

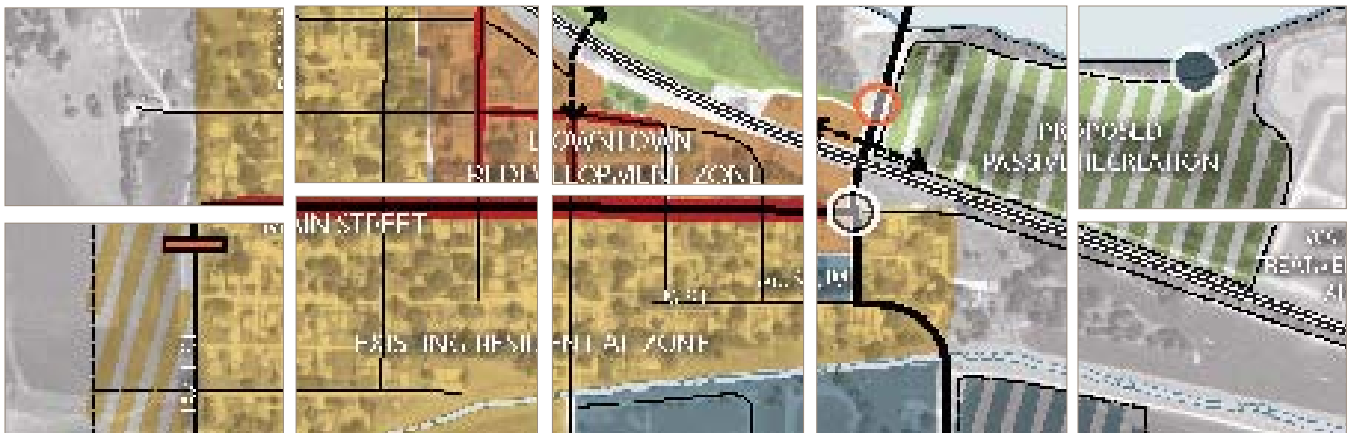


The Van Meter Strategic Vision Plan

Prepared for: the City of Van Meter

#28338.00

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01

executive summary

van meter strategic vision plan

A small Iowa community nestled among hills along the Raccoon River with easy access to Iowa's capital city, Van Meter could be Iowa's best kept secret. With its picturesque setting, quiet streets, and a good K-12 school with exemplary technology training, Van Meter has the makings to be the kind of place many would like to call home. Additionally, Van Meter's small-town friendliness and large-town convenience hold great promise for the City's future success.

During the last decade the population of Van Meter has not declined like many small towns in the state. Instead, Van Meter has grown from 866 residents in the year 2000 to an estimated 1,000 residents for 2010. During that same time demands upon the school and infrastructure have increased while commercial amenities have dwindled. Despite this, the City of Van Meter's tax base has been able to increase slightly.

The questions currently facing Van Meter's community leaders are similar to those faced by all communities at one time or another and will determine Van Meter's long-term viability. Some of these questions are as follows:

- How do we generate growth of the local business community and foster the strength and vibrancy to sustain it?
- How does Van Meter attract young professionals and showcase the evolving city as an ideal place to plant roots?
- How does Van Meter convey to others that it is a friendly, small town with plenty of opportunities for outdoor recreation and community involvement?
- What is needed to attract the creative risk-takers but also provide attractive elements that keep existing families and empty-nesters invested in this community?
- What will Van Meter leverage to make the city more appealing to residents and visitors alike?

To do nothing with these issues will compromise this town's ability to design their future. It will also deny current and future residents the opportunity to be a part of the positive changes affecting their small-town lifestyle. Inaction could also allow the fast-growing neighboring communities to soon extinguish civic pride and any identifiable sense of place within Van Meter.

Process Overview

In December 2008, RDG Planning & Design was contracted to assist the City through a new Strategic Vision Plan. This involved reviewing the existing community planning documents, facilitating community input and identifying opportunities for improvement. From January through October 2009, this plan was developed by gauging public sentiments, identifying examples of 'best practices' and concluding with a ten year timeline of proposed milestone projects which can help guide community development toward a preferred future. The following provides a basic overview of each phase of this process.

Planning Phase One: Investigation (January – May 2009)

First, the community survey was initiated through an email questionnaire targeted at local residents as well as the entire Van Meter school district. Printed copies of the survey were also made available and collected at City Hall. The community survey questions were coordinated through a steering committee made up of the RDG project team and members of the Van Meter Economic Development Committee. The questions



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addressed basic demographic information while also asking respondents to suggest and rank community enhancement priorities. The survey responses were shared with committee members and then were shared with the public on the City web site.

Planning Phase Two: Consideration (June – September 2009)

Following the successful survey, with over 100 respondents, RDG facilitated a public input meeting in which participants gathered to build upon the predominant survey themes through small group discussions. This well-attended meeting provided an additional opportunity for the public to direct the visioning process and yield more specifics within the proposed categories of improvements.

Planning Phase Three: Recommendation (October 2009)

Next committee members reviewed and solidified priorities of recommended community improvements. Additionally, RDG collected example images of community improvements and character sketches appropriate of the design intent for the highlighted initiatives and assembled a timeline of proposed milestone projects.

The following recommendations in this report emerged from the broader community in an effort to imagine what the future could hold for Van Meter. It is the intent of this plan to be used as a guideline for future development in Van Meter over the next three, five and ten years.

Vision Van Meter

It has been identified through this plan that the preferred future of Van Meter promotes local tourism, civic pride, and economic development through cohesive and sustainable initiatives. These initiatives will define and promote an attractive and identifiable sense of place that is unique to Van Meter and will be articulated through a series of enhancements attributed to these specific areas:

- Corridor and town center streetscape improvements
- Redevelopment within a revitalized town center
- Coordinated gateway, directional and informational signage
- Recreation enhancements and expansion
- Trail and walkway connectivity
- F-90 at R-16 Development

A Model Small Town

Within each area of desired improvement, the Steering Committee was adamant in their underlying goal to promote sustainable best practices that will lead Van Meter toward being a model 'green' community. It is the belief of this committee that such a reputation will not only be the right thing to do, but will also be attractive to potential businesses and homeowners; providing a win-win proposition for this community.

The recommendations don't go into the specifics of sustainability for each initiative but generally would encourage the use of locally available resources and using those resources efficiently. In addition, sustainability may mean investing in systems and programs that help users of buildings to conserve energy and water use, manage storm water on-site through permeable surfaces, minimize the community's overall carbon footprint, and celebrate the historical and cultural identity that will draw this community closer together.



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When many other small town are facing extinction, Van Meter takes advantage of its proximity to the Des Moines metropolitan area and can reinforce its embodied strengths: its position along the banks for the Raccoon River, rolling and wooded topography, close proximity to Highway F-90, Interstate 80 and the State Veterans Cemetery, its vibrant independent K-12 school system with a 1-to-1 laptop ratio and \$200,000 worth of advanced virtual reality hardware, and a public commitment to seeing Van Meter become a model sustainable community.

Next Steps

This Strategic Vision Plan is only the beginning of a process which may be articulated through physical improvements and aesthetic enhancements to landscape and streetscape, building facades, way finding elements, and policy ordinance and incentives. Fulfilling the Vision will establish an identity or community brand which will directly influence the make-up of community initiatives from here on out. These items will be used as a roadmap with milestones along the way. By achieving these milestones Van Meter will clearly establish itself as an attractive and vibrant community for this and future generations.

It is important to recognize that this Strategic Vision Plan sets the stage for specific actions to occur. Community leaders must still identify proponents for each agreed upon initiative and foster the same level of care and coordination for the specific categories of improvement identified within this plan. For consistency, it is suggested that each group of proponents be organized as a subcommittee under stewardship of the current Van Meter Economic Development Committee which led this planning process. Using the findings of this planning process as the threshold, each committee will want to engage the appropriate officials and professionals along the way to ensure the highest quality and satisfying results.

This plan is intended to evolve with consistent community support. Continued reference and periodic updates validate the visioning process. Having access to a 'living' document provides direction and opportunities for buy in from others wanting to find their place within a progressive and organized community such as Van Meter.

The following list identifies some key steps for the City of Van Meter to take in an effort to establish its own, unique identity and foster a more vibrant community. Furthermore, as identified through community input, a series of categorized initiatives are assembled in this report in the following order:

- Step One: Establish the Van Meter Community Brand/Identity
- Step Two. Implement Consistent Signage and Identity Collateral
- Step Three. Realize the Van Man Meter Identity in a Revitalized Town Center
- Step Four. Connect the Community through Livable Streetscapes



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The chart below prioritizes the elements of this Plan into the following categories:

- 1–2 years Short–range Priority
- 2–5 years Mid–range Priority
- 5–10 years Long–range Priority

Identified items were categorized based upon functional and aesthetic considerations and well as potential implementation costs. Items may move up or down in priority on this list based upon the changing needs and values of Van Meter.

TIMELINE / SEQUENCE PHASING CHART

Years 1 – 2	Short–Range Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop updated and consistent “brand” on all collateral (web site, news stories, marketing materials, etc.) • Develop Community–wide signage and way–finding standards with a focus on “Gateways” to Van Meter and its amenities • Push for sustainable public and commercial in fill development within a compact and engaging town center • Develop a detailed streetscape plan with proposed façade and infrastructure improvements to support town center redevelopment • Establish zoning and design guidelines for the entire community especially the F–90 development area
Years 2 – 5	Mid–Range Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and work with partners to develop comprehensive trail connectivity to and throughout Van Meter • Develop additional recreational opportunities which take advantage of the river • Pursue federal and state funding for railroad crossing improvements between town center and recreation complex
Years 5 – 10	Long–Range Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with business to minimize the impact of heavy truck traffic on the town center core • Identify and plan for future development opportunities of “lakes” north of town • Expand the connection between communities • Develop the F–90 gateway intersection to compliment the Town Center



02

observations

van meter strategic vision plan



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

It's often said that you never get a second chance to make a first impression. Entering town for the first time can prompt the very same emotion as meeting a personal acquaintance. More importantly is the effort needed to overcome a negative first impression. What are the factors that go into establishing ones first impression: the appearance of community buildings and their surrounding landscape, road conditions and signage, social activities one may encounter, even the weather during that first visit. Now the weather may be out of your control but the other elements can be choreographed according to a preferred vision.

Van Meter has the makings for one of the more picturesque entry sequences available in the Midwest and should be developed in order to strengthen first impressions of this community. The experience when exiting from Interstate 80 from the north may be more memorable then from the south. From the north you are greeted with a long view over the Raccoon River valley to the wooded hillsides beyond the town center. Cutting through the tree line is the lone silhouette of a classic water tower standing sentinel over Van Meter.

Currently the entry sequence is dominated by the gravel pits to the west and the Veterans Cemetery to the east. One can imagine the gravel pits becoming attractive park amenities with walking trails, picnic and play areas and all types of water-sports for residents and visitors alike. Creating a simple and appropriate "gateway" sign for Van Meter before you actually experience it will set the expectation and build anticipation of what lay ahead.

No additional indication exists, however, until a mile later when coming upon a convenience store just after crossing the river. If one doesn't know where the town center commercial, civic offices, parks, recreation complex or school are located, you will likely continue to drive south out of town.

Problematic is the fact that the town center area is not located on the path through town. It would be the recommendation of this report to foster an experience or glimpse of what one may consider the heart of this community from this primary path of travel. A land marked intersection becomes a point from which travelers determine whether they would like to go down town or continue south to the school, Trindle Park, or beyond.

Upon crossing the river, one notices the Casey's convenience store on the right, but may not see the small green and white sign referencing the recreation complex. Also, there is a pole opposite the store with numerous small signs attached to it which welcomes you to Van Meter.



observations

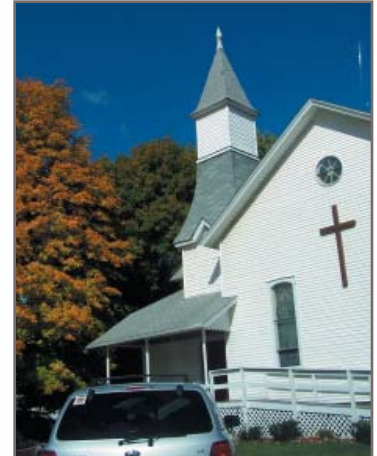
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As one drives through Van Meter, there is a pleasant small town feel with modest but well-kept houses. In many areas there are no curbs or side walks to contain the street so the grass and street's pavement often meet in a transition of dirt and gravel with cars parked along it in regular intervals.

Main Street is a curious mix of residential and metal-clad industrial buildings with heavy truck parking beyond. Small signs will point you to City Hall – another metal-clad building surrounded by a short stretch of primarily one-story older commercial storefronts devoid of any signs of life. Small punched openings allow only minimal, if any views into the buildings. This, and the lack of distinctive signage may leave a 'less-than-welcome' impression upon the first time visitor. Although the metal buildings don't typically represent historic town centers, it is more the lack of large storefront glass as well as distinctive streetscape signage that leads to a deserted ghost-town image.

This is a misleading first impression, despite the attractive tree lined residential streets, and small city park with playground and library adjacent to City Hall. This town does have businesses town center including a restaurant/bar, auto parts, post office, and a trucking company, although the 'front door' to each is somewhat elusive to a first time visitor. One can see a series of outdoor recreation fields across the tracks from the town center, but no apparent access to them. Also having crossed over the river, one is left to wonder if that there may be a riverside park or boat launch somewhere.

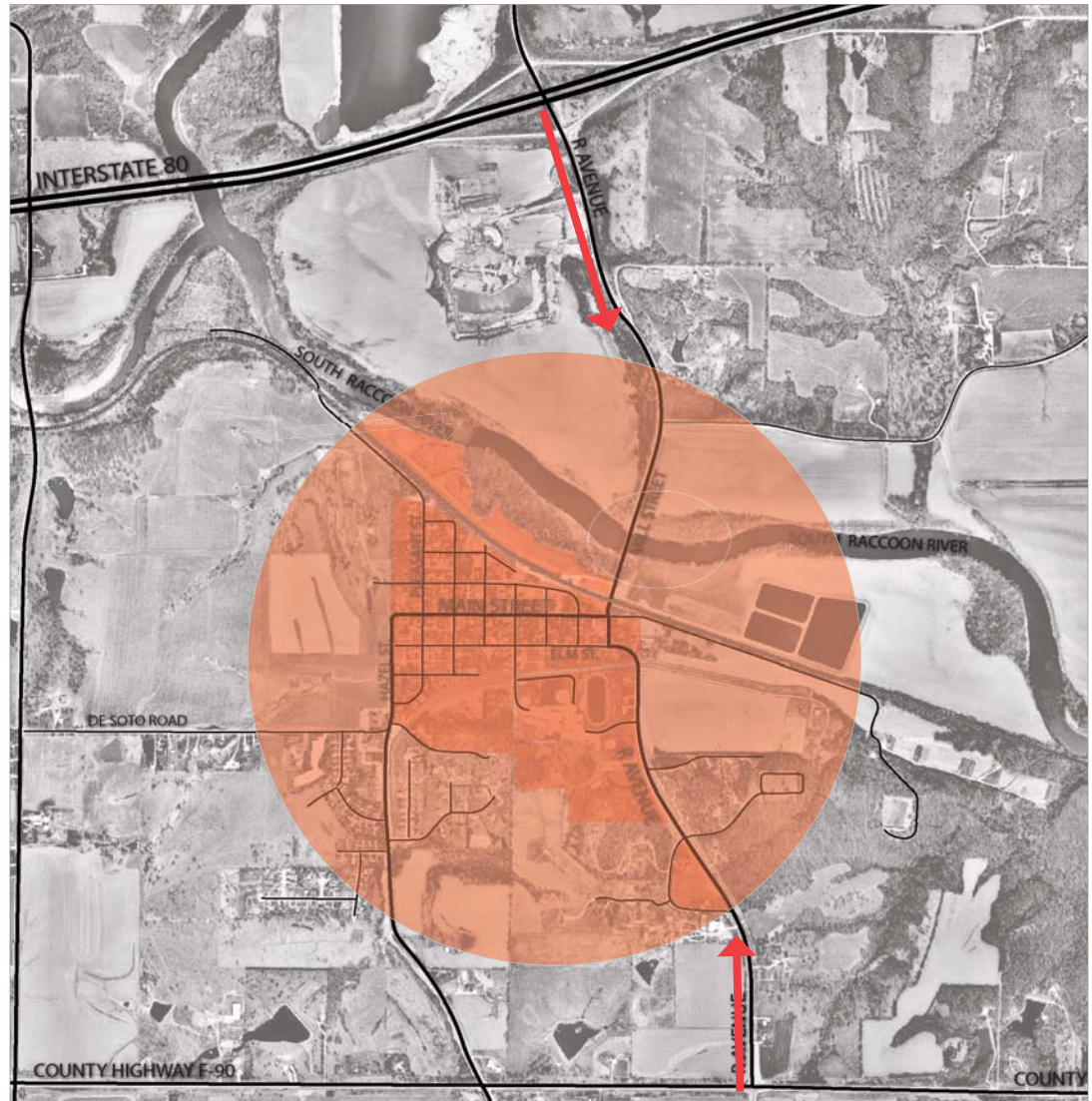
Having observed this community for the past 11 months, the RDG project team knows that Van Meter is alive and has been growing slowly but steadily during the past decade. Also, residents who have shared their views during the recent planning process, have described a safe and comfortable small town environment that sees itself as welcoming to new businesses, residents and visitors alike. Is that the message that the current drive-through will take with them? Whether one sees this or not, Van Meter is taking the steps needed to change the impression documented here and to reshape the future of the community into a unified, growing, and vibrant City.



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recommendations

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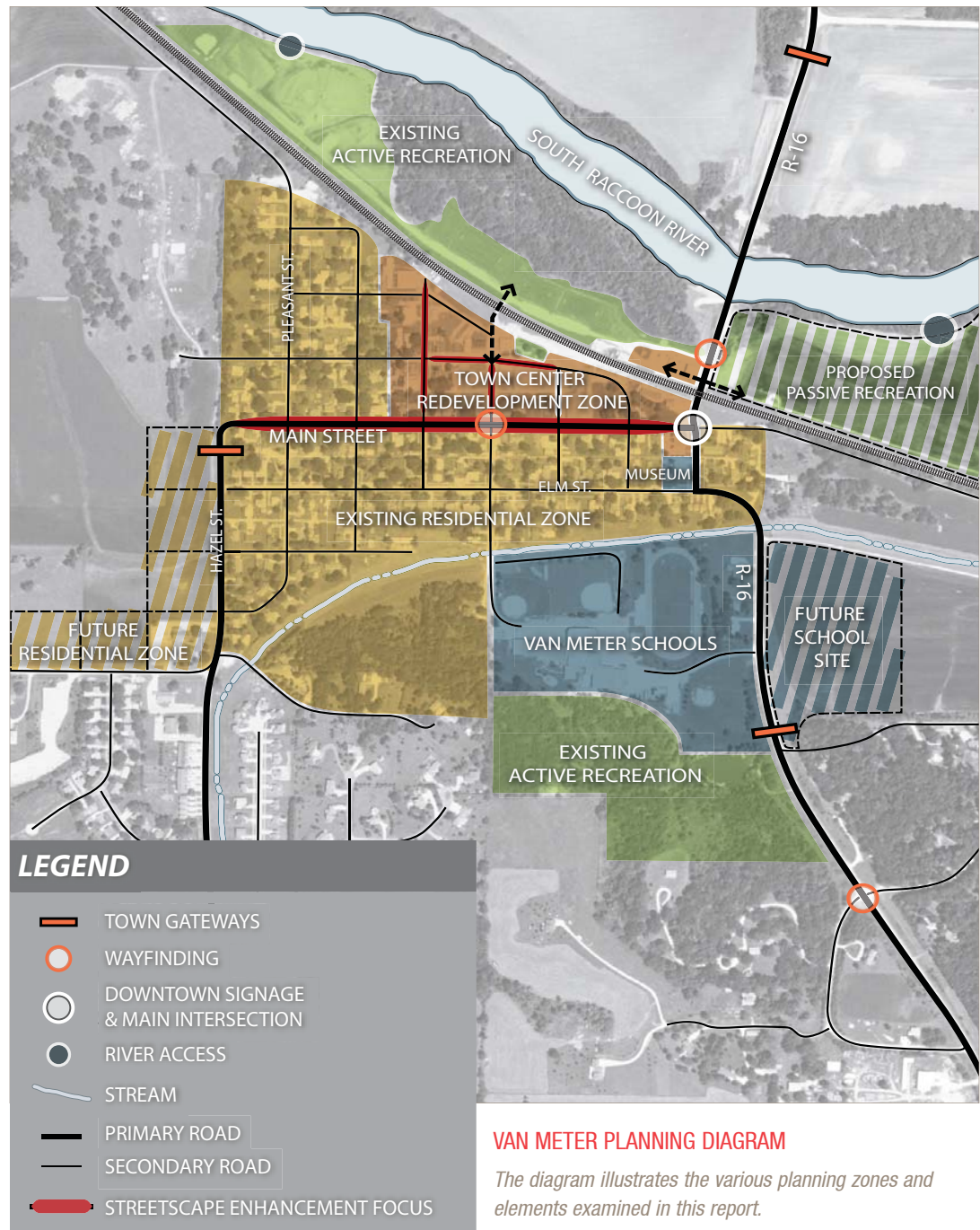


VAN METER VICINITY MAP

The aerial map above illustrates the gateways and main roads within the community of Van Meter.

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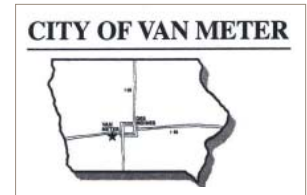
STEP ONE: **Establish the Van Meter Community Brand/Identity**

This plan recommends that the City of Van Meter's first priority should be to establish the community brand/identity. This will allow Van Meter to be consistent as it "markets" itself to potential, future businesses and residents. This first step is critical in identifying and establishing the character of Van Meter for the world to see. This will influence the type of signage the town erects, the types of development it supports, and the aesthetic it embraces. Do this first and do it right with the help of those within your community. Consider hiring an outside (objective) design consultant to package the final ideas in a way that can easily be handed off to others with instructions for fabrication, implementation and coordination. The resulting logo, colors, slogan, font, message and other collateral should be consistently embraced and put to use on all official correspondence, web presence, signage, interviews, etc.

Establishing this community identity may involve addressing the following questions:

1. What / Who is Van Meter? What does it mean to be from Van Meter?
2. What does Van Meter have to offer? How do others know this?
3. What is Van Meter's target audience looking for? Why should they (a family or a company) locate in Van Meter?
4. Who is Van Meter's "audience" (i.e. businesses, industries, young families, retirees, commuters)?
5. What does the intended "audience" want/need (i.e. tax incentives, financial assistance, land, policies, etc)?
6. How does Van Meter communicate its message (i.e. magazines, radio, TV, web, signage, ambassadors, etc)?
7. What is it worth to Van Meter attract the desired audience?

Once the brand has been identified and each context designed accordingly, it is recommended that the City of Van Meter plan a media campaign to clearly establish the identity throughout the community and with each intended audience.



VAN METER NOW

recommendations

van meter strategic vision plan

STEP ONE: BRANDING



EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY BRANDING

These images illustrate various forms, materials and styles of branding used throughout a community. Specifically, how the community brand and riverfront brand tie into each other.

step two:



Coordinated Signage Examples

- Directional / Informational signs at primary corridors
- Gateway monuments proposed north of the river bridge and south of the school
- Informational / Directional signage at primary intersections
- Consistent signage theme throughout corridors
- Identification and directions to all parks, civic buildings, historic markers, business district, school, etc.
- Banners promoting seasonal events
- All signage should be in keeping with the agreed upon architecture or character of community

Collateral Examples

- City Website
- Community Newsletter
- Printed collateral (stationary, etc.)
- Gateway monument
- Signage (informational and directional)
- Points of interest markers
- Event Promotions

recommendations

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STEP TWO: SIGNAGE AND COLLATERAL

Implement Consistent Signage and Identity Collateral

Once Van Meter has established its agreed upon identity, this plan recommends that the message be communicated through the following coordinated means:

- **City Website:**
Share how / why the brand (logo and slogan) were established and show it clearly on all collateral.
- **Printed Collateral:**
Consistently identify Van Meter in accordance with the agreed upon brand.
- **Gateway Monument:**
As the first impression to visitors, a prominent gateway should be erected along the primary corridor through town (which starts north of town between the river and the Interstate, and also south of town between the School and on F-90) to display the physical manifestation of Van Meter's brand. This Gateway monument should visually extend beyond the boundary of the town and establish the character of Van Meter prior to actually arriving.
- **Way finding and Signage:**
Appropriate signage and markers placed at primary decision points around the community will draw attention to what is important for visitors to see in Van Meter and how to get there. In particular the plan recommends that the following be identified: the Town Center, Neighborhoods, Parks, the School, City Hall, the Recreation Complex, Businesses, River Access, Historical Sites, etc. The language of each element should reinforce the identity through the chosen pallet of materials, font, etc.

It is the recommendation of this Plan that the community identifies "gateways" into town that create an appropriate sense of welcome for visitors and utilize forms and materials found within the community it represents.

Directional and informational signs should be easily understood and coordinate with the community message or brand as communicated through the Van Meter recognizable logo and consistent materials, format and colors. Signage should be placed in logical locations that reinforce elements found elsewhere in the community. The coordinated signage should extend to historical markers, interpretive signage, neighborhood entrances, banners, public garden markers, along trails, walkways and parks. Make sure that each element is visible through appropriate placement, material texture and lighting.



VAN METER NOW AND POSSIBLE FUTURE

recommendations

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STEP TWO: The essence of Van Meter is best conveyed if not having to be explained with a lot of text. Appropriate
SIGNAGE AND collateral gateways and way finding elements are critical to town center revitalization and the ease with
COLLATERAL which residents and visitors alike traverse this community.

Resources

Potential Funding:

- Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Resource Enhancement and Protection* (REAP)
\$20 million available per year for this project type
<http://www.iowadnr.gov/reap/index.html>
- River Enhancement Community Attraction and Tourism* (RECAT)
Funding specifically for attractions and tourism
<http://www.iowalifechanging.com/vision/recat.aspx>
- Keep America Beautiful
www.kab.org
- Keep Iowa Beautiful
www.KeepIowaBeautiful.com

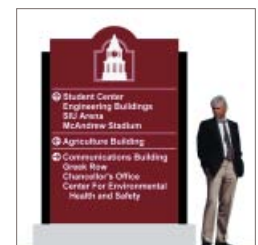
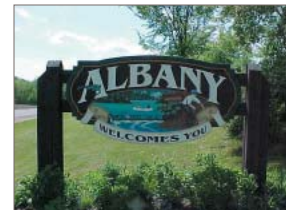
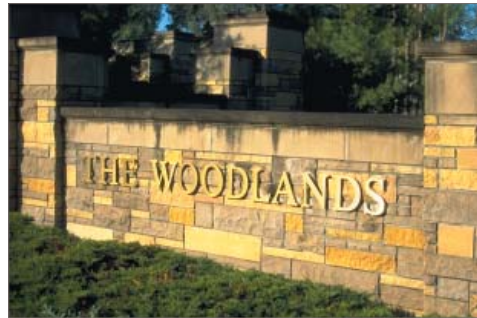
** In naming these specific programs, RDG is not providing any guarantee that the City of Van Meter will be able to secure any of the aforementioned funds or any other grant or funding source that may be available. The aforementioned financial resources are only provided for Van Meter to look into as possible avenues to assist the City with funding some of its improvements.*



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STEP TWO: SIGNAGE AND COLLATERAL



EXAMPLES OF ENTRY, DIRECTIONAL AND WAY FINDING SIGNAGE

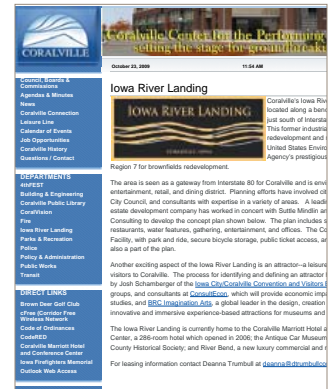
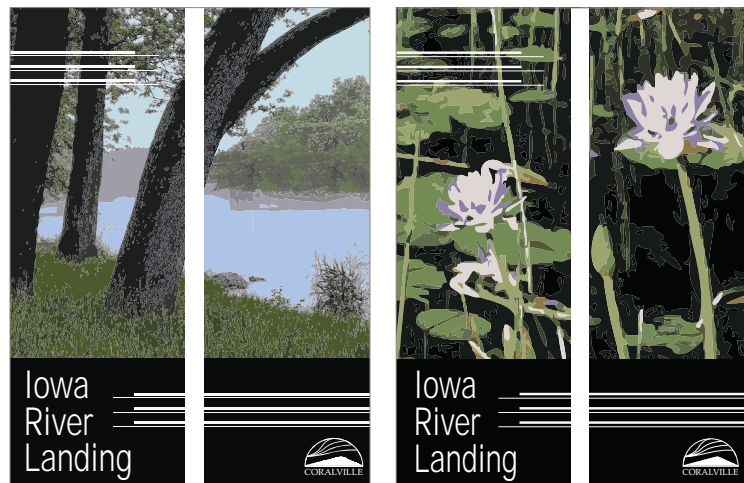
These images are indicative of various forms, materials and styles of signage that might be used to reflect the character of Van Meter.



recommendations

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STEP TWO: SIGNAGE AND COLLATERAL



EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY IDENTITY COLLATERAL

As seen under branding, these images illustrate various forms, materials and styles of branding used throughout a community. Specifically, how the community brand and riverfront brand tie into each other.

step three: revitalize the town center



Revitalized Town Center Examples

- Partner with local businesses to relocate heavy truck traffic from the town center
- Extend street and pedestrian access over the railroad track to the recreation complex
- Attract grocery / office / restaurants / lodging
- Expanded civic presence (library / city hall...)
- Preserve old building stock / recycle buildings
- Promote town center community events / festivals
- Develop businesses surrounding river activities
- Upgrade building facades (restore or rehabilitate storefronts).
- In fill vacant lots with appropriately scaled civic or commercial buildings.
- Encourage / enforce building maintenance (tuck-pointing, roofs, accessibility, etc.).
- Develop streetscape enhancements in business district
- Review and reinforce Design Guidelines, Engineering Standards and Zoning Amendments.

Recreation Area Examples

- Provide Community Center facility
- Provide year-round recreation opportunities/events/programming
- Provide picnic and camping areas near river
- Develop accessible river access/landing
- Plan for future use of gravel pits as community amenity

Creatively influencing life for the better through purpose driven design.



recommendations

van meter strategic vision plan

STEP THREE: TOWN CENTER REVITALIZATION

Realize the Van Meter Identity in a Revitalized Town Center

Once the brand and way finding elements are established, the plan recommends that Van Meter aggressively address the revitalization of its historic Town Center. Van Meter will need to conduct a more thorough study in the way of a Town Center Strategic Plan in order to successfully execute this initiative and draw people to its core. Success will inspire more businesses to set up shop in the town center area, further strengthening Van Meter's 'sense of place' and instill civic pride within the community.

Successful revitalization of a town center recognizes the need for development that clusters early initiatives together to create a more significant impact. Implementing Town Center Design Guidelines for both redevelopment and infrastructure improvements will help connect the town center with its surroundings, coordinate development with infrastructure improvements and identify realistic project phases. Such guidelines should reflect the City's goals to promote economic development, extend the community's identity and branding while enhancing the image of the area. It will also establish expectations for the rehabilitation of existing buildings which contribute to the character of Van Meter while promoting a new generation of sustainable buildings with context-sensitive design.

The plan also highly recommends that when the time comes to move ahead with this milestone, that Van Meter work with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) on the recreation developments in Van Meter and the Iowa Department for Economic Development (IDED) to focus on community development.

An additional key component to revitalizing or re-establishing a town center district will involve a media campaign in order to attract new business. This will involve the Economic Development Council making a case through various media outlets to establish why people and businesses should choose Van Meter. Therefore, the plan recommends that the City examine various financial incentives (i.e. financial assistance, tax abatements, etc.) they can offer to assist these new businesses in starting.

Recreation Area Enhancements and Expansion

With the town center being close to the river, the river's edge can be a primary differentiator between Van Meter and most other small towns. Therefore, the plan recommends establishing a connection between



VAN METER NOW AND POSSIBLE FUTURE

recommendations

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STEP THREE: TOWN CENTER REVITALIZATION

the town center and the river to create promotion opportunities that will draw additional commercial development opportunities to Van Meter. This would include the development of accessible river access with parking, picnicking and camping areas. Further, programming year-round activities would enhance the attraction of each public space and highlight additional recreation opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Once the connection between the town center and the river is developed and recognized, the community can promote this connection to stimulate additional commercial development opportunities.

Once the connection has been made with the river, the plan recommends that the City plan for the construction of a multi-purpose indoor recreation facility at the town center. This facility could become a gathering place for all generations, lessen the burden on the school's facilities and foster business in the town center.

F-90 Development

As one of the community's primary gateways, the plan acknowledges that the F-90 intersection at R-16 will eventually be developed. Although the City does not currently have sanitary sewer service along County Road R-16, it has extended lines south of town along Hazel to F-90 and into Crestview estates. Additionally, MidAmerican Energy has an electric transfer station in the area which may attract a power user of one type or another to Van Meter. Therefore, one can safely assume that development will occur south of town along F-90 in the coming years. However, the question remains as to how aggressive the City will work to choreograph future development and what its manifestation will signal as the south gateway to Van Meter.

While recognizing the importance of this gateway, the plan cautions the City to employ particular strategies to ensure that this area of town will not compete with the redeveloped town center. The reason for this is due to all of the major venues in Van Meter (recreation, government, the majority of housing, etc) are closer to the proposed town center district with the exception of one housing development. In order to promote the town center and to keep it growing, visitors need to be directed and drawn to this part of the community. Therefore, it is the recommendation of this plan that Van Meter holds off on developing this area until a vibrant town center is established.

In order to execute this milestone, the plan recommends that the City of Van Meter examine its zoning and design guidelines for this area and establish what requirements that will they will need for any development in this area. Some additional factors the City must identify when establishing these guidelines include those businesses or types of development that will serve as an appropriate gateway to the community. Once these guidelines are established, this will further strengthen Van Meter's identity in this area of the community and allow time for the City to plan on how best to develop this gateway to support the community as a whole.

Resources

- Discuss with other community leaders how they have done this (i.e. Belle Plaine City Manager Bill Dailey; Columbus Junction Mayor Dan Wilson; Knoxville Major Harvey Sprafka, etc.)
- Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) Community Development staff (i.e. Michael Wegler, etc.)



recommendations

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**STEP THREE:
TOWN CENTER
REVITALIZATION**

Potential Funding Sources:

- Community Development Block Grants* (CDBG), contact the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED)
<http://www.iowalifechanging.com/community/cdbg/default.aspx>
 - Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) Grant*
Available through IDIED <http://www.iowalifechanging.com/vision/cat.aspx>
- Note: There is currently only \$12 million made available per year.

** In naming these specific grants, neither this plan, nor RDG or its representatives are providing any assurance or guarantee that the City of Van Meter will be able to secure any of the aforementioned grants or any other grant or funding source that may be available. The aforementioned funding sources are only provided for Van Meter to look into as possible avenues to assist the City with funding its initiatives.*



recommendations

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STEP THREE: TOWN CENTER REVITALIZATION



EXAMPLES OF A REVITALIZED TOWN CENTER

The images on this page are indicative of various town center forms, materials and styles that could be used in Van Meter.

recommendations

van meter strategic vision plan

STEP THREE: TOWN CENTER REVITALIZATION



EXAMPLES OF RECREATION AREA ENHANCEMENTS

The images on this page represent various recreation forms and materials that could be used in Van Meter.

step four: livable streetscapes



Livable Streetscape Examples

- Distinguished Street Lighting
- Ornamental Trees / Planters / Urns
- Benches and Trash Receptacles
- Widened sidewalks
- Markers/ Columns /Plaques/Banners
- Pavers to distinguish Intersections / Crosswalks
- Town Center Railroad Crossing Improvements
- Building Facade Improvements
- Integrated Art Elements
- Gazebo / Bandshell
- Curb and Gutter Replacement
- On-site storm water management
- Identifiable and Accessible On and Off-Street Parking
- Designated Park & Ride lot for commuters
- Bike lanes and Racks Where Appropriate

Trails and Walkway Examples

- Provide “trail easements” to ensure walkability between neighborhoods
- Develop walking trails along river banks
- Connect the town center, school, parks and neighborhoods
- Connect trails between neighboring towns
- Develop “greenbelt” and “bluebelt” trails

recommendations

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STEP FOUR: STREETSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

Connect the Community Through Livable Streetscapes

By designing a community streetscape Van Meter can capture and revitalize the community's sense of place while working to unite the community at both a vehicular and pedestrian scale. This will promote connectivity, safer environments, and promote land-use patterns that focus on pedestrian connections. By focusing on a livable community streetscape Van Meter will provide its citizens with a healthier lifestyle for its multi-generational population.

The goal, therefore, of Streetscape Improvements is to improve the pedestrian experience along the primary traffic corridors through town. Pedestrian oriented design should address how streets are crafted as active, pedestrian-friendly places that unify and establish a sense of continuity among the adjacent properties.

The plan encourages these improvements primarily along the following routes:

- From the Raccoon River Bridge south to the school entrance (from city gateway to city gateway)
- Main Street from Mill Street (R-16) west to Hazel Street
- Wilson Street from the School to the Railroad tracks (and eventually into the Rec Complex)
- Grant Street from Wilson Street to West Street (the block of existing commercial development)
- Between city parks, county parks and playgrounds
- To the river access and across the river
- The length of Hazel Street

Trail and Walkway Connectivity

Another key to a pleasing, walkable community includes providing safe and convenient routes between neighborhoods and the town center, schools and parks, as well as other attractions within the community (i.e. wooded hillsides, riverbanks, etc.). Pursuing trail easements through developments, connecting with existing sidewalks and denoting safe bike lanes* along designated streets will show that Van Meter clearly respects the pedestrian and is willing to move beyond a car-centric development.

In a walkable community, trails become 'Quality of Life' connections, with one of the most significant benefits being the sense of community and connectedness they foster. Well designed trails can transform a community from an abstraction into a real place. Development of a Community Trails Master Plan would



VAN METER NOW AND POSSIBLE FUTURE

recommendations

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STEP FOUR: STREETSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

provide a system of interconnected regional and community trails and pathways designed to address the public need for recreation and linkages to safe routes throughout Van Meter. A Community Trails Master Plan would also encourage 'Quality of Life' benefits associated with walking, hiking and riding through this diverse Dallas County environment.

Once the City of Van Meter commences this new phase, this plan recommends that the community work with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and local landowners in order to gain legal access to the river which may include land acquisition and/or land leases.

** While the plan recognizes that the Iowa Department of Transportation has informed the City of Van Meter that many of its streets are too narrow for bike lanes, the plan recommends that the community verify if all of its streets are too narrow and to investigate if sharrows (a shared bike–pedestrian lane used for narrower streets) would be an alternative trailway for the City to use.*

Resources

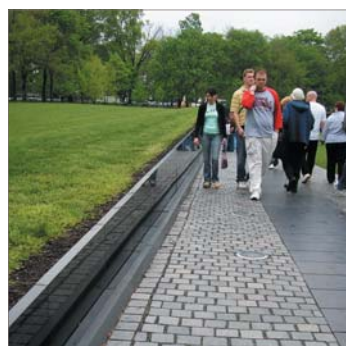
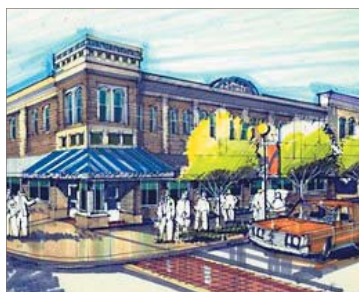
- Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED)
www.iowalifechanging.com
- Keep America Beautiful
www.kab.org
- Keep Iowa Beautiful
www.keeptowabeautiful.com
- Foundation Center
www.foundationcenter.org



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STEP FOUR: STREETSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

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EXAMPLES OF STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

The images on this page illustrate various streetscape forms, materials and styles that could be used in Van Meter.



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STEP FOUR: STREETSCAPE DEVELOPMENT



EXAMPLES OF TRAILS AND WALKWAY CONNECTIVITY

The images above show various trails and walkway connectivity activities and the forms, materials and styles they may take.

A

public survey results

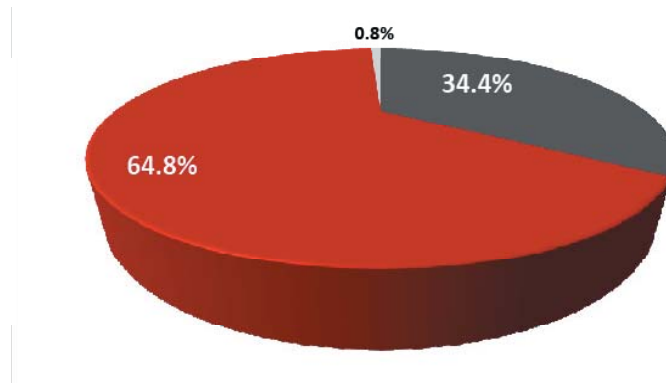


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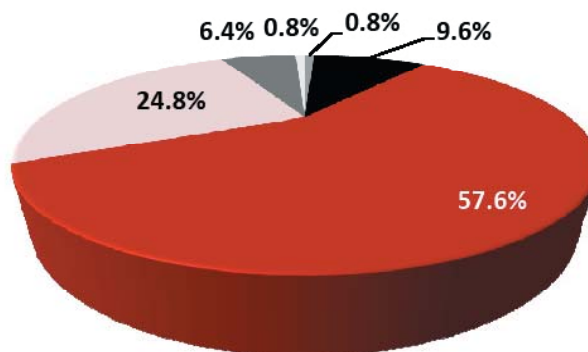
1. What is your gender?

Male	34.4%
Female	64.8%
Prefer not to say	.8%



2. What is your age?

Under 18	.8%
18 – 30	9.6%
31 – 45	57.6%
46 – 64	24.8%
65+	6.4%
Prefer not to say	.8%

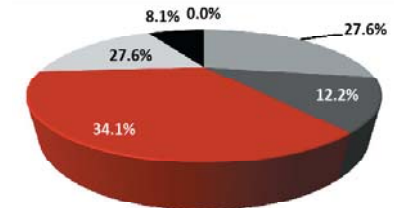


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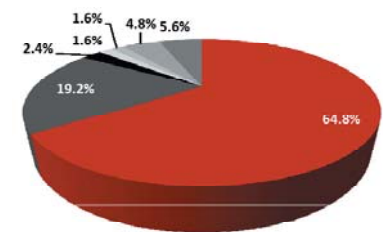
3. How many children do you have living with you?

0	27.6%
1	12.2%
2	34.1%
3	17.9%
4	8.1%
5+	0%



4. Where do you live?

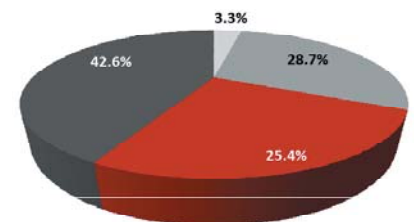
<i>Within Van Meter city limits</i>	64.8%
<i>Within school district boundaries</i>	19.2%
<i>Wildwood</i>	2.4%
<i>Deer Hunter's Run</i>	1.6%
<i>Napa Valley</i>	1.6%
<i>Rural – Dallas County</i>	4.8%
<i>Other as specified below*</i>	5.6%
1 Adel – business owner in Van Meter	
2 Vermillion, South Dakota	
3 Hickory Lodge	
4 Rural Madison County	
5 Austin, Texas	



* only .04% of the 5.6% other respondents specified their location

5. How long have you been at this location?

<i>Under 1 year</i>	3.3%
<i>1 – 4 years</i>	28.7%
<i>5 – 10 years</i>	25.4%
<i>10+ years</i>	42.6%



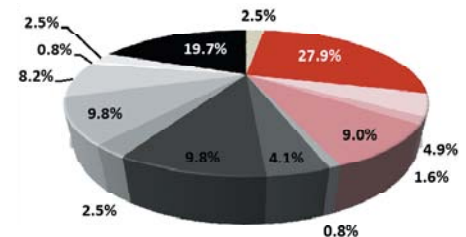
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6. What is your occupation?

Agriculture	2.5%
Banking/Insurance/Finance	27.9%
Construction/Real Estate	4.9%
Designer/Art	1.6%
Education	9.0%
Food/Lodging	.8%
Manufacturing/Transportation	4.1%
Medical/Healthcare	9.8%
Retail	2.5%
Science and Technology	9.8%
Retired	8.2%
K – 12 student	.8%
Full-time college student	2.5%
Other	19.7%

- 1 Daycare
- 2 E-Learning
- 3 Daycare Provider
- 4 Stay at home mom
- 5 Wholesale
- 6 State Government
- 7 State of Iowa
- 8 Homemaker
- 9 Reception
- 10 Management
- 11 Retirement Community Management and Development
- 12 Sales
- 13 Sales
- 14 Closed Captioned
- 15 Public Works
- 16 US Postal Service
- 17 Model and Talent Management
- 18 Office work
- 19 What?
- 20 Association Management
- 21 Government Employee

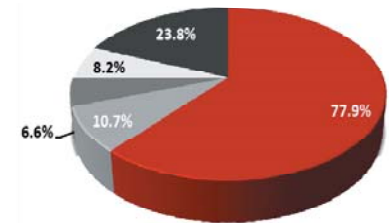


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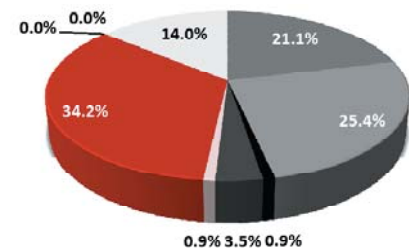
7. What is your primary travel destination?

<i>Work</i>	77.9%
<i>School</i>	10.7%
<i>Entertainment</i>	6.6%
<i>Recreation</i>	8.2%
<i>Shopping</i>	23.8%



8. Where do you work?

<i>Van Meter</i>	21.1%
<i>West Des Moines</i>	25.4%
<i>Waukee</i>	.9%
<i>Adel</i>	3.5%
<i>De Soto</i>	.9%
<i>Des Moines</i>	34.2%
<i>Indianola</i>	0%
<i>Winterset</i>	0%
<i>Other as specified below*</i>	14%



- 1 Johnston
- 2 Home
- 3 Clive
- 4 Clive, IA
- 5 Retired
- 6 Urbandale
- 7 Urbandale
- 8 Ankeny
- 9 Home
- 10 Retired
- 11 Retired
- 12 Retired
- 13 Retired
- 14 Retired
- 15 Urbandale
- 16 All of southern Dallas County
- 17 Austin, Texas
- 18 Urbandale – out of town / out of state

van meter visioning survey results

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9. What brought you to Van Meter?

1. *Small Town Characteristics*
2. *K – 12 School System*
3. *Convenient Commute*
4. *Born/Raised Here*
5. *Housing Options*
6. *Close to Family/Friends*
7. *Work in Community*
8. *Other as specified below**
 - 1 *Husband grew up here*
 - 2 *Reasonable housing prices before the market decline*
 - 3 *Smaller school/grade sizes*
 - 4 *Love small town living*
 - 5 *Parents moved to Van Meter*

10. How long do you foresee living within the greater Van Meter community?

<i>0 – 1 years</i>	<i>2.6%</i>
<i>2 – 5 years</i>	<i>10.3%</i>
<i>5 – 10 years</i>	<i>12.0%</i>
<i>10+ years</i>	<i>75.2%</i>

11. What will keep you here?

<i>Small town feeling/life</i>	<i>22.8%</i>
<i>Family-oriented community</i>	<i>2.0%</i>
<i>Family</i>	<i>8.1%</i>
<i>Work</i>	<i>3.4%</i>
<i>Friends/The People</i>	<i>7.4%</i>
<i>Close to/convenient to big city</i>	<i>2.0%</i>
<i>Friendly</i>	<i>.7%</i>
<i>School/school district</i>	<i>22.8%</i>
<i>Location</i>	<i>3.4%</i>
<i>Plans for VM growth/improvement</i>	<i>6.7%</i>
<i>Safe/low crime</i>	<i>2.0%</i>
<i>Housing/low cost of living</i>	<i>2.7%</i>
<i>Established in VM</i>	<i>1.3%</i>
<i>Lower property taxes</i>	<i>2.7%</i>
<i>Commitment to staying a “small town”</i>	<i>1.3%</i>
<i>Other as specified below*</i>	<i>11.7%</i>



van meter visioning survey results

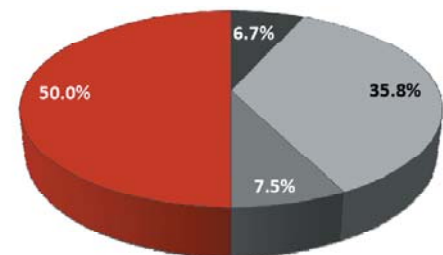
van meter strategic vision plan

(continuation of Question 11)

- 9 Nothing
- 12 Small town feel, school system and other amenities
- 17 Closer grocery store
- 19 Bringing commercial business to our town. School.
- 20 The privacy
- 30 All of the above.
- 36 "Small" school system, small town atmosphere but continue to change with the "times".
- 38 Strong, independent school district. Strong community that values pride of ownership, well maintained houses, yards, public buildings. A stand out community that values input and respect for city leaders.
- 40 Schools, continued growth, increase in goods and services available to the community
- 42 Specifically, a swimming pool and grocery store . . . and inconvenient at present
- 55 Better drinking water. More walking trails.
- 64 Lower taxes, school improvement, clean up run down properties and eye sores
- 66 A small town not big ideas
- 72 Progressive, and focused on the community.
- 88 Small town/school and ease of travel

12. What best describes your preferred living environment?

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| A downtown-like environment with shops, restaurants and apartments | 6.7% |
| A compact neighborhood where everything is a convenient walk away | 35.8% |
| A planned or gated community with a higher level of privacy | 7.5% |
| Rural | 50.0% |



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13. What do you do for fun?

1. *Biking/Walking/Jogging*
2. *Outdoor Sports*
3. *Coffee Shops/Dining Out*
4. *Shopping/Antiquing*
5. *Hunting/Fishing/Canoeing*
6. *Festivals/Farmer's Markets*
7. *Indoor Recreation*
8. *Concerts*
9. *Theatre/Arts*
10. *Winery/Brewery*
11. *Dancing/Night Clubs*
12. *Other as specified below**
 - 1 *Go to my children's activities, scrapbooking*
 - 2 *Gardening*
 - 4 *Playing outside with the kids which can get hard when people are SPEEDING by in their cars and blowing through Stop signs.*
 - 5 *Camping*
 - 6 *Travel*
 - 7 *Golf, yoga*
 - 8 *Attending children/grandchildren's events*
 - 9 *Reading*
 - 10 *Horseback riding*
 - 14 *Hobbies*
 - 15 *Tubing down the Raccoon River and stop in VanMeter for lunch*
 - 16 *Fixing cars*

14. What development would you support around Van Meter?

1. *Grocery/Retail*
2. *Fitness Facility*
3. *Expanded network of trails*
4. *Expanded selection of dining*
5. *Parks*
6. *Teen/Youth Programs*
7. *Community/Senior Activity Center*
8. *Street Improvements*
9. *Entertainment*
10. *Single Family Housing*



van meter visioning survey results

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11. *Camping/RV Sites/Boat Launch*
12. *Energy Reduction Programs*
13. *Wind Energy Farm*
14. *Adult Educational Opportunities*
15. *Community Gardens*
16. *Daycare/Preschool Offerings*
17. *Expanded City Offices*
18. *Commercial Space*
19. *Band Shell*
20. *Other as specified below**
21. *Hotels/Bed & Breakfast*
22. *Multi-family Housing*
23. *Truck Stop/Service Facility*
 - 1 *Swimming pool*
 - 2 *Updated water system, expanded Public Safety Building*
 - 3 *I would support a public safety building.*
 - 4 *Public safety facility*
 - 5 *An all weather track for patrons to utilize. We have a lot of walkers around town with limited sidewalks that presents a danger to all !!*
 - 6 *Our parks need a definite upgrade. The park by City Hall is embarrassing. It in "Downtown" Van Meter and the equipment is ancient. A new coat of paint can only hide so much. The city can apply for grants to have rubber flooring put in at the parks. Waukee and some parks in WDM have it. It is wonderful for special needs children who can get out of the wheelchairs and crawl around. It looks as though too much funding has been put into Johnson Park (which is nice) that is located all the way across town and unless people now where to look they aren't ever going to see it. And yet the primary eyesore (Downtown) apparently receives no attention. Our youth need some where to "hang out". Ice cream shop or community center with music and games would make an absolute fortune. They won't be on the interstates and the money would stay local.*
 - 7 *A small town cafe or dairy Shop would be nice. Since the snow cone building is never open anymore in the summer. The kids need something. Also having concessions during little league games would be nice, maybe some of the school fund raisers could each have a night.*
 - 8 *City needs to clean up before it considers expanding. Cars parked in yards, commercial business and equipment in residential neighborhoods, no apparent code requirements, and so on.*
 - 9 *On fitness facility, I would like to have racquetball courts available.*



van meter visioning survey results

van meter strategic vision plan

(continuation of question 14)

- 10 *Would like to see the community growing with a few additions, but not to the point where it becomes a “big” suburb of DM.*
- 11 *Bike trail/walking trail*
- 12 *Adding a swimming pool for summer recreation*
- 13 *Athletic fields*
- 14 *It would be nice to see a new fire station.*
- 15 *Bigger school or a separate high school and elementary.*
- 16 *Parks are a major concern. Existing parks are too small (next to city hall), poorly accessible (Johnson Park), or limited use (Trindle). Having a large Trucking company smack dab in the middle of town is also another sore spot.*
- 17 *Blue collar employment*
- 18 *Grocery store options.*
- 19 *While the close proximity to Des Moines makes Van Meter a convenient place to live, it creates a bedroom community. I think A focus on available space for owner–operated businesses (insurance, attorney, CPA, etc) would be a popular option.*
- 20 *Local eating establishment*
- 21 *Water quality – soft water*
- 22 *Bring back an England’s type ice cream shop and Edwards type restaurant and bakery*
- 23 *Bait shop and alternative energy but not wind. Too expensive, not enough energy.*

15. Should Van Meter partner with neighboring communities to expand opportunities?

- 1. *Recreation*
- 2. *Festival/event*
- 3. *Commercial development*
- 4. *Marketing*
- 5. *Industrial*
- 6. *Residential*
- 7. *Other as specified below**
 - 1 *Shared equipment/personnel*
 - 2 *Not clear on exactly what you are asking.*
 - 3 *We should definitely get a pool for Van Meter. Then we wouldn’t have to bus kids to Winterset or Dallas Center for rec swimming. Yes there would be a startup cost but it would be so worth it. And it could go where the run down car lot is “Down Town”. Behind Casey’s, across from Casey’s.*



van meter visioning survey results

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(continuation of question 15)

- 4 ?
- 5 *Better water supply. Van Meter water is extremely hard, which is ruining appliances and pipes. When Van Meter had the option to hook on to rural water the vote was to stay independent....which is too bad...those people that voted it down must have a lot of \$\$ laying around to afford water softeners & salt, new appliances and pipes in there houses!!*
- 6 *It needs to work on the problems it has before taking on new challenges.*
- 7 *Don't know enough about it.*
- 8 *No*
- 9 *Need more info*
- 10 *Industrial and commercial development add to the tax base while residential tends to put a strain on it – just ask Waukee.*
- 11 *NO!!!*
- 12 *NO!!!*
- 13 *Small bike rides from Van Meter to some other small town and back, and the next you do it opposite, so both towns benefit from the lunch crowd. A street dance at night would be fun.*
- 14 *I would like to expand but stay independent.*

16. How important is . . .

Answer Options	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Rating Average
<i>Van Meter Entry Signage</i>	45	54	15	1.74
<i>Community Identity Feature</i>	51	49	12	1.65
<i>Street Beautification</i>	50	59	4	1.59
<i>Downtown Appearance</i>	54	55	5	1.57
<i>Energy Efficiency Incentives</i>	61	50	3	1.49
<i>Recycling Programs</i>	66	44	4	1.46
<i>Expanded City Web site</i>	19	66	26	2.06
<i>Other as specified below</i>				
1 <i>Expanded library services – programs</i>				
2 <i>Public Safety Facility</i>				



van meter visioning survey results

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(continuation of question 16)

- 3 Not a lot has changed in the 20 years I have lived in Van Meter. School has new buildings, Downtown has had very little change. New development South has not done much to improve the city. We plan on moving from Van Meter in 1–2 years now that our kids have graduated. The school system is the main reason we moved to the city. Put a lot of your efforts toward the school system is my recommendation.
- 4 The laundry mat and hair place need to replace there sign. It is in horrible disarray and should not be the first thing you see when you drive into Van Meter. A NEW PUBLIC SERVICE BUILDING would make a huge statement that the city does care about the community. Taking care of the city is also taking care of the people that protect it and run it. Having more visible law enforcement is VERY Important. The police need to be present and in plane view during drop off to school and pick up. We need to have bigger stop signs so that people can see them. Writing tickets would be a HUGE revenue opportunity and way more important than salvage titles.
- 5 BETTER WATER OPTIONS OR CITY HELP WITH WATER SOFTENER IN OUR HOMES!!
- 6 Don't know what you mean by "entry signage". (Do you mean signs on the interstate that say Van Meter?). Don't know what you mean by "identity feature". (Do you mean some kind of city logo or catchy little phrase?)
- 7 Downtown appearance??? There is no down town. Any money spent on it would be wasted. Most buildings would be more cost effective to raze.
- 8 I don't know what a Community Identity Feature is.
- 9 I would like to see a new fire station.
- 10 I think we could really improve water quality.
- 11 Van Meter needs an identity. I work in West Des Moines – most coworkers have never heard of Van Meter even though it's ten minutes away.

The best thing that could happen is unfortunately not controlled by the city. Anyone who has spent any amount of time in small Iowa towns knows that the primary identity, and primary source of pride, is the school. Van Meter's school facilities are an embarrassment. We need a new school yesterday.
- 12 Dog tie up enforced & tax those people w/animals (more revenue for the town).
- 13 The quality of the water does bother me... I think we should have better water to drink and that won't damage appliances because of its hardness. There are times it is brown and will discolor laundry and doesn't look good to drink.
- 14 Would like to see improvements to water
- 15 Walking trails, safety, business hours more convenient, more youth activities



van meter visioning survey results

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(continuation of question 16)

16 *Tax Incentive for Energy Star Homes, be the town to live in where you're helping the environment and preserving the feel of the rural area.*

17. How would you describe or "sell" Van Meter?

- 1 *Sell on education and children activities*
- 2 *A growing small community with a quality school system and a sense of pride with the residents.*
- 3 *Minutes away from the Big City where small town charm is at its very best.*
- 4 *Small town living close to big city*
- 5 *Great schools in a small town yet close to the city.*
- 6 *Good family environment – safe/supportive*
- 7 *friendly small town with a great school system*
- 8 *Small town Iowa with a quick commute to Des Moines*
- 9 *A small community with everything at its disposal...we have easy access to the big city, yet we are able to live in a small, connected community. We have the opportunity for a multitude of recreation activities with being right on the river. We have beautiful hillsides and an opportunity for commercial development on both sides of the community with I-80 to the north and F-90 to the south.*
- 10 *A great community with almost everything you need and close enough to Des Moines for the rest.*
- 11 *Small town environment with a fantastic school.*
- 12 *t*
- 13 *Quiet, peaceful, friendly setting within minutes of "big-city" amenities.*
- 14 *Friendly City, On the Move, Great School District,*
- 15 *A very quaint community. Most activities revolve around the school or the churches in town.*
- 16 *A quiet town, good school.*
- 17 *Second to none school system.*
- 18 *Quilt, friendly town great place to live.*
- 19 *I like how it is described on the web site but if I think of something cool I'll let you know.*
- 20 *Better and new improved playground floors school, park. The school can also get a grant for new playground floors. There is no reason not to. Waukee has a new floor it is on their web site.*
- 21 *Small town feel – close to big city living*
- 22 *"Not a lot for kids to do. Close enough to Des Moines for work."*
- 23 *It's a nice small town to live in, has a good school system, and is close to Des Moines.*



van meter visioning survey results

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(continuation of question 17)

- 24 *It's a bedroom city that is land locked with a good school that is close to Des Moines. Until the landowners around the town are willing to sell and someone is willing to develop a business community that is all Van Meter is going to be.*
- 25 *Easy commute to Jordan Creek Parkway for dining, shopping, large library, etc.*
- 26 *Great small town with great school system, except the water problem would be a draw back, prepare to have extra expenses involving water softeners, salt for the water softeners, appliances & etc.*
- 27 *Small town living but close to the "big" city*
- 28 *A small town atmosphere and a safe place to call home.*
- 29 *Quite small town with low crime.*
- 30 *If you don't want to live in a run down trailer court but want the same curb side appeal then move to Van Meter.*
- 31 *It is a wonderful place to raise children, we have a tight knit community with people looking out for one another and our school system is exceptional!*
- 32 *A quiet town that's within a short drive to all that Des Moines has to offer.*
- 33 *Small town that is close enough to Des Moines for work and other opportunities. A good school system that knows every student. A community that cares about each other.*
- 34 *Small town with strong values, with a big town convenience.*
- 35 *A Small rural community close enough to Des Moines for the perks, with a school that strives on "keeping" the small school atmosphere for the children of the community.*
- 36 *Small town, good school*
- 37 *Small close-knit community while being close to the big city*
- 38 *Small close-knit community with short commute to larger city.*
- 39 *Small town living 15 minutes from West Des Moines; 30 minutes from Downtown Des Moines.*
- 40 *Small quiet community. Good school system*
- 41 *Small-town atmosphere with a great school system—yet still very close to the city*
- 42 *A great Place to call home*
- 43 *Small town living close to DSM, great school system, friendly community*
- 44 *Quiet small town living*
- 45 *Very nice community with good, caring people*
- 46 *Great small town close to Des Moines; safe*
- 47 *Small close community*
- 48 *It is a small quiet town in the middle of nowhere yet not to far from town (DSM)*
- 49 *Quiet, with a "we don't want to give away how great it is here attitude"*
- 50 *Small town friendly with big town nearness.*



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(continuation of question 17)

- 51 Great community!
- 52 Quiet. Safe.
- 53 Home Town community living.
- 54 Used to be a quiet small town w/ more people than dogs.
- 55 Great small community only minutes away from Des Moines with an exceptional school district.
- 56 Small town living
- 57 Close knit neighborhoods. Rural scenic rolling hills. A great place for raising families. Small town feeling close to the city life.
- 58 Small town close to a city
- 59 Small town living
- 60 Close knit community with excellent schools that is close to major metropolitan amenities.
- 61 A place where all eating, grocery, fuel are in close proximity
- 62 Far enough away to be quiet, close enough to be convenient
- 63 "Excellent school, friendly small-town atmosphere"
- 64 "Excellent school, friendly small-town atmosphere"
- 65 Great public schools – location, location, location! Lower cost of living/ housing options. Great opportunity for commercial development – services – retail – small industrial.
- 66 A quiet small town with mainly single family homes, good school and close to shopping and work
- 67 A place where everyone knows everyone.
- 68 Small town community with the city conveniences within 1/2 hour drive
- 69 A growing community with a lot of potential for families and small business along with a great school district
- 70 Quiet little bedroom community, close commute to Des Moines
- 71 Small town USA
- 72 Small town safety 15 minutes from big city amenities
- 73 Friendly, nice, quiet
- 74 Quiet, small town living





meeting minutes

van meter strategic vision plan

Date: June 10, 2009 **Date of Issuance:** June 15, 2009

Present: Thomas Wright, RDG Justin Platts, RDG Sondra Sittner, City of Van Meter
Members of the Van Meter Community

Small Group Discussions Summary:

Tourism:

- Attract people to school
- Attract rooftops and visitors
- Utilize river – which might include making ramp/parking available
- Develop/enhance where to go after the river
- Encourage business development on F–90/due to development on W/Grand
- Encourage city growth to south of Hwy 90
- Construct pool/aquatic center – small in scale to fit community
- Continue to promote and improve technology in school (“cutting edge”)
- Encourage retail – particularly restaurant and grocery
- Develop weekly Farmers Market
- Develop community center – available for all ages
- Revitalize downtown area
- Provide better signage and way finding to city parks and attractions
- Continue expansion of annual Raccoon River Days
- Enhance sports in terms of additional opportunities (i.e. roller/ice skating rink; skateboard park; and volleyball; disc golf)

ESSENCE OF VAN METER:

- Family oriented
- Safe
- Affordable
- K–12 School

CIVIC PRIDE:

- Provide separate school buildings for elementary & secondary to allow for growth
- Need for “welcome sign” at city entrances
- Develop river recreation/access
- Develop walking paths/park/trails between spare field and river and possibly disc golf
- Continue activities (i.e. “Melissa Lyons” tournament)
- Separate elementary school – identify long–term need for new buildings



meeting minutes

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ESSENCE OF VAN METER:

- Small
- Relaxed
- Everybody knows everyone
- Not yuppies

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

- Develop “town square”/a “real” downtown development
- Provide incentives to bring businesses to town (tax abatements or other tax incentives)
- Uniqueness
- Make accessible different areas of Van Meter – develop trails/sidewalks to promote connections
- Construct community center for youth/adult/elder activities
- Encourage development of hotel with a restaurant – utilize proximity to Veterans Cemetery (lots of traffic)
- Encourage development of a downtown restaurant
- Promote Van Meter as a green community
- Encourage development of grocery store (coop?) as opposed to “supermarket”
- Utilize river for recreational opportunities and connecting
- Encourage development of abandoned gravel pit north of town
- Promote assisted–living facility
- Target town focus – where will be heart of town be (i.e. highway 90 or “downtown”)
- Provide better public service facility for fire/police/library/administration
- Address water clarity issues
- Develop a long–term master plan for schools

ESSENCE OF VAN METER:

- Van Meter K–12 School
- Quiet
- Affordable Housing
- Family–oriented

RECREATION:

- Need for indoor recreation/community center for classes/meetings/recreation/wedding receptions/youth activities (multi–purpose to keep revenue in Van Meter)
- Build aquatic center sized for community
- Develop bike/walking trails to connect the town
- Extend bike/walking trails and paths – maybe as far as trails on highway 6
- More recreation for ages 10–17 – skating/Frisbee/basketball
- Develop river access/trails – boat ramp/parking areas – opportunities to view/enjoy natural setting (improve ADA access)
- Improve, build–up and enhance Racoon River Days
- Enhance & promote recreational complex (attract adult leagues)



meeting minutes

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ESSENCE OF VAN METER:

- Ability to make a difference/"We can make a difference in our town."
- Feeling/being safe
- Ability to be involved/Involvement

AESTHETIC ENHANCEMENT:

- Focus on F-90 or Interstate access signs to identify City of Van Meter
- Develop/improve "Main Street" with trees/lighting/enhancements/town square/parks
- Enhance City Hall and parks
- In absence of curbs – target parking issues downtown
- Capitalize on river opportunities, river accessibility
- Develop walking trails for easy access to different sections of town (i.e. to cemetery/school/parks) to increase connecting
- Develop recreational access and way finding signage into and out of town
- Provide safe access to recreational facility
- Promote "first time buyers"/other incentives to reduce number of vacant homes which detract from community and increase home sales

ESSENCE OF VAN METER:

- Retain small town feel
- "Best Kept Secret"

Other Discussion and Comments

- "Honestly, the school isn't and wasn't a draw for me."
- "I don't get that – it is an ugly building."



meeting minutes

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Date: August 18, 2009 **Date of Issuance:** August 19, 2009

Present: Thomas Wright, RDG Bob Lacy Allan Adams
Linda Schaut

Distribution: Economic Development Committee

Discussion:

- 1) Review
 - a) Survey effect
 - i) Positive community feedback
 - ii) People looking forward to next steps
 - b) June 10 Public Meeting
 - c) Findings/Draft
- 2) Show
 - a) Plan with proposed milestones
- 3) Planning items of focus (in recommended order of progression):
 - a) Directional and informational way finding/signage recommended locations
 - i) I-80 North
 - ii) Grand / 90 South
 - iii) At bridge
 - iv) At school
 - v) At recreation center / Casey's
 - vi) At Main Street
 - b) Main Street/ downtown streetscape improvements (quaint commercial mixed-use corridor on Main Street)
 - i) Upgrade lighting
 - ii) Curb / gutters
 - iii) Banner / signage
 - iv) Façade improvements
 - c) Downtown commercial development
 - i) Move trucking out of "core" downtown district (cost to move "Rhodes" 32 trucks?)
 - ii) Provide land/incentives for development of:
 - (1) Restaurant
 - (2) Grocery store
 - (3) Office



meeting minutes

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- (5) Service (B&B, hotel)
 - (6) New City Hall
 - iii) Railroad crossing between downtown and recreation center
 - d) Recreational development (east of highway)
 - i) Campsite
 - ii) Boat landing
 - iii) Picnic/passive recreation area
 - iv) Trail easements / agreements connect through community
 - e) Specific project to complete and celebrate first?
- 4) Remaining planning time frame:
- a) Share draft report, character sketches by end of August with all committee members by email and solicit comments
 - b) Bob to update City Council on progress
 - c) Bob and Nancy to include Park & Rec in signage conversation as they may want to handle this initiative
 - d) Review final planning report at September 15 Committee meeting
 - e) Present final Vision Plan to City Council at October meeting
- 5) Discussion items:
- a) Is current downtown “big enough” for future expansion opportunities?
 - b) Still considering building new downtown near F–90 points for consideration:
 - i) Cost prohibitive
 - ii) Recycle existing/historical location
 - iii) Can add additional business park and/or retail convenience centers elsewhere with demand
 - iv) Don’t turn your back on the river, recreation center and future development potential of Hallet material land by I–80
 - c) Within 3 – 5 years things can change
 - i) “Rhodes Trucking” may change hands (retirement of owner)
 - ii) Gillette Gunsmith (former grocery building) retirement
 - iii) Auto Part Store owner may retire/sell
 - d) Draft RDG deliverable will include:
 - i) Narrative /Executive Summary
 - ii) Planning graphic
 - iii) Itemized improvements with the following:
 - (1) Illustrations/character sketches
 - (2) Opinion of cost
 - (3) Possible resources/contacts



van meter infrastructure overview



van meter infrastructure overview

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VEENSTRA & KIMM, INC.

3000 Westown Parkway • West Des Moines, Iowa 50266-1320
515-225-8000 • 515-225-7848(FAX) • 800-241-8000(WATS)

October 12, 2009

Thomas Wright
RDG Planning & Design
301 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

VAN METER, IOWA
INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW

In response to your recent request to the City of Van Meter, this letter is to provide an overview of the City of Van Meter's infrastructure relating to water and sanitary sewer service.

The City of Van Meter has completed periodic evaluations of both its municipal water system and its sanitary sewerage system. The City has not developed a specific capital improvement program for either of the two utilities.

Water System

The existing municipal water system includes two wells, chemical addition, two storage facilities and the distribution system. The average daily pumpage is approximately 75,000,000 gpd. The peak day pumpage is approximately 120,000 gpm. The capacity of the two wells is approximately 150 gpm and 160 gpm each. The firm capacity with one well is approximately 215,000 gpd.

From a capacity perspective the City of Van Meter could accommodate an additional pumpage of approximately 95,000 gallons per day with the existing system. As new pumpage exceeds approximately 75,000 gallons per day, the City will need to consider a third well.

The City is likely to require an additional well. Sand and gravel formations along the Raccoon River should be adequate to allow the City to expand its water pumpage through the construction of new wells. No detailed exploration has been completed to determine the capacity of the number of individual wells.



van meter infrastructure overview

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The City currently does not have a water treatment plant. The City water treatment is limited to basic chemical addition including chlorine for disinfection. The City has identified the need for a water treatment plant primarily for iron and manganese removal. The cost of a new water plant would require a significant rate increase or a combination of rate increases and an ad valorem tax levee for general obligation bond indebtedness.

Although the City has identified the need for a water treatment plant, no schedule has been developed for its design and construction.

The water system includes a 100,000 gallon elevated storage tank and a 42,000 gallon ground storage reservoir. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources recommends reliable storage equal to average day pumpage. As the City's additional water demand increases by more than 50,000 gallons per day, the City will need to consider additional storage.

The City has identified advantages of additional storage in the area south of County Road F90 in a second pressure zone.

The water distribution system currently covers the developed area of the City and includes a 12-inch main along County Road R16 to the Crestview Estates south of County Road F90. Water pressure in the higher elevation area south of F90 is as low as approximately 30 psi.

The City has a plan to install a booster station on County Road R16 north of County Road F90. The booster station would increase the pressure south of County Road F90 by approximately 30 psi. Until storage is constructed south of County Road F90 the booster station would operate as a closed system. As additional development occurs south of County Road F90, the City will need to consider additional storage or looping the water main system for reliability.

Sanitary Sewer System

Wastewater treatment for the City of Van Meter is provided by a 3-cell controlled discharge lagoon. The capacity of the lagoon system is approximately 28 mg. The controlled discharge lagoon is a store and discharge design with an allowable discharge twice each year.

The projected maximum flow is in the range of 35 mg. Theoretically, the City would have available approximately 10,000,000 gallons of additional capacity each 6 months, or an additional capacity of approximately 55,000 gallons per day.



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The actual available capacity in the treatment system will depend on the level of extraneous flow from infiltration and inflow. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources requirement is a limitation to twice annual discharge. Extraneous flow competes with the wastewater flow for available capacity.

The City's sanitary sewer system is tributary to a lift station located west of the lagoon facility. The City has upgraded the lift station to accommodate peak flows in the trunk sewer. It would appear the lift station could accommodate an additional pumpage of 55,000 gallons per day even during wet weather periods.

The sanitary sewer system serves the developed area of the City. The City extended a sanitary sewer on Hazel Street to south of County Road F90 and easterly through the Crestview Estates area. Sanitary sewer is available in the tributary area generally along Hazel Street.

The City does not currently have sanitary sewer available along the County Road R16 corridor. Some of the area south of County Road F90 corridor can be sewerd westerly to the Crestview Estates sanitary sewer. However, there are limitations in capacity and availability of sewer service along the County Road R16 corridor.

If you have any questions or comments concerning the project, please contact us at 225-8000.

VEENSTRA & KIMM, INC.



H. R. Veenstra Jr.

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mid-american advantage



the mid-american advantage

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MidAmerican Energy Company meets its customers' demand for electricity with nearly 6,700 megawatts of owned electric generating capacity. The record peak demand of 4,310 megawatts was set July 31, 2006. The peak demand in 2008 was 4,210 megawatts on July 31.

When energy is a major factor in the prospect, we believe we offer an advantage no other energy supplier in the Midwest can match. Here's why:

- MidAmerican Energy Company is privately owned and as such is not subject to the quarterly whims of Wall Street. This allows us to focus on long-term growth in improving energy infrastructure. Berkshire Hathaway, Inc., our principal owner, is one of the most respected companies in the world.
- MidAmerican Energy Company is No. 1 in the nation in ownership of wind powered electric generation among regulated utilities. The company solidified its wind energy leadership by adding 611.3 megawatts of wind energy in Iowa during 2008. MidAmerican has 1,393.3 megawatts of wind energy facilities in operation in Iowa.
- To further MidAmerican's commitment to the environment, the company is investing approximately \$400 million in emissions control projects in 2009.
- The price of electricity per kilowatt-hour, the electric rate, for MidAmerican customers is lower today than it was in 1995, and MidAmerican's current rate agreement with the Iowa Utilities Board keeps electric rates stable through at least 2013. Also, the company does not have any electric rate increases planned for its customers in Illinois or South Dakota.
- MidAmerican Energy offers EnergyAdvantage, an energy-efficiency program for commercial new construction and installation of energy-efficient equipment and lighting. Rebate incentives are available to help offset the higher initial costs associated with the design and installation of energy-efficient options. To use this program, the prospect must meet with us at the start of the building design and equipment specification process. Following is the Web site link: www.midamericanenergy.com/html/energy6.asp.
- MidAmerican Energy Holdings Company, of which MidAmerican Energy Company is a wholly-owned subsidiary, received an Award of Excellence at the 2008 Platts Global Energy Awards. This award honored MidAmerican for having earned the most recognition as a Platts Global Energy Award winner throughout a "decade of tumultuous change." MidAmerican has earned more Platts awards than any other company in the history of the awards. Platts is a leading information provider in the global energy industry. It is MidAmerican's sixth Platts Global Energy Award.



van meter schools' technology



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DesMoinesRegister.com

Small Schools Become Technology Pioneers

Van Meter, Ia. — The future of public education is unfolding inside an old brick school in Van Meter. This is what it will look like:

Spanish students talking to their counterparts in Brazil over an online video-chat program.

Science students using three-dimensional images instead of books to study cells.

Speeches involving video and PowerPoint slides instead of notecards.

Van Meter and more than a dozen other small schools in Iowa have become unlikely pioneers in the digital education age.

As their bigger-city counterparts pump money from a statewide sales tax increase into new buildings, some small schools have made unprecedented investments in technology.

This fall, the Van Meter school district spent \$600,000 to equip every junior high and high school student with laptop computers. A virtual reality lab with donated equipment will open soon.

Parents hardly recognize the new face of school.

"When I went to college back in '89, we all had word processors, and those were cool," said Gillian Gillespie of Van Meter, a mother of two. "Technology is changing so fast."

Van Meter school officials say their goals transcend what's cool. They want to change the way they do business.

In four years, textbooks will be a memory, they hope. Eventually, so will the traditional school day of 8:20 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

In its place will be an open campus where students and teachers come and go, much like college. For virtual classes, students won't leave home.

Superintendent John Carver told parents this fall that computers will alter the information landscape the way the printing press did.

Schools need to be ready, he said.

"Technology is not the answer," Carver said. "The thinking is what's different. This could be the flash point for educational reform."



RODNEY WHITE/THE REGISTER

Jenny Junker, above, asks for help with her project in the technology and information literacy class at Van Meter Junior/Senior High School. This is the first year every student has had a laptop computer. Within four years, the Van Meter district hopes to be "bookless."



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Potholes Along the Way

Rarely have the nation's schools faced so much pressure to change.

The short attention spans of today's tech-savvy children demand it, education officials say. So does the economic viability of the United States, because most of tomorrow's jobs will require high-tech skills and critical thinking.

State lawmakers had that in mind when they passed the Iowa Core Curriculum, a mandatory blueprint for what teachers will cover in classes beginning in 2012.

"Digital technologies are transforming every other segment of our society," said Scott McLeod, an Iowa State University education professor. "There's no reason to expect that our schools won't similarly be disrupted. You can already see the system start to crack."

McLeod and others predict the road to digital revolution will be filled with potholes. Here's why:

- The aging ranks of teachers — Iowa's average is 42 years old — fuel worries about using new tools in old ways. A laptop program in New York schools fell through because the equipment was used as little more than electronic worksheets, McLeod said.
- Many school leaders see technology as a nuisance. This summer, St. Ansgar school officials considered buying a device to block cell phone signals because so many students ignored a ban on text messages in class.
- Iowa school administrators are wary of pumping money into technology when expenses have skyrocketed and enrollment in most districts has dropped.
- Teaching nationwide is driven by test scores instead of innovation. "If our accountability system doesn't change, I don't know how much our schools will change," said Tony Wagner, a Harvard University education researcher. "There will be more technology, but it will be used in test preparation."

Tech-Savvy School Districts

These Iowa school districts have spent money from a statewide sales tax and other sources to equip students in at least one grade with laptop computers:

- AHST of Avoca (enrollment 567)
- Anita (246)
- BCLUW of Conrad (664)
- Bedford (535)
- C and M of Massena (162)
- Cardinal of Eldon (644)
- Central City (480)
- Mount Ayr (678)
- Newell-Fonda (428)
- Pocahontas Area (617)
- Sidney (390)
- Sigourney (695)
- South Hamilton of Jewell (792)
- United of Boone (343)
- Van Meter (614)

*2008–09 enrollment

These Iowa school districts have virtual reality equipment, whose three-dimensional images give students hands-on work in math and science lessons:

- Boone (enrollment 2,120)
- College community schools in Cedar Rapids (4,199)
- East Marshall (898)
- Perry (1,864)
- Sigourney (695)
- Van Meter (614)
- Valley of Elgin (506)
- Waukee (5,428)

*2008–09 enrollment



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Technology also forces teachers into a supporting role in class rather than the lead.

The approach collides with entrenched beliefs about education, said McLeod, who trains school leaders at technology boot camps.

"We fear what we don't understand," he said. "Most educators don't really understand the technological world because they're not active in it. We've got a long way to go."

Growth Spurt Coming

Like many small towns, Van Meter is heavy on pride and light on frills.

Preschoolers and 18-year-olds go to school together. A 19th-century bell that signaled the school day to farm families is on display. The Bulldogs run on a cinder track.

Unlike most small Iowa districts, however, Van Meter is on the verge of a growth spurt.

The district, seven miles west of Jordan Creek Town Center, is a key part of the Des Moines metro area's westward growth.

By some estimates, the number of Van Meter students could balloon from 614 this year to 5,000 in a decade.

- The projections sparked a lot of soul-searching.
- "We want to make sure we have our educational philosophy at a laser-sharp focus so that when we do grow, we do not lose focus," Carver said.
- School officials mapped the district's four-year plan in yellow sticky notes on a bulletin board.
- A key piece fell into place when school officials signed a four-year lease with Apple.

Money from a statewide sales tax increase and the district's physical plant and equipment levy, a special tax on property for upkeep and equipment,



RODNEY WHITE/THE REGISTER

Shae Saxton is a technology pioneer at Van Meter Junior/Senior High School. He works on a class presentation about the school's football team, blending highlight footage and information about the team.



ANDREA MELENDEZ/THE REGISTER

Stacey Wigant, a Spanish teacher at Van Meter Junior/Senior High School, asks her students to find more information on Chichen Itza, the famous Mayan pyramids on Mexico's Yucatan peninsula. Instead of scrambling for the school's encyclopedias, the students go to their laptops. The district put a computer in the lap of every student this school year.

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is footing the bill for the MacBooks.

Van Meter school leaders also obtained \$200,000 of virtual reality hardware, whose 3-D images bring math and science concepts to life. Rockwell Collins, the Cedar Rapids maker of communications and aviation electronics, donated the equipment.

School board members gave their stamp of approval. So did students.

When the MacBooks were handed out in August, many students spent their first night on Facebook.

"I think for the younger students it was like opening a Christmas gift," said Bailey Morrell, 17, a senior.

Parents and teachers needed more convincing.

Some parents feared big repair bills for broken MacBooks. Five opted out of the program, school officials say.

Gillespie, who has sons in ninth and seventh grades, said she almost did, too.

"What happens if they forget it, or what if they drop it? What if somebody steals it?" Gillespie said. "Those were my concerns."

Teachers Learned, Too

Some teachers worried they would not be ready for the school year's first bell, despite training and visits to tech-savvy schools.

Stacey Wigant, a high school Spanish teacher, signed up for summer classes.

"I used to think, 'I can use the computer, I can figure things out and I can troubleshoot,' " said Wigant, 30.

"But time got by me. I had kids, and I think I stopped learning. Twitter? I didn't even know what it was."

Wigant became versed in Twitter, Wiki and Delicious, an online service that lets users access their bookmarked Web pages from any computer.

In the first week of school, Wigant's students wrote about their summer vacations in Spanish. Instead of essays, they put together electronic slide shows using online photo galleries and designed layouts on their MacBooks.

Some lessons have flourished, Wigant said. Others have flopped.

High-Tech Schools Efforts in Iowa, U.S.

- Members of the Iowa Board of Education have called for a technology task force to find ways to push schools into the 21st century.

- Several Iowa school districts will form a school technology consortium in October.

Nationwide:

- Colorado's Boulder Valley school district will use three-dimensional technology in the classroom.

- Maine students in grades 7 through 12 received their own laptop computers this year.

- Developers of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as the nation's report card, are working on a national test of technological literacy. The test would measure students' use of technology tools. It could be ready by 2012.



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- “The biggest thing that’s frustrating is, I spend all this time preparing a lesson and it takes them three minutes to finish it,” she said. “I feel like a first-year teacher again.”
- Other teachers face different challenges.
- Bart Jones, a physical education teacher, wonders where computers fit in with ultimate football games and other lessons that exercise the body instead of the mind.
- Dave Tapps’ algebra students used Excel spreadsheets in a recent lesson about subtracting real numbers. But the 38-year teaching veteran is wary of overhauling his lesson plans.

“I’m a little bit old school,” he said. “The kids have done very well on the ACT, and I don’t want to change a lot around.”

Students Push Forward

It didn’t take long for Gillian Gillespie’s misgivings to melt away.

The MacBooks do for her son Paxton, 12, what traditional classes have not: They keep up with him.

Paxton Gillespie is a seventh-grader, but he’s in ninth-grade math and eighth-grade reading.

“It has helped him advance quicker without having to wait for his classmates to catch up,” Gillian Gillespie said. “He can do stuff on his own now.”

Paxton Gillespie is a fan of computers, but he also loves books. When he finished a recent science test early, he opened Victor Hugo’s “Les Miserables” instead of his MacBook.

By some estimates, students spend about a quarter of the school day on their Macbooks.

Teachers say they confiscate fewer cell phones during class. Now they deal with students who type instant messages to friends or play games when they should be working.

Facebook is blocked during school hours. Administrators also weighed blocking iChat, the instant-message application. But they didn’t want to discourage students like Josh Porter, 17.

When a chemistry question stumped him in study hall, he typed an instant message to his teacher, who helped.

“I really like that we pretty much have access to our teachers 24/7 now,” said Porter, a junior.

Special software helps school administrators keep tabs on what students do online throughout the day.

“I’ll send messages to them, ‘Are you supposed to be there?’ “ said Mike Linde, Van Meter’s technology director. “All of a sudden it shuts down.”

Van Meter school officials acknowledge this year is a big experiment.

The district has help from Iowa State University, where professors are designing a test of the technology’s effect on children’s education. Computer experts at Des Moines Area Community College will investigate serious breaches of Internet security, including cyberbullies. And East Marshall students will help their counterparts in Van Meter navigate the virtual reality lab.

- Still, teachers and students will largely feel their way. In Paxton Gillespie’s eyes, that’s the best lesson of all.

