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First Impressions

KEITH COUNTY VISION PLANNING

Our first impressions are generated by our experiences and our environment, which means that we can change our first impressions...by changing the experiences that comprise those impressions.

-Malcolm Gladwell

2018 FIRST IMPRESSIONS STUDY

01

Website/Social Media

02

Personal Contacts

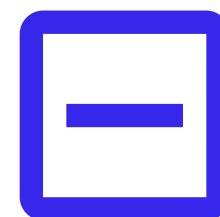
03

Team Visits

WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA



- Great information available
- Easy to find contact information



- Some outdated information
- Modernized and cohesive marketing approach

PERSONAL CONTACT INTERACTIONS

01

Residents knew what they were talking about.

02

Helpful and willing to go above and beyond.

03

Prompt responses.



Five-Minute Impression

- Great new development off I-80
- Signage needs work - landscaping, visibility, additional signs
- Mural could be more engaging
- Story behind the water tower?



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DOWNTOWN BUSINESS AREA

- Building repairs
- Vacant buildings
- Greeted well in businesses
- Nice historical markers about locations
- More landscaping/green spaces
- Great parking access to downtown
 - (needs signage for back parking)

HOUSING IMPRESSION



Some neighborhoods
lack sidewalks.



The majority of
houses and proerties
are well kept.

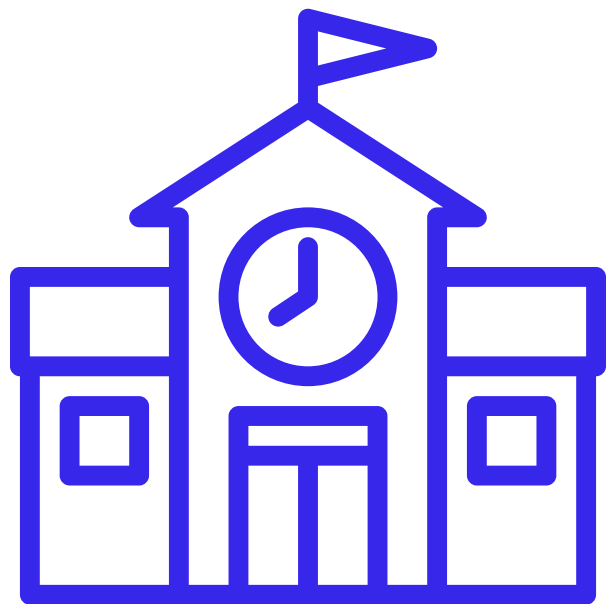


Very low number of
for sale or for rent
signs visible.

SCHOOLS AND CHILDCARE

NEW SCHOOLS LOOK GREAT!

DIDN'T FIND ANY CHILDCARE FACILITIES



VACANT SCHOOLS NEED A NEW USE

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Residential neighborhoods are well-maintained
- Front Street/historical ties

WEAKNESSES

- Downtown facade improvements
- Lacks cohesive community brand

OPPORTUNITIES

- Build off historical significance
- Attract conferences/large events

THREAT

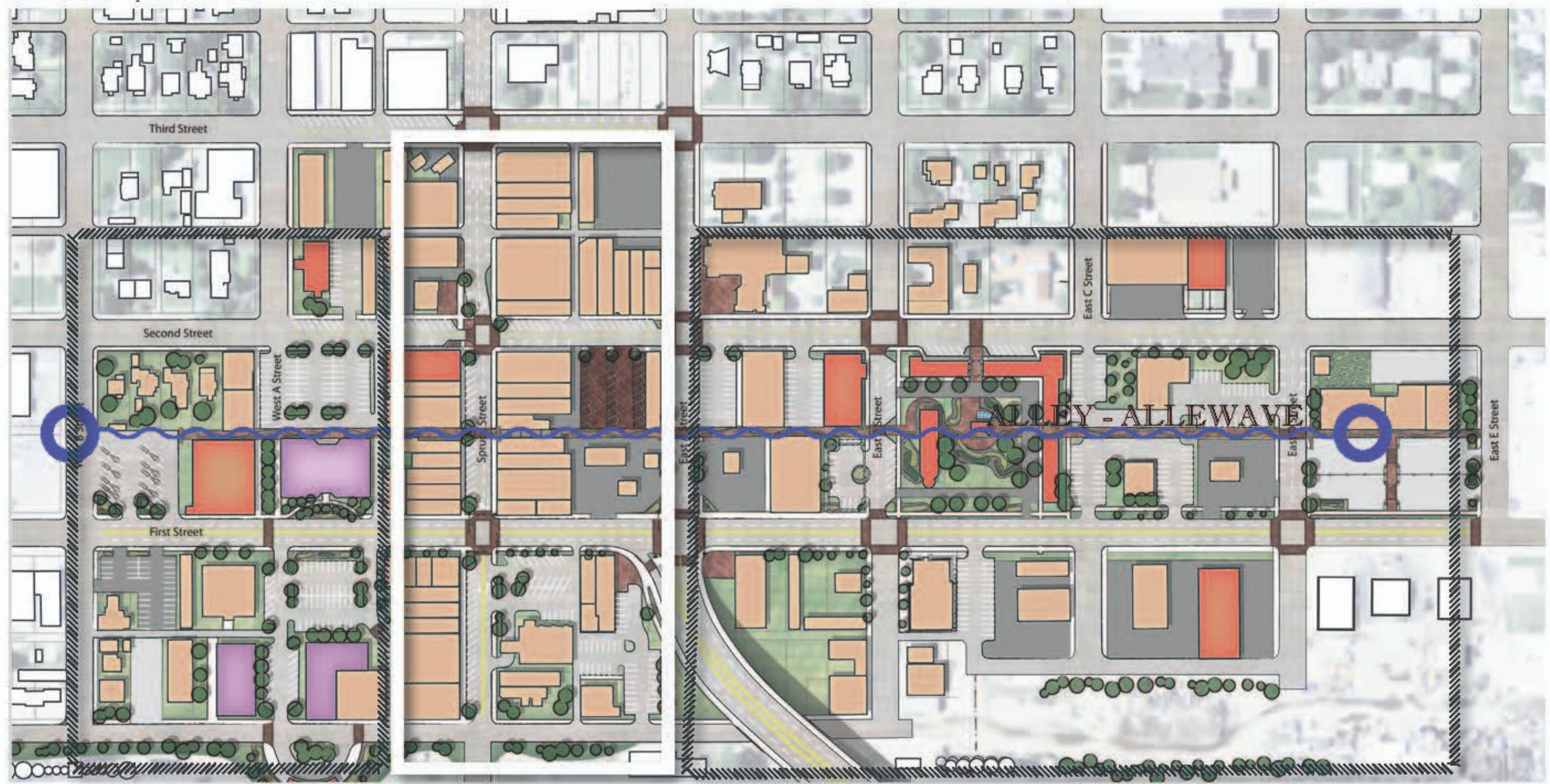
- Lack of housing deters new residents





Downtown Revitalization Plan

2011 - RDG PLANNING & DESIGN



WEST
DOWNTOWN

DOWNTOWN
CORE

EAST
CONNECTION

Spruce Street is a one-way southbound road, providing limited parking along the street. The street right-of-way is about 64 feet wide, providing 8 foot sidewalks on both sides and angle parking on the west side. The recent reconstruction of the street led to retaining the current configuration, while focusing on minor improvements.

COMPONENTS OF THE CONCEPT:

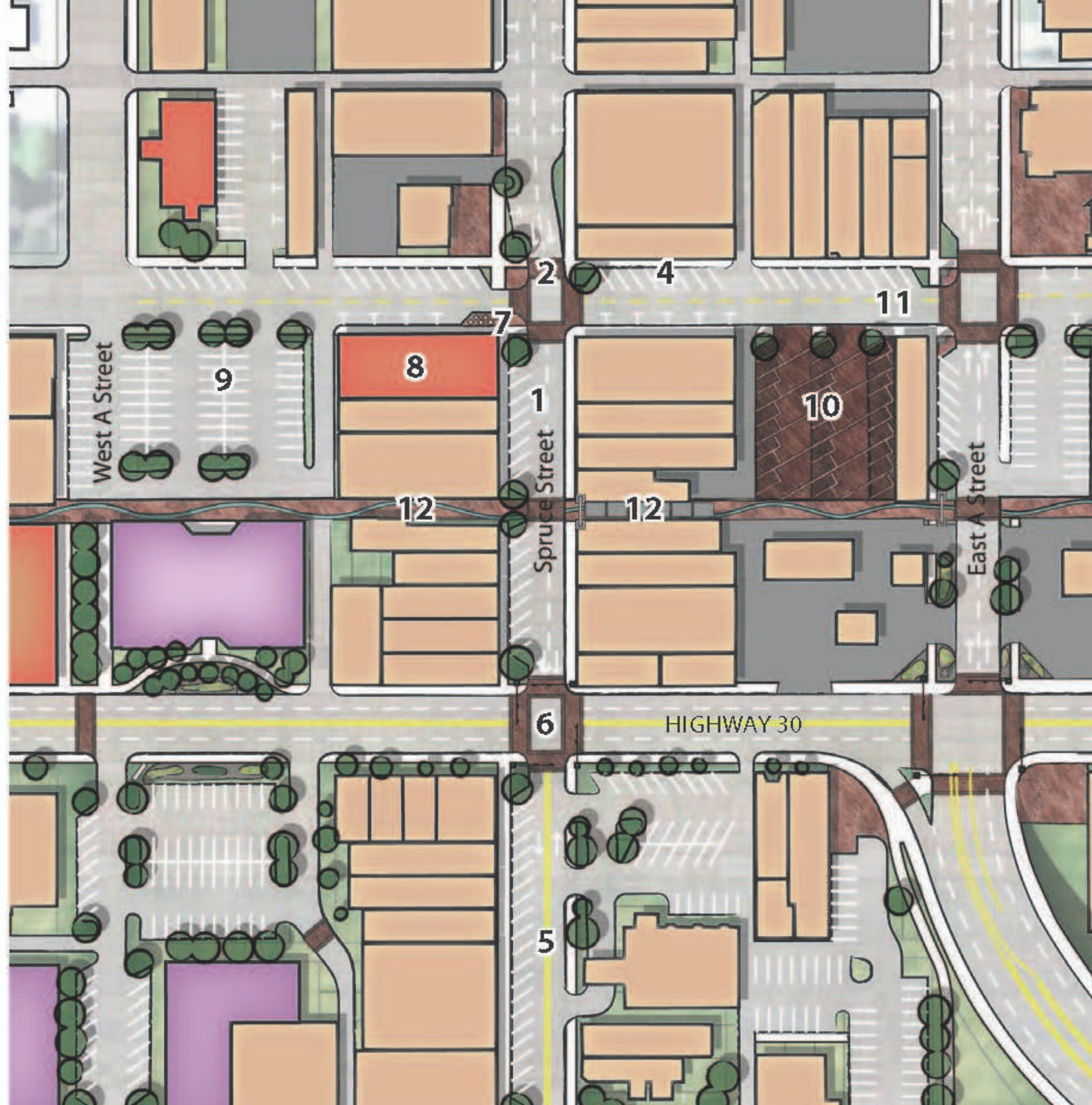
- **Benches, Trash Bins and Bicycle Racks.** Benches provide space for people to sit and wonder, exchange ideas, chat or simply rest. Trash bins should accompany benches to reduce clutter along the street. Each block should have bicycle racks at corners and along the street. The sidewalk should retain an “obstruction free zone,” where the placement of street furniture, lighting, and outdoor displays do not interfere with pedestrian movements.
- **Corner Nodes.** Corner nodes calm traffic, protect the edge of diagonal parking, and make streets more crossable for pedestrians. The size and locations of corner nodes are already established. The concept includes new planting beds, including tree planting, paving, and street furniture. The nodes may also include interpretive graphics and public art.
- **Corner Node - Second Street.** Figure 3.2 on page 37 shows an expanded node at 2nd Street providing additional space for landscaping, outdoor seating, and gathering space. This improvement would lend the corner building to becoming a restaurant or bar.



- **Mid-block Node.** The midblock node aligned with the alley provides landscaping and street furniture, providing a greener pedestrian environment. The drawback of the mid-block nodes is that it takes up two parking stalls in a district with an already high demand for parking.
- **Public Art.** At the entrance to the downtown business district should be a major piece of public art that incorporates a three-dimensional icon and lighting.
- **Street lighting along the street.** The ornamental acorn fixtures used south of Highway 30 on Spruce Street should be repeated along the entire corridor. The fixture has a timeless look, comfortable in an historic environment but also consistent with contemporary architecture. Poles are already designed with enough sheer strength to support banners or graphics and other attachments like flower baskets.

Intersections should be supplemented with fixtures that provide sufficient light. The concept drawing shows tear-drop fixtures mounted at corners.

- **Convert South 100 block of Spruce Street from one-way to two-way circulation.** The photos above show that the blocks south of Highway 30 were once two-way, with the blocks north of Highway 30 being two-way. This configuration should be returned, particularly when patrons pulling out of the pharmacy drive-thru are forced to go south and out of their way to returning to Highway 30.
- **Street Trees.** Planting trees transforms a street’s appearance and produces great benefits with limited funds. Trees add color and shade to the environment. They separate vehicles from pedestrian pathways, tend to calm traffic, and help the city breathe.
- **Planter Baskets.** Attaching planter baskets to street lights add color and interest to the district. Ongoing maintenance plans must be considered before installation.
- **Historic Interpretative Displays.** Interpretative displays tell the story of Ogallala’s development from a weight station at the end of the Texas Trail, to an oasis for the motoring public along the Lincoln Highway, to a center for outdoor recreation today.



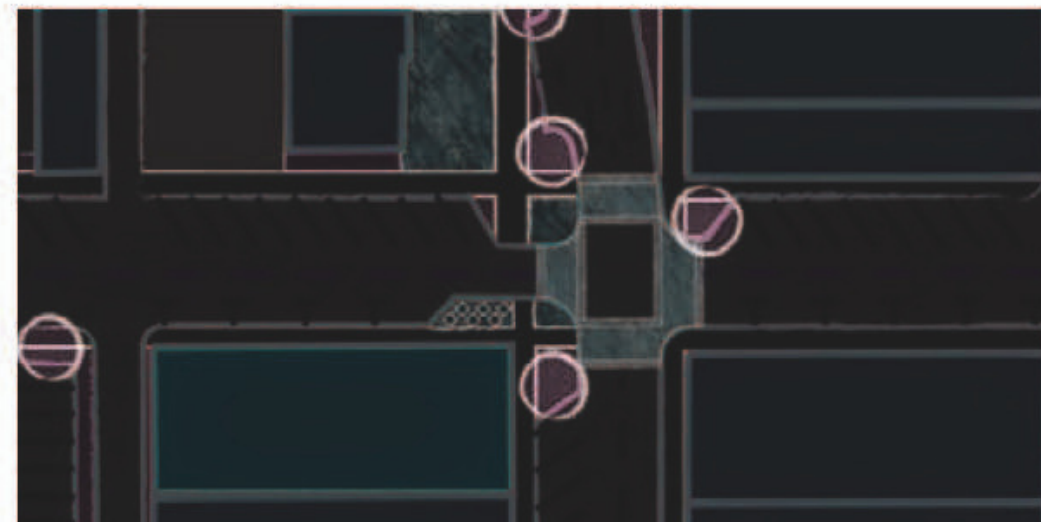
DOWNTOWN CORE

- 1 Streetscape Furniture and Lighting
- 2 Chicane Node
- 3 Mid-block Node
- 4 Angle parking
- 5 Convert from one-way to two-way
- 6 Pedestrian crossing counters
- 7 2nd Street Node
- 8 Reuse for restaurant/bar
- 9 Parking lot upgrades
- 10 Carscape
- 11 Convertible street
- 12 Alleyway connections (Alleywave)



Spruce Street streetscape improvements, showing nodes, landscaping, and crosswalks.





Spruce Street streetscape improvements, showing nodes, landscaping, and crosswalks.



2nd Street improvements showing angle parking on the northside, nodes at intersection, benches, trees, landscaping, and lighting. Bollards placed at intersection converts the street into an event space.

The life and economy of downtown takes place in its buildings. In general, façade upgrades should restore windows to original scale, replace inappropriate storefronts, and include awnings, doors, and other features that add scale. However, diversity is important in an eclectic district, and absolute uniformity is neither necessary nor authentic.

Most of Ogallala's downtown buildings are one to two stories tall. Buildings along Spruce Street exhibit various architectural styles, although consisting mostly brick. Original facades should be restored rather than covered with siding or material that conceals the building's historic character. Special consideration should be given to the following:

- **Awnings.** Awning installations should attach to the structure. Modern metal awnings are acceptable alternatives to canvas awnings. Businesses should attempt to have distinguishable awnings for each business front and not be uniform throughout the district.
- **Signage.** Desirable signage includes wall-mounted signs with individual letters, awning signs, and carefully designed projecting signs. Typically, flush-mounted cabinets, pole signs, and other "auto-strip" signs are not appropriate in the downtown district. Signs should not obscure large areas or major façade design features.
- **Window Displays.** Windows should have displays that advertise the goods and services available within. Vacant or office buildings should have displays, as well, despite not offering retail products.
- **Upper-story improvements and reuse.** Windows in the upper-story should be replaced regardless if vacant. The appearance of vacant upper-stories in the district creates a perception that the district is struggling and is being abandoned.



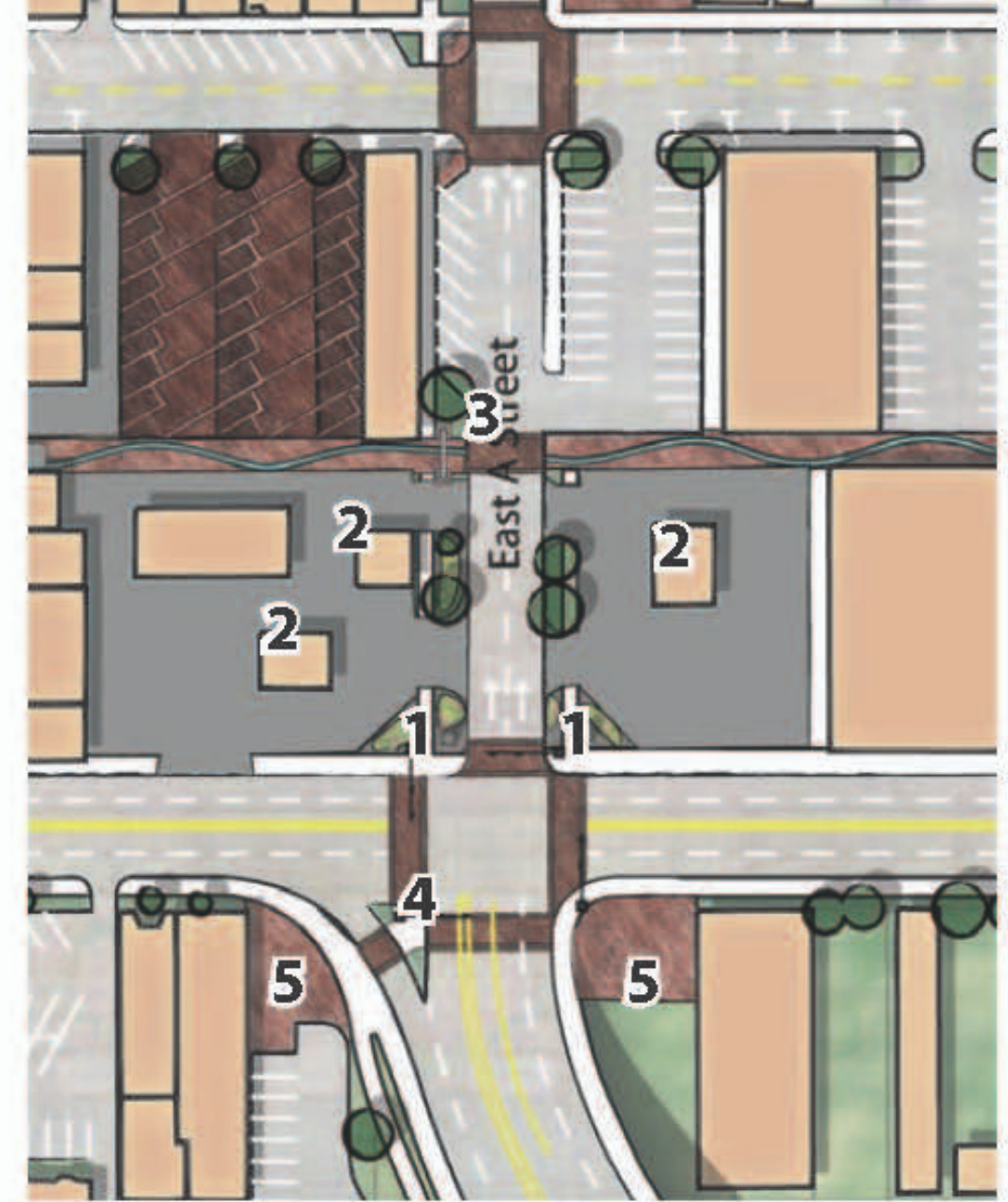
ging and is being abandoned. Maintaining window openings, and hanging curtains can create the illusion of occupancy.

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

In the event of new development or redevelopment along Spruce Street, buildings should be built to the property line, preserving the setbacks and character of the shopping experience. Public access to development should face the street.

The entrance to downtown should be a major announcement to travelers that they have arrived to OGALLALA. Several gateway concepts are explored, including:

- **Landscaping.** Replacing sections of corners of concrete with landscaped edges of shrubs and flowers to add color to the arrival to downtown, and capture stormwater runoff. Low-maintenance, native grasses should flank the base of the viaduct to provide interest and dimension to otherwise under used areas.
- **Pole Signs.** Replacing the pole signs of both gas stations with classic 1940's signs that tie with the district's historical connection to the Lincoln Highway.
- **Gas Canopies.** Visitors to the district first notice the two gas stations at the base of the viaduct. Both stations are significant economic resources for downtown and represent the front door to the community. Retrofitting or replacing the canopies will have a significant influence on people's perception of the area. Figure 3.6 shows the gas station with a new canopy, modeled from designs used in Duluth, Minnesota.
- **Gateway Arch -option.** Participants in the planning process conveyed interest in creating an arch over East A Street. Pedestals, made of brick, could have in-laid tiles showing historic photographs of the city that could be viewed by pedestrians crossing at the alley.
- **Towers -option.** A more grand gateway leading to downtown from Interstate 80 is creating a pair of towers at the base of the viaduct. The middle image to the right shows Paragon Tower in Urbandale, Iowa (designed and fabricated by RDG).



- 1 Landscaping and pole sign upgrades
- 2 Canopy and facade improvements
- 3 Pedestrian Crossing Node & Gateway Element
- 4 Refuge Island. Raised median for pedestrians.
- 5 Gateway Towers and Landscaping

Top: Possible gateway arch, Sioux Falls, SD
 Middle: Paragon Tower in Urbandale, IA
 Bottom: Refuge Island





CITY HALL RELOCATION

During the planning process, discussions with city staff revealed the need for additional office and meeting space for the Fire Department and City Hall.

Concepts were considered for building a new Fire Hall, yet buildings in the vicinity provide sufficient space for relocating City Hall, allowing the Fire Department to expand into their vacated space.

The plan considers relocating City Hall to New Hope Church, which has in the past attempted to sell their building but were unable to find a buyer. The move keeps the civic campus intact, with both the Police and Fire Department within one-block of each other. Also, it allows for City Hall to provide more space for each department. Next steps include:

- Prepare a feasibility study and building program. Adaptations to the building may include:
 - Converting the congregation space into Council Chambers.
 - Converting classrooms in the downstairs for meeting rooms and record storage.



PARKING LOT

The Plaza Motel is a vacant motel along Highway 30. Its ability to be reused as a motel and remain competitive with new hospitality services near Interstate 80 are not favorable.

Redeveloping the site for parking would serve both City Hall to the north and the reuse of the Lobby building to the east, while creating an attractive landscaped edge along Highway 30.



EXPANDED FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Fire Department is experiencing a growing need for additional office and meeting space. Following the relocation of services at City Hall, the Fire Department could expand into the vacated offices and meeting rooms.

Additional bays (not shown on map) could be constructed to the east of the now City Hall, allowing for growth in personnel and vehicles.



EAST CONNECTION

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 City Hall Relocation | 8 Green Alleyway |
| 2 Parking Lot | 9 Service Parking Upgrades |
| 3 Expanded Fire Department | 10 Front Street Boardwalk |
| 4 Welsch Motor Court Reuse | 11 Restore Mini-golf |
| 5 Civic Office & Business Incubator | 12 Caboose connection |
| 6 Commercial Tenant Space | 13 Oregon Trail Monument Plaza |
| 7 Children's Plaza and Spray Pool | 14 Parking Lot Upgrades |

The Welsh Motor Court/Erin Plaza Motor Court, built in 1940, provided convenience to motorists traveling along the Old Lincoln Highway (Highway 30). It is significant to the history of the transcontinental highway, and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005 (KH04-106).

The design of the building included a garage attached to the unit. However, the space was impractical due to limited space for the vehicle and combustible fumes. The building was renovated in the 1950's, converting the garage spaces into rooms and adding a brick veneer over the stucco.

The buildings have remained vacant since 2005. Discussions with city staff speculate that the building was to be rehabilitated using Historic Tax Credits, yet the project was delayed or dropped entirely leaving the place vacant.

The appearance of the buildings and property continue to deteriorate, creating concern among residents that the site is diminishing the appearance of the community to travelers along Highway 30.

Rehabilitating the buildings back to their historic quality will commemorate the Lincoln Highway and allow new opportunities for economic development for the Welsh Motor Court. The concept includes:

- **Reuse of Lobby Building.** The most striking building in the complex is anticipated to be rehabilitated for civic use, and possibly provide space for a visitor's center, Chamber of Commerce, or business incubator. The second story could be used as community meeting space overlooking Highway 30. Rooms could be converted to offices or artisan studios.



- **Motor Court Buildings.** Convert the row of motel rooms to retail incubators, becoming a center for entrepreneurs wanting to sell local products, and provides an opportunity for collaborations between the city's businesses.

- Garage doors may replace entrances and allow for more transparency into space and indicate the historic use of the space.
- Portions of the buildings could be opened or possibly removed to improve pedestrian access and continuation of the alley pathway from downtown to Front Street.

- **Children's Courtyard Plaza.** Public participants unanimously support the concept of defining a gathering space that can be bonded with the experience of visiting downtown, yet connected to the experiences at Lake McConaughy.

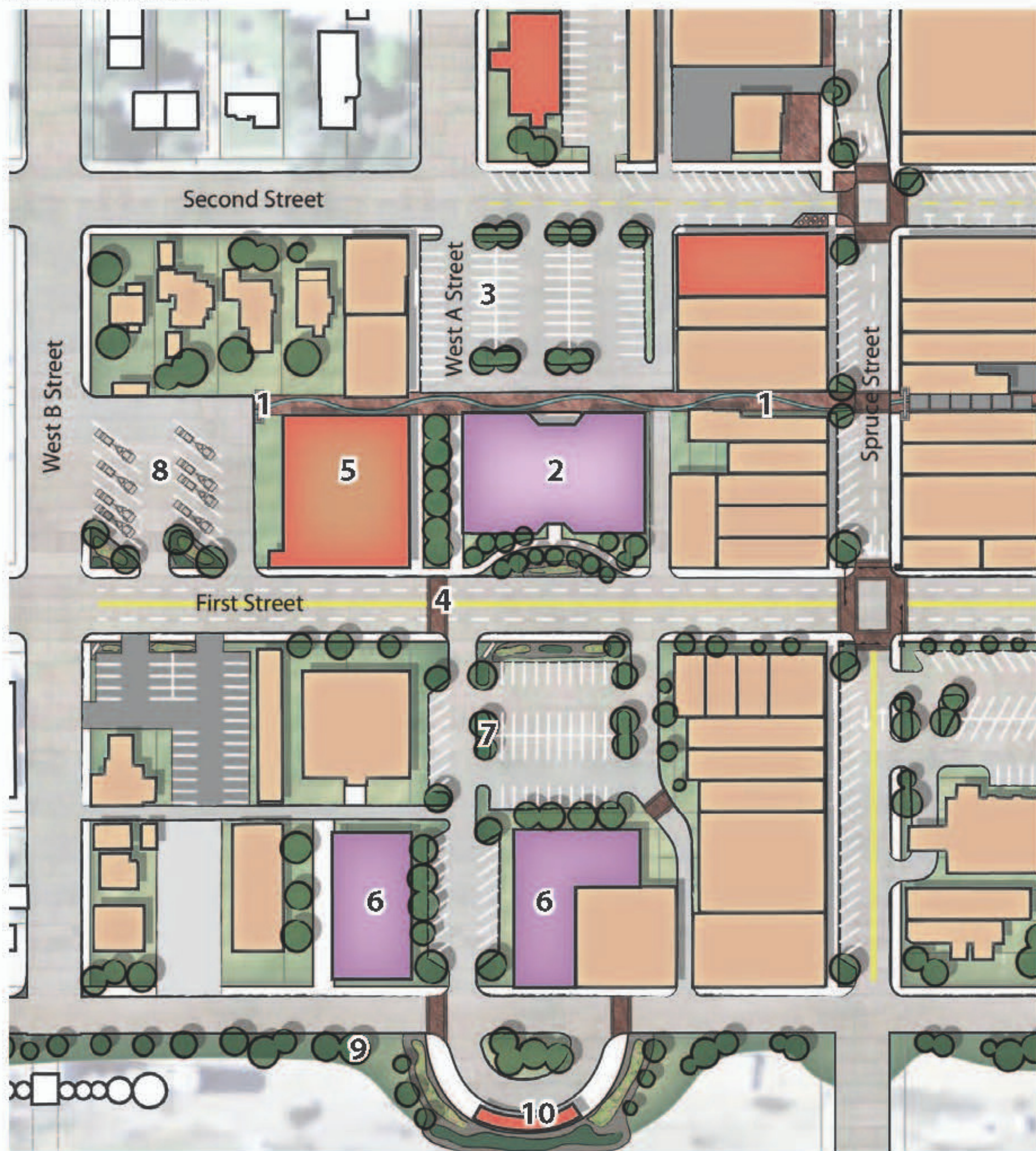
The common space near the pool could be developed for a new public gathering space where businesses surrounding the plaza could become a catalyst for new commercial development.



- **Children's Spray Pool.** Ground level spray fountains allow for a break from the hot summer months and also serve as an amenity that will attract people into the downtown daily. The open lawn defined by the paving and trees can be used for outdoor events and unscripted play.

- **Pool.** Restoring the pool to its original condition and providing regular maintenance is possible. However, adapting the pool to a community garden may be a more feasible alternative. Installing an information kiosk, similar to those found in downtown, would present the story of the Welsh Motor Court and retaining the edge of the pool would indicate the pool's historic footprint.

An alternative concept discussed during the planning process was to redevelop the site for a new signature community park. However, the site's historic significance would be lost, along with potential tenant space for commercial and office uses.



- 1 Alleyway Connection
- 2 New Public Library
- 3 Parking Redesign
- 4 Pedestrian-actuated Crossing
- 5 Reuse of Cox Building - Youth Center
- 6 Commercial tenant space
- 7 Shared parking
- 8 RV and Trailer Parking
- 9 Railroad Street Landscaping
- 10 Railroad Overlook



- Railroad Street Landscaping.** Planting trees, turf and shrubs along the railroad corridor will relax the intensity of the railroad's use and encourage private investment to adjacent properties.

- Railroad Overlook.** Establishing a railroad overlook on the south side of Railroad Street, and reinforces Ogallala's historic connection to the industry. Relocating the caboose from Front Street to the terminus of West A Street would provide an icon for visitors to explore and photograph themselves.



THE PLAN AND ITS SCHEDULING WILL INEVITABLY CHANGE OVER TIME. SOME PROJECTS MAY ADVANCE AS OPPORTUNITIES OR DEMANDS OPEN, WHILE OTHERS APPEAR LESS IMPORTANT OVER TIME. THIS PLANNING PROJECT, INITIATED BY THE CITY OF OGALLALA FROM FUNDING RECEIVED FROM NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT'S PHASE I REVITALIZATION PROGRAM, IDENTIFIES PROJECTS THAT MAY LEAD A COMBINATION OF IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS.

**What impression do YOU envision
here in Keith County??**