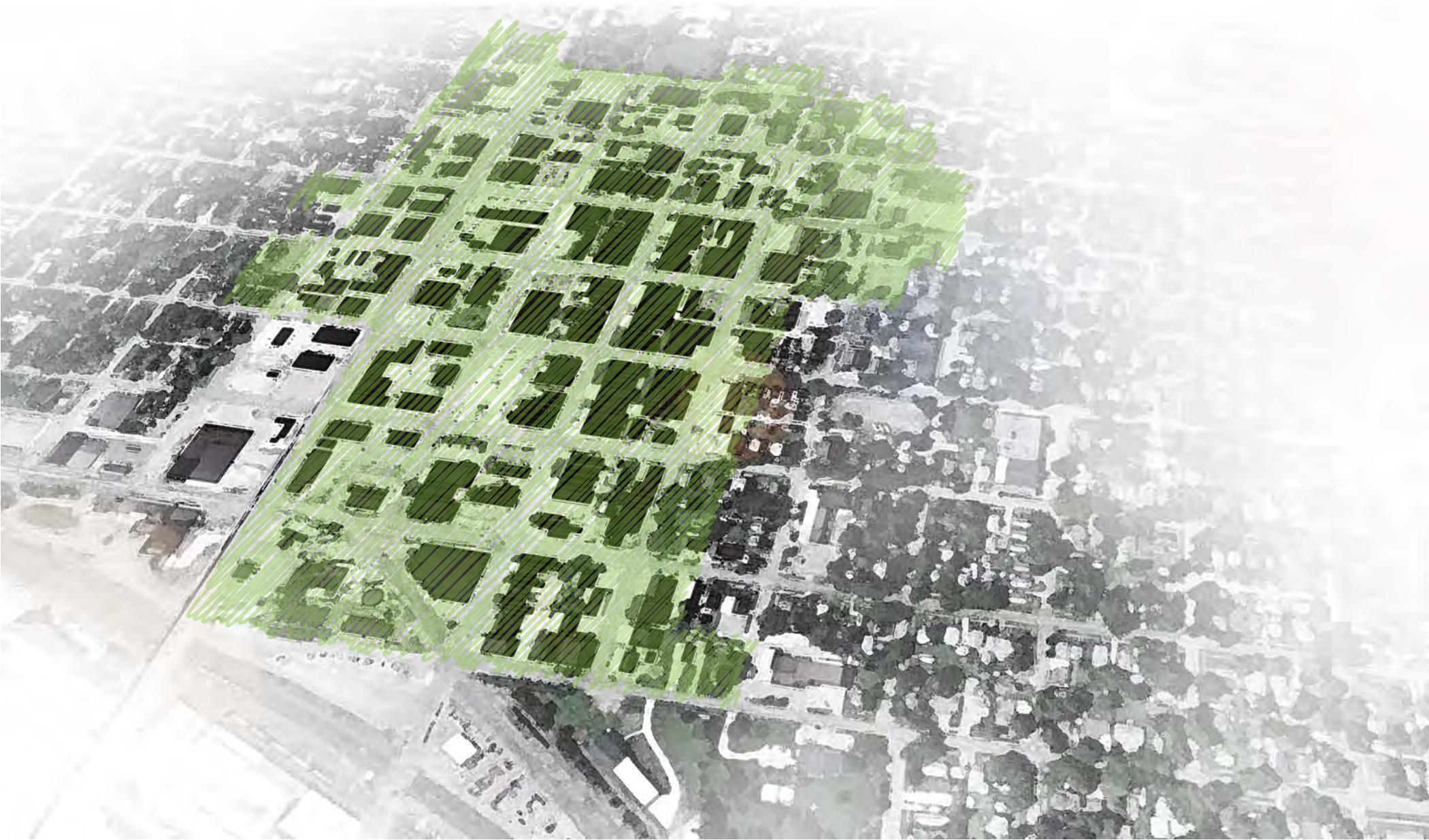


# CITY OF FREMONT

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

01.2012

ALLEY-POYNER  
MACCHIETTO  
ARCHITECTURE



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## **OF SPECIAL NOTE**

The consultant team would also like to acknowledge the guidance, assistance, and cooperation of all the participants; especially the members of the community, too numerous to mention, who participated in the Public Meetings and On-Line Survey.

## **FUNDING**

Funding was provided by the City of Fremont and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development through a Community Development Block Grant. The source of the City's matching funds were the Dodge County Visitors Bureau and Downtown Improvement District.

## **CONSULTANT TEAM**

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Hanna : Keelan Associates, P.C.

Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture is proud to be Fremont's partner in this exciting venture and is sincerely grateful for the help and participation of the City of Fremont, its stakeholders, leaders, members, volunteers, and residents.

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## Chapter 1 | INTRODUCTION

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The City of Fremont retained the services of Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, P.C. to facilitate the creation of a Downtown Revitalization Plan. In addition, the consultant team also included the talents of: Engineering Design Consultants, L.C.C., Hanna Keelan: Associates, P.C., and Steven Jensen Consulting.

The project that includes this study is a two-phase project: Planning and Implementation. Planning, or Phase One, creates this Downtown Revitalization Plan for the City of Fremont. It includes realistic short and long-term goals and objectives, along with priorities for each of them. This plan gives Fremont the guidance to create a revitalized downtown, which will be implemented with Phase Two.

The implementation of this plan will help insure that downtown Fremont continues to be an active vibrant center of the community for many years to come.

### PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Analyze the public and private downtown district.
- Review previous studies and planning documents.
- Identify tourism, marketing, and entertainment opportunities.
- Encourage citizen participation.
- Identify potential funding strategies, sources and uses.
- Make recommendations that will support and facilitate future development that will foster downtown's success.

### STUDY AREA

The historic center of Fremont is the focus of this Downtown Revitalization Plan. It is a vital component of Fremont's economy and an irreplaceable community resource. The downtown has a number of significant assets including its historic architecture, a historic courthouse, large park at the north end, and recently renovated streets and wide covered sidewalks along Main Street. It serves as the center for the City and County government facilities and services. However, the vacancies in many downtown buildings - particularly in regards to the upper floor housing, along with the limited marketability of the existing streetscape and buildings speaks to the need for revitalization.

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## DOWNTOWN DISTRICT

The Downtown District is generally located between the tracks by 1<sup>st</sup> Street north to 8<sup>th</sup> Street and C Street on the east side to H Street on the west side. It is outlined as follows:

- Between Broad Street and H Street on the north, extending one block to 9<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Between Main Street and d Street, extending ½ block north.
- On the west side, between 6<sup>th</sup> Street and 4<sup>th</sup> Street, two half-block jags.
- On the east side, the area extends out between 8<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets, then ½ block west between 5<sup>th</sup> Street and ½ block south of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

## HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Historic Downtown District is designated as Main and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets.



Figure 1.1: downtown fremont circa 1908, photograph courtesy of library of congress

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Figure 1.2: dodge county courthouse building



Figure 1.3: fremont chamber building



Figure 1.4: downtown district study area

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Figure 1.5: broad & main, nshs photograph collection



Figure 1.6: looking east, nshs photograph collection



Figure 1.6: map of downtown historic district

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## Chapter 2 | HISTORY AND SETTING

### THE PAST

The City of Fremont, Nebraska was founded in 1856, along the northern bank of the Platte River. This River Corridor had long been an important route for early pioneers traveling the Mormon Trail, and eventually the route of the Union Pacific Railroad that reached the City in 1866. The River Corridor also served as the route of the first Transcontinental Telegraph Line, in 1881, and the Lincoln Highway in 1913 (later becoming Highway 30).

Downtown Fremont played an important role in providing goods and services to these early travelers and residents of a growing City. The growth of Fremont as an important regional commerce center in Dodge County can be traced in the evolution of Downtown commercial buildings and civic facilities such as the Dodge County Courthouse, City Hall, Fremont Opera House and U.S. Post Office.

The growth of the City throughout the mid to late 1900s brought an expansion of neighborhood commercial centers, beyond Downtown Fremont, along major arterial streets and Highway corridors such as Bell Street, Broad Street (Highway 77) and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street (formerly Highway 30). As the decentralization of business and commerce lessened the commercial importance of Downtown Fremont, many of the upper levels of

commercial buildings became vacant and the major retail anchors relocated from Downtown to other growth areas of the City. Today, Downtown Fremont is a center of commerce and entertainment, but comprised mainly of specialty shops, locally based retailers and professional and financial institutions and, to a lesser degree, residential development.

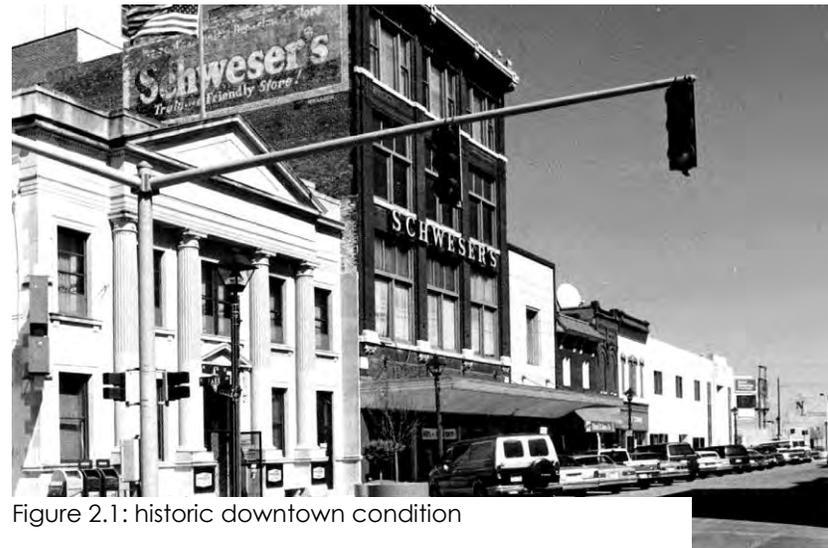


Figure 2.1: historic downtown condition

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## CONTEXT

Downtown is the City's historic center, housing the Dodge County courthouse and a number of long-standing cultural, commercial, and civic buildings. As in city centers across the county, new commercial activity has shifted to big-box retail outlets and strip malls outside of Downtown. This transition has occurred over many years and warrants regeneration of repurposing of Downtown. Given its central location among the City's well established neighborhoods and its proximity to Midland University and Metropolitan Community College, Downtown is well suited to cater to residents and students, as well as regional visitors and tourists. The nature of the businesses and the types of activities and attractions must appeal to all sectors. [BLUEPRINT FOR TOMORROW](#)

## EXISTING LAND USE IN DOWNTOWN FREMONT

The growth and development of Commercial Uses in Downtown Fremont is focused between Park Avenue and Main Street, from First Street north to Military Avenue (see Figure 8, Existing Land Use Map). These boundaries generally serve as the pedestrian oriented Downtown Fremont, where the entire area is a destination within the City. Automotive oriented commercial businesses line the outskirts of this area along and west of Broad Street, adjacent and to the east of "C" Street, adjacent "H" Street and north of Military Avenue to Eighth Street. The automotive oriented commercial uses tend to have parking areas and parking lots directly associated with the businesses along Broad Street, Military Avenue, "C", "D" and "H" Streets. The pedestrian oriented Downtown has a variety of public parking lots around the perimeter.

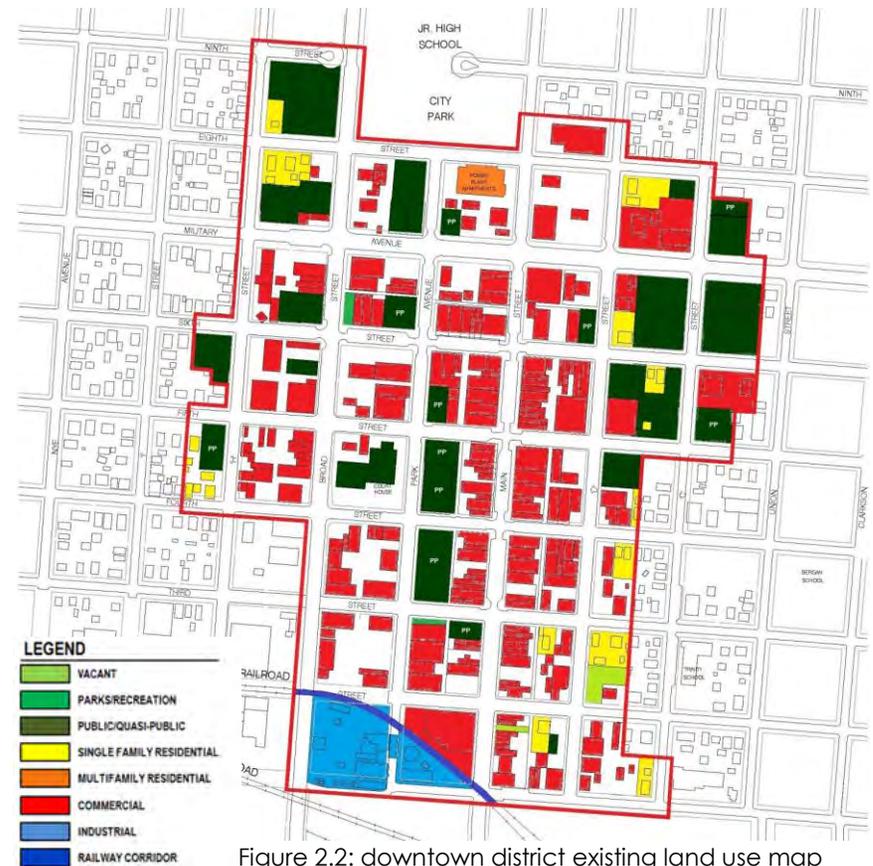


Figure 2.2: downtown district existing land use map

Civic and municipal buildings identified as Public/Quasi-Public Uses are in highest concentrations along both sides of Park Avenue and west of Broad Street. A variety of municipal and religious facilities are centered about "C" street in the northeastern portion of Downtown Fremont. Industrial and uses are located along and

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south of the railroad corridor at the extreme southwest portion of Downtown.

Mixed Commercial and Single Family Residential Uses exist along the borders of Downtown Fremont, typically along “D” and “H” Streets. Houses in these regions are generally 100+ years of age, originally constructed in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS PER LAND USE TYPE AND DEVELOPMENT FEATURES IN DOWNTOWN FREMONT**

Masonry Buildings throughout Downtown Fremont were typically constructed in the late 1880s to the mid to-late 1920s, replacing the original wooden one and two-story false front 1860s and 1870s buildings. A few modern commercial buildings later replaced obsolescent commercial buildings throughout the following decades. A concentration of single-and multiple-story commercial buildings, approximately 100+ years of age, remains, having become home for more specialty oriented businesses on the first levels of the multi-story buildings along Main, Broad and Sixth Streets.

Conversations with business and building owners confirmed the deteriorating state of now vacant upper levels of a majority of these commercial buildings. Decades of underutilized upper levels have rendered this space functionally obsolescent. In many instances, building owners indicated that water lines, electrical wiring and steam operated heat radiators and forced air heating systems were all removed to prevent water damage or potential fires. In several cases, the room or



Figure 2.3: existing downtown building conditions

office configurations of original uses remain, but utility systems are disconnected or removed.

The exteriors of brick masonry buildings have received varying degrees of upkeep and maintenance over the many decades since originally constructed. Based upon the average age of buildings throughout Downtown Fremont, even well maintained buildings are in need of moderate maintenance and repair. Tuck pointing of mortar joints between brick courses, painting of wooden window and door trims, or even re-sealing or replacing roofs of buildings are reoccurring as annual maintenance requirements.

As a whole, Downtown Fremont needs significant building repairs and rehabilitation. The recently adopted Downtown Fremont Blight and Substandard Determination Study, March 2011, verifies that the Downtown meets the Four Criteria of Substandard and 12

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Criteria of Blight, as per the Nebraska Community Development Law.

As the Study states, "Of the primary buildings, 44 percent exhibit dilapidated or deteriorating components; while, 42 percent of the secondary structures exhibit dilapidated or deteriorating components." The Study also indicated that Downtown Fremont meets a preponderance of the criteria such as: Age or obsolescence of buildings; Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness; Diversity of ownership; Deterioration of site or other improvements; Improper subdivision or obsolete platting; and Conditions which endanger life or property by fire or other causes.



Figure 2.4: typical existing downtown building conditions



Figure 2.5: typical existing downtown building conditions

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Future land uses throughout the Downtown are proposed to remain a combination of commercial and public/quasi-public use. The primary difference between the Existing Land Use Map and the Future Land Use Map is the potential replacement of all single family residential uses with alternative “economic value” uses, such as commercial. This recommendation is in conformance with the “Comprehensive Plan” for the City of Fremont, currently being updated. Residential uses in second levels and above are permissible uses in the “DC” Downtown Commercial Zoning District and are, therefore, depicted as commercial uses in the Existing and Future Land Use Maps.

Public/Quasi-Public uses are proposed to remain in current locations and potentially expanded in place. Civic and municipal facilities such as public parking lots and garages, the Dodge County Courthouse and Law Enforcement Center are concentrated along Park Avenue. The Fremont Opera House, Chamber of Commerce and Metropolitan Community College are prominent public uses along Broad Street, while several religious facilities and the U.S. Post Office and City Hall are centered about “C” Street.

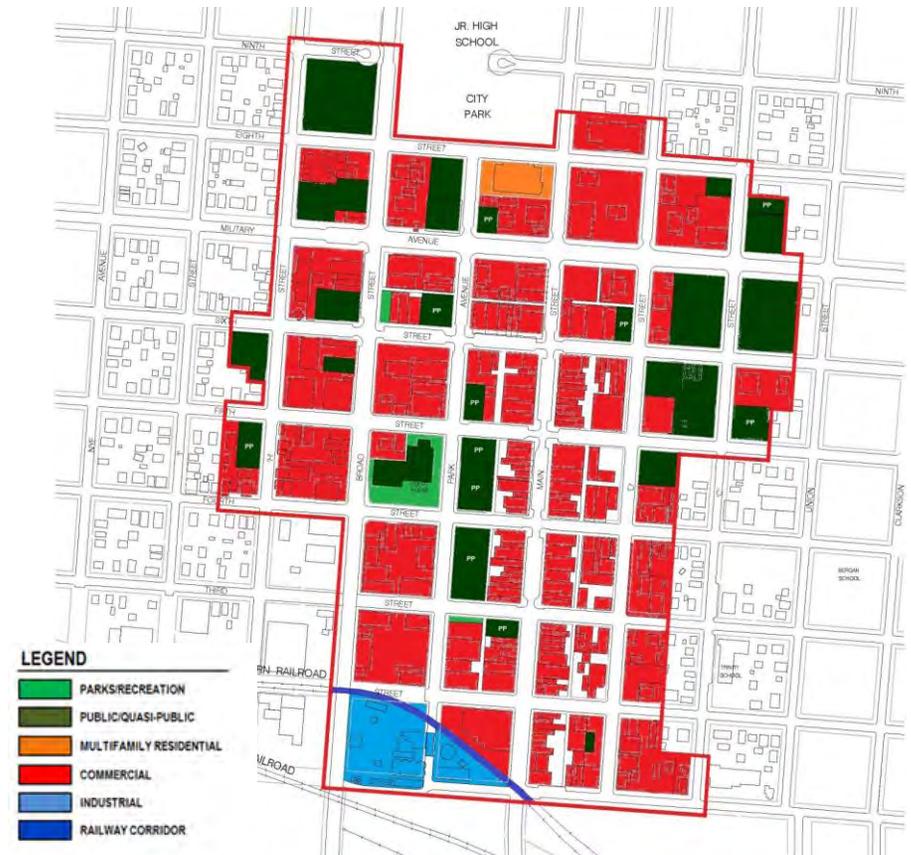


Figure 2.6: downtown district future land use map

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## THE NEED TO REVITALIZE

The following text was taken from *What Happened to America's Main Street?*, published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program.



Figure 2.7: historic main street, circa 1920

"Before World War II, Main Street was the community's primary commercial hub. Downtown buildings usually had several tenants, typically a ground - floor retailer and, frequently, several upper - floor offices or apartments; together, these tenants provided enough rent for property owners to keep their buildings in good condition. The presence of the post office, library, banks and local government offices added to the steady flow of people downtown. Not only was Main Street the center of the community's commercial life, it was also an important part of its social life; people thronged the streets on Saturday nights to meet friends, see a movie and window - shop."

In the past 40 years, America's downtowns have changed drastically. The creation of the interstate highway system and subsequent growth of suburban communities transformed the ways in which Americans live, work and spend leisure time. With improved transportation routes, people found it easier to travel longer distances to work or shop. Roads that once connected outlying towns and neighborhoods to downtown now carried residents to larger cities with shopping strips and regional malls.

Throughout the nation, in town after town, the story repeated itself. Downtown businesses closed or moved to the mall or larger cities, shoppers dwindled, property values and sales tax revenues dropped. In many communities downtown merchants and property owners, attempted to modernize by covering traditional building fronts with aluminum slipcovers. People forgot how important their downtown and its historic commercial buildings were in reflecting their community's unique heritage."

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The challenges downtowns face do not outweigh the importance these districts have in their community. They continue to serve as the civic, social and entertainment hub of the community. Today's downtowns are important because they are:

- A reflection of the community's heritage
- A significant portion of the community's tax base because they retain property values
- An ideal location for independent businesses
- The historic core of the community
- A major tourist attraction
- Walk able and offer convenient shopping

Downtown Fremont exhibits each of the six characteristics mentioned above or has the potential for those characteristics. In addition, it is easily accessible from within Fremont and via its well - traversed highways. Despite some building modifications, the downtown retains its historic character and continues to serve as the center of civic and government functions. Maintaining and continuing to improve on those downtown qualities can result in long - term economic competitiveness for attracting and expanding market opportunities.



Figure 2.8: Sampter's, now in its third generation of ownership, has been serving customers at this location on Main Street since 1925

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## Chapter 3 | OPPORTUNITIES

### PROCESS

The Downtown Revitalization Plan was developed as a collaborative effort between Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, our consulting team, and Fremont stakeholders including the City of Fremont, Steering Committee Members, and the citizens of Fremont.

Throughout the process we engaged with the Fremont stakeholders in monthly steering committee meetings, public outreach / visioning workshops, email correspondence, and on line surveys. The analysis of this process is presented throughout Chapter 3, Opportunities.



Figure 3.1: image from the first public outreach and visioning workshop

### SHORT AND LONG TERM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

During the first public outreach / visioning workshop we developed the following realistic short-term and long-term goals and objectives.

- To identify potential improvements to public streets and spaces.
- To identify realistic opportunities for investment and business development.
- To develop a prioritized list of potential enhancement or redevelopment projects.
- To identify potential funding strategies and sources for enhancement and redevelopment projects.
- To make policy recommendations that will support and facilitate future development that will foster downtown's economic success.

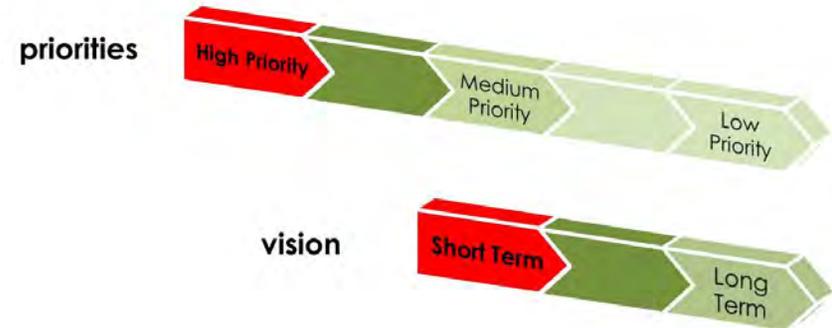


Figure 3.2: graphic depicting priority for phase II implementation

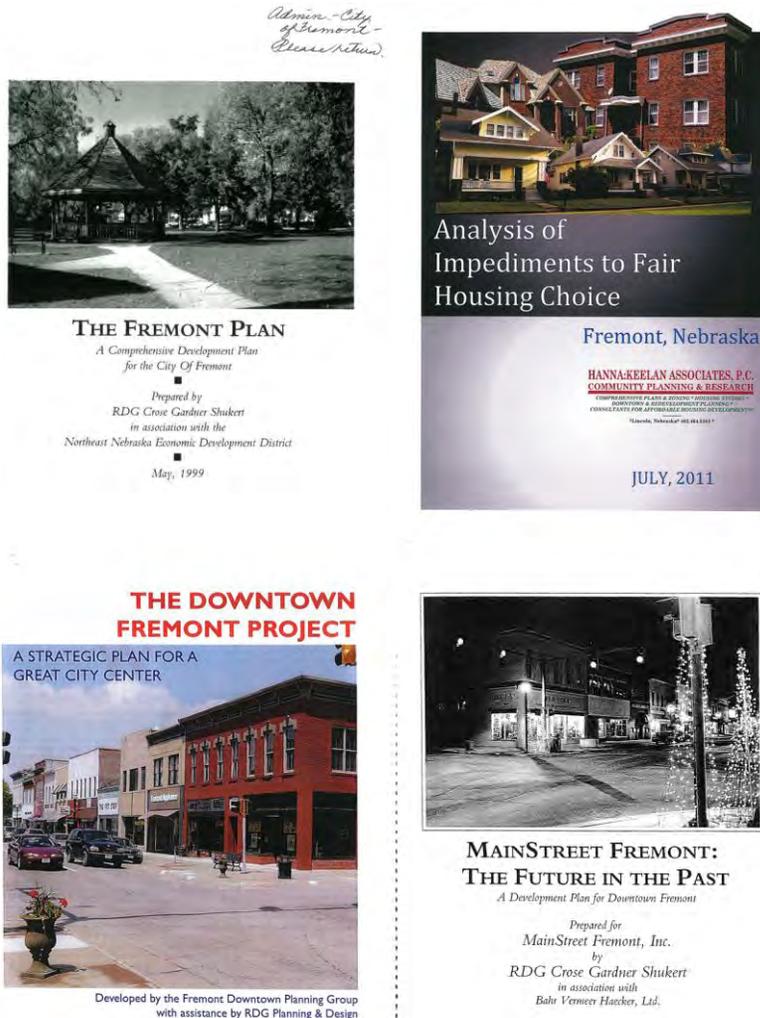


Figure 13.3: cover pages of previous downtown fremont studies

## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EARLIER DOWNTOWN STUDIES

Prior to the first public outreach / visioning workshop, the consultant team thoroughly reviewed all of the concepts from previous studies in the Downtown District. Those studies included the following:

- 1997 Main Street Fremont
- 1998 Proposed Design Guidelines
- 1999 City Comprehensive Plan
- 2008 Downtown Fremont Project
- 2009 Buxton Retail Site Assessment
- 2011 Comprehensive Plan
- City Codes and Ordinances
- Fremont Business Survey

Below is a summary of the contents of the previous Downtown District studies. This summary was presented at the first public outreach / visioning workshop and the consultant team facilitated a town hall style discussion on what should be the priority items.

### 1. Improvements to the Public Realm

- a. traffic
- b. sidewalks
- c. landscaping
- d. user comfort
- e. maintenance mechanism
- f. better connection to John C. Fremont park
- g. wayfinding graphics
- h. local circulator bus

### 2. Upper Level Reuse

- a. clearinghouse for opportunities & technical assistance

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- b. establish community development funding capacity (city/private investment, TIF, tax credits, CDBG, HOME NIFA)
- c. create publicly financed flexible enterprise fund
- d. establish lending consortium
- e. replace voluntary downtown improvement district (DID) with assessment for business improvement district (BID)
- f. possible revision to building codes

### 3. Downtown Learning Community

- a. create initial collaboration board (Midlands, Metro, main street community)
- b. fund employment initiative for student interns/employees
- c. establish joint student-oriented projects (upper-level housing, student operated/oriented business)
- d. low-cost performance / arts venue
- e. develop a fund to support functions requiring assistance (city funds, private contributions, foundation assistance endowments, work-study funds, business funding)

### 4. A Lively Downtown

- a. organized, systematic businesses recruitment
- b. develop a downtown performance venue
- c. develop a loan fund for tenant improvements for entertainment/restaurant venues (BID or other financing mechanisms)

### 5. Codes and Ordinances

- a. create a codes taskforce
- b. engage assistance of regional building permitting agency (other city's experience with permits and inspections modifications)
- c. review sign ordinance
- d. draft amendments to codes (outdoor dining on public sidewalks, occupancy restrictions, etc.)
- e. develop reasonable design guidelines and standards

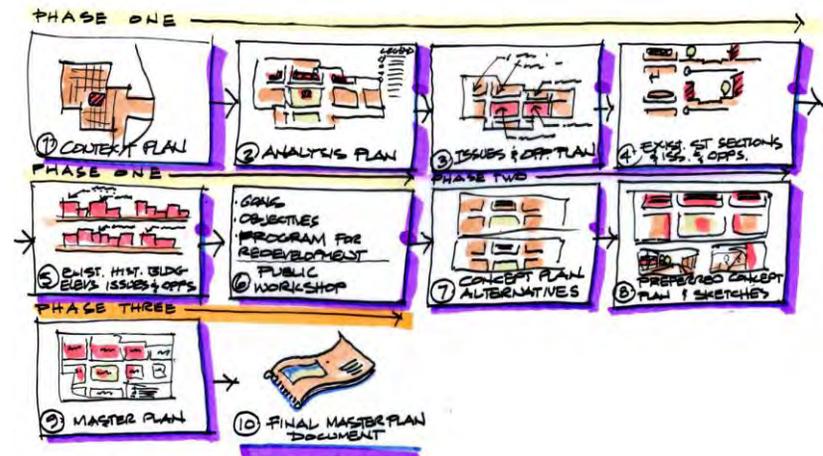


Figure 3.4: graphic depicting process for developing the Fremont Downtown Revitalization Plan

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## COMMUNITY VISION

At the second public outreach / visioning workshop, the consultant team put forth the following vision statement for discussion.

“Downtown’s **urban** character presents a **walk able, mixed use** environment that serves as the City’s **primary civic, cultural** and **entertainment destination**, and as an **important commercial center**.” BLUEPRINT FOR TOMORROW

The statement was broken down into its core components and discussed in depth. There was an overall positive response, by those in attendance, that this statement provided a good vision for the Downtown District.

- **urban** : population density, city center
- **walk able** : sidewalks, pedestrian amenities, human comfort
- **mixed use** : lower level commercial, upper level housing
- **civic** : government center, public gathering space
- **cultural** : arts, education, learning community
- **entertainment** : dining, events, nightlife, shopping, attractions
- **commercial center** : healthy business, exchange of goods and services

## STRATEGIC AND PHYSICAL PROJECTS

At the second public outreach / visioning workshop, the consultant team facilitated a town hall style discussion on the following Phase II Implementation projects. The projects were organized and presented as follows:

**physical projects** [building specific] [public realm]  
**strategic projects** [tools] [partnerships]

[building specific]	[public realm]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second Story Housing</li> <li>• Façade Improvements</li> <li>• Energy Efficiency</li> <li>• ADA Accessibility</li> <li>• Catalyst Project                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 505 Building</li> <li>• Movie Theatre</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Infrastructure</li> <li>• Parking</li> <li>• Storm / Sanitary Sewer</li> <li>• Water System</li> <li>• Streets / Sidewalks</li> <li>• Landscape</li> <li>• Way Finding</li> <li>• Parks / Open Space</li> <li>• Downtown Gateway</li> </ul>
[tools]	[partnerships]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Codes and Ordinances</li> <li>• Developers “How To Book”</li> <li>• Pattern Book</li> <li>• Form Based Guidelines</li> <li>• Market Study                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Commercial</li> </ul> </li> <li>• TIF Bucket</li> <li>• Financial Strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College / Universities</li> <li>• Main Street</li> <li>• DID</li> <li>• Chamber</li> <li>• Young Professionals</li> <li>• Governments</li> <li>• Businesses</li> <li>• Lenders</li> </ul>

A brief summary of each potential Phase II Implementation Project that was discussed is listed below.

## physical projects [building specific]

**Second Story Housing** is proposed in Downtown Fremont to utilize vacant upper level space and provide an immediate economic boost to the downtown area. Several catalyst projects have been identified with potential to be redeveloped.

**Façade Improvements** have been proposed to create a holistic and historically appropriate aesthetic within the Downtown District. Improvements could include renovation of masonry, storefront, doors, windows, awnings, signage, and hardware.

**Energy Efficiency** Improvements have been proposed at several buildings in Downtown Fremont. Improvements could include more efficient window glazing, insulation, and improved mechanical systems.

**ADA Accessibility** improvements would allow easier access to building for those with disabilities. Improvements would include curbs, ramps, handrails, doors, entries, and restrooms that follow ADA Accessibility Guidelines.

**Catalyst Projects** have been proposed that would spur development within the Downtown District. The 505 Building has been identified as a high priority catalyst project for mixed-use development.



Figure 3.5: a rehabilitated 505 Main Street would make a big impact on the residential and commercial activities in the Downtown District.

## physical projects [public realm]

**Green Infrastructure** has been proposed to improve wet weather management. Green infrastructure includes strategically planned natural landscapes and open spaces that conserve positive qualities within the ecosystem.

**Parking Improvements** in the downtown area has been studied many times in the past several years. The most recent information on parking was compiled by former City Planner, Jeff Ray. From reviewing these documents it can be determined that the downtown area has adequate parking; however there is a cultural issue in the

community which leads many to feel that they need to be able to park adjacent to the business they are visiting. It would be beneficial to future housing in the downtown area to have the ability to lease parking from the city. In addition, it may be beneficial to business owners to lease parking from the city.



Figure 3.6: the Downtown District features several FREE parking lots for visitors to the Downtown area.

**Infrastructure Improvements** have been communicated with local businesses and the Public Works Director. The Public Works Director indicated there are no current issues with the sanitary sewer or the water services in the downtown area. However, the age of these systems is a concern for future redevelopment in this area. Review of the water system indicated several 4" lines in the area as shown in the attached exhibit. Modern water mains to supply adequate pressure for fire prevention need to be at or above 1,500 psi. Several 4" water mains are located on the numbered streets in the downtown area. It is recommended that the water pressure be tested to assure adequate fire flow pressure prior to construction of 2nd or 3rd story housing.

**Streets and Sidewalk Improvements** have had several phases of recent renovations. These projects have received a large amount of positive feedback. Additional enhancements to ADA standards may be required at a future date to meet the needs of the community.

**Landscaping Improvements** have been proposed to improve green spaces within the Downtown District and beautify businesses and the streetscape in general. There are several opportunities to incorporate additional landscaping and green solutions into the existing improvements.

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**Way Finding Improvements** have been proposed to improve directional signage within the Downtown District, particularly in relation to locating public parking lots.



Figure 3.7: Main Street Fremont has provided several of these location maps helping visitors discover new places to shop and dine.

**Park and Open Space Improvements** have been proposed to improve access to active and quality green spaces within the Downtown District. There is currently no central gathering point within the Downtown District. John C. Fremont Park is disconnected with downtown by Mission Avenue, a major traffic way into the downtown area.

**Downtown Gateways** serve as the first and last impression for the Downtown District as well as signifying a sense of arrival at the intersection of Military and Main Streets. They should relate to the area's sense of historic architecture, and can have a variety of configurations and scales. Elements may include vegetated walls, decorative lighting, street and sidewalk patterns, and other unique design treatments.



Figure 3.8: Design features such as this one at 6<sup>th</sup> and Broad, help visitors know they have arrived at the downtown district.

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Figure 3.9: Additional gateway elements should be considered for the intersection of Military and Main Streets. (image of historic district marker used in the 100 Block of Broadway, Council Bluffs, IA)

## strategic projects [tools]

**Codes and Ordinances** could be reviewed to insure that appropriate development is occurring in the Downtown District. Consideration should be given to creative parking standards for residential uses in the downtown.

A **Developers “How To” Book** could be created to provide guidelines for a property owner that would include the proper steps to take when renovating their building. Information could include things such as a financial incentive overview, when to contact an architect, and what resources the State Historical Society can provide.

A **Pattern Book** could be developed as a tool to document the physical characteristics of historic sites and buildings and provide clear guidance for their preservation. Additional preservation design guidelines could be used to guide alternations, additions, or the appropriateness of newly constructed buildings.

**Form Based Guidelines** could be created as a tool to provide guidelines for new development. The guidelines can be used by the city as an alternative to land use oriented zoning codes, and would include things such as a build to line rather than a minimum setback.

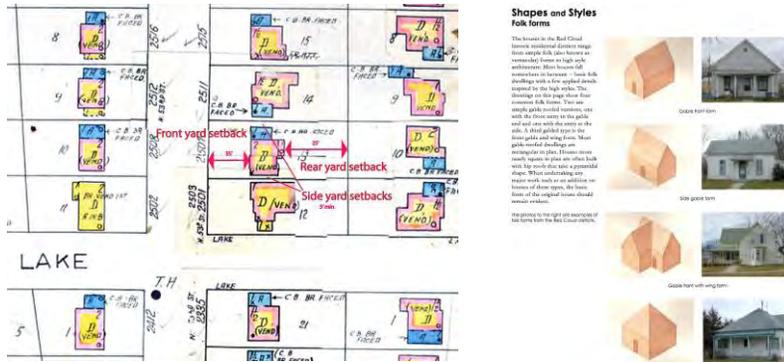


Figure 3.10: Pattern Books document the key physical characteristics of the historic area through research, site plans, drawings, photos, and written description. Form Based Guidelines develop set of guidelines to maintain, preserve, and restore the physical character of the district.

A **Market Study** should be conducted as a tool to help potential developers and investors better understand the demand of commercial and residential markets within the Downtown District.

A **TIF** or Tax Increment Financing district could be created to help fund many of the improvements mentioned in Chapter 3, and exist as a low-interest financing source for design compatible projects.

**Financial Strategies** for city improvement and development can be achieved through a variety of programs both on the state and federal levels. These sources should be further developed and utilized to implement portions of the Downtown Revitalization Plan.



Figure 3.11: Recent street, sidewalk, and lighting projects in the Downtown District have been well received by business and patrons.



Figure 3.12: Additional elements such as signage or banners would help visitors identify the Historic Downtown District.

## strategic projects [partnerships]

### Downtown Development Corporation

A Downtown Development Corporation would play a crucial role in bringing the public and private sectors together as partners in Downtown Fremont's redevelopment and revitalization. It's activities would involve economic development (job creation), including public-private real estate and business development, long term planning, and serving as the lead entity in the implementation of a Downtown Master Plan.

BLUEPRINT FOR TOMORROW

Partners in the DDC should include the College and Universities, Main Street, the Downtown Improvement District, the Chamber of Commerce, City Government, Young Professional, Downtown Businesses, and Local Lending Institutions.



Figure 3.13: Many of the partners needed for successful Revitalization of Downtown were in attendance at the public outreach and visioning workshops.

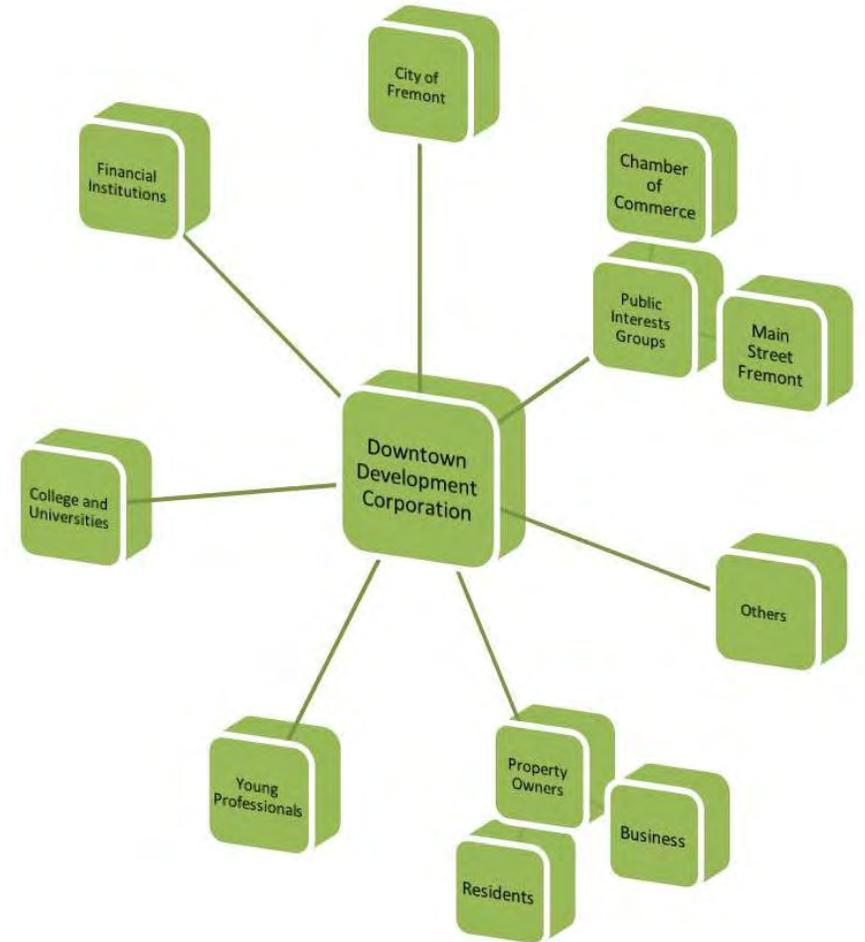


Figure 3.14: Graphic depicting the importance of establishing an entity to take charge of Downtown Revitalization.

## PHASE II IMPLEMENTATION CRITERIA

Also at the second public outreach / visioning workshop, the consultant team presented information related to the criteria needed to qualify for Phase II funding, and what other communities have used Phase II funding to accomplish.

### Requirements:

- \$350,000.00 grant
- Minimum match of 25% (can be either city or property owner)
- Majority of communities do façade improvements
- local approval process
- state historical society approval process
- code related items
- fire sprinklers
- energy efficiency items qualify
- HVAC upgrades
- ADA accessibility
- Rarely has funded additional planning efforts such as the strategic projects tools and partnerships described above.

### Other Communities:

- **Acquisition:** South Sioux City
- **ADA Accessibility:** Gothenburg, Sidney, Lexington, Scottsbluff
- **Commercial Rehab Grant / Loans:** Nebraska City, Plattsmouth, Geneva, Auburn, Lexington, Scribner, Scottsbluff
- **Demolition:** Nebraska City, South Sioux City
- **Energy Efficiency:** Cozad, Gothenburg, Scribner
- **Façade Improvements:** Cozad, Wayne, Gothenburg
- **Public Facilities:** Lexington, Scottsbluff
- **Relocation:** South Sioux City
- **Street Improvements:** Geneva, Falls City
- **Sidewalk Improvements:** Cozad, Wayne, Sidney, Scribner, Falls City
- **Parking Improvements:** Lexington
- **Storm Sewer:** Scribner
- **Water System:** Scribner

Following the presentation and town hall style discussion, those in attendance were asked to vote, using a “colored sticky dot to coordinate with priority”. The results of that vote are shown in Figure 3.15.

At the next steering committee meeting, the steering committee members suggested following up with a widely distributed on line survey. The results of that survey are shown in Figure 3.16.

# OPPORTUNITIES | 3

Rank		High	Medium	Low	Total No. of Votes
	<b>Physical Projects</b> [building specific]				
1	Second Story Housing	●●●●●	●		6
3	Façade Improvements		●●	●●●●●	6
	Energy Efficiency				0
	ADA Accessibility		●●		2
	Catalyst Project				
5	505 Building	●●	●	●	4
	Movie Theatre				0
	<b>Physical Projects</b> [public realm]				
	Green Infrastructure			●	1
	Parking				0
	Storm / Sanitary Sewer				0
	Water System				0
	Streets / Sidewalks		●		1
	Landscape		●	●	2
	Way Finding			●●	2
4	Parks / Open Space	●●●	●●		4
2	Downtown Gateway	●●●●●	●	●	6
	Handicap Accessible Parking	●			1
	<b>Strategic Projects</b> [tools]				
4	Codes and Ordinances	●●●			3
	Developers "How To Book"				0
	Pattern Book	●			1
	Form Based Guidelines				0
	Market Study				
	Housing		●●		2
	Commercial			●	1
2	TIF Bucket	●●●		●●●	5
5	Financial Strategies			●●●	3
	<b>Physical Projects</b> [partnerships]				
3	College / Universities	●	●●	●	4
6	Main Street		●●	●●●	3
1	DID	●●●●●		●●	7
	Chamber				0
	Young Professionals				0
	Governments				0
	Businesses	●		●	2
	Lenders		●		1

Figure 3.15: graphic depicting town hall priority votes

**Response Summary** Total Started Survey: 39  
Total Completed Survey: 39 (100%)

PAGE: FREMONT DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

1. Please rank the following BUILDING SPECIFIC Physical Projects in order of highest priority (1) to lowest priority (6) [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	1 highest priority	2	3	4	5	6 lowest priority	Rating Average	Response Count
second story housing	12.8% (5)	15.4% (6)	23.1% (9)	38.5% (15)	7.7% (3)	2.6% (1)	3.21	39
facade improvements	33.3% (13)	30.8% (12)	17.9% (7)	10.3% (4)	0.0% (0)	7.7% (3)	2.36	39
energy efficiency	10.3% (4)	15.4% (6)	15.4% (6)	17.9% (7)	17.9% (7)	23.1% (9)	3.87	39
ada accessibility	0.0% (0)	2.6% (1)	15.4% (6)	23.1% (9)	33.3% (13)	25.6% (10)	4.64	39
505 building	38.5% (15)	28.2% (11)	2.6% (1)	7.7% (3)	20.5% (8)	2.6% (1)	2.51	39
movie theatre	5.1% (2)	7.7% (3)	25.6% (10)	2.6% (1)	20.5% (8)	38.5% (15)	4.41	39
answered question								39
skipped question								0

2. Please rank the following PUBLIC REALM Physical Projects in order of highest priority (1) to lowest priority (10) [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	1 highest priority	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 lowest priority	Response Count
green infrastructure	7.7% (3)	15.4% (6)	10.3% (4)	7.7% (3)	10.3% (4)	15.4% (6)	0.0% (0)	7.7% (3)	5.1% (2)	20.5% (8)	39
parking	12.8% (5)	17.9% (7)	10.3% (4)	12.8% (5)	10.3% (4)	5.1% (2)	10.3% (4)	15.4% (6)	2.6% (1)	2.6% (1)	39
handicap accessible parking	0.0% (0)	5.1% (2)	7.7% (3)	10.3% (4)	5.1% (2)	12.8% (5)	12.8% (5)	7.7% (3)	10.3% (4)	28.2% (11)	39
storm / sanitary sewer	5.1% (2)	5.1% (2)	5.1% (2)	12.8% (5)	15.4% (6)	10.3% (4)	2.6% (1)	15.4% (6)	23.1% (9)	5.1% (2)	39
water system	0.0% (0)	5.1% (2)	7.7% (3)	7.7% (3)	7.7% (3)	10.3% (4)	20.5% (8)	17.9% (7)	12.8% (5)	10.3% (4)	39
streets / sidewalks	20.5% (8)	15.4% (6)	5.1% (2)	5.1% (2)	12.8% (5)	15.4% (6)	5.1% (2)	10.3% (4)	2.6% (1)	7.7% (3)	39
landscape	10.3% (4)	17.9% (7)	15.4% (6)	5.1% (2)	10.3% (4)	7.7% (3)	10.3% (4)	12.8% (5)	7.7% (3)	2.6% (1)	39
way finding	10.3% (4)	2.6% (1)	17.9% (7)	15.4% (6)	5.1% (2)	7.7% (3)	17.9% (7)	5.1% (2)	10.3% (4)	7.7% (3)	39
parks / open space	5.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	10.3% (4)	20.5% (8)	15.4% (6)	7.7% (3)	10.3% (4)	5.1% (2)	15.4% (6)	10.3% (4)	39
downtown gateway	28.2% (11)	15.4% (6)	10.3% (4)	2.6% (1)	7.7% (3)	7.7% (3)	10.3% (4)	2.6% (1)	10.3% (4)	5.1% (2)	39
answered question											39
skipped question											0

Figure 3.16: graphic depicting online survey results

## PHASE II RECOMMENDATION

During the process, Fremont stakeholders identified improvement of downtown Fremont's historic building facades as the highest priority, short term project that can be implemented for Phase II CDBG funding.

The statement of purpose for the Phase II CDBG funding is below:

***“To improve the blighted appearance of buildings in the downtown area by restoring, renovating, replacing or reconstructing facades and signage.”***

Chapter 4 further describes steps to be taken for the successful implementation of a Façade Improvement Program.



Figure 3.17: image depicting example façade before renovation



Figure 3.18: image depicting example façade after renovation

INTRODUCTION

HISTORY AND SETTING

OPPORTUNITIES

IMPLEMENTATION

## Chapter 4 | IMPLEMENTATION

### PRIORITIZED ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Recognizing that, due to financial and time constraints, not all of the components of the plan will be completed at one time, a phased approach is recommended. As each phase is completed, a contiguous unit of the overall design will be complete thus maximizing the effect for the public's benefit and the efficiency of utilizing available funding.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The following recommendations have been provided as guidelines to utilize and implement the highest priority, short term effective improvements to the Downtown Fremont district.

- 1 Façade Improvements
- 2 Upper Level Housing
- 3 Design Guidelines and Zoning Recommendations
- 4 Sources and Uses of Funding



Figure 4.1: graphic depicting priority of improvements

# IMPLEMENTATION | 4

## FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

Improvement to building facades in the Downtown District has been identified as a high priority throughout the Public Outreach / Visioning Workshops. There are a number of different approaches one can undertake to improve the aesthetic appeal of a building. Figures 4.6 and 4.7 illustrate how removal of existing metal awnings and slipcovers, storefront replacement, upper-story window rehabilitation and/or replacement, masonry restoration and painting can dramatically impact the aesthetic of downtown Fremont.

A commitment to façade improvements should not be limited to the buildings along Main Street. The same approaches listed above could apply to buildings of a similar vernacular nature throughout the Downtown District. Façade improvements will ultimately lead to an improved Downtown District and an immediate positive economic impact on the area.

## CDBG PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The purpose of the CDBG grant program is to restore, improve, or create historic architectural features to facades of commercial buildings anywhere within the City of Fremont's Downtown District as identified within the Fremont Downtown Plan.

The grant is provided through a forgivable loan program administered by the City of Fremont and the Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District and funded Community Development Block Grant Downtown Revitalization funds.

The grant is available to property owners and tenants within the Downtown District and includes a maximum funding request is \$100,000. Any amount of funding requires a 25% match (i.e. \$1,000 is \$250 in match and \$750 in loan). The request and design receive final approval from the Fremont City Council.



Figure 4.2: graphic depicting example of façade improvements

## **CDBG PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

The purpose of this grant program is to restore, improve or create historic architectural features to facades of commercial buildings anywhere within the City of Fremont's Downtown District as identified within the Fremont Downtown Plan. The following guidelines have been created to ensure that design improvements are carried out within CDBG standards:

- Where practical, building facades planned for upgrading shall be restored to their original period design. If it is deemed not practical by the Fremont Business Improvement District, then a similar architectural design shall be used. All horizontal and vertical features (lintels and piers) shall be retained.
  - If a building does not have a historic significant architectural design or feature, then another proposed design may be submitted to qualify for the program.
  - All storefronts shall be designed, constructed and maintained to complement and accent the architectural features of the building. All accessories, signs and awnings shall likewise harmonize with the overall character of the building.
  - All color schemes shall accent the building as well as harmonize with adjacent buildings. Historical murals will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
  - Funds shall be allocated on a competitive basis for a maximum up to 75% of cost of improvements, not to exceed \$100,000.
- No work for which funding is sought should begin until authorized by the City Council.
  - No program monies shall be used to perform general repair, structural, or habitable work or otherwise to meet code to occupy the building.
  - To qualify for funds, an application with appropriate conceptual plans and other documents must be submitted to the City of Fremont, Attention City Planner for review and recommendation with final approval by the Fremont City Council.
  - The work proposed by the applicant requires at least two bids from outside sources to verify that costs are within reasonable parameters.
  - Contractors are required to comply with Davis-Bacon Wage Determinations and E-Verify requirements (see contractor packet from Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District for additional information).
  - Attestation of U.S. Citizenship form is required if applying as an individual.
  - Projects are subject to Tier II environmental review. Part of this environmental review will be the review and approval from the State Historical Preservation Office.
  - Improved facades and signage must remain intact on building for a minimum period of five years from date of completion. Changes to improved facades and signage prior to five years may trigger repayment of loan.

# IMPLEMENTATION | 4

## CDBG DESIGN GUIDELINES

For the benefit of the entire Fremont, N, community, the Facade and Building Improvement Program encourages the improvement of facades and building in the historic downtown district, so as to accentuate the historic elements of the district through restoration, renovation, replacement or reconstruction of facades, as defined:

**Facade** shall mean the front (and side if located on a corner) exterior wall of a building exposed to public view from the building's exterior. This will typically include a visual impact with items such as awnings, windows and signage.

**Restoration** is the preferred treatment for building facade improvement. Restoration is most applicable to buildings where there has been very little change to the building facade over time. This results in the return of the facade to its original appearance through the use of authentic materials and the replication of missing or deteriorated components.

**Renovation** results in facade improvements which do not attempt to return the building to its original appearance. Improvements made should be sensitive to historic details and materials and should respect whatever original character remains.

**Replacement** of facades is appropriate when the majority of the original facade is missing or has been significantly altered so as to make restoration or renovation impractical. Facade designs should select

materials, dimensions and architectural details that are similar or compatible to surrounding buildings. Example: facade height, window size and spacing, materials and colors.

**Reconstruction** takes place when the building and its features no longer exist. With reconstruction, facade designs are created through new construction to replicate, mimic, resemble or accentuate historic period details.

**Structural Improvements** will be considered to be the sides of the buildings not visible to the street along with the roof.

Therefore, this program encourages the following specific design guidelines for facades and signage in Fremont:

- Contemporary design alterations should not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material.
- Distinguishing original qualities and character should be retained.
- Historic material and distinctive architectural features should be retained.
- Skilled craftsmanship that characterizes the building should be retained.
- Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced. If replacement is necessary, new materials should match as closely as possible in design, color, texture and other visual qualities.

# IMPLEMENTATION | 4

- Building surface cleaning should be completed using the gentlest means possible. Exterior sandblasting or methods that will damage historic building materials should be avoided.
- Alterations to facades should be done in a manner that if the alterations were to be removed in the future, the integrity of the structure and subsurface would be unimpaired.
- Non-original building siding such as stucco, vinyl and aluminum should be removed whenever possible.
- Replacement glass should be similar in size color and reflectivity to the original.
- Dark tinted glass should not be used.
- Original historically significant facades should be restored with as little physical alteration as possible.
- The use of incompatible materials for reconstruction should be discouraged; eg. aluminum or steel siding, faux brick, asphalt or cedar shingles, plastic, fiberglass and stucco.
- Storefronts should incorporate the three design elements of a traditional storefront to retain the integrity of the streetscape: bulkhead, storefront windows and transom windows.
- Signage should accentuate the period architecture and should comply with local signage code ordinances.



Figure 4.3: example building before façade improvements



Figure 4.4: example building after façade improvements

## FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLE



Figure 4.5: existing façade example

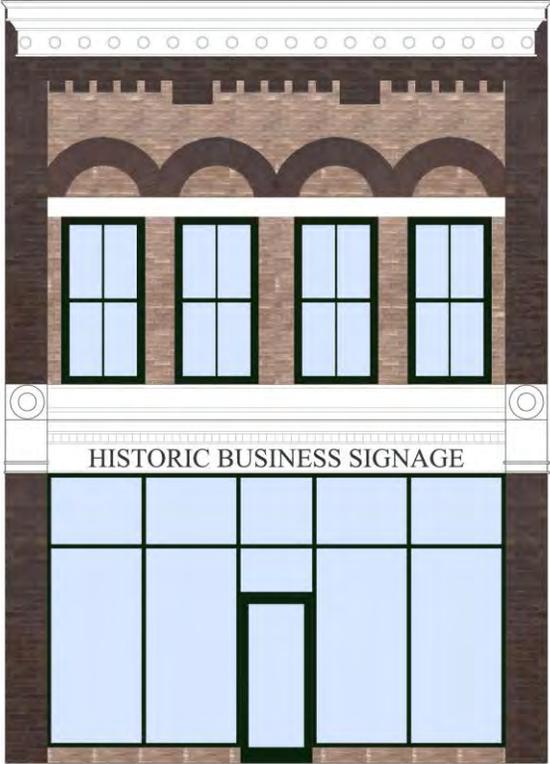


Figure 4.6: façade improvements with new storefront, upper level windows, and restored masonry

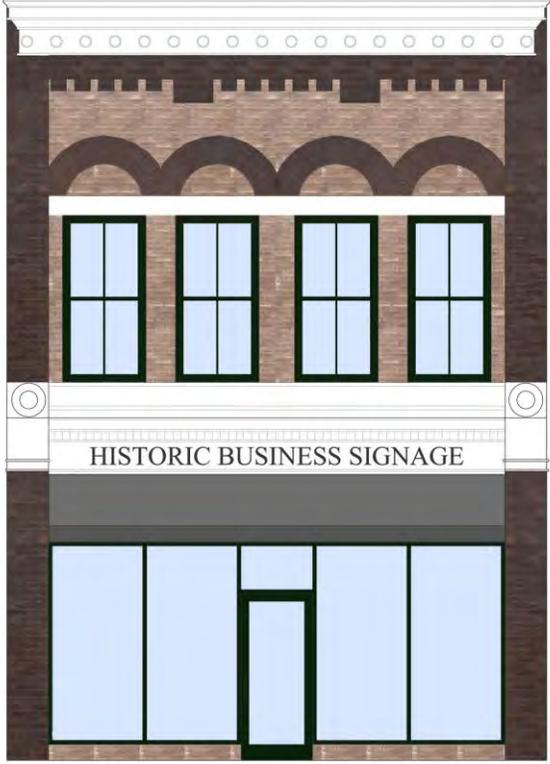


Figure 4.7: façade improvements with awning

# IMPLEMENTATION | 4

### FAÇADE COST EXAMPLE

During the Public Outreach / Visioning Workshops, and follow up online survey, community members identified improvement to downtown Fremont's historic building façades was a priority. Because the city is exploring different avenues to implement such work and since each building represents a varied need for improvement a sample estimate for a typical façade is provided below.

OPINION OF PROBABLE COST		218 E. COOLBAUGH STREET		
DESCRIPTION OF WORK	UNIT COST	UNIT	QTY	TOTAL
demo	\$2.00 SF		500	\$1,000.00
2nd / 3rd floor windows small	\$1,000.00 EA		4	\$4,000.00
2nd / 3rd floor windows large	\$2,000.00 EA		0	\$0.00
aluminum storefront assembly w/ doors	\$13,500.00 EA		1	\$13,500.00
masonry repair	\$30.00 SF		100	\$3,000.00
masonry repointing	\$12.00 SF		360	\$4,320.00
masonry cleaning	\$1.00 SF		360	\$360.00
façade paint	\$1.50 SF		250	\$375.00
misc. caulking / sealants	\$1,000.00 EA		1	\$1,000.00
fabric awning	\$100.00 LF		18	\$1,800.00
downspout	\$1,000.00 EA		0	\$0.00
parapet to roof repair	\$30.00 LF		24	\$720.00
structural allowance	\$7,500.00 EA		0	\$0.00
misc. entry mods	\$4,000.00 EA		0.5	\$2,000.00
signage allowance	\$1,500.00 EA		0	\$0.00
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>				<b>\$32,075.00</b>
10% contingency				\$3,207.50
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>				<b>\$35,282.50</b>

Figure 4.8: existing façade cost example

# IMPLEMENTATION | 4

## NPS TECHNICAL BRIEFS

The National Park Service Technical Preservation Service has provided technical guidelines for the renovation and improvement of historic buildings. A brief introduction to several guidelines that would apply to the Downtown District are below.

(Source: <http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm>)

### Repointing Mortar Joints

Although generally considered "permanent," masonry is subject to deterioration, especially at the mortar joints. Repointing, also known as "pointing" or "tuck pointing", is the process of removing deteriorated mortar from the joints of a masonry wall and replacing it with new mortar. Properly done, repointing restores the visual and physical integrity of the masonry.



Figure 4.9: image depicting masonry repointing

### Abrasive Cleaning

Sandblasting or other abrasive methods of cleaning or paint removal are by their nature destructive to historic building materials and should not be used on historic buildings. If it is in the best interest of the building to clean it, then it should be done "using the gentlest means possible."

### Repairing Historic Wooden Windows

Technical Preservation Services recommends the retention and repair of original windows whenever possible. Wooden windows which are repaired and properly maintained will have greatly extended service lives while contributing to the historic character of the building. If the original wood windows do not exist or are beyond repair, replacement windows should match the original window character as closely as possible.



Figure 4.10: image depicting wood window restoration

# IMPLEMENTATION | 4

## Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts

Wherever possible, significant storefronts (be they original or later alterations), including windows, sash, doors, transoms, signs and decorative features, should be repaired in order to retain the historic character of the building. Where original or early storefronts no longer exist or are too deteriorated to save, the commercial character of the building should nonetheless be preserved -- either through an accurate restoration based on historic research and physical evidence or a contemporary design which is compatible with the scale, design, materials, color and texture of the historic building.



Figure 4.11: image depicting historic storefront improvements

## Heating, Ventilation, and Cooling

Meeting modern HVAC requirements for human comfort can result in both visual and physical damage to historic resources. In undertaking changes to historic buildings, it is best to have the advice and input of trained professionals who can:

- Assess the condition of the historic building
- Evaluate the significant elements that should be preserved or reused
- Prioritize the preservation objectives
- Understand the impact of new interior climate conditions on historic materials
- Integrate preservation with mechanical and code requirements
- Maximize the advantages of various new or upgraded mechanical systems
- Understand the visual and physical impact of various installations
- Identify maintenance and monitoring requirements for new or upgraded systems
- Plan for the future removal or replacement of the system

# IMPLEMENTATION | 4

## **Preservation of Historic Signs**

The NPS encourages communities to promote diversity in signs--their sizes, types, colors, lighting, lettering and other qualities. It encourages business owners to choose signs that reflect their own tastes, values, and personalities. At the same time, The National Park Service encourages businesses to fit their sign programs to the character of the building.

## **Making Historic Properties Accessible**

With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, access to historic properties open to the public is a now civil right, and owners of historic properties must evaluate existing buildings and determine how they can be made more accessible. Solutions for accessibility should not destroy a property's significant materials, features and spaces, but should increase accessibility as much as possible.



Figure 4.12: image depicting historic awnings

## **Maintenance, Repair, and Replacement of Historic Cast Stone**

Appropriate repair of damaged units can extend the life of any cast stone installation. Because of the necessity of matching both matrix color and aggregate size and ratio, conservation projects which involve repair or replication of cast stone should allow adequate lead time for the assembly of materials and the preparation of test samples. Understanding which conditions require repair, which warrant replacement, and which should be accepted as normal weathering is key to selecting the most appropriate approach to the protection and care of historic cast stone.

## **The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings**

Awnings often have a significant role in contributing to the historic character of a building. It is important that owners, architects, engineers, historians, and others consider this when planning work on a historic building.

## **Maintaining the Exterior of Small to Medium Historic Buildings**

Maintenance is the most important preservation treatment for extending the life of a historic property. It is also the most cost effective. Understanding the construction techniques of the original builders and the performance qualities of older building materials, using traditional maintenance and repair methods, and selecting in-kind materials where replacements are needed will help preserve the building and its historic character.

# IMPLEMENTATION | 4

## UPPER LEVEL HOUSING

Downtown housing should be attractive for its unique design qualities as well as for its proximity to unique downtown attractions. A range of housing choices should be developed over street level office or retail spaces in existing buildings. As directions for downtown housing are considered, the market potential should not be underestimated. Downtowns have long been locations for housing simply because the space was “cheap”. Today, downtowns are attractive to a segment of the populations that chooses to live in downtown. A more “upscale” notion of downtown living might therefore, be appropriate for downtown Fremont. Ultimately, a population of people living in downtown will foster the revitalization of downtown.

## PROFILE OF COMMUNITY POPULATION, INCOME AND HOUSING ANALYSIS AND PROJECTIONS, WITH ESTIMATED HOUSING DEMAND FORECAST FOR DOWNTOWN FREMONT

The 2010 Census identified the total population for the City of Fremont as 26,397 persons, while projections estimate the 2012 population to have increased by 33 persons to 26,430. Over the next five years, through 2017, it is estimated that the population of Fremont will increase by 0.7 percent, or by 175 persons, to 26,605.

As of 2012, there were an estimated 11,461 total housing units in Fremont, with 6,833 owner units and 3,912 renter units. The Downtown housing stock consists of an estimated 117 housing units, including 21 owner and 96 rental units. These projections include the Power House Apartments, the John C. Apartments, existing upper level housing and single family dwellings within the Downtown.

Households in the City of Fremont in 2012, include an estimated 5,948 owner and 4,030 renter households, totaling 9,978 households. The City-Wide Housing Vacancy Rate in 2012 is estimated to be 6.2 percent. Downtown Fremont is estimated to have 19 owner households and approximately 85 renter households, as of 2012.

The projected Housing Target Demand for Fremont, Nebraska, 2017, includes 385 owner housing units and 260 renter units, totaling 645 new housing units in the next five years. Approximately 95 of these housing units, including 30 owner and 65 renter housing units, are recommended to be developed in Downtown Fremont, to increase the total number of housing units by 2017 to 212 units. These additional housing units will require an estimated 99,750 square feet of space at an estimated development cost of \$21,000,000. Nearly half of the units proposed for Downtown, or 30 owner housing units and 15 renter units are recommended to be designated for retirees and the Elderly 55+ years of age.



Figure 4.13: powerhouse apartments

# IMPLEMENTATION | 4

The Figure titled “Upper Level Housing Potential” identifies appropriate commercial buildings within Downtown Fremont having at least two-stories and suitable for the development of housing units in the upper levels. As identified, the highest concentration of buildings appropriate for upper level housing are located upon Main Street, generally between Second and Sixth Streets and along Sixth Street, from Park Avenue to “D” Street. Approximately 335,100 square feet of upper-level housing could be reclaimed from vacant or underutilized space in second and above floors in Downtown commercial buildings, identified in the Illustration.



Figure 4.14: example renovated building with lower level retail and upper level housing

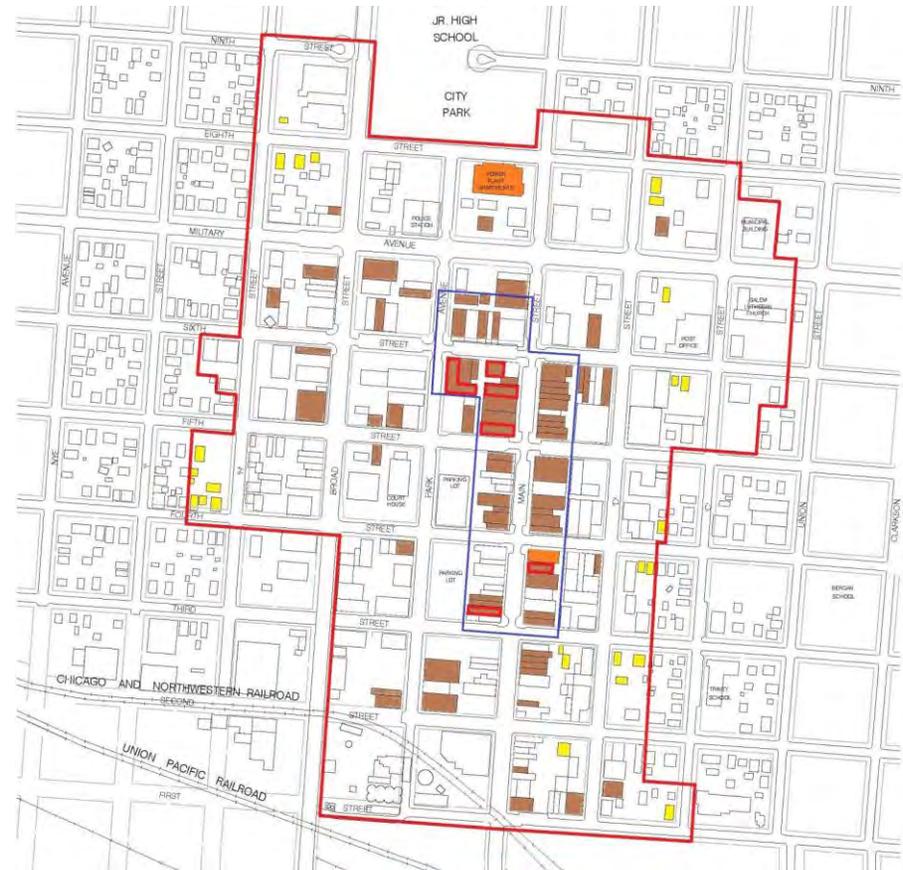


Figure 4.15: downtown housing map

### LEGEND

- MULTI-STORY BUILDING
- SINGLE FAMILY DWELLING
- MULTIFAMILY BUILDING
- PRIORITY UPPER LEVEL PROJECT
- DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

# IMPLEMENTATION | 4

Six buildings are highlighted on the Figure titled “Upper Level Housing” as recommended priority projects for upper-level housing development:

- (1) the three-story building at 105 Sixth Street
- (2) the attached three-story buildings at 141-145 Sixth Street occupied by the Yankee Peddler
- (3) the two-story building at 541 Main Street
- (4) the 505 Building
- (5) the two-story building occupied by the Main Street Office and Country Traditions
- (6) the two-story building at 307-311 Main Street

These six buildings are identified as priority projects for housing due either to the historic significance of the buildings in the Downtown, the owners of the buildings proposing housing projects, and/or the adaptability of these buildings for housing development.

The concentration of buildings along Main and Sixth Street generates a nucleus of activity that also correlates to the area designated as the Historic District of Downtown Fremont; an area listed on the National Trust of Historic Places. This designation provides historic properties and “contributing” properties access to Historic Preservation Tax Credits of 20 and 10 percent, respectively, on every dollar spent for preservation, restoration or adaptive-reuse of these structures.

Most recently, this same District was selected by Heritage Nebraska as a “Main Street” Community, a program supported by the National Trust. This designation establishes Main Street Director and Board to implement the Main Street “Four-Point Approach” including:

- Organization – working towards the same goals by consensus
- Promotion – marketing the district’s unique characteristics
- Design – physical improvements throughout public and private property
- Economic Restructuring – supporting existing and recruiting new businesses and converting vacant buildings and spaces to new uses



Figure 4.16: priority buildings for upper level housing

# IMPLEMENTATION | 4

## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF HOUSING IN THE DOWNTOWN FREMONT

The Downtown Housing Target Demand of 95 housing units, by 2017, is projected to add an additional 99,750 square feet of new or rehabilitated housing in the upper levels of commercial buildings, equating to an approximate investment of \$21,000,000. The resulting increase in value of additional housing in the Downtown is estimated to generate, approximately, \$490,000 in new real estate taxes paid, annually.

The Economic Impact of new housing development in Downtown Fremont upon the retail, services, food and entertainment sectors is estimated to result in the need for an additional 36,000 square feet of commercial development, uses at an estimated development cost of \$6,275,000, by 2017. This additional investment in the Downtown would equate to an estimated added annual real estate tax payment of \$155,000.

An estimated 60 to 105 new jobs could be created from the increase of up to 36,000 square feet of retail, services, food and entertainment development in Downtown Fremont.



Figure 4.17: example façade before renovation



Figure 4.18: façade after renovation and addition of upper level housing

# IMPLEMENTATION | 4

## **DESIGN GUIDELINES AND ZONING RECOMENDATIONS**

This plan is intended to create a development environment that invites revitalization. Design Guides such as Pattern Books and Form Based Guidelines along with Zoning Overlay Districts are local government tools that affect development demand, densities and patterns. Design Guides or Zoning alone, without market demand, cannot make investment happen. However, Design Guides and Zoning can encourage and protect development.

## **DESIGN GUIDELINES**

Insuring a community is attractive as well as pedestrian-friendly can be further accomplished by implementing consistent guidelines for development, redevelopment and improvement projects. Although the city of Fremont has some guidelines in place at this time, to insure they are embraced and adhered to, they need to work with zoning ordinances and/or a Local (not federal) historic district designation. They should address both historic and modern construction along with site development. Site guidelines address building placement, circulation and parking, landscaping, signage, pedestrian access and lighting at a finer-grain level than Overlay Districts can. Architectural guidelines relate to the appearance, materiality and form of the structures on the site. Design Guidelines insure that a property owner's investment in their community is protected.

## **ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Today the zoning code does not differentiate between the historic core of downtown and other areas. The creation of an Overlay District would be an appropriate way to address the special needs of the historic downtown core. An Overlay District supplements existing land use regulations; it does not replace them. This approach avoids the need to rezone and allows a city to maintain or update current codes while addressing the special needs of particularly sensitive areas that either exhibit unique characteristics or require additional protection. This could work hand in hand with a Historic Resources Commission or a Historic District.

An Overlay District would provide guidance encouraging new development to protect and enhance desired density. It could define maximum front yard depth, building height, setbacks, maintenance of public views, streetscape, signage, lighting, pedestrian access, parking lots, and screening regulations.

The addition of more restrictive demolition and removal regulations for downtown historic properties could also offer further protection of resources community members participating in the planning sessions felt were very important to Fremont's identity. This could include requirement of a formal independent consultant's report on the physical condition and economic viability of retaining a building proposed for demolition. Any such recommendation understands that demolition or removal of such properties is permitted when there is an immediate hazard to public safety.

## FORM BASED GUIDELINES

Form Based Guidelines are tools used to provide guidelines for new development in an area. The guidelines are used by cities as an alternative to land use oriented zoning codes. They can also be used to provide protection of historic neighborhoods and properties.

Form-based codes are a new response to the modern challenges of urban sprawl, deterioration of historic neighborhoods, and neglect of pedestrian safety in new development. Tradition has declined as a guide to development patterns, and the widespread adoption by cities of single-use zoning regulations has discouraged compact, walkable urbanism. Form-based codes are a tool to address these deficiencies, and to provide local governments the regulatory means to achieve development objectives with greater certainty.

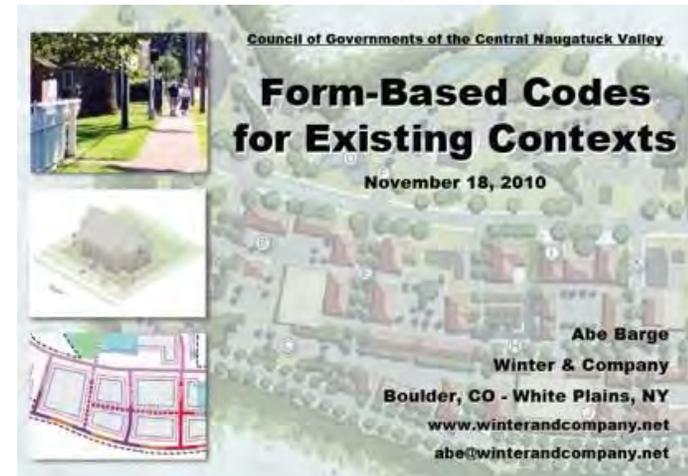


Figure 4.19: image depicting form based guidelines

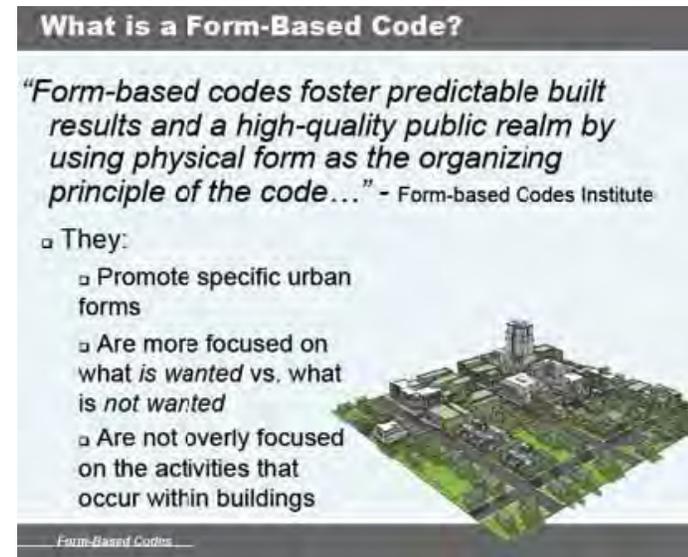


Figure 4.20: image depicting form based guidelines

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## PATTERN BOOK

A Pattern Book is a tool used to document the physical characteristics of historic sites and buildings. It combines site related form-based guidelines and historic building guidelines. Through public record searches, a photo survey, and physical measurements of the area and buildings, the book helps inform the public of an area's uniqueness and provides a "menu" of features to be preserved. When used with Secretary of Interior Standards, a pattern book provides clear guidance for preservation.

## PATTERN BOOK COMPONENTS

- Documentation of the key components of the historic area including site plans, drawings, photos, and written descriptions.
- Guidelines to maintain, preserve, and restore the physical character of the district.

## PATTERN BOOK DEVELOPMENT

- Public Record Search to document the physical characteristics of the neighborhood and buildings, public infrastructure/spaces, architectural styles, building floor plans, and elevations.
- Photo Survey documenting the existing characteristics of the area and its buildings
- Physical Measurements of the area and buildings

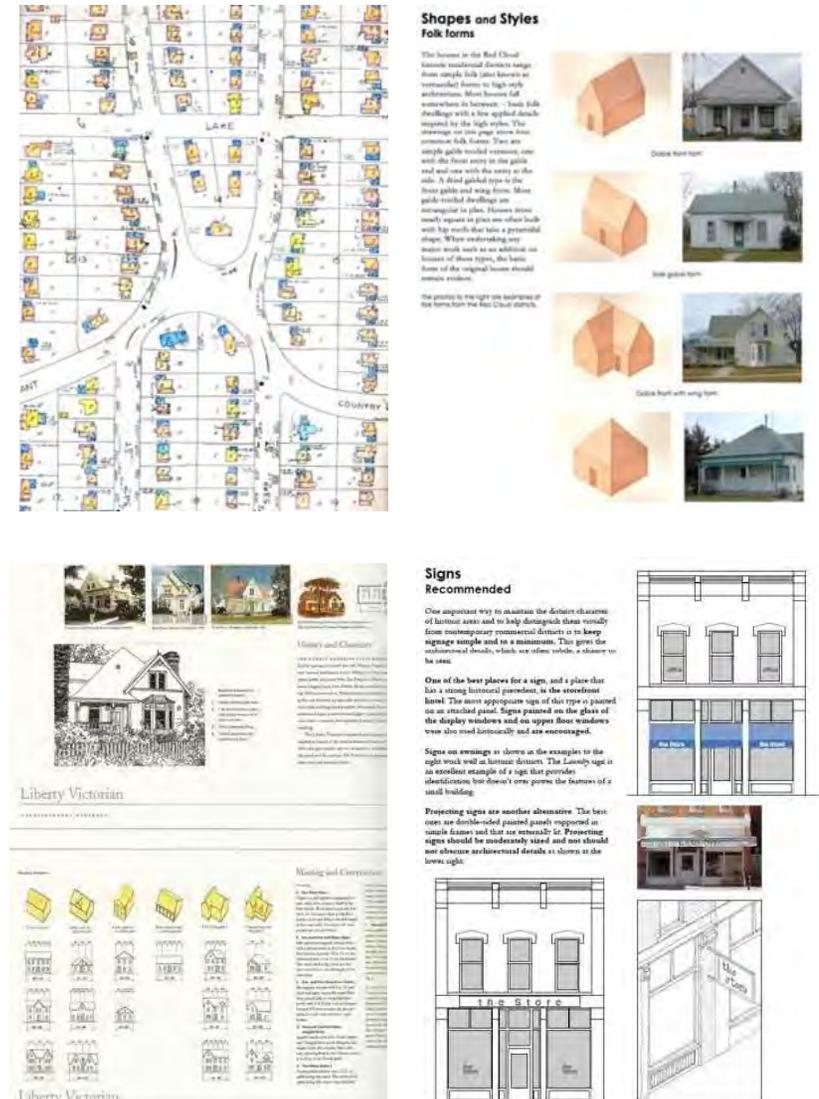


Figure 4.21: images depicting a pattern book example

## ZONING OVERLAY DISTRICT

Zoning Overlay Districts allow property owners and community leaders to agree upon features to be protected. Through a process of meeting with area property owners and the public, presenting information on an area's unique importance, and determining areas of agreement on features to protect, Zoning Overlay Districts allow for a level of protection for areas lacking a historic district designation.

## ZONING OVERLAY DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT

- Meet with area property owners and the public.
- Present information to help inform them of the area's unique character and importance.
- Determine areas of agreement on features to protect.
- Create neighborhood conservation zoning overlay district.

### **Sec. 55-601. NCE neighborhood conservation/enhancement district.**

#### **Sec. 55-602. Purpose.**

The NCE neighborhood conservation/enhancement overlay district is intended to help preserve unique pedestrian-oriented land use, urban design, and other distinctive characteristics of older established neighborhoods and commercial areas as well as to enhance more recently developed neighborhoods and commercial areas in order to implement the urban design element of the city's comprehensive plan. The NCE district, used in combination with a base district, allows changes in permitted uses and adjustments to site development standards in order to respond to the needs of a specific residential neighborhood or neighborhood commercial area. In addition, the NCE district may include supplementary site development standards and guidelines, based upon a neighborhood conservation/enhancement plan adopted by the city council as part of the city's comprehensive plan.

(Code 1980, § 55-602; Ord. No. 37810, § 5, 8-14-07)

#### **Sec. 55-603. Qualifications for designation; manner of designation; applicability; conflict of provisions; permitted uses.**

(a) *Qualifications for designation.* To qualify for adoption, a proposed NCE district shall satisfy the following requirements:

- (1) *Minimum area.* Each NCE district shall include a contiguous area of at least five acres, including intervening streets, alleys and private ways.
- (2) *Status of area at time of adoption.* The area included in each NCE district shall be allocated into one of the following two categories:
  - a. *Conservation.* Areas intended to be conserved must have been recorded as a subdivision with the county register of deeds no later than 1960.
  - b. *Enhancement.* Areas intended to be enhanced must have been recorded as a subdivision with the county register of deeds no earlier than 1961.

Figure 4.22: image depicting zoning overlay district enhancement codes

## SOURCES AND USES OF FUNDING

City improvement and development can be funded through a variety of programs both on the Federal level and through state programs, often funded in part by federal apportionment. Following are grant sources and funding mechanisms that could be utilized by the city of Fremont. These sources could be further developed and utilized to implement portions of the Downtown Revitalization Plan.

### Main Street Grant

Through Main Street Fremont, continue to offer mini-grants to existing commercial property and business owners to help finance building façade improvements, enhanced landscaping, or other site upgrades that might otherwise not occur, and where no construction or expansion activities are planned that would trigger compliance with newer development standards.

### Community Development Block Grants

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program provides Nebraskans with safe, affordable, accessible housing, infrastructure, quality jobs and investment through financing new and expanding businesses. Since Fremont is currently utilizing the CDBG Downtown Revitalization Program, it is not discussed at length in the course of this document. Although the Department of Economic Development does have threshold expenditure requirements within each category before you can apply for another project within that category, it doesn't prevent you from

applying for other categories. Therefore Fremont is eligible for the other applicable grant categories listed below:

- Economic Development offers loans to for-profit businesses for a variety of business purposes. Public facilities (infrastructure) projects where a benefiting business agrees to locate or expand premises on the infrastructure are also eligible.
- Water or Wastewater Systems and Other Public Works/Facilities. The following Public Works activities would be eligible: community centers, senior centers, nonprofit centers for day care, parks, water distribution and/or sewer collection, street, curb, gutter, sidewalk, or storm sewer, flood control and drainage. Maximum grant size is \$350,000 with a required minimum of 25% match.
- Tourism Development. Funds are awarded for certain types of tourism attraction activities: historic restorations; interpretive sites, museums, cultural heritage recreational sites and facilities. Maximum grant size is \$200,000 with a match equivalent equal to at least 50% of the total project cost.

### Transportation Enhancement Activities

Administered by the Nebraska Department of Roads, the Transportation Enhancement Program provides funding to local, state, and regional governmental entities to build and restore transportation infrastructure. Examples of transportation infrastructure projects that are eligible under this program include non-motorized facilities for pedestrians and bicycles, development of scenic

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byways, restoration of historic transportation facilities, and other projects directly related to the historic, current, or future transportation infrastructure.

## Tax Incremental Financing

Used for redevelopment and community improvement projects, Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) uses future gains in taxes to finance current improvements. It provides an exemption on property taxes on the value added to a property by the participating business after such property has been dramatically improved. It is used to channel funding toward improvements in distressed or underdeveloped areas where development might not otherwise occur. State enabling legislation gives local governments the authority to designate tax increment financing districts.

## Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Programs

This program offered through the Department of Housing and Urban Development provides developer tax credit incentives. At least 20% of residential units constructed or renovated must be reserved for persons with incomes at/or below 50% of area median income (50% AMI for 1 and 2 person is \$38,500) adjusted for family size; or at least 40% of units must be made affordable for persons with incomes at/or below 60% of AMI adjusted for family size. Project must be retained as low-income housing for at least 30 years with loan terms of up to 40 years.

## Rehabilitation Tax Incentives

A 10% rehabilitation tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of buildings placed in service before 1936.

The 10% credit applies only to buildings rehabilitated for non-residential uses. Such projects must retain a percentage of the buildings external walls and internal structural framework to qualify.

## Historic Preservation Tax Incentives

There are two tax incentive programs available pending addition of a property or district to the National Register of Historic Places.

- Value Incentive Program is a tax abatement program. It can be described as a temporary “hold” on increases in property tax assessment that results from improvements made to preserve a historic property. The property's assessed valuation is frozen for eight years at its pre-rehabilitation value and then rises to its market level over a period of four years.
- 20% Tax Credit Program is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the amount of taxes owed. The amount of credit under this program equals 20% of the qualifying cost of your rehabilitation. Rehabilitation work shall meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

## New Market Tax Credits

The New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program administered by the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund permits taxpayers to receive a credit against Federal income taxes for making qualified equity investments in designated Community Development Entities (CDEs). Substantially all of the qualified equity investment must in turn be used by the CDE to provide investments in low-income communities. The credit

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provided to the investor totals 39 percent of the cost of the investment and is claimed over a seven-year credit allowance period. In each of the first three years, the investor receives a credit equal to five percent of the total amount paid for the stock or capital interest at the time of purchase. For the final four years, the value of the credit is six percent annually. Investors may not redeem their investments in CDEs prior to the conclusion of the seven-year period.

## Challenge Grant Program

Offered through the Kresge Foundation, the Challenge Grant Program provides capital grants that range from \$50,000 to \$2.5 million. There are 50% matching funds for health, the environment, arts and culture, education, human services, and community development.

## Housing Preservation Grants

The HPG program offered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture is a grant program which provides qualified public agencies, private non-profit organizations, and other eligible entities grant funds to assist rental property owners and cooperative housing complexes in repairing and rehabilitating their units if they agree to make such units available to low- and very low-income persons. The term of the grant can vary from 1 to 2 years, depending on available funds and demand. No maximum or minimum grant levels have been established at the National level.

## Rural Economic Development Loan and Grants

The primary objective of the U.S. Department of Agriculture program is to promote rural economic development and job creation projects. Assistance provided to rural areas may include business startup costs, business expansion, business incubators, technical assistance feasibility studies, advanced telecommunications services and computer networks for medical, educational, and job training services and community facilities projects for economic development. The maximum loan award is anticipated to be \$740,000 and the maximum grant award is \$300,000. At least 20 percent of the loan or grant must be matched.

## HOPE VI Main Street Program

The purpose of the HOPE VI Main Street program offered through the Department of Housing and Urban Development is to provide grants to small communities to assist in the rejuvenation of an historic or traditional central business district or "Main Street" area by replacing unused commercial space in buildings with affordable housing units. The objectives of the program are to (a) Redevelop Main Street areas; (b) Preserve historic or traditional architecture or design features in Main Street areas; (c) Enhance economic development efforts in Main Street areas; and (d) Provide affordable housing in Main Street areas. A match of cash or in-kind services of five percent of the requested grant amount is required in order to be considered for grant award. There are four \$1,000,000 grants of up to \$1,000,000 awarded.

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## HOME Investment Partnerships Program

HOME is the largest federal block grant to state and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households. The funds are awarded annually as formula grants to participating jurisdictions. Eligible activities include building or rehabilitating housing for rent. A 25% match is required.

## **GREEN APPROACHES TO REVITALIZATION**

Fremont has an opportunity to embrace techniques for revitalization that will reduce the use of fossil fuels, improve public health, and provide sustainable improvements for the community. Recommended techniques for achieving these “green” goals are outlined in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, (LEED) Green Building Rating System as published by the U.S. Green Building Council. There are many potential LEED “Points” for Innovative, Sustainable Design that could be applicable such as: Sustainable Sites: Sedimentation Control, Alternative Transportation, Bicycle Storage; Alternative Transportation Parking, Storm water Management (rain gardens etc), Landscape to Reduce Heat Islands, Minimizing Light Pollution, Water-Efficient Landscaping, Water Efficiency: Water-Use Reduction Energy and Atmosphere: Optimum Energy Performance, Renewable Energy sources Materials and Resources: Storage and Collection of Recyclables, Building Reuse, Resource Reuse (building materials), use of Local/Regional Materials, Renewable Building Materials.

There are a number of funding mechanisms and grants available to facilitate Green Design and implementation. They are as follows:

## Rural Energy for America Program Grants

This program offered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture is designed to assist farmers, ranchers and rural small businesses. Most rural projects that reduce energy use and result in savings such as retrofitting lighting or insulation, or purchasing or replacing equipment with more efficiency units. Eligible renewable energy projects include projects that produce energy from wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, hydro power and hydrogen-based sources. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis and can be up to 25% of total eligible project costs. Grants are limited to \$500,000 for renewable energy systems and \$250,000 for energy efficiency improvements. Requests as low as \$2,500 for renewable energy systems and \$1,500 for energy efficiency improvements will be considered. At least 20% of the funds awarded must be for \$20,000 or less.

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## Dollar and Energy Saving Loans

The program offered by the Nebraska Energy Office is a revolving fund that reduces the interest payments for energy-related projects that meet minimum efficiency standards. The energy office purchases half the loan at zero interest and a commercial lender provides the other half at market rates. The loan program, which was originally funded with oil overcharge dollars, is replenished with loan repayments. The loan amounts vary and include projects such as adding insulation to walls, floors, ceilings, attics and other building envelope surfaces, installing high efficiency heating and cooling equipment, lighting and controls, renewable wind, solar and fuel cell projects, and windows and exterior door replacement.

## Low Income Weatherization Assistance Program

Offered through the Nebraska Energy Office, the weatherization program enables low-income families in Nebraska to reduce their energy bills by making their homes more energy efficient. Downtown Fremont properties could apply if the upper stories are renovated to provide housing for low-income families. If the property qualifies, it will be evaluated to identify the most effective energy and dollar saving improvements which can be made. Pending those recommendations this program could be used to provide financial assistance to add insulation, improve the efficiency of current heating and cooling systems, window replacement, etc.

## Enterprise Green Communities

This program offers grants to help cover the costs of planning and implementing green components of affordable housing developments as well as tracking their costs and benefits. Planning and Construction grants up to \$75,000 can be used for design work, efficient HVAC systems, green materials and energy efficient appliances. The program is open to 501 (c)(3) nonprofits, public housing authorities and for-profit entities.

# THANK YOU

The City of Fremont is working hard to take action to improve the environment of the entire Downtown District. With a strong vision, organization and plan in hand, Fremont can purposefully take advantage of the opportunities that exist for downtown revitalization.

The Consulting Team of Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, P.C., Steven Jensen Consulting, Engineering Design Consultants, L.L.C., and Hanna : Keelan Associates, P.C. appreciates the community's enthusiastic participation in efforts undertaken to create this plan and is especially grateful to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, the City of Fremont and The Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee for their leadership, help, and outstanding commitment to this venture.