

## DOWNTOWN WAYNE

*Downtown Wayne should be an important service center for the city and a unique activity center for the region.*

Downtowns occupy a particular place of importance within cities and towns. They are unique to their individual communities – no downtown looks exactly like any other downtown. Because of this relationship, people often measure the health of their city by the health of their traditional business center. In recent years this has been a difficult barometer for Wayne. The closing of retail establishments in the district has left many residents concerned about the economic vitality of the downtown and the community in general.

Despite recent closings the downtown still provides a critical mixed use center of business, civic and residential uses. Many believe that downtown Wayne's balance is fragile, as it faces the competition of commercial development along the 7<sup>th</sup> Street corridor and large discount department stores based in Sioux City and Norfolk. Yet, downtown Wayne is an essentially strong district that can benefit from strong private action and beneficial public policies and investments. This section of the plan is designed to provide a realistic development program for the downtown area that will enable it to expand and continue its role as a vital center for many kinds of activities.

### ANALYSIS

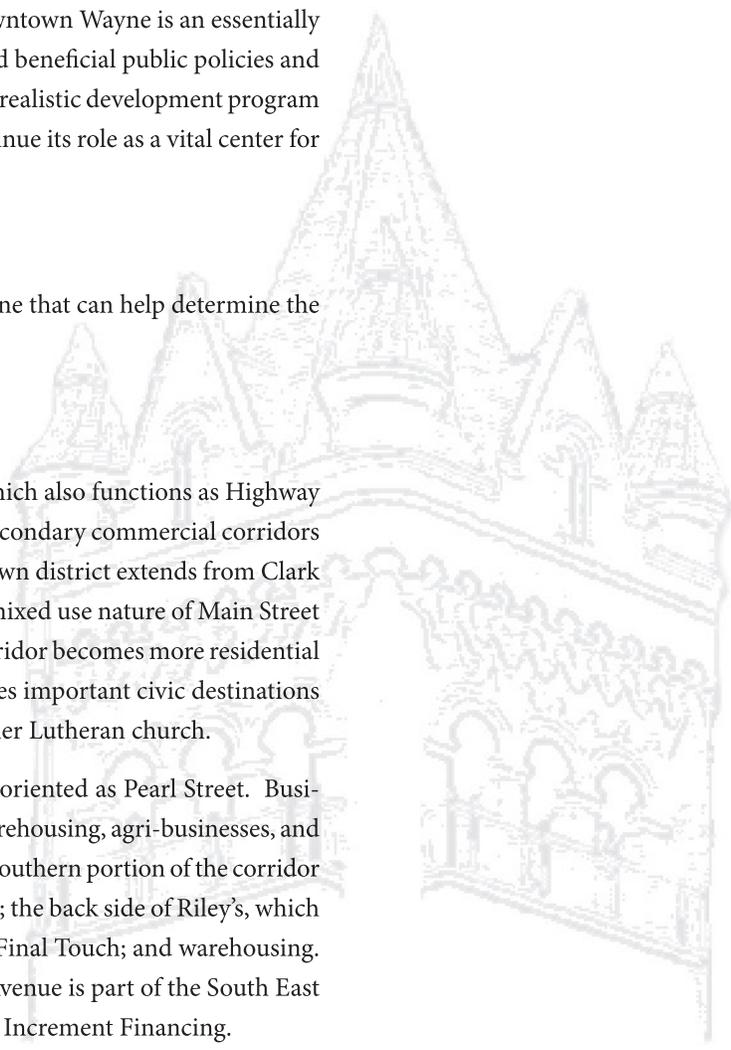
This section examines important features of downtown Wayne that can help determine the directions of a development policy.

#### Issues Affecting Downtown Wayne

##### *Land Use Patterns and the Surrounding Environment*

Downtown Wayne is focused on the Main Street corridor which also functions as Highway 15. Logan Street to the east and Pearl Street to the west are secondary commercial corridors that bound the downtown spine of Main Street. The downtown district extends from Clark Street on the south to 4<sup>th</sup> Street on the north. Although the mixed use nature of Main Street continues north of 4<sup>th</sup> Street to 7<sup>th</sup> Street, the Logan Street corridor becomes more residential in nature to the north. Pearl Street north of 4<sup>th</sup> Street includes important civic destinations including the senior center/library, courthouse, and Redeemer Lutheran church.

The nature of Logan Street has never been as commercially oriented as Pearl Street. Businesses along this corridor have included Carhart Lumber's warehousing, agri-businesses, and businesses related to the now abandoned railroad. Today the southern portion of the corridor includes a mobile home park consisting of mostly older units; the back side of Riley's, which includes the enclosed sand volleyball court; the entrance to Final Touch; and warehousing. The east side of Logan Street from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to Fairground Avenue is part of the South East Wayne Drainage Area; a redevelopment area eligible for Tax Increment Financing.



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The south end of Pearl Street also has an industrial nature. South of 1<sup>st</sup> Street there is a mixture of warehousing, outdoor storage, grain bins, the city's public utility storage, and some residential. North of 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Pearl Street exhibits strong neighborhood qualities such as the brick street, significant tree canopy and the large lawn of the Wayne County courthouse.

### *Historic Significance*

Historically sympathetic reinvestment can be an important revitalization element in a downtown program because of the availability of tax credits for certified projects. In addition to economic advantages, historic importance adds distinctive themes to a downtown development program. The majority of Wayne's historic building stock lies in its public buildings, which include the City Auditorium, City Hall (former hospital) and County Courthouse. In the past ten years significant investments have been made in the City Auditorium and some of the downtown business facades.



Adding to the historic atmosphere of the downtown are the numerous brick streets that lead into it. These streets are an important asset to any revitalization program. They not only add to the historic nature of the downtown, but also have a traffic calming effect that often slows traffic along the corridors leading into the more pedestrian active areas.

### *Circulation and Parking*

The ability of downtown to accommodate vehicles will be important to the future growth of the district. A successful downtown must balance the needs of vehicular and pedestrian traffic by accommodating the automobile without becoming dominated by it.

### *Traffic Flow and Circulation*

Main Street is one of Wayne's busiest streets and forms the heart of the downtown. This corridor is also a regional highway, moving larger volumes of traffic, including trucks. The reconstruction of Main Street during the summer of 2006 should increase pedestrian safety and begin to enhance the overall environment of the corridor.

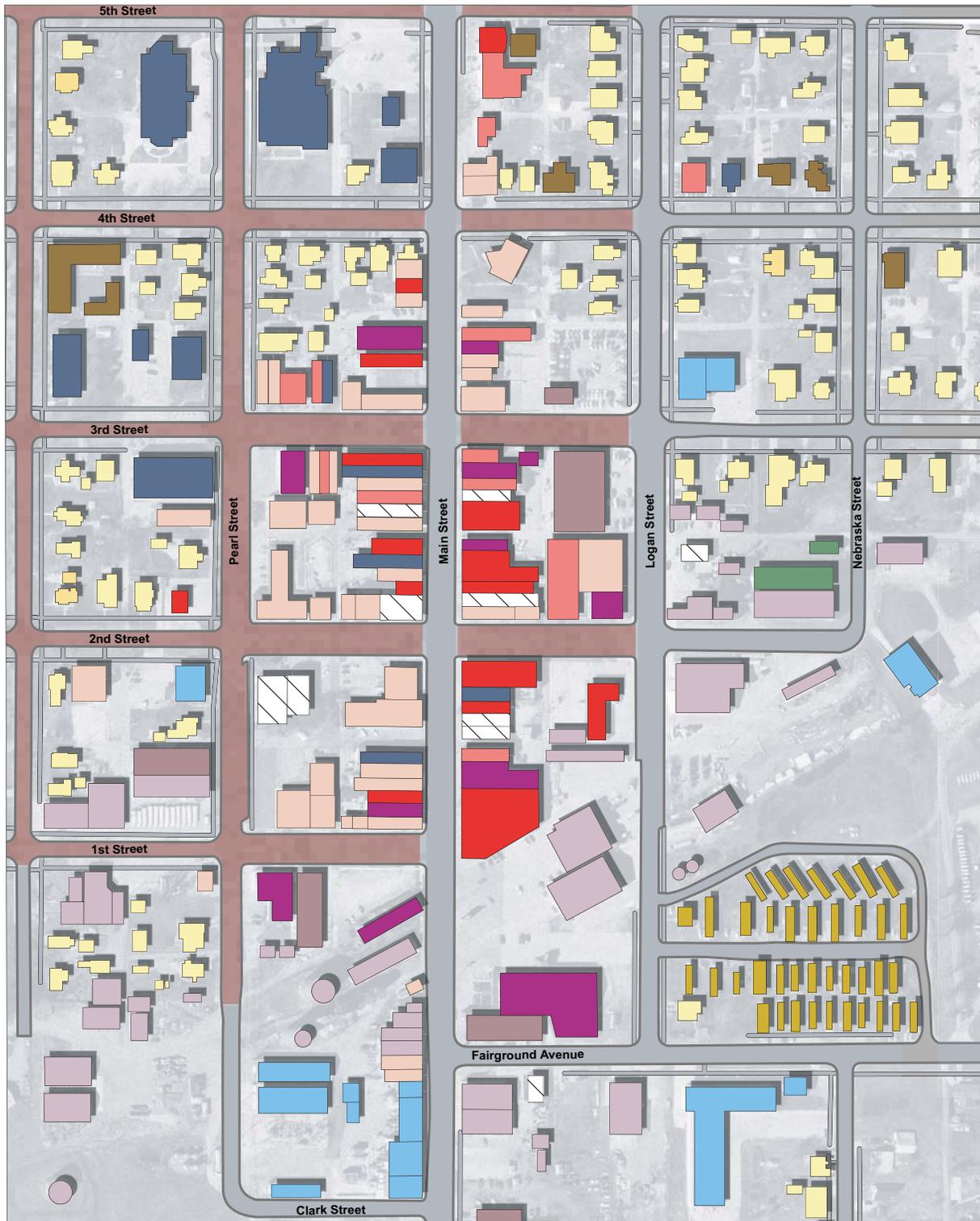
Although Logan Street is not a major highway corridor it does carry a significant amount of traffic, which often moves at a higher rate of speed. The street width and the more free flowing character of the street, following a recent paving project, increase traffic speeds along the corridor. Once the Main Street project is completed, techniques for slowing traffic along this corridor should be evaluated.

### *Local Access*

Wayne's original plat is based on the grid system, which provides numerous access points into the downtown and to facilities in surrounding neighborhoods. Fairground Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> streets all feed into the downtown from the surrounding residential areas. The parallel streets of Pearl and Logan also feed traffic into the district from the north. Pearl Street is the city's primary civic corridor and the location of many downtown office establishments. The diagonal parking along some of the side streets provides important downtown parking and creates a more pedestrian friendly atmosphere for those visiting the downtown.



MAP 8.1  
Wayne Comprehensive Plan  
**EXISTING DOWNTOWN LAND USE**  
*Wayne, Nebraska*



**Land Use**

- SF Residential
- Duplex
- Mobile Home
- MF Residential
- Office / Financial
- Restaurant / Entertainment
- Service
- Auto
- Retail
- Warehouse
- Civic
- Vacant
- Public Utility
- Ag Industrial

**Street Surface**

- Brick
- Cement / Blacktop



## ***Parking***

The availability of downtown parking is important to the district. Parking in Wayne is provided in both private and public lots and along the district streets. Most of the east/west streets provide diagonal parking while the north south streets offer parallel parking. The state highway designation and constrained right-of-way restricts Main Street to parallel parking, which limits the amount of parking directly in front of businesses. Wayne generally provides an adequate supply of parking to meet its current demand; however, there is often a perception issue that downtowns must overcome. This is the perception that if parking is not available directly in front of one's destination, a lack of parking exists. While the district is highly dependent upon its on-street parking to provide a well-distributed parking supply, this should be continually evaluated.

## ***The Pedestrian Environment***

Downtown Wayne, in common with other central business districts, is both a pedestrian and vehicular environment. Most users will park their vehicles and become pedestrians as they move through the district. In addition, the pedestrian environment can create a sense of civic space that can be an important part of a vital town center. Although the district provides pedestrian access it lacks a clear sense of civic space, with no common gathering space for events.

Main Street is the district's major shopping street and carries a heavy volume of traffic. There are crossing lights at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> street, however, pedestrians often cross at mid-block to reach their destinations. Enhancements to Main Street should improve the pedestrian environment of the corridor. The new bump out nodes at the intersections, a part of the street reconstruction, will decrease the distance the pedestrian travels across the street, thereby enhancing safety, and providing a visual cue for vehicles to slow down.

Sidewalks in the district are in fairly good condition, however, definition of the sidewalks along Logan and Pearl streets could be improved. In several locations along these two streets the sidewalk becomes part of the parking area and is less defined. This often leaves what few civic spaces exist in the downtown disconnected and undefined.

## **Opportunities**

While challenged by the growth of commercial development along the 7<sup>th</sup> Street corridor and mass retailing in the region, downtown Wayne has several important assets which can form the basis of a development strategy. These include:

- *A strong, varied business community.* Despite the recent closing of Legends clothing store, downtown Wayne still maintains a mix of uses including retailing, service, entertainment, financial/office and civic uses. This mixed use base is a foundation for future development.
- *An excellent inventory of sound, buildings, suitable for rehabilitation.* The building stock of Main Street provides excellent opportunities for rehabilitation or adaptive reuse. Except for two buildings north of the alley between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> streets the vacant building stock is

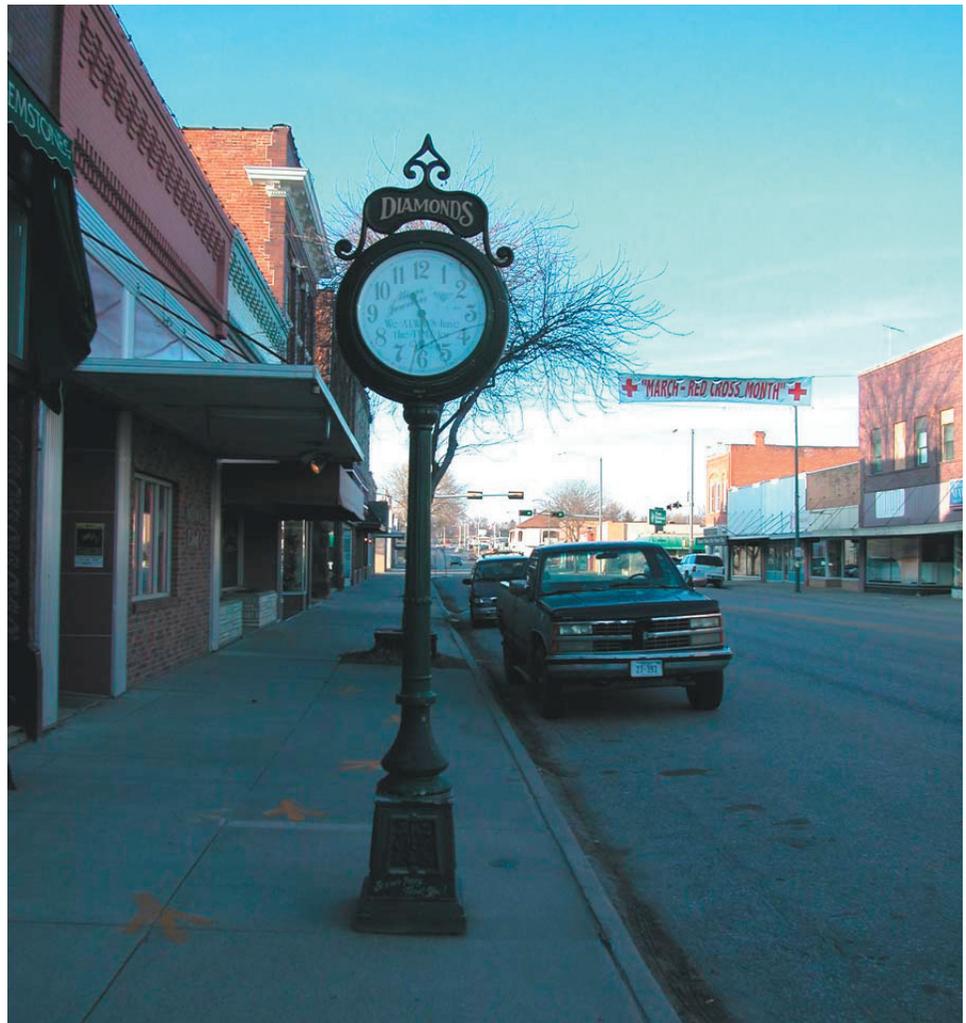


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in fairly good condition. Multi-story buildings and a demand for housing also provides incentives for conversion to upper level housing. This has already occurred in several buildings along Main Street and can be built upon to develop new units and improve existing units.

- *Civic and Cultural Institutions.* Although the downtown lacks a well-defined public space, Pearl Street is a major civic destination in the city. Facilities along this corridor bring people to the downtown everyday and should be closely tied to the Main Street corridor.
- *A highly accessible location.* The districts location along Highway 15 means a significant amount of traffic moves through the downtown every day. The district is off the more geographical center of the city at 7<sup>th</sup> and Main streets but can easily be viewed and accessed from this intersection.
- *A strong Main Street Program.* As part of the Lied Main Street Program, Wayne has worked to create a unified business community. The program supports communities through leadership development and assists in constructing a sustainable economic agenda for the downtown. These leaders will be an important component to any downtown program.

The succeeding section, then presents development policies and concepts for downtown Wayne based on these substantial assets.



## DOWNTOWN WAYNE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

This section presents a strategy designed to help downtown Wayne maintain and expand its role as a regional mixed use center. The downtown development program is designed to provide realistic steps leading to the revitalization of the city center. The overall concept proposes:

- A vision of downtown Wayne as a mixed use district, placing an emphasis on civic and community centers and residential development to augment a traditional reliance on office and retail uses.
- A downtown management system that builds on the work of the Main Street program to coordinate and implement the downtown improvement program and to provide a unified marketing and promotional effort.
- Enhancement to the districts' image and public environment, in order to establish a niche as a center of entertainment, specialty shopping, and apartment living.
- Stabilized existing occupancy, and the redevelopment or rehabilitation of specific buildings and sites, including the upper levels of commercial structures.
- Redevelopment of underused areas for major business and residential development.
- Parking enhancements that improve existing parking and identify locations for new parking.

The components of this program include:

- SOUTHSIDE REVITALIZATION**
- PEARL STREET OPPORTUNITIES**
- AN ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT**
- RETAIL DEVELOPMENT**
- DISTRICT MANAGEMENT**
- DOWNTOWN HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES**

### SOUTHSIDE REVITALIZATION

*A southside redevelopment plan should build on the strengths of downtown while focusing on civic space and an improved front door to the community.*

Downtowns typically have strong areas and soft areas. Strong areas are positive spaces that residents and visitors are attracted to. Soft areas might have issues related to maintenance and visual appearance, safety and security, access, and general comfort. The southside of downtown Wayne has many of these issues. The area is a major entrance into the entire community, making its statement to local visitors very important.

Challenges for this area include:

- A poorly organized parking area between Riley's, Carhart's, and Final Touch. The large expanse of concrete provides a bleak entrance into the community and could yield more parking.
- Scattered operations and buildings for Carhart Lumber.
- Deteriorated units within the mobile home park

### PROGRAM COMPONENTS: DOWNTOWN WAYNE

- Southside Revitalization**
- Pearl Street Opportunities
- An Arts & Entertainment District
- Retail Development
- District Management
- Downtown Housing Opportunities



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## PROGRAM COMPONENTS: DOWNTOWN WAYNE

### Southside Revitalization

Pearl Street Opportunities

An Arts & Entertainment District

Retail Development

District Management

Downtown Housing Opportunities



- Lack of an entrance feature into the community

Map 8.2 identifies strategic improvements that could be made to this area to improve appearance, circulation, and parking and identifies civic spaces and development opportunities.

Logan Street transitions from a more residential character on the north side to what often feels like the back door of the district with storage areas and deteriorated housing before dead-ending into Fairgrounds Road. Realigning this street to connect with Nebraska Street to the south provides several benefits. The realignment:

- Provides a larger space for Carhart Lumber on the west side of Logan Street and the space necessary to consolidate yard and warehousing operations on the west and east sides of Logan Street (Map 8.2 note 8).
- Removes the older mobile home park for a large community green or town green and new housing. A significant deficit in downtown Wayne is the lack of a community gathering space. A large area to hold community events including Chicken Days would add to the atmosphere and livability of the district. The proposed green space would provide a recreation and entertainment attraction for the downtown that could accommodate regular events (Map 8.2 note 15).

The project should also:

- Support residences in the downtown with the development of new housing framing the new green space (Map 8.2 note 16). The new rental housing could provide up to 24 units with parking in the back. These units will frame the green space and increase traffic in the downtown outside of regular office hours. The design of these units should reflect the character of the downtown and provide garage parking that is concealed from the park.
- Improve the parking lot between Riley's and Carhart Lumber, including improved circulation and an increased number of parking stalls. Enhancements to this area should also include an entrance plaza that is nicely landscaped and invites visitors into the community and downtown (Map 8.2 note 14). The small plaza brings attention to the businesses in this area including Final Touch which sits outside the line-of-sight of Main Street.
- Improve buildings along Fairgrounds Road as well as defined street parking and landscaping. The city's public works building should also receive improved landscaping and features that provide a more urban feel (16).
- Provide a trail connection between the downtown and the existing Logan Creek trail to the south (20).

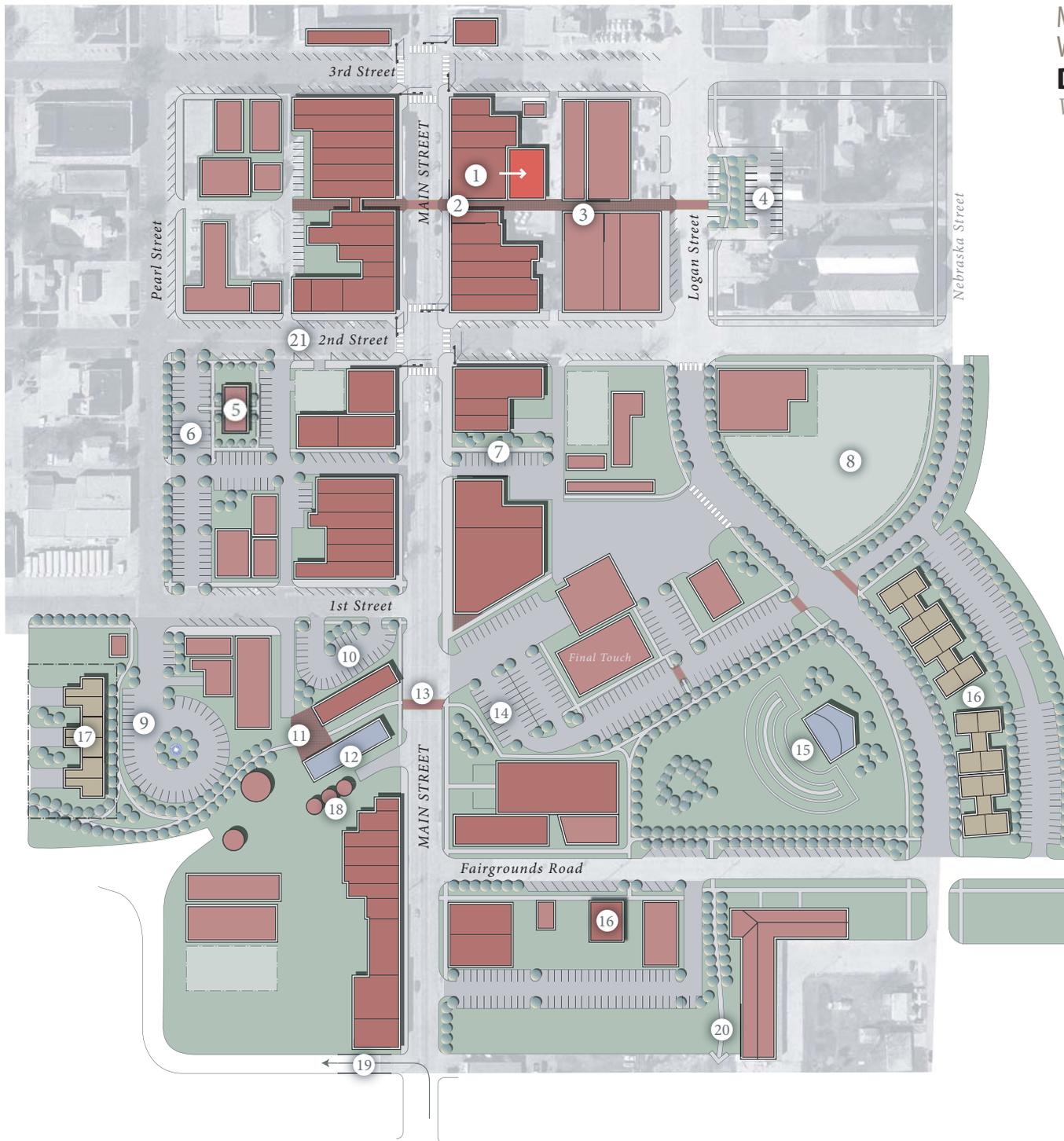
## PEARL STREET OPPORTUNITIES

*A terminus at the south end of Pearl Street should provide a separation between the civic Pearl Street to the north and the industrial Pearl Street to the south.*

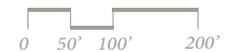
Pearl Street is an important civic corridor highlighted by its brick pavers and tree canopy. The finer qualities of the corridor deteriorate to the south as the land uses transition to more industrial uses. Terminating Pearl Street south of 1st Street will provide greater separation between the "civic" Pearl Street and the "industrial" Pearl Street (Map 8.2 note 9). The ter-



MAP 8.2  
Wayne Comprehensive Plan  
**DOWNTOWN CONCEPT**  
*Wayne, Nebraska*



- 1 Department Store Site
- 2 Pedestrian Connection
- 3 Improved Entrance to Mineshaft Mall
- 4 Additional Parking
- 5 Community Theater
- 6 Bank Parking with Removal at Old Fire Station Bays
- 7 Future Redevelopment Site
- 8 Consolidated Carhart Yard and Warehouses
- 9 Pearl Street Improvement Parking
- 10 Improved Parking Lot
- 11 Plaza Area
- 12 Visitor Center
- 13 Pedestrian Crossing
- 14 Reconfigured Parking with Additional Greenspace
- 15 Downtown Greenspace
- 16 Potential New Commercial Site
- 17 Future Housing or Retail
- 18 Grain Silos - Potential Mural or Color Markers
- 19 Industrial Traffic Route
- 20 Extend Trail to Existing City Trail System
- 21 Arts and Entertainment Anchor



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minus could create a parking court that would reinforce Geno's restaurant at the corner, and provide additional parking and a buffer between land uses. The parking court could include a small fountain or artwork that would create a focal point at the end of the street.

The quieter nature of the terminus could provide improved and expanded housing opportunities. A sidewalk/trail connection would lead visitors to a small plaza and interpretive area that would connect the newer depot, which houses Godfathers Pizza, with the older wood frame depot to the south (Map 8.2 note 11). The wood frame depot should be restored and used to house the Chamber and visitor center. This would place them directly on Main Street, increasing the visitor centers visibility and strengthening the entrance into downtown.

The path should then cross Main Street at a pedestrian signalized crossing connecting to the town green. An additional crossing at the south end of the Main Street will be an important project in any downtown development plan. South of the 2nd Street intersection there is significant ambiguity as to where the pedestrian should cross, decreasing pedestrian safety. A defined, signalized crossing will improve safety and connect parking areas, civic spaces and businesses on both sides of the street.

## AN ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

*Wayne should build on local and regional talent to develop a distinctive arts and entertainment district.*

Wayne's art community is both talented and rich in variety. As such, the arts could be a major theme for downtown development. While the arts, including home arts and performing arts, should be a consistent theme, the 2nd Street corridor could provide a center for an arts and entertainment district. This corridor could include the reuse of the historic city hall as a new community theater and the development of the Legend's building for an artist-in-residence program.

The old city hall building is currently vacant with potential for reuse as a community theater. Site improvement could include removal of the vacant fire station bays for parking that would serve the bank at 2nd and Main streets during the day and the community theater on nights and weekends. The former Legend's clothing store was used as an artist gallery during the 2005 Chicken Days with great success. Building on this recognition, a community arts group could use the first floor as a gallery for local artist, with possible conversion of the second floor and even the basement as residents for artists. Both the community theater and gallery could be closely tied to the college, building on events and resources that have already been developed in the community.

Additional components to these two anchors would be the City Auditorium and Antiques on Main. The Auditorium provides as an additional venue for community and cultural events, while Antiques on Main has an established reputation of access to local craftsman and entrepreneurs.

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### RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

*Wayne should strive to expand and support downtown retail development opportunities.*

The role of the average Midwestern downtown has changed dramatically over the past 50 years. As retail has been drawn away from many downtowns to large retail centers, what were once thriving commercial retail hubs are now often centers of office and service oriented businesses. Competition from regional markets like Norfolk and Sioux City, mean that Wayne's downtown must define itself in new ways with a piece of that mix including retail development. The prices and diversity of choices in the larger markets and large retail stores makes it difficult for the traditional downtown retail store to compete. A number of communities in Wyoming, Nevada and Montana have chosen to take retail development into their own hands, shifting the risk away from a single store owner. These communities have formed small community-owned department stores. Through the sale of stocks, funds are raised to open the department stores and disperse the risk. The locally operated stores can focus on the needs of the community, providing clothing, luggage, and bedding or whatever is of particular demand in that community. Many of these communities including Powell, Wyoming (25 miles from Cody) and Torrington, Wyoming (32 miles from Scottsbluff) are similarly situated to regional retail markets as Wayne is to Norfolk and Sioux City.

Finding a building with a significant amount of space will be one of the challenges for Wayne. The space should have at least 10,000 square feet to provide the area needed for stock and displays, with as much of the store as possible on one floor. One possible location would be the building on the east side of Main Street just north of the 2nd/3rd Street alley (the Maytag building). Additional space may be needed to reach 10,000 square feet including an addition off the back of the building and some use of the basement. This site's location on Main Street will provide optimal visibility for the store, the needed square footage, and adjacency to other retail establishments.

Removal of vacant buildings along Logan Street could provide the additional parking needed for the enterprise (Map 8.2 item 4). The parking should be connected to the store through a more pedestrian friendly alleyway. Enhancements could include windows on the new store facing the alley, lighting, awnings and unobstructed walkway. The rear entrance to Mineshaft Mall could anchor the east end of the alleyway and create an inviting entrance into this facility. The walkway could be extended across Main Street and include a speed table (a wider, flatter speed bump) to slow traffic and an arch identifying the crossing and making it safer for pedestrians.

### DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

*Downtown Wayne should strengthen its organizational structure to manage and promote the commercial district.*

Single-owner shopping centers maintain unified management to promote businesses and the overall facility. Through the Main Street Program, Wayne has developed a strong downtown organization. The foundation of the Main Street program should be built on for a Downtown Wayne Association that would fill many of the roles of a shopping center manager.



These roles include preparation and distribution of promotional materials, development of programs, management of improvement projects, district maintenance, and recruitment of businesses into downtown Wayne. Residents noted the need for uniform store hours and organized events that attract people to the downtown. These types of efforts should be headed up by the association. The association should maintain a close relationship with the Chamber, the City of Wayne, the Lied Main Street Program and Northeast Nebraska Economic Development.

In conjunction with the Main Street program, a development foundation should be formed that would be able to pool the resources of private contributors to make strategic investments in the downtown. Examples of important investments may include rehabilitation of significant downtown properties, financing packages to maintain retailers in downtown, and acting as a general partner for development projects. However, the most important part of the association's efforts will be marketing and promotional events. Some directions for the partnership include:

- A program of activities and events, providing an ongoing series of attractions that bring people into the downtown.
- Marketing and management programs, developing and gaining wide distribution of advertising materials that add the district to Wayne's list of significant visitor attractions.
- Establishing uniform service standards, store hours, and service mission for the downtown, and defining the district as an area in which customers can expect personalized, knowledgeable attention.
- Business recruitment, defining business targets and actively recruiting individuals or businesses to fill the identified niches. These can often be local entrepreneurs looking for the right opportunity.

## **DOWNTOWN HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES**

*Wayne should capitalize on existing downtown housing and encourage new housing opportunities within walking distance of downtown businesses.*

Downtown housing has proven to be an effective mechanism for the revitalization of traditional business districts that have the potential to experience evening use. Wayne's bars and restaurants already attract a substantial amount of evening traffic. Additional residential uses would spread this traffic out over an evening and increase the demand for these types of uses. Housing can make downtown Wayne a neighborhood as well as a business district. In addition, adaptive reuse of second and third-floors of commercial buildings can increase economic returns for downtown building owners and provide needed housing in the community.

Many Main Street buildings are particularly encouraging for adaptive reuse, as many have already been converted. The development of a town green circled by townhomes (Map 8.2 items 15 and 16) would give residents clear views of the green and downtown businesses while providing the addition units needed to support business expansion. New construction should echo the design patterns of the traditional town center, creating a unified district.

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Opportunities**

Development of new housing and redevelopment of existing structures can use a variety of financing mechanisms, including tax increment financing, equity financing utilizing the low-income housing tax credit, historic tax credits, and the use of CDBG/HOME funds. Private investment will also be an important component to development of new housing in the district.

Downtown Wayne can be a resource that accommodates a portion of the city's annual housing demand. In addition, the character and economics of the district can also benefit substantially from its evolution as a mixed-use neighborhood.

