

**Report to the Citizens of  
Davenport, Iowa**

**The City Livable:  
Modest Proposals for  
Reviving Downtown**

**September, 2008**

**JEFF SPECK, AICP LEED-AP**



Streets like this one in Chicago embody a key aspect of what makes cities successful: all the necessary ingredients of active pedestrian life.

Most of this presentation deals with bringing these ingredients to your city in full force.

This presentation, and all of my work, is based on the conviction that a successful city is one in which people choose to walk.

They will also drive, and take transit (which supports walking). But if people are not comfortable using your city as pedestrians, then it will never provide the high quality of life that is now demanded of our communities, and those with a choice will be more likely to choose to locate elsewhere.

# **This report is organized in four sections:**

## **1: Principles**

This section lays out the principles of walkability that underline the remainder of the Report.

## **2: General Recommendations**

This section lists ten non-site-specific ways to improve the walkability of downtown.

## **3: Mapping Analysis and Street Assignment**

This section uses existing conditions to determine the location and sequence of specific interventions.

## **4. Specific Interventions**

This section proposes fourteen site-specific improvements that are worthy of prioritization.

**Part 1:**

**Principles**

# **If a Successful city = people walking, how do you get people to walk?**

## **There must be:**

- A reason to walk (balance of uses)
- A safe walk (reality and perception)
- A comfortable walk (space and orientation)
- An interesting walk (signs of humanity)

All four conditions must be met. We will address each in turn.

# **If a Successful city = people walking, how do you get people to walk?**

- A reason to walk (balance of uses)

As Jane Jacobs said, “almost nobody travels willingly from sameness to sameness. . . . even if the physical effort required is trivial.” The first precondition to pedestrian life is a healthy and balanced mix of uses within walking distance.

The story of our cities losing their mix of uses in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the story of how suburban thinking replaced urban thinking in the planning profession.

Historically, there are only two established ways of building communities: the traditional neighborhood, and suburban sprawl. The traditional neighborhood evolved naturally in response to man's needs. Suburban sprawl was invented in response to the automobile, and now covers the majority of developed land in the U.S. Its principles and techniques have also profoundly impacted the design of our cities, which often accommodate automobiles at the expense of pedestrian life.



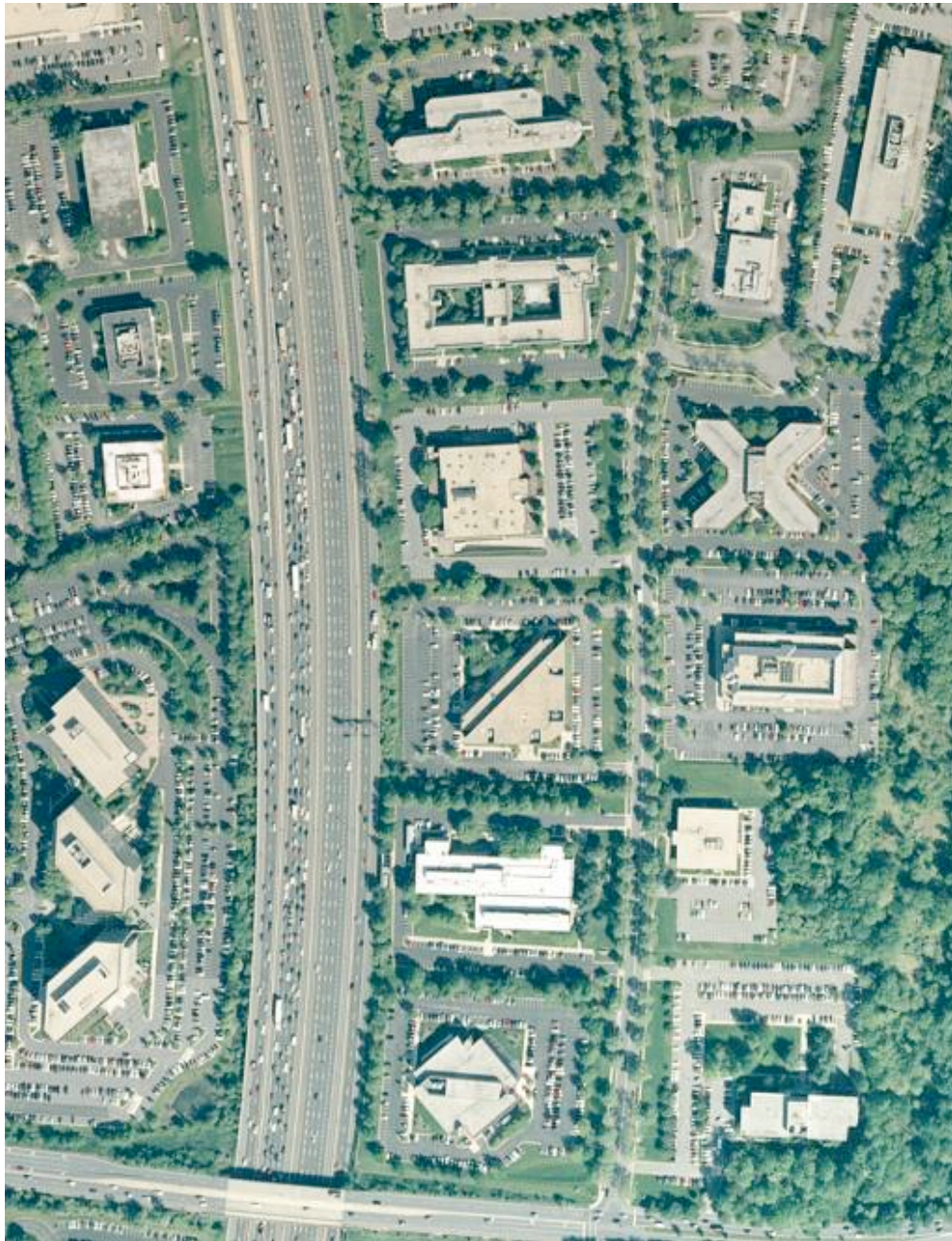
The traditional neighborhood is compact, walkable, and diverse, that is, fully mixed in use. Almost every aspect of daily life is within a close, comfortable walk. It is an extremely evolved and complex organism.



In contrast, suburban sprawl is not compact, walkable or diverse, and is extremely simple. It is composed of large areas of single use, each of which can be easily classified.



There are places to live.



There are places to work.



There are places to shop.



There are single-use institutional sites, usually consolidated and oversized, such as this high school to which no student will ever walk.



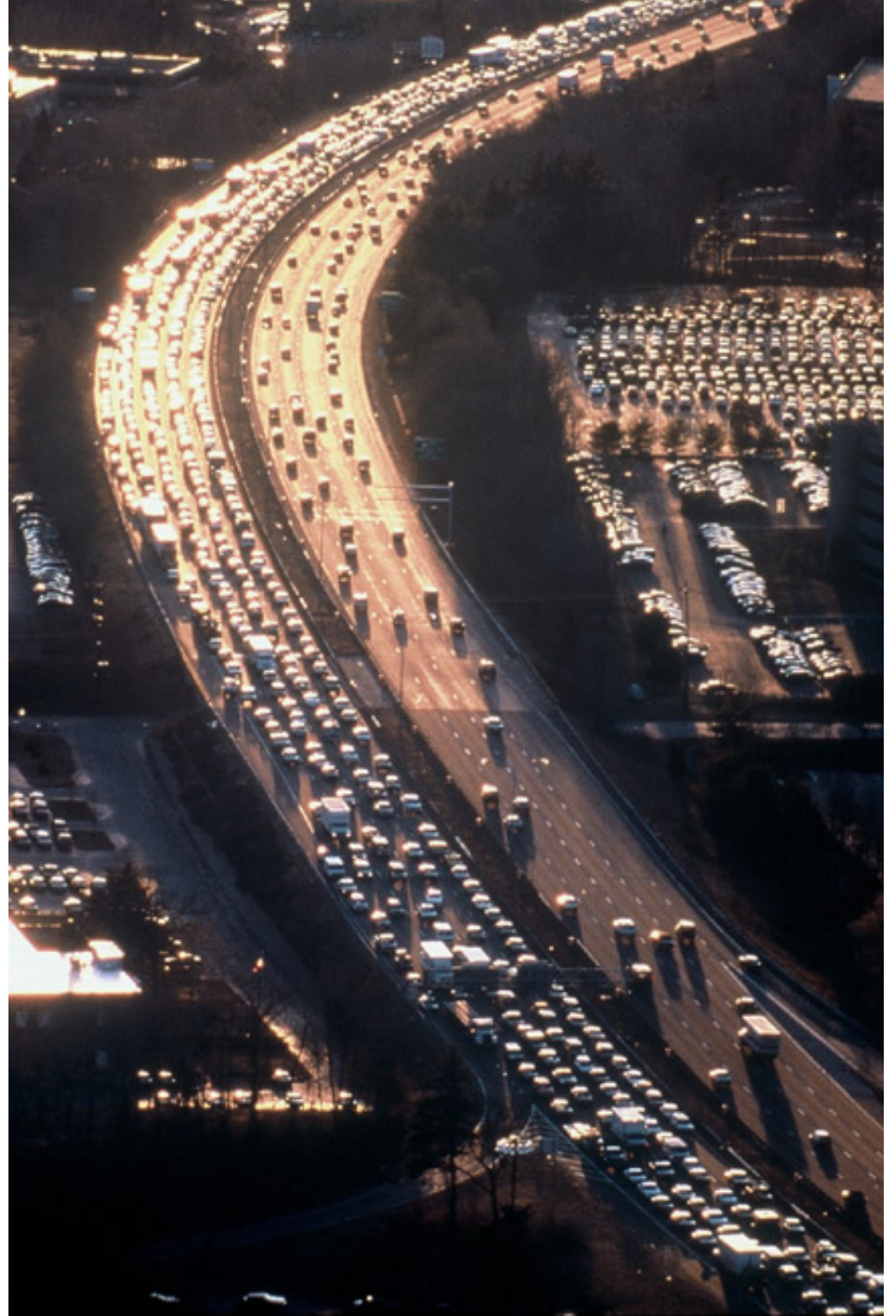
And the consolidated ball-field, the reason we need soccer moms (chauffeurs).



And finally, the massive automotive infrastructure necessary to reconnect all the areas we have oversized and separated.



With this,



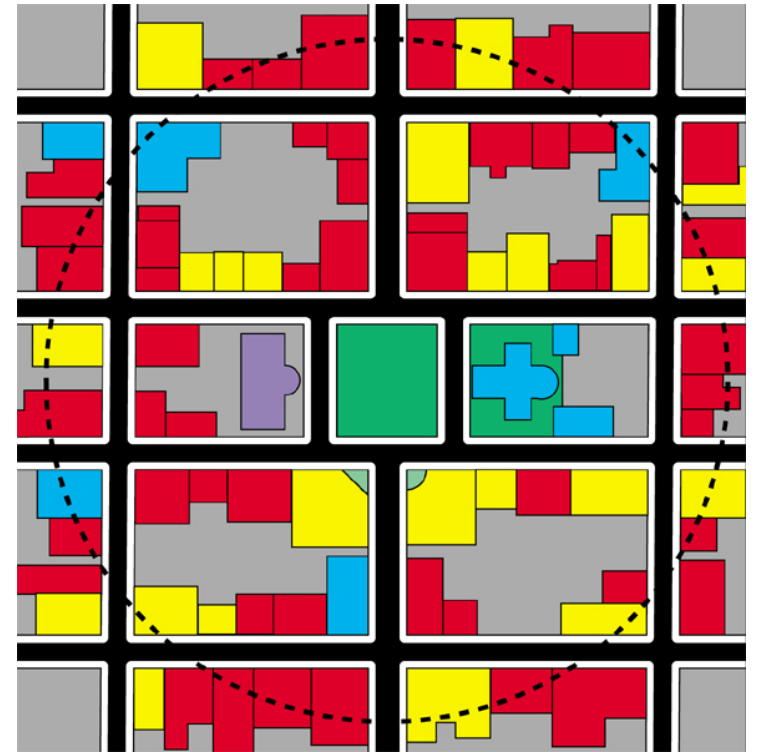
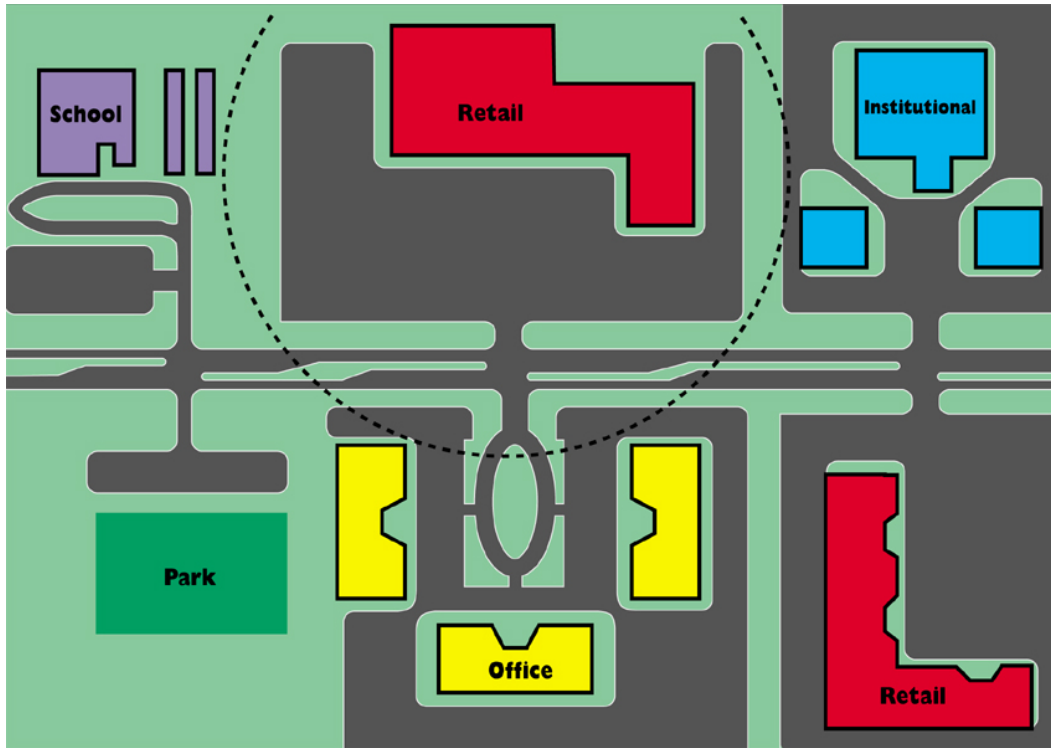
must come this



Sometimes to the point of silliness.



And a fair amount of frustration.



This comparison contrasts the two models, with sprawl on the left and the traditional neighborhood on the right. Both models contain the same land uses but, in the traditional neighborhood, those uses are proximate and of limited size, so that most of the aspects of daily life can be reached in a five-minute walk. This makes walking useful.

In most American cities, a shortage of housing in the downtown core causes an imbalance of uses that drastically reduces the amount of pedestrian activity. This is also the case in Davenport, whose downtown could add many thousands of housing units before a jobs/housing balance would be achieved.



Progress is certainly being made, and new downtown housing is renting well. But Davenport can best promote a healthy, walkable mix of uses by encouraging yet more housing in the city center.

# **If a successful city = people walking, how do you get people to walk?**

- A reason to walk (balance of uses)
- A safe walk (reality and perception)

Once pedestrians have a reason to walk, they must also be safe, and feel safe, walking. This is not about crime – if you design a place to attract pedestrians, it will be too populous to attract crime. Rather, every aspect of the streetscape must help the pedestrian to feel unthreatened by automobiles. Each detail of the street must cause cars to drive slowly, and limit the pedestrians actual and perceived exposure to being hit.

Cars are not the problem. Cars moving quickly near pedestrians are the problem.

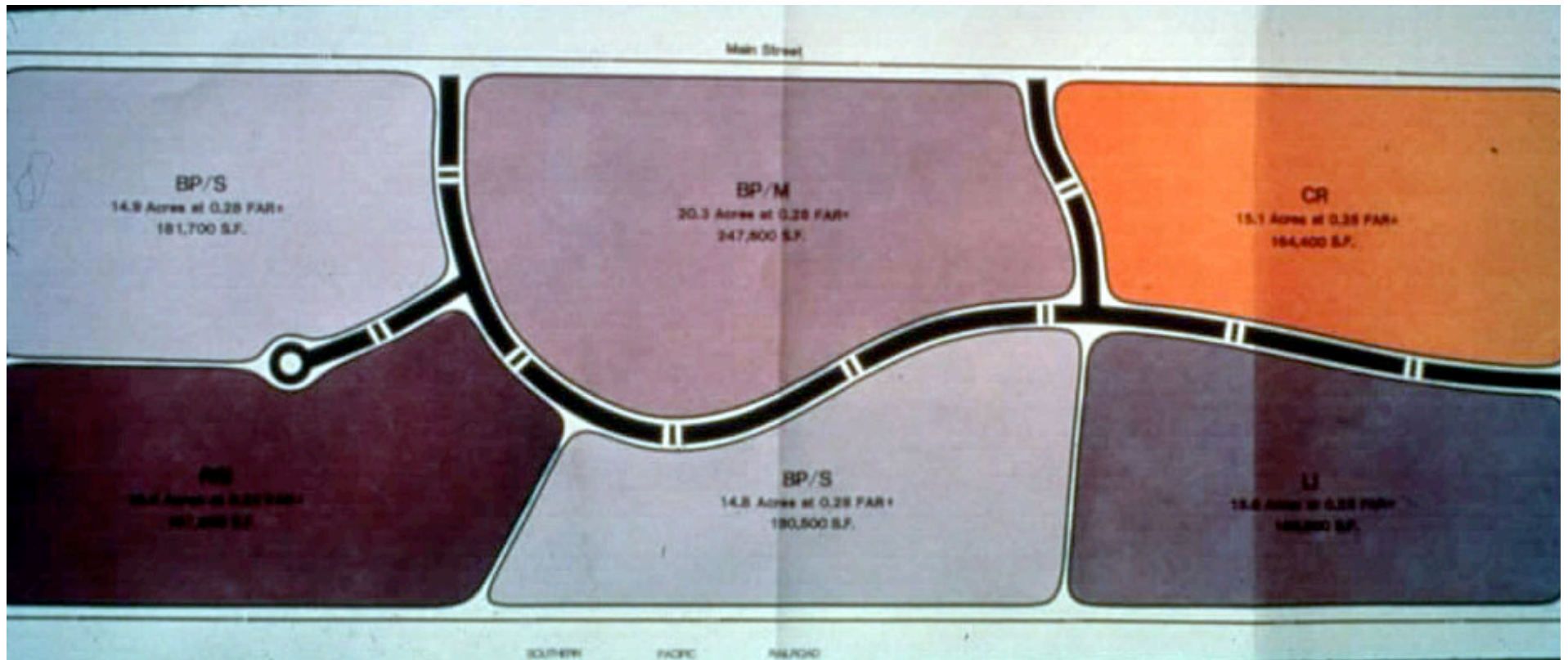
The principal criteria of a safe and safe-feeling streetscape are:

- Small blocks and many streets,
- Few, narrow driving lanes on each street,
- Two-way traffic,
- On-street parking, and
- Street trees

Every street in your community that you wish to attract pedestrians should satisfy all five criteria. We will cover each in turn.



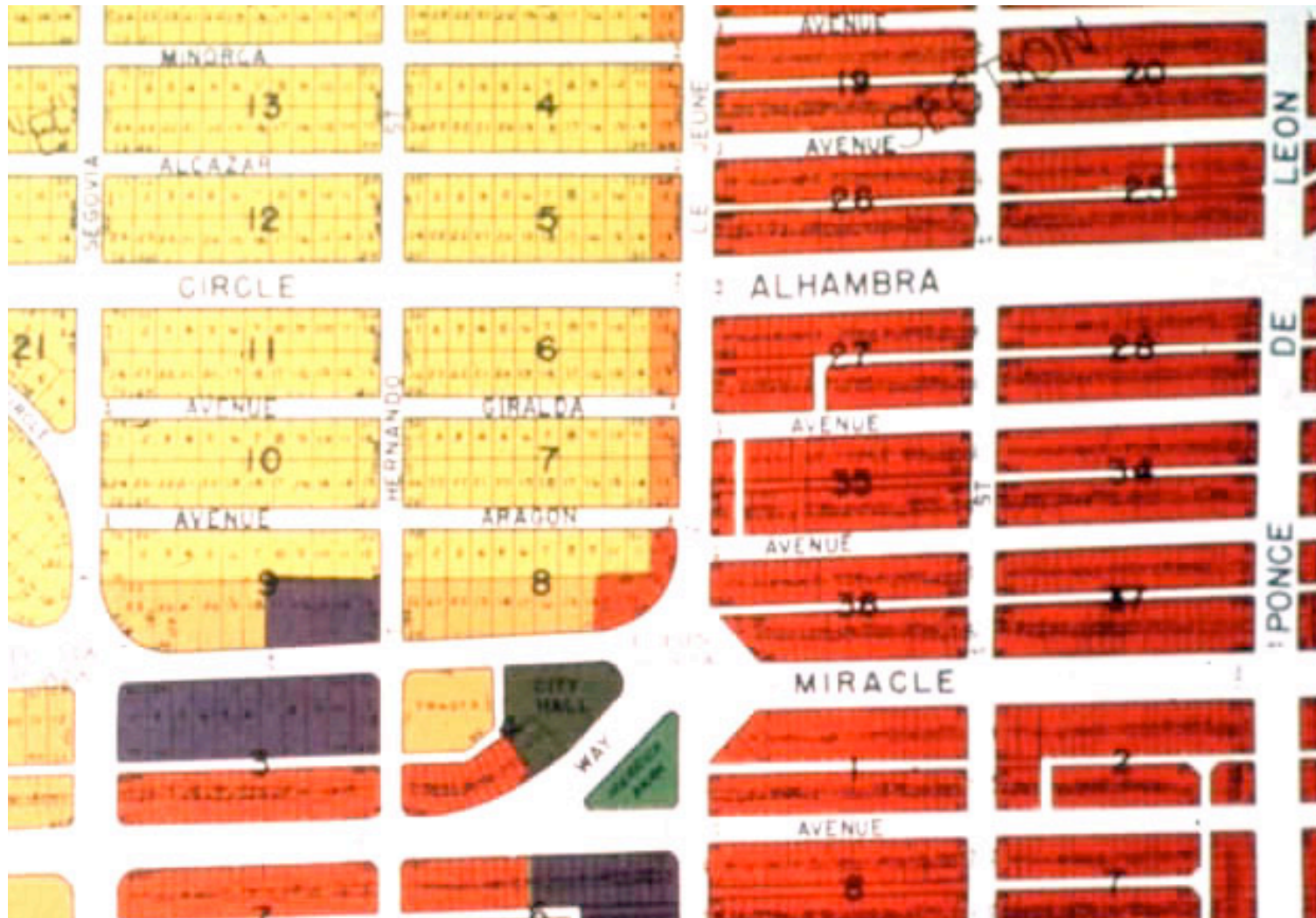
There are two models of street network design. The suburban model has few streets of great capacity, and does not support pedestrian life. It looks like this.



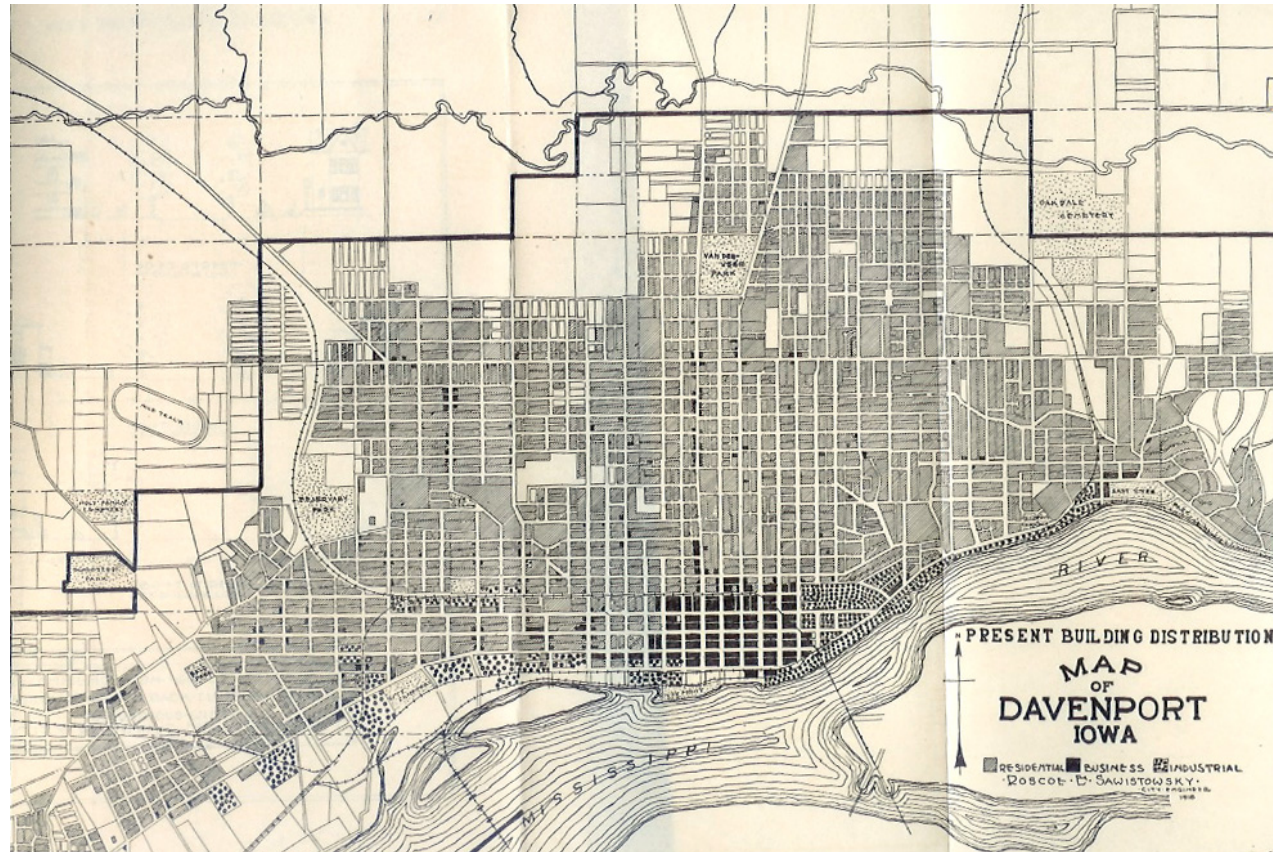
In plan, it looks like this. The same traffic engineers who create these systems every day in the suburbs are also creating street designs in your city, using the same manuals and templates. They are charged with moving as many cars through your city as quickly as possible. That is their job, and they do it well.



The other model of street network design looks like this. It is the traditional neighborhood model, in which many small streets disperse traffic over a large area. In all of Alexandria, Virginia, only a few streets contain more than one lane in each direction.



This model dominated planning through the 1930s. This map of Coral Gables, Florida, shows how providing many streets allows each street to be small.



Downtown Davenport is also blessed with a tight network of many streets, which means that each street can be small. Since there are multiple paths between each destination, no one street should be expected to carry more than a limited share of traffic.



In addition to the number of lanes, the width of each lane also has a profound effect on driver speed and pedestrian safety. The past half-century has witnessed a dramatic inflation in lane widths. Residential streets that used to be 20' wide are now often 40' wide or wider. These wider lanes correspond to higher design speeds that endanger pedestrians and drivers alike.



These two photographs, taken from the same height, show how many subdivision street widths effectively doubled between 1960 and 1990. The same standards have also been applied to the downtowns of our cities.



As in this Miami Beach neighborhood, new standards result in sidewalks being cut in half during routine curb maintenance. Cars now drive faster while pedestrians get the squeeze.

## Width of streets is narrowed by popular demand

BY HELEN NIEMIEC  
STAFF WRITER

### ■ BIRMINGHAM

Complaints from residents about mandated street widths has resulted in an emerging street-width policy for improved roads in Birmingham.

The City Commission has narrowed the standard width for non-fire route streets and is expected to set a width for fire routes within a month.

"We need information and then we need to officially designate fire routes," said city commissioner Archie Damman III.

The city's engineering and public services department will present a report on street widths concerning fire routes at today's city commission meeting.

The new policy is that non-fire route streets can be 20-foot wide with parking on one side of the street or 26-foot wide with parking on both sides of the street.

Nine residents attended the Jan. 18 long-range planning session where the street width policy changed. Susan Gienapp, who has endorsed narrower streets, had given the commission a report from Portland, Oregon that showed how it had narrowed streets.

The idea of "traffic calming" and residential streets that had more of a small town flavor came up a number of times during the Downtown Master Plan study.

The policy affects the approximately half of Birmingham's roadways that still don't have curbs, gutters and storm sewers and currently are classified as unimproved roads. The city has 45 miles of improved streets; 25 miles of unimproved streets without curbs or gutters; and 20 miles of unimproved streets with curbs.

The petition of three streets in

the neighborhood immediately south of the downtown prompted the commission to rethink its policy which was reaffirmed last year as 29-foot wide. On citizen petitions to pave and improve the streets, the city engineering department had specified that improved streets would be done at 29-foot widths.

"I support this concept," said city commissioner Eleanor Siewert of the new widths. "We could handle something with options. I was very influenced by reading the Portland report. After the master plan, I've become more aware of what our streets look like."

City Manager Thomas Markus still has reservations about narrower streets. Portland, he noted, has a public transit system where Birmingham residents are reliant upon their cars and need more parking space.

Additionally, Markus expects that the narrower streets will become less used for cut-through traffic.

"When we downsize one neighborhood street, that will force traffic on the wider streets," Markus said.

Birmingham went with a 29-foot street width to allow safety vehicles, such as fire trucks and ambulances, to pass if cars are parked on both sides of a street. The large fire trucks are 9-foot, 10-inches wide. The street width policy last year was reaffirmed by a 4-3 city commission vote, though the topic of street width surfaced at every commission meeting where road improvements were discussed.

In some places, citizens are fighting back. Birmingham, Michigan is one of many cities where traffic specialists are not allowed to design roads according to the sole criterion of maximum flow. Pedestrian safety is taken in to account, and it is understood that lanes should be no wider than the measurement that corresponds to the desired automobile speed.



Many Davenport streets, like Third, have travel lanes of 13' or more. These are highway lane widths, created for speeds of 70 MPH and higher. Why are downtown streets designed for illegal speeds? If traffic is to be reduced to speeds that are safe for pedestrians, these streets must be restriped with 10'-wide travel lanes



One-way streets are damaging to walkability for several reasons. The lack of opposing traffic causes drivers to speed, and the availability of alternative lanes puts drivers in a “road racer” mentality. One-ways also distribute retail vitality in unpredictable and often damaging ways.

Downtown Davenport has two major one-way pairs, Third and Fourth, and Brady and Harrison. Together, these streets comprise about half of the core of downtown. Like in many cities, they were converted to one-way in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century specifically to speed traffic through the city, which they do quite effectively. Unfortunately, this end is accomplished at the direct expense of pedestrian life and retail vitality.



On-street parking is an important element in protecting the sidewalk from speeding cars. A sidewalk unprotected by parking is not truly attractive.



Davenport has several streets that have lost their on-street parking in favor of increased traffic flow. This lack of parking is one of many reasons that these streets fail to attract pedestrians.



Streets trees are also a key component of pedestrian safety, protecting the pedestrian from traffic as parked cars do. They are especially necessary if on-street parking cannot be provided.



Many streets in downtown Davenport are utterly lacking in trees of any quality. In some cases this is due to underground vaults, but more often there is no impediment to additional planting. The goal should be a continuous tree canopy throughout the city.

# **If a Successful city = people walking, how do you get people to walk?**

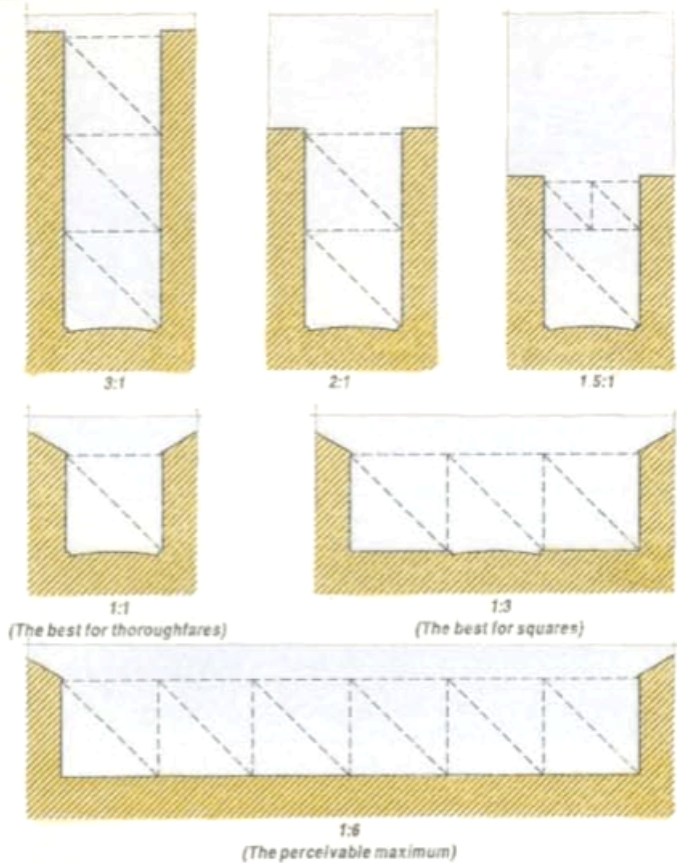
- A reason to walk (balance of uses)
- A safe walk (reality and perception)
- A comfortable walk (space and orientation)

For pedestrians to feel most comfortable, they must feel enclosed. This is counterintuitive – we do like open space – but all animals demand both prospect and *refuge*. We have developed this need over millennia and it cannot be unlearned quickly. That is why we prefer places that have strong edges, with street walls that provide spatial definition to the public realm. Many streets fail to attract pedestrians because they lack edges that are tall enough and close enough to provide that sense of refuge.



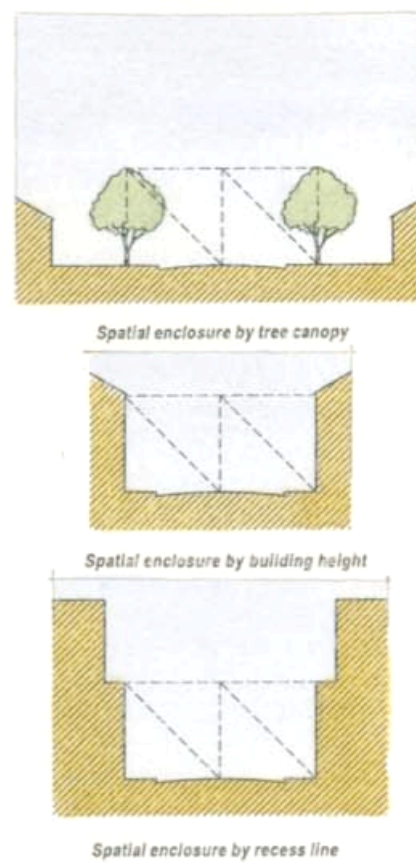
We choose to vacation in places like Paris and Split (Croatia, shown here) because they provide places like this. Planners call these “outdoor living rooms.”

### SPATIAL DEFINITION BY HEIGHT-TO-WIDTH RATIO



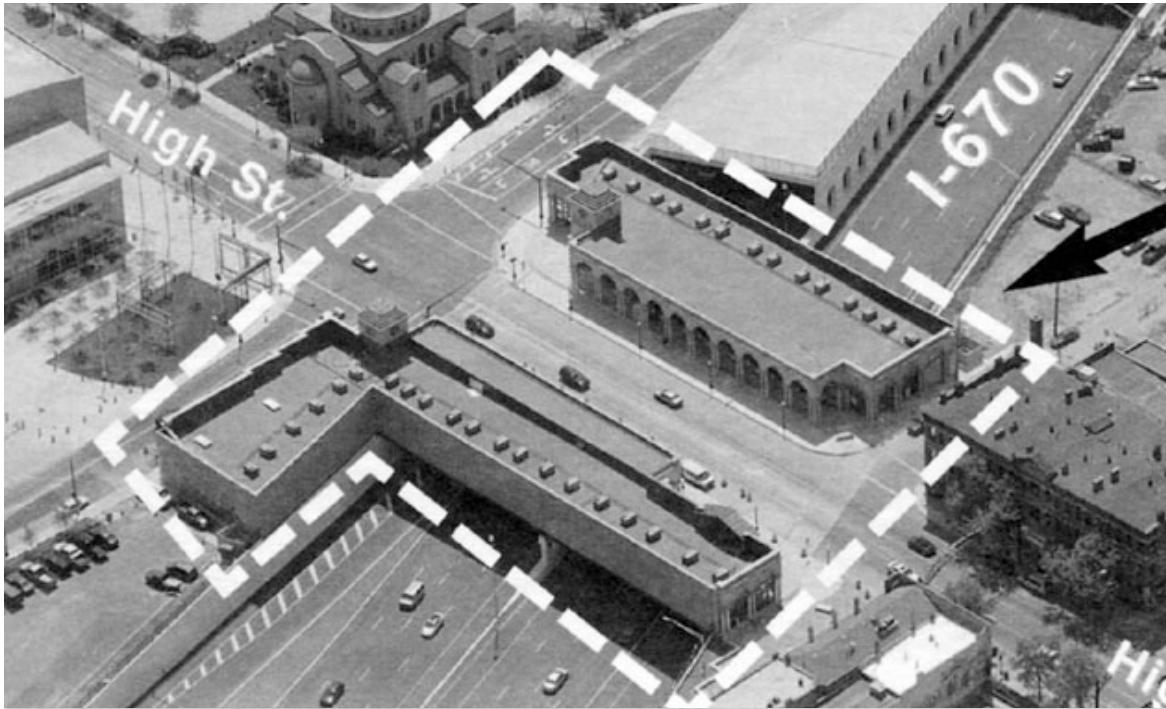
- **Spatial Definition:** the fabric achieved when fronting facades are aligned in a coherent manner, and the defined space does not exceed a certain height-to-width ratio.
- **Height-to-Width Ratio:** the proportion of spatial enclosure related to the physiology of the human eye. If the width of space is such that the cone of vision encompasses less street wall than open sky, the degree of spatial enclosure is slight. As a general rule, the tighter the ratio, the stronger the sense of place and, often, the higher the real estate value. See: *Sense of Place*

### SPATIAL DEFINITION IN SECTION



- **Spatial Enclosure:** the defining elements of a public space provided by facades with disciplined tree planting as an alternative. Trees aligned for spatial enclosure are necessary on thoroughfares that exceed the maximum height-to-width ratios.
- **Enclosure:** a physical attribute of thoroughfares and open spaces, contributing to a sense of place. Enclosure of the public realm involves the delimitation of the public space by frontages as a room is defined by its walls. Controlling the degree of enclosure is one of the principal variables in the creation of an urban-to-rural transect. Enclosure is adjusted through the selection of frontage types or by a build-to line specifying the minimum building frontage and the minimum building height.

Street height to width ratios have been studied since the Renaissance. If a space gets too wide for its height, spatial definition is lost, along with the feeling of containment and comfort.



The Cap at Union Station in Columbus, Ohio, is a recent project that shows how spatial definition across a previously inhospitable seam can dramatically improve pedestrian activity in both of the neighborhoods that it connects.



In Davenport, the major contributor to a lack of spatial definition is a preponderance of surface parking lots, each of which creates a tear in the traditional urban fabric. Along important pedestrian routes, these street edges should be incentivized for development, with parking placed in mid-block structures, located off-site or, in some cases, eliminated.



Street trees are important for comfort as well as safety. They help to enclose space, make climates more mild, and improve air quality. They also contribute mightily to real estate value. We have already mentioned the lack of trees in downtown Davenport.

# **If a Successful city = people walking, how do you get people to walk?**

- A reason to walk (balance of uses)
- A safe walk (reality and perception)
- A comfortable walk (space and orientation)
- **An interesting walk (signs of humanity)**



Our house is built with the living room in the back, so in the evenings we sit out front of the garage and watch the traffic go by.

Humans are among the social primates. Nothing interest us more than other humans. To attract pedestrian life, the fronts of buildings must expose -- or at least suggest -- human activity. Blank walls, parking structures, surface parking lots and even plant life are a poor substitute for windows and doors.



In Davenport, one can find blank walls and bank drive-throughs along key pedestrian routes.



Many streets are lined by parking structures.  
The message: people don't live here, cars do.



What many cities now demand: It takes only 20' of building to make the edge of a parking structure delightful. This street is in Charleston, South Carolina.



In conclusion: we know what types of places attract pedestrian life, and they can be easily emulated.

In many cases they are beautiful, but often they are not.



But like this street in San Francisco, which attracts people despite its messiness, they all share four qualities: they are mixed-use, safe, comfortable, and interesting.

The Rise of Sprawl

**SUBURBAN**

and the Decline of

**NATION**

the American Dream

Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck

For further information, please refer to *Suburban Nation*, which I wrote with my former colleagues Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk. They deserve credit for most of the ideas discussed here.

**Part 2:**

**General**

**Recommendations**

## **TEN GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. Restripe your streets to eliminate pedestrian-hostile configurations.**
- 2. Provide bikers with complete streets.**
- 3. Bring more housing downtown.**
- 4. Create a parking plan.**
- 5. Get serious about transit.**
- 6. Focus on historic rehabilitation. . . and preservation.**
- 7. Plant trees.**
- 8. Celebrate your artists, and attract more.**
- 9. Don't lose your (River) vision.**
- 10. Move the farmer's market.**

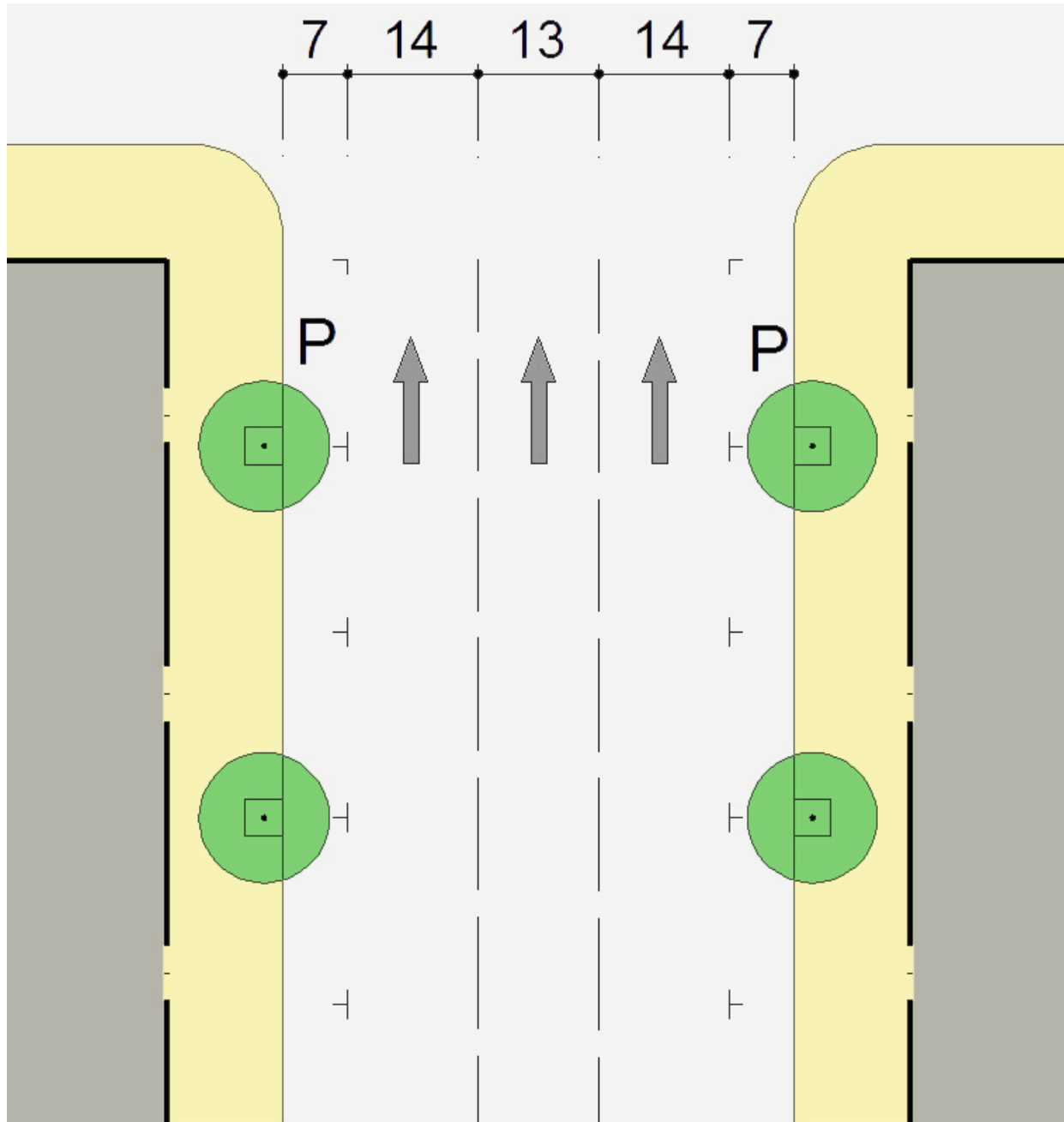
**1. Restripe your streets to eliminate pedestrian-hostile configurations.**



Davenport has two one-way pairs: Third and Fourth Streets (this page); and Brady and Harrison Streets (next page). As discussed, one-ways are detrimental to pedestrian life and retail viability. No overriding traffic crisis mandates that these streets remain one-way. Any slight reduction in through-put caused by reversion to two-way traffic can be justified by the goal of urban viability and vitality.



A recent study concluded that Brady and Harrison should remain one-way, *but only to the edge of downtown*. Once they cross the railway, two-way traffic should be reinstated. This can be accomplished with restriping and signalization, without rebuilding any curbs.

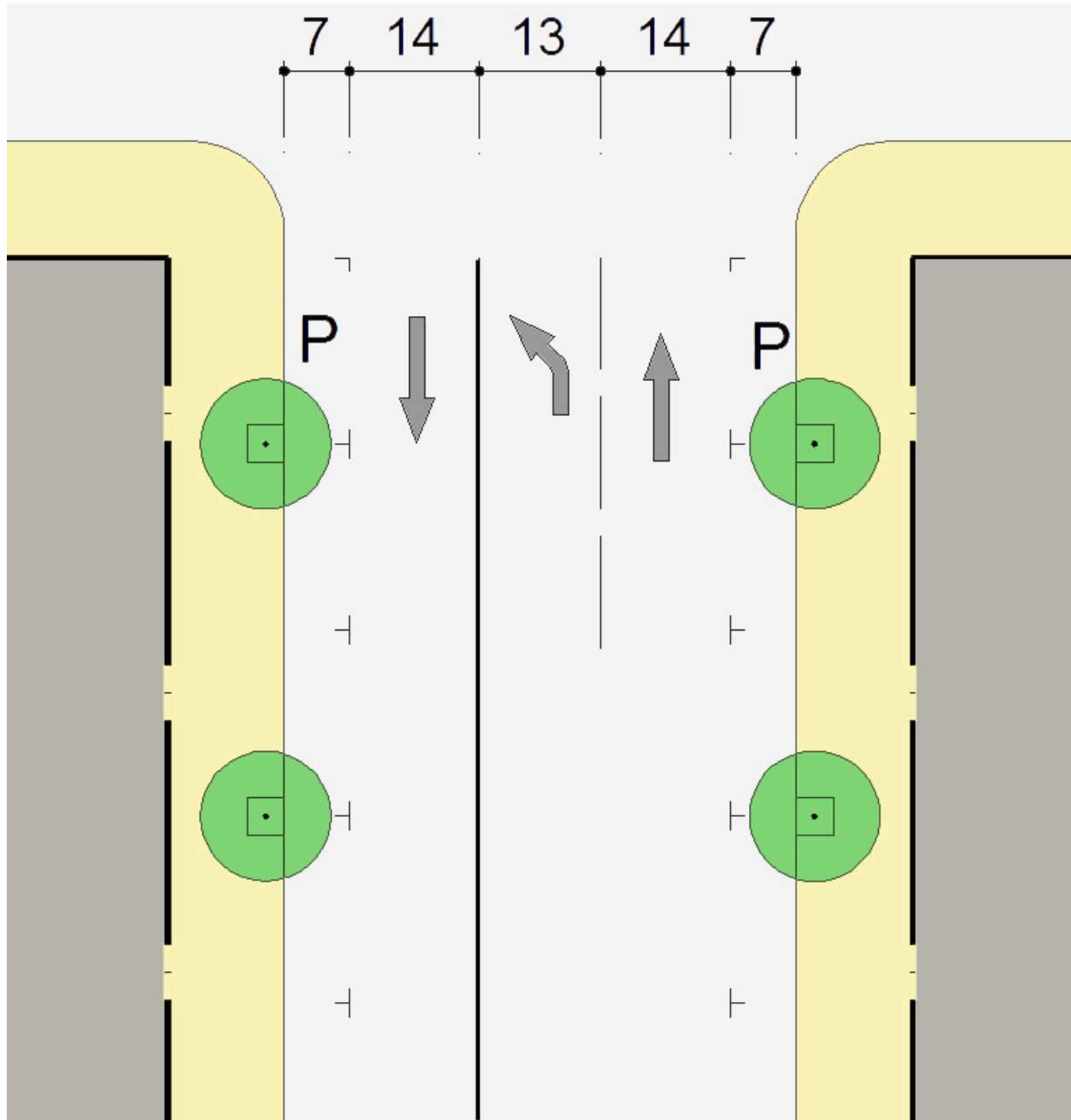


TYPICAL ONE-WAY

Redesign of Davenport's one-way streets must also correct their high-speed geometrics, shown here. 13' and 14' travel lanes must be replaced by 10' travel lanes.

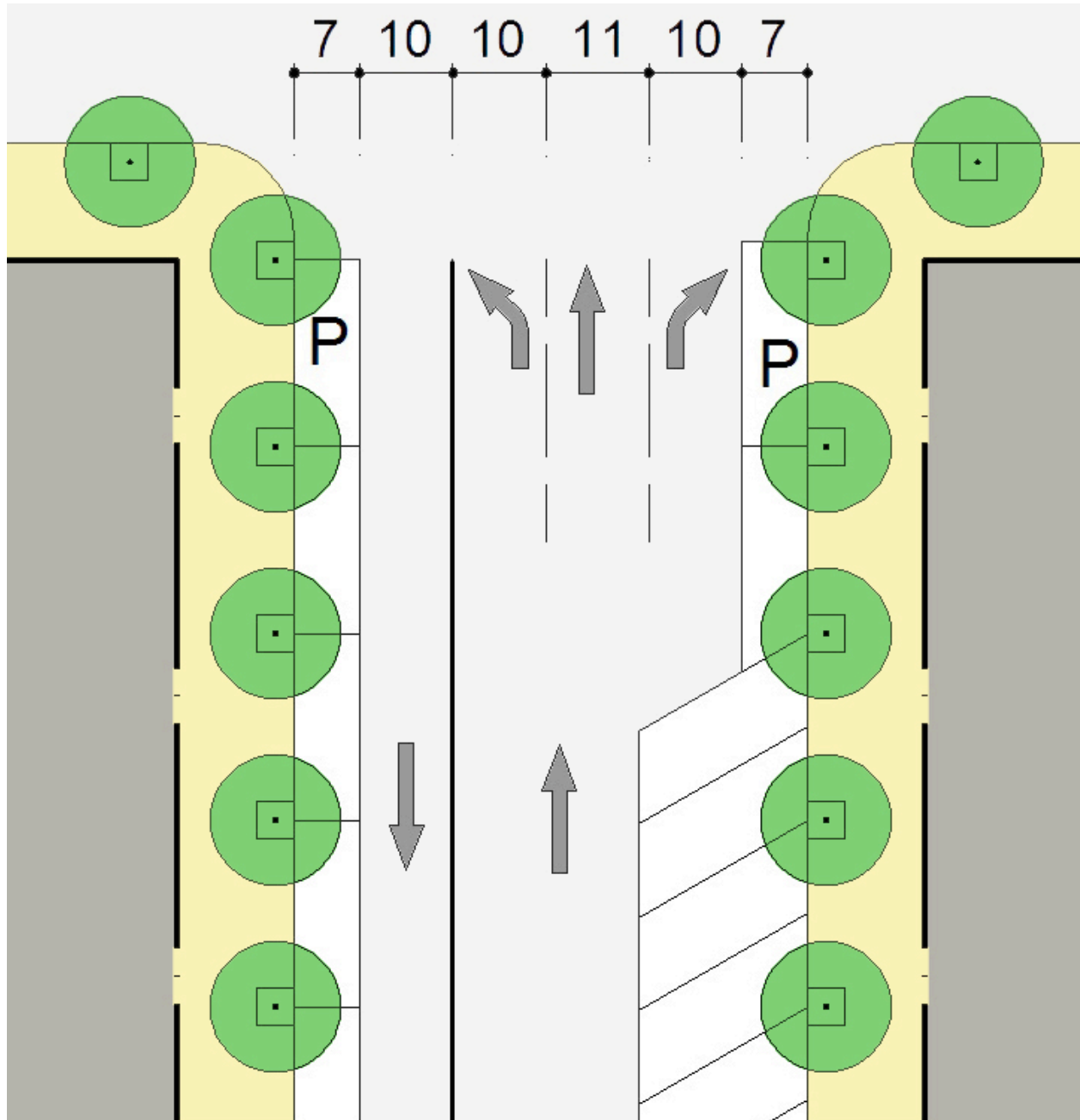


Many of the city's two-way streets, such as Main, are also striped for high-speed travel.



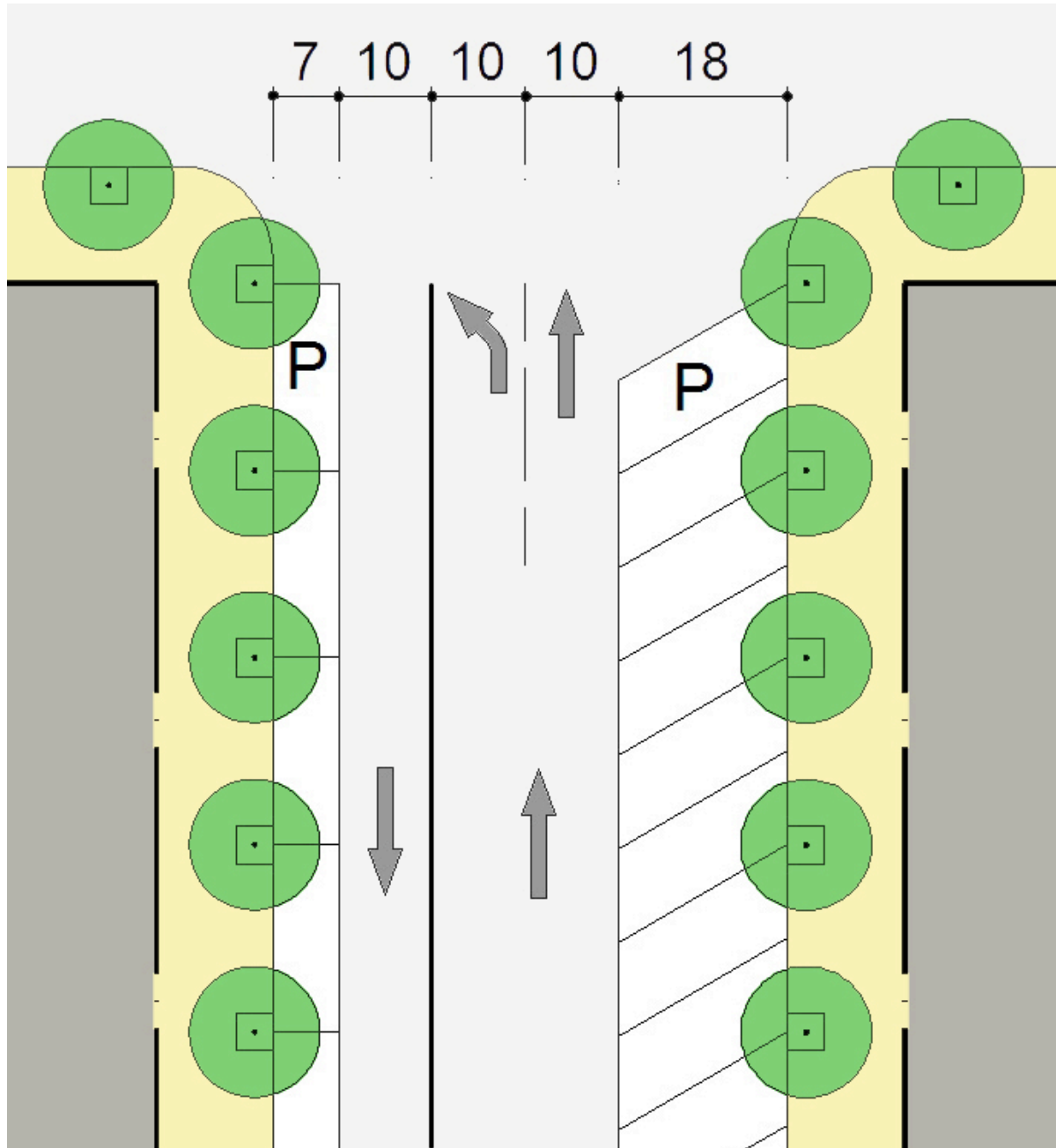
TYPICAL 2-WAY

Again, we see 13' and 14' travel lanes, and left-hand turn lanes that are overlong and sometimes unnecessary. Almost all downtown streets have approx. 55' of pavement width, which can support a number of superior alternative configurations.



For example, one side of parking can take on an angled configuration. We see this condition already in use on Second Street in the heart of downtown.

“FASTER” ANGLE

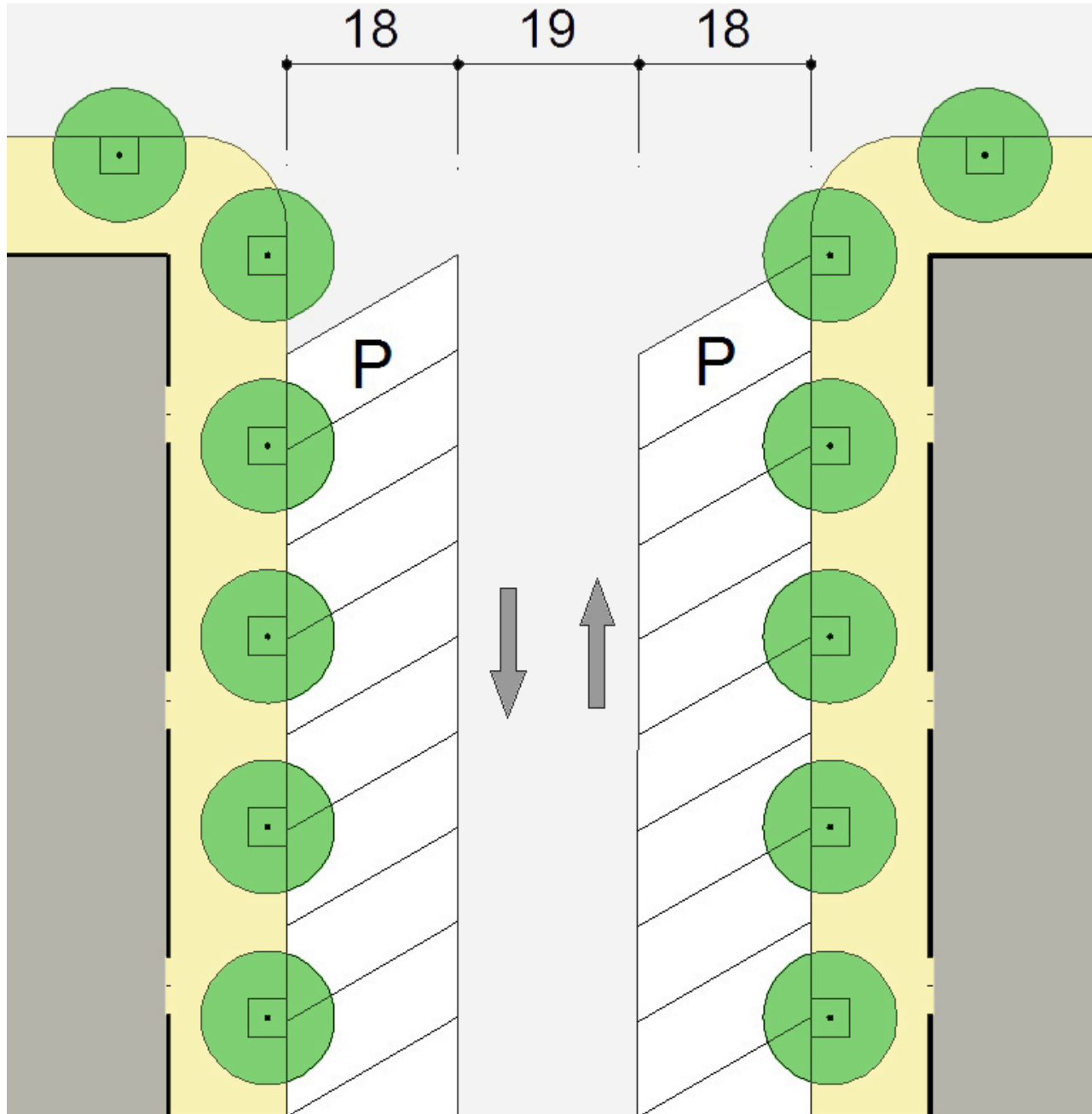


This version, for less busy streets, intentionally creates a conflict between angled cars pulling out and traffic at the intersection, further slowing traffic. . .

ANGLE PARKING - ONE SIDE



. . . as one finds already in use on Ripley Street.



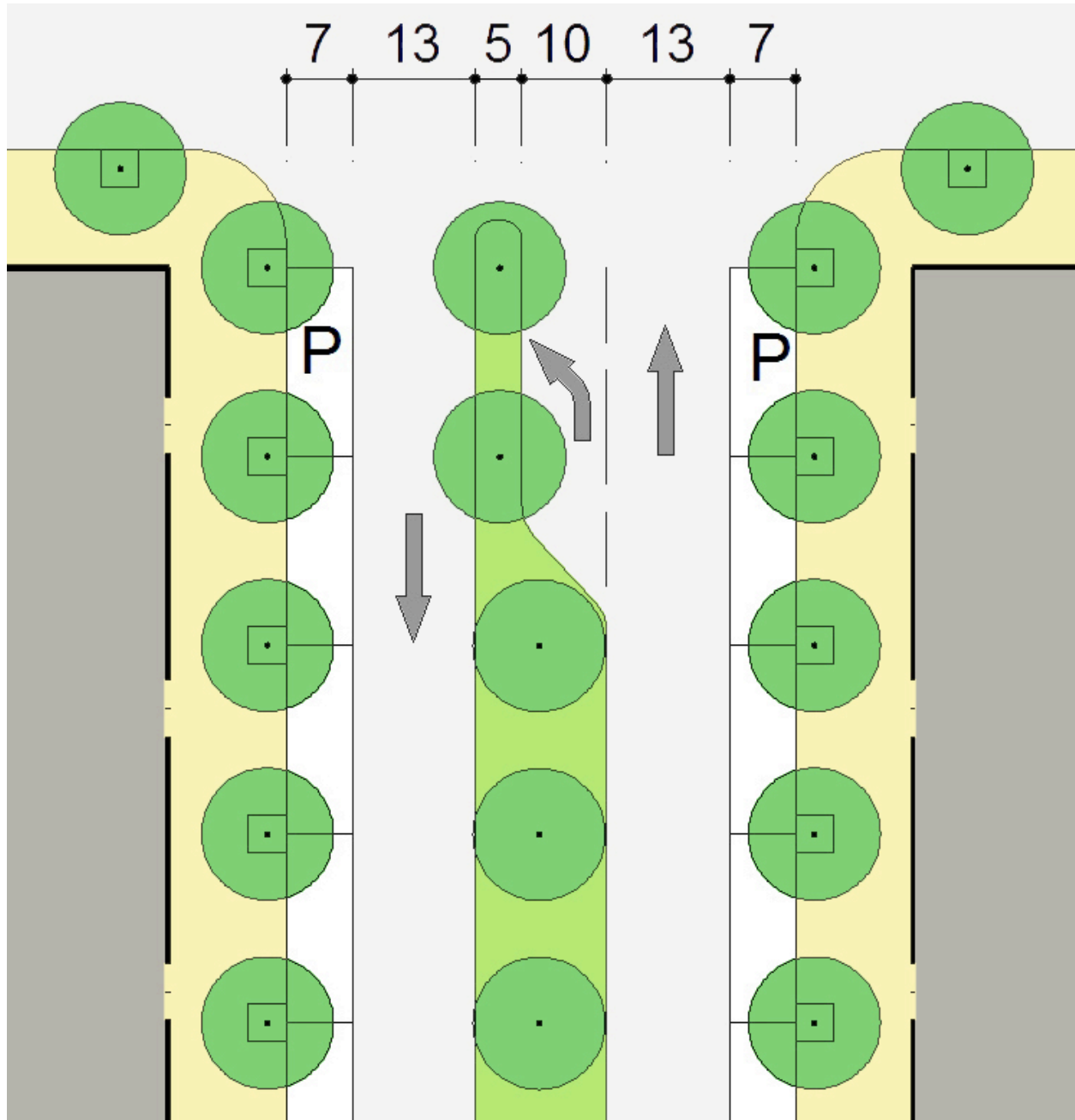
Even slower driving speeds can be encouraged by providing double-angled parking.

This solution can be found currently in use on Western Avenue.

ANGLED 2-WAY

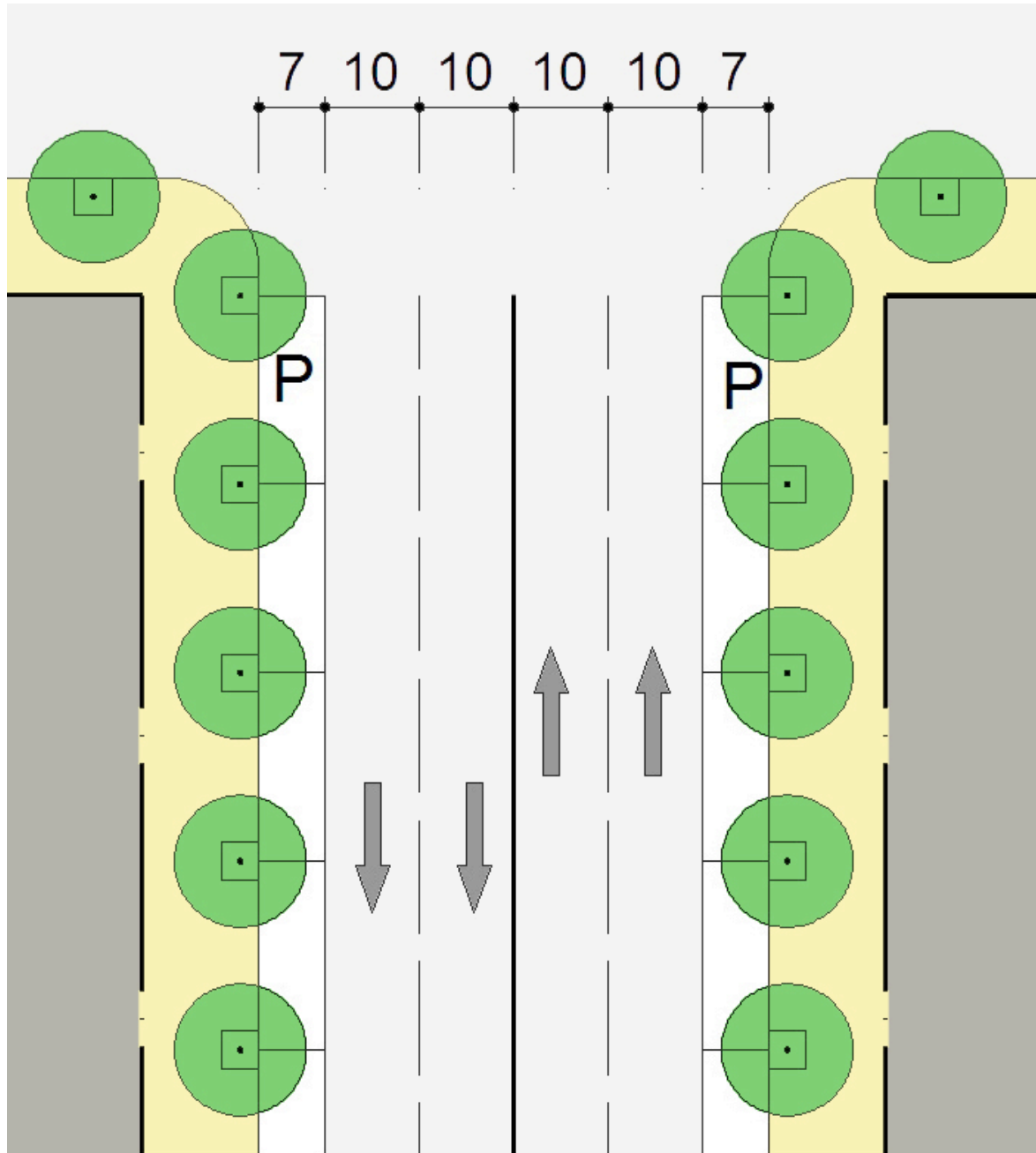


Applying these solutions in more places downtown would create hundreds of new parking spaces for the cost of paint alone.



BOULEVARD

Using the same 55' roadway width, one could create a special street (or street-segment) for a unique location by introducing a new thoroughfare type with a central green median.



Where traffic flow is indeed burdensome, a four-lane design could be introduced, but with lanes of the proper 10' width. The absence of a center-turn lane in this configuration helps keep speeds down.

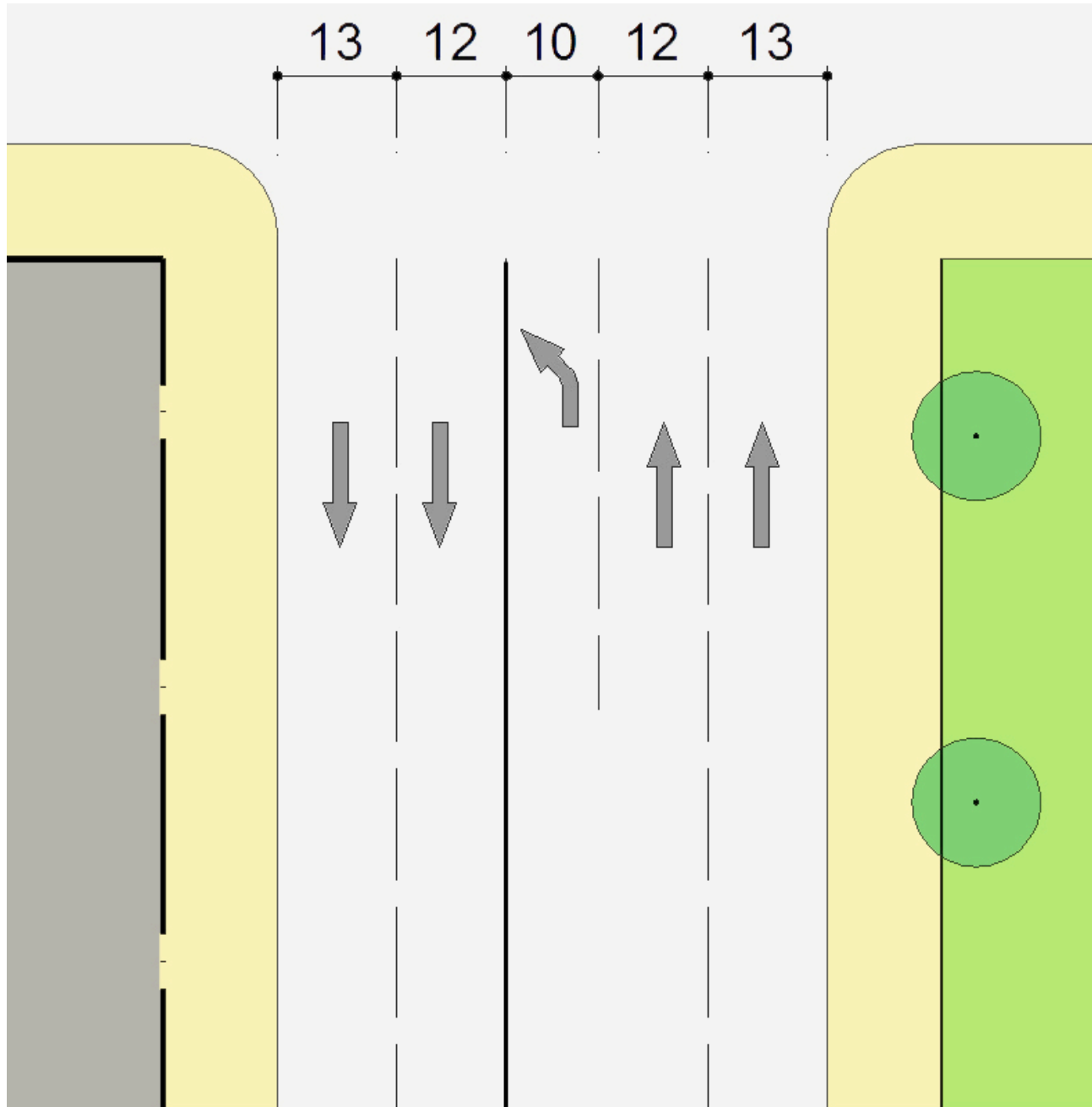
4 - LANE WITH PARKING



The above design can be seen in this image of Main Street from the 1950's.

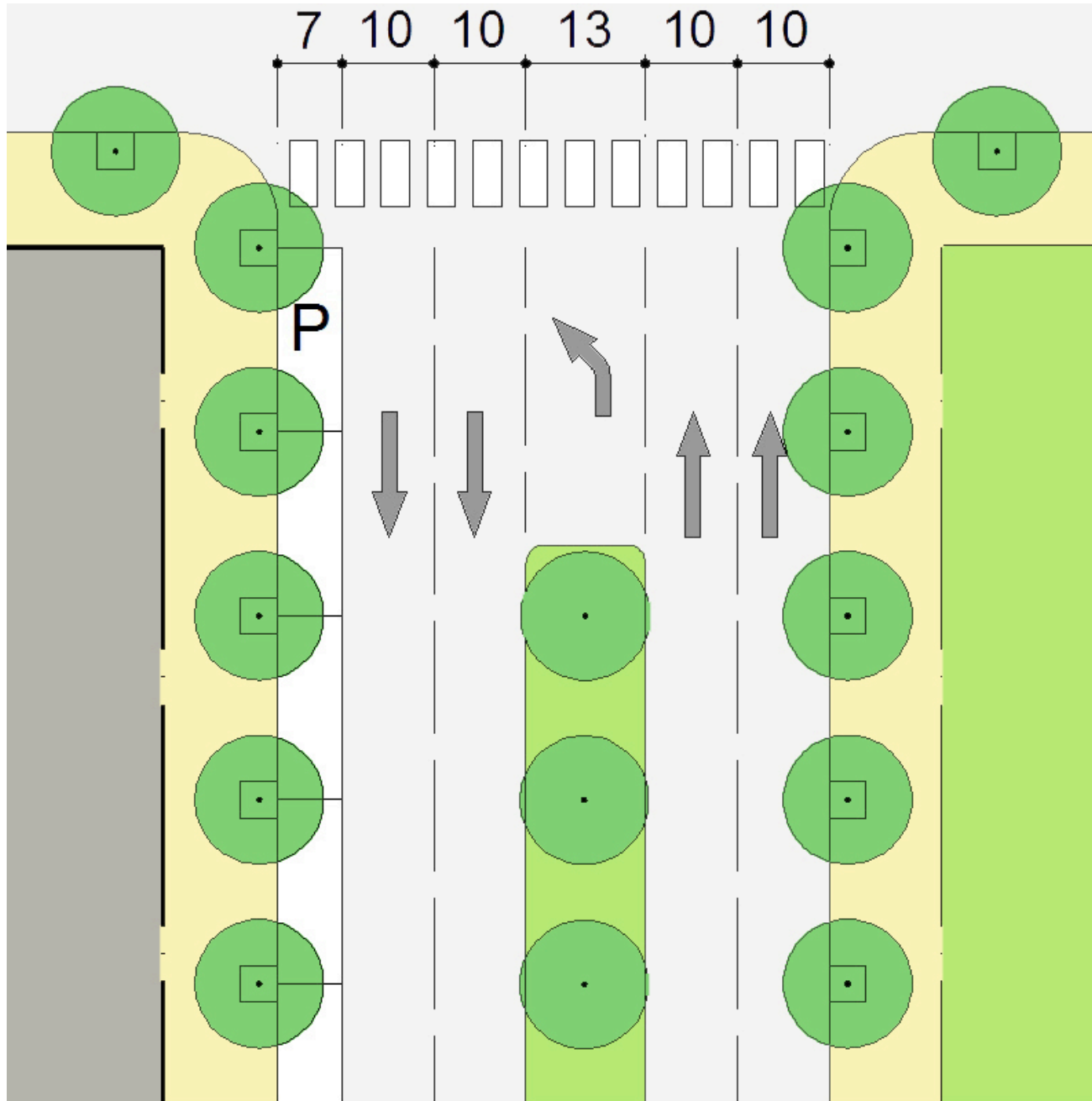


Finally, there has been much discussion of River Drive, a state highway that currently encourages high speed traffic while presenting pedestrians with a challenging distance to cross in a single light cycle. This street, which should connect Davenport with its riverfront, effectively separates one from the other.



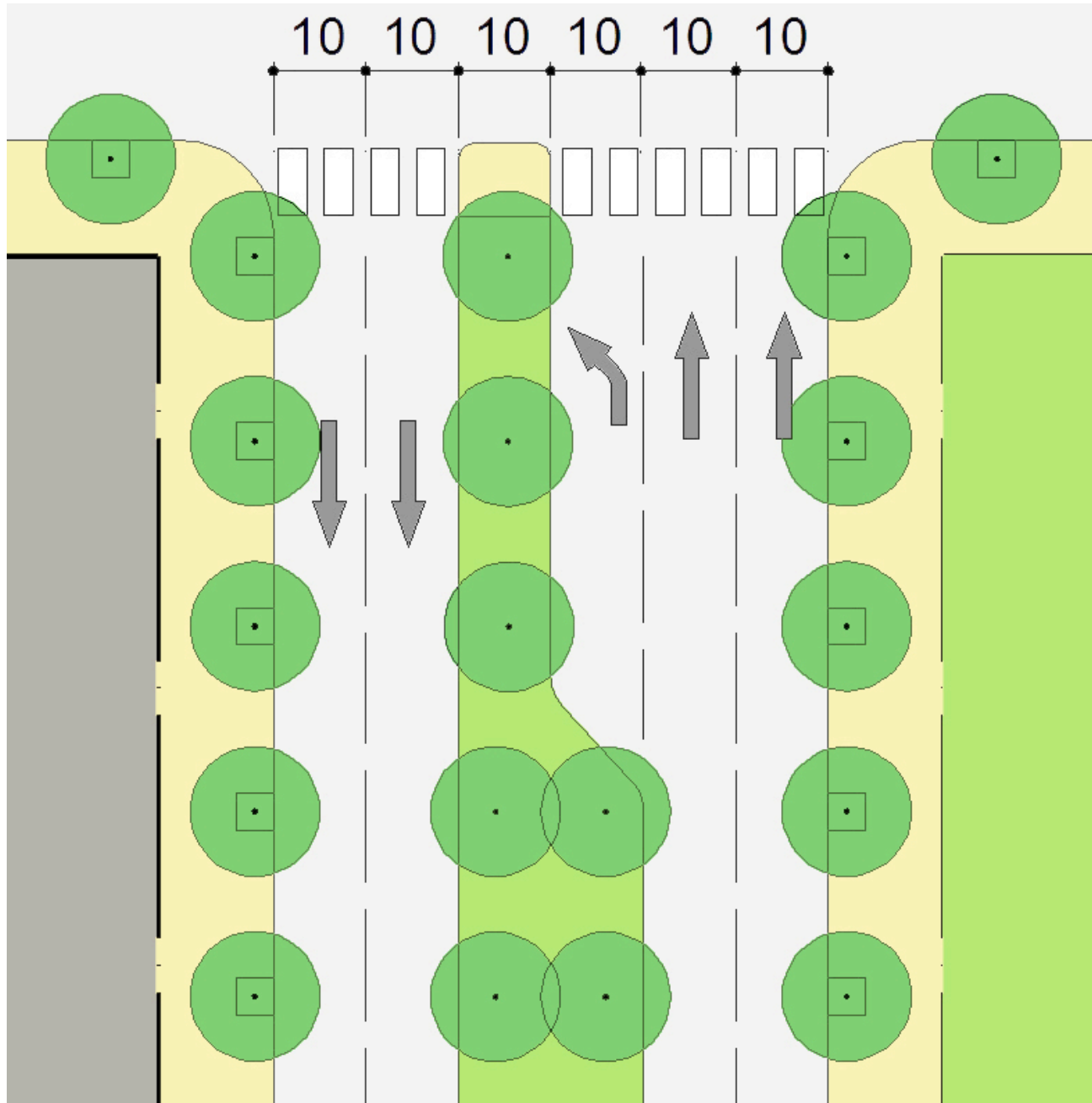
RIVER DRIVE - TYPICAL

The current configuration includes 60' of pavement with 12' and 13' travel lanes. While this highway handles many trucks, trucks could also drive perfectly well on 10'-wide travel lanes, which would encourage more reasonable speeds.



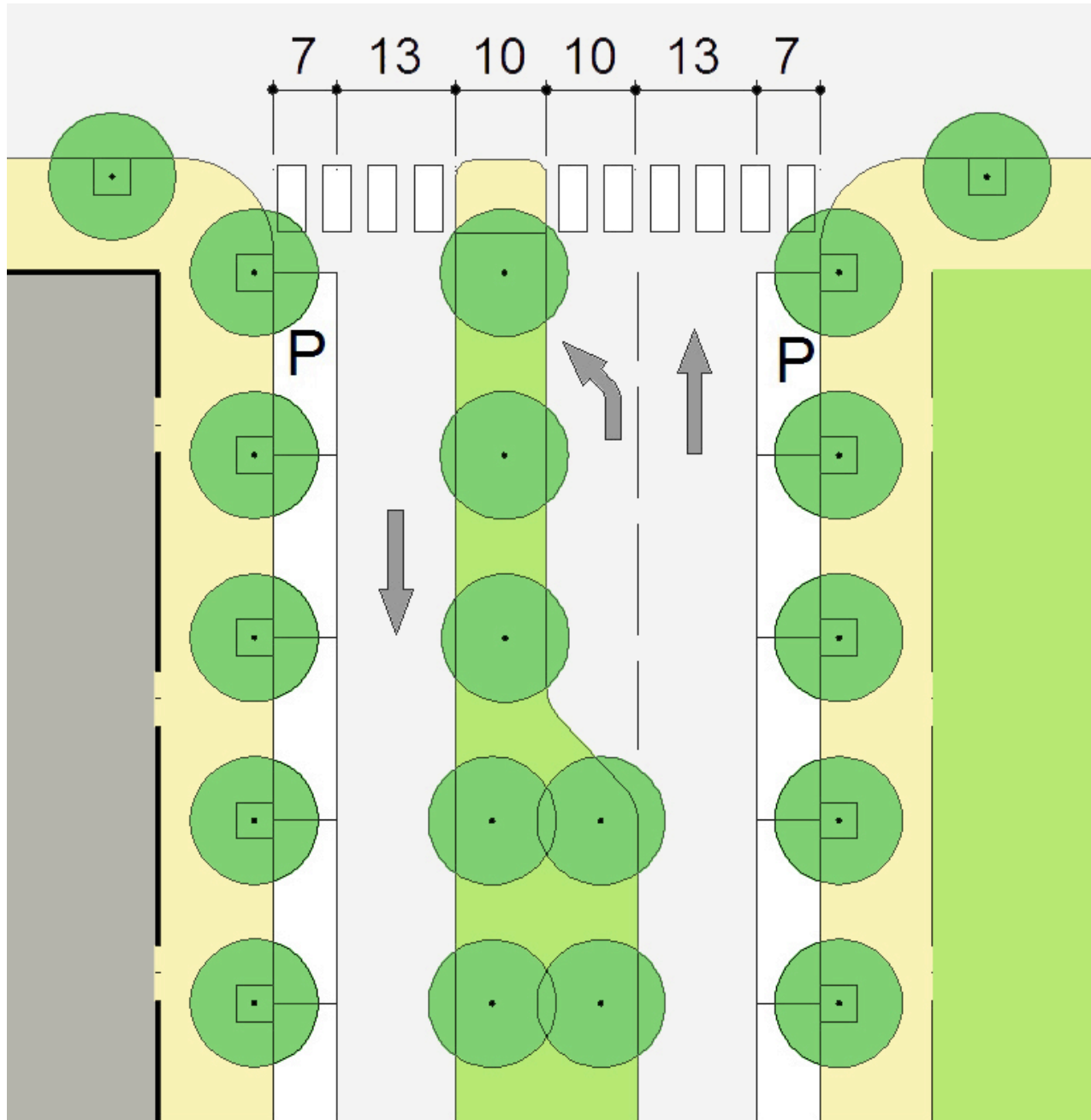
RIVER DRIVE - PROPOSAL 1

This alternative layout provides the same amount of through-put, but introduces a median where the left-hand turn lane is not needed, and provides parking on one curb through space gained by right-sizing the travel lanes.



Another layout improves pedestrian cross-ability by extending the median to the corner, but this is accomplished at the expense of the parking lane that protected the sidewalk in the previous version.

RIVER DRIVE - PROPOSAL 2



A final version reduces the number of travel lanes to one in each direction, presenting an ideal riverfront drive, with a central median and parking on both sides.

RIVER DRIVE - IDEAL

This final outcome could perhaps only be achieved by taking over the roadway from the State DOT, which may not be the best outcome. However, the two other proposals should each be possible within the rubric of a state DOT “contextual design” program. Many states have these programs. If Iowa does not, it is time that it created such a program for the sensitive design of roadways within urban areas.

**2. Provide bikers  
with complete  
streets.**



While it might be justified in certain unusual circumstances, the needs of the bicyclist should not be allowed to trump the needs of the pedestrian. That said, it is the City's responsibility to provide safe and convenient bicycle routes to every destination downtown. But these routes take many forms, not just bike paths and bike lanes.

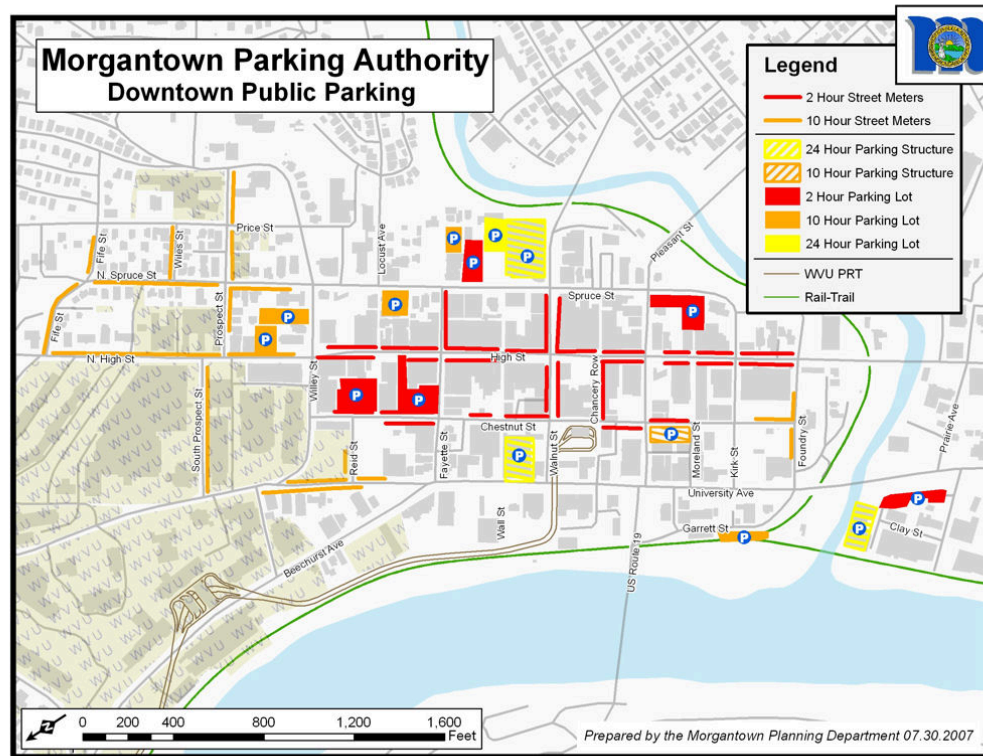
Indeed, in a small city like Davenport, most bike routes can simply be streets in which bikes and cars are expected to mix at slow speeds. These “complete streets” do not include dedicated bike lanes. Dedicated bike lanes are only warranted in those few streets where cars are expected to drive at slightly higher speeds, since they broaden the pavement and thus can encourage that speeding. Gaines Street, which carries traffic up the hill from the Centennial Bridge, may be the only street in the heart of downtown that warrants a dedicated bike lane.

**3. Create a parking plan.**



Because surface parking lots discourage pedestrian activity, they should not be visible from sidewalks or plazas, let alone sit on them. Moreover, it is a general rule of city planning that, whenever you find a small surface parking lot across the street from a large parking structure – as occurs at the Figge and elsewhere -- there exists a need for a more coordinated parking plan.

Second only to its high-speed streets, Davenport's greatest impediment to pedestrian activity is its lack of a downtown parking plan and strategy. Almost every block of the city is blighted by at least one surface parking lot, while structured parking lots often sit half-empty. Somehow, an excess of parking, much of it constructed at great expense, gives visitors the impression of inadequate supply. Meanwhile, streets that could hold much more on-street parking are unable to do so because they dedicate excessive area to moving traffic at speed. These issues need to be addressed collectively and comprehensively.



The first step of a successful parking plan is to inventory and map all current parking capacity, in order that strategic decisions can be made about wayfinding, pricing, and changing capacity in order to achieve the desired ends. These ends typically include an outcome in which a limited percentage of on-street parking spaces are always available near all destinations.

Too little on-street parking availability causes motorists to circle. Too much creates sidewalks that are not protected by an adequate number of cars. In *The High Cost of Free Parking*, Donald Shoup recommends a pricing regime which causes 15% of on-street spaces to be left vacant at all times. Ann Arbor is one of many cities which has benefitted, socially and financially, from commissioning a comprehensive downtown parking plan. Davenport has much to gain from pursuing such an effort immediately.

**4. Bring more  
housing  
downtown.**



The success of the Crescent Lofts and other new downtown housing developments show that a strong market exists for the additional apartments that Davenport needs to move closer to a jobs/housing balance downtown.

# CRESCENT LOFTS

Thank you for your interest in the Crescent Loft Apartments! The Crescent Lofts offer a mix of the century factories transformed into expansive 1 and 2 bedroom apartment homes. Many of these apartment homes in this historic warehouse district boast exposed brick walls, high ceilings, massive columns, a variety of finish packages, and oversized windows. As a resident of the Crescent Lofts, you will take in the views from the roof garden, watch your favorite show or work on the computers in the community room, try out the fitness center, and delight in the underground parking and on-site laundry.

You will find the Crescent Lofts are like no other apartment home you've seen and a perfect place to call home!

## Project Details

Rental Ranges:	1 Bedroom Homes	\$570 - \$865
	2 Bedroom Homes	\$690 - \$1,135

Some Apartment homes are offered at a discounted rate. In order to qualify for these units, the household income must be within the following median income limits:

Household Size	50%	60%
1 person	\$21,050	\$25,260
2 people	\$24,050	\$28,860
3 people	\$27,050	\$32,460
4 people	\$30,050	\$36,060

If you have any questions regarding this program or your eligibility, please feel free to contact our leasing office.

Utilities included in rent: gas heat, garbage removal, and the majority of the water/sewer.

Security Deposit - \$250 \* Application fee - \$30.00 \* Parking - \$40  
Pet Deposit/Rent - \$150-225/20 \* Water/Sewer - \$10/Person/month

711 1/2 Street \* Davenport, IA 52801  
Phone: 319-323-1111 \* Fax: 319-323-1955 \* Toll Free: 1-877-323-1071  
www.CRESCENTLOFTS.COM

# PLEASE TAKE ONE

According to the property manager, new housing units downtown “can’t be built fast enough” to satisfy demand. This circumstance exists for several reasons. First, government grant programs, while stimulating housing construction for below-market tenants, do nothing to encourage market-rate housing, which is also needed.

Secondly, the impression among many real estate professionals is that none of the local banks are willing to make loans for the construction of new condominiums downtown. If this is true, then Davenport is suffering from a circumstance as potentially damaging as the red-lining of the sixties, a practice which is now remembered with much recrimination and regret. It is hoped that the banks of Davenport will see it as a matter of pride to prove their critics wrong on this important issue.

**5. Get serious  
about transit.**

It is said that the American cities that will thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as the globe warms and oil becomes increasingly scarce, are those that have compact downtowns surrounded by nearby farms and served by transit. Davenport is poised to succeed based on two of those criteria but not the third, as its transit provision is next to negligible. It is not too late to fix this error.

A trackless trolley is currently being planned to run up and down Main Street, from the Riverfront to Vanderveer Park, which seems wise. But the Quad Cities should work together to fund a transit loop that connects the downtowns of Davenport, Rock Island, Moline, and Bettendorf with regular service, in both directions and around the clock. Transit only attracts large ridership when riders need not consult a schedule before walking to the stop, which means maximum waits of 15 minutes between buses.

This is a chicken-and-egg problem. Current ridership does not mandate 15-minute-headway service late into the night, but such service would cause ridership to increase to a point where it would begin to make sense. The solution is to start the service with vehicles that are small and efficient enough so that waste is limited. And yes, it must be subsidized publicly, just as our automotive infrastructure is massively subsidized by general taxation revenues. It is time to end the false double standard of “highway investment” vs. “transit subsidy.” Both modes of transportation need support and, today, the smart cities are betting on transit.



Incidentally, the apparent decision to move the Transit center out of downtown seems dubious. Downtowns exist because they are nexuses of transportation. Asking people to transfer buses elsewhere is to consign the downtown a secondary regional status. This approach will have a graver impact as transit options grow, as they inevitably must in the years ahead.

**6. Focus on historic  
rehabilitation. . .  
and preservation.**

Davenport is competing nationally for residents and businesses. Every decision it makes about its physical form needs to be made in the light of its competitive position. In that context, it is disappointing to learn how many of its distinctive historic buildings have been torn down. Most of these demolitions were made in the name of economic development, with the idea that historic preservation and economic development were somehow two opposing alternatives. *"either we have historic preservation OR we have economic growth."* As discussed by the economist Donovan Rypkema, this is a false choice. *"Increasingly around the world historic preservation is becoming a uniquely effective vehicle for economic growth."*



*“In economics, it is the differentiated product that commands a monetary premium.”*



*A community which in the long term wants to be a 'valuable place', however that is defined, needs to identify its attributes that add to its differentiation from anywhere else.” - Donovan Rypkema*



Davenport has many unique historic structures, such as the Forest Block and the Renwick Building, for which uses have yet to be found. Every effort should be made to direct funds to their rehabilitation, *before* funds are directed to the construction of new buildings.

However, when no immediate use can be found for a structure, this should not be considered a failure. The only failure would be neglecting to weatherproof the building so that it can be renovated at a later date. In the meantime, an empty building is a much better neighbor than an empty lot.

When faced with a historic building that is currently unused or under-performing, remember that old adage:

“Don’t do something. . . Just stand there!”

# **7. Plant trees.**



As already mentioned, Davenport has a severe lack of tree cover on some of its streets, and few downtown streets have full tree cover.



In some cases, this is due to inherited conditions, but in others, an intentional decision has been made to ban trees for aesthetic considerations. This approach completely ignores how treeless sidewalks are completely destructive to pedestrian life.

In addition to protecting the pedestrian from traffic and better shaping the street space, studies show that continuous street trees provide the following benefits:

- absorption of the first 30% of most precipitation, reducing storm-water runoff.
- 5 to 15 degrees local sidewalk heat reduction.
- 4 to 7 degree reduction in overall urban temperature.
- UV protection.
- significant absorption of tailpipe emissions.
- significant reduction in ozone.
- \$15 - 25,000 increase in home or business value.
- 12% higher income streams to businesses.
- 40% to 60% lengthening of pavement life.



According to Dan Burden of Glatting Jackson:  
“For planting costs of \$250-\$600 (includes first 3 years of maintenance) a single street tree returns over \$90,000 of direct benefits (not including aesthetic, social and natural) in the lifetime of the tree.”

It is hard to imagine a better investment, and many cities are making more tree investments than can be seen in downtown Davenport. The wisest approach, whether funded publically or privately, would be to create a Davenport *Continuous Canopy Campaign*, with the goal of complete tree cover by 2025.

If necessary, a study should be commissioned to demonstrate that such an effort would pay for itself in short order.

**8. Celebrate your  
artists, and attract  
more.**



It has been well documented how the presence of artists in a city's downtown can be a powerful catalyst for economic revitalization and growth. With the Figge Museum and several great performance venues, Davenport has already begun to develop its reputation as a place for the arts.



Other cities have taken greater advantage of the arts to bring back their downtowns. Paducah, Kentucky, is famous for its Artist Relocation Program, which is largely credited with that small city's reemergence.



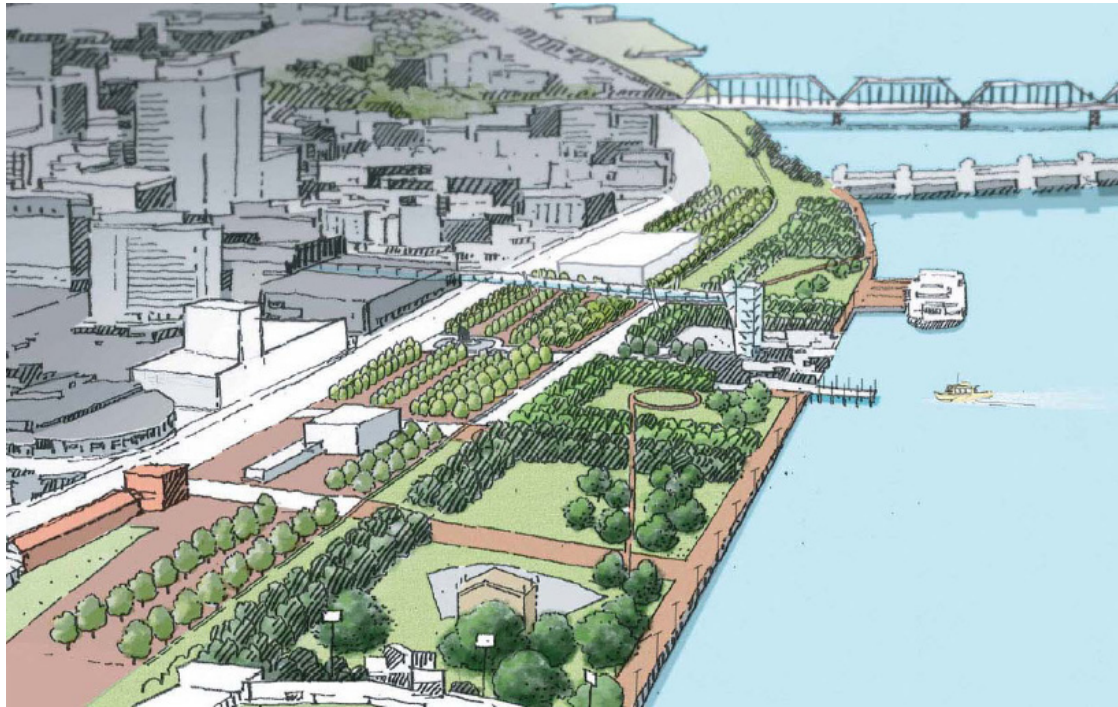
The Bucktown Arts Center is one of several signs that there is an emerging arts culture in downtown, one that can flourish if properly supported.

Artists live cheaply and often ask for nothing more than space: space to live and work, and space to display their art. The large number of currently unoccupied upper stories and store windows downtown, respectively, offer this space for the cost of maintenance alone. What is missing is a coordinated program to get artists into empty real estate and to get their work into empty storefronts. The leadership of city government or a resourceful non-profit in this regard is often needed to overcome inertia and to surmount any challenges regarding life safety and liability. This is another investment that would reap large rewards.

**9. Don't lose your  
(River) Vision.**



The River Vision plan for the Quad Cities riverfront is a superior plan with a national reputation for quality. Planners across the U.S. are monitoring its progress.



Plans take time, sometimes decades, to be accomplished. They must evolve over time as needs change, and are rarely completed in full. But growth along the lines of a plan is always preferable to random growth that lacks coordination. Previous plans for downtown Davenport have been ignored, and some have even gone missing. River Vision must not be allowed to suffer the same fate.

# **10. Move the Farmers' Market (I'm sorry.)**



Davenport's Farmers' Market is a great success, a regional draw that brings great energy and life to its site downtown. Unfortunately, due to its remote location, blocks from any other commercial activity, the market creates almost no economic spillover in support of downtown stores, restaurants or cultural institutions. People drive in, park, shop, and drive home.



The most successful farmers' markets, like the Dane County Market in Madison, are located right in the heart of the downtown, giving life to existing businesses and familiarizing regional residents with their city.



In the U.S. and Europe, these markets take advantage of well-shaped streets to create an environment that is ideal for shopping and great for downtown.



Where to relocate the Market is open to discussion, but the goal of energizing the most viable stretch of downtown would suggest that it be placed on Second Street between Brady Street and the Figge Plaza.

Moving the beloved Farmers' Market is not a popular proposition. Much laudable effort has gone into establishing its current location, and also into refitting the Freight Terminal as a winter venue. The best solution may entail maintaining the current location for winter months only. Situating the market on a city street will also present logistical challenges, but none that other small cities have not overcome. From the perspective of the profession of city planning, in which past successes and failures are studied and learned from, the choice is clear: those people who truly wish to revitalize the downtown will advocate that the market be moved.

The preceding ten proposals are offered informally as a call to action for the government, business community, and citizens of Davenport. As a group, they may seem a bit overwhelming but, individually, none is particularly difficult. They merely need champions.

**Part 3:**

**Mapping Analysis  
and Street  
Assignment**

There are many areas of Davenport which would benefit from concerted planning efforts, and all such efforts are worthwhile. However, in these days of strained public resources, one has to set priorities about where municipal planning dollars should be invested and where private development should be encouraged.

This study argues that the place to spend money first is in the downtown core, and specifically in the area bounded loosely by the railroad tracks, Gaines Street, and the river.

Other neighborhoods may be in greater need of assistance. But it is important to remember that a city's downtown is its one neighborhood that really belongs to every resident, wherever they may live.

In addition, the condition of a city's downtown plays a disproportionate role in the city's reputation and thus its future success.

Make a residential neighborhood better, and its residents benefit. Make the downtown better, and the entire city benefits.

Furthermore, there are some areas within the downtown core where investments will have a greater impact on walkability than in others.

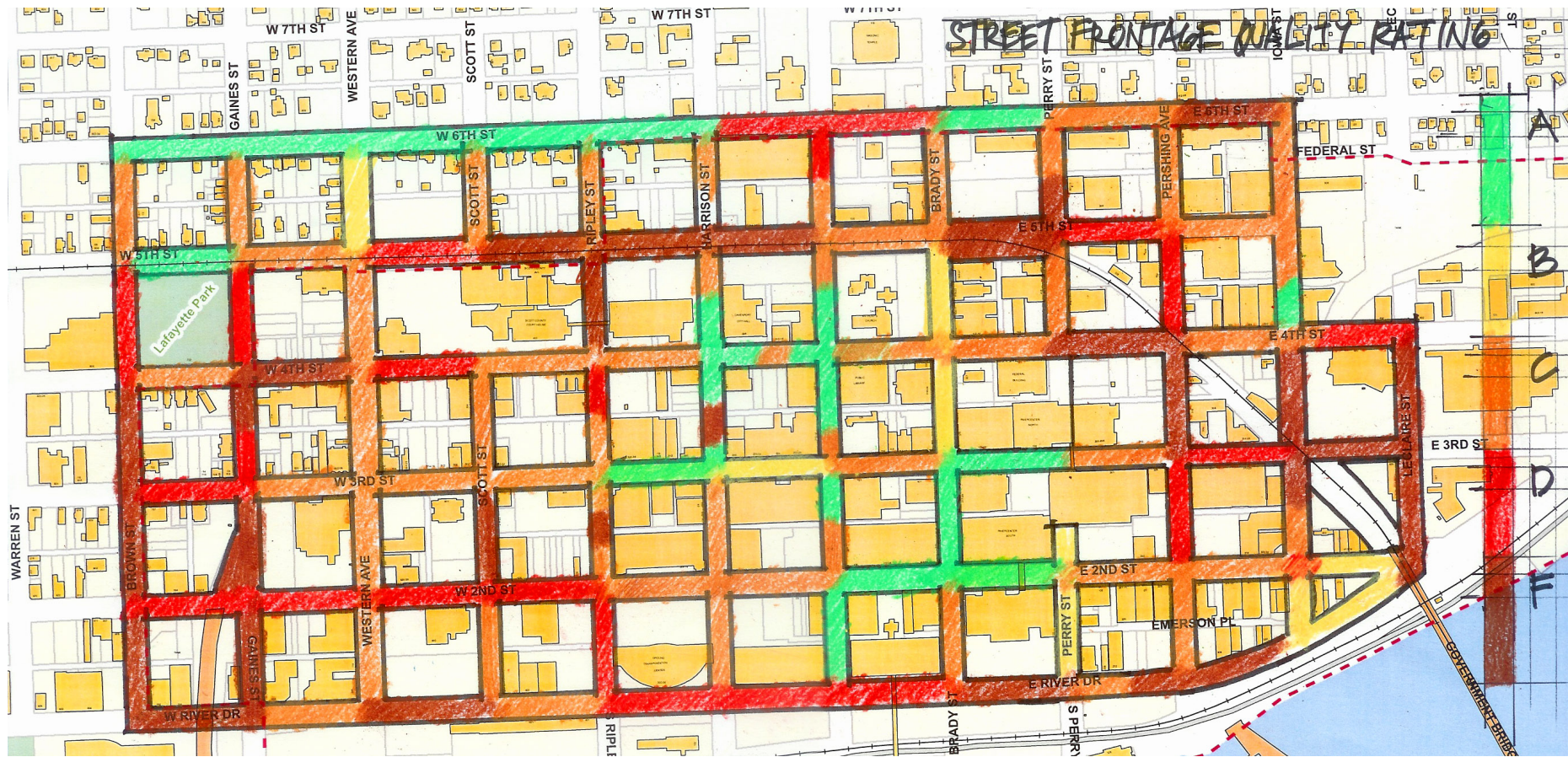
By trying to be universally good, most downtowns end up universally mediocre. This is particularly the case when it comes to pedestrian activity.

Only certain areas of your city have the potential to attract and sustain pedestrian life.

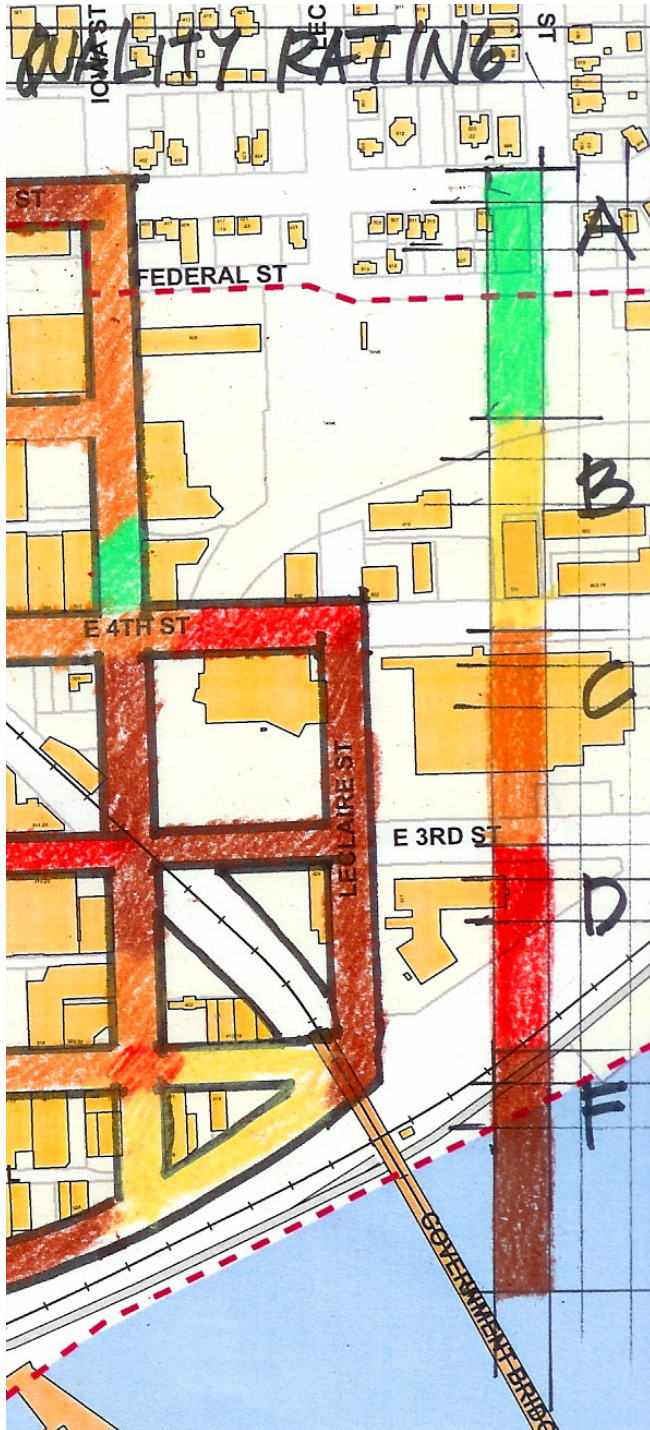
Improvements intended to attract pedestrians to less promising areas will only succeed at great expense.

By studying existing conditions, we can see where limited investment can quickly produce significant improvement in pedestrian activity, and focus there.

This technique is called Urban Triage. It may seem mercenary and unfair, but it results in money being spent wisely.



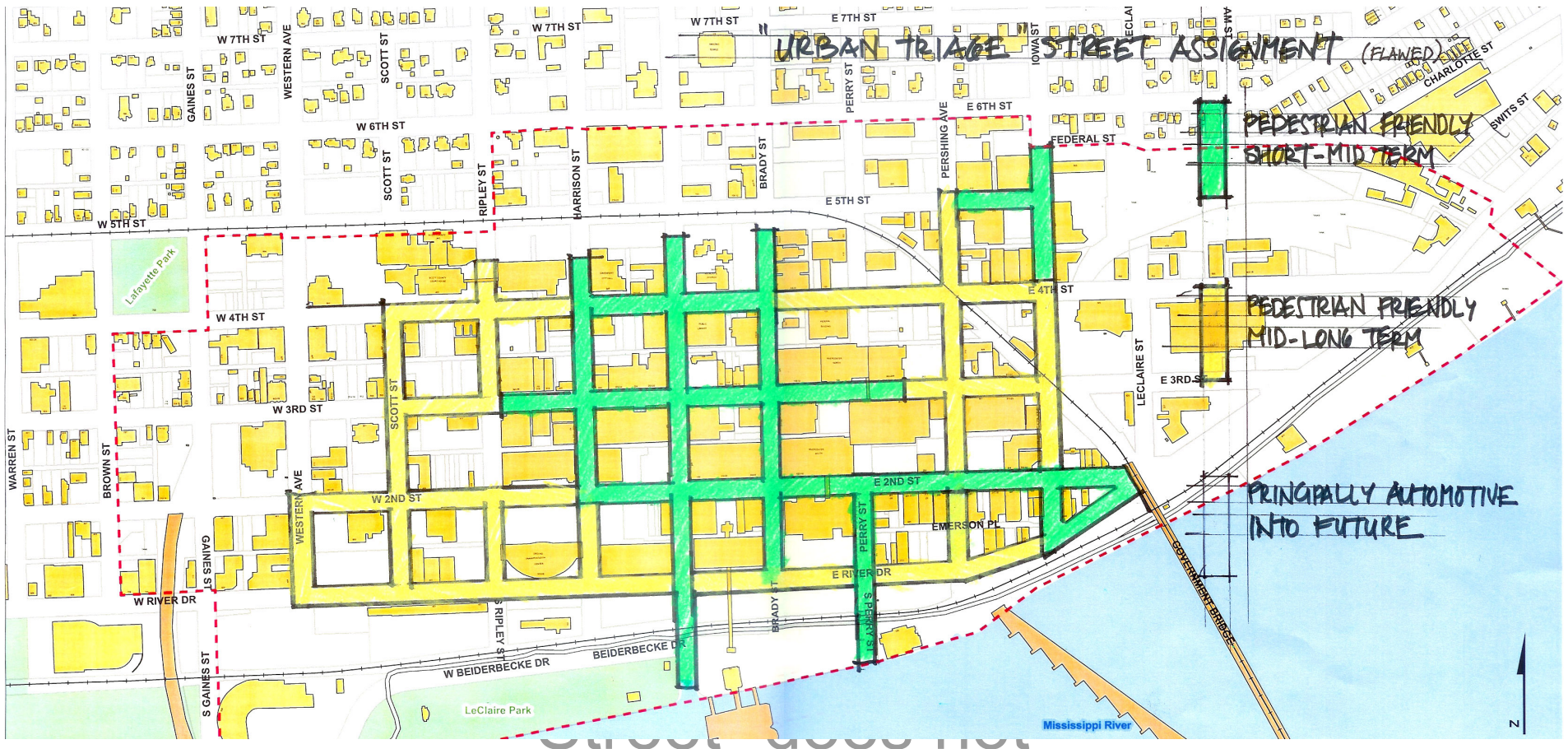
This drawing shows a very quick (and probably error-laden) A - F Walkability Map for the heart of your downtown. This map rates each block subjectively in terms of its pedestrian quality, based on the criteria of safety, comfort, and interest.



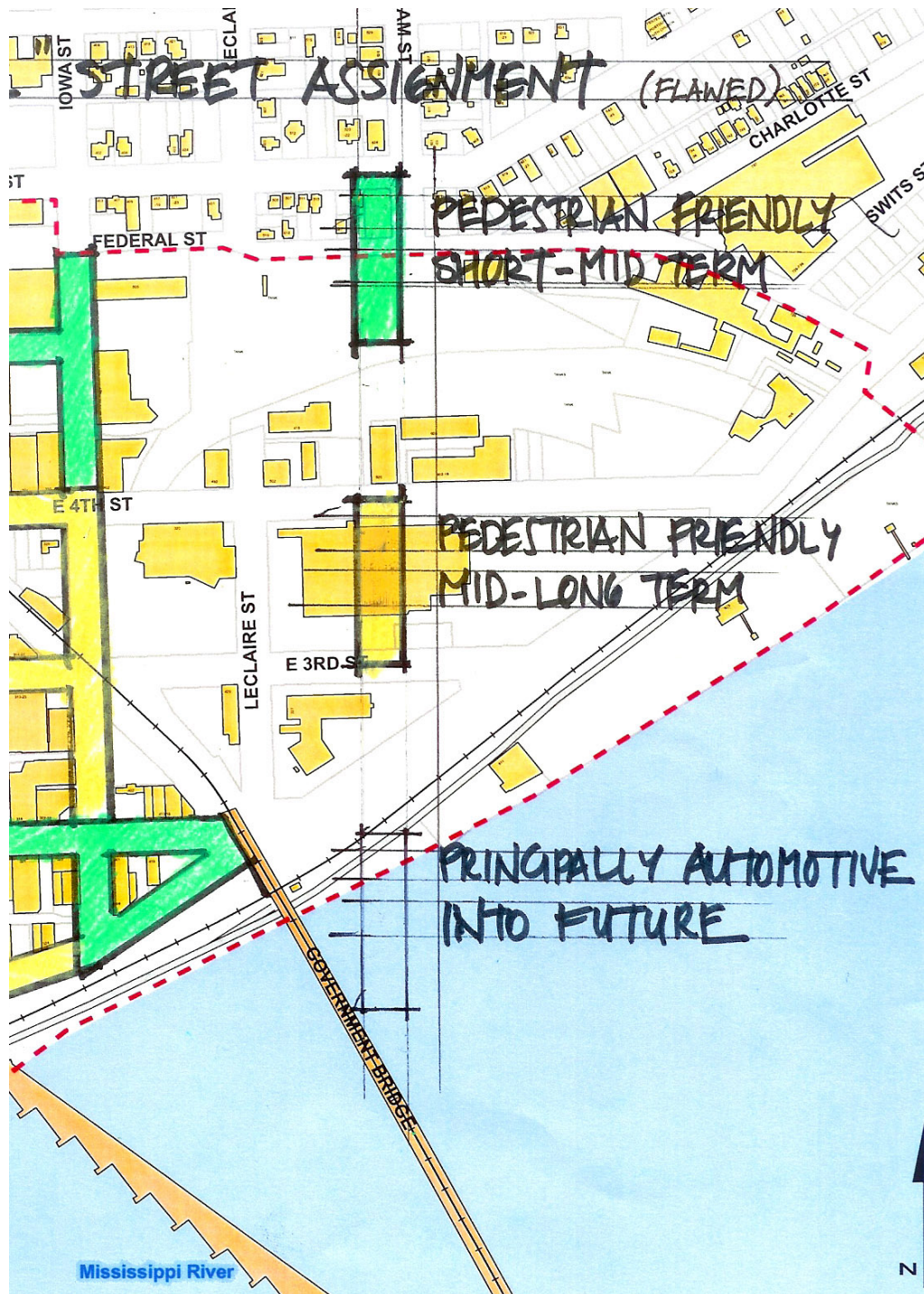
Areas in green are, generally, safe, comfortable, and interesting, and therefore attract pedestrians.

Areas in red are principally automotive, and it is hard to imagine how limited interventions could turn them into places where pedestrians would feel comfortable.

And areas in orange could go either way with continued improvement or neglect.



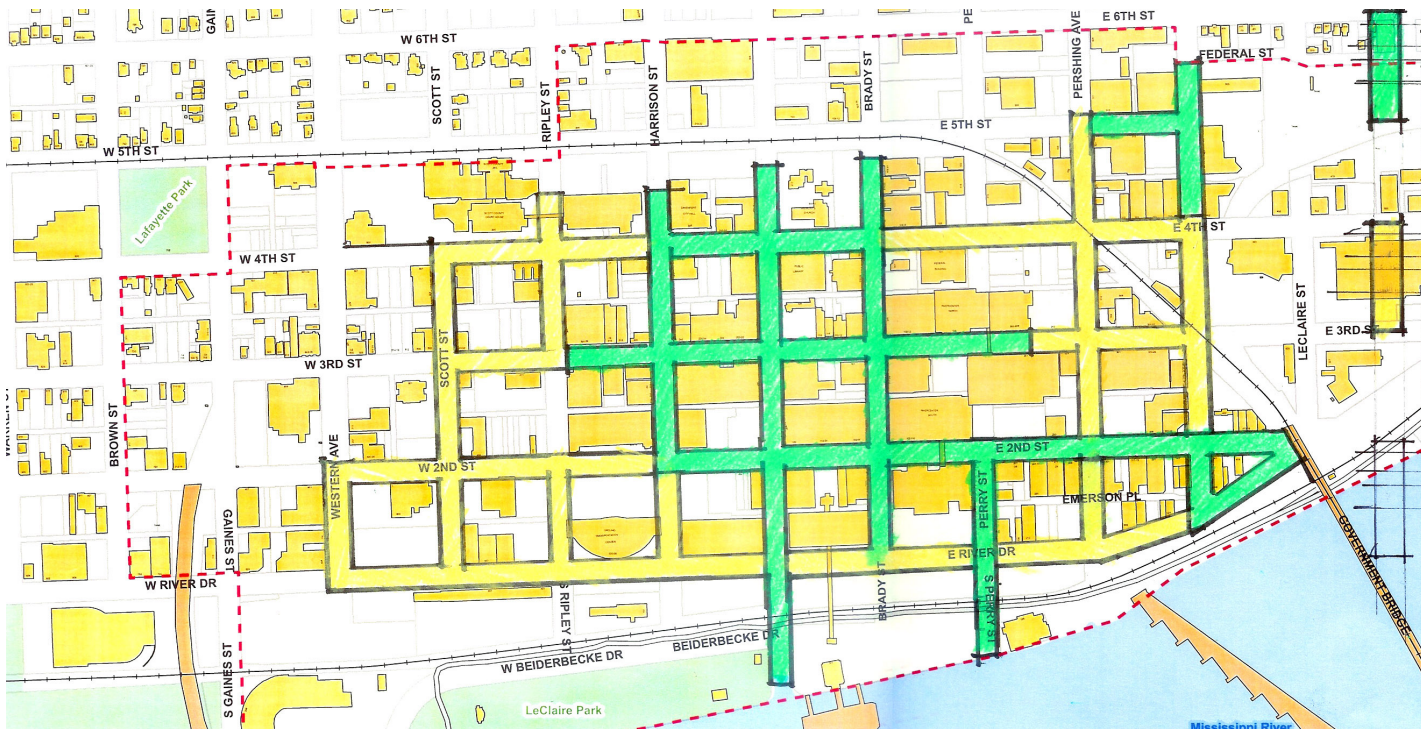
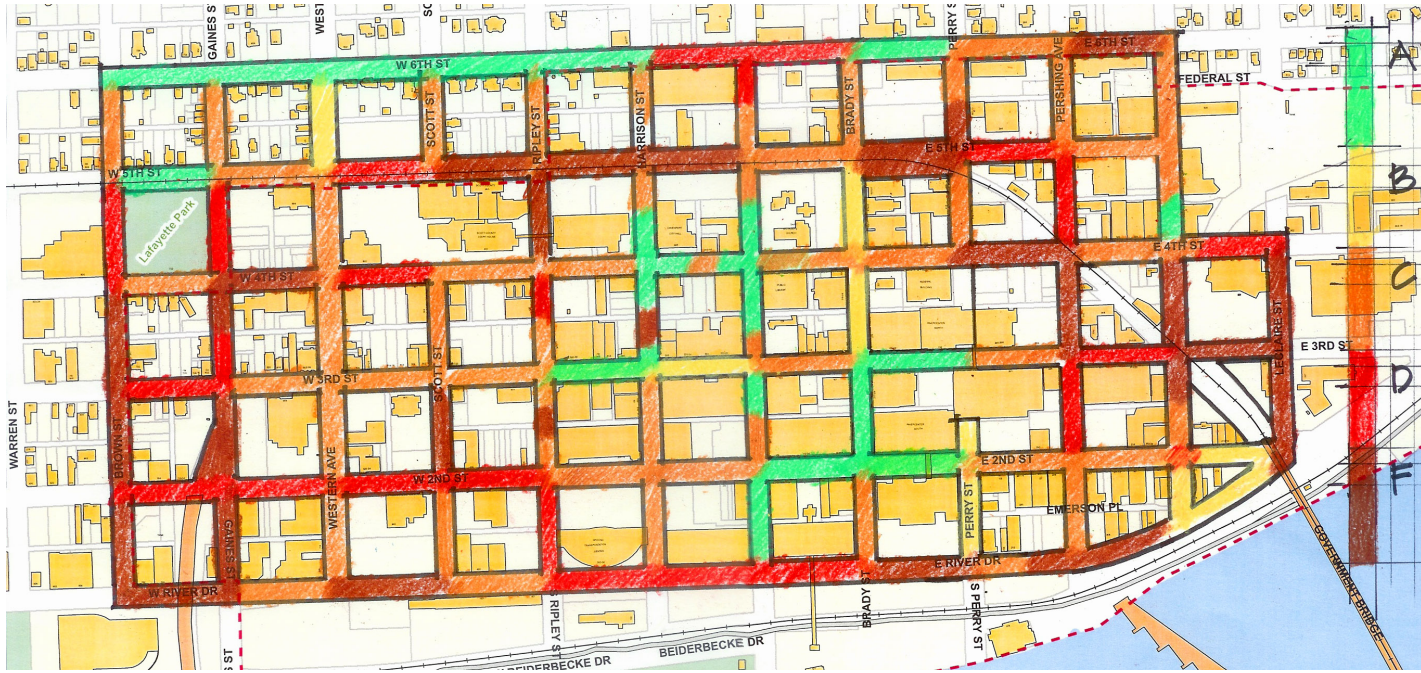
This A-F Analysis leads to a second drawing, in which streets are given an Assignment in terms of their walkability status.



Areas in green are capable of becoming pedestrian-friendly with limited short-term intervention.

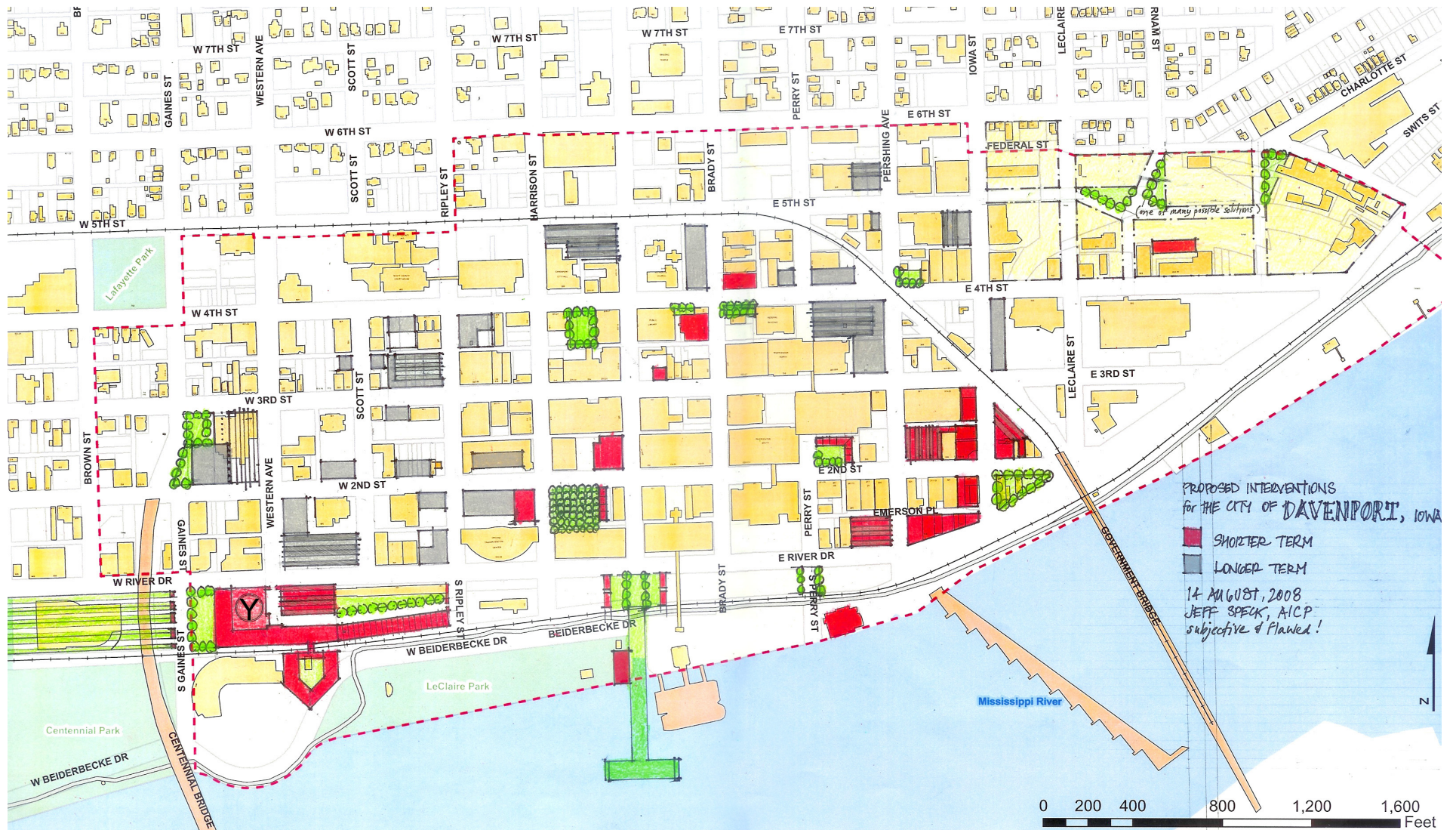
Areas in yellow have the potential to become walkable over a longer period of time.

And areas in white are dominated by traffic flow and are not likely to become walkable anytime soon.

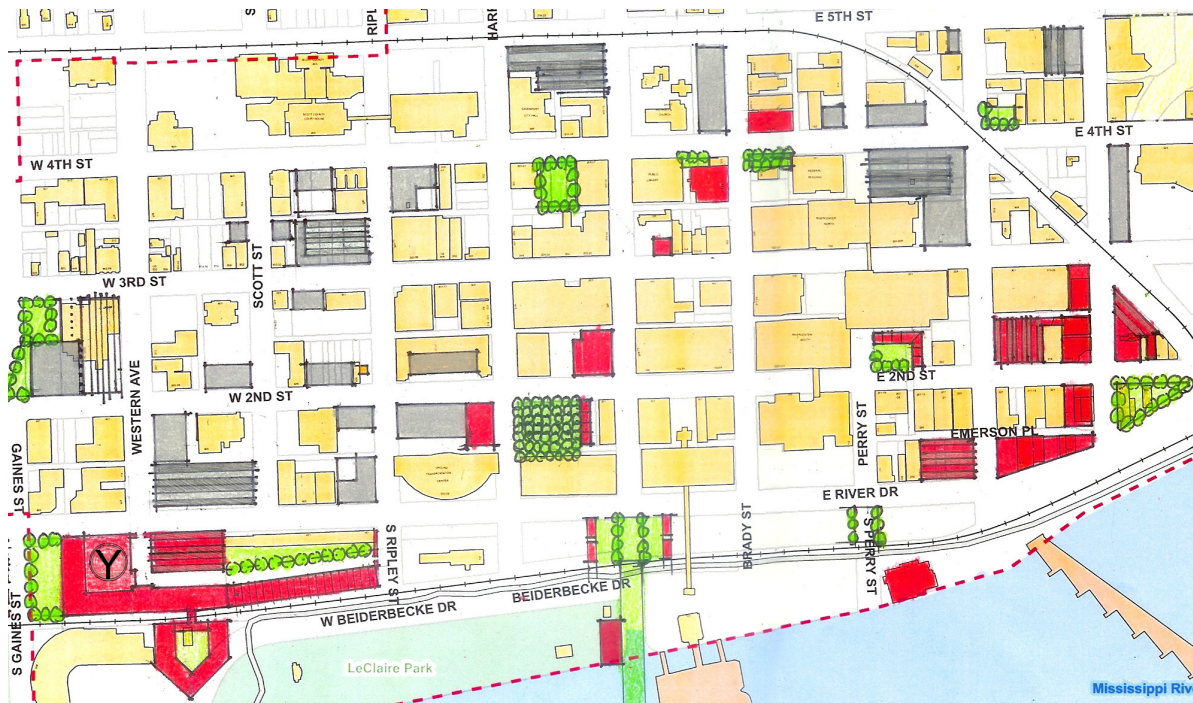
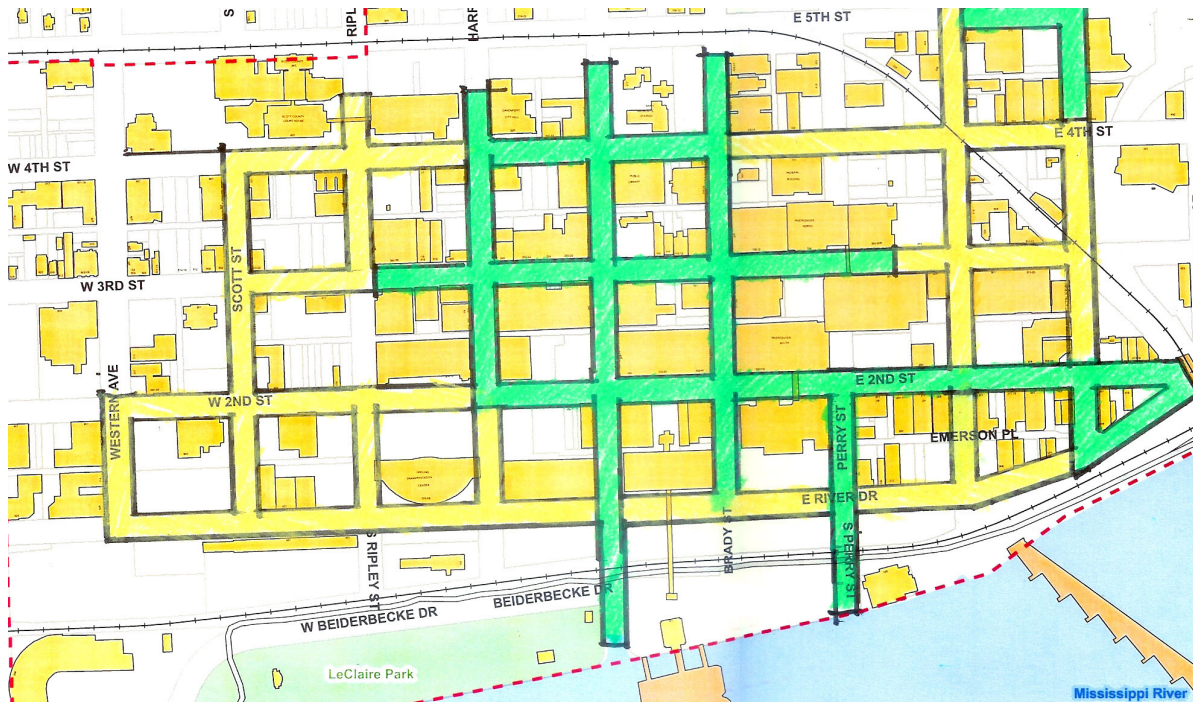


Comparing the two drawings, one sees how strengths have been reinforced in order to create a limited but continuous area of excellent quality.

The Pedestrian/Automotive Street Assignment is an essential tool in the planning of the downtown. The City has a limited amount of funds for making public investments, and a limited number of tools for encouraging private investments. If these funds and tools are to be used wisely, they will be concentrated on those specific areas that will improve, reinforce, and make continuous the part of downtown that is truly walkable. The Specific Interventions that make up the remainder of this report attempt to do just that.



These proposed interventions are located and designed with the goal of reinforcing and, in a sense completing, the pedestrian-friendly downtown core.



Generally, near term proposals (in red) are located in green areas, while longer-term proposals (in grey) are located in yellow areas -- with one or two exceptions that result from especially fertile opportunities in less essential locations.



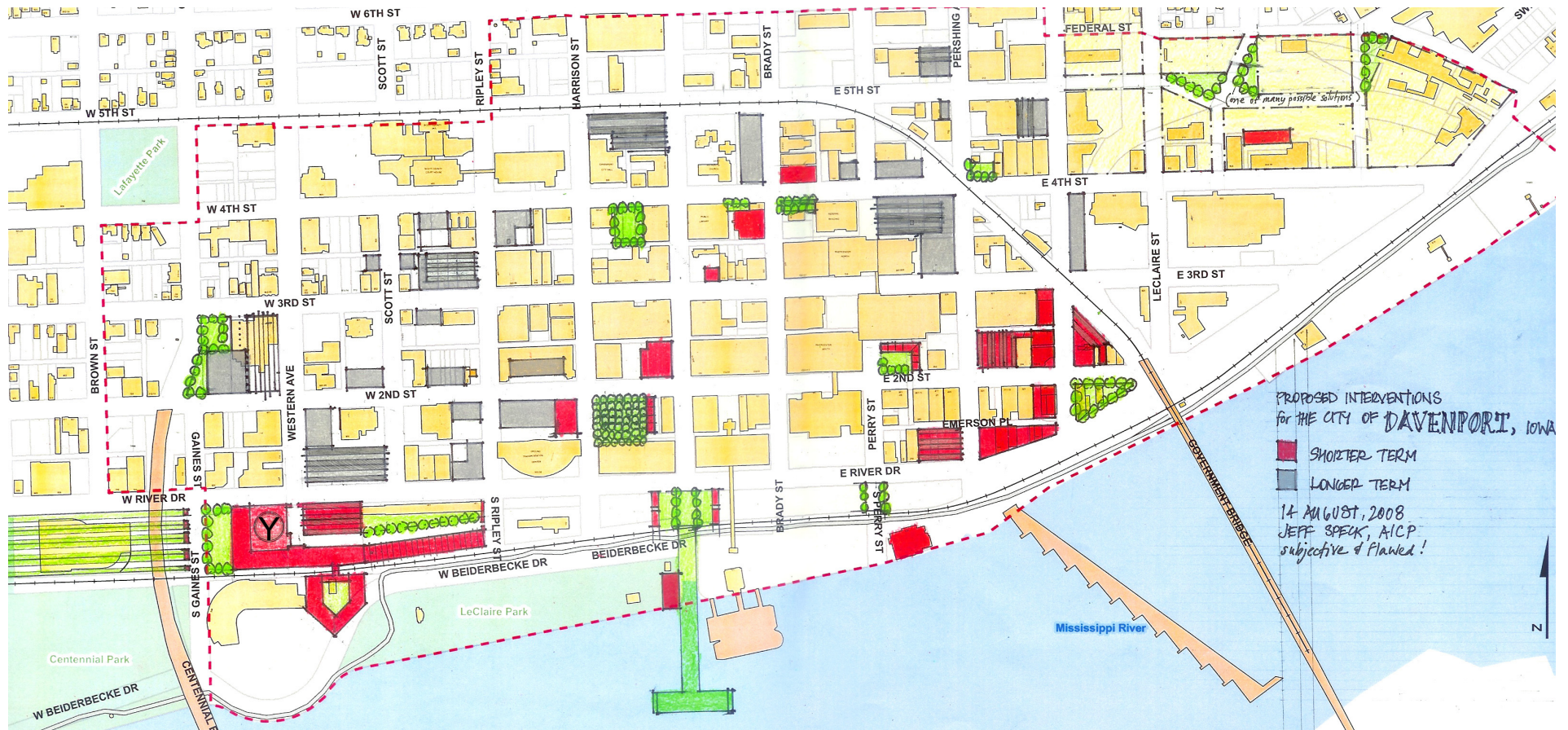
In discussing this plan, it is important to understand the nature of planning. It is not possible to simply put lines on a map and say “put buildings here.” One cannot presume economic energy where little exists. Rather, a plan is a *mold* designed to *shape* future economic energy into the most efficacious form. This plan, and others like it, allow a city to use the resources and tools at its disposal to fund and incentivize development in the right places, in the right shape. With a plan, resources and tools are no longer distributed randomly, and synergies between efforts are more likely to occur.

**Part 4:**

**Specific**

**Interventions**

The objective of the Specific Interventions is to reinforce the potentially walkable portions of the downtown core. While all of them will contribute to this effort, they cannot all be accomplished immediately. How they are prioritized and, indeed, which ones are pursued, can be determined only through community discussion. Even accomplishing only a few of them would have a significant impact on downtown, but it is hoped that efforts will be made to encourage the majority of these proposals. As noted, proposals in red are likely to have the greatest immediate impact on walkability, while those in grey are considered appropriate for the longer term.



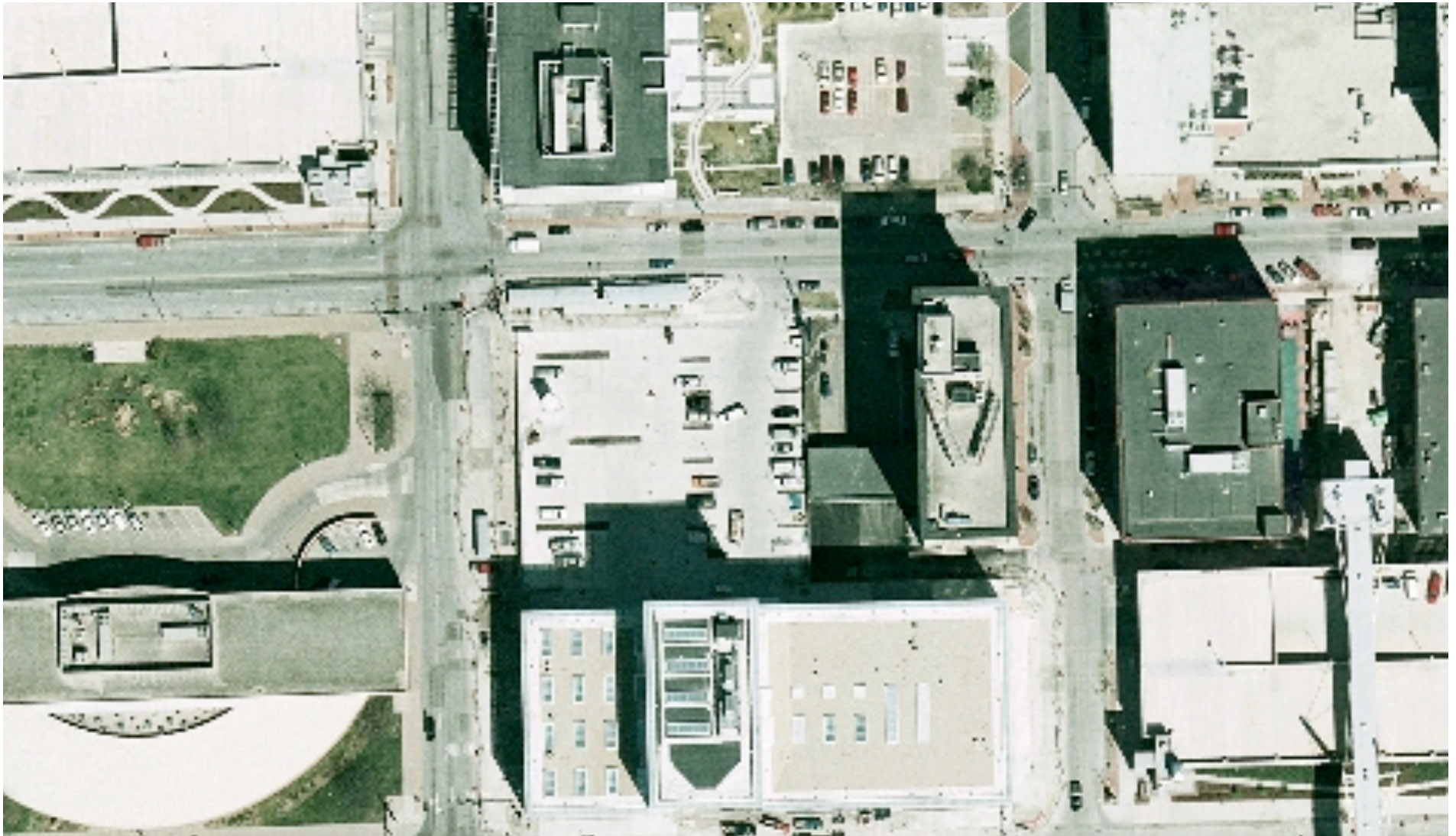
The fourteen recommendations that follow are ordered not in terms of priority, but in terms of their location in the downtown core. We will begin at the Figge Plaza and circle the downtown in a counter-clockwise direction.

## **FOURTEEN SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. Figge Plaza**
- 2. Second Street East**
- 3. The Eastern Anchor**
- 4. Reaching the Riverfront**
- 5. The Warehouse District**
- 6. The East Industrial Area**
- 7. Opportunity Corner**
- 8. Hibernia Way**
- 9. The Third Street Sweet Spot**
- 10. The Courthouse Corridor**
- 11. Second Street West**
- 12. The YMCA Block**
- 13. The Woodmen Park Modern District**
- 14. The Bridges of Davenport**

# **1. Figge Plaza**

Figge Plaza is considered by many to be the western edge of walkable downtown Davenport. If this area is to ever grow further west, the walkability of the Plaza itself must improve. As currently designed, Figge Plaza fails to meet our prior definition of *comfortable* in several key respects. Most significantly, it lacks spatial definition on several of its edges, and its landscape (or lack thereof) creates a microclimate that alternates between broiling and windswept while rarely being temperate. It also fails to be as *interesting* as it could be if it were lined by more buildings with doors and windows facing it and giving it life.



As seen in this aerial, the plaza lacks spatial definition (building fronts) to its west, northeast, and east.



To the west sits the green lawn in front of the Transit Center, which has always been planned as a future building site. To the northeast sits a surface parking lot, which fails to shape the very important intersection of Second and Main.



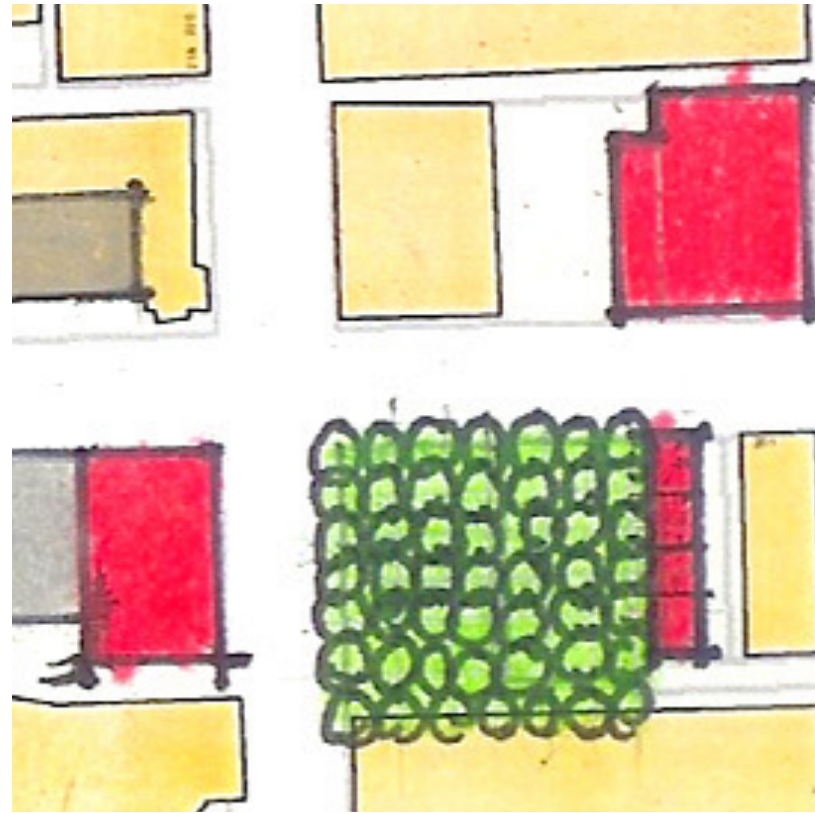
The Figge is also one of the only great museums in America with a parking lot right in front of it. This was apparently done to provide convenience parking for the bank, parking that could easily be located as part of a parking plan.



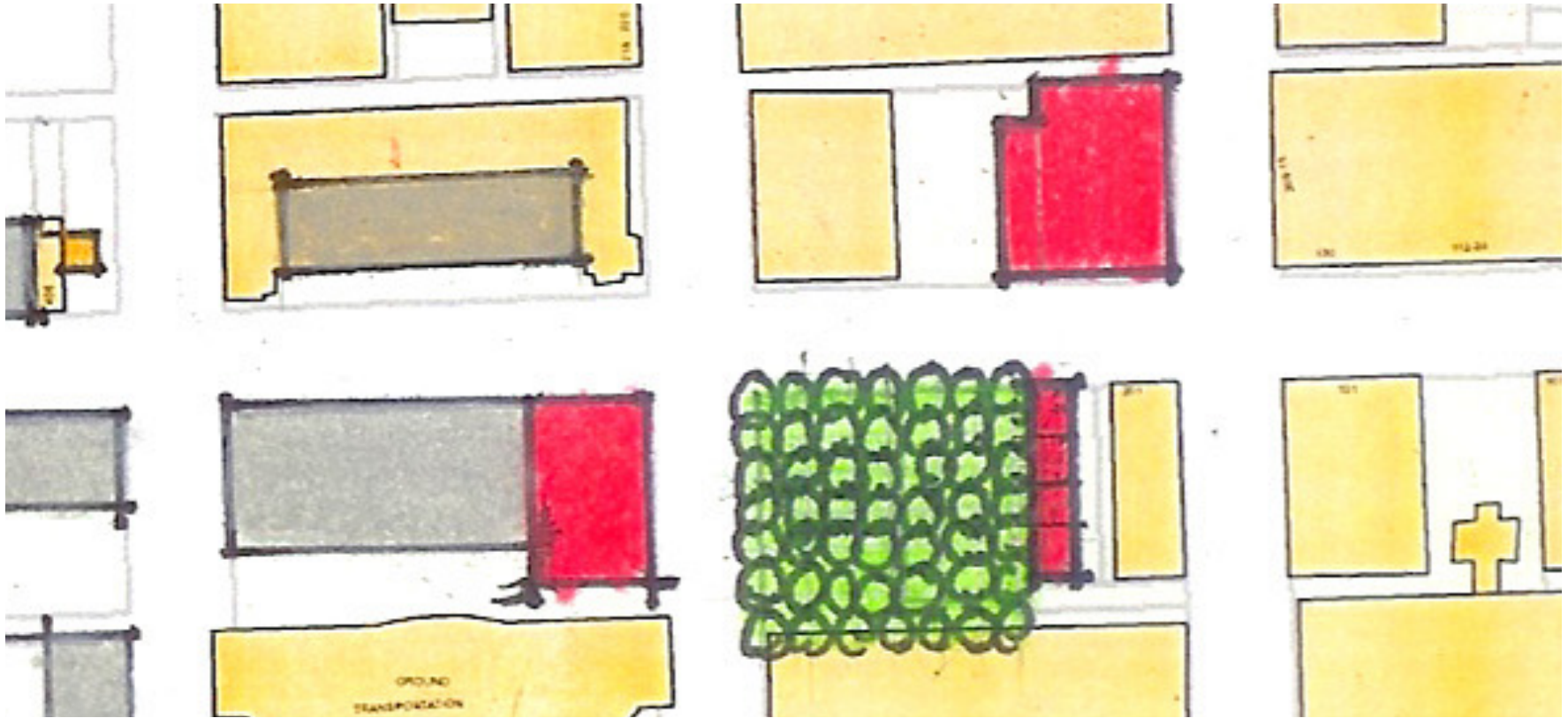
The Plaza's surface is entirely paved, with small trees planted too infrequently to provide shade, even at maturity. It cries out for more trees and greenery.



And its eastern edge, instead of being faced by a building with doors and windows, it overlooks a bank drive-through.



Given the important location of this site, the tremendous investment that has already been made in the Figge, and the plaza's manifest failure as an inviting public space, this intervention merits the highest priority.



The plan shows four remedial actions: the plaza is planted with trees and greenery; new building sites are prioritized to its west and its north, and a thin building containing any viable use – but ideally artists live/work studio lofts – is built in the western two lanes of the bank drive-through.



Angled convenience parking could be placed under this building in the two right drive-through lanes, which are almost never used.



Imagine how much more lively Figge Plaza would feel with an eastern edge like this— minus the parked cars, of course.

# **2. Second Street East**



Second Street east of the Figge is the most pedestrian-friendly part of downtown. Great gains in walkability can be easily achieved by reinforcing and extending this successful area.



Both physically and socially, this area is where downtown works best.





It is currently anchored to the east, albeit weakly, by the block containing both the Bucktown Arts Center and the art supply store.



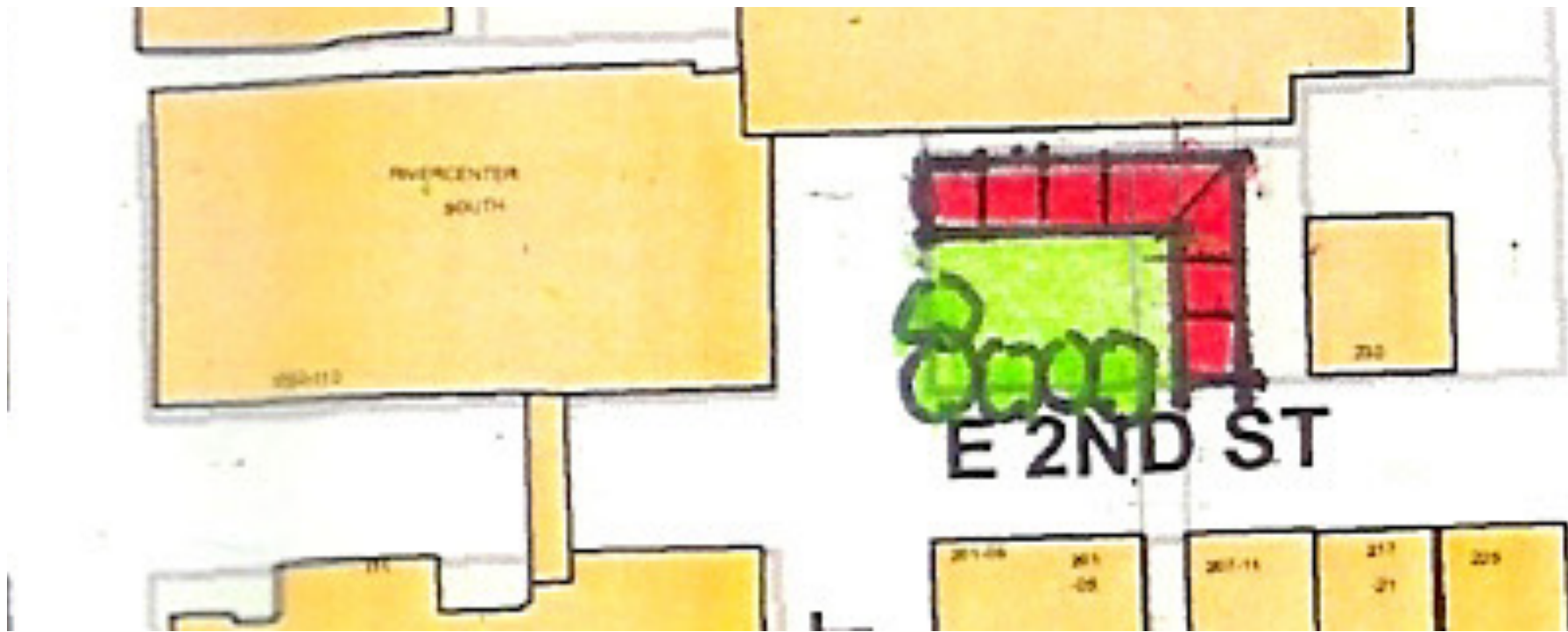
But these sit past a large blank-walled empty lot awaiting an expansion to the Convention Center that will never be built.



This area is not large enough to accommodate an expansion of the scale necessary to make the Convention Center competitive in a bigger market.



The aerial photograph shows how the spatial definition and interest of Second Street are undermined, first by the Convention Center green, and next by the surface parking lots to the east. These lots will be addressed in the recommendation that follows (Intervention 4).



This intervention recommends that the existing lawn be turned into a special place, perhaps an urban green surrounded by attainably-priced rowhouses. City incentives can entice a private developer to take this site on. This effort should include a small investment in trees, paths, benches, and perhaps a fountain.



This green has the advantage of sitting directly across Second Street from Mike and Mark Park, a lovely mid-block pedestrian walk.

# **3. The Eastern Anchor**



Further east on Second street is a spectacular, undervalued site that has the potential to form a strong eastern anchor to the pedestrian-friendly part of downtown.



The view across the Mississippi, framed between the lock-and-dam and the railroad tracks, creates a dramatic forced perspective unmatched anywhere else in America. This view would be especially powerful if seen from a greater height.



The new Bechtel Park was wisely placed in this location.



This park has some very nice features but, like Figge Plaza, would benefit from more greenery and trees.



It is surrounded by undervalued properties, many of which are empty and/or for sale.



And to its west, at the corner of Second and Pershing, is a vast surface parking lot that often sits empty.



This intervention proposes tall condominium buildings surrounding Bechtel Park, served by parking structures in the striped areas indicated, including on the large empty lot, where it can be hidden behind less expensive housing against Second Street.



It also suggests turning the corner onto River Drive, with more condominiums and an additional parking structure where indicated. These buildings, perhaps five to eight stories tall, should be luxurious enough to justify structured parking.



This photo shows this second area, which is also underutilized. As drawn, the condo buildings are located a short distance from their structured parking, but that arrangement will become marketable once the streetscape is improved.

# **4. Reaching the Riverfront**



Davenport is blessed with a beautiful waterfront, one that has not been cut off by levees. Unfortunately, this waterfront *has* been cut off by a highway and deep parking lots. River Drive can and must become less of a highway -- as already proposed -- and the parking lots should be converted to parks, as laid out in River Vision.



Connection to the river is further complicated by the requirement that new buildings near River Drive, unless they float, may not provide street-level shops, due to flooding concerns. For this reason, it is hard to imagine Davenport developing a world class live-work-play waterfront.



This sort of outcome – here in Oslo – is not possible without ground-level retail.



So the challenge becomes how to bring people to the River in a way that is safe, comfortable, and interesting, while lacking the capacity to create a continuous lively urban edge along River Drive or elsewhere. There is no easy solution to this challenge, but the proper approach is to identify the most promising north-south *corridors* to the water, and making walk along those corridors as inviting as possible.



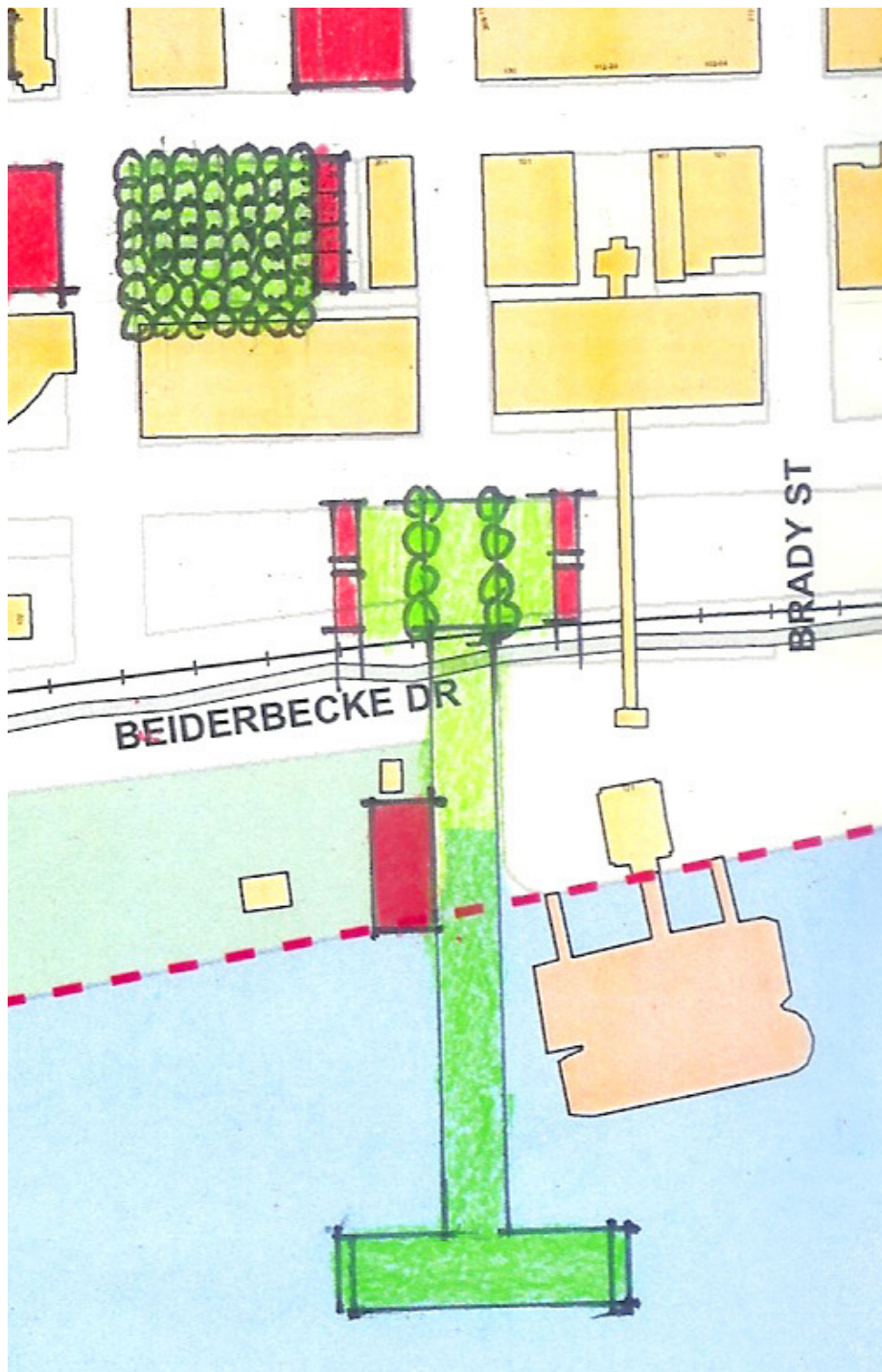
River Vision correctly identifies Main Street and Perry Street as the two best pedestrian paths to the River. Main Street is the most viable north-south pedestrian connector in the downtown, reaching straight up to Vanderveer park, soon with transit. And Perry Street provides an attractive path from the Convention Center to the River.



Main Street already terminates on a lovely fountain. Unfortunately, the fountain is bounded by two parking lots rather than the two mixed-use buildings that would create an active corridor to the water.



In any case, the view east and west from the fountain should be something other than parked cars. Even a low stone wall would help improve this space.



The red objects shown framing the fountain here, then, are a frustration, because we don't know what they are or could be. But some sort or framing device would be helpful. Further south, we see the Pier recommended by River Vision, and another red object of more significance.



Love it or hate it, the Casino is a major source of energy on the riverfront. It brings a million people there every year, and is not going to be moving any time soon.

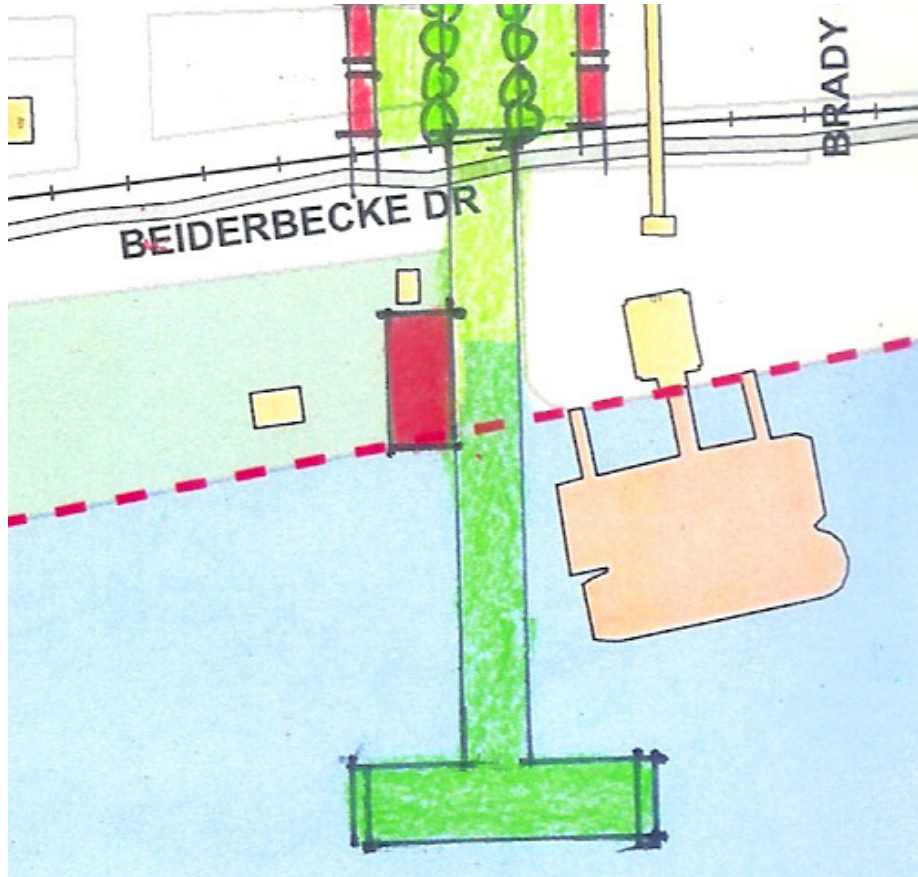


Directly west of it, across from the proposed pier, is a site that could function alone as Davenport's urban waterfront.



This site, shown at right, could house a restaurant with kitchen facilities on the second floor, and a wash-out-able ground floor dining area. Such restaurants have been successful elsewhere, with the aid of dumbwaiters.

The building could also contain one or two stories of luxury condominiums upstairs.



It's not Oslo, but one mixed-use building on the Main Street dock would contribute mightily to the perceived liveliness of the Davenport waterfront.





On Perry Street, the Dock, abandoned after a fire, deserves to be re-inhabited, and its property made more pedestrian-friendly rather than focused on automotive drop-off. This axis is less significant than Main Street, but the presence of a restaurant building already on site makes it an easier win.

# **5. The Warehouse District**



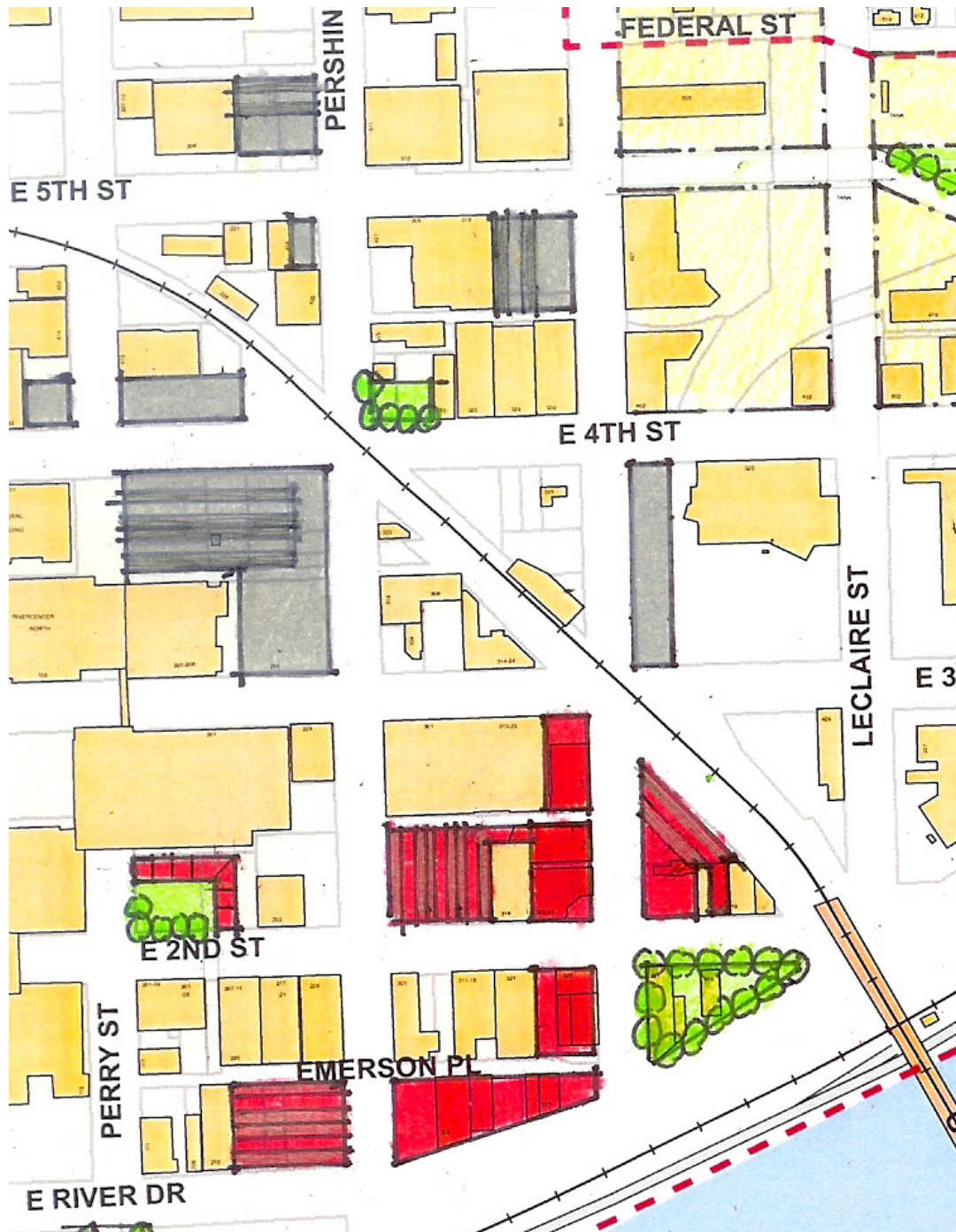
As discussed, the area by the Crescent Lofts is experiencing a revitalization, one that needs to be reinforced and connected to the downtown core.



Here we see how the newly renovated apartments are separated from the heart of the city by not just the railroad, but also by some large open parking lots.



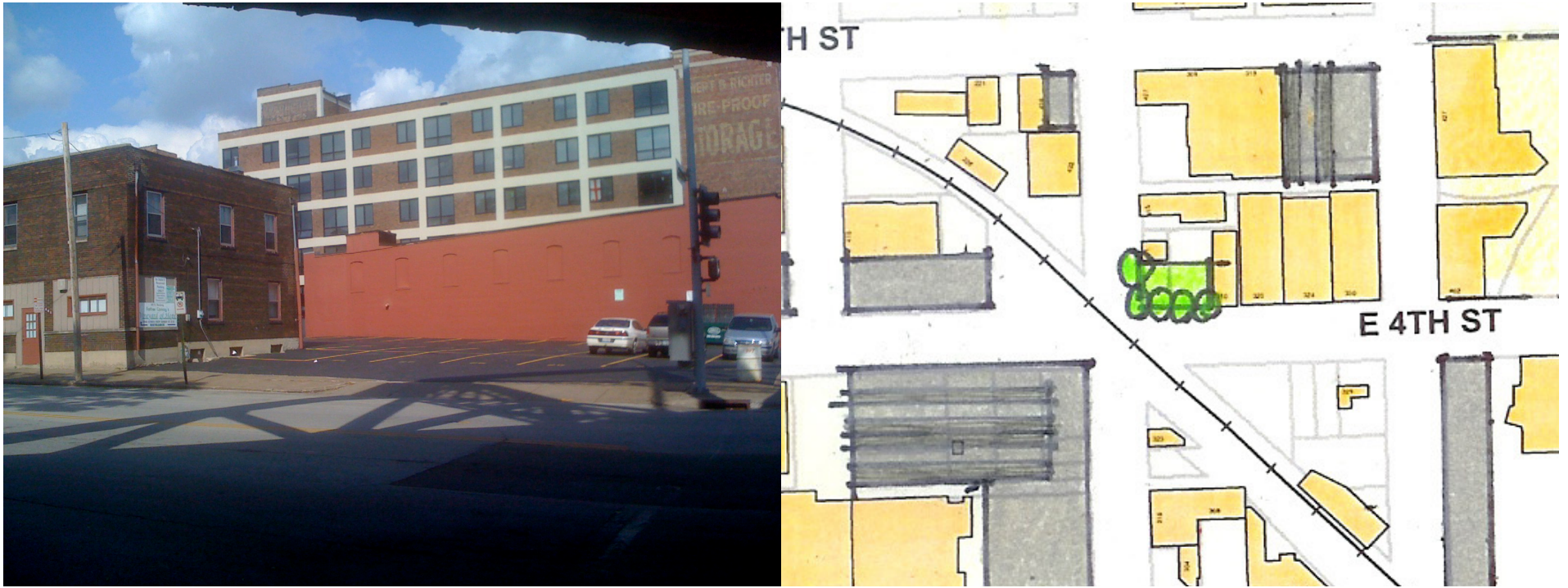
People who live in this “edgy” type of area do not mind the continued presence of industrial uses nearby. But filling in a few empty lots would give the neighborhood a sense of greater completion.



The upper right side of this map shows, in grey, the lots that must be prioritized for development if this area is to feel more complete and connected. The upper lots give a better edge to Fifth Street, while the lower lot links this area to the Eastern Anchor site.



Few people care to make this trek past a vast parking lot to reach the Warehouse District, and this parking lot sits empty but for forty hours per week. A thin residential building along Iowa Street between Third and Fourth would take advantage of off-peak parking and improve this walk.



This small parking lot holds the Bix Beiderbecke Run party and is apparently sacred, but a downtown parking plan could perhaps find a way to turn it into a little neighborhood park, something the Warehouse District currently needs.

# **6. The East Industrial Area**



Part of this planning exercise was to consider the brownfield site just east of the Warehouse District, because there has been much discussion of its redesign as a mixed-use neighborhood.



This area contains one historic building of high quality, shown at right, while the remainder of its construction seems expendable. What is not expendable, however, is the idea that this site, if it is to be developed as a vital part of the city, must have a traditional urban organization of small blocks and streets.



This plan, then, is presented as one of many possible solutions as to how streets and blocks could be laid into the site, preserving the one historic structure while creating a streetscape of character. However, given this site's relatively remote location, it is considered a lower-priority development zone than any other site in this study.

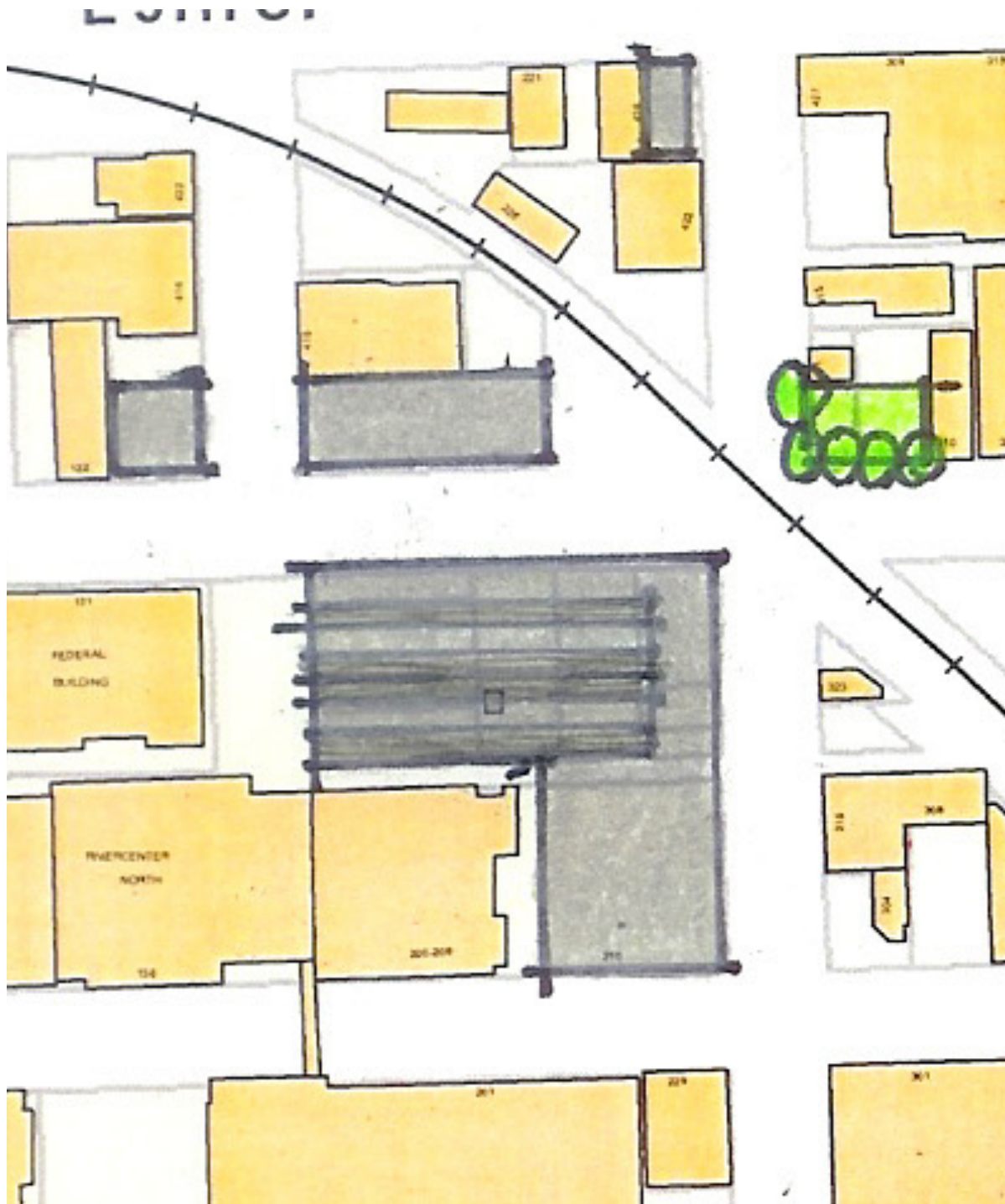
# **7. Opportunity Corner**



Also not the highest priority, the very large parking lot that surrounds the Blackhawk Hotel is presented here as “Opportunity Corner,” for no other reason than its great size and its fairly ideal location.



This site, against the railroad bridge at upper right, is worth studying for a Convention Center expansion, since it is much bigger than the site currently being held for that use.



This drawing shows how a building could wrap its own parking structure to create a walkable street edge. To its north, additional new buildings could help give life to Fourth Street.

# **8. Hibernia Way**



One of the most attractive half-streets in downtown is Brady just north of Fourth, where Hibernia Hall and a number of other businesses cater to the sort of urbane young adults who are leading the regeneration of the city.



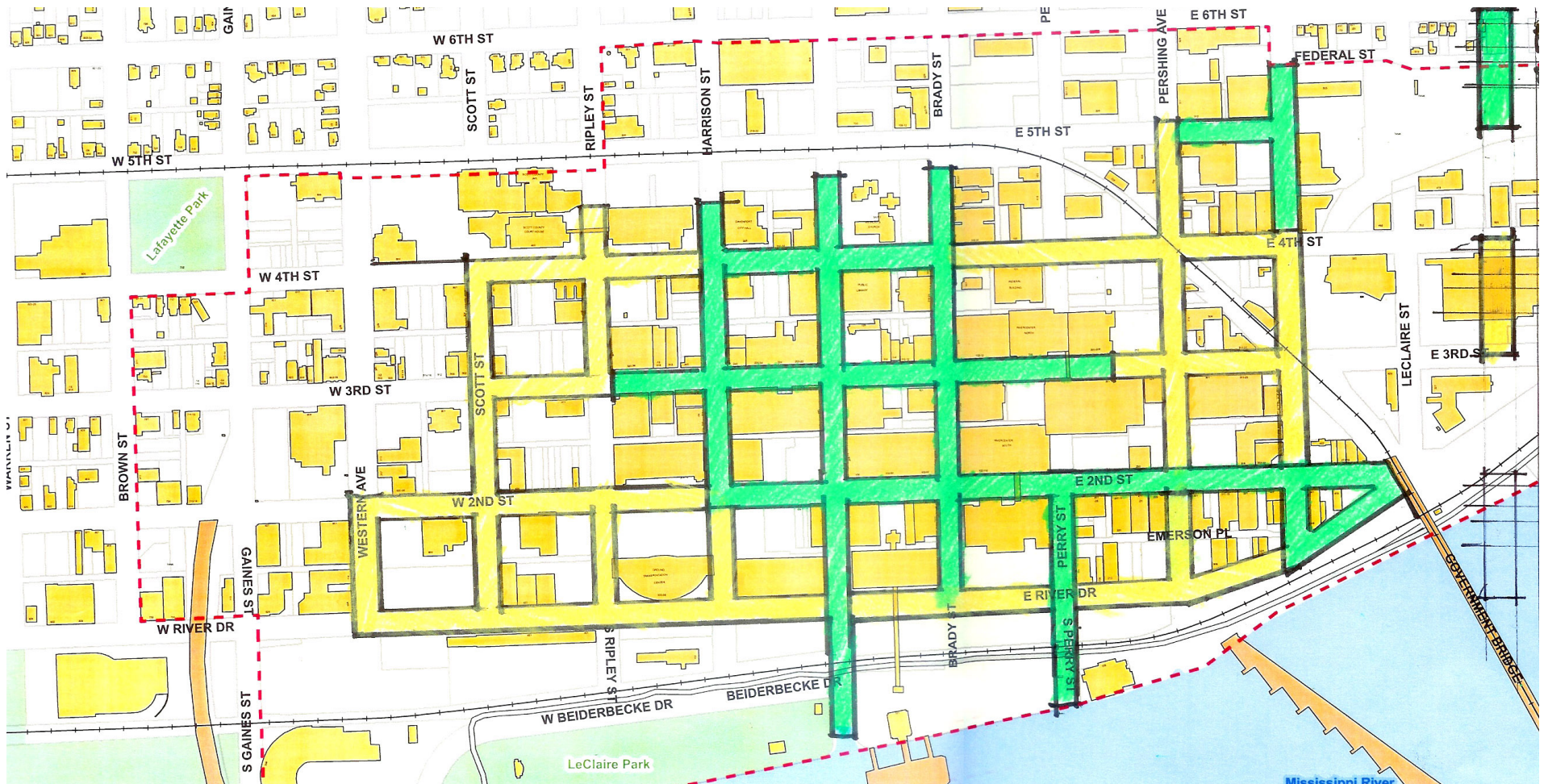
It can be called a “half-street” because these businesses sit across from a parking lot that fails to give spatial definition or interest to its sidewalk.



Across Fourth Street, a tiny parking lot, holding perhaps a dozen cars, ruins the street face of the lovely small Symphony Orchestra headquarters.



And slightly west, another tiny parking lot and blank wall further blight the pedestrian experience of Fourth Street.



All of which might be acceptable if our Street Assignment did not prioritize this corner as one that could contribute mightily to the walkability of downtown if it were to be improved.



The aerial view shows the damage done by these parking lots, but also the location of another parking lot, between Main and Harrison, which is well located to absorb parking from other sites.



The longer-term solution to this site, to be addressed in a parking plan, would be to consolidate the area's parking load in a structure as shown. This structure would allow the west side of Brady to be completed with another row of buildings, and a series of greens to replace the ineffectual parking lots currently lining Fourth.



The plan also shows the Forest Block and the Renwick building in red, because finding new uses for these two sites will jump start the further development of this area.



This longer-term solution may not be justified for many years, but this area will never reach its potential until the surface parking lots are relocated. Perhaps, if streets are restriped as already suggested to slow traffic and provide more parking, these lots can be eliminated without the need for a new structured lot.

# **9. Third Street Sweet Spot**



Another part of downtown favored by younger adults, and currently in better physical shape, is Third Street between Ripley and Brady Streets.



Its collection of bars, restaurants, and lower-cost shops make this the sort of environment that entices millennials to seek housing downtown.



Aside from the bad traffic characteristics and treeless sidewalks of Third Street, the only other major impediments to walkability are banks: one overly large drive-through. . .



. . . and a bank parking lot across the street.



These gaps to the street-wall can be seen in the aerial photo.



Filling in these spots with small buildings along the sidewalk would complete the job started by restriping the roadway and adding more trees. The drive-through's massive curb-cut could be reduced to a single lane, and the displaced bank parking could easily be replaced by additional spaces on the street as angle parking is added.

# **10. The Courthouse Corridor**



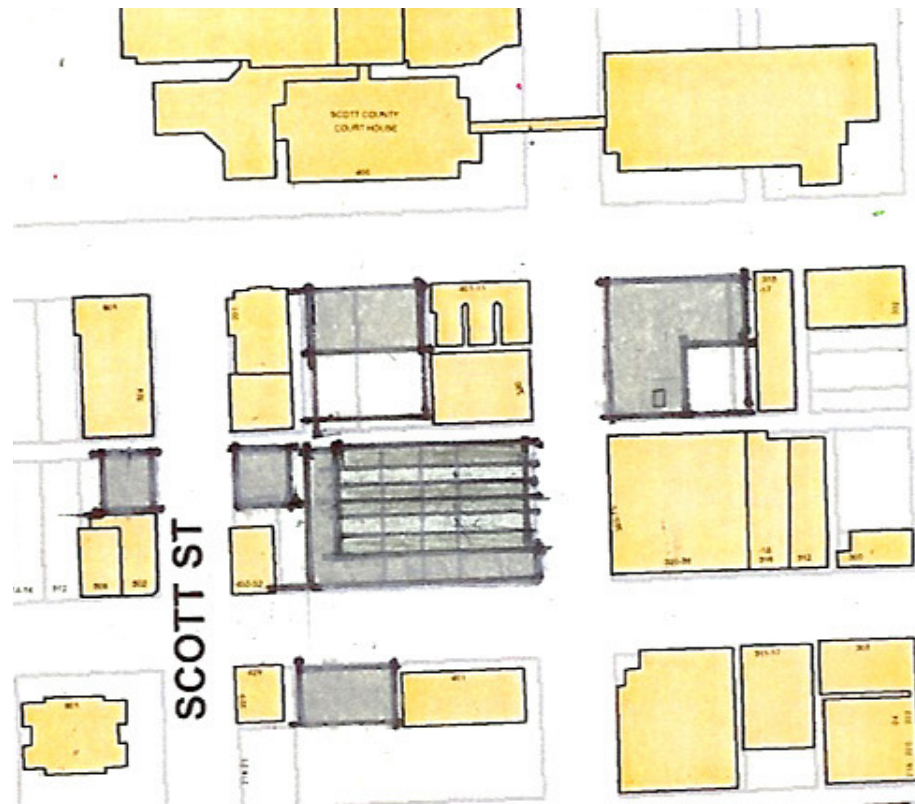
A small but not insignificant number of people who would not otherwise come to downtown Davenport do so to serve on jury duty at the County Courthouse. Many of these people might enjoy lunch or an evening drink on Third Street.



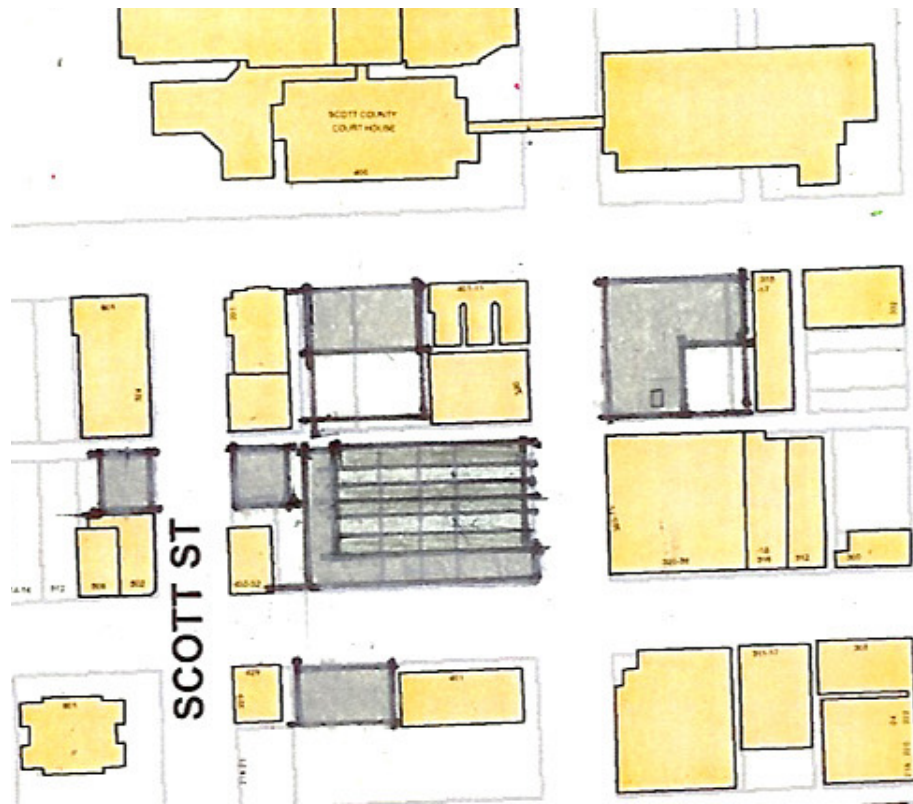
These are located less than three blocks away, but the path to reach them is blighted by one empty parking lot after another.



One of these lots is used largely by community college students, who must drive to class because they cannot find attractive, affordable housing downtown.



A longer-term solution to both of these problems would be the location of a single structured parking lot, lined by student housing, on Third Street between Scott and Ripley Streets. This lot would allow for the more productive development of all the parcels shown in grey.



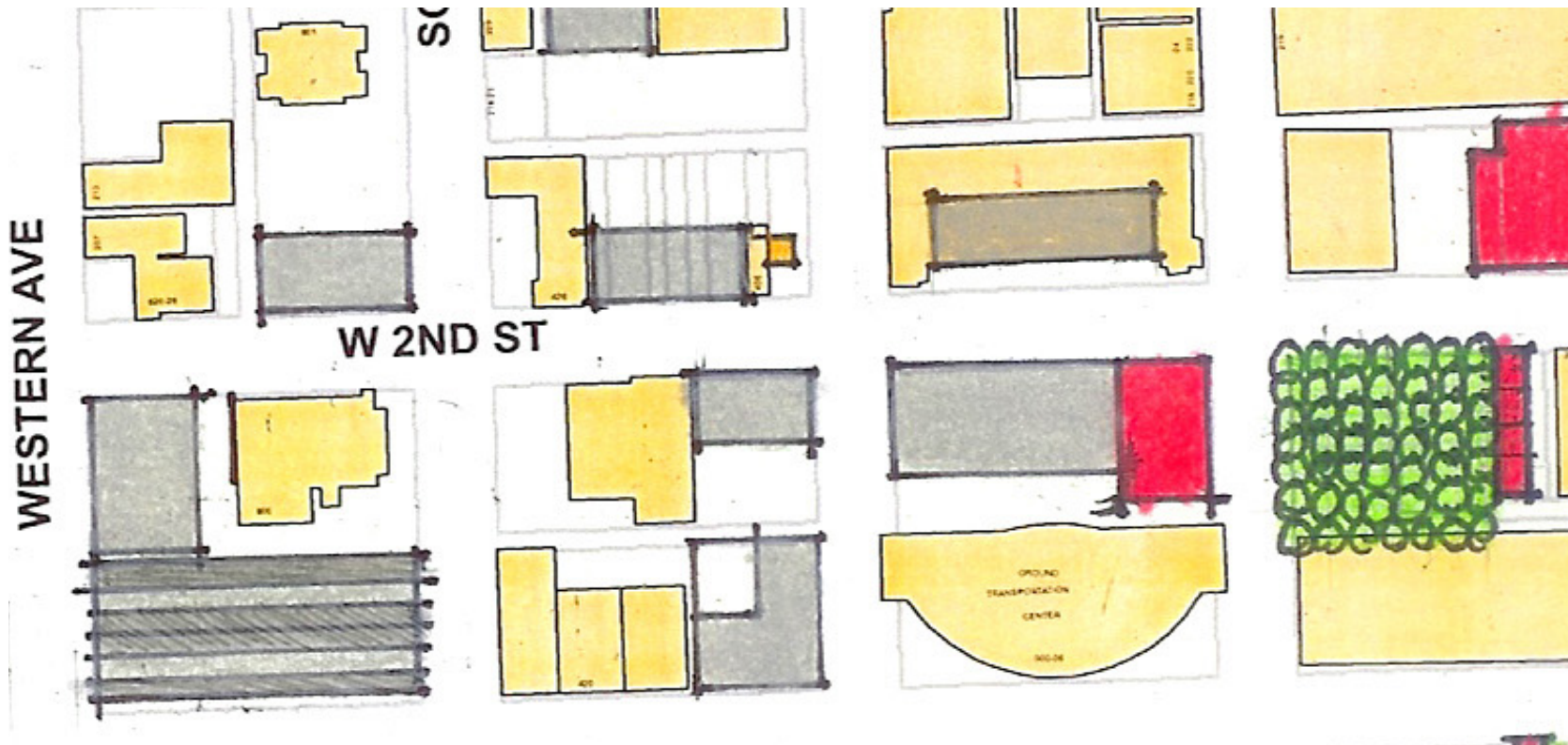
An intermittent solution would be to simply create thin buildings with student housing along the exposed parking lot edges, and using parking management to better make full use of the remaining surface parking spots. Again, restriped streets would help meet the parking demand.

# **11. Second Street West**



Downtown west of the Figge has the reputation of being unsafe. It is actually extremely safe (statistically), but does not present an attractive walking environment.

In the longer term, if the walkable area of downtown is to grow, then westward on Second Street is a natural trajectory for this growth. Several natural anchors – the YMCA and Modern Woodmen Park – already draw people in this direction, so that improvements to the pedestrian quality of this corridor are likely to reap real rewards. Like other streets in higher-priority areas, the fix is the same – restriped roads, more trees and, eventually, the consolidation of parking into centralized facilities so that surface parking lots can become building sites with street-friendly facades.



This drawing shows in grey all the spots that should ultimately be filled in, and the possible location of a parking structure on River Drive. Other locations, like by the Transit Center, are also possible for parking, as long as it is shielded from the street.



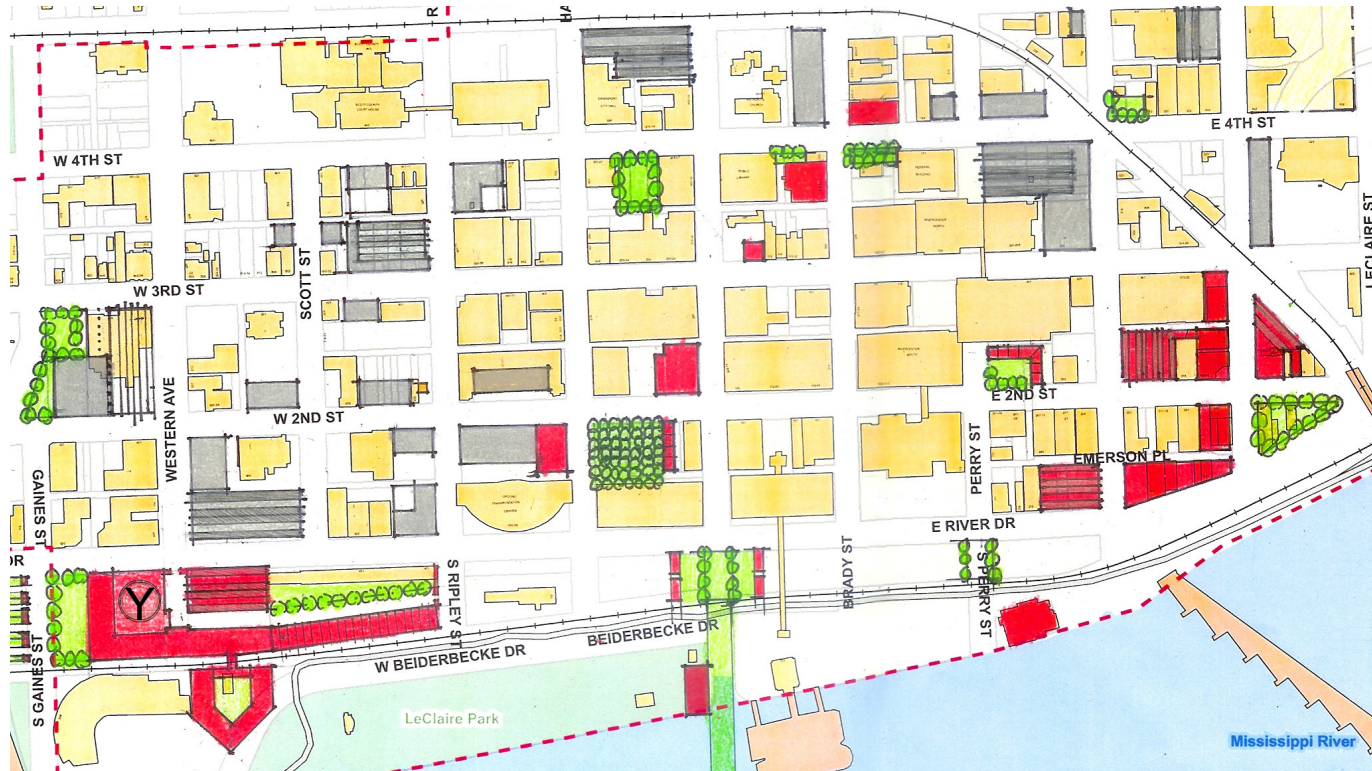
This otherwise attractive parking structure, between Harrison and Ripley, presents the street with an edge that is too boring to entice pedestrian activity. Fortunately, it is designed to allow future retail infill at street level.



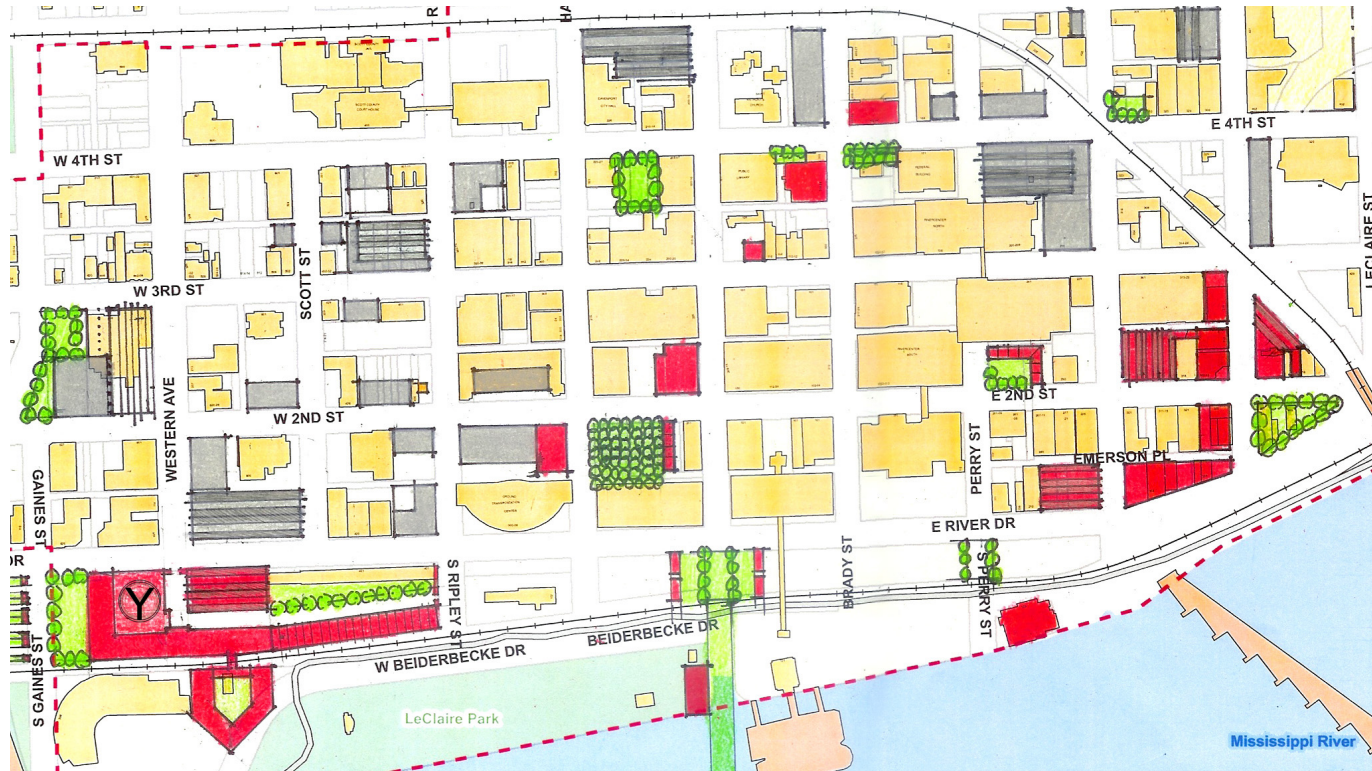
As already discussed, the lawn in front of the Transit Center is poised to receive a building, or a real park. A lawn does not a park make, and this lawn is a far cry from a useful park with a tree-lined edge and spaces for active and passive recreation.



Heading west, one passes a series of surface parking lots, most of which will be quite difficult to move without a parking plan and central structure.



If pedestrians are to be brought comfortably west to the YMCA and to the ballpark, a walkable corridor needs to be selected and made truly excellent. These improvements are suggested because Second Street is the most viable candidate to play that role.



However, if the YMCA were to move, and the proposed Woodmen Park Modern District were to be built (Intervention 13), then an alternative path west would exist south of River Drive. In this case, Second Street could remain principally automotive west of Ripley Street.

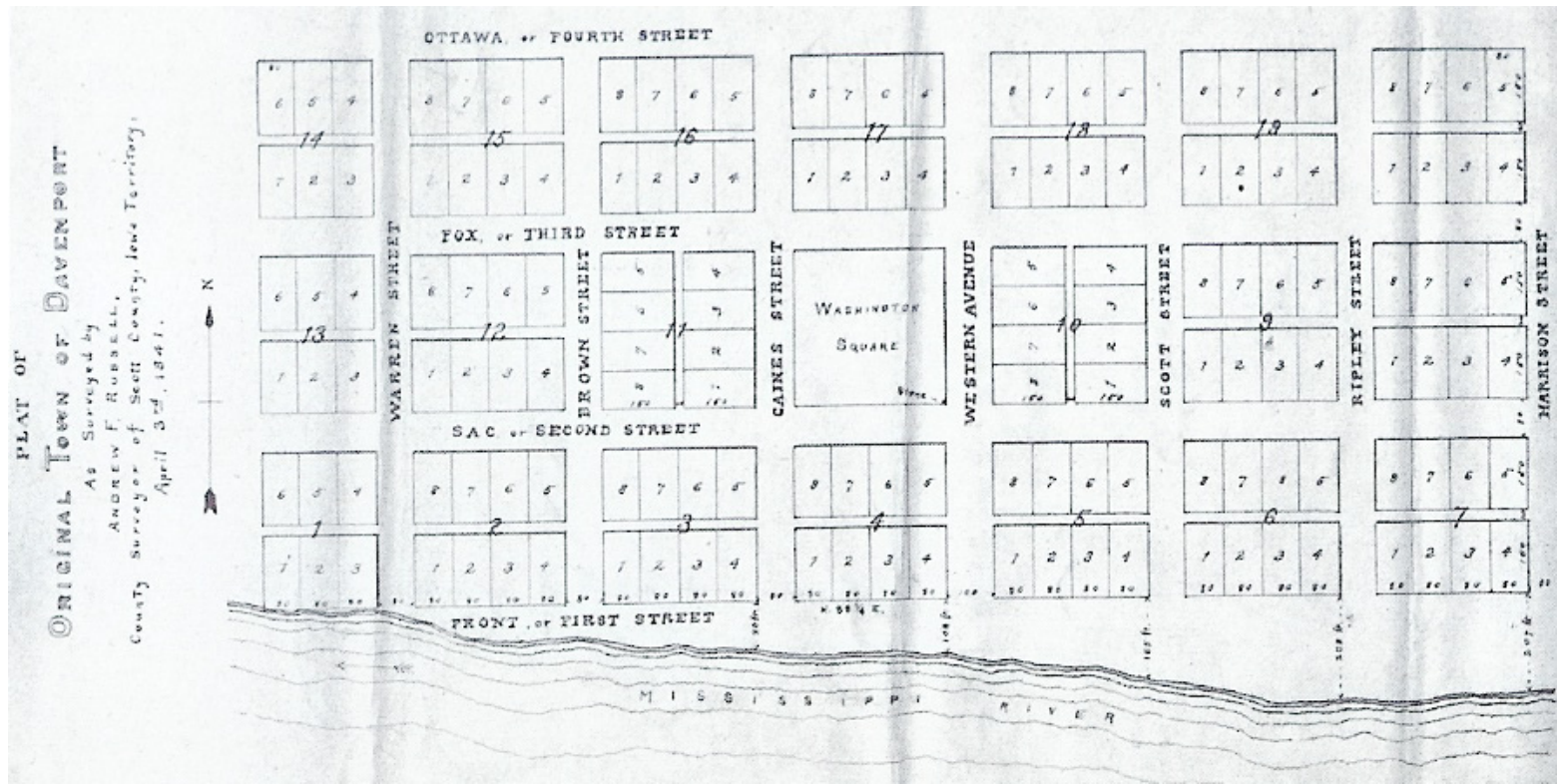
# **12. The YMCA Block**



The YMCA is a tremendous downtown anchor, bringing over 1500 people daily to its gym and daycare facilities. The building, however, needs renovation, and we are told that it cannot be rebuilt on site without shutting down for years. The loss of this facility would be a big blow to downtown.



If indeed it must be moved, it will vacate a site with tremendously valuable retail visibility, at the foot of the Centennial Bridge. This site seems to be Davenport's best opportunity to bring a grocery store downtown.



Interestingly, this block was once Washington Square, the civic heart of Davenport before the downtown expanded eastward in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It still contains, in its northwest corner, many majestic trees from its inception. These must be preserved.



The proposed plan shows these trees within a small park, while a medium-size grocery store with surface parking fills the remainder of the block. This solution is inferior to a building with parking underground and/or on the roof, an increasingly common urban grocery type.



Again, this solution is only suggested if the YMCA absolutely must move, since it is such a valuable resource downtown, and on this site in particular.

# **13. The Woodmen Park Modern District**



Davenport's nationally-recognized Modern Woodmen Park is a local treasure and a largely untapped downtown resource.



With roughly 70 home games each five-month season – that’s about 3 home games per week – the River Bandits bring many thousands of people into downtown Davenport. Most of these people drive in, park, attend a game, and drive home, never setting foot on the streets of your city or patronizing one of its businesses. Like the Farmers’ Market, the ballpark is located on the edge of downtown, without a pleasant pedestrian corridor connecting it to the heart of the city.



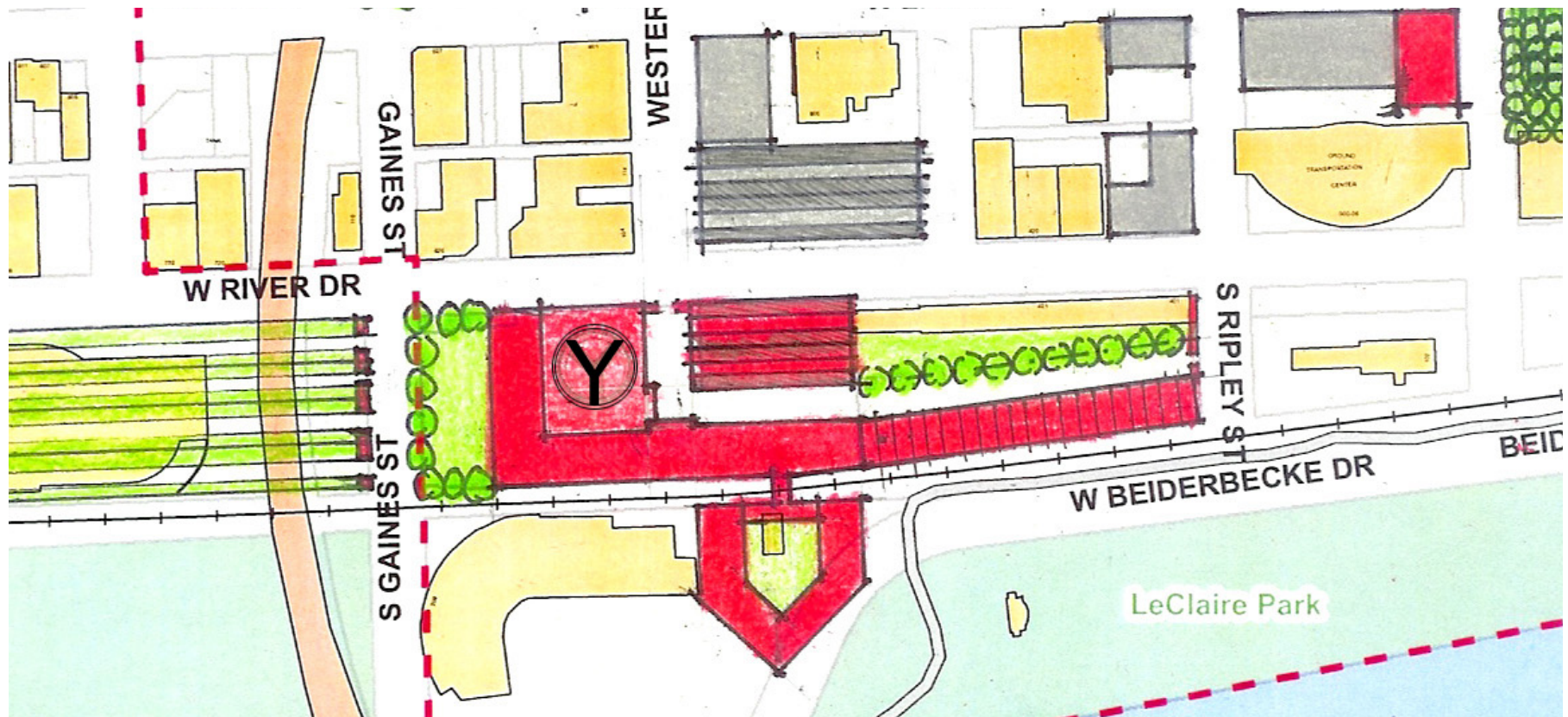
The ballpark is also an untapped real estate goldmine, as many people would be willing to pay top dollar for condos with baseball views, not to mention river views.



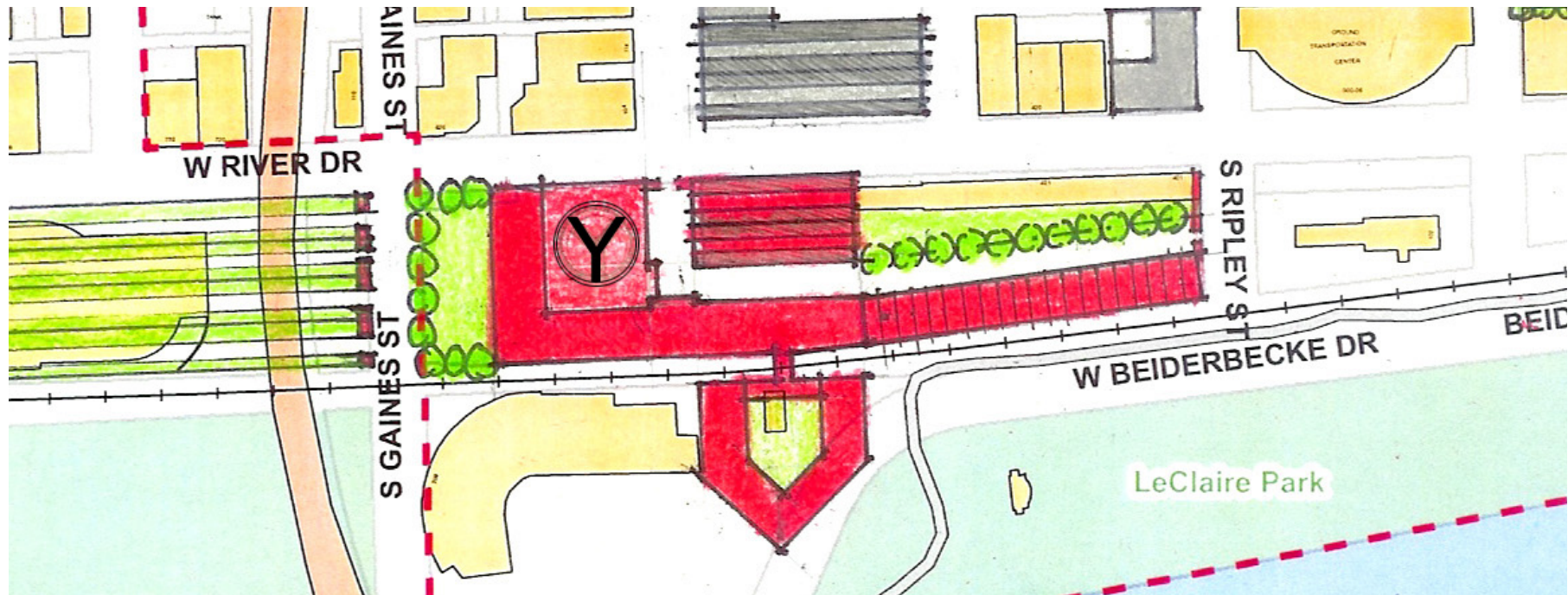
Probably the best opportunity for connecting the ballpark to the rest of downtown exists at the back of the old freight house, where a number of restaurants and clubs form half of what could be a very attractive street.



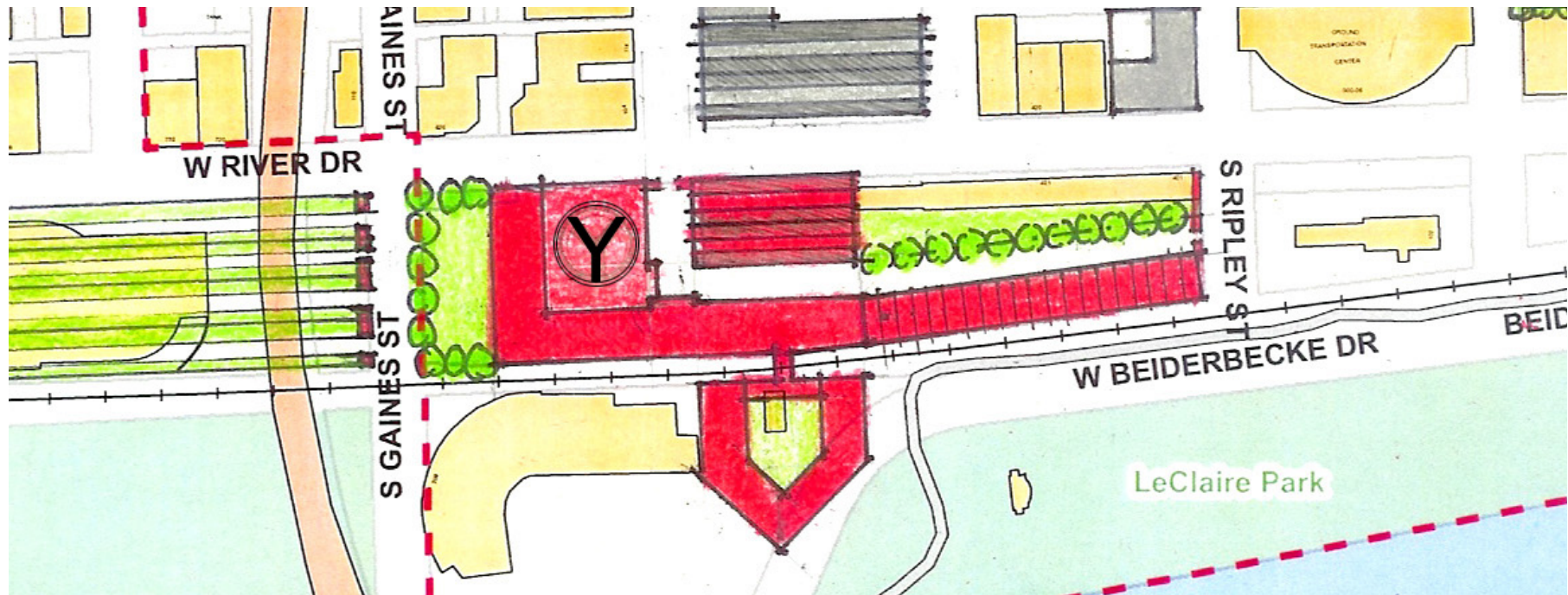
This corridor is currently a two-row parking lot. One row of this lot could be converted to a street with double-angle parking, while the other could become a building site for apartments or rowhouses sitting atop their own double-head-in parking lot.



This housing, at right above, would offer views of the river and bandstand. A limited amount of parking would need to be relocated.



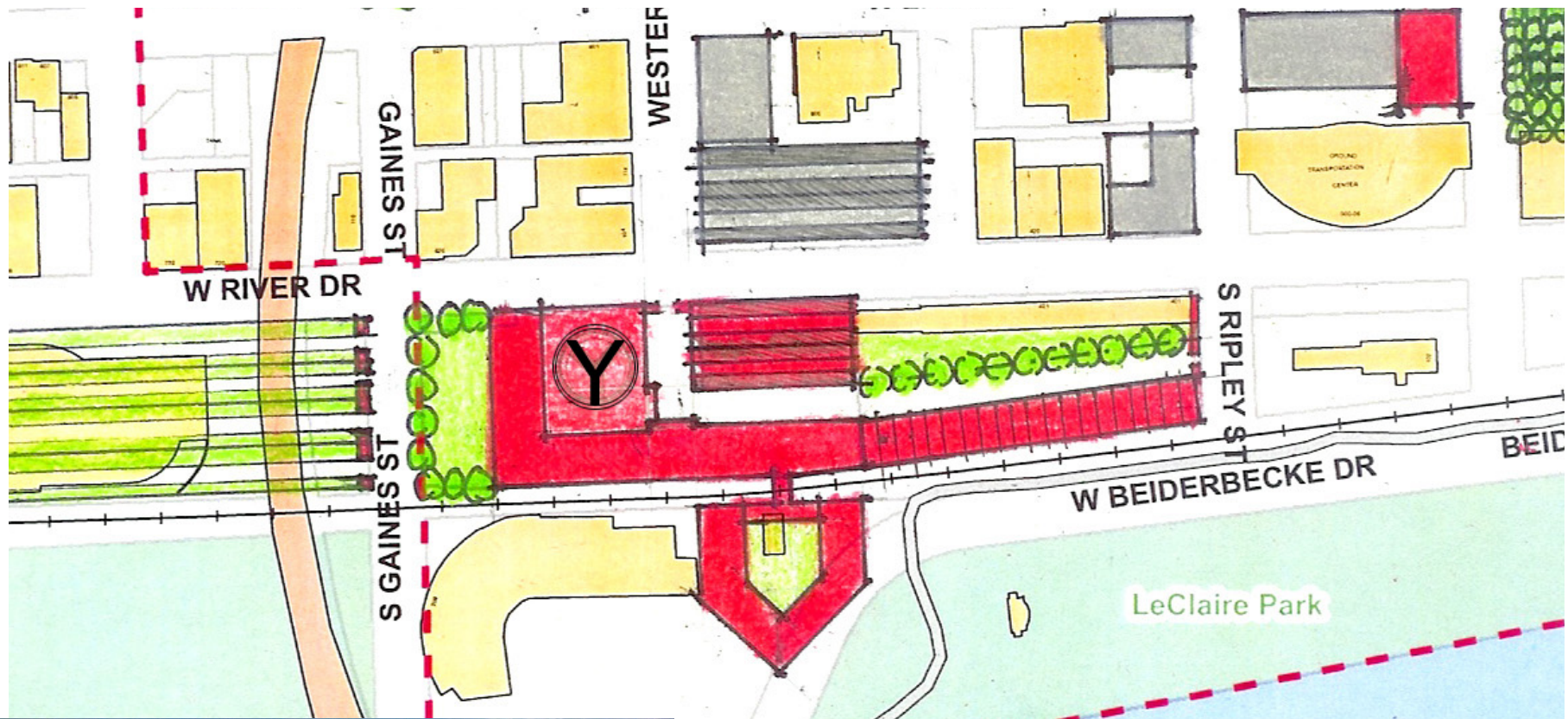
At center above is a scheme designed to take full advantage of the real estate value of baseball views, while also connecting the ballpark back to River Drive and the rest of downtown. This design, one of many possibilities, takes advantage of a relocated YMCA to lift housing above the ballpark and river views.



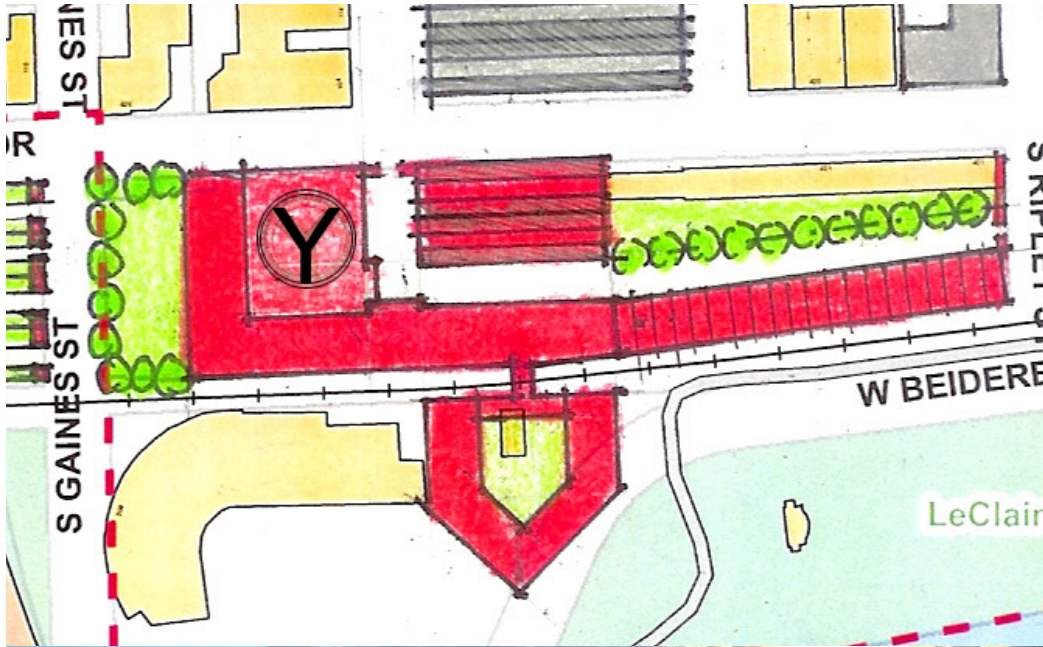
The taller L-shaped building overlooks a mid-rise building south of the tracks which offers closer views of the outfield and river park. A civic square lined by slightly-elevated restaurants frames views of the ballpark from the north. Parking is located in structured lots along River Drive, and also to the west, where it currently sits.



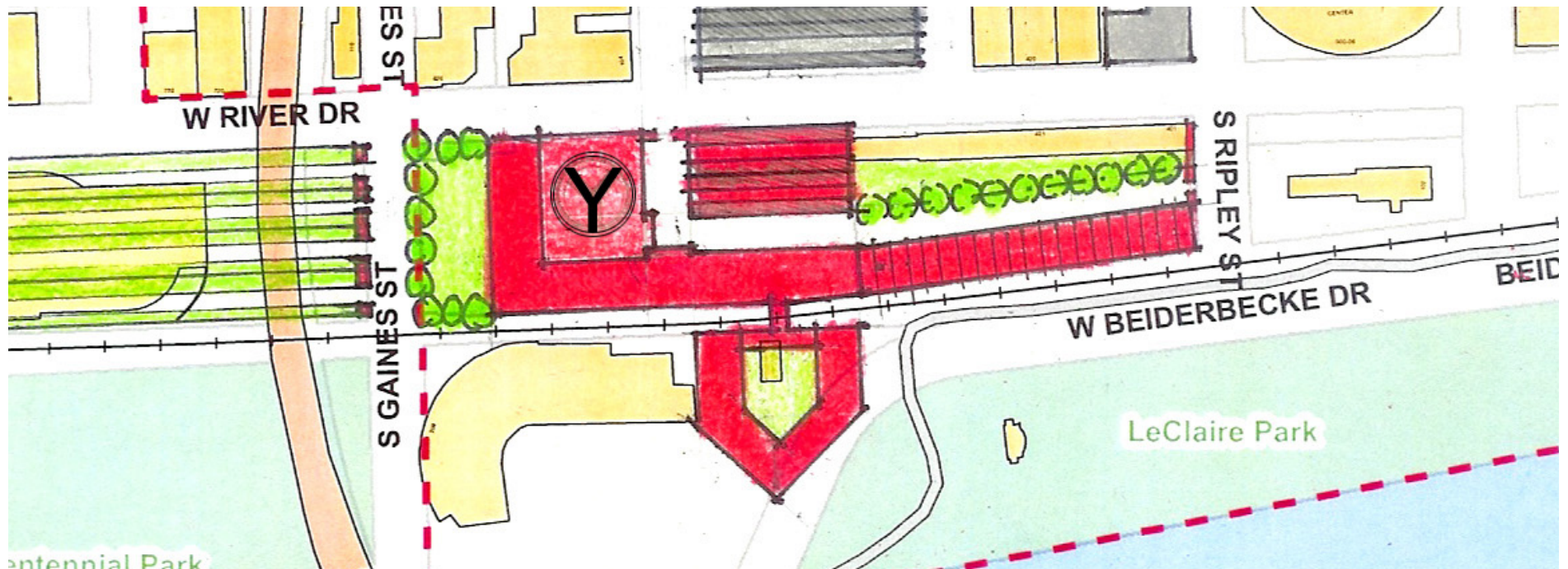
This parking area, much of which is gravel and grass, must be left unpaved, so that it can assist in stormwater infiltration.



Western avenue would terminate on an entry into this new district, connecting to the new street behind the freight house.



The northern and western entries to this internal street would need to be provided with waterproof gates that rise in a storm, so that the entire district could have a sealed boat-bottom perimeter. All indoor uses would need to be built above the flood zone.



The economy of this proposal has yet to be proved, but it is reasonable to think that a developer offered a low-cost 99-year lease on this City property might find the opportunity attractive. The lot should not be conveyed, however, without the City retaining the right for plan approval.

# **14. The Bridges of Davenport**



Davenport is a city characterized by railroads and bridges. If the city were to create a unique brand, it would celebrate this infrastructure.



This has already begun to happen with the lighting of the Centennial Bridge, but this nascent effort has yet to reach its potential.



The skybridge, while perhaps a bit gaudy, continues this effort, such that Davenport is on the verge of becoming known for its lighted infrastructure.



No less than seven small railroad bridges surround the heart of downtown Davenport. These are often presented as a challenge, an impediment to people walking downtown. But some of the world's best cities are surrounded by similarly pierced barriers.



The walls of Dubrovnik and Florence contribute to the integrity of those cities' downtowns. If properly treated – and celebrated – Davenport's railroad bridges could play the same role.



Some of these bridges are more attractive than others but, taken together, they constitute a unique collection that, if treated with imagination, could become a trademark for the city.



It is interesting to see how some of these bridges are becoming overgrown with greenery, plainly visible from the streets below. Seeing nature claim these man-made artifacts confounds our understanding of them, and presents opportunities for art.



One is reminded of the ongoing reconstruction of the abandoned High Line in New York City as an elevated park corridor.



This discussion becomes more relevant when one learns that most of the bridge crossings, while carrying only a single rail, are two or three rail-beds wide, leaving room for other uses.

This sort of challenge and opportunity is better addressed by an artist than a city planner. But it is possible to imagine a wide range of creative solutions that, rather than prettifying the bridges or making them disappear, would embrace their messy vitality and take advantage of both nature and (low-energy LED) lighting to create a breathtaking edge to the heart of downtown. Such an urban-scale spectacle would build Davenport's growing reputation as a place for the arts, while reinforcing its unique brand. This intervention would require cooperation from the notoriously uncooperative railroad, but it is worth pursuing given the possible benefits.



Again, the prior fourteen recommended interventions are not presented to the City of Davenport as any type of downtown plan. Rather they are intended as a menu of opportunities to make the most impactful investments in the city's growth. It is not expected that all or even many of them can be accomplished quickly, as resources are limited. But, if the goal is to make the city thrive by improving its walkability – as I believe it should be -- then all future investments, public and private, should be oriented around accomplishing its objectives. I look forward to assisting the City and its business community in this ambitious effort.

- Jeff Speck AICP

Special thanks are due to my hosts and sponsors, the Figge Museum, the Downtown Partnership, DavenportOne, and the City of Davenport office of Community Planning and Economic Development.

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And finally, my tremendous gratitude goes to Darrin Nordahl of the City of Davenport Design Center, who caused this study to happen, and made it a pleasure to undertake.