (populations of fewer than 10,000).

Goals for the Visioning Program include:

- Developing a conceptual plan and implementation strategies with local communities
- Enhancing the natural, cultural and visual resources of communities
- Assisting local communities in using external funds as leverage for transportation corridor enhancement

Each visioning community works through a planning process consisting of four phases of concept development:

1. Program initiation
2. Needs assessment and goal setting,
3. Development of a concept plan
4. Implementation and sustained action

Each visioning community is represented by a steering committee of local residents and stakeholders who take part in a series of meetings that are facilitated by field coordinators from Trees Forever. Iowa State University organizes design interns, and Iowa State University faculty and staff. The program is sponsored by the Iowa Department of Transportation.

Community Goals

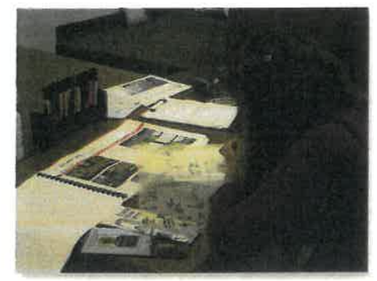
The Mount Vernon visioning committee identified a number of goals and priority areas during the visioning process.

1. Trail Connectivity and Safety
2. Integrated Signage Plan
3. Unified Transportation System

Capturing the Mount Vernon Vision

Based on the needs and desires of the local residents, as well as a detailed inventory of community resources, the design team developed a conceptual transportation enhancement plan, which is illustrated in the following set of presentation boards:

1. Program Overview
2. Special Places Mapping
3. Bioregional Assessment
4. Regional Context
5. Destinations and Connections
6. Barriers and Other Challenges
7. Preferred Commuting Routes
8. Preferred Walking Routes
9. Preferred Biking Routes
10. Preferred Running Routes
11. Enhancement Priorities
12. Transportation Inventory and Analysis
13. Visual Quality Assessment
14. Concept Plan
15. Comprehensive Trails Plan
16. Regional Comprehensive Trails Plan
17. Lighting Improvements Master Plan
18. Highway 30 Underpass near Nature Park
19. Highway 30 and Highway 1 Roundabout Pedestrian Accommodatons
20. Highway 1 Crossings | 4th Street (sheet 1 of 2)
21. Highway 1 Crossings | 4th Street (sheet 2 of 2)
22. Highway 1 Crossings | 7th Street
23. Residential Street - Widened Sidewalk Concepts
24. Bryant Road and 1st Street Intersection Improvements
25. Nature Park Pedestrian Entrance at 4th Street
26. Prairie Park Trailhead Concept
27. Community Signage



Mount Vernon

Program Overview

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
LA Intern: Nicholas Gulick and Robin Hamadani, ISU Landscape Architecture Extension

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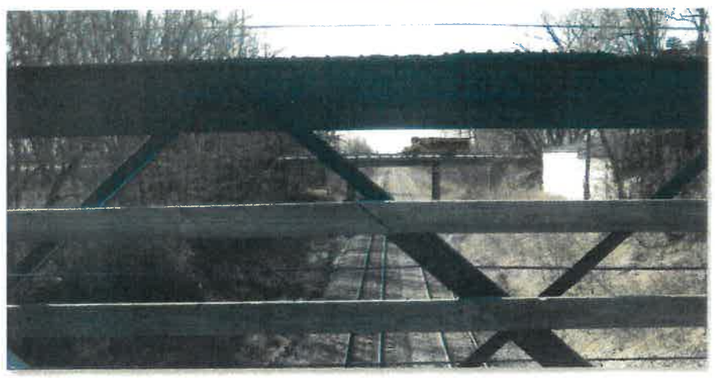
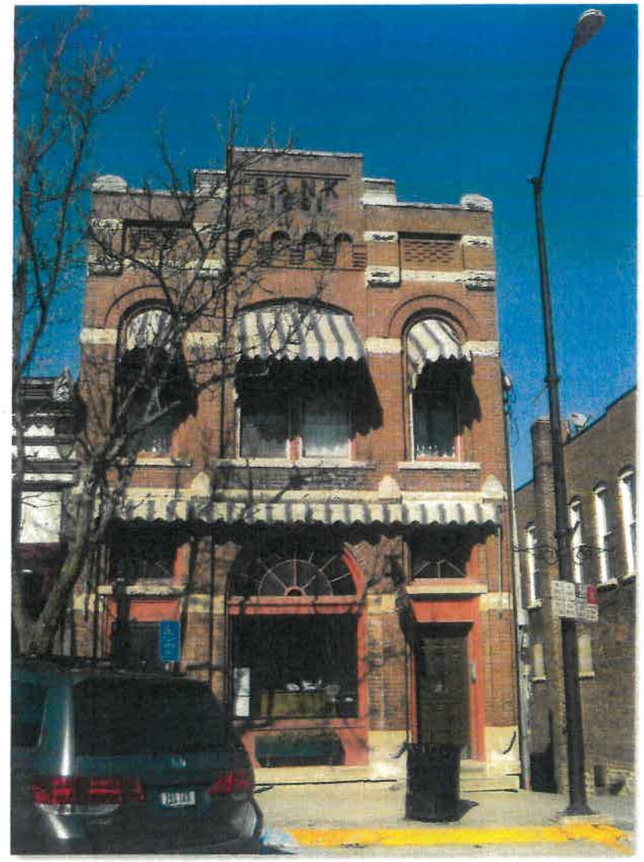
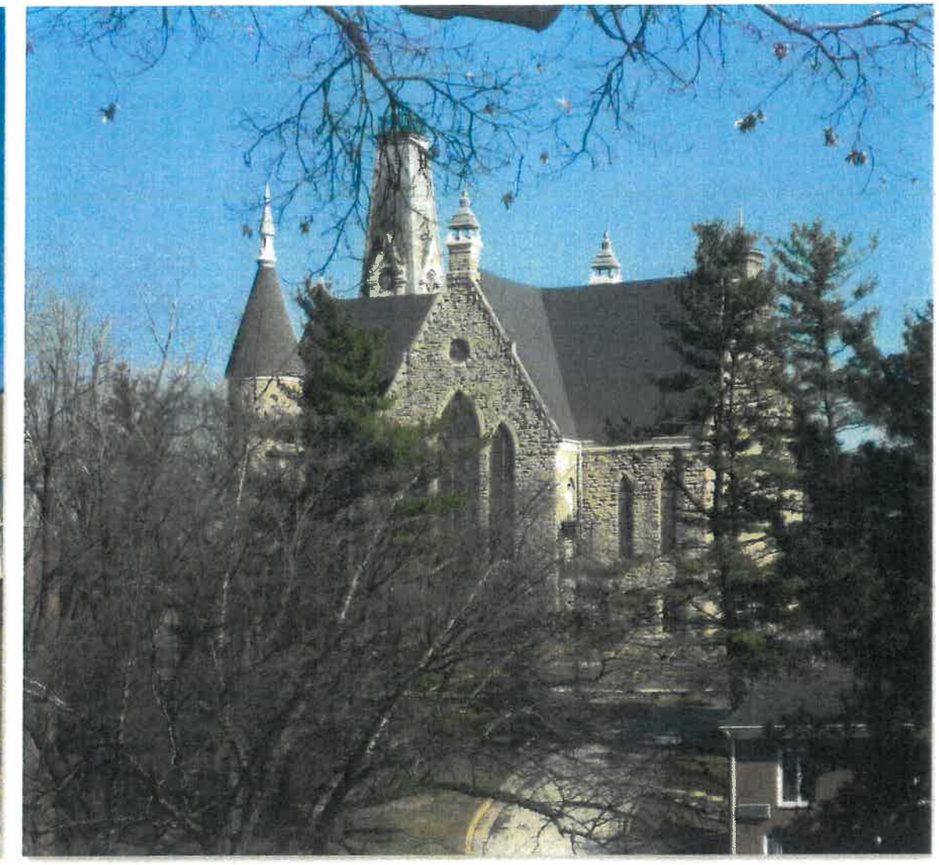
IOWA'S LIVING ROADWAYS
Summer 2011







Community Visioning Program Special Places Mapping Summary, 2011

Introduction

Every community has places that are of special value to its residents. Places may be valued as landmarks, such as historic trees or buildings. Other places may be valued as the site of childhood adventures or universal events. Some places just seem to evolve into local hangouts—a tavern, a diner or even a parking lot. Places may be valued because they are tangible reminders of past residents; they represent a shared history.

"Special places" refers to these places, which often contribute to residents' perception of home and desire for community investment. By identifying a community's special places and learning why those places are important, designers gain a better understanding of residents' values and are able to incorporate those into a meaningful design. The design team conducted mapping interviews with Mount Vernon residents about their special places, and noted comments and locations on an aerial photo. These were then studied to discover themes and consensus among residents about their town. The results are communicated in the thematic maps to follow.

Workshop Date:
March 24, 2011

Number of Participants:
25

Mount Vernon, Iowa

Landscape Architect: Craig Ritland, FASLA, Craig Ritland Landscape Architects

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IOWA'S LIVING ROADWAYS
Spring 2011

"I would like to see the town expand all of our trails."

Walkable Community

"There are several different trails in town but they are disconnected and some just don't lead anywhere" was an observation by one workshop participant. "We need more connectivity." Other residents expressed a need to replace deteriorating, narrow sidewalks in older neighborhoods.

Mount Vernon residents are avid walkers, despite the shortcomings of their off-road trail system and broken sidewalks. When one listens to them it is easy to see why. It is a small, compact community with an abundance of interconnected, beautiful neighborhoods to explore. One can get to just about anywhere on foot and do so while enjoying well maintained, historic architecture on tree-lined streets with sidewalks. Mount Vernon has many of the urban qualities being replicated in some progressive new developments around the country.

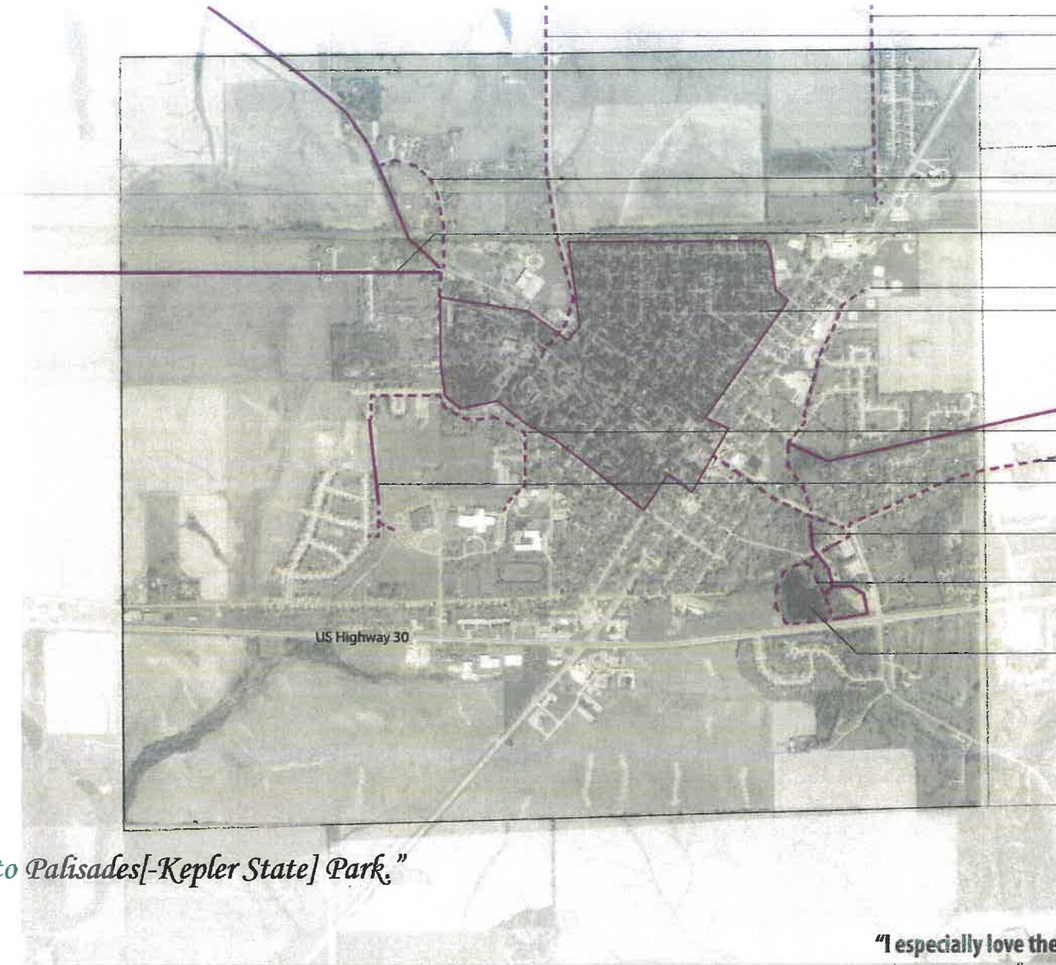
Several residents enjoy the experience of walking the picturesque countryside made famous by Grant Wood. A trail runs alongside the old Lincoln Highway between Mount Vernon and Lisbon. Popular loop routes are located on county roads northwest of town.

A current sewer project is helping to accomplish one objective by clearing a corridor that will allow the nature trail to be extended to Nature Park, completing an off-road trail that runs from Elliott Park to Nature Park. Nature Park features an abandoned limestone quarry lake. Residents enjoy the rugged, natural setting and the trail that extends around the lake.

Sidewalk conditions should steadily improve with the enactment of a recent sidewalk ordinance.

Workshop participants expressed interest in developing rural trails that connect to regional systems or destinations. Previous attempts to do this have failed, such as the proposed route to Lisbon on the old abandoned interurban rail line, which failed in part because residents adjacent to it objected. Many residents would also like an off-road trail to Palisades-Kepler State Park about four miles away. Geographically, the abandoned interurban line going west out of town could be part of that trail alignment.

US Highway 30 creates some safety issues that concern residents. It is hoped that improvements to the highway, such as a roud-a-bout at the Highway 1 intersection, that will help to address these concerns.



"It's amazing how many people use the trail by the gazebo. It will be so nice when that finally connects to Nature Park."

"I wish there was a trail to Palisades[-Kepler State] Park."

"I especially love the path behind the old middle school when phlox are in bloom. It is just so beautiful."

"I would love to see further development of community bike trails. We have a lot of trails in town but they do not connect to each other."

"I like the walking scale of the older part of town. I've walked for 20 years and always feel like I'm seeing new things. You can always turn a different corner. There are just so many walking choices."

"[It would] be great to have trail access to Abbe Creek School."

"And by bike trails, I don't mean putting up signs that say, 'share the road'."

"I would like to see additional trails along Nature Park that don't take away from its beauty but enhance it."

Walkable Community

Mount Vernon, Iowa

Landscape Architect: Craig Ritland, FASLA, Craig Ritland Landscape Architects

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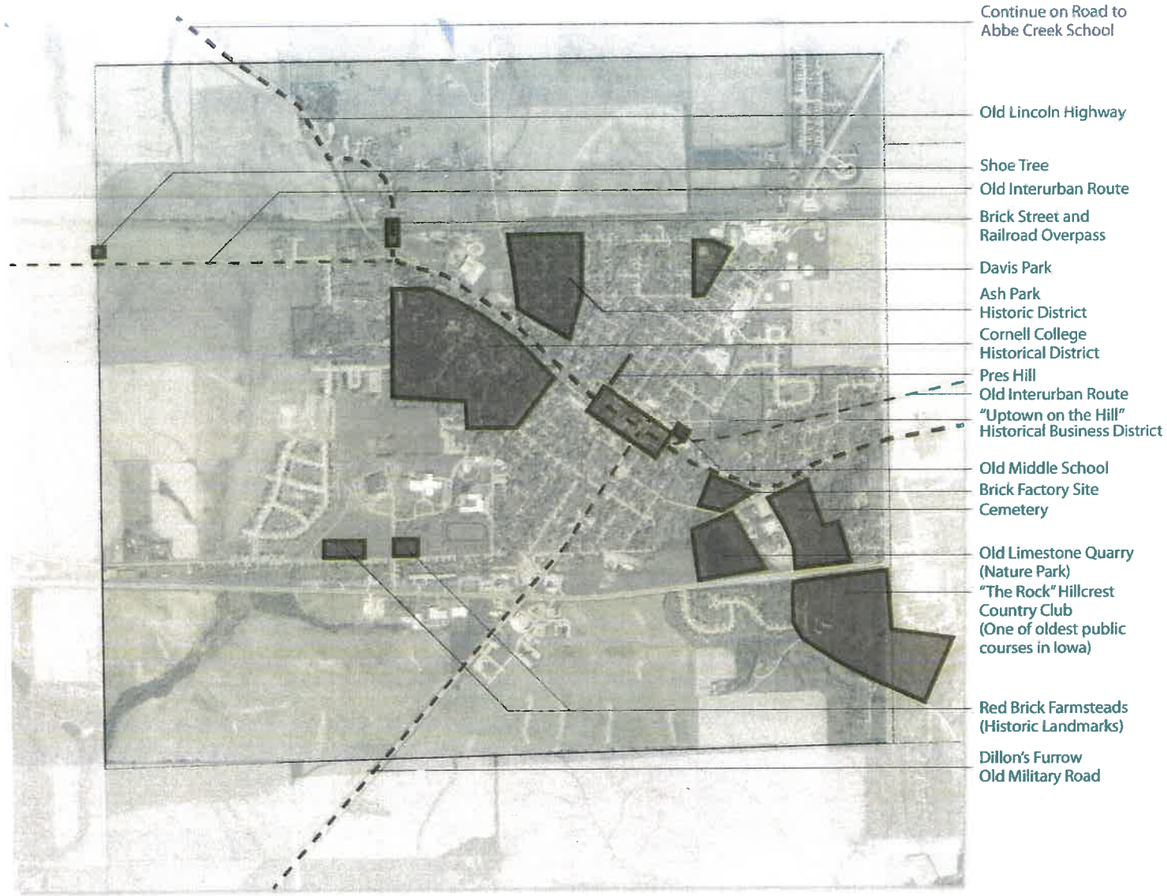
IOWA'S LIVING ROADWAYS
Spring 2011



"I like the countryside atmosphere around Mount Vernon."

"We like to hang out at Ink Pond and stand around talking and catching frogs."

"Davis Park is constantly used and has three 120 year old cottonwoods!"

"Students comb their hair with a hand mirror in the moonlight beneath the gingko tree [on Cornell campus] and wait to see their true love in the reflection."

"I love the iconic, traditional and old fashioned feeling of the downtown."

"The houses up the hill from Cornell College— Oh how I love them!"

"The old train bridge is so unique. It is always a destination during our family bike rides."

"[There is a] beautiful, historic, and social culture with front porches on older homes."

"Every 20 minutes a train goes through and the noise used to annoy us. Now it is a comforting sound— like a community rhythm."

Historically Speaking

Mount Vernon residents love their history, which is so closely intertwined and related to their beloved architecture that it is often hard to distinguish the two. In fact, Mount Vernon's architecture is a large part of its history.

According to special places mapping workshop attendees, there are three official historic districts in Mount Vernon: Uptown Historic District on 1st Street, which is the business district; Cornell College Campus, which is on the National Register of Historic Places; and the Ash Park Historic Neighborhood, a neighborhood with outstanding visual qualities created by well maintained Victorian homes on streets lined with large, mature trees.

No discussion of Mount Vernon history would be complete without mentioning, as many residents did, the historic Lincoln Highway, which ran through the heart of town. Segments still remain. It was the first transcontinental highway in the United States and one with a much celebrated past.

Of more local significance is the old interurban rail service that connected Lisbon to Cedar Rapids through Mount Vernon. The alignment is still visible at either end of town and is often thought of by trail advocates as a perfect regional trail opportunity.

A railroad is still active on the northern edge of town and trains pass through town approximately every 20 minutes. One fairly new resident has overcome her early dislike for the disruption and now looks forward to the sound of the passing trains. She feels as if it brings a comforting rhythm to the community.

Workshop participants described their own favorite historical sites. One woman said the residential neighborhood south of 1st Street and east of the college makes her feel as if she were living in a post-Victorian age. One young girl loves the three huge and more than 120-year-old cottonwood trees in Davis Park. The loud rustle of the cottonwood leaves marks the coming of autumn to some in the park's neighborhood. Another popular site is Pres Hill, starting at the Presbyterian Church heading downhill on 3rd Avenue NW. The city blocks off the street at certain times in the winter for sledding.

Several young residents cited Ink Pond on campus as a favorite location, noted for its opportunities for rock throwing and socializing. The old bridge over the railroad tracks on the old Lincoln Highway alignment has been converted to pedestrian use and is a favorite spot to experience the trains as they pass beneath.

Northwest of town on Mount Vernon Road, outside the city limits, is an old, one-room schoolhouse known as Abbe Creek School.

Historically Speaking

Mount Vernon, Iowa

Landscape Architect: Craig Ritland, FASLA, Craig Ritland Landscape Architects

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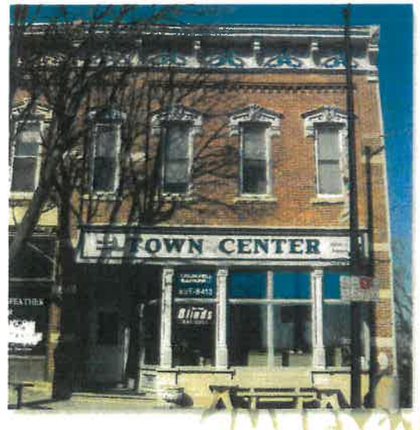
IOWA'S LIVING ROADWAYS
Spring 2011

"The two best things we have in Mount Vernon are architecture and trees. I love trees. You [have to] have trees!"

"I love King Chapel because you can see it from all corners of the town."

"Coming into Mount Vernon from Cedar Rapids you see the scenic beauty of the countryside and then the architectural beauty and you know this place is special."

"I love the architecture of the pre-1900's homes with the big porches and wood siding."



Architectural Heritage

Mount Vernon, Iowa

Landscape Architect: Craig Ritland, FASLA, Craig Ritland Landscape Architects

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Architectural Heritage

An iconic photo often used to describe Mount Vernon depicts a row of nicely maintained Victorian homes on a street lined with large shade trees. Each home features a matching Victorian porch, many of which are flying an American flag.

This nostalgic image is a reality in Mount Vernon repeated over and over in variations throughout the neighborhoods. Workshop participants agreed that they are constantly discovering new architectural delights to enjoy on their daily walks.

As one resident pointed out, when one approaches town on Mount Vernon Road, and begins to make out some architectural and landscape details on the horizon, it soon becomes apparent it is a special place. Crossing the railroad bridge and climbing the hill toward Cornell College, King's Chapel dominates the view. At 1st Street and the college one is literally surrounded by rich historic architecture. The entire Cornell College campus is on the National Register of Historic Places.

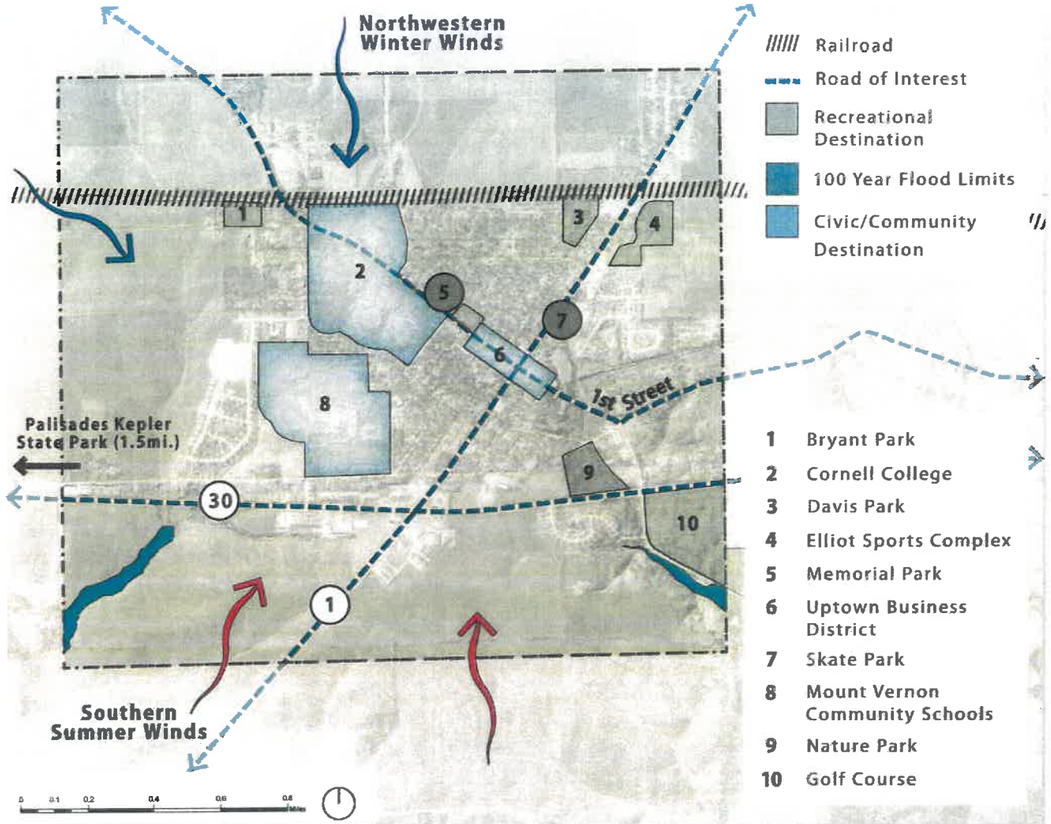
Residents at the workshop agreed that it was not only the strong architectural influence that made Mount Vernon a beautiful place to live, but also the abundance of large street trees, in combination with the architecture, that is so powerful. Another neighborhood in the northeast corner of town is designated an historic district, known as the Ash Park Historic Neighborhood. Throughout town are many small private gardens for the residents to enjoy as well.

In addition to King's Chapel, other notable architectural examples include the Presbyterian and Methodist churches. All three of these buildings are constructed from limestone that was mined locally from a quarry now converted into a popular community park known as Nature Park.

It's not just the residential and college architecture that the community embraces, but the character of the uptown buildings as well. Much of the original storefront details remain, enough to have been designated one of three historic districts in town.

Residents feel strongly about their architectural heritage and are working to protect and enhance it. Mount Vernon has recently become a Main Street Iowa community.

IOWA'S LIVING ROADWAYS
Spring 2011



Agricultural fields along W Mount Vernon Road. Source: Nicholas Gulick

Nearby Cedar River. Source: Nicholas Gulick

Gently rolling hills west of Mount Vernon. Source: Nicholas Gulick

Bioregional Assessment

The Visioning Program encourages the use of sustainable design, a philosophy that human development is integrated with the natural world and should exemplify the principles of conservation. Preservation of the natural world is critical to ensuring the sustainability of the human community.

An important component of sustainable design is bioregional assessment. In order for a design to be sustainable, it must function within the existing natural environment without producing a negative impact. The design team has conducted an inventory of its natural resources, including both biological and physical characteristics, such as geology, vegetation, climate, soils, land use, wildlife, and hydrology. This information is mapped here.

Soils

Soils are formed by the weathering of bedrock over thousands of years. Wind, waterborne sediments, and vegetation also factor into formation of soils. According to the 1975 Soil Survey of Linn County, IA by the United States Department of Agriculture, the Mount Vernon soils are composed of alluvium, loess, glacial till and parent plant material. The principal soils include Seaton loess soils running from the northwest to the southeast: well-drained Tama soils in the southwest and northeast portions of the city: Dickinson soils in the center of Mount Vernon: alluvial Colo soils found in the southwest and the east around streams; and Downs and Atterberry found in the eastern part of the city. Colo soils are poorly drained, nearly flat and found in flood plains and upland drainage ways. The Dickinson-Downs-Seaton soils are well-drained, loess soils found on gentle to strongly sloping uplands and ridges. Tama soil is well-drained nearly flat to moderately sloping in upland areas. Atterberry soil is poorly drained, nearly flat and found at the head of drainage ways, the base of slopes, and near major streams.

Vegetation

The native vegetation for Linn County was tallgrass prairie, and woodland forest along waterways. This flora supported the fauna of the historical Midwest grassland which included deer, bison, elk, wolves, and a variety of birds. Since the settlement of Iowa in the 1840's, nearly all the tallgrass prairie has been tilled under and converted to agricultural use. Mount Vernon is no exception to this conversion process, much of the surrounding area is dedicated to growing corn and soybeans.

Climate

The Climate of Mount Vernon is characterized by regular annual weather cycles that are typically continental. Weather patterns frequently change with warm summers and cold winters. The average temperature varies from 20°F in January to 75°F in July, though much cooler and warmer temperatures occur annually. According to the United States Department of Agriculture the warmest month is usually July with a record temperature of 110°F in 1911. The lowest record temperature of -36°F occurred in January 1883. Average annual precipitation for Linn County is 33.4 inches, with May and June being the wettest months and July and August being drier. The average snowfall is 30 inches, with snowfall of one inch or more persisting through November and as late as April. Storm systems typically travel from the west across Mount Vernon.

Topography and Drainage Patterns

Much of downtown Mount Vernon resides on a Paha formation of loess soils. The topography of Mount Vernon is gently to strongly sloping with a high elevation just over 930 feet above sea level at Cornell College. Major elevation changes occur on the slopes of the Paha. Tributaries of the Cedar River reach just into the city limits in the south. Flooding is not a major problem in Mount Vernon with only a small 100-year flood plain located in the southeast corner of the city.

Geology

Mount Vernon is located on fractured carbonate bedrock created during the Silurian period between 443.7-416 million years ago. Beginning 750,000 years ago the Nebraskan glacier was the first to deposit glacial drift in Linn County. Later during the Wisconsin age, glacial till was covered by windblown loess. Also during the Late Wisconsin age, alluvium was deposited in flood plains and terraces of water courses. The windblown loess created a Paha geological feature, or elongated ridge oriented northwesterly to southeasterly, that Mount Vernon rests upon today. The makeup of the bedrock and soils in the area contribute to the overall fertility of the soil, how water infiltrates into the soil and which areas have the appropriate bearing capacities for buildings.

Mount Vernon

Bioregional Assessment

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
LA Intern: Nicholas Gulick and Robin Hamadani, ISU Landscape Architecture Extension

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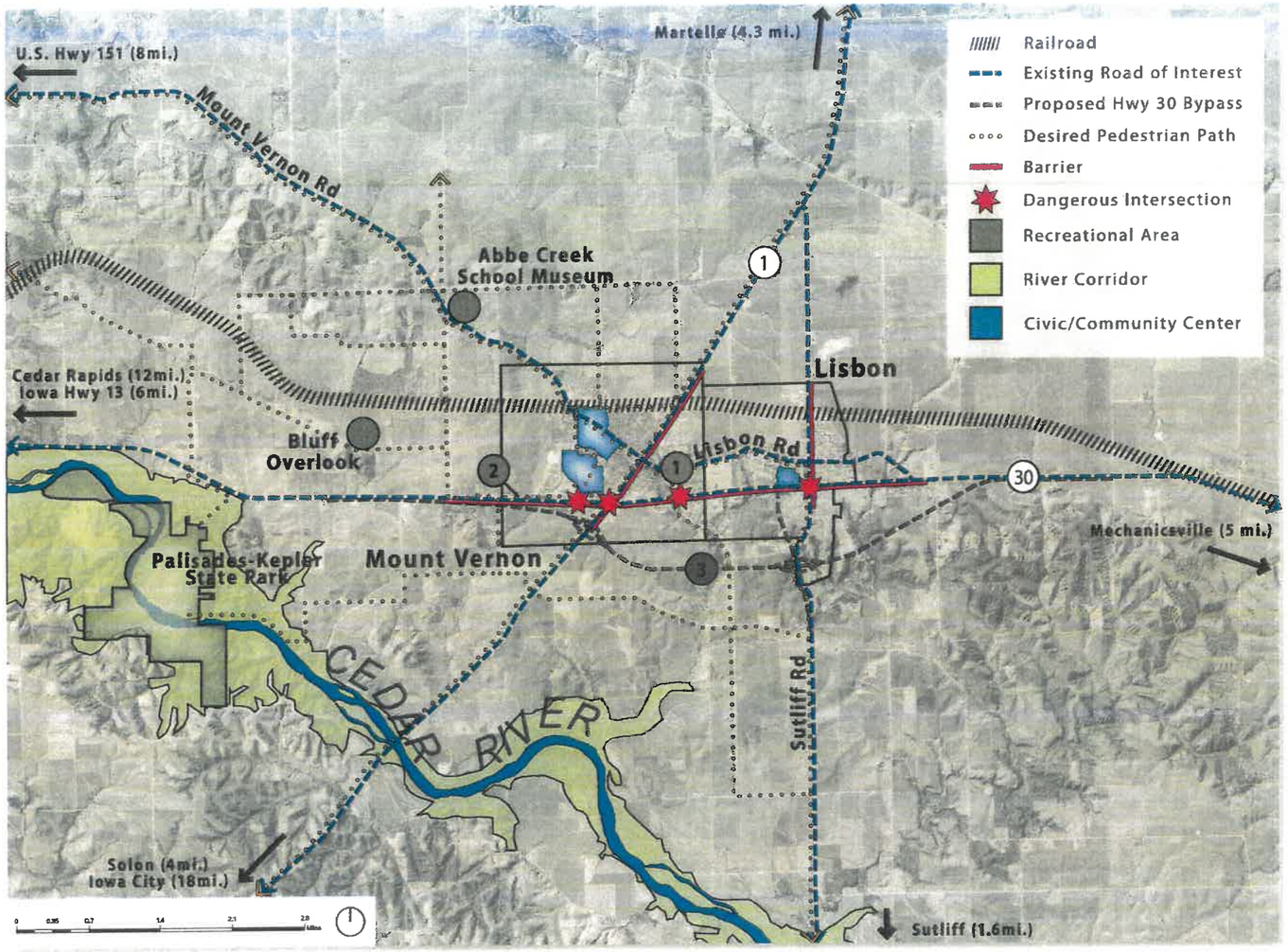
Summer 2011



Abbe Creek School Museum. Source: Nicholas Gulick

Palisades-Kepler State Park. Source: Nicholas Gulick

Lisbon Road Trail. Source: Nicholas Gulick

Regional Context

Transportation behavior—how and why people drive, walk, and bike where they do—is different in each community. These behaviors are influenced by regional and local elements such as highways, topography, sidewalk conditions, and destination. People have destinations in mind when they set out to go somewhere, but barriers such as difficult intersections, broken sidewalks, and lack of shade or visibility create negative experiences residents want to avoid. By talking to small groups of people and mapping destinations and desired connections, as well as barriers and other problems, we can get a good sense for what works well and what needs attention.

Mount Vernon and Lisbon have a historical and present day connection represented by the walking/biking path along the old **Lincoln Highway (Lisbon Road) (1)**. Runners and bikers from Mount Vernon continue to Sutliff Road through Lisbon, as well. Mount Vernon residents frequently utilize **Palisades Road (2)** for running and biking and **Palisades State Park** for recreation. Mount Vernon was once connected to Cedar Rapids by an electric rail car, known as the InterUrban. Active residents looking for biking trails longer than 20 miles may drive to Solon and bike the trail to Lake McBride, or bike out Springville Road north of Mount Vernon. Many residents work in Cedar Rapids or Iowa City. The **Cedar River** flows south of Mount Vernon and Lisbon through **Palisades Park**.

A **Highway 30 bypass (3)** of Mount Vernon and Lisbon has been considered for a number of years to alleviate congestion and improve safety conditions for travellers of the current Highway 30. As of June 2011, the project has not been included within the Iowa Department of Transportation's five-year Transportation Improvement Program. The Iowa Department of Transportation continues to make plans for a bypass. There are currently five different route alternatives, all south of Mount Vernon and Lisbon. The Department of Transportation will reveal a preferred alternative during the fall of 2011.

Mount Vernon

Transportation Behavior and Needs | 1. Regional Context

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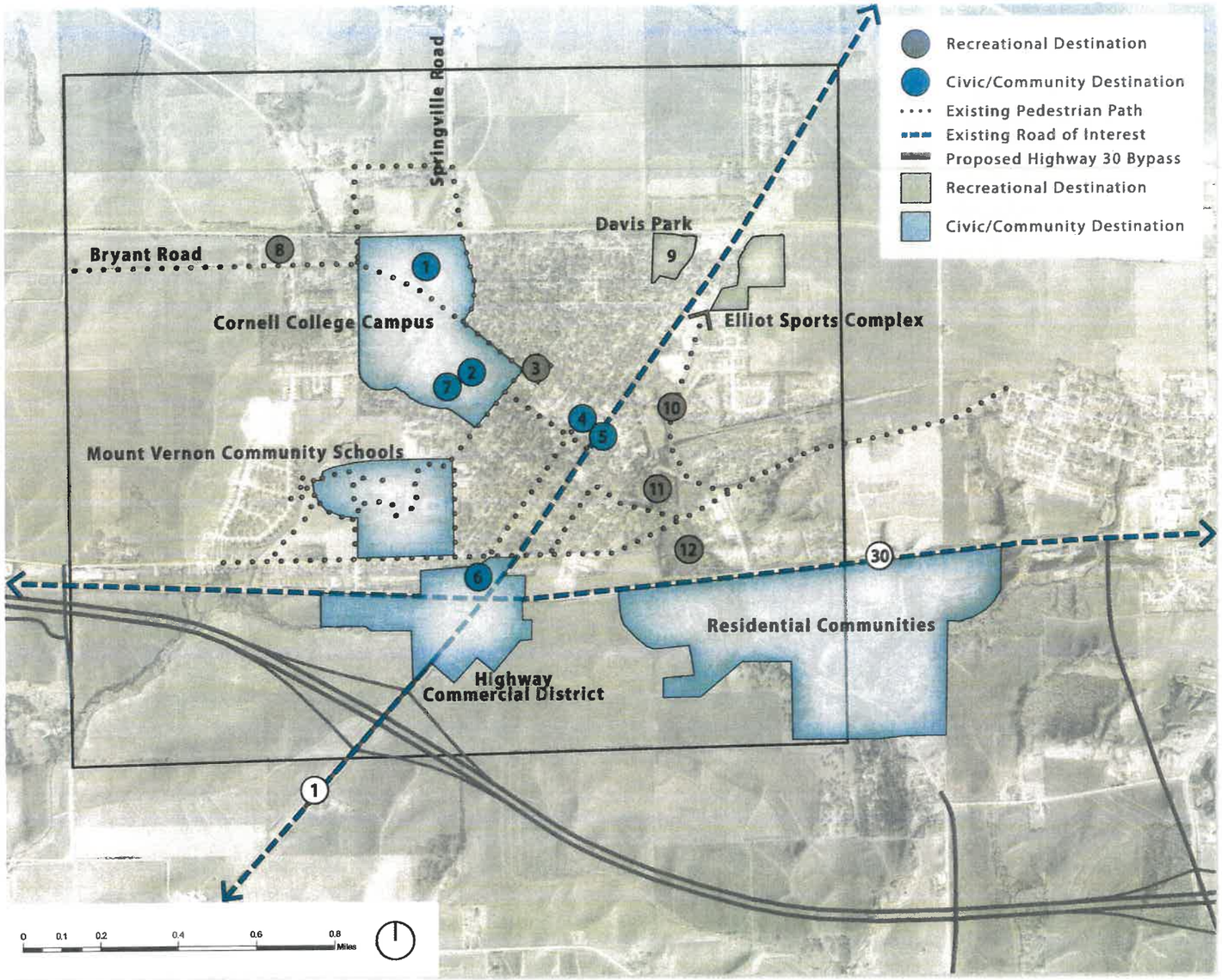
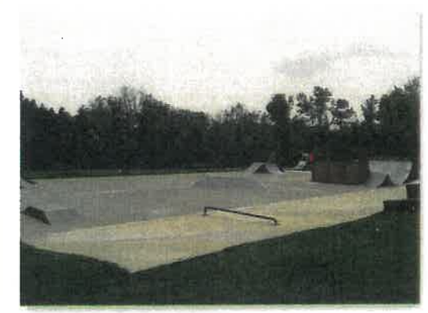


Farmers Market. Source: Robin Hamadani

Main Street. Source: Robin Hamadani



Skate park. Source: Nick Gulick

Destinations and Connections

Mount Vernon is home to Cornell College, which is a popular place for walking and biking because of the large greenspace and sidewalks. Features on campus include the **gym (1)**, soccer fields, and **Ink Pond (7)**, as well as the **Mount Vernon Public Library (2)**.

The coffee shop (Fuel), the **Lincoln Café (4)**, City Hall, Art Gallery, and many quaint shops are frequently visited destinations on **Main Street (5)**. In the summer, Main Street hosts a farmers market on Thursday evenings. Another popular feature on Main Street during the summer is the Open Bike-Share program, locally known as "Purple bikes." Because Main Street is busy, some prefer to walk on Second Street. The main grocery store is **Gary's Foods (6)** on Highway 1.

Bryant Road on the northwest side of Mount Vernon is a popular place to run and walk because it is not navigable by car, and leads to the "Shoe Tree" a community attraction. Multiple activities and school events take residents to the high school and middle school campuses also.

Families with young children enjoy the swimming pool and playground equipment at **Davis Park (9)**. **Bryant Park (8)** has soccer fields, a shelter-house, restrooms, and playground equipment. **Memorial Park (3)** is located near downtown. Another popular trail is **Mosquito Alley (11)**. This popular trail links **Underhill Skatepark (10)** and **Nature Park (12)**, situated in an old quarry. A fairly extensive sidewalk network already exists and provides walking routes to many of the community's destinations.

Mount Vernon

Transportation Behavior and Needs | 2. Destinations and Connections

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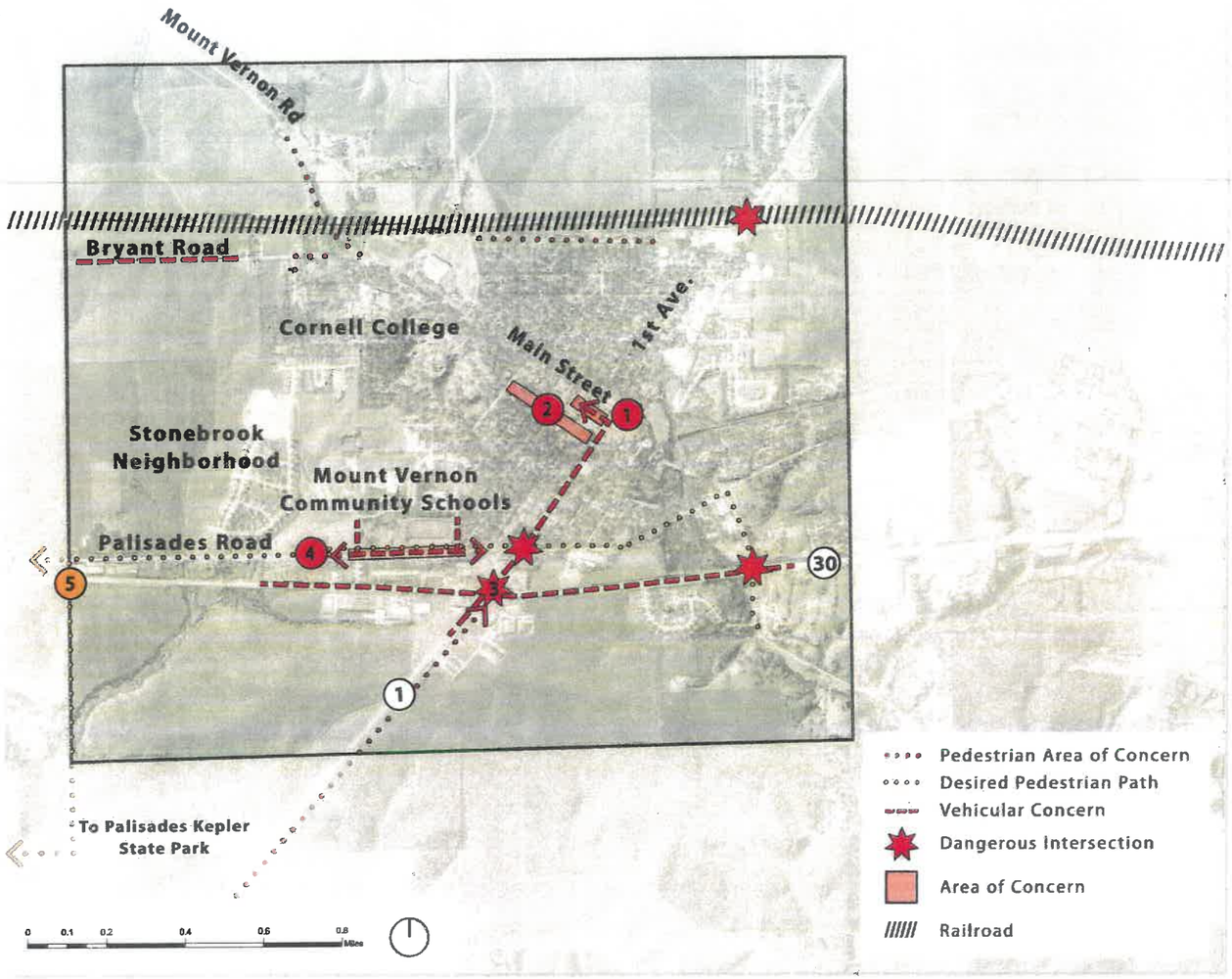


Barriers and Other Challenges

In general, pedestrians have a hard time crossing Highway 30 and Highway 1. Highway 30 is congested, especially during peak commuting hours. The stop signs at **"dysfunction junction" (3)**, where Highways 30 and 1 meet, do little to encourage pedestrian traffic. A community member states, "You take your life in your hands out there." The City is considering **Entryway signage (5)** coming into town west on Highway 30. Residents are unhappy with the unsightly billboards that greet visitors when coming into town on Mount Vernon Road.

Residents expressed a desire to connect the **Stonebrook Neighborhood** to the rest of town with trails and road linkages. The Stonebrook neighborhood feels cut off—"impossible to get anywhere from there," stated a resident. To get to school from Stonebrook, kids have to walk three times farther than the actual distance, and cross Palisades Road at least twice. Additionally, they would like a way to connect to the north side of Lisbon (other than Main Street/Lisbon Road).

People identified **Second Street (2)** as in need of improvement for two reasons. During the winter, the stairs that pedestrians need to climb to reach the sidewalk present safety and accessibility concerns. Street lighting is absent or sparse and creates safety and security issues. Another street that would benefit from lighting is **Palisades Road (4)**, especially in front of elementary school.

In a community where so many ride bikes, residents felt there were not enough bike racks on **Main Street (1)**. Long-distance cyclists were interested in creating linkages to regional trails. For example, a trail to Cedar Rapids would provide access to an extensive network of trails in that city. A trail developed along Sutliff Road could connect to North Liberty, Solon, and Iowa City. Some cyclists use Sutliff Road now, but it is dangerous because of narrow shoulders and speeding traffic.

Adults expressed a need for more parks designed for them. Adults prefer places that are quiet and scenic, with seating and picnic tables. They would like outdoor art that is not playground equipment, a vista to look at, a flower garden—something to make it special. They are looking for soothing places where small groups of adults can sit and have conversations.

Intersection of Highway 1 and Highway 30. Source: Robin Hamadani

8th Street Northwest. Source: Nicholas Gulick

Intersection of Highway 1 and 4th Street South. Source: Nicholas Gulick

Mount Vernon

Transportation Behavior and Needs | 3. Barriers and Other Challenges

Iowa Department of Transportation Trees Forever ISU Landscape Architecture Extension ISU Extension Community and Economic Development Summer 2011

IOWA'S LIVING ROADWAYS

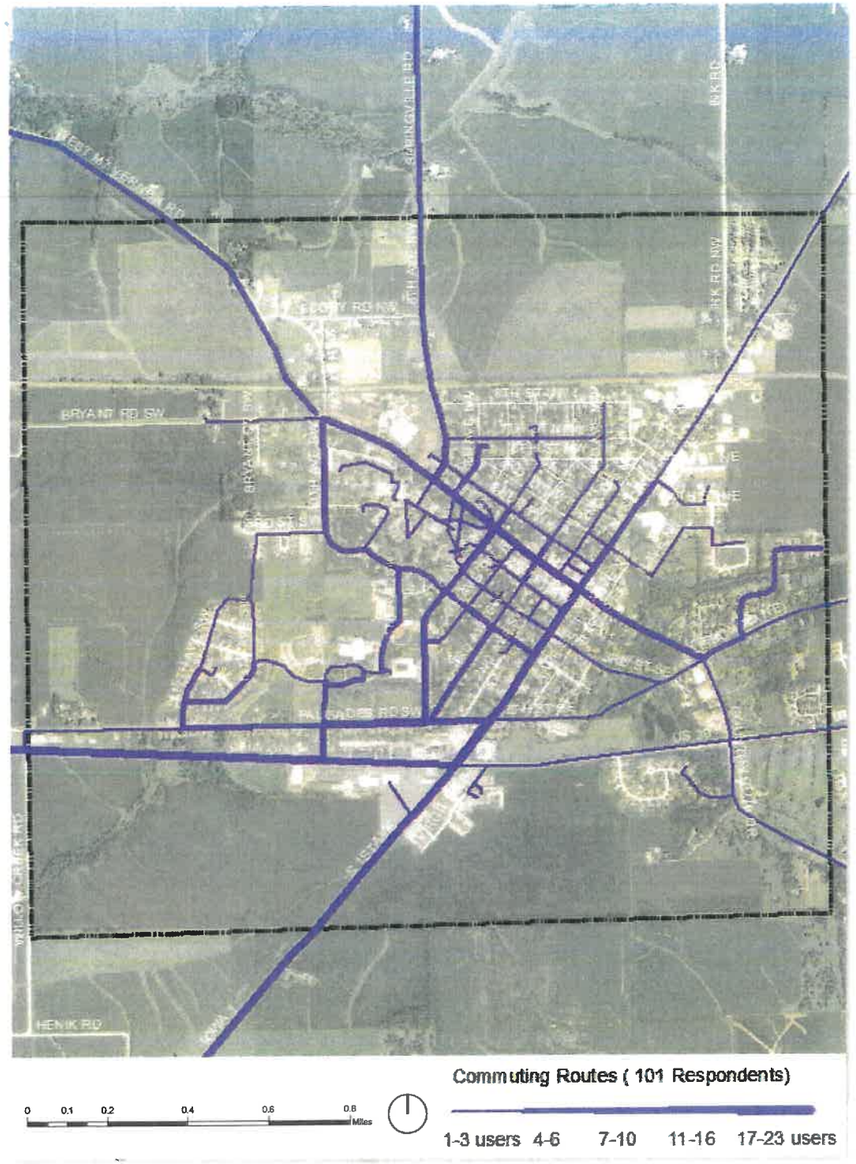


Figure 1. Respondents' modes of commuting (126 responses)

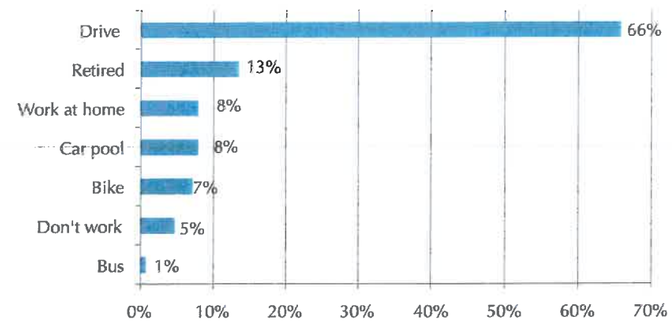


Figure 1 shows the modes of transportation that Mount Vernon respondents use to get to work. Eighty-two percent of study participants in Mount Vernon are employed. A clear majority (66%) drive alone, while 8% carpool. None of the respondents walk to work and 7% bike. Please note that some respondents indicated more than one mode; therefore, the percentages do not equal 100.

Table 1. Respondents' demographic information (107 responses)

	ISU survey	U.S. Census
Average age	52.0	36.6
Female	33.%	53.2%
Male	67%	46.8%
Married	88.8%	51.5%
Single/divorced	9.3%	44.7%
Widowed	1.9%	3.3%

Preferred Commuting Routes

This map shows the commuting routes identified in the survey. Study participants who work out of town primarily go west on US Highway 30, south on Highway 1, north on Springville Road, and northwest on Mt. Vernon Rd. Some commuters take US 30 east and some go north on Highway 1. First Street W, College Boulevard, and 10th Avenue are heavily traveled, as many residents work at Cornell College.

The circulation patterns that emerge when survey participants' biking running, walking, and commuting routes are overlaid are useful indicators of important areas where transportation enhancements may be employed. Such improvements could include reducing the conflicts between vehicular and pedestrian traffic by creating better visibility, defining crossing points, and improving signage.

Methodology

Mount Vernon has a population of 3,656. A random sample of Mount Vernon residents received postcards requesting that they complete the survey. The sample size desired was 337 responses, and a total of 102 surveys were completed, for a response rate of 17.9%. The demographics of the respondents are somewhat different from the actual demographics of Mount Vernon. The respondents' average age was 51, while the actual average age is 41.7 years old. Married people are over-represented in the survey (ISU –77.8%, Census – 54.7%), while divorced and widowed people are under-represented. Of the responses received, 81.4% or 83 were from the original random sample. The remaining 19 responses were self-selected—that is, the participants did not receive postcards.

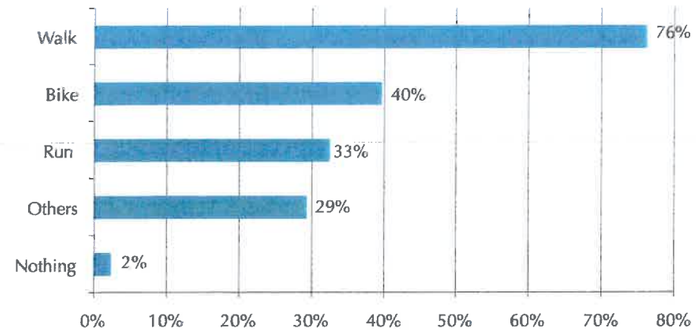
Intersection of 1st St and 1st Ave. Source: Nicholas Gulick

Intersection of Hwy 30 and Hwy 1. Source: Robin Hamadani

Mount Vernon

Transportation Behavior and Needs | 4. Preferred Commuting Routes

Figure 2. Respondents' preferred types of exercise (126 responses)



Walking is the most common form of exercise for participants (76%), followed by biking (40%) and running (33%). Only 2% of respondents do not exercise. Twenty-nine percent engage in other activities, such as team sports, golf, cross-country skiing, yoga, and juggling. The percentages for each activity are shown in figure 2. Please note that some respondents indicated that they engage in more than one form of exercise; therefore, the percentages do not equal 100.

Preferred Walking Routes

Seventy-two survey participants provided information about the walking routes they use. The most heavily walked streets in town are Palisades Road, 7th Street, 1st Street, 5th Avenue, and College Boulevard. Palisades Road and 7th Street are part of the old Lincoln Highway. Many people walk the old highway east into Lisbon. Some walkers make a loop from the old Lincoln Highway to 15th Avenue and follow the streets along the west side of town to Scoby Road. From Scoby Road they go south on 8th Avenue to 8th Street, and then following the streets along the east side of town back to Lincoln Highway. Some people walk at the intramural fields near the high school and middle school and some walk on the school track. Some people also walk in their neighborhoods. Some cross US Highway 30 to the country club and walk south on Country Club Drive.

1st St W across from Cornell College. Source: Nicholas Gulick

Old Lincoln Highway Bridge. Source: Nicholas Gulick

1st Street in Downtown Mount Vernon. Source: Nicholas Gulick

Mount Vernon

Transportation Behavior and Needs | 5. Preferred Walking Routes

Iowa Department of Transportation Trees Forever ISU Landscape Architecture Extension ISU Extension Community and Economic Development

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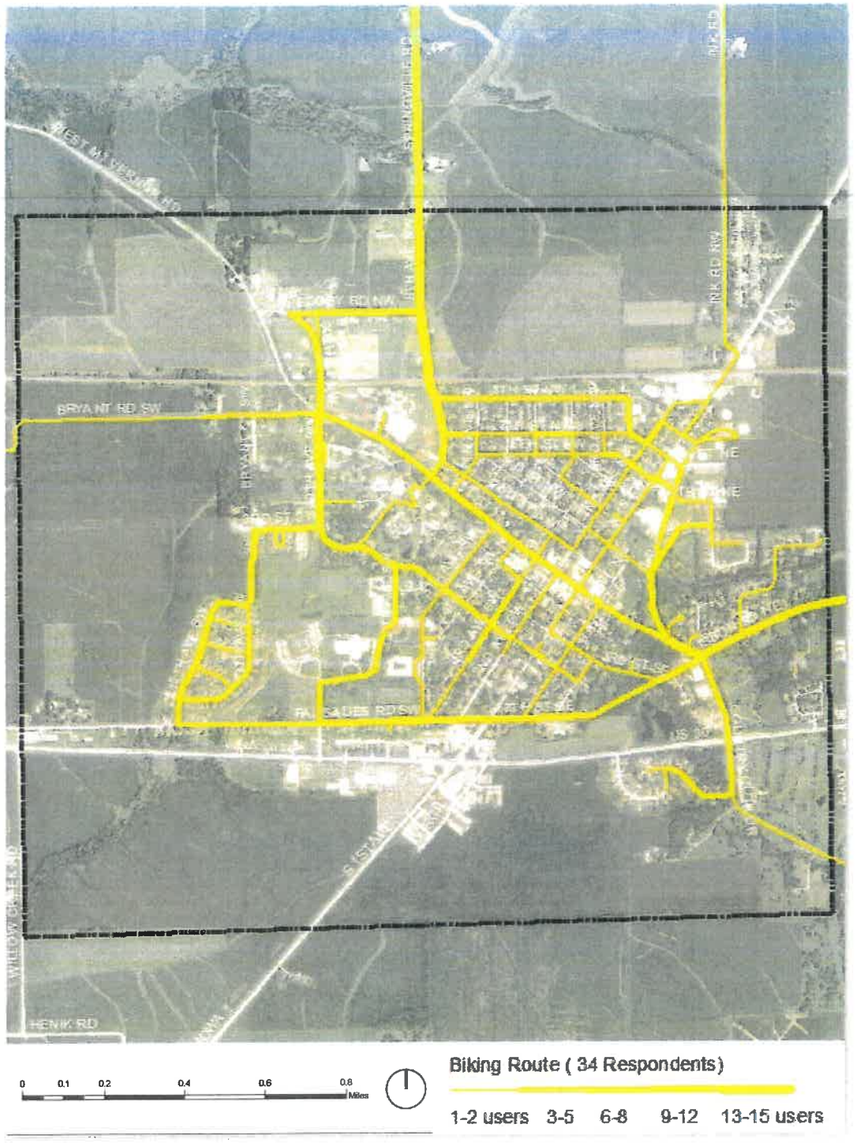
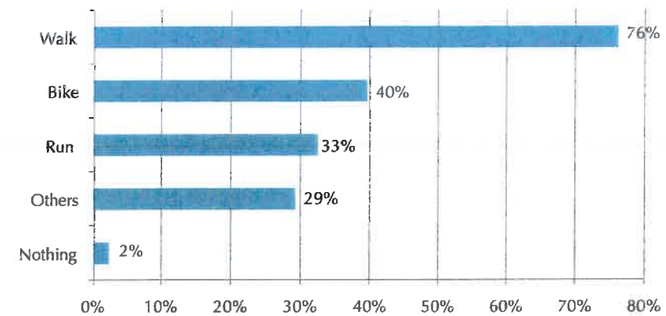


Figure 2. Respondents' preferred types of exercise (65 responses)



Forty percent of respondents who answered this question indicated that they bike for exercise. Please note that some respondents indicated more than one type of exercise; therefore, the percentages do not equal 100.

Preferred Biking Routes

Thirty-four respondents provided information about the biking routes they use. As with walkers, many cyclists frequently use Palisades Road, 7th Street, and 1st Street. Many people bike the old Lincoln Highway east into Lisbon, as well as 8th Avenue (Springville Road) to the north out of town. Several riders also go north out of town on Ink Road and west out of town on Bryant Road. Some cyclists ride the city streets throughout town. A few cyclists cross US Highway 30 to the country club and ride south on Country Club Drive.

Palisades Road. Source: Nicholas Gulick

Lincoln Highway Trail west of Mount Vernon. Source: Nicholas Gulick

E 1st Street near Cornell College. Source: Nicholas Gulick

Mount Vernon

Transportation Behavior and Needs | 6. Preferred Biking Routes

Iowa Department of Transportation Trees Forever ISU Landscape Architecture Extension ISU Extension Community and Economic Development

IOWA'S LIVING ROADWAYS Summer 2011

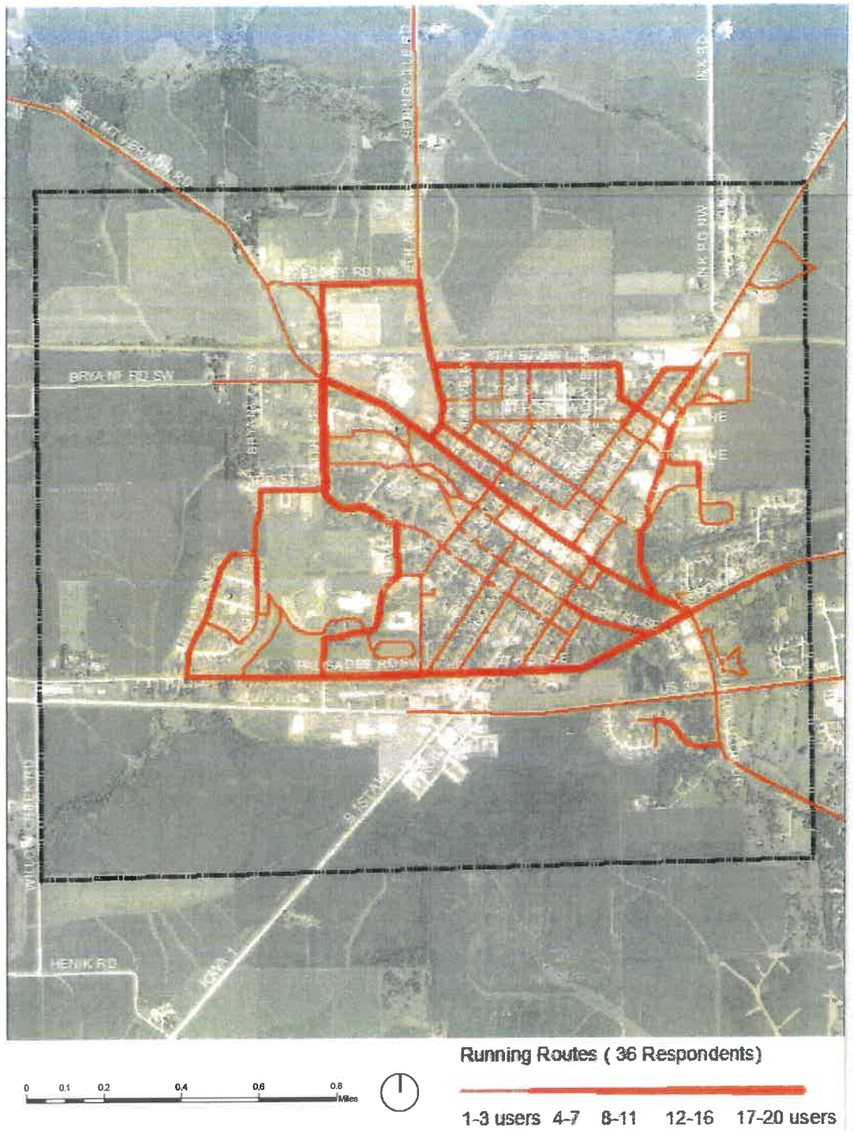
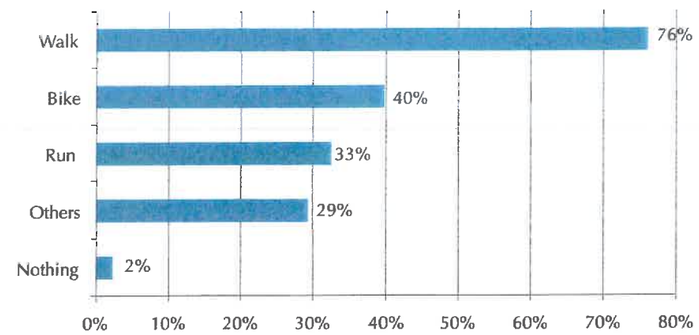


Figure 2. Respondents' preferred types of exercise (65 responses)



Thirty-three percent of respondents who answered this question indicated that they run for exercise. Please note that some respondents indicated more than one type of exercise; therefore, the percentages do not equal 100.

Preferred Running Routes

Thirty-six respondents provided information about the running routes they use. The routes identified are quite similar to those of the walkers and cyclists. Like walkers and cyclists, runners go back and forth between Mount Vernon and Lisbon via the Old Lincoln Highway. Lisbon Road, 7th Street, and Palisades Road are popular among runners, as well as 1st Street, 10 Avenue, Scobey Road, 8th Avenue, and 8th Street. Some runners go outside city limits on West Mount Vernon Road, Springville Road, and Highway 1. A few people also run south of US Highway 30 to the country club and run south on Country Club Drive, as do some walkers and cyclists.

College Blvd. Source: Robin Hamadani

Intersection of Palisades Rd and 15th Ave S. Source: Robin Hamadani

Traveling west on 8th St NW. Source: Robin Hamadani

Mount Vernon

Transportation Behavior and Needs | 7. Preferred Running Routes

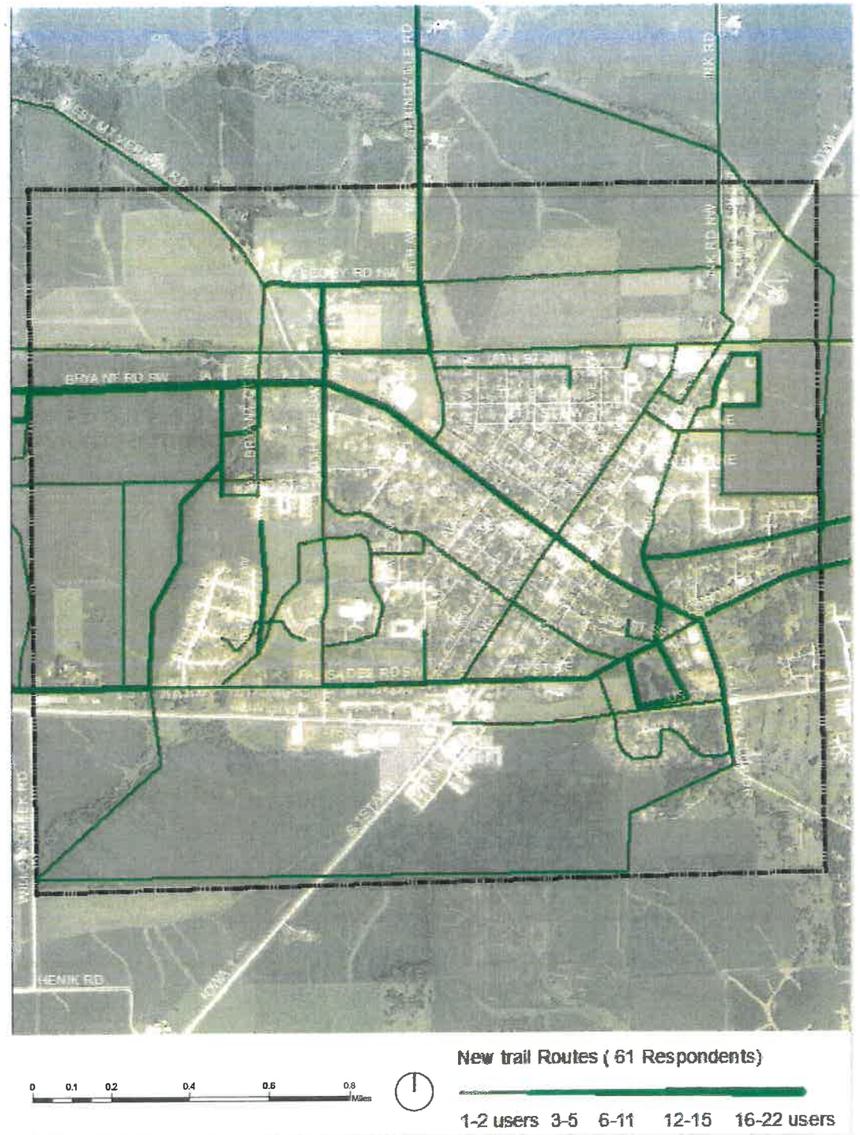
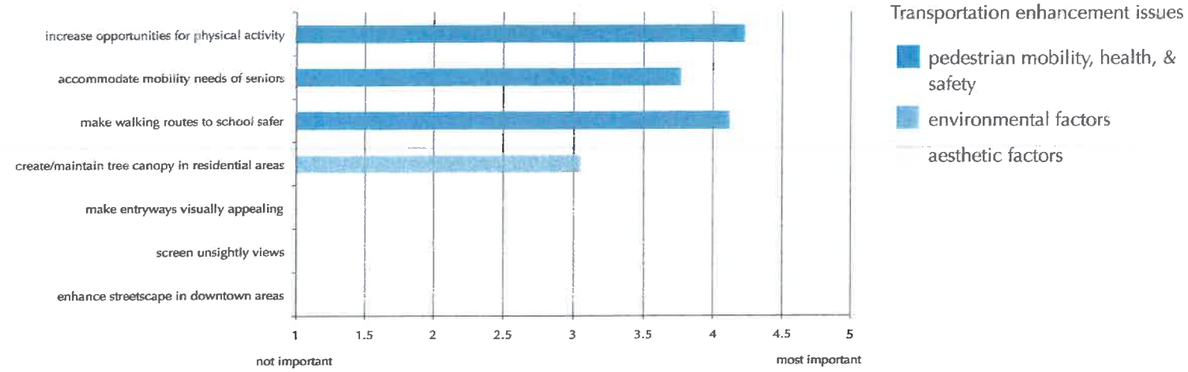


Figure 3. Importance of transportation enhancement issues by type

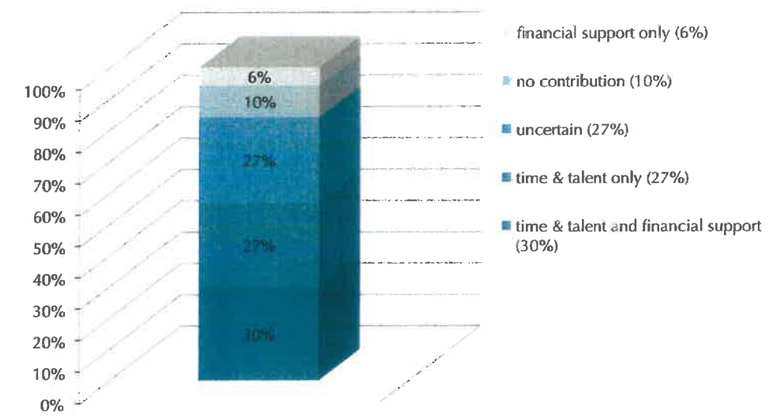


On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, participants in Mount Vernon ranked all of the enhancements above the average of 2.5, indicating that these issues are highly important. Enhancements that increase opportunities for physical activity and make walking routes to school safer ranked highest, followed by enhancing the downtown streetscape. Respondents were neutral about improvements that maintain a tree canopy in residential areas.

Desired Trail Routes

Sixty-one respondents mapped their desired trail routes. The popular location for a trail is west out of town on Bryant Road, presumably to link with the extensive trail system in the Cedar Rapids area. Many people also desire a trail along the old Lincoln Highway, both west out of town and east into Lisbon. Several respondents identified a route that would cross US Highway 30, connecting the country club area, as well as following the southern boundary of the city to Willow Creek Road and then following the creek north to the Cornell College campus. Trails are desired around the soccer and intramural fields near the high school and around the sports fields in the northeast corner of town south of the railroad tracks. Other proposed routes include a trail along the railroad route, trails going north out of town on Springville Road, Ink Road, and Scoby Road, and northwest on Mount Vernon Road.

Figure 4. Respondents' willingness to implement change (118 responses)



Almost 60% of participants are willing to contribute time and talent only or both time and talent and financial support. Interestingly, the number of people willing to contribute both (30%) is slightly higher than the number willing to contribute their time only (27%).

Mount Vernon

Transportation Behavior and Needs | 8. Enhancement Priorities

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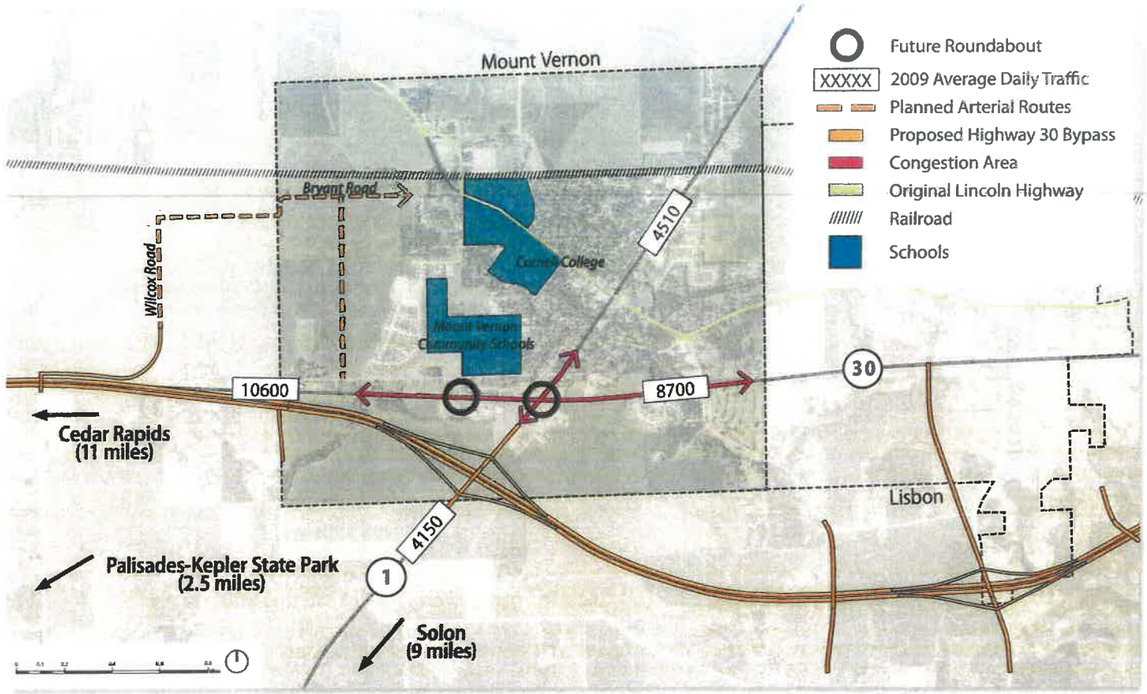

Traveling west on Highway 30. Source: Nicholas Gulick

Seedling Mile west of Mount Vernon. Source: Nicholas Gulick

Transportation Inventory and Analysis

Knowledge of the transportation systems in and around a community is critical for sustainable transportation enhancement planning. Transportation systems include paved and unpaved roadways, pedestrian and bike trails, waterways, railroad lines or railbeds from abandoned railroad lines and airports.

The Mount Vernon visioning design team met with Department of Transportation personnel and local officials to identify existing, past, and future transportation systems in the area and to discuss possible transportation related restraints and opportunities that could potentially affect project areas.

Existing Highway 30

Current traveling conditions of Highway 30 are less than desired, especially during peak traffic timeframes. Speeding traffic or moderate delays can be expected near the intersection of Highway 1 and Highway 30. The Mount Vernon Community School District also has its main connection to Highway 30 at 10th Street S. Long queing of traffic can be expected along 10th Street at schools dismissals, due speeding traffic and heavy volumes of traffic along Highway 30. To remedy this problem, the community is undertaking a significant roadway improvement project from west of 10th Street to east of Highway 1. The improvement will include the construction of 2 roundabouts, one at each of the respective intersections. In addition to improving intersection safety at 10th Street, the roundabouts will serve as significant traffic calming elements to provide a natural deterrent to reduce speed levels through this short roadway segment. The safety of pedestrians crossing of Highway 30 will be greatly improved with the incorporation of the roundabouts. Raised medians within the entrance nodes into the roundabout will provide pedestrian refuge areas.

Highway 30 By-pass

With a Highway 30 by-pass being considered, the community needs to start planning efforts now. A corridor preservation zone has been identified to trigger notifications to the Iowa DOT if property is sold or a subdivision request is made on property within this zone. This notification process will allow the Iowa DOT to review and comment on any changes of properties within the corridor. This significant roadway project could create a barrier, especially as it relates to pedestrian traffic connectivity to the south. An arterial street is slated for Mount Vernon's developing west side. A west-side at-grade connection to the by-pass is being explored. This to creates limitations for pedestrian connectivity and safety. When the by-pass is constructed the current Highway 30 will be turned over to the community's jurisdiction.

Highway 1

Like Highway 30, Highway 1 creates a barrier within the community. Certain intersections as constructed created unsafe crossing conditions, as a result of faulty or deteriorated pedestrian ramps as well as crossing points with very low visibility due to topography within this hilly community. A possible remedy would be to discourage crossings at the poor visibility areas, while enhancing logically spaced crossings where visibility is not a problem. Streetscape enhancements would be slated for these designated crossings that would draw attention to them (i.e. enhanced crosswalks, landscaping, decorative light poles) so vehicular traffic would be on the look-out for pedestrians in the area.

Lincoln Highway

The community is located adjacent to Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway. The Lincoln Highway was the first hard-surfaced road that stretched almost 3400 miles from coast to coast, New York to San Francisco, over the shortest practical route. A special designation has been given to a segment of roadway just west of Mount Vernon. This segment, known as Seedling Mile was the first concrete paved segment of the roadway paved in Iowa.

Trails

Trail expansion is a high priority for the community. A loop or number of smaller loops of the community is desired. Connectivity to regional trails and Palisades-Kepler State Park is also within future plans. East Central Iowa Council of Governments (ECICOG) recently completed a 2011 Trails planning document for Linn County and the surrounding area. A number of regional trails have been identified. Plans for possible long-term connection are important for the community. A Mount Vernon to Palisades-Kepler State Park is not identified within the current 2011 ECICOG plan.

Mount Vernon

Transportation Inventory and Analysis

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
LA Intern: Nicholas Gulick and Robin Hamadani, ISU Landscape Architecture Extension

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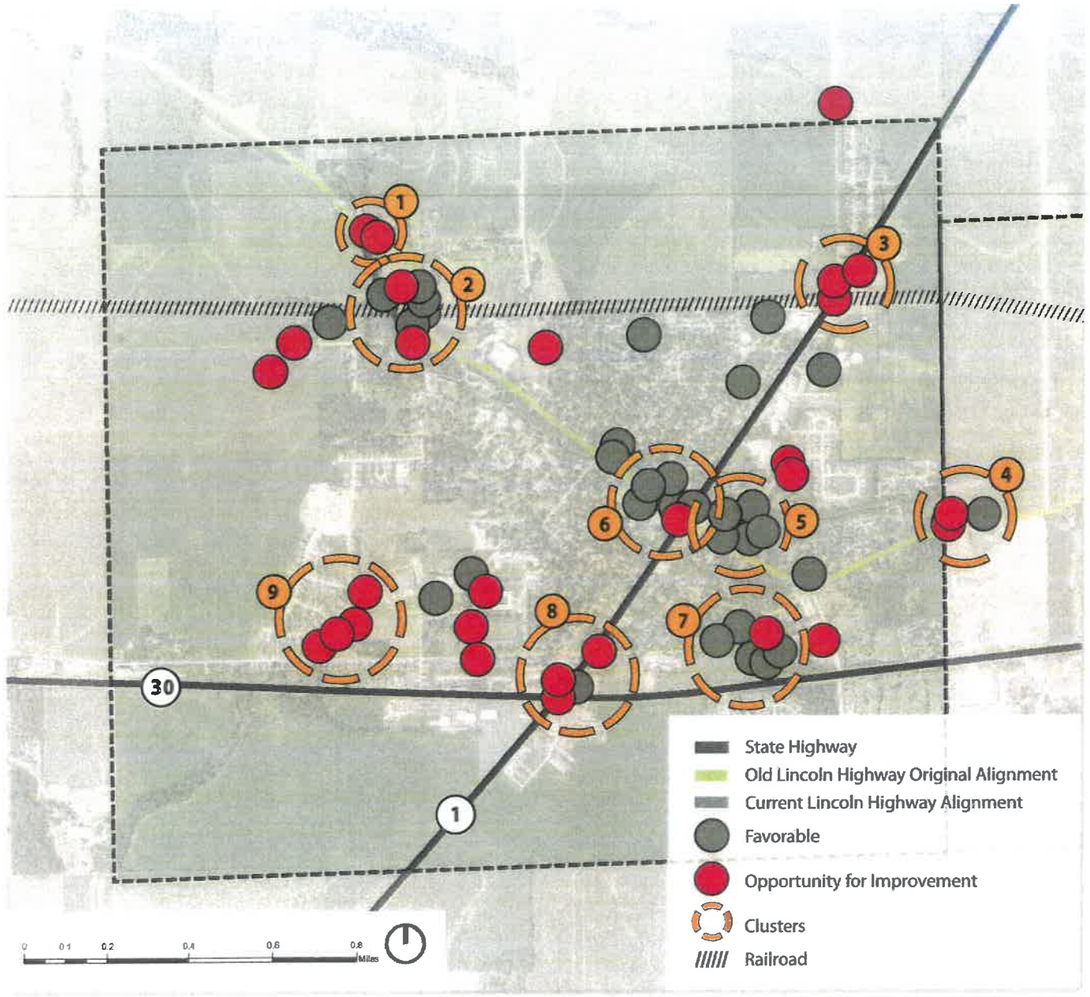
Summer 2011



Visual Quality Assessment

At its initial meeting, the Mount Vernon Visioning Committee discussed the community's motivations and goals for creating a vision for the community.

The Visual quality assessment (VAQ) is the bridge between the motivations and the vision. Committee members identified and mapped areas in the community that they perceive as "favorable", as well as areas that they believe could be improved in the community.

This analysis, combined with the cultural, historical, and bioregional assessments, reveals areas in the community that the vision should address. It also shows the resources available to support the community concept plan and what restraints may exist. The committee used this information to set goals to guide the concept plan development.

Clusters of "favorable" and "opportunities for improvement" images become easy to identify. Mount Vernon has many "favorable" areas in the community including parks, the Historic Uptown District, Trail Greenbelt, and the Visitor Center. Understanding what are considered "favorable" qualities offers critical insight into what will be valued and supported by the community. In addition, these assets provide inspiration and motivation for the future developments that have the same design challenge.

The Community members also identified areas where visual quality improvement is desired:

- Entrances into town
- Intersection of Highway 1 and 30
- An improved trail along Lisbon Rd
- School greenspace without trees

Some improvements will be easier to achieve than others and should be prioritized to allow the greatest immediate impact and allow appropriate planning and funding to be identified to tackle larger issues.
The prioritized areas are focused on improving the town's identity, drawing in new residents and satisfying the needs of current residents.

Prairie Park and the Old Lincoln Highway Bridge. Source: Craig Allen

Historic Main Street in Mount Vernon. Source: Craig Allen

Trail to Nature Park. Source: Slaton Anthony

The congested intersection of Highway 30 and Highway 1. Source: Craig Allen

Nature Park Lake. Source: Slaton Anthony

Mount Vernon

Visual Quality Assessment

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
LA Intern: Nicholas Gulick and Robin Hamadani, ISU Landscape Architecture Extension

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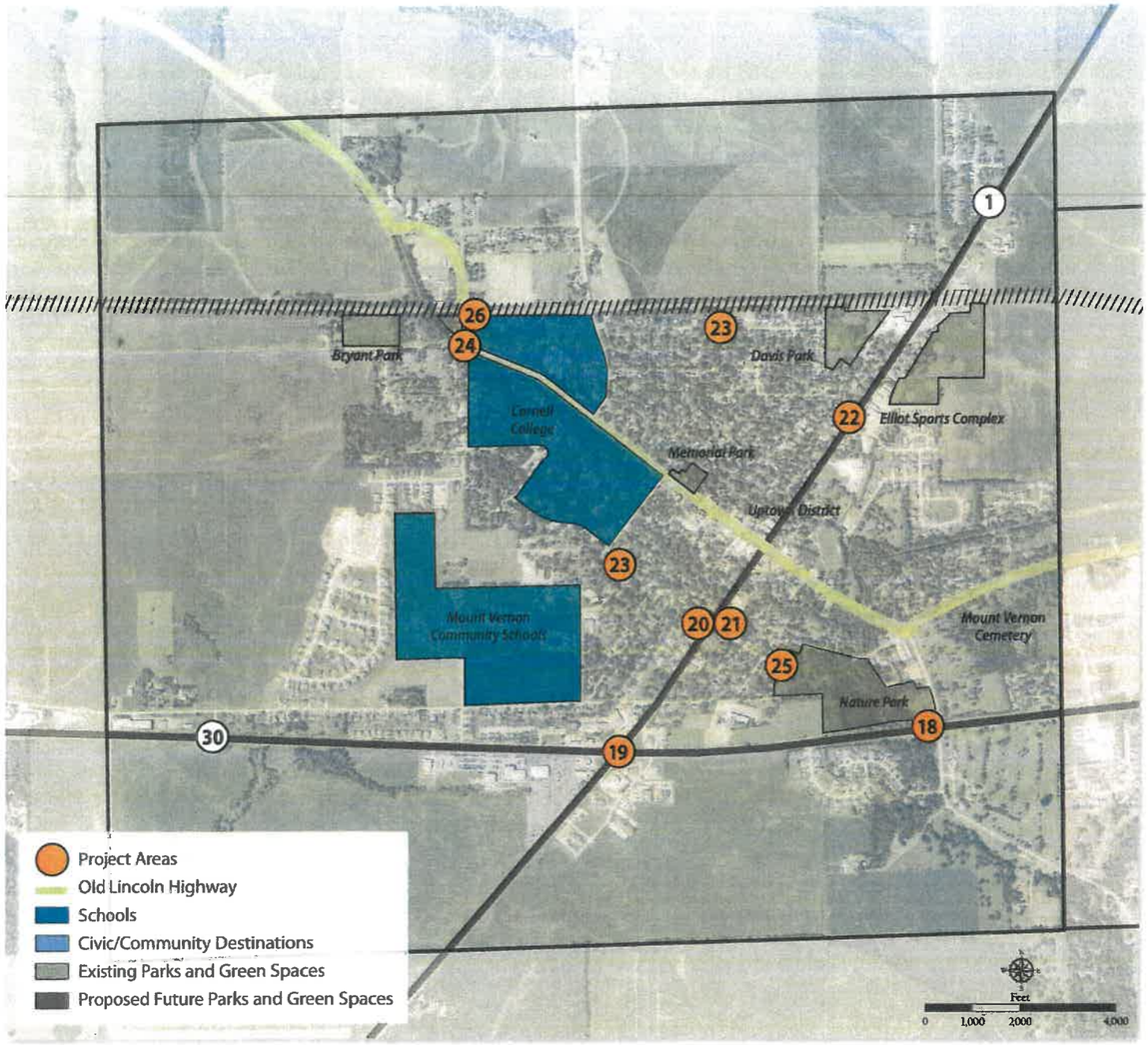

19. Roundabout Pedestrian Accommodations

23. Streetscape enhancements at the 7th Street and Highway 1 Intersection.

25. Pedestrian entrance to Nature Park at 4th Street.

Mount Vernon's Vision

Once the community members mapped out bioregional characteristics, historical assets, transportation patterns and visual quality survey of the town, the Mount Vernon visioning committee developed three broad goals for the design team to aim attention to. The areas of focus include:

A. Improve Trail Connectivity and Safety

B. Create a Unified Transportation System

C. Develop an Integrated Signage Plan

Using these goals as a basis for design, the design team selected project areas that would best assist the community to reach these goals. The project areas include:

15. Comprehensive Trails Plan
16. Regional Comprehensive Trails Plan
17. Lighting Improvements Master Plan
18. Highway 30 Underpass near Nature Park
19. Highway 30 and Highway 1 Roundabout Pedestrian Accommodations
20. Highway 1 Crossings | 4th Street (sheet 1 of 2)
21. Highway 1 Crossings | 4th Street (sheet 2 of 2)
22. Highway 1 Crossings | 7th Street
23. Residential Street - Widened Sidewalk Concept
24. Bryant Road and 1st Street Intersection Improvements
25. Nature Park Pedestrian Entrance at 4th Street
26. Prairie Park Trailhead Concept
27. Community Signage

The concept plans presented hereafter are a culmination of a planning process that involved citizens of the city to define its future. Hard work and dedication is necessary to bring these plans to fruition. Although desirable, it simply is not feasible to tackle all the projects at once. This planning document shall serve as a guide as the vision of Mount Vernon is revealed.

Mount Vernon

Concept Plan

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
LA Intern: Nicholas Gulick and Robin Hamadani, ISU Landscape Architecture Extension

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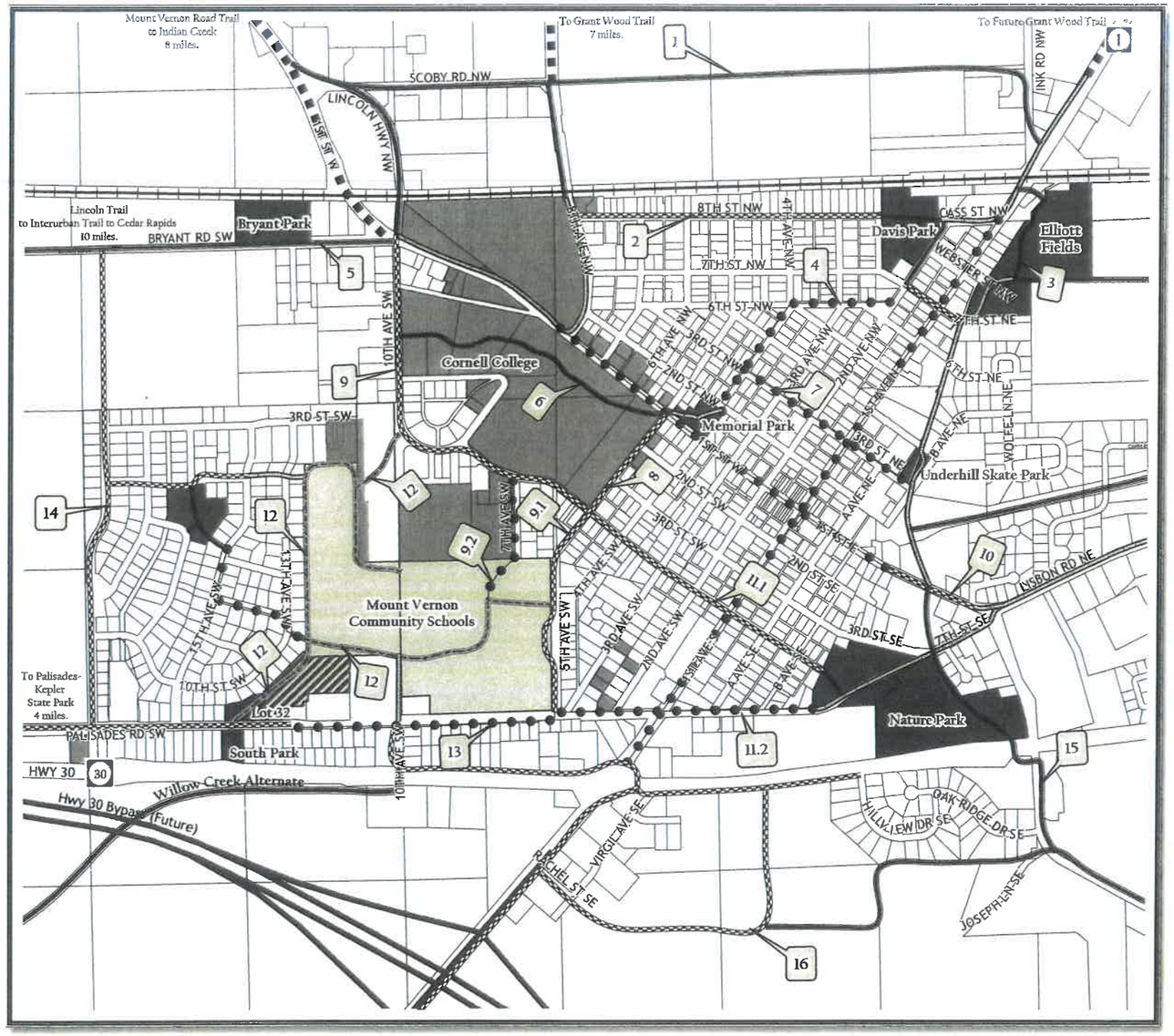

LEGEND

- LOS 1: Grade Separated, Concrete Trail
- LOS 3: Widened Sidewalk, Shared-Use Road
- LOS 4: Standard Sidewalks, Shared-Use Road
- LOS 5: Widened Shoulder, Shared-Use Road
- Existing/In Progress Routes
- Discretion of School District
- Joint City and School Property
- Mount Vernon City Parks
- Mount Vernon Community School District
- Cornell College

1: Future North Connector
2: Davis/Cornell Connector
3: Davis/Elliott Connector
4: Davis/Memorial Connector
5: Bryant/Cornell Connector
6: Cornell/Memorial Connector
7: Memorial/Underhill Connector
8: Memorial/MVCSD Connector
9: Cornell/MVCSD ES Branch
9.1: Cornell/MVCSD Elem. Sch. Branch
9.2: Cornell/MVCSD HS/MS Branch
10: Underhill/Nature Park Connector
11.1: MVCSD/Nature Park, North Branch
11.2: MVCSD/Nature Park, South Branch
12: MVCSD Connector Trail
13: MVCSD/South (Lot 32) Connector
14: Future West Connector
15: Nature Park/South End Connector
16: Future South Connector

N W E S

Feet

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Mount Vernon Long-Range Level of Service Recommendations
Prepared by Kara J. Homan
Masters Candidate in Urban and Regional Planning
Created March 23, 2007
Data Sources: Linn County GIS, City of Mount Vernon, and the University of Iowa
Map updated or amended August 2011 through Community Visioning Process.

Comprehensive Trails Plan

This plan contains updates and amendments to the trails planning that the community undertook with the development of the "Mount Vernon Parks and Schools Safe Connection Routes Plan" completed in 2007. This map specifically updates Map 4: Long-Range Level of Service Recommendations of that trails plan.

Significant updates include:

1. Citing Palisades Road as a less than desirable pedestrian crossing due to limited sight distance.
2. Identifying 4th Street South as a primary pedestrian route, due to recent acquisition of additional Nature Park land at the east end of the corridor and great intersection sight distance at Highway 1.
3. Refined west side connector route to coincide with latest development plans for Stonebrook neighborhood.
4. Plan considers forthcoming roundabout improvements and resulting improved pedestrian access at the intersection of Highway 1 and 30.
5. Plan includes accommodations for access to south of Highway 30 bypass and linkages to regional trails and Palisades-Kepler State Park.
6. Plan identifies more strategically planned crossings of Highway 1.

The trails plan identifies four preferred Highway 1 crossing locations between Palisades Road and Cass Street North. Three of the crossings are located where Highway 1 traffic is not required to stop (i.e. 4th Street South, 3rd Street North & 7th Street North) and the fourth preferred intersection is suggested to occur at 1st Street where traffic lights exist. These crossing locations are logically spaced and were selected because topography and sight distance are not an issue. Few locations will require minor limbing up of trees; however is not a significant issue.

Other than these aforementioned updates, the "Mount Vernon Parks and Schools Safe Connection Routes Plan" should still be considered the guiding document for the community's trail development. Much research and community input was put forth with that process and simply was not feasible to start that process over within the Visioning Program timeframe.

Mount Vernon

Comprehensive Trails Plan

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
LA Intern: Nicholas Gulick and Robin Hamadani, ISU Landscape Architecture Extension

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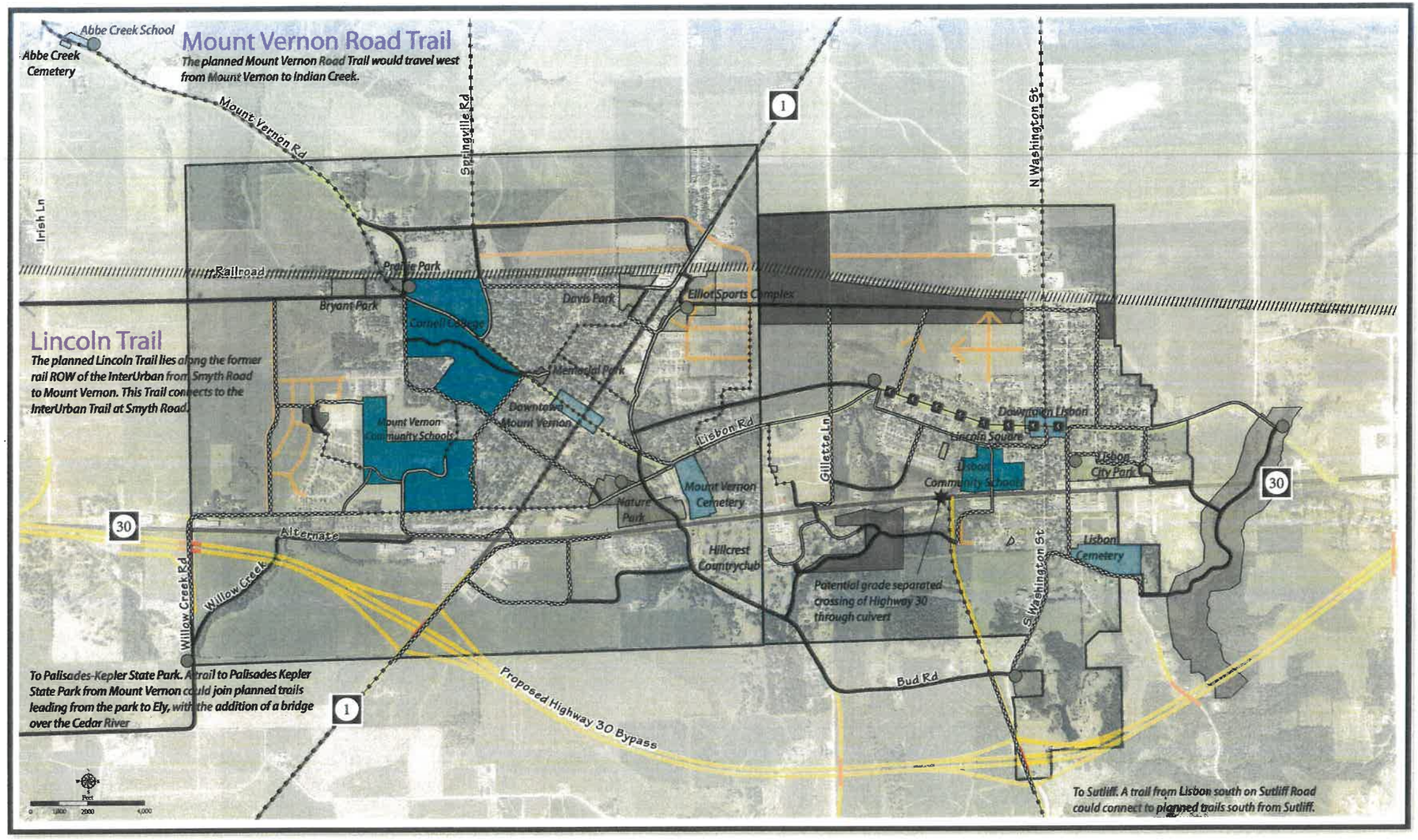

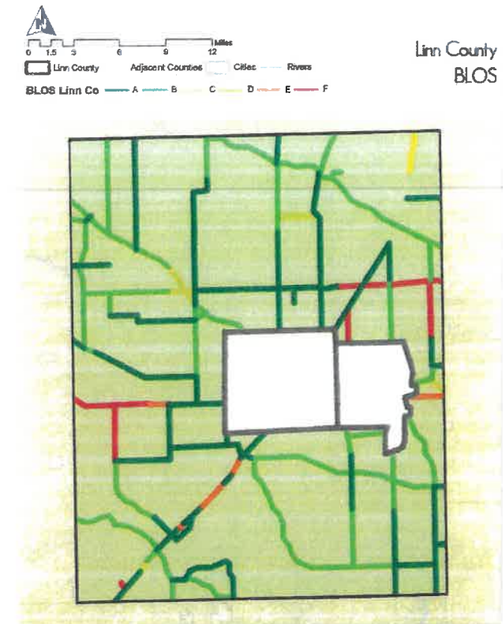

Above: Excerpt from East Central Iowa Council of Governments 2011 Trails Plan. Notice majority of primary county roads exiting the community are given a Bicycle Level of Service grade of A or B, which is excellent to good bicycle environment. A full version of the trails plan can be viewed at: (http://www.ecicog.org/).

LEGEND

- Trailheads
- Old Lincoln Highway
- Planned Future Road
- Existing Trails
- LOS 1: Grade Separated Concrete Trail
- LOS 2: Bike Lanes, Standard Sidewalks
- LOS 3: Widened Sidewalks, Shared-Use Road
- LOS 4: Standard Sidewalks, Shared-Use Road
- LOS 5: Widened Shoulders, Shared-Use Road
- Schools
- Civic/Community Destinations
- Existing Parks and Green Spaces
- Proposed Future Parks and Green Spaces

Mount Vernon

Regional Comprehensive Trails Plan

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
LA Intern: Nicholas Gulick and Robin Hamadani, ISU Landscape Architecture Extension

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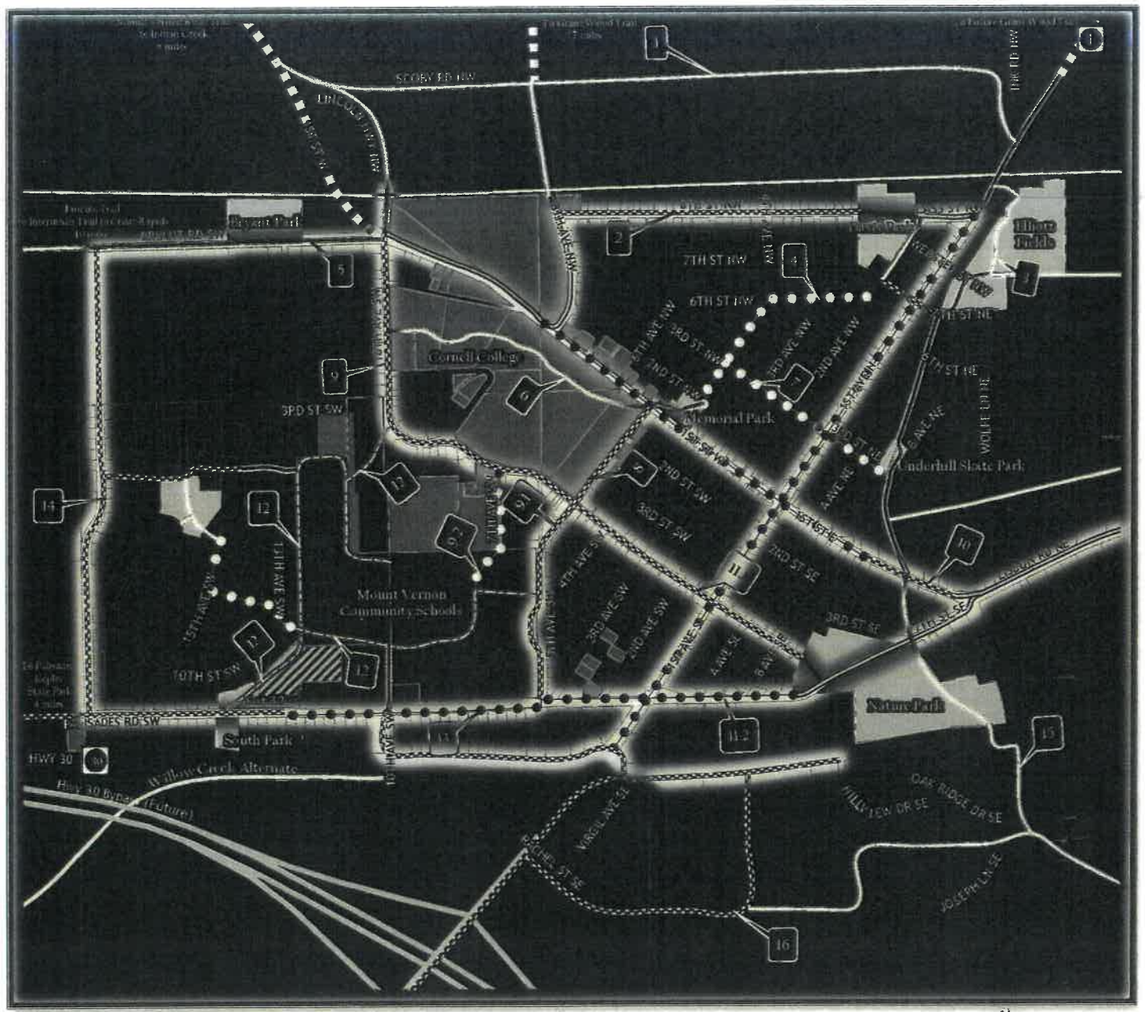

Highlighted routes suggest higher priority corridors suitable for lighting improvements.

N
W E
S

Feet

0 500 1,000 2,000

LEGEND

- LOS 1: Grade Separated, Concrete Trail
- LOS 3: Widened Sidewalk, Shared-Use Road
- LOS 4: Standard Sidewalks, Shared-Use Road
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8: Memorial/MVCSD Connector
9: Cornell/MVCSD ES Branch
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11.2: MVCSD/Nature Park, South Branch
12: MVCSD Connector Trail
13: MVCSD/South (Lot 32) Connector
14: Future West Connector
15: Nature Park/South End Connector
16: Future South Connector

Lighting Improvements Master Plan

The Lighting Improvements Master Plan is a response by the community members to lighting issues in and around the community. Issues include concerns about safety, visual quality, cost efficiency, and light pollution. This concept plan should act as a catalyst as lighting improvements are sought. A Community Lighting Master Plan Committee should be formed to prioritize projects, establish standards and work towards obtaining the following goals:

The following goals ensure a balanced approach to resolving lighting issues by assigning equal importance to safety, visual continuity, total cost, and minimization of light pollution.

Goal 1 - To provide sufficient levels of illumination along designated routes so that pedestrians, drivers, bicyclists, and other users can travel safely at night.

Goal 2 - To establish a system that provides a unity and continuity to the community and enhances the character of the community architecture and landscape.

Goal 3 - To balance energy efficiency and cost issues with other goals.

Goal 4 - To minimize the nuisance effects of light pollution.

(The above goals are contained within the University of Iowa Campus Lighting Strategy Plan and have been tailored to fit the needs of Mount Vernon.)

In 1996, the University of Iowa completed a Campus Lighting Strategy for the campus. This thorough document can serve as a guide for Mount Vernon's Lighting Plan. Important topics such as Procedure for Assessing Lighting, Lighting Fixture Selection Matrix, and Foot-candle Standards have been thoroughly researched and will provide much needed direction while moving towards implementation of lighting improvements. The document can be reviewed at www.facilities.uiowa.edu/cfp/cp/cplighting.htm.

Mount Vernon

Lighting Improvements Master Plan

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
LA Intern: Nicholas Gulick and Robin Hamadani, ISU Landscape Architecture Extension

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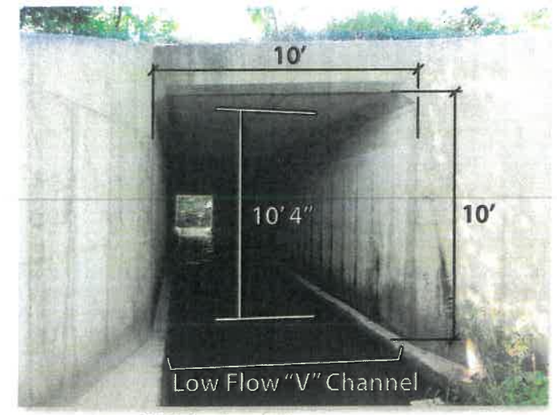
Cutaway of proposed modifications that would allow pedestrians to pass safely beneath Highway 30 through the culvert.



Existing conditions within the large box-culvert.

Aerial photo showing the location of the existing culvert location and the adjacent non-buildable lot, which happens to be in a forest preserve.

Highway 30 Underpass near Nature Park

Near the southeast corner of Nature Park, there is a 10' x 10' box culvert which passes drainage under Highway 30. Most days drainage occupies only the bottom 3-4" of the culvert. Initial discussions with the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) indicate there is an opportunity here to utilize this culvert as a grade separated crossing of Highway 30. Currently the IDOT has a similar application in Coralville where a trail traverses under Interstate 80.

The first task would be to complete engineering design calculations to determine if drainage from large storm events could still pass within the culvert without creating increased backwater depths that would damage upstream properties. Secondly, a durable elevated walking platform with the ability to pass low flow drainage underneath would be necessary. The 10' culvert has a built in 4" deep 'V' channel which adds to the much needed vertical clearance that is necessary to make this a viable pedestrian crossing.

The initial concept shows using the 4" 'V' channel including the bottom 12" of the culvert to provide for a 16" high walking surface with drainage accommodations underneath. This would allow for clearance of roughly 9' clearance to the culvert ceiling, which is the preferred minimum clearance needed to pass bike traffic.

At the exit of the culvert, on the south side of Highway 30 there is a 4 acre tract of land that is considered a non-buildable lot, due to access restrictions and within the floodplain. The owner of the parcel has indicated in the past an interest to donate this property to the City. Previously, with the position of this parcel adjacent to Highway 30 with no access, the property had no value to the City. Now with this trail extension, this property would extend the City's greenbelt south of Nature Park and would provide the much needed room to transition the trail through the culvert. A grade separated crossing would provide much needed pedestrian access to the south side of Highway 30.

Mount Vernon

Highway 30 Underpass near Nature Park

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
LA Intern: Nicholas Gulick and Robin Hamadani, ISU Landscape Architecture Extension

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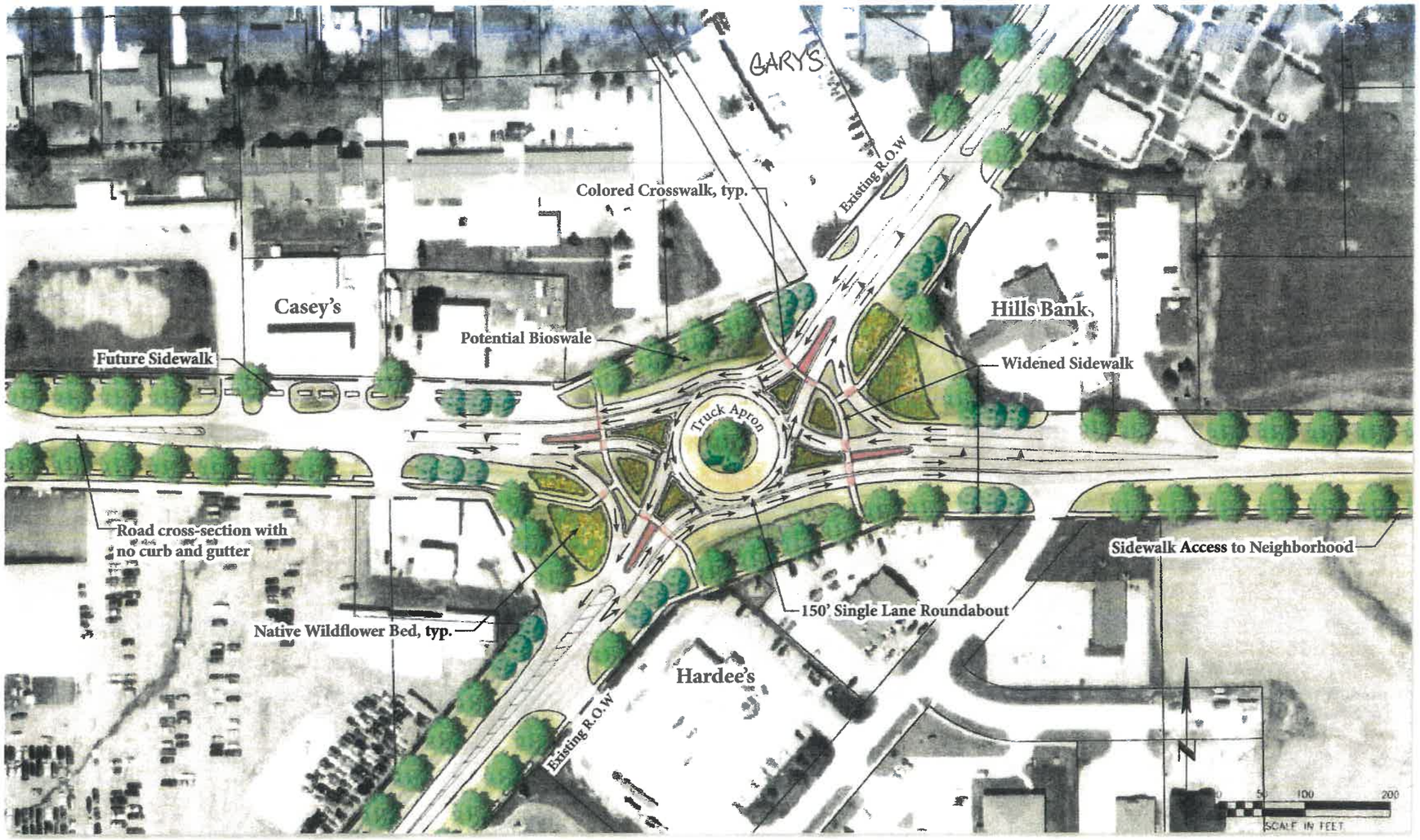

Plan showing pedestrian accommodations at Highway 30 and Highway 1 intersection.

A perspective of the roundabout accommodations looking northeast along Highway 1.

Mount Vernon

Highway 30 and Highway 1 Roundabout Pedestrian Accommodations

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
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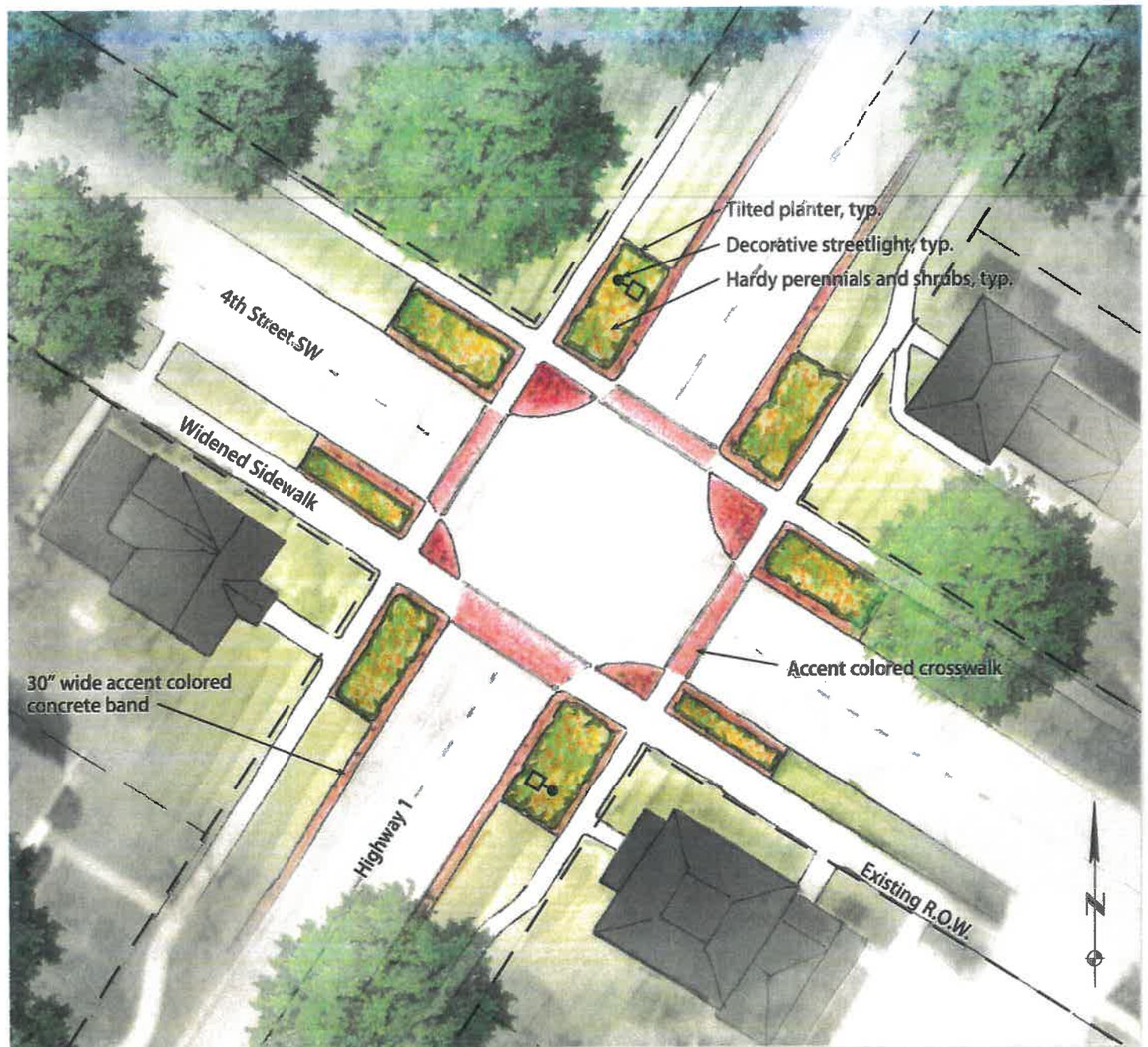

Plan showing proposed streetscape improvements at the Highway 1 and 4th Street South Intersection

Proposed enhancments to the intersection of Highway 1 and 4th Street to improve pedestrian safety.

Highway 1 Crossings | 4th Street

Four intersections along Highway 1 have been identified as preferred pedestrian crossing locations primarily due to unrestricted sight lines. Due to poor visibility at Palisades Road and intersections immediately north of 4th Street South, it was determined that 4th Street South was a preferred crossing location. In addition to great visibility, streetscape enhancements are proposed at this intersection. These enhancements will draw attention to the pedestrians that are invited to cross the highway at this location. Even with Highway 1 being an arterial street, these improvements will go a long way in improving pedestrian safety and reducing the effects of this street acting as a barrier within the community.

Looking west on 4th Street at the existing conditions of the intersection with Highway 1.

Mount Vernon

Highway 1 Crossings | 4th Street (sheet 1 of 2)

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
LA Intern: Nicholas Gulick and Robin Hamadani, ISU Landscape Architecture Extension

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Looking north along Highway 1 near 4th Street at the existing site conditions.

Proposed enhancements at the intersection of Highway 1 and 4th Street to improve pedestrian safety.

Highway 1 Crossings | 4th Street

Highway 1 carries a lot of traffic from Highway 151 to the north to Interstate 80 to the south. The current corridor contains sidewalk along both sides of the street for much of its distance through town. The sidewalk condition is in average to poor condition. This arterial street acts as a barrier for pedestrian traffic and presents safety concerns at particular intersections. Speeding traffic is also a concern when inviting pedestrians into this area. Certain cross streets maintain less than adequate sight distance at intersections for crossing pedestrian traffic. This is due to topography issues and is most evident at intersections with Palisades Road, 2nd Street South, 2nd Street North and Webster Street to name a few.

The first task was to identify intersections that contain adequate sight distance. Then verify how these intersections blend with the proposed trail plans. This ultimately resulted in logically spaced pedestrian crossings of Highway 1 every three to four blocks through town. Pedestrian traffic would be directed to these crossings from the adjacent neighborhoods. Second Street South is a great example of a problem intersection. Sight distance is extremely poor at this location. It would be good practice to remove pedestrian ramps that traverse Highway 1 at this location and possibly add signage to direct pedestrian traffic to a preferred crossing location. The preferred crossing locations are explained in more detail on the Comprehensive Trails Plan.

The preferred crossing locations are slated to receive streetscape enhancements that suggest to motorists that they have entered a pedestrian zone. The enhancements include accent plantings within raised planters, decorative street lights, accent colored paving materials for splash zones along curb and highlighted crosswalks. The additional street lights are essential at these designated crossing locations to improve the visibility of pedestrians. Current lighting levels are generally not adequate to invite pedestrian traffic. These select streetscape enhancement features serve as traffic calming elements and will draw attention of motorists, making Highway 1 crossing safer and more pedestrian friendly.

Street lighting with community banner.

Mount Vernon

Highway 1 Crossings | 4th Street (sheet 2 of 2)

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
LA Intern: Nicholas Gulick and Robin Hamadani, ISU Landscape Architecture Extension

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Existing condtions looking east at the intersection of Highway 1 and 7th Street.

Proposed enhancements at the intersection of Highway 1 and 7th Street to improve pedestrian safety.

Observing sight distance looking north along Highway 1.

Observing sight distance looking south along Highway 1.

Highway 1 Crossings | 7th Street

Four intersections along Highway 1 have been identified as preferred pedestrian crossing locations primarily due to unrestricted sight lines. Due to poor visibility at 6th Street North and Webster Street intersections, it was determined that 7th Street North was a preferred crossing location. This intersection contains open views which make pedestrians more visible to motorists and allow pedestrians an improved view of traffic. Pedestrians need to identify an ample gap in traffic to initiate the crossing. It is estimated that 8 seconds is needed by an average pedestrian to cross the highway, while 12 seconds is necessary for elderly or young children. The judgment of a pedestrian to cross at this intersection is not compromised due to poor sight distance.

In addition to great visibility, streetscape enhancements similar to 4th Street South are proposed at this intersection. There are large existing street trees that are in close proximity of this intersection. The raised planter bed would not be included adjacent to the trees as it would be detrimental to their health. However, at-grade planting beds could still be incorporated to carry the common theme from the other quadrants, while leaving the ground elevation unaltered adjacent to the trees. Limbing up of trees is recommended along the entire Highway 1 corridor to improve overhead clearance for vehicles and improve sight distance. These improvements will go a long way in improving pedestrian safety and reducing the effects of this street acting as a barrier within the community.

Mount Vernon

Highway 1 Crossings | 7th Street

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
LA Intern: Nicholas Gulick and Robin Hamadani, ISU Landscape Architecture Extension

Existing sidewalk alignment looking east along 4th Street.

Existing curbside conditions looking west along 8th Street.

Residential Street - Widened Sidewalk Concepts

Certain corridors within the Mount Vernon community have been identified as primary pedestrian routes as shown on the Comprehensive Trails Plan. These routes are typically established based on a number of factors including available right-of-way, existing infrastructure and utilities, connectivity to community resources, accessibility and topography. Both 8th Street North and 4th Street South are slated to receive widened sidewalk. A widened sidewalk is 5-8' in width and sits a minimum of 4' from the edge of the roadway.

In addition to these two corridors illustrated hereon, the trails plan also shows a number of ways widened sidewalk can be introduced into the community including;

Proposed sidewalk alignment along 4th Street.

Proposed sidewalk alignment along 8th Street.

New Roadways

Mount Vernon is anticipating a number of new roadways in the near future within the Stonebrook Addition and West Side Connector. The Trails Plan considers these planned street projects and the opportunities gained with these forthcoming extensions. City officials can use an adopted trails plan as leverage while working with developers on future road extensions. The plan identifies corridors that may contain widened sidewalk, street width alterations or off-site connections to help complete the plan.

Sidewalk and/or Street Reconstruction

Infrastructure reconstruction is necessary to maintain functional streets and sidewalks. As this reconstruction occurs, the comprehensive trails plan can serve as a guide to implement the necessary pedestrian accommodations to work towards fulfilling the plan. Pedestrian access accommodations built into common street improvement projects such as intersections improvements, can make significant strides in making a more walkable community.

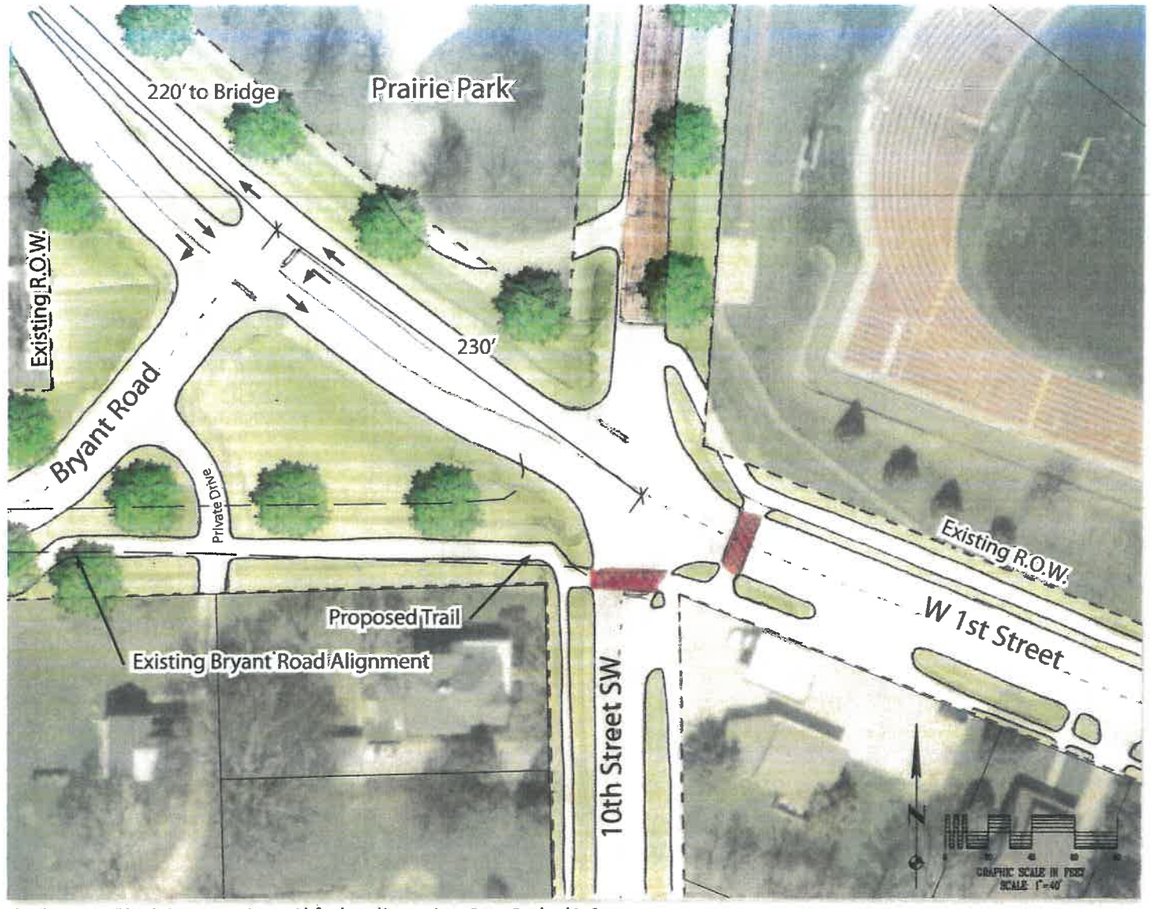
Street Tree Plantings

Mount Vernon contains many tree lined streets. It is inevitable that street trees over time will need to be replaced. A bigger concern would be that of a widespread epidemic such as the Emerald Ash Borer crisis were to cause a larger tree population decline. Nonetheless the trails plan identifies pedestrian routes that contain widened sidewalks necessary to fulfill the trails plan. This requires that replacement trees be positioned to avoid conflict with these future infrastructure improvements.

Mount Vernon

Residential Street - Widened Sidewalk Concepts

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
LA Intern: Nicholas Gulick and Robin Hamadani, ISU Landscape Architecture Extension



Plan showing possible solution to correct issues with five-legged intersection at Bryant Road and 1st Street.

Observing sight distance looking north along 1st Street.

Observing sight distance looking east along 1st Street.

Bryant Road and 1st Street Intersection Improvements

In time, Bryant Road is expected to be extended and link with other transportation routes to the west. It is likely that this roadway would reach an Arterial Street status with its connections to the west. The current 5 legged intersection at 1st Street and 10th Street would not function with increased traffic flows coming off Bryant Road.

This proposal explores realigning Bryant Road to intersect with 1st Street at a 90 degree intersection. Fortunately, there appears to be excess right-of-way to allow this to happen. However, the distance between the railroad bridge and 10th Street is less than desirable and would require less than optimal turn lane and taper lengths. Further exploration of sight distance is necessary to determine if this proposal is feasible. Sight distance is compromised for traffic approaching this intersection from the northwest over the railroad bridge due to topography that is present. Vehicles exiting and entering 1st Street from Bryant Road might find it difficult to obtain adequate sight distance from vehicles approaching the opposite side of the railroad bridge.

Regardless of how this intersection gets reconstructed, it is imperative that something needs to be done in this area when the West Side connector is extended. It is also important to accommodate pedestrian traffic within the improvements as this is along a proposed trail corridor.

Mount Vernon

Bryant Road and 1st Street Intersection Improvements

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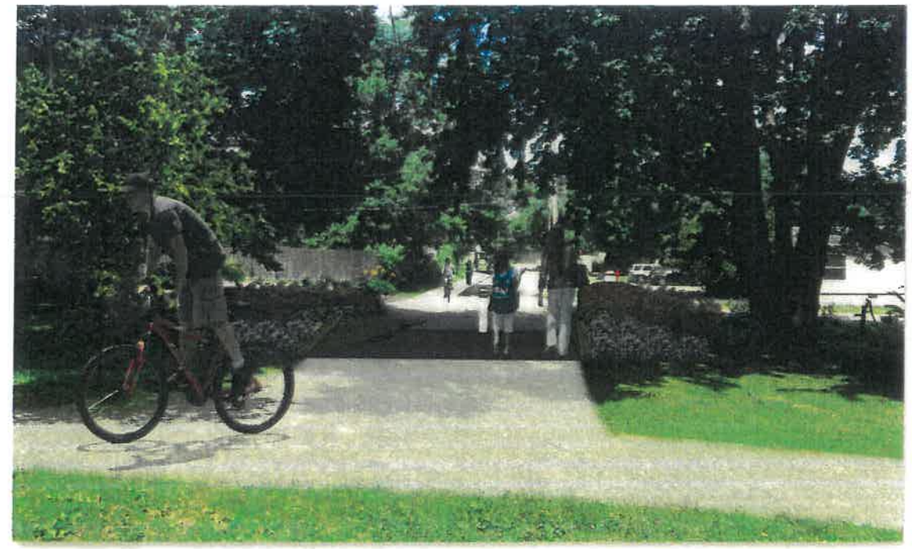
Existing conditions looking west from Nature Park down 4th Street.



Looking west through the proposed pedestrian entrance to Nature Park down 4th Street.

Nature Park Pedestrian Entrance at 4th Street

With the City's recent acquisition of additional park land near Nature Park, 4th Street will now serve as a significant access corridor into the park. The current street terminates at the edge of the park and is uninviting and without signage to suggest this is public greenspace. Long-term plans for the park include passive recreation opportunities and would indicate that vehicular access would not be necessary at this location.

The proposed improvements would highlight this entrance into the park and would invite pedestrian traffic. Flanked on either side of the entrance would be raised planters. These planters would serve as vehicular deterrents while providing space for signage and landscaping. The planter walls would also provide a spot for passing pedestrians to sit and take a short break. A collapsible bollard would be proposed to still allow access of an occasional maintenance vehicle. Unit pavers would be proposed at this mini entry plaza to add pedestrian scale and visual interest.

Enhancements made at this location would serve as a nice gateway for both the park and for trail users exiting the park that will advance west along the 4th Street trail system.

Proposed pedestrian entrance into Nature Park at 4th Street.

Existing conditions looking east where 4th Street meets Nature Park.

Mount Vernon

Nature Park Pedestrian Entrance at 4th Street

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
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Existing conditions in Prairie Park along the Old Lincoln Highway.

Proposed trailhead improvements in Prairie Park along the Old Lincoln Highway.

Prairie Park Trailhead Concept

Prairie Park is a 1 acre remnant that is bounded by a railroad line to the north, 1st Street West along the south and west and Old Lincoln Highway along the east. This park currently contains a City structure that houses utility appurtenances, a small parking lot and an informational board. The informational board details the history of the Old Lincoln Highway. The size and layout of the park limits the types of uses it can provide.

The proposed plan will include a large massing of native plantings to highlight an area adjacent to the old brick road. The native plantings will make the name 'Prairie' Park take on a special meaning. The native plantings will be a nice fit in this passive recreation area. With the nearby historic Lincoln Highway Bridge, this area sees a lot of pedestrian traffic along the brick roadway. This factored into the trail planning that took place with this visioning process. This corridor is along a significant trail route around the north side of town. A trailhead seems more appropriate for this park setting versus the nearby Bryant Park which is an active recreational area.

The plan suggests the incorporation of an informational kiosk which contains architectural character to blend with proposed site amenities slated for the downtown area. The kiosk would contain a small roof structure and small seating area where bikers can rest a bit and view over the prairie planting. There would also be an opportunity to incorporate a rain garden near the kiosk. Currently storm water is contained by the curb in the street and flows to the bottom of the slope where it exits through the driveway leading to the parking lot. A curb cut could be incorporated just upstream of the kiosk to intercept runoff running along the curb. A small rain garden could be incorporated in the greenspace behind the curb. This would be a great location and opportunity to include an educational component regarding storm water management and the benefits of using native plantings.

Looking north from the Old Lincoln Highway Bridge.

Informational trailhead kiosk.

Mount Vernon

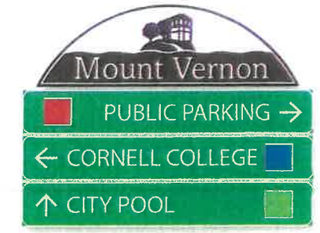
Prairie Park Trailhead Concept

Landscape Architect: Loren Hoffman, ASLA, Hall and Hall Engineers, Inc.
LA Intern: Nicholas Gulick and Robin Hamadani, ISU Landscape Architecture Extension

Left: Logos can be used on anything from signs to letterhead. The logos represented here are options that were developed during this visioning process to create a unique identity for Mount Vernon. An initial developement of a logo has been developed through the local Community Developement Group. The example to the left uses a similar theme, however places more emphasis on the residences that make up the community.

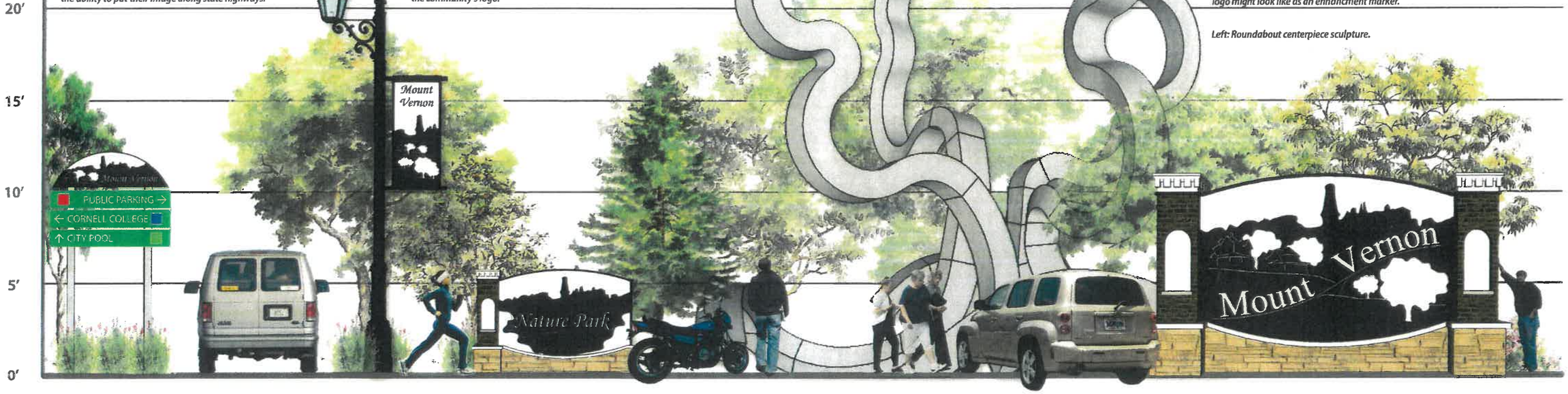
Lower Left: Iowa Department of Transportation offers little opportunity for unique signing along state highways. These enhancement markers (caps) are becoming popular in Iowa and do provide communities the ability to put their image along state highways.

Below: A series of banners are a simple and cost effective way to strengthen the identity of a small town. Banners can be easily interchanged to match seasonal changes or to recognize a community event or provide additional opportunities to showcase the community's logo.



Above: This logo was created for Mount Vernon by the Mount Vernon & Lisbon Community Developement Group (CDG). Shown on the right is an example of what the logo might look like as an enhancment marker.

Left: Roundabout centerpiece sculpture.



Way-Finding Signage

Way-finding signage is not only part of the process of community image building, but also an essential component in improving circulation, building community identity, strengthening linkages and creating a more pedestrian/visitor friendly environment. Possible logos, banners and signage have been explored and influences from the Community Developement Group theme were intertwined into the identity development.

In addition to landscape improvements the community should explore making enhancements to the standard Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) community designation signage. The IDOT has strict requirements for signage placed within the right-of-way and simply do not allow monument signage to be placed there. There is the opportunity to incorporate an Enhancement Marker atop of the standard IDOT sign. There are some restrictions on color and size, however offer great flexibility on the logo options. Adding Enhancement Markers atop the current inconspicuous signage will draw attention of passerby motorists. There is also the opportunity to showcase Mount Vernon's identity to the thousands of daily travelers on Highway 30 and Highway **1**. Monument signage can placed along State Highway's, but must be located outside the right-of-way on private property.

Mount Vernon

Community Signage

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