

Postville, Iowa

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# **Our Postville**

Brownfield Area-Wide Plan







## Acknowledgements

**Prepared by** Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development, Inc.

**Prepared for** the City of Postville, Allamakee County Economic Development, and Postville Chamber of Commerce

**Funded** by a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency

**Assistance** provided by EPA Region 7, the City of Postville, Allamakee County Economic Development, the Postville Chamber of Commerce, Our Postville, and the residents of Postville

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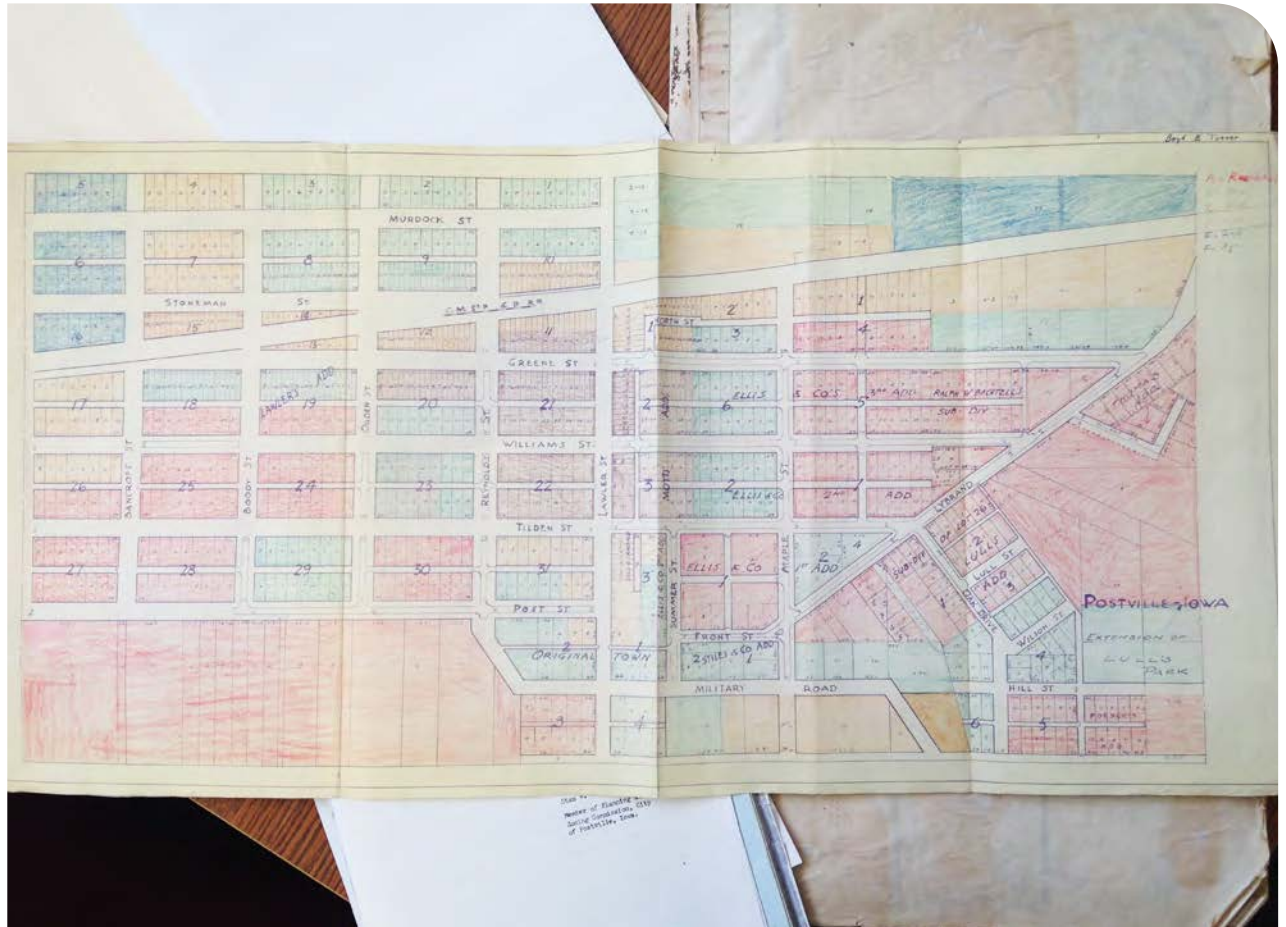


## Background & Process

Postville has a history and culture unique in Iowa and the United States. This diverse rural community has remained resilient in the face of tremendous economic and demographic changes since 1990. Community leaders remain optimistic about the potential of the town to renew its economic vitality and thrive in the 21st century. Postville has opportunities to build on its strengths as an affordable employment hub for the region and to capitalize on its location and identity.

The City of Postville and Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation & Development (RCD) have worked closely to realize this plan. This plan builds on previous efforts that have led to the restoration of Williams Creek, implementation of Stormwater Management Best Management Practices at several sites, and numerous smaller projects throughout the community. The goals and elements included in this plan align with those of the 2008 Postville Comprehensive Plan, the 2016 Driftless Area Scenic Byway Plan, and other regional and state plans.

In the process of developing previously successful projects, RCD and the city recognized that one of the primary challenges facing Postville is the number of potential brownfield sites, which are concentrated in a core area around downtown as well as a linear corridor along the railroad tracks in the center of town.



Hand-colored map of Postville zoning from 1969

RCD was awarded an EPA Brownfield Area-Wide Planning grant in 2017 and actively sought participation from all of the different communities that call Postville home. Because of the inclusiveness of this outreach and the positive participation from members of the public, this plan reflects the priorities and vision of the residents of Postville.

## Challenges

Postville mirrors the challenges facing rural communities throughout the United States: population change, decline of small farms and rural population loss, retail and economic concentration in larger population centers, underinvestment in housing stock, a stagnant real estate market, and a lack of well-paying jobs for younger residents.



### Older built environment

- Of the 128 parcels within the planning area, 19 (15%) could be considered potential brownfield sites due to current or past land use
- Lead paint and asbestos are likely to be the most common concern throughout the planning area
- The mean year built in the planning area is 1928
- Only 8% of buildings in the planning area are classified as being in poor or extremely poor condition, but three of those are in downtown
- Of the 19 potential brownfield sites, 8 are in downtown Postville

### Poverty and low income

- Census estimates show a decline in Median Household and Per Capita income from 2010 to 2016, and a decline in inflation-adjusted Median Household income since 2000
- 24% of individuals and 36% of children are below the poverty level
- 28% of households have received SNAP benefits in the last 12 months (2016)

### Population stagnation

- 1,200 people commuting into Postville every day for work; many employees at higher-wage occupations do not reside in Postville
- Postville is not regionally competitive for residents, entrepreneurs, or jobs
- Lack of cohesive community identity
- Limited organizational structures and resources for Postville economic development



Businesses and empty storefronts on west Greene St. in downtown Postville



Recently vacant lot in downtown Postville

## Assets & Opportunities

### Assets

Postville has a young, diverse population, a location adjacent to natural and recreational resources, and a mix of industry that provides a strong employment base. The community has a unique and compelling story, a well-supported, growing school district, dedicated public servants, and a low cost of living.

### Youth

- 13.5% Postville Population age 5 or under
- 38% Postville population 18 or under
- 34% increase in enrollment at Postville Community School District, 2006/2007 to 2019/2020

### Diversity

- 41% Postville population speaking a language other than English at home
- Majority-minority (51%) city

### Customer base

- 1,200 people commute into Postville for work
- Competitive location along major regional highways

### Low costs

Postville has a lower cost of living than many of its surrounding communities, largely due to low homeownership and food costs. Rental costs vary greatly depending on building age and condition. Newer and well-maintained apartments and homes command rental rates equal to or greater than nearby towns with higher real estate values. Transportation

costs to retail and services not available in Postville are not factored into the lower cost of living here. A greater availability of local retail could help boost Postville's competitive edge on living costs.

### Excellent location

Postville is located only 20 minutes from large retail outlets, and sits at a strategic site at the intersection of four counties. A large state forest, recreational rivers, trails, and trout streams are within a 25-mile radius. Two major federal highways and a state highway intersect downtown. The 100-mile Driftless Area Scenic Byway, a tourist draw that was designated "the most scenic byway in the state," begins in downtown Postville.

### Business gap & retail sales leakage

Unlike many rural Iowa communities, and Iowa as a whole, Postville and Allamakee County both enjoy a robust manufacturing sector while retail sales lag wholesale sale numbers. This reflects changes in rural retail as populations decline, business owners retire, and people travel farther to meet their shopping needs. The connectivity to retail centers in nearby towns is a benefit for consumers but has harmful effects on rural main street businesses.

### High level of pedestrian activity

Postville is a flat, compact community built on a grid and largely constructed before 1960. Any location within town is reachable on foot in less than 20 minutes. The ease of walking is not why many residents walk, however: youth, culture, and

religious observance all contribute to a high number of pedestrians on Postville streets. Postville residents would benefit from changes that would enhance pedestrian safety and entice visitors to join residents strolling through town. Pedestrian safety changes will also benefit downtown business and help give a more welcoming feel to the town.

### Desire for change

Postville has endured demographic changes that have roiled many Midwest towns with major meatpacking industries, but it is unique in the composition of those demographic changes. The town is infamous as the site of a major immigration raid in 2008 that left its major employer temporarily closed, hundreds of residents gone, and many businesses shuttered. After that year, the town has come together to ensure that its city government functions, city finances are stabilized, and the school district is supported. A universally-held sentiment in the town is the need to move forward and build a strong and economically viable diverse community.

### Diversity as an asset

Postville's unique demographics provide opportunities for tourism and to recruit new residents. "Where else but Postville can a dairy farmer's kids go to school with Somali students, buy ice cream at the Guatemalan grocery store, and play baseball with the (orthodox) Jewish students," commented one local. "You can learn about the world without leaving home." While this diversity can create challenges for inclusion and representation in local institutions,



there is also the opportunity to build on the town's reputation as the "hometown to the world" to build a niche within Northeast Iowa's tourism industry.

### Guiding Vision & Strategies

This planning effort, in a community and region that have limited opportunities for planning work that actively engages with the public, was embraced by community leaders who recognized the chance to use brownfield reuse and redevelopment to change the image of the town and show the qualities that make it unique.

The planning advisory committee developed three overall strategies that will support the overall project vision. These strategies shaped the projects and proposals that are included in the final redevelopment plan for the area and for individual sites. The three redevelopment strategies are centered on the idea that Postville should be regionally recognized as a great community for businesses, residents, and visitors alike.

### Creating a Great Place to Live

Investments in quality-of-life features such as new housing and recreational amenities will help retain current residents and attract new residents.

### Creating a Great Place to Visit

Improving Postville's image and appeal to visitors through partnerships with regional tourism and visitation initiatives will help to create new business opportunities and encourage additional investment.

### Creating a Great Place for Business

Building on Postville's strength as a regional employment hub, this strategy will ensure that existing large employers have access to the resources that they need to thrive while also boosting entrepreneurs and investors from both inside and outside Postville.

### Implementation Strategy

Implementation of elements of this plan will depend on the success of community-led initiatives. Earlier successes, such as hosting the RAGBRAI bicycle race in 2017 and fundraising for a new playground from 2018-19, have built capacity and strengthened relationships. Sustaining this momentum will be the key to realizing the projects in the brownfield plan.

### Ensure buy-in from leaders of all cultural groups

Broad-based support from residents creates a shared vision for Postville's future and encourages participation in future planning, organization, and fundraising. It will also build community capacity for change through new programming and leadership opportunities.

### Create sustainable Postville-focused organization

Dedicated staff and funding will be needed to successfully carry out interlinked redevelopment, promotional, and branding efforts, as well as fundraising, grant writing, and outreach activities. Key tasks include identifying and leveraging potential grant funds for historic resources, downtown renovation, pedestrian and bicycle safety, public

### Vision Statement

**Postville is a place where the American Dream can still be achieved, with opportunities for business, education, and recreation, and cultural and social diversity that contribute to a high quality of life. Our innovative, niche-driven business climate offers opportunity for the youth of this region, and residents have access to quality, affordable housing options.**

art, and recreational projects that have broad public support. An organization can also join or learn from existing programs and initiatives offered by the State of Iowa such as Iowa Great Places or Main Street Iowa.

### Build on existing partnerships

Identify where organizational partnerships and initiatives already exist, and utilize these to help foster new partnerships. Byways, tourism initiatives, housing programs, and economic development and living-wage job initiatives could be valuable resources for accomplishing objectives and meeting goals.



## Planning Intention

The initial advisory committee discussions and public engagement showed support for the following goals. In order to achieve these initial goals, the committee developed a vision, strategies, goals, and objectives for this plan.

- Downtown: revitalize downtown Postville as the focal point for the community and a regional destination
- Re-use key brownfield sites to improve Postville's image
- Tell the story of Postville to new residents and visitors by highlighting the positive and unique assets of the town
- Create conditions for investment by large-scale employers
- Attract new families to Postville
- Create spaces for entrepreneurs to thrive in Postville
- Improve quality of life of Postville residents
- Build on links to regional economic development and tourism initiatives and projects
- Specific projects that were mentioned while during the initial planning discussion include:
- Restore downtown buildings for use by new businesses
- Rehabilitate downtown upper-story housing units
- Create entrepreneur and community kitchen space at 101 E. Greene site
- Explore the possibility of new or expanded Postville trail
- Re-use or cleanup 715 W. Tilden to create better gateway for Postville
- Create entrance for Driftless Area Scenic Byway at Lawler & Tilden streets
- Create historic and/or cultural interpretation sites
- Create gathering space at 111 N. Lawler
- Repurpose 110 S. Lawler for public plaza
- Install public art pieces at key sites downtown
- Revitalize Dreamland for use by new generations
- Ensure integrity and continued utility of Turner Hall
- Create safer pedestrian environment through physical changes to streetscape

### Leverage resources

Postville has managed a remarkable recovery from dire fiscal situation after the 2008 recession and immigration raid, but its hard-won solvency leaves little room for surplus. Postville is a thrifty community that takes pride in its fiscal responsibility, and it will be important to identify opportunities to leverage existing spending, regional programs, and financial tools such as Urban Renewal Areas and tax abatement to foster redevelopment. Postville can utilize Iowa Department of Natural Resources Brownfield Program funding and Iowa Economic Development Authority programs to identify and remediate potentially hazardous substances at key sites identified in the plan.

### Support existing businesses and future entrepreneurs

Postville has a strong entrepreneurial culture among immigrant groups, as well as a broadly diversified base of large employers. This can provide stability for the town, but only if employees and managers are committed to- and living in- the community.

### Start small

Beginning with achievable short-term projects will build a record of “wins” for the community and show that changes are possible.



One of Postville's local store owners

# Strategies, Goals, & Objectives

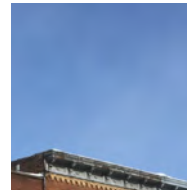
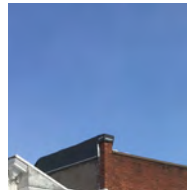
Vision Statement	Postville is a place where the American Dream can still be achieved, with opportunities for business, education, and recreation, and cultural and social diversity that contribute to a high quality of life. Our innovative, niche-driven business climate offers opportunity for the youth of this region, and residents have access to quality, affordable housing options.		
Strategy	A Great Place to Visit	A Great Place for Business	A Great Place to Live
Goal	Improve Community Entrances	Create & Retain Higher-Wage Employment	Mobility Options for All
Objective	Byway & Gateway improvements	Expanded business park	Walking and Bicycle Improvements
	New attractions or landmarks	Workforce Development & Career Training	Enhanced Recreational Opportunities
	Landscaping / Stormwater practices	Entrepreneurial Assistance	Recreational sports projects
	Electric Vehicle Charging stations	Business Incubator	Create New Gathering Spaces
	Revitalize Downtown as the Center of Postville	Re-use key Brownfield Sites	Expanded Library
	Creative Placemaking	Site preparation and testing	Teen Center
	Pedestrian infrastructure and streetscape ideas	Marketing of Sites, Advantages, and Incentives	Community Social Services Hub
	Art Projects	New Development or Improvement Incentives	Downtown Business Recruitment
	Restore & Reuse Downtown Buildings	Create Industry Clusters	New Downtown Plaza
	Tell Our Story	Kosher Foods	Improved Housing Options
	Historic Preservation	Thermoset Plastics	Downtown 2nd Story Apartments
	Interpretive elements	Malted Grain	Remediate Housing Hazards
	Create links to regional initiatives	Improve Connectivity and Transportation	
		Truck Routes	
		Utilize Existing Infrastructure Capacity	
		Development-Ready Sites	
		Additional Childcare facilities	
		Parcel consolidation	
		Solar Energy Development	



Postville, Iowa

# Existing Conditions

Brownfield Area-Wide Plan



## About Postville

### Location

Postville is far from any large urban centers, both within the Midwest and in Iowa. Its traditional role as a market community for surrounding farms has been diminished in the wake of macroeconomic changes that have reduced the number of small farms in Iowa and in the US, as well as competition with other regional towns that have a greater diversity of shopping and entertainment options. Its accessibility along major highways creates a direct link to and from the community, allowing workers from across Northeast Iowa to commute to Postville easily and Postville residents to leave town to spend money at regional shopping centers. A decline in Postville's role as a regional shopping destination, its proximity to communities with greater amenities, and its isolation from major urban markets create challenges for development efforts.

### Political Geography

Postville is centrally located in Northeast Iowa, laying nearly at the intersection of the state's four northeastern-most counties. Most of Postville lies in Allamakee County, while a small part of the south side of the city is in Clayton County. The boundaries of Winneshiek and Fayette counties are within a mile of city limits. U.S. Highways 18 and 52 merge into a cosigned route half a mile west of city limits and pass through the middle of town, while Iowa Highway 51 is routed down the main downtown street. Wisconsin is

25 miles from Postville, while Minnesota is 35 miles and Illinois is 80 miles from the town. The nearest large metropolitan area is Minneapolis-Saint Paul, 180 miles from Postville.

### Physical Geography

The town is within the Driftless Area, or Paleozoic Plateau, an area of the Upper Midwest left uncovered by ice during the most recent period of glaciation that ended roughly 10,000 years ago. Dramatic river bluffs, hills, oak savannah, and karst topography set the region apart from its flat surroundings, which were covered in the glacier sediment, or drift. These geological features have helped to create a tourism industry in Northeast Iowa based on recreational opportunities. Trout fishing, hiking, bird-watching, bicycle touring, and kayaking are available within a twenty-minute drive of Postville. The city and its immediate surroundings, however, are located on a broad, gently sloping plain.

Efforts are underway to capitalize on the unique aspects of the Driftless Area both locally and regionally. Its physical traits have shaped regional economic forces and a regional identity rooted in small-scale and organic agriculture, Scandinavian heritage, and relative isolation from other more populated and industrialized parts of the Midwest. The Driftless Area Scenic Byway begins at the intersection of US-52/18 and IA-51 in downtown Postville and winds 100 miles through the hilly topography of Allamakee and Winneshiek Counties, and the River

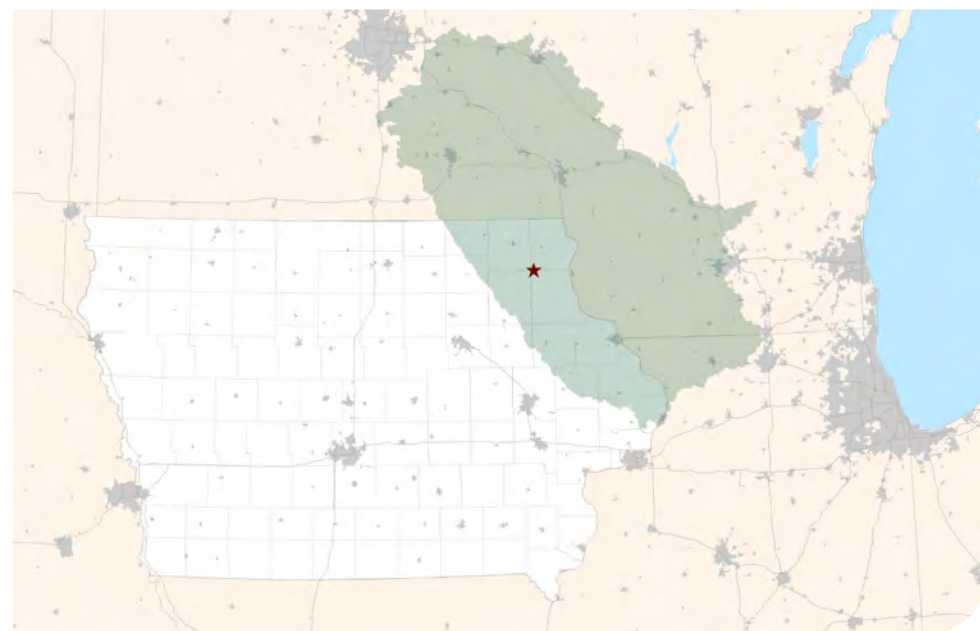
Bluff Scenic Byway along the Turkey River starts 10 miles to the south. Both are part of the Iowa Scenic Byways system, which is a series of driving routes that highlight unique ecological or cultural assets of the state. Postville has not fully capitalized on its location on the byway through signage, wayfinding, or partnerships with Driftless Area Scenic Byway Board or other regional organizations. These byways are an opportunity for growth and economic development.



Postville in the 4-County region of northeast Iowa

**The rugged, deeply carved terrain seen in the Paleozoic Plateau is so unlike the remainder of the state that the contrast is unmistakable, even to a casual observer.**

*Landforms of Iowa, Jean C. Prior, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, 1991*



**Paleozoic Plateau, or Driftless Area**

## History

Postville's history reflects larger macroeconomic trends in the United States. Its founding in 1849 is representative of a period of American frontier history that saw native settlements removed in favor of white agricultural settlement. Its growth came in an era of river transportation and, later, railroad expansion.

Joel Post settled in 1843 at the halfway stop between Fort Atkinson, Iowa Territory and Fort Crawford, Wisconsin. The land was part of the so-called Neutral Ground between the Sauk & Fox and Dakota settlements in Iowa. Other settlers did not follow until after the land was surveyed and opened to white

settlement in 1849, and the town itself was platted in 1853.

Commodities markets have shaped the development of Postville from its early days. With the railroad connection to the Mississippi River in 1864, farmers could sell their grain in Postville. New arrivals built a grain elevator which would later become Hall Roberts Son, a business that still sells grain at the site of its original elevator. By 1875, 85,000 bushels per year were being sold in Postville.

Northeast Iowa counties were among the top national producers of wheat in the 1870s and 1880s, though this came to a sudden end with the regional emergence of the Wheat Rust fungus toward the end

of that period. Today, the regional economy revolves around international corn and soy export markets, as well as ethanol production. Postville's economy is dependent largely on local businesses, which have created a unique regional population and economic niche.

Germans settled in Postville in the 19th century, establishing Lutheran and Catholic congregations, a German-language newspaper that was published until 1918, and a large Turnverein that was built in 1913. During and after the First World War, German language and cultural expression declined rapidly in Postville and throughout Iowa due to nativist and xenophobic pressures; the local newspaper stopped printing in German in 1918 after Iowa's so-called



Former depot building



Memorial Day Parade, 1910



Postville's German-language newspaper

“Babel Proclamation” prohibited the use of foreign languages in public spaces.<sup>1</sup> Few immigrants came to Postville after the initial wave of German settlement in the late 1800s, a situation that was unchanged for nearly 100 years.

In the twentieth century, Postville continued to be an important regional service center for farmers in the four counties surrounding the town. The meat packing industry came to the town in the 1950s, bringing relatively high-wage and often unionized employment opportunities to the rural area. Two processing plants were built on the western edge of Postville— one for turkey, one for beef. Wayne Poultry, which became Iowa Turkey Processors, was destroyed in a 2002 fire and did not rebuild, with a

loss of 350 jobs. Hygrade Packing took over the beef plant in the 1980s, but closed soon after and was purchased by a businessman from New York.

The buyer of the beef plant, Aaron Rubashkin, transformed it into a kosher beef and chicken processing plant. Agriprocessors employed 800 people by 2007, making it the largest kosher meatpacking plant in the United States. The plant attracted immigrant labor from Eastern Europe, Latin America, and parts of Africa, as well as Hasidic rabbis to supervise production.

In May 2008, the largest immigration raid to that date in the United States took place at Agriprocessors, in which over 300 plant employees were arrested and

the plant was closed. This event brought significant negative publicity to the town. Results of the raid included an overnight loss of population, growing mistrust between various resident communities, and the shuttering of several downtown businesses. Coming at the same time as a national downturn in real estate and lending, the city saw a crash in property value and a surge in the number of vacant and abandoned homes. The town that cultivated its image as the “Hometown to the World” until 2008 held a yearly festival called Taste of Postville, but following 2008, the festival was no longer held, its multicultural community disbanded, and the community radio station and multicultural center were closed. Some





Renovated downtown building

**While there are many positive signs of recovery for Postville, there are many challenges ahead to transform its diversity into a cohesive mosaic.**

effects of the immigration raid are still being felt, as property valuation is still depressed and the real estate market continues to be stagnant compared to neighboring communities.

By many metrics, however, Postville has recovered from the devastating effects of the raid: the processing plant is expanding, the school district enrollment continues to rise, and the city has worked diligently to reduce the number of vacant, abandoned, or otherwise problematic properties. In 2009, the plant was purchased by a Canadian-Israeli real estate and packaging magnate and was renamed Agristar. Agriprocessors brought diversity to a small Midwestern town, and while Agristar still employs many immigrants and naturalized Americans, the company has shown an interest in being more involved in the community through charitable giving, employment training programs, and interest in community enhancements. The school system has continued to grow as immigrants from Central America and east Africa come to Postville to work at Agristar.

While there are many positive signs of recovery for Postville, there are many challenges for efforts to improve housing stock, attract or cultivate new businesses, and revitalize downtown and other brownfield and grayfield sites. Overcoming those challenges will require solutions that build capacity for business development, community organizing, and political involvement within all sectors of

Postville's diverse population in order to transform its diverse component parts into a cohesive mosaic.

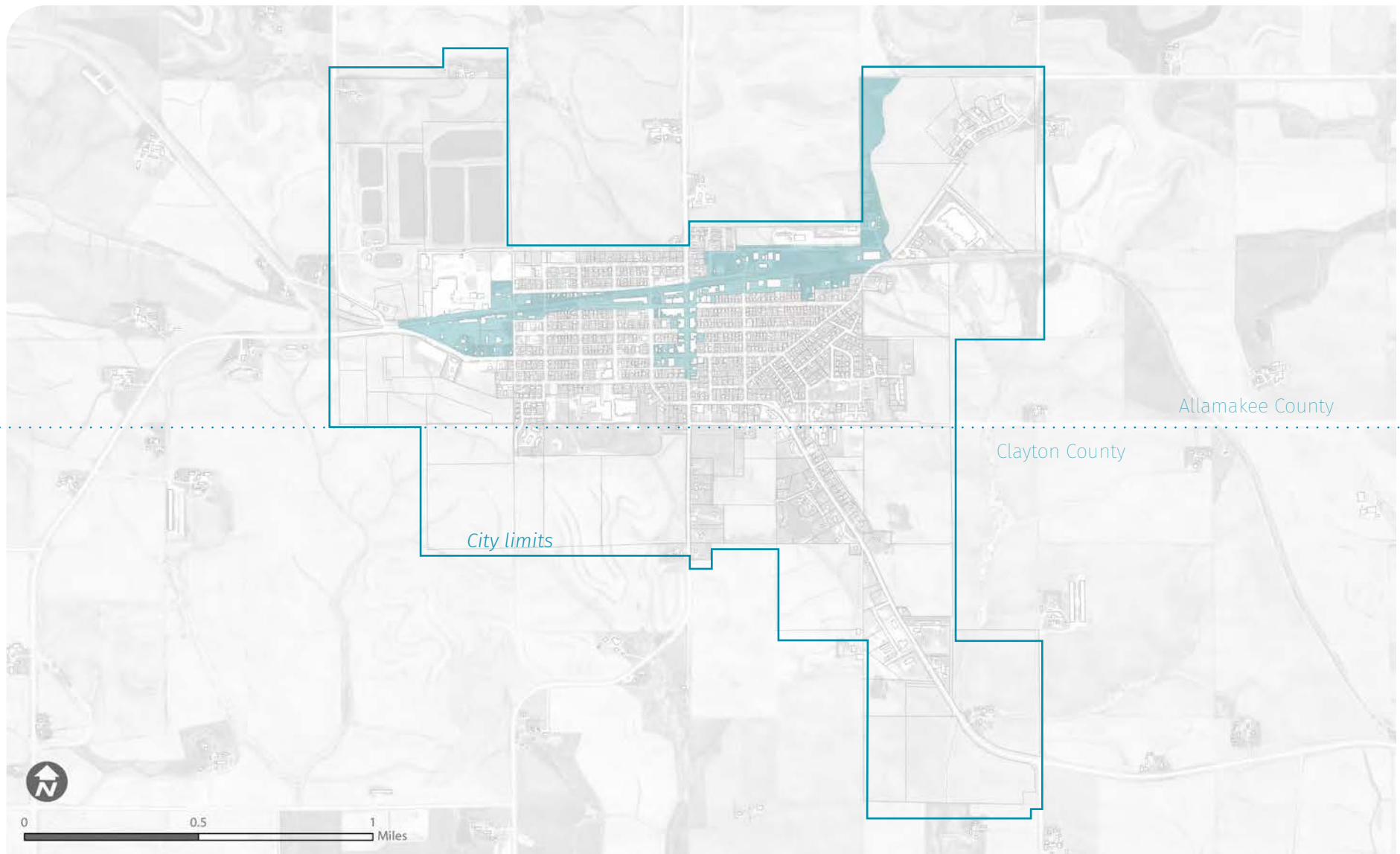
## **Brownfield Planning Area**

Postville's Brownfield Planning Area (BPA) was chosen to maximize the effect of an area-wide plan by including key commercial, industrial, and public use areas of the city with a wide range of land uses, building types, and potential future re-use. The railroad that was key to the early development and growth of the city spurred commercial and industrial development alongside, and the planning area spans the entire length of the track through the city. Downtown Postville, with its diversity of land uses and old structures, is also included, as is a part of the undeveloped eastern section of Postville that could see residential development and recreational corridor development. The BPA has the potential to tie together areas of the city that are not well connected through improved active transportation links and new community and business spaces.

## City of Postville and Planning Area

**127 Acres** || **107 Parcels** || **15% of city area**

PLANNING AREA



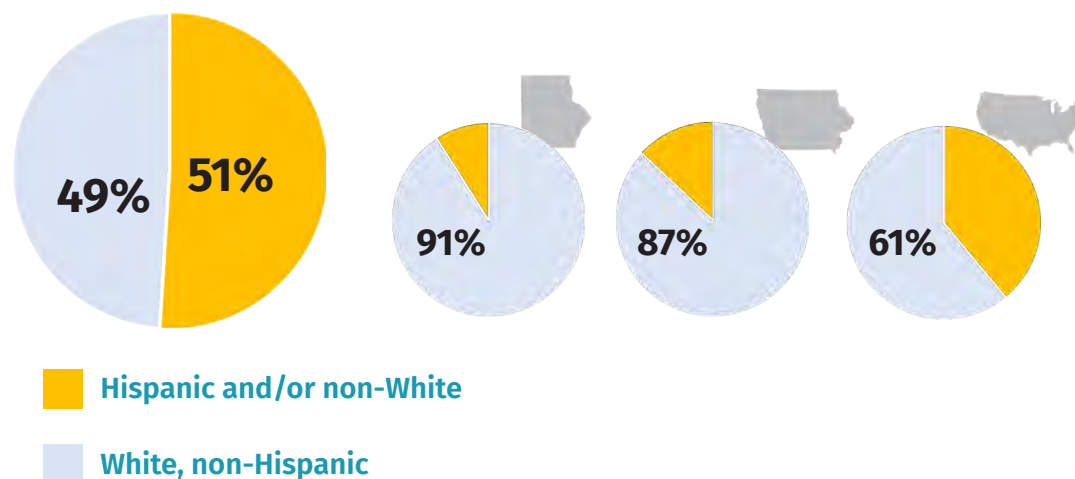
## Demographics

Demographic information is provided for Postville as a whole, since the town has a small population and geography. Census tracts do not provide useful data for the town, since Postville is split between two different tracts that encompass large parts of rural Allamakee and Clayton Counties. All demographic information collected is for the City of Postville unless otherwise noted. Where available, information from the United States Bureau of the Census 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates was used; other data was from the decennial 2010 census.

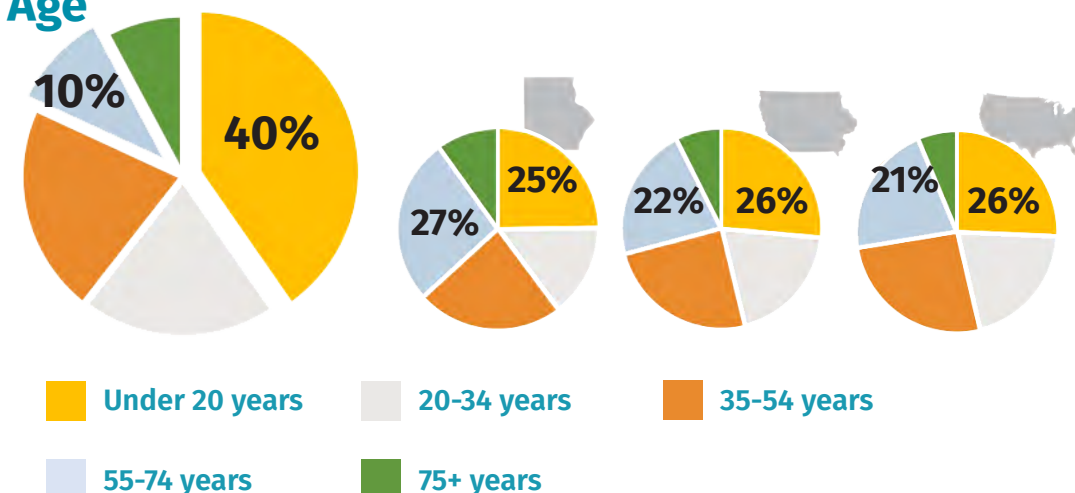
Postville is a unique community in Northeast Iowa because of its population characteristics. Before the 1990s, the town had a relatively stable and demographically homogenous population of about 1,400. Postville would have likely followed the same trajectory as many small rural communities throughout the Midwest, with a slow decline in local commercial activity, dwindling school enrollment due to farm consolidation, and an increasingly older population. In the 1980s, however, Agriprocessors changed the future of Postville.

Since 1990, the demographics of Postville have sharply diverged from those of surrounding communities and counties. Postville has gained population and become an ethnically, racially, and religiously diverse community. Not only did the town diversify rapidly, children of newcomers gave Postville another unique asset for a rural town: a growing school district. The Postville Community School District shows both

### Race & Ethnicity



### Age



Young and Hispanic people are a large percentage of Postville's population, while the share of adults aged 55-74 is lower than in other communities and the nation as a whole.

trends over the last 20 years. In 1996–1997, total enrollment stood at just over 600 students, almost 100% of whom were non-Hispanic white. In 2017, nearly 770 students were enrolled, and fewer than 40% were non-Hispanic white. African-American or black students are now 11% of the school body, up from zero in 1996. Most students in this category are from Somali families.<sup>2</sup>

Aside from its diversity, the most striking aspect of Postville's demographic profile is the age of its residents. Most small towns in Iowa have an older, shrinking population. The high percentage of people at the younger age extreme gives Postville a high dependency ratio, or ratio of working-age adults to non-working age population that may be dependent on the earnings and labor of others. Children under the age of 18 make up over 37% of the population of the town, while adults over 80 are 4.1%. Small children, younger working-age adults, and very old people make up far higher percentages of Postville's population than that of Iowa. Postville's median age is 27.7, and 31% of residents are age 14 or younger.

Postville's child dependency ratio is 71%—nearly double that of the United States as a whole—and its total Age Dependency ratio is 97%, 37% percent higher than the remainder of the US. These numbers reflect both an aging white population typical of many small towns in the Upper Midwest, and a rapidly growing young non-Hispanic white population that has the potential to sustain Postville—like its school district—as an economically viable entity.

### Dependency Ratios

Dependency ratios are the ratio of the number of working-age adults (ages 18–64) to dependent populations—non-working age adults or children. An overall Dependency Ratio includes both children and adults over 65, while the Child Dependency Ratio only counts the ratio of children under 18 to working-age adults and the Old Age Dependency Ratio counts only the ratio of adults 65 and over to the working-age adults. The number of young children in Postville contribute to a dependency ratio far higher than those of the county, state, and nation.

### Age Dependency Ratio

**97** **77** **65** **60**




### Old Age Dependency Ratio

**25** **38** **26** **23**




### Child Age Dependency Ratio

**71** **40** **40** **37**




The demand for labor at the plant was the primary driver behind a 50% increase in population between 1990 and 2000, with many laborers from the former Soviet Union or Mexico and rabbis and kosher food production specialists from throughout the United States. Postville's population growth during this period—in defiance of the traditional narrative of small-town decline—gives it an advantage over other regional towns of its size, but additional work will be required in order for the town to maximize the potential of its diverse, young residents.

In many ways, however, Postville does continue to reflect macroeconomic and national demographic trends. The US Census Bureau projects that the national median age will continue to climb, reaching

43 by 2060. Allamakee County has already seen this trend, with a median age, 47, that is higher than Iowa or the United States. Likewise, the percentage of non-Hispanic White population will continue to fall in real numbers in the US even as the population as a whole climbs. In Postville, the demographic decline among non-Hispanic white population has been offset by international migration since 2000, leading to a population rise but a steady decline in the number of non-Hispanic white households from 79% in 2000 to an estimated 63% in 2017.

Data from other Iowa communities suggests that demographic decline would have led to a sharp population decline were it not for large employers attracting younger adults with families. Low



## Relevant demographics

POST  
VILLE

ALLA-  
MAKEE

IOWA

USA

### Median age

27 45 38 38

### Population 14 years or younger (%)

31 19 20 19

### Foreign-Born (%)

29 4 4 13

### Speak a language other than English at home (%)

42 7 8 21

### High school diploma or more, over 25 years (%)

72 88 92 87

prestige employment opportunities at Agristar have attracted immigrants to Postville since its opening as Agriprocessors in 1989. The non-Hispanic white population in Postville was estimated at 49% in 2018, and the Postville Community School District enrollment numbers by race and ethnicity echo this dramatic story of demographic change in the town: while virtually all students were non-Hispanic white in 1996, over 50% were Hispanic by 2017.

The town's demographics are far different from neighboring communities: 29% of residents were born in another country, and no fewer than 42% speak a language other than English at home. Of those foreign-language speakers, 28% speak Spanish. The non-Hispanic white population includes orthodox Jewish families from around the United State and the world. By contrast, neighboring Monona is 98.3% non-Hispanic white. As of 2010, 20% of Postville residents had roots in Mexico, while an additional 8% had roots in Guatemala. Recent immigrants from the Horn of Africa region have boosted the Black/African-American population of the town to nearly 8%, according to 2010 ACS estimates.

Postville residents are also more transient than in other communities, reflecting broader national trends more than regional characteristics. Nearly 50% of housing units in Postville are renter-occupied; this more than double the percent of total Allamakee County units that are renter-occupied (24%) and closer to the percentage of housing units

nationally that are renter-occupied (64%). Tenure in homes is also distinct in Postville compared to counties and other communities in the region: 61% of Postville households occupied their homes after 2010, while only 13% have been in their homes since 1990. By contrast, 25% of households in the region have lived in their homes since 1990, and only 30% have occupied a new housing unit since 2010.

While many newcomers to Postville are currently from Central America or the Horn of Africa, previous waves of immigration- fueled by jobs at Agriprocessors and Iowa Turkey Products- included people from former Soviet Union, Mexico, Central America, and the Pacific Islands. Many of these workers have left, but some long-term residents have remained, opening businesses, purchasing homes, and pursuing citizenship. Immigrant labor has helped grow enrollment at the district in an era in which many rural Iowa schools are consolidating or closing. Though there currently are no signs of the tension between various communities that was documented in Stephen Bloom's 2000 book *Postville: Clash of Cultures in America's Heartland*, an ongoing challenge for long-term Postville residents continues to be the integration of newcomers with different religious imperatives, cultural norms, and schedules into civic life and participation in local decision-making.

## Income & Poverty

Though there are significant regional and local economic assets in Postville, residents do not all share in the benefits of these assets. One ongoing challenge for residents in economic mobility. Median household income has risen by less than \$3,000 from 2000 to 2016, but that obscures trends within that time period: income rose sharply and fell just as sharply from 2000–2010 and then from 2010–2016. Most significantly, though the real numbers have changed, the inflation-adjusted Median Household Income has shrunk; the inflation-adjusted median household income from 1990 would be over \$45,000 in 2016.<sup>3</sup>

This anomaly might reflect changes in Postville's economy during that period. The 2008 immigration raid and subsequent bankruptcy of Agriprocessors brought to light irregular employment, wage, and tax practices at the plant, which could have skewed

statistics on population, wages, and income in the town over that period due to unreported or underreported wage and salary information and employment numbers. Even with significant changes to the operation of the facility, labor force turnover in the town is high. Transient populations may be less likely to participate in civic life and do not have the same opportunity for upward mobility as older native-born Postville residents, who are more likely to have enjoyed higher-wage employment and to have equity in real estate.

Significant educational, cultural, and linguistic barriers to upward mobility also remain. The percentage of residents without at least a high school diploma is far below the state and national average. Many households still struggle with English proficiency, a significant challenge for finding or changing employment in a rural area. Even for those

who find full-time employment, pay is low; only 33% of jobs in Allamakee County in 2016 paid more than \$44,000/year.

Postville employers have been a part of the town for decades. The change over the last 30 years has been in who lives in Postville. Local workers and retirees lived in Postville in 1990, but many employees of higher-income jobs no longer live in the town. Instead, it has become a home for workers at lower-wage occupations who may not have a choice of housing options in the area. A decline in disposable income and changes in spending habits have followed demographic changes at the same time as profound national changes in the retail environment and the emergence of major regional retail centers. As a result, Postville has little to no retail sector outside of wholesaling and major industrial sales.

Median Household Income and Per Capita Income for Postville are both far lower than the regional average, a dramatic change since 1990.

Income	Postville	Allamakee	Clayton	Winneshiek	Fayette
Median HH 1990	<b>\$21,506</b>	\$21,098	\$21,406	\$24,383	\$21,109
Per Capita 1990	<b>\$12,315</b>	\$10,232	\$9,813	\$10,503	\$10,226
MHH 1990, 2016 dollars	<b>\$43,566</b>	\$42,740	\$43,364	\$49,394	\$42,762
PC 1990, 2016 dollars	<b>\$24,947</b>	\$20,728	\$19,879	\$21,277	\$20,716
MHH 2016	<b>\$35,000</b>	\$51,620	\$53,214	\$57,867	\$48,891
PC 2016	<b>\$14,755</b>	\$26,435	\$28,315	\$29,045	\$26,202
Change, MMH 1990-2016	<b>-20%</b>	21%	23%	17%	14%
Change, PC 1990-2016	<b>-41%</b>	28%	42%	37%	26%

## Jewish Postville

פוסטוויל

Many Midwest towns are home to meatpacking operations, but the largest employer in Postville is unique: it's the largest Kosher meat facility in the United States. The kosher slaughterhouse has brought a significant Jewish population to this corner of rural Iowa. There are no formal estimates of the Jewish population in Postville, but community members estimate that about 50 Jewish families live full-time in the city, with other rabbis employed with Agristar on a temporary basis. There are two synagogues, one Kosher store, and a primary and secondary Jewish school in the city. Within this community, too, there is diversity: many people come from Russia, Israel, Argentina, and other countries, as well as other parts of the United States.



Lag B'Omer Parade



The Kosher market before a 2019 remodeling



Hanukkah decorations downtown



## Land Use

Postville's zoning code is simple, with three residential categories and two commercial and industrial categories. There are no subcategories of zoning, and there are currently no zoning overlay districts for historic preservation, floodplain development, or other considerations in Postville. The last Postville Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2008. Since then, there has been little new development in the town. Of the 128 parcels within the Brownfield Planning Area (BPA), the majority are used for commercial purposes, including industrial activity. Zoning within the planning area is limited almost entirely to commercial and industrial codes, though land use is more diverse than the current zoning would imply.

The eastern part of the planning area has a large portion of land devoted to civic uses including both recreational uses and city services. The area includes space for a recreational trail along Williams Creek and an agricultural parcel that could see future residential development. Heavy industry and existing multifamily and single-family residential units are beyond the boundary of the planning area, but within city limits. The planning area will be a critical connection between these land uses and the rest of developed Postville to the south and west.

Downtown Postville has a mix of building uses, styles, and ages that is common to rural Midwest towns of its size and age. Commercial buildings with

offices or residential uses above are common. Most buildings were built between 1870 and 1950 and are in varying states of repair. Many downtown storefronts are in either inactive use such as storage, light manufacturing, or religious services, or are vacant. Along the railroad tracks to the west of downtown are larger industrial and commercial parcels used for warehousing, shipping and receiving, and light manufacturing.

Several large employers are found within the boundaries of the BPA. Farmers Union Co-op and Hall Roberts Son, a legacy wholesale seed business that has been owned by the same family since its founding in 1864, are both located in close proximity to downtown Postville and have offices, grain storage, shipping and receiving, and warehousing operations within the planning area. Light industrial uses such as livestock sales, warehousing and distribution, light manufacturing, and farm implement sales and repair are within or immediately adjacent to all the BPA, including downtown.

Civic uses are also found within the BPA. In the east section are the city's wastewater treatment plant, an area of native prairie planting, the city baseball diamond, the municipal campground, Dreamland Ballroom, and the Big Four Fairgrounds. Hall Roberts Park is next to the downtown business of the same name and was donated to the city by Hall Roberts. A

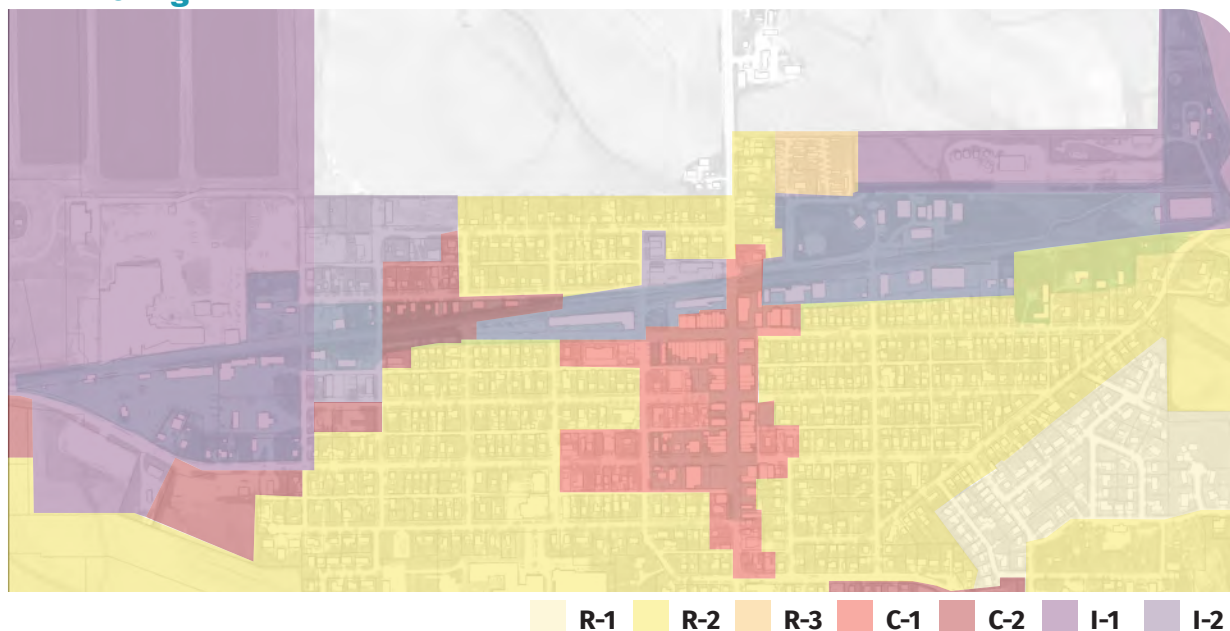
large community garden on private land is one block north of the west section of the BPA.

Residential uses, including one multi-family residential structure owned by the regional planning agency, several single-family homes, and multiple apartments in downtown buildings lie within the BPA boundaries. Nonconforming residential uses are scattered through the western half of the BPA, which is adjacent to the Agristar facility. There are 13 single-family residential structures, many of which lie adjacent to the railroad. All downtown parcels are zoned as C-1 commercial and are proximate to commercial and industrial uses typical of the area. In addition, at least 24 buildings in the central commercial district of the city have residential units on upper floors, though many of these are not currently in use.

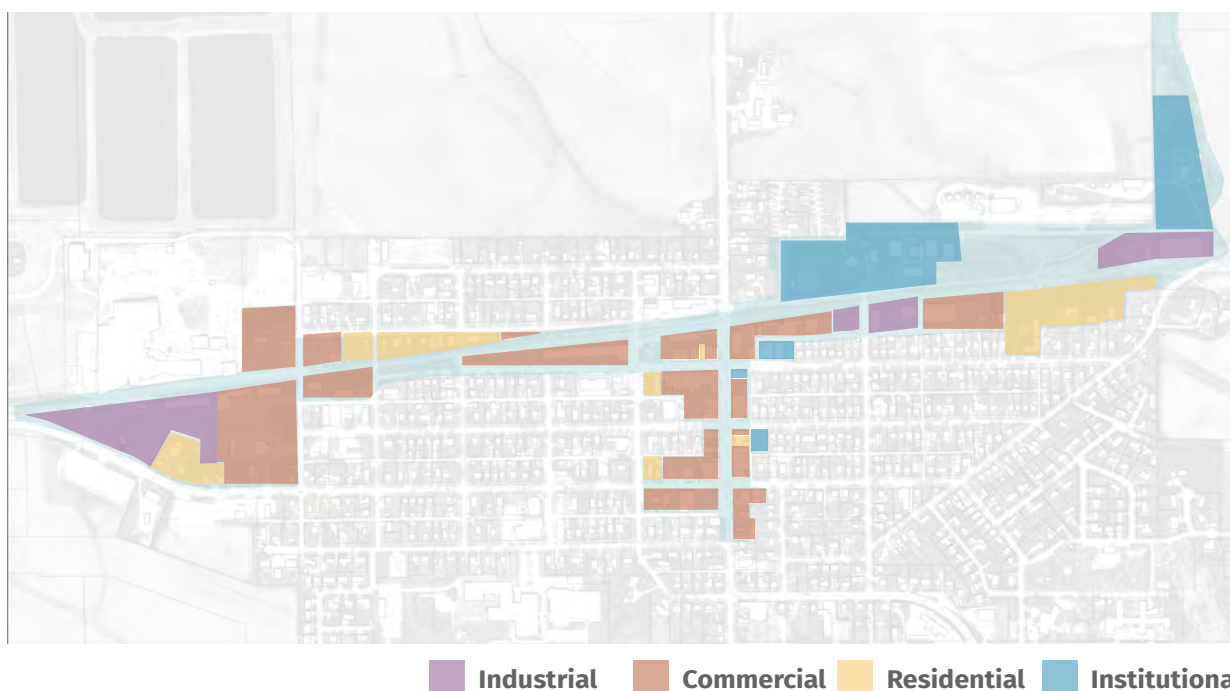
Additional housing or improved housing have been mentioned as a critical need by many individuals and groups in the community. Property values and a limited market for buyers are likely factors in the lack of housing development in Postville. Even with population growth and a strong employment base, demand remains relatively stagnant. Lower wage occupations among Postville residents means that the greatest demand for housing is in the \$75,000-\$125,000 range, a price point that may not be feasible for developers. In addition, many housing units are currently vacant or in poor condition, and some



## Zoning



## Land Use



Postville residents cannot finance home purchases because of legal status, religious proscription of interest payments, or temporary employment.

The creation of an industrial park south of Postville in the 2000s demonstrates that there may be limited demand for industrial and large commercial space. Of the 19 acres that were a part of the original development, 7 acres remain undeveloped. Even if demand exists, expansion of, or additional industrial uses within the BPA may be hampered by a lack of large-scale parcels suitable for industrial development and mixed zoning in proximity to industrial uses.

### Parcels by land use

Class	#	%	acres	%
Residential	21	16%	6	5%
Commercial	99	77%	44	45%
Industrial	4	3%	13	13%
Agricultural	2	1%	17	33%
Public/other	2	1%	17	14%

## Public Services & Transportation

### Transportation

Postville's location at the corner of four Northeast Iowa counties and at the junction of US and state highways makes it a natural focal point for commerce and travelers. Traffic counts are high, relative to the region, but show a general decline since 2000. Stops in Postville by visitors are limited, though there is a high volume of freight traffic that serves major industries within the BPA. Freight through-traffic makes crossings difficult for people walking and on bicycles.

Allamakee County has a single stoplight, 18 miles away from Postville in the county seat, Waukon; Clayton County has none. Postville is far from any large metropolitan centers, and more than 75 miles from any interstate highway.

No interstate passenger service of any sort serves Postville or the surrounding counties. U.S. Highways 18 and 52 are cosigned through the city, providing a direct route to Milwaukee, Madison, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Chicago. No direct route connects to Iowa's State Capitol, Des Moines. Postville's connection to the rest of the state and country centers on the four-way intersection of the federal and state highways downtown. US highways 52 and 18 pass through Postville as Tilden Street, Lawler Street, and Military Road. Lawler Street, Postville's downtown "main street," also serves as Iowa Highway 51 through the

city, terminating at the intersection with the federal highway. The nearest four-lane divided highway is US-63, 45 miles to the east, while the nearest through Interstate highway, I-90, is 65 miles to the northwest in Minnesota.

Street design on highways through the town is the responsibility of the Iowa Department of Transportation, which has shown a willingness to work with municipalities to implement safer, more pedestrian-friendly street design.<sup>4</sup> A tourist route, the Driftless Area Scenic Byway, begins in downtown Postville.

Despite its relative isolation and low population, Postville's main streets, Lawler and Tilden both see relatively high through and terminal truck traffic. In addition, vehicles often share the street with agricultural vehicles and implements during planting and harvest seasons. Major businesses in town ship and receive high quantities of agricultural commodities and livestock, and the highways are major regional routes for shipping agricultural products.

Noise and pollution from traffic through downtown pose a challenge for revitalization efforts. Exposure to air pollutants from diesel engines and noise from



The trail crossing at Lawler Street



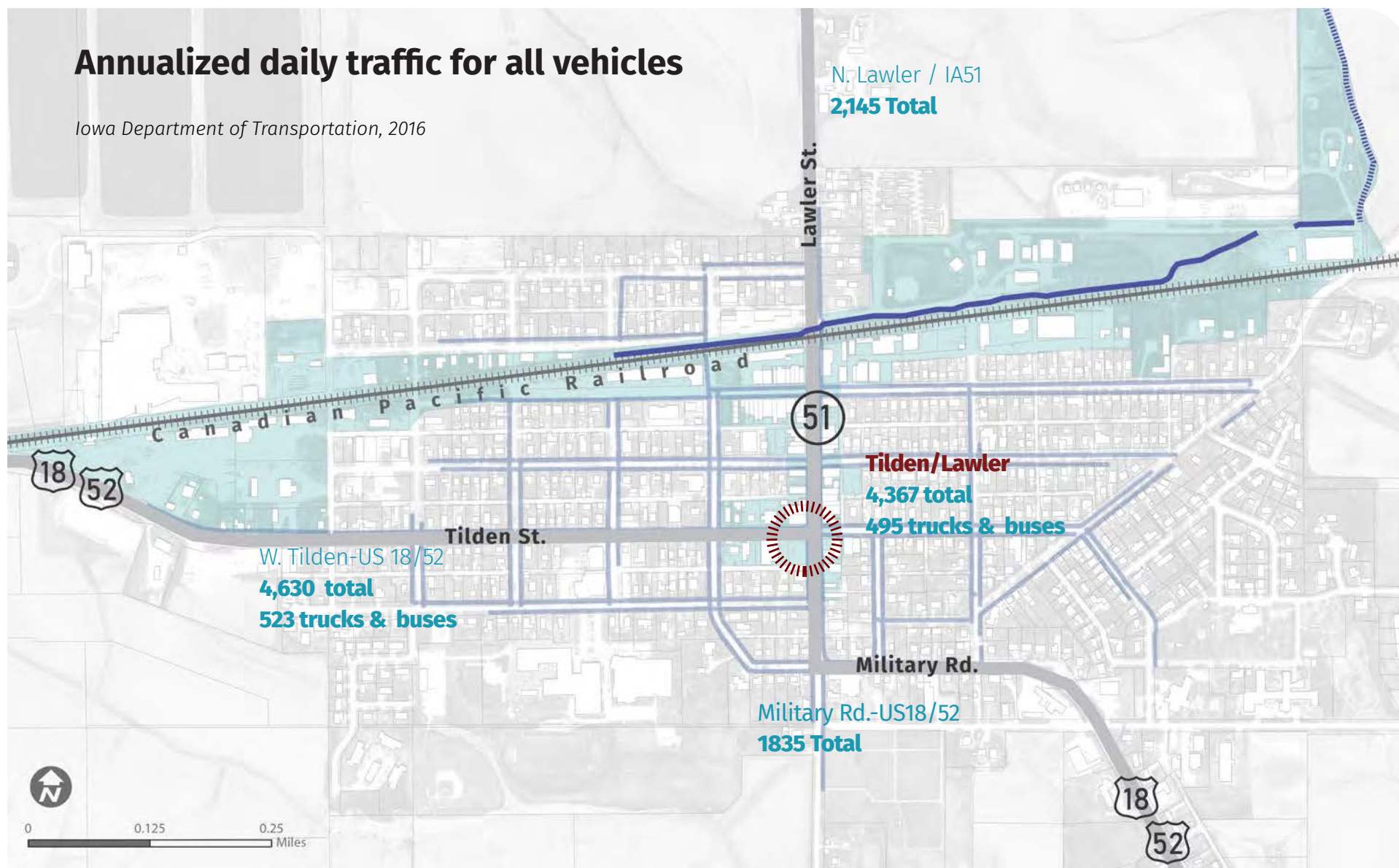
Farm equipment is a common sight on Lawler Street during planting & harvest seasons



# Transportation

## Annualized daily traffic for all vehicles

Iowa Department of Transportation, 2016





Postville trail near Big Four Fairgrounds



Crosswalk at Lawler & Tilden Streets

truck traffic is relatively high, according to EPA Environmental Justice data.<sup>5</sup>

Canadian Pacific owns the east-west freight rail line through Postville. There are no active sidings in Postville, and the rail line sees a low volume of traffic. No passenger rail service has served Postville since at least the 1950s, when the track was owned by the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific Railroad (known as the Milwaukee Road).

Active transportation is used by many Postville residents for a variety of factors. Over 37% of the population is under the age of 18, and 4.1% are over the age of 80. Many of these residents are unable to drive. In addition, the high rate of poverty means that many residents cannot afford a car. Others do not drive on certain days of the week or at certain times due to religious restrictions.

Language barriers, cultural traditions, and other factors also affect the ability of residents to drive. Though there is a single walking path in the town, it does not connect to the primary pedestrian destinations or population centers. A large apartment complex that houses many immigrant families is connected to town only through a two-lane rural route, with steep dropoffs and no shoulders for pedestrians or bicycle users.

Postville's multi-use path parallels the Canadian Pacific railroad tracks for approximately 3/4 mile before coming to an abrupt end at Ogden Street,

where connection to south Ogden Street is blocked by the railroad tracks and by the Hall Roberts Son warehouse. The trail was built when the tracks were owned by a successor to the Milwaukee Road, with the intention of extending it in future years. The current railroad owner, Canadian Pacific, will not allow any new trail to be built on its right-of-way.

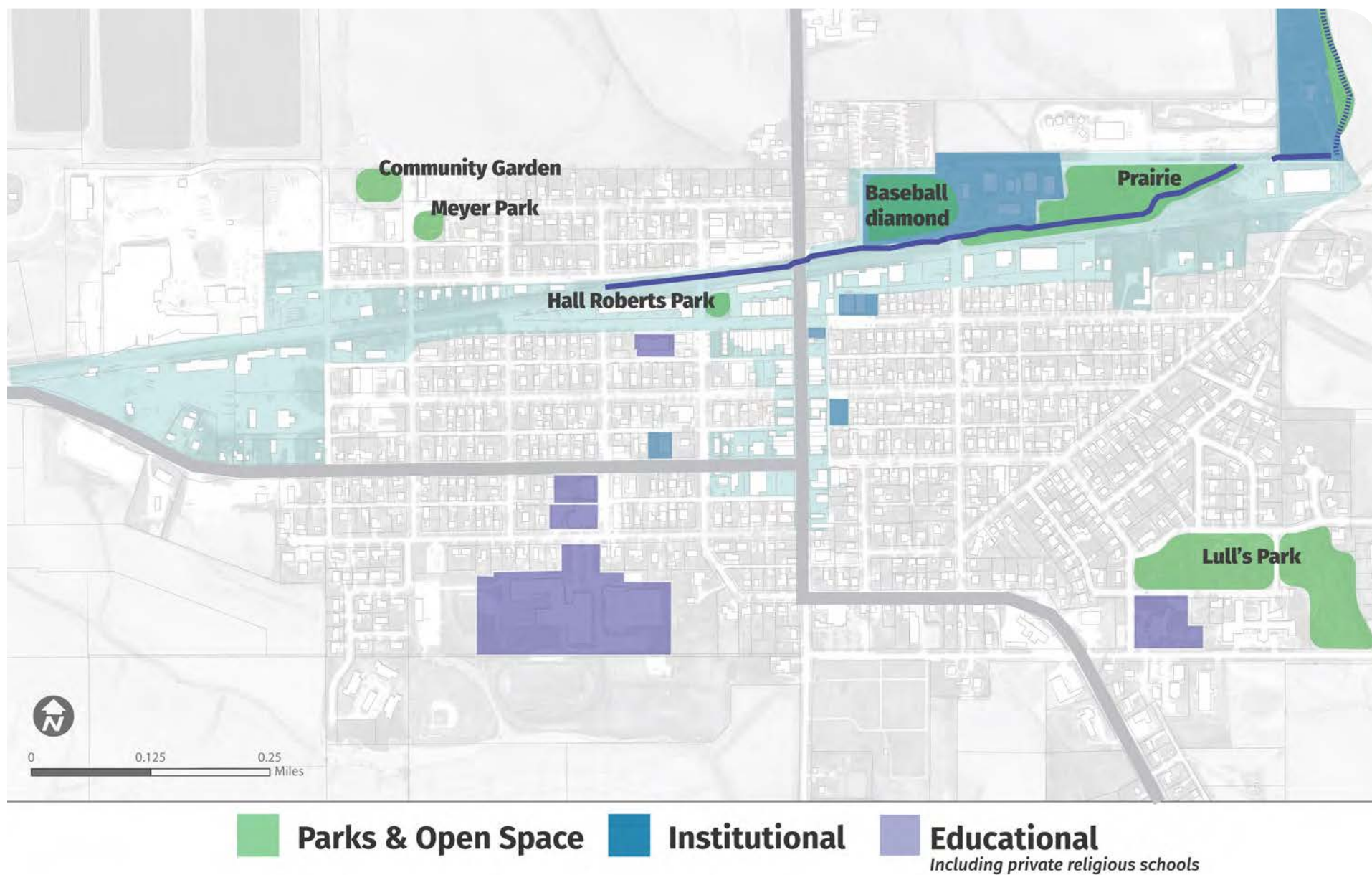
Crosswalks at major intersections downtown and near schools are not painted, and no signage for pedestrian safety currently exists, despite the high number of people whose primary mode of transportation is by foot or bicycle. A Safe Routes to School group in Northeast Iowa offers a "walking school" bus to help children walk safely to and from school as a group.

Data shows that, despite a lack of pedestrian-friendly design on city streets, there are few crashes in Postville. According to the Iowa Department of Transportation, there were 66 crashes in the city from 2009–2019, of which 15 were injury crashes. The intersection with the highest number of crashes in that period was west Tilden St. and Reynolds St., which is a frequently-used crossing for children walking to school and for people walking to the recreation center and childcare center.<sup>6</sup>

A regional public transportation system, E.A.R.L., serves Postville with dial-a-ride service and with a weekly shuttle to the Decorah Free Clinic 20 miles away. Taxi services based in Decorah and in Prairie du Chien, WI are also available.



## Public Facilities



## Utilities

All parts of the planning area are served by Postville's water, wastewater, and stormwater utilities. Northeast Iowa Telecom (NEIT) provides telephone and high-speed internet service. Gas is provided by Black Hills Energy. All of Postville in Allamakee County is served by Alliant Energy. A small part of Postville in Clayton County is served by the Allamakee-Clayton Electric Co-op (ACEC). The city of Postville serves city customers through its water utility. A Phase 1 Source Water Protection assessment from the DNR shows no significant threats to Postville water quality or volume. The municipal well is located one mile north of downtown Postville along IA-51.

The City of Postville is currently upgrading its wastewater treatment plant. The city secured financing for the \$5,000,000 project from a Community Development Block Grant grant and from a loan from the Iowa Finance Authority and Iowa Department of Natural Resources through the State Revolving Fund (SRF). A portion of the interest due on the loan will be re-invested through the SRF and used to implement innovative stormwater best management practices at sites throughout the city. The upgraded wastewater treatment plant will be completed in 2019.

No additional major infrastructure projects are planned in the region at this time.

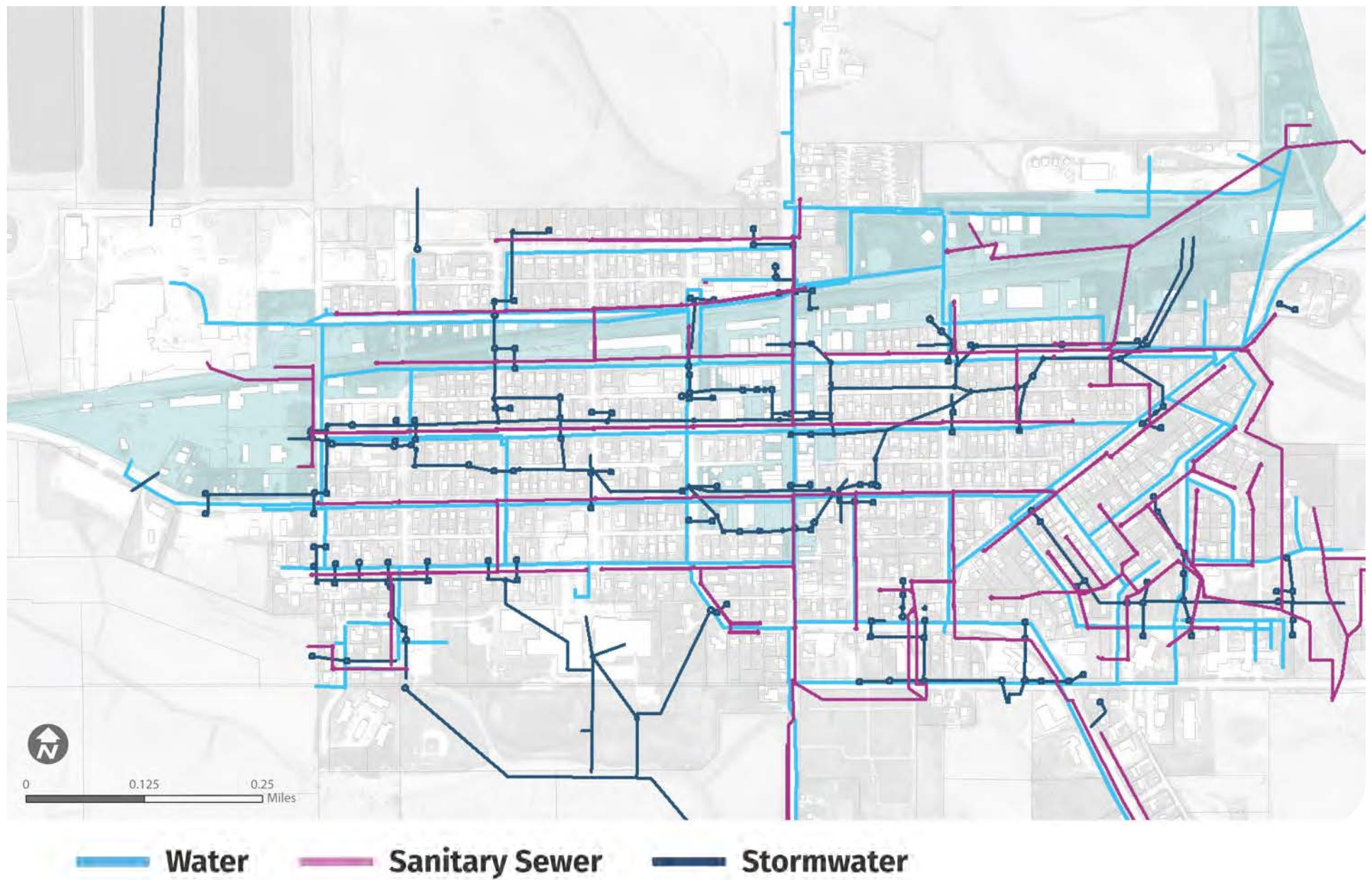
## Public Facilities

Postville is unique among communities of its size for having a community recreational facility with gymnasium, exercise center, and therapy pool; until December 2018, it was one of the smallest YMCA facilities in the country. Though the facility is beyond the planning area boundary, its presence in the town is significant for planning purposes because it serves as central community gathering point for Postville residents of all backgrounds, ethnicities, and religions in the way that a library or community center might in other towns. It is also a significant asset that can contribute to economic development. Other public facilities are located in the eastern part of the planning area, including the community baseball diamond, a native prairie planting area, and the Big Four Fairgrounds, which includes the municipally-owned Dreamland Ballroom.

The only park within the planning area is Hall Roberts Park, a square space at the corner of Williams and Reynolds Streets. The park is used as a veteran's memorial and has a variety of benches, plaques, and sculptures dedicated by various civic groups. Postville lacks a suitable public space for outdoor gatherings such as the annual public menorah lighting at Hanukkah or fundraising barbeques; the parking lot of the grocery store was often used because of its high visibility, easy access, and central location, but the site is currently being redeveloped as a large convenience store.

Turner Hall, a community center and former city hall was built by Postville's German community in 1913 lies within the planning area, as do the current city hall, police department, and fire department. There are many religious institutions in Postville, including four within the planning area: two evangelical Spanish-language churches, a synagogue, and a mosque. No schools or other educational facilities are within the BPA.

## Water Utilities







Turner Hall served as Postville's city hall for decades, and is currently a public events space, city storage, and EMS offices



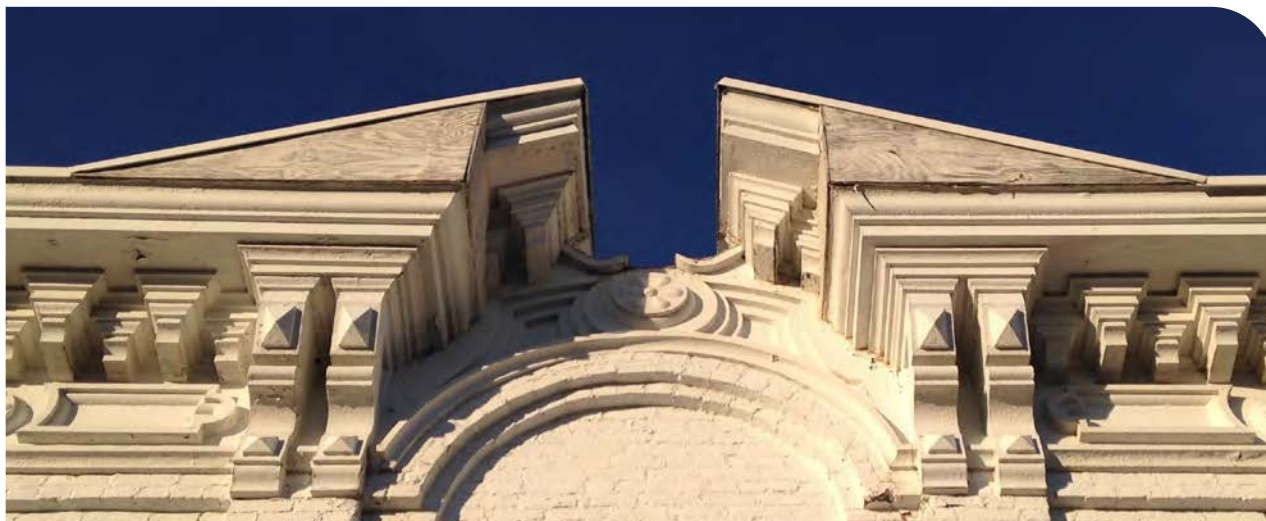
# Built Environment

## Historic Resources

Postville retains many of the vestiges of a prosperous farm town from the 19th and early 20th century. Large, elaborate homes, prominent brick commercial blocks, community facilities, and elaborate churches can be found throughout the town. Though many structures have been lost to fire, neglect, or demolition, a significant number of historically significant buildings remain, including a German community center, downtown commercial buildings, and the home of a Nobel Prize winner.

Postville was settled by Germans and retained its regional niche as a German community well into the 20th century in an area with Irish, Scandinavian, and Bohemian settlements. Although the recent migrants to Postville lack the homogeneity of previous immigrants, they still set the community apart from its neighbors in terms of ethnic, racial, and religious diversity.

John Mott, who grew up in Postville and is one of two Nobel Prize winners from Northeast Iowa, helped to establish the World Ecumenical Council, later the World Council of Churches. Postville's association with Dr. John Mott, its early prosperity which led to the construction of ornate homes and commercial buildings in distinct period styles, and its material association with broader patterns in US history make several sites eligible for nomination to the National



Historic features on a downtown building

Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Turner Hall is the only building in town currently listed on the NRHP. Due to a loss of historical integrity of many structures and disconnection between historical elements, it is unlikely that downtown Postville could successfully be nominated as a historic district. However, a four-building block located at 103-109 W. Greene Street with a uniform facade may qualify for the National Register under the criterion "C" because of their size and prominence in downtown and their historical integrity.<sup>7</sup> The buildings retain all or most of their original facades, including brick corbeling, windows, doors, and storefronts, making them unusually intact examples of commercial Italianate architecture.

Neglect, a lack of long-term planning, limited access to capital, limited demand for commercial and residential space, and apathy toward historic resources remain threats to the remaining historic buildings in Postville. The framework provided by Main Street Iowa could be a potential resource for future redevelopment and revitalization, but the most critical need will be identifying long-term project leadership and vision.

## Building Condition

Within the planning area, the average building age is nearly 90 years, according to dates provided by the county assessor. The average year built for structures is 1928. Weak demand for both housing and commercial real estate in Postville provides little to no incentive for investment in properties through renovation, restoration, rehabilitation, or new construction.

In residential areas of Postville, high rehabilitation and renovation costs are exacerbated by deferred maintenance, creating a cycle of neglect and disinvestment. Postville retained its status as a prosperous hub for the regional farming community well into the 1990s, resulting in continued building renovations and maintenance throughout that period. As a result, even some unoccupied structures in downtown Postville remain in fair condition. In downtown Postville, 12 buildings are in fair or poor condition, according to an analysis conducted according to standards established by the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) to meet the Community Development Block Grant Slum and Blight National Objective. One structure was demolished in 2018 after part of the roof collapsed.

While the city has been proactive in code enforcement, especially in residential areas, a lack of staff, funding, absentee ownership of structures, and long-term redevelopment demand, as well as community opposition to city actions, continue to make long-term stabilization of building stock a challenge.



A prominent building before a 2019 renovation project



## Environmental Justice

The brownfield planning process is an opportunity to not only to identify and reduce threats to public health through re-use planning, but also to promote built environment interventions that can positively impact long-term health. Overcoming barriers to health and well-being, and promoting access to recreation and green space, will influence long-term behaviors associated with health outcomes, such as the link between a lack of physical activity and obesity and diabetes incidence.

The built environment currently presents hazards to well-being through substances such as lead-based paint, PCE from dry cleaning, petroleum contamination from leaking underground tanks, asbestos, and others. Current infrastructure and past and present land use decisions also make active transportation choices more dangerous than using a car and do not take into account the needs of people who are unable to use a car.

Like most rural communities, a lack of nearby goods and services is one of the primary challenges faced by Postville residents. According to the US EPA's EJScreen report for Postville, the city's highest concerns for environmental risk factors are for lead paint contamination, asbestos, and pollution from transportation. There are also several facilities required to have a Risk Management Plan due to storage or handling of hazardous materials.<sup>8</sup>



Lead tests and information about lead paint hazards in multiple languages were distributed to Postville residents throughout 2019

Selected Variables	Percentile in State	Percentile in EPA Region	Percentile in USA
<b>EJ Indexes</b>			
EJ Index for Particulate Matter (PM 2.5)	90	84	65
EJ Index for Ozone	90	84	65
EJ Index for NATA* Diesel PM	87	80	61
EJ Index for NATA* Air Toxics Cancer Risk	88	82	62
EJ Index for NATA* Respiratory Hazard Index	88	81	60
EJ Index for Traffic Proximity and Volume	92	94	81
EJ Index for Lead Paint Indicator	92	88	79
EJ Index for Superfund Proximity	87	81	61
EJ Index for RMP Proximity	96	95	88
EJ Index for Hazardous Waste Proximity	92	87	72
EJ Index for Wastewater Discharge Indicator	99	96	94

EPA estimates, available online at <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/> Accessed 8/09/19.

Data from the EPA's EJScreen Report for Postville

### Lead paint Indicator (based on % pre-1960s housing)

percentiles



### Traffic proximity and volume

percentiles



### Risk management plan facility proximity

percentiles



# 1928

**Average year built  
in planning area**

Buildings built before 1960 likely contain **lead paint**  
Buildings built before 1978 may contain **asbestos**

Postville scores higher for these factors in part due to the small size of the town and diverse land uses in close proximity to town. Any industrial activity that may pose a public health hazard, if located in town, is relatively close to residential areas.

As the number of businesses and organizations has dwindled in Postville, residents face longer distances to essential goods and services like groceries and medical providers. The town's grocery store, its only source of fresh fruit and produce, closed in 2019. In response, a smaller Latino-oriented market began to carry fresh produce, but overall access to fresh fruits and vegetables is limited in Postville, with many households relying on pre-packaged foods at small markets or convenience stores. WIC provides basic screenings, immunizations, and dental care to children in qualified households, but the town's only dental clinic closed in 2016. A regional free medical clinic is available once per week in Decorah, 20 miles away, but some residents are unable to access it due to a lack of transportation.

Even where there may be resources available to ameliorate suboptimal environmental conditions, many Postville residents may not be able to access them for various reasons. In a state where over 90% of the population is Non-Hispanic white and English speaking, the language barriers in Postville impact the transfer of important information to non-English-speaking households. The EJScreen Report classifies Postville as a "linguistically isolated

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.<sup>16</sup>

population," with a rating in the 97th percentiles in Iowa and EPA Region 7.<sup>9</sup>

Linguistic isolation is compounded by social and economic disparity as demonstrated by demographic indicators such as poverty rates, median household income, and other factors that further decrease the flow of information about environmental and public health issues to Postville's underserved community members. In response, RCD is working with community leaders to provide lead and radon tests and educational material about these health hazards available to all Postville households. Material has been translated into four languages, and this is a first step toward ensuring healthy homes and workplaces for all Postville residents. Lead paint is likely prevalent in many structures within the BPA and remediating it will be a priority for any future renovation or reuse.



## Downtown Postville

Many downtown buildings are brownfield sites because of the existence of or perception of hazardous material that could hinder redevelopment. Building condition and renovation costs are often cited as a major factors preventing entrepreneurs and small businesses from moving into and renovating downtown buildings. Asbestos, lead paint, and even radon are common hazards in downtown buildings that require remediation for reuse, which can add significant upfront costs for projects.

Because Postville does not currently have in place any incentive or assistance program for downtown building owners, many property owners are unable to afford the costs of renovation. The real estate market is also stagnant in Postville, which further complicates the ability of investors and entrepreneurs to realize a return on their investment. Assistance with hazard remediation through brownfield assessment and related financial resources will be an important factor in any future building renovation, but will likely require the intervention of a third party or the creation of a dedicated building rehabilitation group, such as a downtown improvement association or Main Street group.



The Commercial Hotel, today the site of one-bedroom downtown condominiums, was destroyed by fire in 1976



This large italianate commercial block burned in 2009

# Downtown Facade views: Lawler Street

## Number

Business / use

Condition

Assessed Value



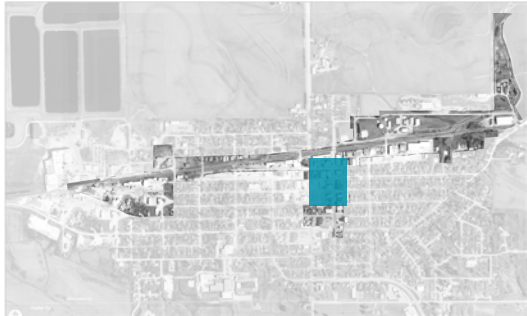
## Vacant

Data: Allamakee County Assessor

Overview of area shown



Location within planning area



N	147	139	125	123	111	107	101
	Postville City Hall	Pharmacy	Parking	Storage / light mfg.	Vacant	Bar & grill	Postville Herald
-	-	Excellent	-	Normal	-	Below Normal	Normal
-	-	\$29,400	-	\$56,700	\$9,500	\$44,900	\$78,600



S	142	136	132	128	118	110	102
	Vacant / apartments	Storage	Telecom	Specialty foods /variety store	Appliance store	Vacant	Specialty foods store / Religious
	Normal	Normal	-	Normal	Normal	-	Normal
	\$107,900	\$35,700	-	\$22,100	\$62,300	\$30,500	\$60,100

S

**103**

Variety store  
Normal  
\$99,400

**105**

Religious

**111**

Private home  
Above Normal  
\$86,200

**119**

Vacant  
Below Normal  
\$37,700

**125**

Office  
Very Good  
\$62,600

**131**

Office  
Normal  
\$48,100

**135**

Hardware Store  
Normal  
\$99,800

**145**

Religious  
Above Normal  
\$29,800

**145**

Thrift Store  
Normal  
\$48,600

N

**100**

Bank  
Normal  
\$194,400

**112**

Vacant  
Normal  
\$32,900

**120**

Religious  
Above Normal  
\$71,900

**128**

Vacant  
Normal  
\$44,900

**136**

Office  
Above Normal  
\$43,700

**142**

Office  
Above Normal  
\$44,400



# Downtown Facade views: Greene Street

## Number

Business / use

Condition

Assessed Value

Data: Allamakee County Assessor

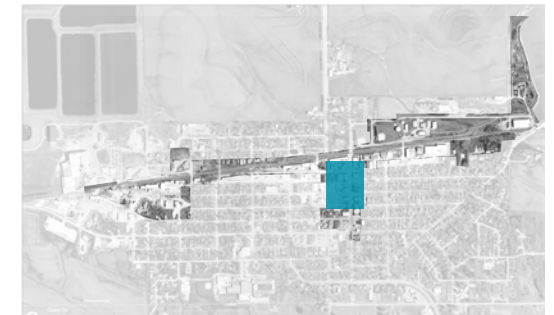


## Vacant

Overview of area shown



Location within planning area



<b>W</b>											<b>E</b>	
<b>Hall Roberts Park</b>			<b>139</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>103</b>		
City of Postville			Grain Wholesaler	Religious	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Office	Office		
			Normal	Above Normal	Normal	Below Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Above Normal		
			\$202,300	\$41,600	\$29,800	\$60,400	\$46,600	\$62,200	\$47,100	\$46,000		
<b>E</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>W</b>
	School	Variety Store	Vacant	Office	Office	Vacant	Restaurant	Restaurant	Vacant	Restaurant	Condominiums (4)	
	Excellent	Normal	Above Normal	Normal	Above Normal	Good	Normal	Normal	Poor	Normal	Normal	
	\$53,600	\$72,800	\$96,000	\$60,600	\$87,300	\$44,200	\$58,200	\$33,000	\$27,500	\$25,000	\$44,375 (average)	



# Building Condition and Age

## Building Condition



## Year Structure Built



## Brownfield sites

Determining a site's status as a brownfield can be a subjective and controversial process. Postville brownfield sites were determined based on available data and local knowledge of land uses. In most cases, the hazards associated with known land uses are widely acknowledged, but a wider definition of "brownfield" that includes substances such as lead paint and asbestos will include sites with structure built before 1978.

To determine whether or not a site in the planning area might be considered a brownfield, current land use, known prior land use, and records that show previous environmental concerns or land use were analyzed. These included Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) databases, Iowa DNR shapefiles, a 1930 Sanborn map of Postville, telephone directories from the 1950s and 1960s, old photographs, and local knowledge of prior land and building uses. Aerial photography was used to determine the approximate built area of Postville before 1970, when the use of lead-based paint was common, and most structures within this area are presumed to contain lead-based paint and / or building materials containing asbestos.

### Sanborn Map

A 1930 Sanborn map of downtown and adjacent areas<sup>10</sup> in Postville has been an invaluable tool to determine where underground storage tanks, petroleum or chemical storage, or other land uses associated with potential site contamination existed in the last 90 years. In some cases, current and likely

future land use makes it unlikely that the site would be disturbed enough to warrant full remediation, but some parcels had land uses of concern that are beyond living memory and not recorded in other databases. No maps were available for outlying sections of the planning area.

### Historical aerial photographs

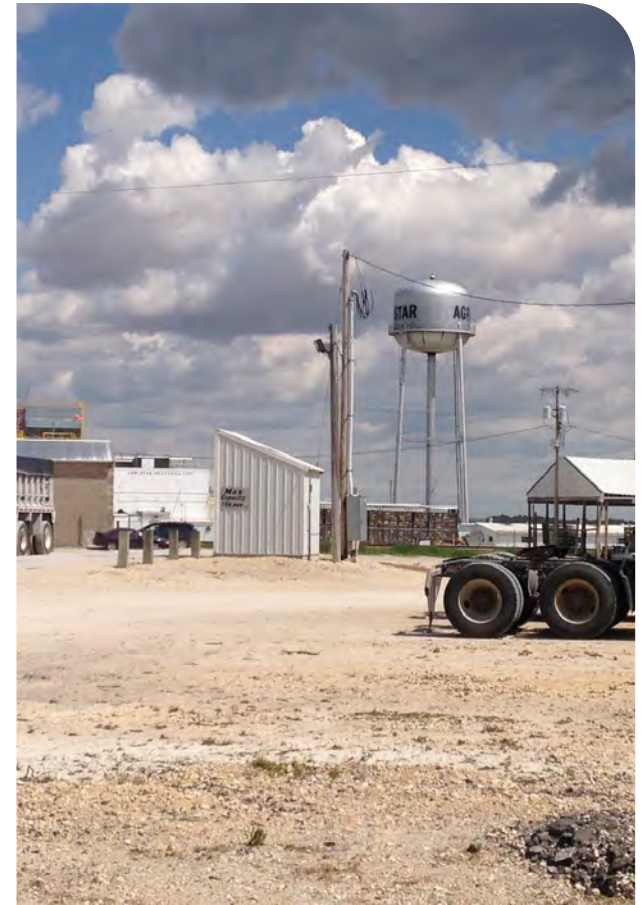
Aerial photos from the 1930s, 1960s, and 1980s were analyzed in order to determine what land uses may have been present that could contribute to a former or current REC. Later aerial photographs were especially helpful because they cover a time period that not shown on the Sanborn map.

### Telephone directories

An additional resource used to determine possible brownfield sites was telephone directories. Because of the small size of Postville and the clustering of most commercial and industrial land uses along corridors within the brownfield planning area, there was little difficulty in using telephone directories from 1950-1962 to identify addresses with land uses that could contribute to potential RECs.

### Iowa DNR LUST Database

According to the Iowa DNR Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) database, there are no currently monitored LUST sites within Postville. However, a shapefile from the Iowa DNR, downloaded in 2018, shows seven LUST sites within the city. None of the sites are currently listed in the LUST database, and



715 W. Tilden brownfield site

all but one are classified as No Action Required. The single site that is not classified as such is at a facility that is currently being used for advanced manufacturing, where land use changes are highly unlikely in the foreseeable future. Only three sites are within the brownfield planning area, though one is across the street from the plan area boundary.





Removal of underground tanks at 203 S. Lawler in 2018

### Iowa DNR Shapefiles

Areas with past uses that likely involved hazardous or toxic substances such as petroleum or chemicals are included in a list of brownfields. This list only includes properties that are known to have had those land uses or other contamination sources. This dataset has not been updated in several years and has limited geolocational accuracy, so its utility was mostly in confirming known brownfield site concerns.

### Description of Area

The 127-acre brownfield planning area spans many land uses and several zoning categories. Many active industrial uses are included in the planning area, including the Postville Farmers Co-op and Hall Roberts Son, two major commodities wholesalers. Both of these businesses, which are also large employers, span

several acres and multiple parcels along the CP railroad corridor in the heart of the city and in the middle of the brownfield planning area. Vacant or underutilized parcels are scattered throughout the downtown, especially the southern end of downtown, and at the west side of the town near Agristar. Uses that contribute to brownfield concerns include agricultural and implement use and dealers, automobile service, repairs, and sales, and building materials such as asbestos and lead paint. No rail yards were in use in Postville, though a siding was utilized by the Milwaukee Road line on a site outside the planning area that currently houses a farm implement dealer.

### Current uses

Within the planning area, 18 parcels currently or formerly have uses that would suggest potential for contamination from one or more hazardous materials. Those land uses include filling stations, auto garages, railroad yards, and agricultural service, shipping, and storage.

Other potential hazards are linked to building age. The average year built within the planning area is 1928, meaning that structures have a high probability of containing lead paint and asbestos. Primarily due to low rates of new construction after 1980, the EPA's Environmental Justice screening report gives Postville a lead paint indicator of .64, significantly higher than the state average of .43 and the national average of .29.<sup>11</sup>



## Sanborn Map, 1930 (updated 1950s)

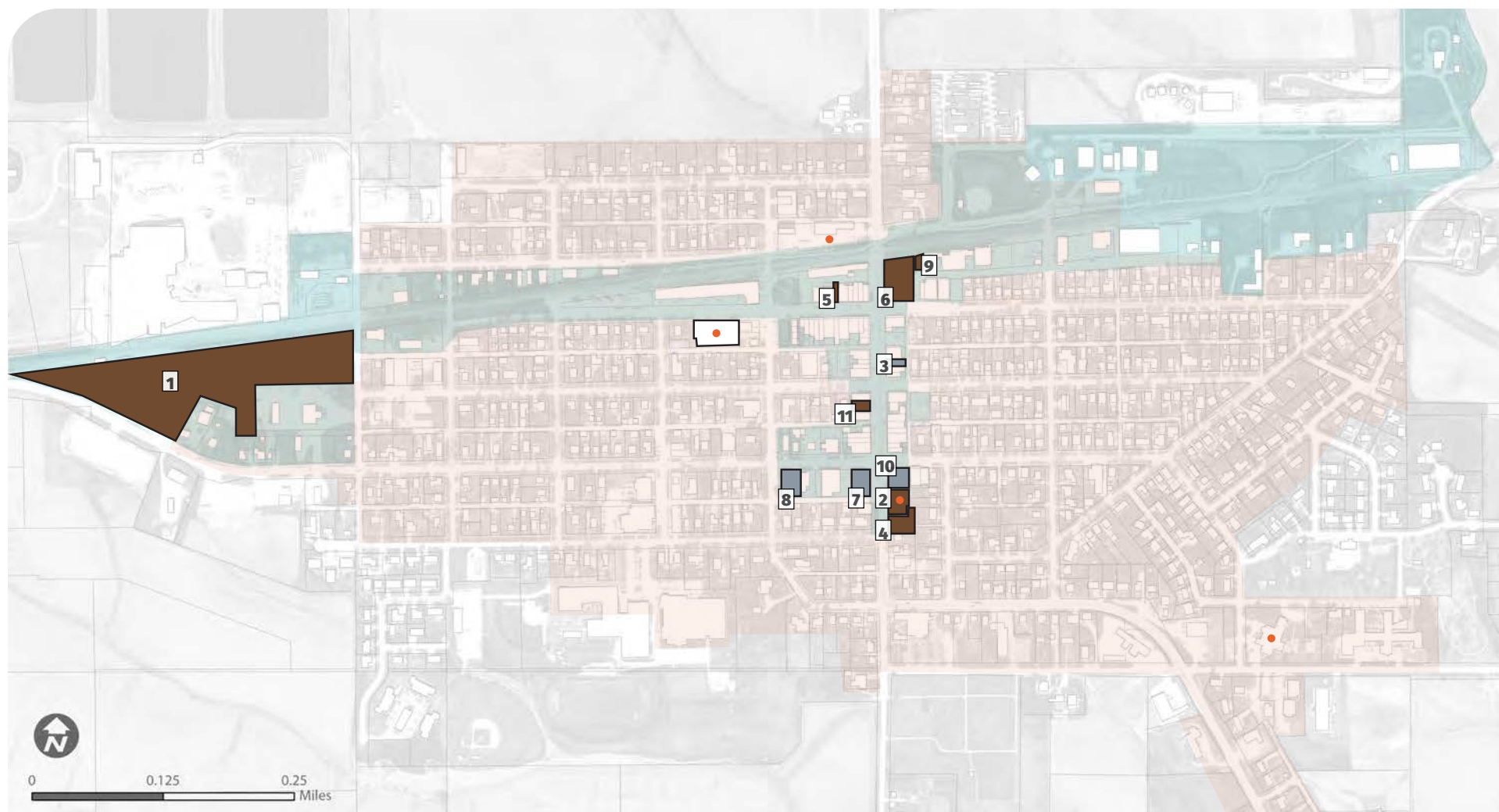
Only 3 underground storage tanks are known to exist within the planning area, and one leaking underground storage tank. That tank has been classified by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources as “No Further Action” (NFA) / “No Action Required” (NAR), which implies that whatever contamination plume may exist is considered stable. A former gas station in downtown Postville was listed as a NFA site after its underground tanks were removed in 2018.<sup>12</sup>

Existing major manufacturing and industrial facilities that have recorded Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) violations include Agristar and the City of Postville’s wastewater treatment plant. Both of these facilities are currently considered to be in compliance with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) standards and other permits.<sup>13</sup> Norplex-Micarta, the third facility in Postville with recorded RCRA noncompliance, is located outside the planning area. A search of the Superfund Enterprise Management System (SEMS) database shows no sites in northeast Iowa.<sup>14</sup>

A Phase 1 ESA was performed at a site recorded as REC POSTVILLE- 228 WEST GREENE STREET, which is the only current brownfield site in Postville recorded in the ACRES database. No contaminants were found and no cleanup was required. The site was entered into the EPA’s ACRES database in 2013.<sup>15</sup> The property, just across the street from the boundary of the currently planning area, was the former headquarters and shop facility for the Allamakee-Clayton Electric



## Initial Analysis: Potential Brownfield Sites



 Brownfield - Hazardous Materials

 Brownfield - Previously recorded

 Brownfield - Petroleum

 Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) site

## Overview: Potential Brownfield Sites

Potential Brownfield Sites									
	Ownership	Land Use	Potential contaminant type			Potential contamination pathways			
			Building mat'l	Petroleum	Other or Unknown	Soil	Vapor	Water	Unknown
1	Private	I			•				•
2	Private	C		•	•				•
3	Private	C	•	•		•	•		
4	Private	C		•		•			
5	Private	C	•		•	•	•	•	
6	Non-profit	C			•	•			
7	Private	C		•	•	•			
8	Private	C		•		•	•		
9	Private	C	•		•				•
10	Private	C		•		•	•		
11	Private	C	•		•				•

Cooperative (ACEC). ACEC moved to a facility one mile north of Postville in 2010, leaving their former site available for redevelopment. It was purchased by Bais Sholom, Inc. in 2011 and converted into a Jewish boys' boarding school, the Mesivta of Postville, with no known hazardous substance investigation or remediation.

The brownfield site that is currently considered the highest priority for redevelopment is adjacent to Agristar, the CP rail tracks, and the highways at the western edge of Postville. This 7.73-acre site was once the site of Iowa Turkey Processors, which was destroyed by fire in 2003. Since the fire, it has remained vacant, with only crumbling concrete foundations and a chain-link fence. The current owner of the site, Agristar, has indicated a previous willingness to work with the city to ensure reuse of the parcel, but these discussions have stalled since the beginning of the process. Priorities for Agristar include creating a screening for the Agristar facility, maintaining a clean perimeter of the site, retaining control of the "buffer zone" next to their facility, parking for Prime Star Trucking, and site testing to ensure that there are no volatile or otherwise hazardous materials in the soil before site work.



## Previous Plans

Objectives of this plan will support goals of local, regional, and state plans for economic development, environmental protection, and health. Areas of alignment for each plan are listed below a brief description of the plan.

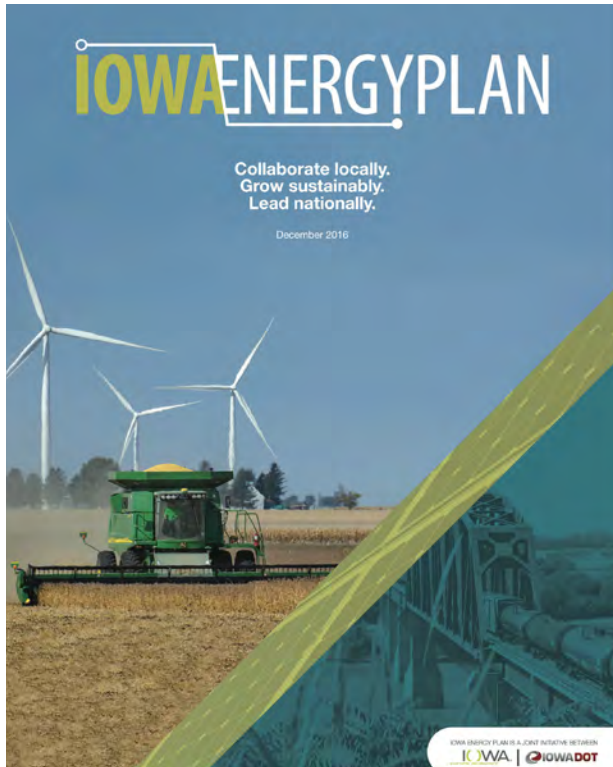
### Upper Explorerland RPC | 2008

#### Postville Comprehensive Plan

This plan provides an overview of the community and recommends the following:

- Targeting manufacturing and food processing industries for future economic development initiatives
- Promoting Postville's proximity to natural resources
- Increase housing supplies
- Expand the existing Postville trail
- Pursue incentives and support for downtown building renovation and business expansion
- Invest in additional recreational facilities to increase quality of life and attract and retain residents
- Create safer streets for walking and bicycling





Iowa DNR | 2016

### Iowa State Energy Plan

The state plan outlines policies and goals that will help communities across the state achieve energy efficiency and renewable energy objectives. Elements of this plan that could be supported by Postville planning objectives include:

- Encourage the expansion and diversification of energy resources, incentives, and programs.
- Support Energy Efficiency Efforts in Underserved Areas
- Support distributed renewable energy generation including wind, solar, and other clean energy resources in Iowa.
- Expand the use of alternative fuel vehicles in Iowa.
- Plan for Electric Vehicle Charging Corridors
- Incentives for Alternative Vehicle Fueling Infrastructure

Northeast Iowa RC&D | 2012

### Postville Safe Routes to School Plan

Safe Routes to Schools planning involves a comprehensive look at transportation choices made by parents and children going to and from school and seeks to find ways to develop safer routes for walking and bicycling to schools, with the goal of increasing physical activity by children. The Safe Routes to Schools program emphasizes “5 E’s” (Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, and Evaluation). Of those, Engineering proposes physical improvements to infrastructure at intersections. Postville currently has a “walking school bus” that addresses many plan components and has recently installed flashing speed indicator signs near schools. The plan recommends additional intersection safety improvements to enhance connectivity.

Iowa DNR | 2010

### Postville Urban Forestry Plan

This plan was developed by the Iowa DNR to help the City of Postville plan for the removal and replacement of Ash trees, which make up approximately 17% of the city’s tree canopy. The plan found that it would take 24 years to remove Ash at the city’s current funding level, a time frame far beyond the estimated peak impact from Emerald Ash Borer. The plan found that Postville’s urban tree canopy provides nearly \$125,000 in health and environmental benefits, including utility cost savings and stormwater management, every year. Key relevant recommendations of the plan include:

- Plant 1.2 trees for every tree removed due to EAB
- Plant no more than 20% of any one species of tree



**Endnotes**

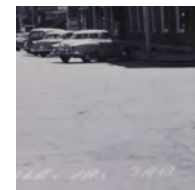
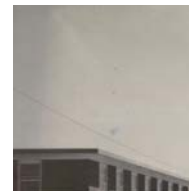
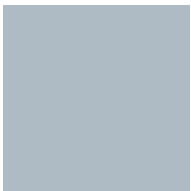
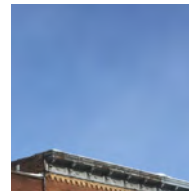
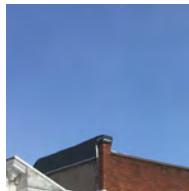
- 1 State Historical Society of Iowa, "Babel Proclamation, May 1918." Online: <https://iowaculture.gov/history/education/educator-resources/primary-source-sets/immigration-regulation-response-and/babel-proclamation>
- 2 Iowa Department of Education, 2019. Online: <https://educateiowa.gov/data-and-reporting/data-reporting/certified-enrollment/school-district-certified-enrollment>
- 3 Simple analysis using the Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator. Online: [https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm)
- 4 See, for example, the department's promotion of 4-to-3 lane conversions to improve small-town main streets: <https://iowadot.gov/traffic/4-to-3-lane-conversion/3-lane-roads>
- 5 Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Justice (EJScreen) Report. Online: [epa.gov/ejscreen](https://epa.gov/ejscreen).
- 6 Iowa Department of Transportation, 2019. Online: <https://iowadot.gov/crashanalysis/data.aspx>
- 7 "How to List a Property," National Park Service. Online: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/how-to-list-a-property.htm>
- 8 Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Justice (EJScreen) Report. Online: [epa.gov/ejscreen](https://epa.gov/ejscreen)
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Sanborn maps for Postville- and most US communities- are available through the Library of Congress at <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/>
- 11 Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Justice (EJScreen) Report. Online: [epa.gov/ejscreen](https://epa.gov/ejscreen).
- 12 Iowa Department of Natural Resources Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) database. Online: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Land-Quality/Underground-Storage-Tanks>
- 13 Environmental Protection Agency, 2017. Online: <https://enviro.epa.gov/facts/rcrainfo/search.html>
- 14 Environmental Protection Agency, 2017. Online: <https://www.epa.gov/enviro/sems-search>
- 15 Environmental Protection Agency, 2017. Online: <https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/login-acres-0> (login required)
- 16 EPA definition. Online at <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>



Postville, Iowa

# Market Conditions

Brownfield Area-Wide Plan



## Summary of Findings

Existing conditions in many communities where brownfield area-wide plans have been developed favor potential economic growth. Brownfield assessment and cleanup are essential to capitalize on existing regional trends of economic growth and population increase (Kalispell, MT, 2012; Northfield, VT, 2016). In other cases, brownfield planning can help develop an economic development or regional amenity niche that fits into a larger urban economy (Phoenix, AZ, 2012; Cleveland Opportunity Corridor Plan, 2013).

Postville may be a unique case in both its microeconomic and demographic situation and in its regional role. While Postville has experienced growth atypical of rural Iowa communities, this growth was entirely between the years of 1990–2008. Subsequent census bureau estimates show a stagnant population or slight decline after 2008. Regional population trends continue to show a steady decline in population among the four counties in northeast Iowa. Demand for goods and services continue to decrease as household sizes decrease and people move away, and existing retail demand is increasingly met by large, regional shopping centers. Non-wholesale retail sales underperform relative to Postville's population and spending power.

Postville continues to be shaped by macro-economic trends and federal and state agricultural and immigration policies, but its assets give opportunities



Empty sign after closing of local business, 2019

to build a resilient local economy. Postville's location, affordability, educational assets, and large industry provide an opportunity for continued viability and possibly future growth as larger metropolitan regions become increasingly unaffordable.

Favorable conditions for large-scale redevelopment do not exist. Farm consolidation and the regional decline of manufacturing jobs both continue to be problematic for rural economic development. Location and population trends do not incentivize investment in Postville's commercial or residential areas. This plan recognizes the reality of Postville's situation while proposing investments in brownfield sites that can help to spur small-scale redevelopment,

build on regional initiatives, and spur entrepreneurial opportunity.

A survey of rural area challenges by Iowa State University identifies common challenges faced by many small towns throughout the state and throughout Northeast Iowa. These include workforce preparation and participation, childcare, housing, commodity prices, business (including farm) succession, and career development for youth.<sup>1</sup> While some of these challenges cannot be directly addressed through brownfield remediation, there are means by which investments in buildings, land, and infrastructure can complement efforts to meet these large-scale challenges:

- Providing spaces for entrepreneurs and small businesses by removing barriers to investment;
- Education about resources available for hazard remediation;
- Incentivizing large-scale investment by major employers through partnerships; and
- Encouraging housing investments by providing assistance with lead and asbestos removal.

## Housing & Real Estate

Rents are not sufficient to stimulate speculative construction, but landowner expectations of land value are not necessarily in sync with market demand. Employers and civic leaders have identified housing as a critical need in Postville. Existing housing stock is older than state and national averages, and housing values have not recovered from the recession era. Postville has a low housing vacancy rate, but a corresponding relatively low rate of owner-occupancy, even with depressed real estate prices. Of the 14 Postville homes that sold in 2018, only 1 sold for more than its assessed value.<sup>2</sup>

Postville does not have the advantages of proximity to any major markets for real estate or employment. While there are certain advantages to its location—proximity to a major highway, and to scenic natural resources—those advantages also make it easier and, in some cases, more desirable for workers to live other places within commuting distance of Postville. Because there is little real estate demand in Postville, there is little investment in new construction or

in rehabilitation of existing housing and building stock. The phenomenon is compounded by neglect or abandonment, which drives down real estate prices, creating an environment where it is virtually impossible to realize a return on investments in property or renovation. Several buildings downtown are used for storage, with minimal or no maintenance performed by owners, and many downtown apartments sit vacant not because of a lack of demand for housing but because repairs or maintenance are not considered by the owners to be worth the return in rental payments. One building, a former movie theater, was remodeled into two storefronts and a single apartment in the 1970s; in good, well-maintained condition, it has not found a buyer at \$18 per square foot in the two years it has remained on the market, even with rental income of \$750 per month.<sup>3</sup>

What can be done to create a regional niche that will attract and retain residents? Many brownfield plans address large parcels within or proximate to urban areas, neither situation applies to Postville. Instead, the town has small parcels and is surrounded by small population centers. Large-scale development is not likely or feasible in a town of 2,200 at the corner of four counties, all of which had a lower population in 2010 than in 1900 and whose combined population does not exceed 75,000. A demand for large scale development or redevelopment projects does not exist, and where there is new development in the region, it mostly caters to the market for retirement homes and storage buildings.

While Postville cannot compete with some of its neighbors in terms of outdoor amenities or natural setting, its affordability, school system, and diversity are critical elements for creating a plan for the future.

Large employers have continued to invest in Postville. Conversations with business leaders has revealed that at least three large employers are seeking additional space for expansion and anticipate additional hiring.<sup>4</sup> This represents a substantial opportunity for the brownfield area-wide planning team because of the potential for site redevelopment, additional demand for small businesses and retailers, and additional demand for housing. In addition, it creates incentives for employers and business leadership to take the lead in other kinds of civic improvements that could bring in more residents. These business leaders will continue to be involved in the planning process, especially as it transitions into an implementation phase and needs local project support.

A lack of suitable spaces for entrepreneurs, or a lack of demand for commercial real estate? Many employees and entrepreneurs have cited difficulty finding suitable real estate for both homes and businesses. Smaller businesses and entrepreneurs have found the cost of renovations to start a business at available buildings to be prohibitive. Likewise, many employers have expressed the idea that employees in Postville are dissuaded from purchasing home because of their general condition and age. However strongly this anecdotal evidence may be felt, assessor and real estate data shows that real estate is more affordable





**Agriculture remains the dominant industry in the region, and many parcels within the planning area are dedicated to agricultural commodity storage and wholesale businesses**

in Postville than any other surrounding community, though housing units are also older. In addition, both commercial and residential real estate sells at near or even under appraised value, according to data from the county assessor's office.

These factors indicate a very weak demand for property within the city, which has implications for both existing property owners, potential owners, and for lenders, who may be reluctant to extend loans

for renovations on property because of depressed or stagnant valuation.

### **Business & Employment**

Postville has a strong employment base, but it draws workers from surrounding towns who don't reside in Postville. Large employers will continue to be a critical asset to the community for jobs, tax base, and economic growth. Manufacturing jobs, though continuing to decline as a percentage of regional

employment, account for a larger share of regional wage income than other private sectors.

### **Retail Trade Analysis**

The number of firms reporting retail sales in Postville is in a long-term decline that has grown especially acute since 2008. Postville still has a relatively robust wholesale trade market, but consumer retail sales have collapsed during the past four decades.

The number of firms reporting retail sales has dropped by 26% in Postville since 1976; no other community in the area has seen a comparable drop, or even a decline in the number of firms during the same period. The number of firms in nearby Decorah increased by 92% during that period.

Wholesale trade is 22% of Allamakee taxable sales, compared to 10% of statewide taxable sales.<sup>5</sup>

### **Retail Leakage**

Most sectors show retail leakage from Postville, especially in large-format general retailers located in communities within a 30-minute drive time. This is likely to grow more acute in the wake of the closing of the full-service grocery store and the neighboring auto parts store in Postville.

### **Potential Retail Analysis**

Despite losing much of the potential retail trade to other nearby communities, a few sectors may be able to compete for shoppers within a 15-minute drive of Postville.

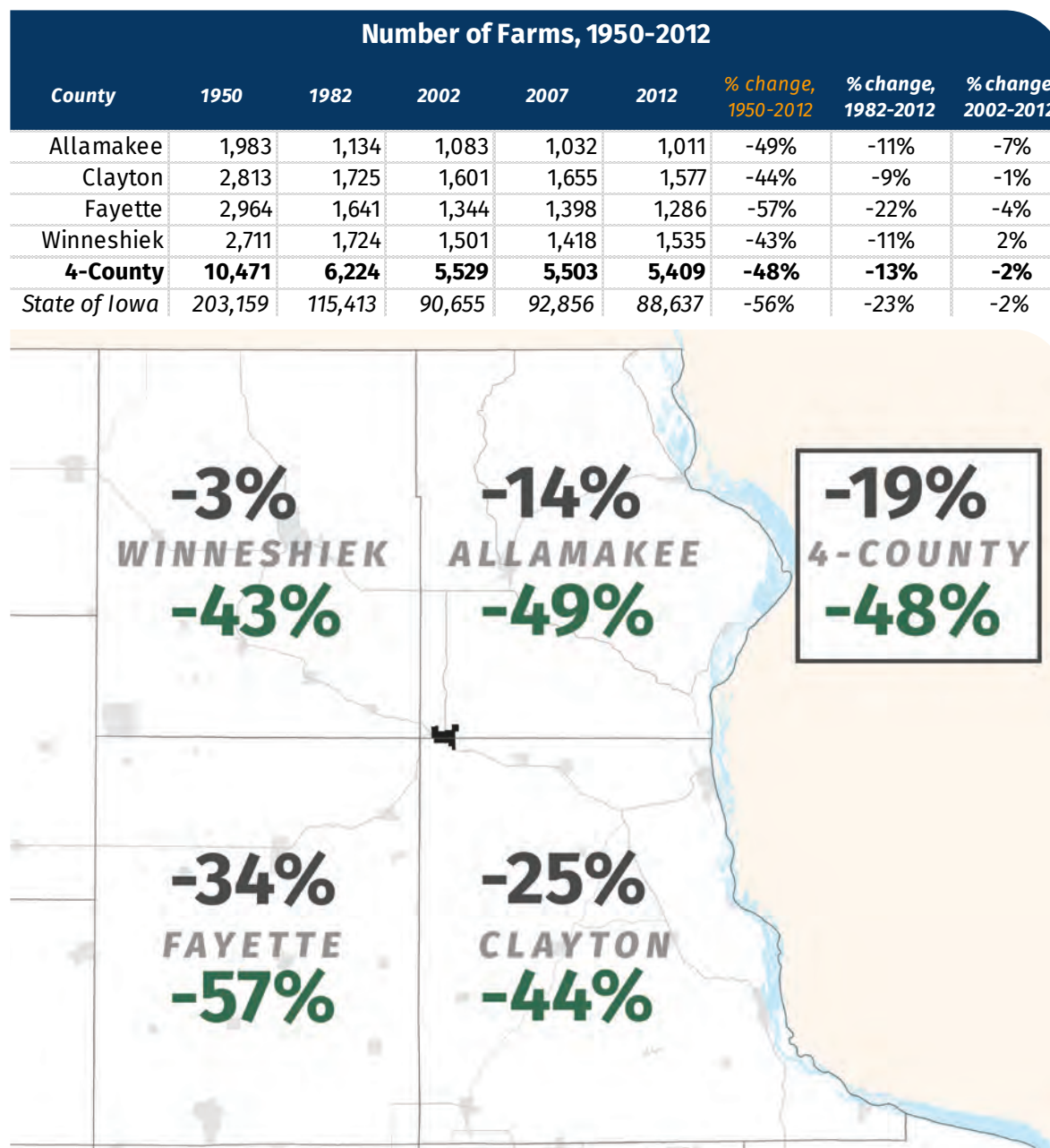


There are many vacant store fronts throughout the Brownfield Planning Area including West Greene Street

## Decline & Opportunity

Population change has been a major driver of economic fortune in Northeast Iowa. Nearly all of Iowa's rural counties have lost significant numbers of residents since 1950, while urban counties have continued to grow. This is in large part due to changing agricultural practices and the consolidation of small farms, as well as a decline in family size and out-migration due to limited economic opportunities. Declines in retail sales, the numbers of businesses, tax revenue, school district enrollment, and essential services such as access to medical care and facilities have followed this trend.

While Postville has remained an outlier with its rapid population growth in the 1990s, its population has plateaued since 2000 and it has seen many of its former businesses close or move since the devastating immigration raid of 2008. Since then, however, many entrepreneurs have opened new businesses and others have expanded. People are finding opportunity in the low costs of living and doing business that Postville can offer.



\*2012 is the most current estimate of the number of farms by county from the USDA.<sup>6</sup>

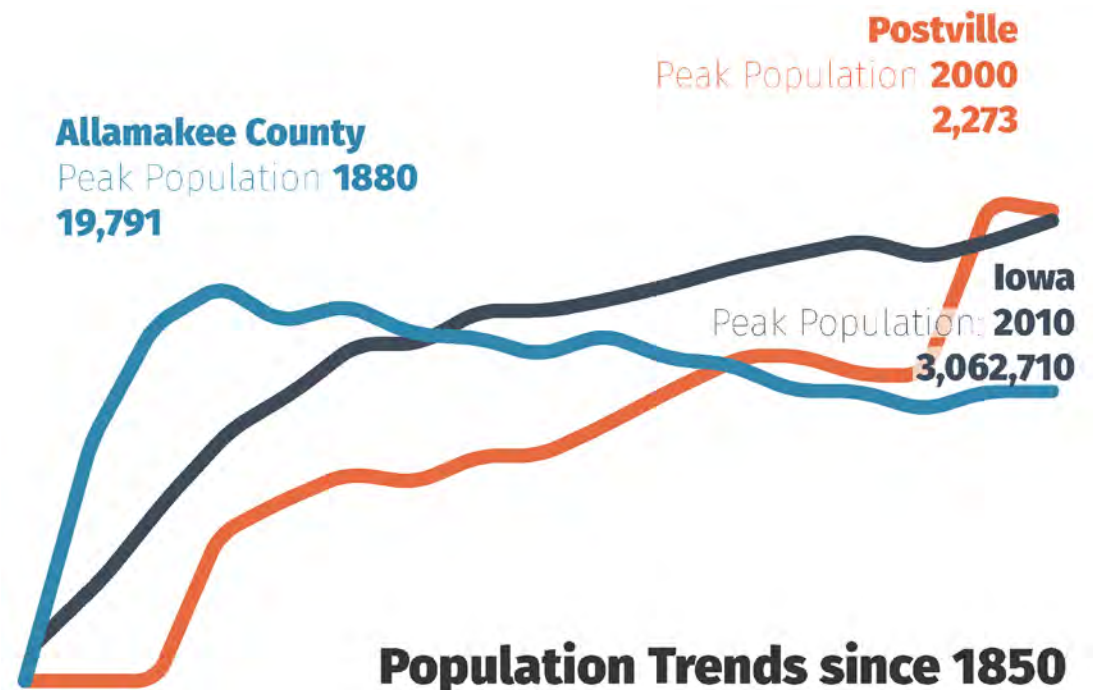
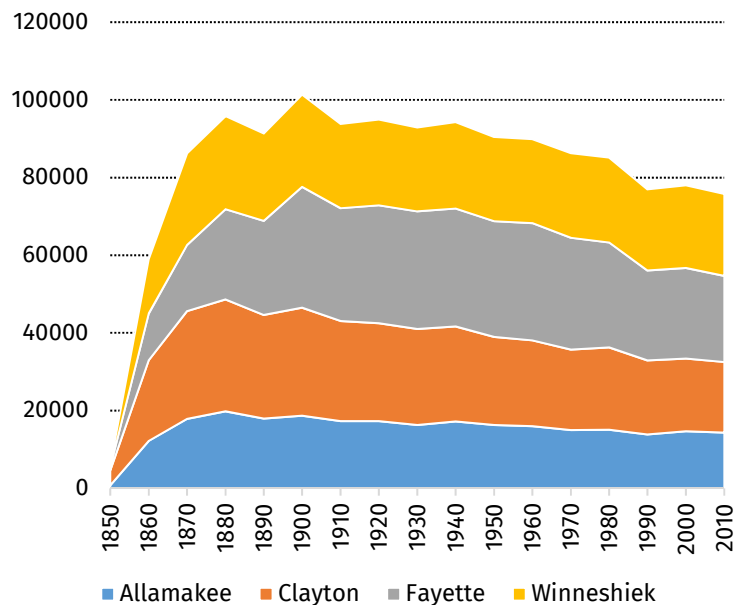


## Population Change, 1850-2012

Population as % of 1900 Population							
	1900	1920	1940	1960	1980	2000	2017
Postville	100%	106%	121%	158%	150%	231%	215%
Allamakee County	100%	92%	92%	85%	81%	78%	74%
Clayton County	100%	90%	88%	79%	76%	67%	63%
Winneshiek County	100%	93%	94%	91%	92%	90%	87%
Fayette County	100%	98%	98%	96%	85%	74%	68%

No county in Northeast Iowa has gained population since the mid-1900s, and all counties have a population below their 19th-century peak.

### 4- County Population, 1850-2010



## General Trends

Some of the changes that Postville's economy has faced in the past thirty years, such as farm consolidation, fluctuations in commodity prices, consolidation of the commodity sector, retail stagnation, and the effects of the 2008 recession and housing crisis, have followed macroeconomic trends that are familiar to any small town. Unique factors in Postville's economy are linked to its major employers and its demographics.

Postville has always been primarily dependent on macro-scale market forces, starting with a dependence on wheat exports in the mid-19th century. For most of the 20th century, it functioned as a farm service town dependent on commodities markets and the fortunes of area farmers. As the farm crisis was unfolding across the Midwest, a trend that can be seen in the decline in retail sales and firms in Postville throughout the 1980s, the meatpacking industry was also consolidating and changing from an industry with high-paying skilled labor to one that uses a low-wage, low-skill labor force. This was the context in which a large kosher meatpacking plant opened in 1988 in the former Hygrade packing plant, an event that has defined the trajectory of the town and set it apart from its neighbors in Iowa and the Midwest ever since.

The rapid growth of AgriProcessors fueled a growth in multifamily housing for workers, many of whom were transitory, and a rapid rise in real estate prices.

The 2008 raid on the plant and its temporary closure brought a complete collapse in the local housing market that was contemporaneous with a nationwide real estate and economic crisis. While subjected to the national changes in immigration policy, labor markets, and free trade agreements that have brought profound demographic and economic challenges to many rural farming communities, Postville has remained a resilient community due in part to its diverse employment base.

Rural housing, retail, and commerce functions on a larger geographic scale than urban areas, with various communities each filling a different economic niche. Postville is located far from any major metropolitan areas. The closest metropolitan area is La Crosse, Wisconsin (66 miles), followed by Waterloo-Cedar Falls, Iowa (77 miles) and Rochester, Minnesota (103 miles). Des Moines, Iowa, Madison, Wisconsin, and Minneapolis, Minnesota are all over 150 miles away. This distance from major population centers helps Northeast Iowa to function as its own regional economy, with residents traveling to neighboring communities and counties for employment, retail shopping, and commercial services. Decorah, 20 miles to the northwest, is a retail hub, tourist town, and residential community. Monona, 10 miles to the southeast, functions as a residential community with few large employers or retailers. By contrast, there is little to no retail activity in Postville beyond the wholesale sales of agricultural goods, food products, and direct sales from manufacturers.

**Postville was the place to retire...you were really something if you could buy a house and retire in Postville. It was a happening place.**

*Area resident on Postville, 6/22/18*

Postville's location along two federal highways, a state highway, and a freight rail line has helped the city become a regional center for employment, with a high percentage of daytime workers drawn from nearby areas to work in agricultural, construction, and human services jobs.

### Employment & Industry

Postville functions as a regional employment hub, drawing workers from the four counties surrounding it to work in manufacturing, construction, agricultural wholesaling, and education. There are nine major employers in the city, mostly in the agricultural and construction industries. An aging regional population helps to maintain a strong demand for assisted senior housing facilities, while the growth of Agristar has kept young families in the city and helped the school district to maintain a large number of faculty and staff.

Major industry has continued to thrive in Postville even as the retail and housing market has shrunk and

## Largest Private Employers, Postville

<i>Employer</i>	<i>Approx. # employees</i>
<b>Agristar</b>	<b>600</b>
<b>Norplex-Micarta</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Good Samaritan Care Center</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Allamakee-Clayton Electric Coop</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Mueller Construction</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Hall Roberts Son</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Ziegler CAT</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Bacon Concrete</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Farmer's Union Co-op</b>	<b>20</b>

stagnated. The regional economy of which Postville is a part has reflected larger-scale economic shifts in the United States. These trends can be seen in data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA).<sup>7</sup> Total income and employment from industries classified by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) category from the four counties surrounding Postville (Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, and Winneshiek) was used. This dataset does not include complete or separate information for the healthcare and education sectors, though they are included in the yearly total income and employment figures for each county.

Data was compiled at the county level for several reasons:

- BEA data is not available at a scale smaller than county level.
- The proximity of Postville to major population centers in all four counties and its central location between them.
- Northeast Iowa functions largely as a regional economy; regional commuting patterns show that many residents in the region do not work in the community or even the county of their residence.

Farm consolidation continues even as income from farm proprietorship and employment continues to rise. From 2001 to 2016, farm income increased by 121%; during the same period, farm employment declined by 15% and farm proprietorship by 21%. This means fewer people earn a living by farming in rural areas near Postville. Nonfarm income has increased by 152% in the same period.

Manufacturing in the four-county area has declined by all metrics since 2001. Manufacturing employment has declined by over 20% in all four counties, with Fayette County losing 48% of manufacturing jobs since 2001. Personal income from manufacturing has declined by 28% over the same period. Food manufacturing, Postville's dominant industry, has declined by 29% region-wide; the closing of Iowa Turkey Processors in 2003 produced a notable change in regional food manufacturing income from

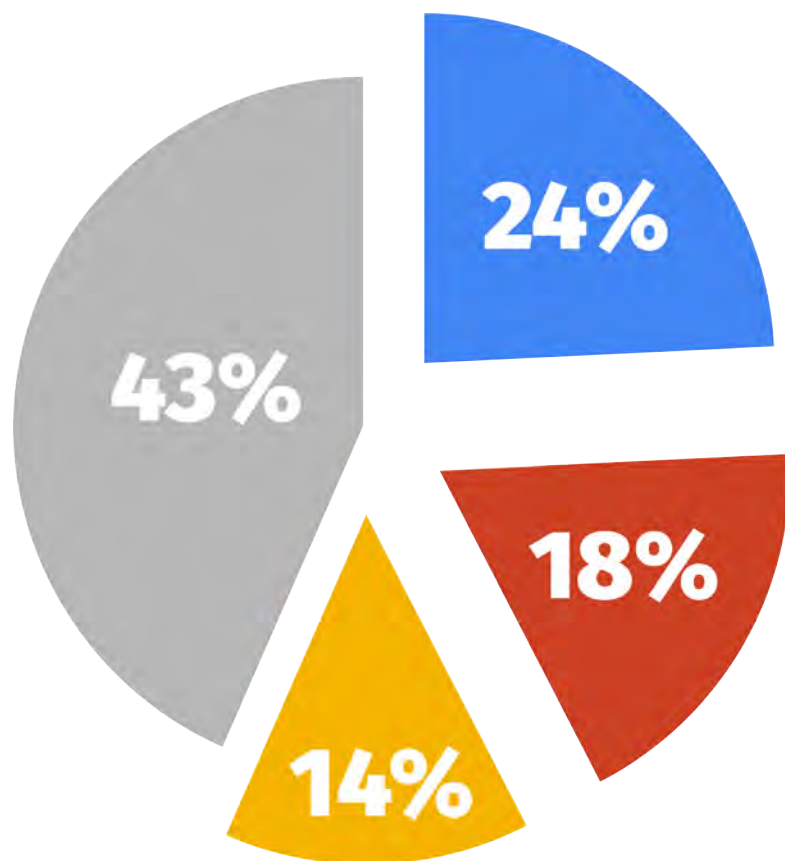
2003–2004. Nine percent of four-county jobs and 18% of regional income comes from manufacturing, suggesting that these jobs are better-paying than other industries. Manufacturing income is declining more quickly than its share of employment, however: from 2001 to 2016, income from manufacturing employment declined by 7% from 25% to 18% of the regional total, while employment in the manufacturing sector declined by 4% from 13% to 9% of the regional total.

Retail facilities, while desirable for sales tax revenue and visitation, may not be valuable for employment and wage growth: retail jobs are 10% of regional total, and 9% of total regional income. By contrast, government jobs (including local government, but not school districts) are responsible for 13% of employment but 24% of area income. Other sectors whose regional share of income is above that of their regional share of employment include construction (14% of income / 7% of employment) and wholesale trade (8% of income / 4% of employment). In fact, five industries—manufacturing, construction, government jobs, wholesale trade, and retail—make up 74% of regional nonfarm income.

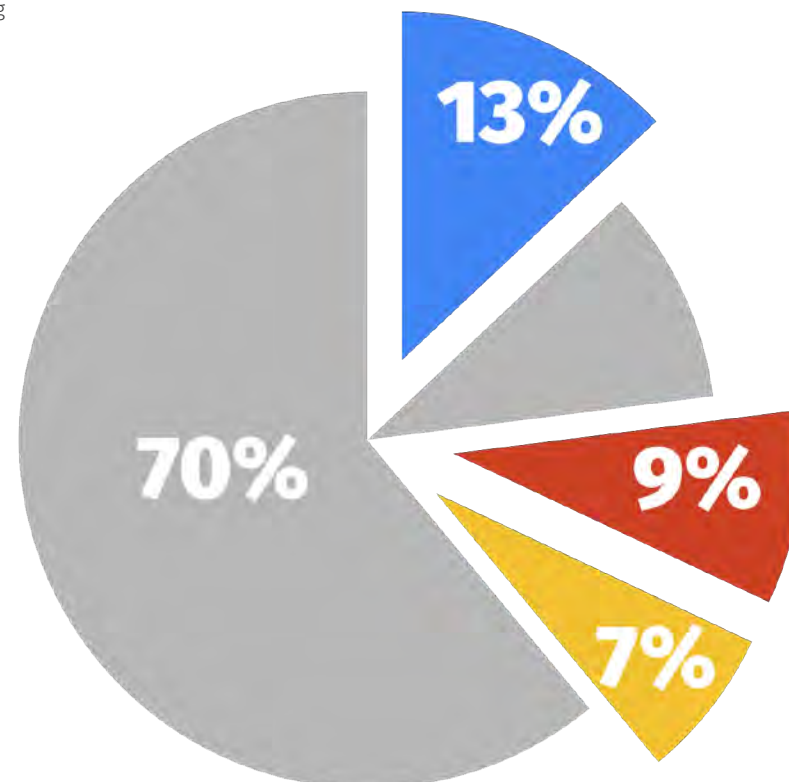


## Non-farm Income and Employment Data, 4-County Region

Share of 4- County Income



Share of 4- County Employment



Manufacturing income in the region has declined by 7% since 2001, the largest change in any category, with retail income also declining. The number of retail jobs, however, has remained steady.

SHARE OF REGIONAL <b>INCOME</b>	2001	2005	2009	2013	2016
Construction	12%	14%	14%	12%	14%
Manufacturing	25%	22%	17%	19%	18%
Wholesale trade	7%	8%	8%	8%	8%
Retail trade	11%	9%	10%	10%	9%
Transportation and warehousing	3%	3%	1%	0%	0%
Information	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Finance and insurance	4%	5%	5%	4%	4%
Real estate and rental and leasing	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	1%	3%	3%	1%	4%
Admin. & support & waste mgmt& remediation svcs	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Health care and social assistance	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Accommodation and food services	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Other services (except gov't and gov't enterprises)	5%	6%	6%	5%	6%
Government and gov't enterprises	21%	23%	26%	24%	24%

SHARE OF REGIONAL <b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	2001	2005	2009	2013	2016
Construction	6%	7%	7%	6%	7%
Manufacturing	13%	11%	8%	9%	9%
Wholesale trade	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Retail trade	10%	11%	10%	10%	10%
Transportation and warehousing	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Information	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Finance and insurance	3%	3%	4%	4%	3%
Real estate and rental and leasing	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	1%	2%	3%	1%	3%
Admin. & support & waste mgmt& remediation svcs	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Health care and social assistance	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Accommodation and food services	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Other services (except gov't and gov't enterprises)	5%	6%	6%	5%	6%
Government and gov't enterprises	12%	13%	13%	13%	13%

Employment trends for the region show that the number of manufacturing jobs has declined since 2001, while other sectors have remained steady.



A former feed mill in a residential neighborhood in Postville

## Business and Employment

According to data from the US Census Bureau, ESRI, and analysis from Iowa State University, of the estimated 1,628 jobs in Postville, over 1,200 are filled by people not living here.<sup>8</sup> Over 500 Postville residents commute elsewhere in the region for work. Nearly 600 of these employees work at Agristar, but a large percentage also work at Norplex-Micarta, a thermoset plastics manufacturing facility, Mueller Construction, Bacon Concrete, the Farmers Union Co-op, Hall Roberts Son, and Zeigler Caterpillar.

Many employees of Postville businesses, including senior management at large firms, do not live in Postville; lower-wage workers, especially immigrant labor, live in the community and send their children to the school district, which has grown by over 15% since 2006.<sup>9</sup> This has implications for business and retail location, real estate, and for redevelopment opportunities.

The number of businesses in Postville reporting taxable sales has fallen by 26% since 1976, which makes the city an outlier in the region. This decline has not been uniform in those 41 years, however: after a decline in the number of businesses in the 1980s, the number rose in the 1990s and remained stable until the mid-2000s. Between 2007 and 2017, the number of businesses declined by 19%. This initial decline, followed by recovery, is explained first by the national farm crisis in the 1980s, which hit rural communities by both reducing the number of farmers and reducing farm income. Postville's recovery was

due in part to a large population influx during the rise of AgriProcessors, and its subsequent decline post-2008 is likewise due to retail changes, demographic changes, the nationwide recession beginning in 2008, and the effects of the 2008 immigration raid.

Population and income characteristics for Postville are markedly distinct from its neighboring counties and the rural areas that surround it. Compared to the averages from surrounding counties, Postville has lower incomes, larger household sizes, and more people requiring assistance to meet basic needs. It's also far more diverse, as measured by ESRI's Diversity Index, which "...shows the likelihood that two persons chosen at random from the same area belong to different race or ethnic groups."<sup>10</sup> This finding is in line with anecdotal experiences of northeast Iowa residents, Census Bureau findings, and enrollment data from the Postville Community School District.

Postville's unique characteristics have implications for economic development strategies, consumer spending habits, and regional settlement patterns:

- Residents of lower-income communities have less spending power and may be less likely to patronize the restaurants and niche retailers that could form part of a downtown revitalization strategy and they are more likely to utilize discount retailers and regional general merchandise chains located in other towns.
- Perceptions of town character based on population characteristics are a likely factor in



determining home buying decisions for those who can afford to purchase homes in the region.

- Regionally, higher-paying jobs can be found in the manufacturing and construction sectors. Focusing on these sectors in redevelopment efforts could yield a greater multiplier effect in consumer spending due to higher disposable income levels. Spending could increase for specialized retail sectors regardless of the residence of these workers if Postville can find an unfilled regional retail niche.

Surrounding counties have low diversity. Postville will benefit from finding a way to capitalize on its uniqueness through visitor experiences.

### Cost of Living: A Competitive Advantage?

The estimated cost of living in Postville is approximately 20% below the national average, according to a national consulting firm.<sup>11</sup> This cost advantage is even greater than neighboring communities in northeast Iowa, and is largely due to lower real estate costs. Transportation costs, however, are higher, perhaps reflecting the high number of people in the region who commute to other towns. While the low cost of living may be an advantage, it also reflects a low demand for real estate and the fact that Postville is not viewed as a desirable community in which to live or visit. Postville can capitalize on this potential competitive advantage through selective marketing and with basic aesthetic and quality of life improvements. This

will require investments in assets and institutions that can create strong appeal to outsiders, as well as a robust, regionally-coordinated marketing campaign. Ensuring access to high-speed internet can also provide a means to attract telecommuters.

Postville's most significant assets are its large employers, which sustain the economic life of the town. While Postville offers low cost of living for employees, it is also competitive for large businesses because of lower land costs, lower construction costs, lower wages, and lower utility costs compared to places of larger population. Transportation costs for raw materials and goods produced could erode that potential competitive advantage somewhat, but Postville can still offer a direct highway connection via US-18 and US-52 to Madison, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and Chicago, as well as railroad access.

## Cost of Living

source: BestPlaces 2018

New York City	209.3
Los Angeles	195.1
Chicago	117.8
Minneapolis	116.4
Iowa City	100.9
<b>USA</b>	<b>100</b>
Rochester	98.2
Decorah	91.9
Kansas City	91.9
La Crosse	89.9
Cedar Rapids	87
Des Moines	85.9
Monona	85
Waukon	84.9
Elkader	82.1
Postville	80.8

**Postville was a like a hidden secret, a little golden town that had Norman Rockwell values, and all the things that people dream about, nice beautiful atmosphere, large friendly people, virtually no crime, and affordable housing... It also had all the qualities of safety, friendliness, and affordability.**

Aaron Goldsmith, former city council member<sup>12</sup>

## Housing & Real Estate

Postville is not a choice community for people who work here. Postville, for many, is simply a place to go to work. Most Postville residents work in the city, but most people who work in Postville do not live in the city. This is reflected in mean travel times to work: 16.4 minutes for Postville residents, compared to 24 minutes for residents of Allamakee County as a whole. More than 72% of Postville workers travel less than 25 minutes to work, with 52% travelling less than 10 minutes, meaning that they are employed within the city.

As noted elsewhere, many of the employees at Postville businesses do not live in the community. An Iowa State University study estimated that 1,200 people commute to work in Postville every day, while roughly 500 residents commute elsewhere for work. Norplex-Micarta confirmed that only 20% of their 150 employees live in or near Postville,<sup>13</sup> and conversations with other major employers suggest that a similar percentage of employees at their businesses reside locally. One of Postville's best assets- its location near areas of scenic beauty and outdoor recreational activities- is also a challenge, because many workers can choose to live in larger communities that can offer a greater variety of businesses, retail offerings, and services, as well as more amenities.

One metric that supports the idea that the real estate market in Postville suffers from its proximity to more

amenity-rich communities is the age of its housing stock. On average, Postville homes are older than surrounding communities, and construction starts since 2008 have been minimal. According to several large employers, most employees of large businesses do not live in town. Perceptions about crime rates, housing stock, and a lack of downtown activity discourage many people from purchasing homes in the community. In addition, many homes are rental properties that are absentee-owned. Though the city has made an effort to enforce housing standards, staff and funding limitations are barriers to addressing blight from untended properties.

Real estate and redevelopment opportunities in Postville are limited due to depressed housing values. All of the four counties adjacent to Postville have a lower population in 2016 than in 1900; Allamakee County alone has lost 23% of its 1900 population, and census estimates continue to show a regional population decline even as Iowa and surrounding states grow. This suggests that there is a shrinking market for the existing housing stock. The 14 single-family residential properties for sale in Postville between January and July of 2018 were listed for an average of only \$4.22ft<sup>2</sup> above assessed value. Sales records show that 13 sold for less than assessed value. Commercial real estate appears to show a similar trend, though there is limited sales data to analyze.<sup>14</sup>

Residential and commercial property valuation in Postville is lower than its percentage of the county total, while multi-family and industrial properties



Older home in Postville



Owner-built housing unit in Postville

## Housing Indicators

Metric	Postville	Allamakee	Clayton	Winneshek	Fayette	Iowa	USA
Vacancy rate, total housing units	9%	22%	16%	8%	33%	9%	12%
Vacancy rate, OOH	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Vacancy rate, rental units	7%	10%	7%	2%	11%	6%	6%
Owner-Occupied Housing (OOH)	50%	77%	76%	78%	81%	71%	64%
Renter-occupied housing	50%	24%	24%	22%	19%	29%	36%
Moved in 2010 or later	61%	31%	29%	31%	30%	41%	42%
Moved in 1989 or earlier	13%	26%	26%	23%	24%	17%	15%
GRAPI 35% or greater	44%	26%	29%	34%	26%	35%	42%
Housing units built before 1980	69%	65%	72%	70%	80%	67%	55%
Median home value	\$83,100	\$123,800	\$123,500	\$175,100	\$89,300	\$142,800	\$226,800

**Postville has a far higher number of residents who moved into their homes after 2010 compared to surrounding communities or even the Iowa & US averages, and home values are far lower than in other locations.**

are higher than the share of county total. This suggests undervaluation of single-family and smaller commercial properties, a consistent demand for rental housing, with corresponding stability of rental rates, and significant investments in industrial facilities. These assumptions appear to be confirmed by other data such as real estate transactions and median rent.

Demand exists for lower-cost housing, a segment of the market that may not always be feasible for developers without participation in affordable housing programs such as those managed by USDA, HUD, or through the IRS Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. These programs largely target larger population centers and larger-scale

developers with resources and staff who are familiar with these programs; there are no affordable housing developers within the four counties adjacent to Postville. Median Rent is nearly \$100 higher in Postville than surrounding counties. The one LIHTC property in Postville offers 2-bedroom units for \$750, while a bank-owned apartment complex to the east of town rents units starting at \$695.<sup>15</sup>

The city of Postville has been proactive in clearing blight throughout the city and has partnered with regional nonprofits to create new affordable housing units. However, these efforts have been opposed by a vocal contingent of landlords in the city who are threatened by the construction of new units. The experience discourages the city and regional

nonprofit partners from taking risks or trying new solutions to solve problems. Unfortunately, this will likely have a direct impact on the ability of local leaders to implement parts of the plan that may require greater involvement by the public sector and could add additional barriers to implementation of plan elements.

The current estimated city Median Household Income (MHI) of \$35,000 leaves nearly 40% of renters and 60% of homeowners cost-burdened even with low local home values. Affordable housing, defined as Selected Monthly Ownership Costs or Gross Rent that does not exceed 1/3 of MHI would indicate that \$50-\$100,000 homes and rent of \$400-\$800 would be affordable to most households. Nearly 89% of



Postville homes are assessed below \$100,000; sales prices in Postville track closely with assessed value. Postville's many young adults do not necessarily have the opportunity to participate in long-term asset-building: over 40% of homeowners in Postville are over the age of 65.<sup>16</sup>

Demand also exists for housing for families. Average household size in Postville is 2.92, and 38.3% of Postville households include families with children, 10% higher than the rate for Iowa and the United States as a whole. Single-family detached housing comprises a large percentage of the housing stock in Postville. Newer housing stock in Postville consists of apartments built during the 2000s, when Agriprocessors was running at full capacity, and oriented toward single-person households. While there is demand for certain types of homes in Postville, especially larger new units for families, a 2018 study projects that only five net housing units will be needed in Postville by the year 2025.<sup>17</sup>

A 2014 study found that many rural Iowa communities face a demand for one- and two- bedroom housing units. This demand was created not by population increases, but by demographic shifts among the existing population: household size in most rural and urban communities is shrinking, creating more households with fewer people even as the population decreases. Neighboring Decorah shows this trend; from 2000-2010, the number of households in the city increased by 3%, while the overall population decreased by 2%.<sup>18</sup> Postville has the opposite problem:

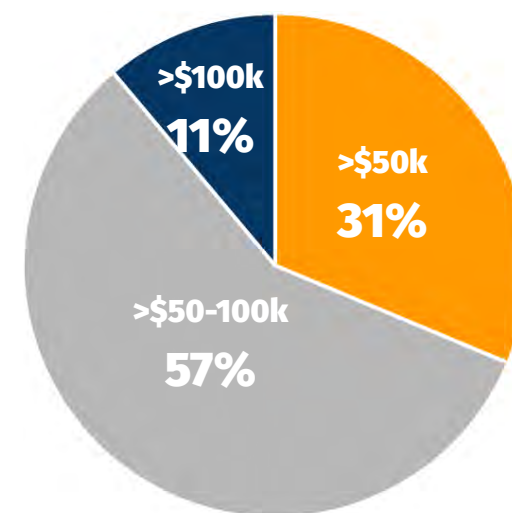
demand for housing is not driven by retirees and single or two-person working age households—these demographics settle in other communities in the region— but by large families with multiple children.

Conversations with mortgage bankers in Postville reinforces this data point: there is a demand for lower-priced homes among immigrant families. Significant barriers to navigating traditional financial mechanisms exist, among them religious restrictions on interest, residency status of either potential buyers or family members, and pressure to purchase from members of one's own community. According to local mortgage lenders, most demand is in the \$60k-\$80k range, while housing supply is in the \$90-120k range.<sup>19</sup> Less than 12% of Postville single-family housing stock is assessed at a value greater than \$100,000.

While only approximately 25% of Postville housing units are classified as being in less than “Good” condition by the county assessor, 81% were built before 1980 and 65% before 1965.<sup>20</sup> Older units are more likely to require additional- and potentially more costly- maintenance and repairs, and have a much higher risk of containing potentially hazardous materials requiring mitigation, such as lead paint and asbestos.

Within the planning area, multiple downtown buildings have unrented upper-level apartments, and there are several single-family housing units near the railroad tracks. Many upper-story units

**Single Family Valuation,  
Postville, 2018**  
*% of total*



in downtown buildings are limited in size and not adequate to meet the demand of current households. These housing units are unlikely to be rehabilitated or reused without participation in a cost-sharing, grant, or forgivable loan program to incentivize investment. In addition, a 2014 study of downtown upper-story units in rural communities shows the highest demand for apartments in the sub-\$600 range. Rental rates in that range would be insufficient to recoup costs, requiring a per-unit subsidy estimated at up to \$400 per month.<sup>21</sup> Construction costs, especially for buildings that require significant lead and asbestos remediation, are likely to drive up the cost of that subsidy even further.



**Remodeled older home in Postville**



**Large home outside planning area**



**An uncommon example of a one-story Italiante home with original bracketing and porch**



**Postville has many rental units of varying condition and size; this home is within the planning area**



**The expense associated with renovating and maintaining large homes is prohibitive for many prospective buyers**



## Retail Analysis

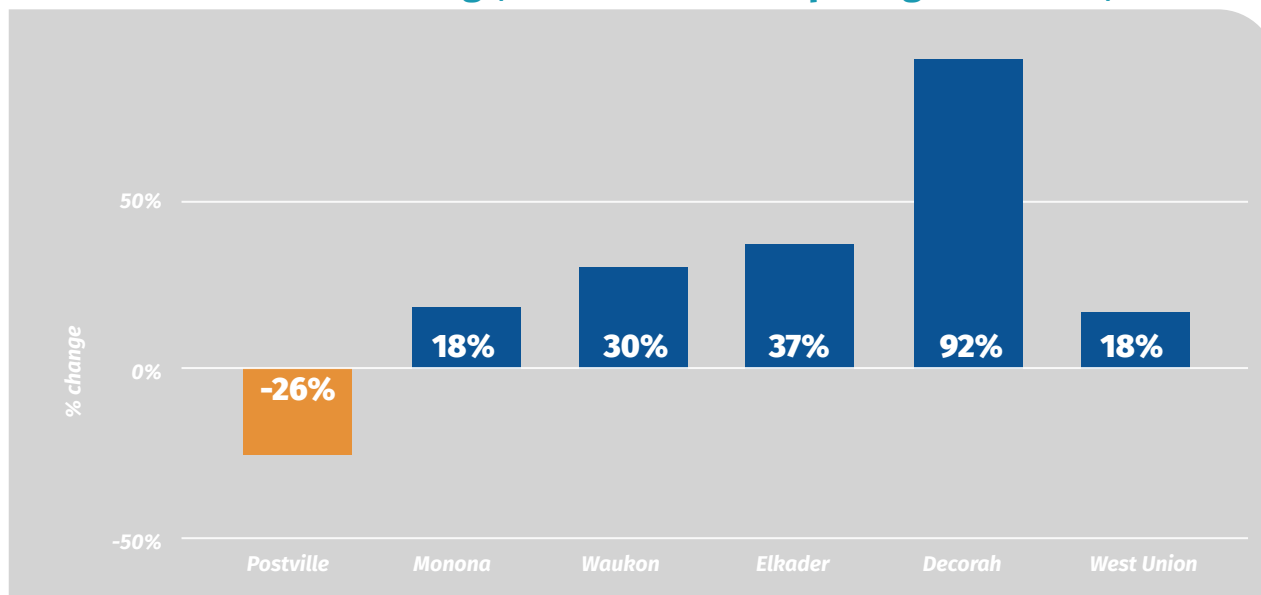
Postville does not currently have a significant retail market: over 94% of local sales are classified as wholesale or manufacturing sales, with retail trade and food and beverage establishments accounting for little over 1% each. Even with a comparatively low median income, Postville still loses up to 95% of potential retail sales to other communities, according to market data. Postville showed an estimated trade leakage of \$4,715,000 in 2017, while nearby Decorah, with its Walmart Supercenter and other retail establishments, had an estimated trade surplus of over \$96,000,000 in 2017.<sup>22</sup>

Proximity to major regional retail hubs makes it unlikely that Postville would be able to recapture general merchandise sales lost to neighboring communities; a Dollar General, opened in 2016, serves as a local resource for household necessities, and data from 2017, two years prior to the closing of the town's grocery store, show no leakage of grocery sales from the community. However, significant opportunities may exist for eating and drinking establishments, with 50% of potential sales in that category lost to other communities. This does not factor in the daytime population of Postville, which provides an additional business opportunity for restaurants.

As indicated previously, Postville is not a strong market for additional general retail or grocery stores due to its proximity to retailers in other communities

and regional commuting patterns. Wal-Mart supercenters are located in Decorah, 20 miles away, and Prairie du Chien, 25 miles away. In 2016, a discount variety store opened. Until 2019, Postville also had a branch of the regional grocery chain Quillin's, but this closed, with few opportunities for a new large grocery store to take its place. A new convenience store, Casey's, moved from a parcel within the planning area to a larger new facility near Agristar, leaving an additional potential brownfield parcel open for redevelopment. These stores, in addition to the regional chains and the smaller markets catering to the Guatemalan, Mexican, Somali, and Jewish population, serve the needs of the residents of the town.

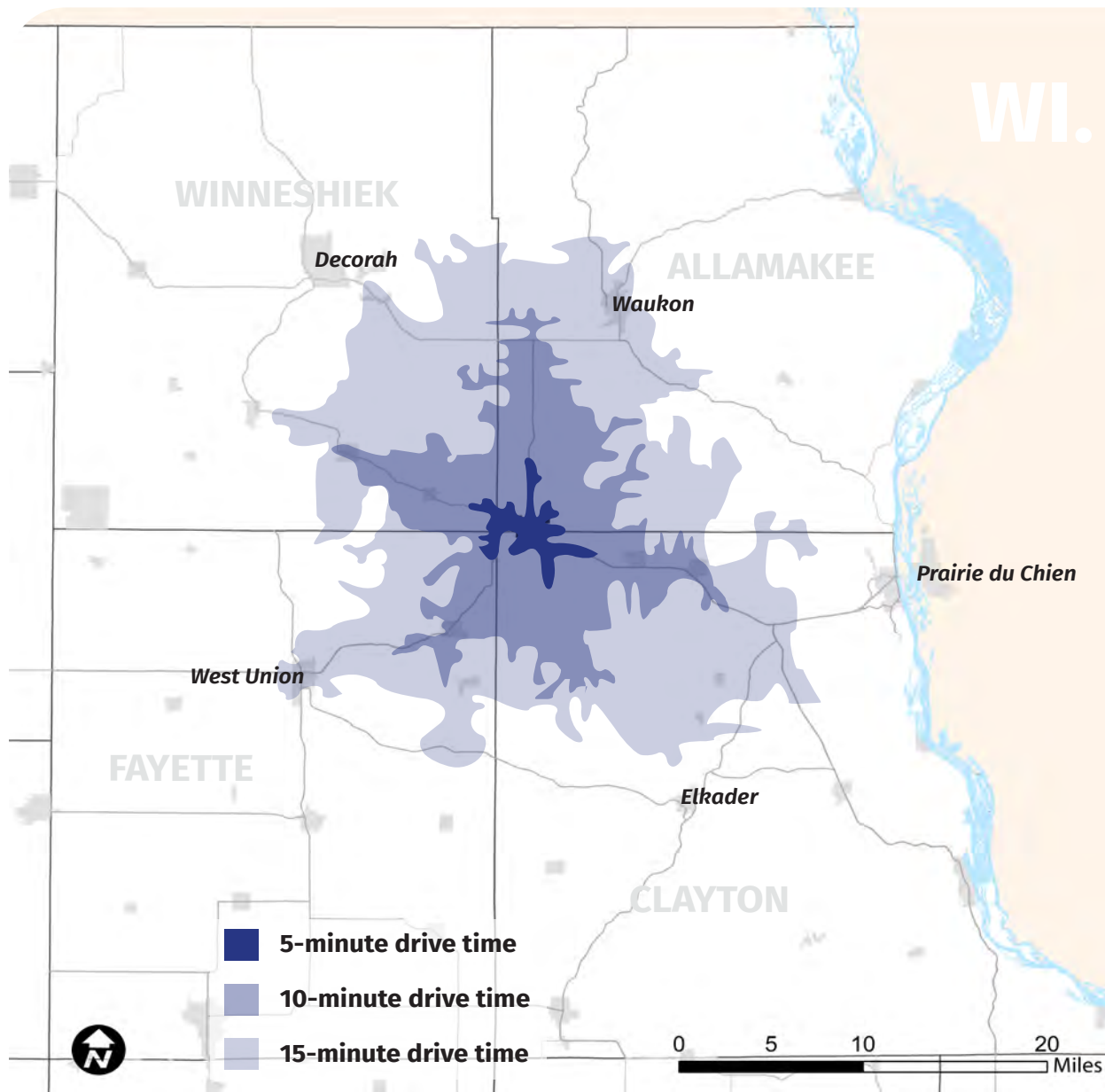
**Change, Number of Firms Reporting Retail Sales, 1976-2017**



Retail sales in Postville and in Allamakee & Clayton Counties have become more dependent on wholesale trade. A 2017 Retail Trade Analysis by Iowa State University (ISU) found that Postville accounts for 18% of retail (including wholesale) sales in Allamakee County, slightly higher than its percentage of Allamakee County population (15%). In Allamakee County as a whole, wholesale trade accounts for 22% of taxable retail sales, while the statewide average is 10%. It also found that Postville has lower wages and salaries than peer cities in Iowa.<sup>23</sup>

Retail sales are more focused at regional big-box retailers located in regional shopping destinations that are easily accessible from communities in these counties. Allamakee and Clayton Counties,





WI.

## Market area

A 15- minute drive time is used to estimate a potential market area for Postville businesses. This is the amount of time that customers might reasonably be expected to drive to use a business located in Postville.

5,517

Estimated **Population** within 15-minute drive time

2,156

Estimated **Households** within 15-minute drive time

\$43,926

Estimated Median **Household Disposable Income** within 15-minute drive time

Data: ESRI, 2017

with smaller populations and direct connections to retail trade centers at Prairie du Chien, WI, and La Crosse, WI, have a far greater percentage of sales (22%) from wholesale trade than counties that are not adjacent to counties in neighboring states with big-box retailers. Eating & drinking establishments as a percentage of sales is consistent across counties, suggesting that demand for establishments that serve local communities remains constant. This data is consistent with estimates of Postville-area sales leakage.<sup>24</sup>

## Leakage

Demographic and social indicators from an area within a 15-minute drive of Postville were used to create a profile of people who are within the potential market area of Postville. The city and its surrounding counties are included for comparison purposes. There are strong demographic and economic disparities between rural farming areas in surrounding counties and Postville that can make averaging data between these two areas misleading. While many rural areas are increasingly dependent on nonfarm employment, farm proprietorship, land rental, and farm jobs remain a high proportion of rural income. Wages and salaries from farming-related income sources are generally higher than wage employment from Postville enterprises.

A retail leakage study indicates that in an area within a 15-minute drive of Postville the following

sectors have the highest rate of retail leakage, or percentage of goods purchased from that sector from establishments outside a 15-minute drive of Postville:

- Other motor vehicle dealers
- Furniture Stores
- Clothing Stores
- Shoe Stores
- Books and Music
- Specialty Foods
- Misc. retailers<sup>25</sup>

These numbers, on their own, suggest that a community with a demographic and economic profile like Postville's would be able to support businesses in these categories. Postville did support a shoe store until 2010; it moved to the nearby community of West Union.

However, potential sales volume may not be sufficient to justify capital and operating expenses for some establishments such as a bookstore or deal for "other" motor vehicles such as specialized trucks. Existing and new businesses may not be accounted for in this analysis, such as a new pharmacy in Postville that opened in summer 2018, and existing small specialty grocery stores that serve the market for Kosher, east African, and Latin American foods. In addition, low population density, relatively low traffic volumes, stagnant regional population

growth, and low household income would probably preclude large-format retail investment.

The National Retail Federation projected 3.8-4.4% growth in retail in 2018 following growth of 3.9% in 2017. While this growth is significant, it still lags the growth in online sales, which were predicted to show sales growth of 10-12% in 2018.<sup>26</sup> Big-box retailers, small-format discount variety chains, and online retail will continue to serve most area resident needs, but there is potential for "experiential retail" and niche stores that can provide a unique experience for consumers.

As shown through the school's bi-annual Diversity Festival and the 2017 RAGBRAI, visitors to Postville are impressed by the town's diversity. Businesses that highlight Postville's uniqueness and sense of place will help shape- and monetize- a visitor experience that is not available through national chains or online. Currently there are few obvious attractions or informational hubs for visitors passing through on highways. Regionally, little is known about Postville besides its diversity, the 2008 immigration raid, and Agristar. There are no attractions, destination retail, or entertainment businesses to draw visitors from either the highway or surrounding communities. Resident feedback indicated strong support for a coffee shop, bakery, and additional dining options. Population and spending power are limited in the city of Postville, but opportunities exist for specialized businesses catering to specific demographic subsets,

to workers who are in Postville during daytime hours, and to visitors interested in the town's diversity and history.

The kosher slaughterhouse has brought waves of immigrant communities that have created Postville's current diversity and created opportunities for specialized retail and food sales. There is likely unmet market potential for other specialty or niche retailers and for additional food and beverage oriented businesses that could expand beyond their target market. These businesses offer several advantages:

- They can have lower start-up costs than other businesses;
- They can utilize the prominent location of the city along major regional highways;
- They can capitalize on the town's existing brand, "Hometown to the World," and help visitors have an experience of diversity.

Connecting potential entrepreneurs to financial resources and to opportunity sites will be essential in order to realize this potential.

### Retail Potential Analysis

Is there a market for certain types of retail in Postville? The retail leakage data gives an idea of what kinds of goods and services are potentially used by Postville residents based on sales tax data and population characteristics. The data implies that there might be a potential local market that

could be captured by Postville retailers for certain goods and services. To answer this question, a Huff Model was used to determine the likelihood that a given customer within the four counties adjacent to Postville would use a given store type in Postville. Four store types were analyzed because of their high retail leakage: Sporting Goods store (NAICS code 451110), Automobile Dealerships (NAICS code 41120), Coffee Shop (NAICS code 722515), and Furniture Stores (NAICS code 442110).

RC&D staff used a Huff Model to determine potential retail viability in Postville. The Huff model is a spatial interaction model that takes into account different variables to determine what kinds of new businesses may be viable in Postville. The resulting calculations show the probability that a given customer within a defined census block would use a Postville store and is expressed in a percentage; for example, 15% would imply that there is a 15% chance that a customer would use a Postville store as opposed to another store within the defined trade area. The defined trade area is the four-county region in which Postville sits. Census blocks were used as the spatial unit of analysis because of the data available at this level from the US Census Bureau. Factors taken into account include distance from census block centroid locations, Gross Leasable Area of a potential new store, and competition (stores within the 4-county defined trade area).

Retail Leakage by Sector		
NAICS code	Industry	Leakage factor
4412	Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	100
4421	Furniture Stores	100
4452	Specialty Foods Stores	100
4481	Clothing Stores	100
4482	Shoe Stores	100
4512	Books, Periodicals, & Music Stores	100
4539	Miscellaneous Store Retailers	91.3
4441	Building Material & Supplies Dealers	58.2
7225	Restaurants/Other Eating Places	56.9
4461	Health & Personal Care Stores	56.2
4413	Auto Parts, Accessories, & Tire stores	52.7
4511	Sporting Goods, Hobby, & Music Stores	45.3
4529	General Merchandise Stores	44.6

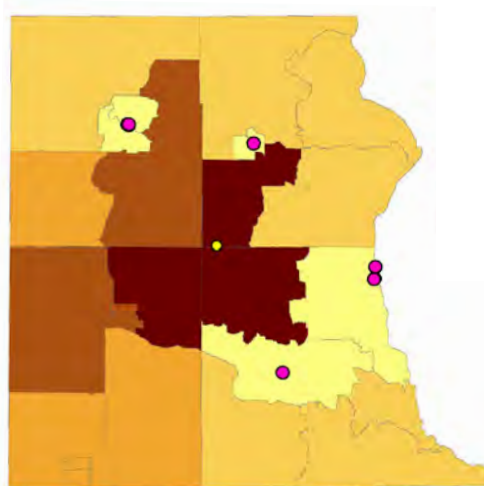
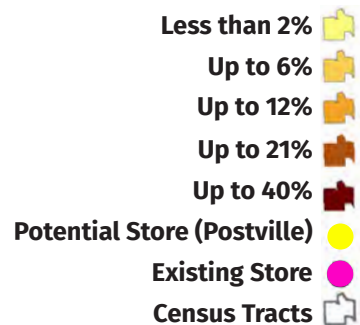
This analysis found that businesses within at least two of the of the categories could find a viable market in Postville. Potential coffee shops and furniture stores had the highest scores, with up to a 46% chance that consumers within at least two Postville census tracts would patronize a business within those categories located in Postville. The weakest category was the sporting goods store, due to a limited customer base and established businesses in nearby communities.



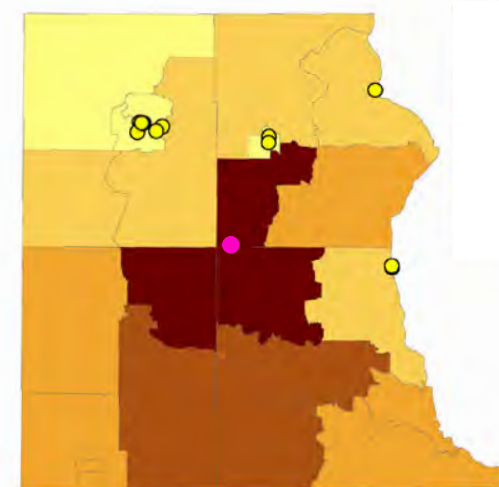
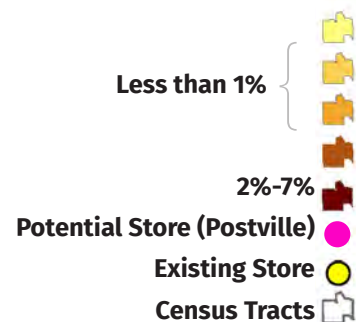
# Huff Model Analysis

Probability of Patronage by Customer within each Census Tract

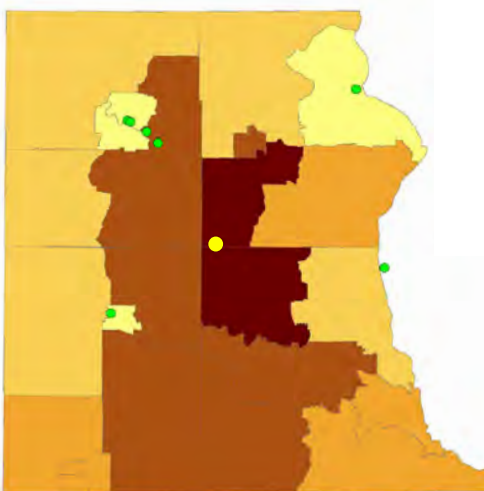
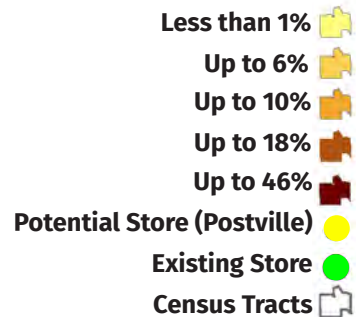
## Coffee Shop



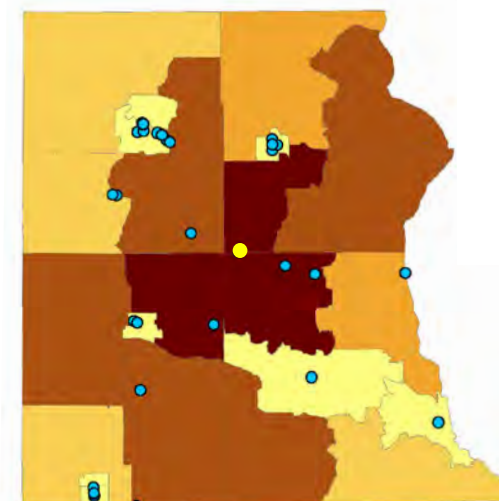
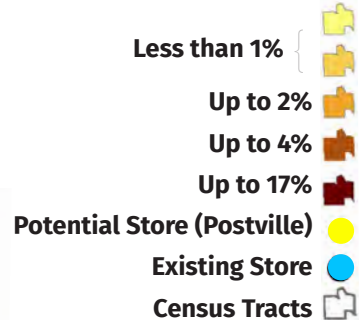
## Sporting Goods Store



## Furniture Store



## Auto Dealership



## Grocery store

During the planning process, the need for a full-service grocery store emerged. Postville's only grocery store, Quillin's, announced that it would close permanently in February 2019. Grocery stores are considered to be an essential part of small-town vitality and viability. Postville's loss of its long-time grocery store creates a "food desert," with limited access within the city for fresh produce and other non-packaged foods. Without reuse, the closing of the store could have negatively impacted reuse efforts at nearby brownfield planning sites, but its redevelopment as a convenience store has already had a positive effect for adjacent parcels. A longer-term concern is how the loss will affect the image and marketability of the town, already a primary challenge for redevelopment and a significant factor in the stagnation of the local real estate market.

The loss of the town grocery store, which had operated for over 100 years and nearly 60 years in the same building, created problems for the entire town but also presented key opportunities: redevelopment of a prominent parcel at a busy intersection in adjacent to downtown, and the opportunity for local entrepreneurs to fill the gap left by the store's closing. In Spring 2019 it was announced that regional convenience store chain Kwik Star would build a new store on the site.

Postville has a challenge and an opportunity that distinguish it from many case studies of similar-



Former grocery store, March 2019



Original grocery building shortly after construction, ca. 1965

## Community & store size: small-format grocers

Aldi				
city	Acres (lot)	Ft2 (lot)	Ft2 (building)	Population
Dubuque	2.75	119,790	-	58,276
Muscatine	2.56	111,514	17,786	22,697
Ottumwa	2.96	128,938	18,260	25,023
Marshalltown	1.66	72,213	14,841	27,552
Ft Dodge	2.76	120,400	24,140	25,206
Clinton	-	74,923	17,948	26,885
Davenport 1	2.15	93,690	17,806	102,320
Davenport 2	0.94	40,770	19,248	-
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.25</b>	<b>95,280</b>	<b>18,576</b>	<b>41,137</b>

Brothers Market				
city	Acres (lot)	Ft2 (lot)	Ft2 (building)	Population
Denver	1.95	84,794	15,408	1,838
Grundy Center	1.91	83,156	13,000	2,706
Sigourney	0.73	31,944	12,946	2,002
Cascade	3.28	142,887	17,772	2,285
Lisbon	3.2	139,828	18,432	2,179
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.21</b>	<b>96,522</b>	<b>15,512</b>	<b>2,202</b>

sized rural Midwestern towns: its proximity to goods and services in other communities (within a 25-minute drive) and its niche grocery markets selling to different population segments. Many Postville shoppers utilize big-box stores in Decorah and Prairie du Chien, WI for their grocery shopping because of the selection and the opportunity to

purchase other home goods at the same time. With a new pharmacy opening in Postville in 2018, one of those conveniences is once again available in downtown Postville.

The size of the town and its location within the market zone of Decorah and Prairie du Chien make it

unlikely that a large-format, full-scale grocery would likely find it profitable to locate here. In addition, the limitations of the parcel consolidation strategy discussed above became increasingly evident when researching market needs for grocery chains: of the potentially developable parcels within the planning area, only one is greater than one acre in size. This one parcel is unlikely to change ownership and would require significant site demolition and clean up even if it were to sell.

Some community leaders advocate for actively marketing the town to outside grocery chains for a new store. While this does present some merits for the town, an analysis of existing stores<sup>27</sup> quickly shows that this expectation is likely unrealistic:

- Stores are looking for buildable sites of three acres or more without demolition or remediation costs
- Traffic counts of over 10,000 are preferred (Postville's busiest street averages about 4,600 vehicles per day)
- Many stores will not located to areas with less than 15,000 trade area; Postville is within the trade area of higher-population communities in the region
- Only 5,517 people are estimated to live within a 15-minute drive of Postville<sup>28</sup>
- Postville residents are more likely to prioritize cost over other factors, such as travel time, when choosing where to shop for food. This would



make it difficult for general grocery stores to break through the Walmart habit.<sup>29</sup>

While providing remediated brownfield or grayfield sites, or providing greenfield development sites through city action or the actions of an economic development group may provide a solution to one of those problems, population and traffic counts are unlikely to vary significantly in the foreseeable future.

The advisory committee discussed research from Kansas State University about small town grocery stores, challenges for towns seeking to add a grocery store, and viable, replicable models for success. Community ownership, a grocery cooperative model, assisting existing businesses in developing a full-service grocery model, and attracting an outside grocery retailer were among the options that were discussed.<sup>30</sup> While the city may pursue outside grocery chains, there is limited chance of success due to the location of Postville with existing grocery and big-box capture areas, Postville's small size, and a lack of buildable sites with high traffic counts. Interest in a community-owned or cooperative enterprise was limited because of concerns about long-term management, staffing, and viability.

The dilemma of the grocery store underscores a common theme to the brownfield plan: the need to invest strategically in key buildings, sites, housing, and amenities that will bring direct benefit to the small-scale entrepreneurs, existing small businesses,

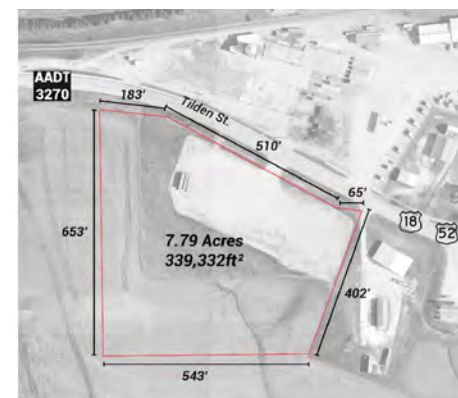
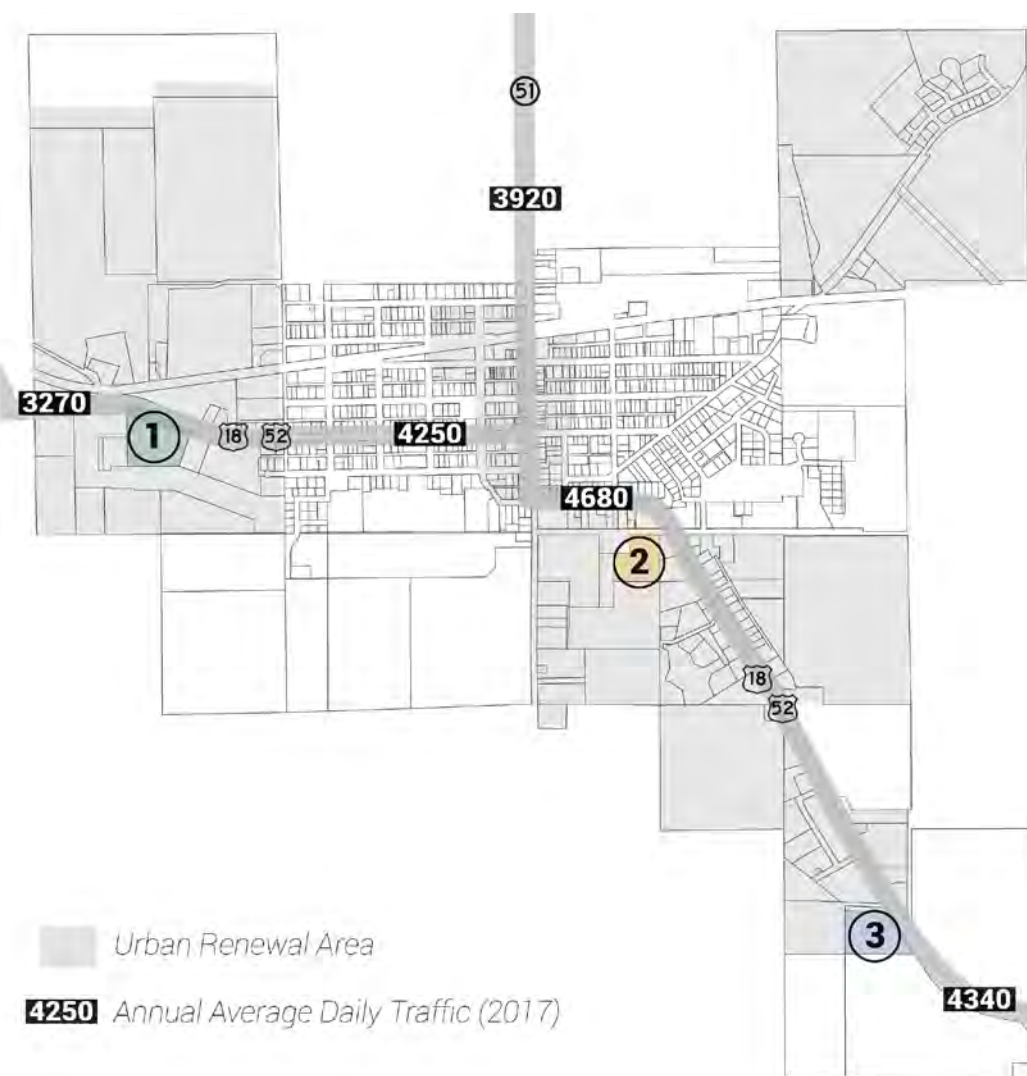
## Potential grocery store sites within planning area



and Postville residents who have a stake in the community and are willing to work for success. While the Postville business park, well beyond the planning area, can offer a greenfield site for a new developer, little to no incentives or assistance is offered to any of the five existing small markets (Kosher Market, La Canasta, Tienda Tonita's, El Pariente, and Juba Market) that cater to niche populations within the city. The city can use the opportunity of the brownfield plan to reconsider successful microeconomic development strategies that target the needs of small businesses and entrepreneurs and help them to get

started and then scale up. One of the existing grocery stores has taken the risk of installing a produce cooler, reorganizing the store, and actively marketing to populations that do not typically frequent the store. Though the city is interested in their success, the existing incentive structures are not in place to be able to offer meaningful assistance to the owners. Brownfield funding should be leveraged to remediate lead and asbestos hazards as a part of renovations to downtown buildings and to remediate petroleum and other hazards at existing vacant lots to create more attractive building sites.

## Potential grocery store sites outside planning area



### 1. West Tilden St.

7.79 Acres  
339,332 ft<sup>2</sup>  
Frontage: 755ft  
Zoning: I-1  
County: Allamakee



### 2. County Line Road

4.96 Acres  
216,058 ft<sup>2</sup>  
Frontage: 315ft  
Zoning: R-2  
County: Clayton



### 3. S. US 18

5.38 Acres  
234,353 ft<sup>2</sup>  
Frontage: 577ft  
Zoning: I-2  
County: Clayton



## Opportunity sites

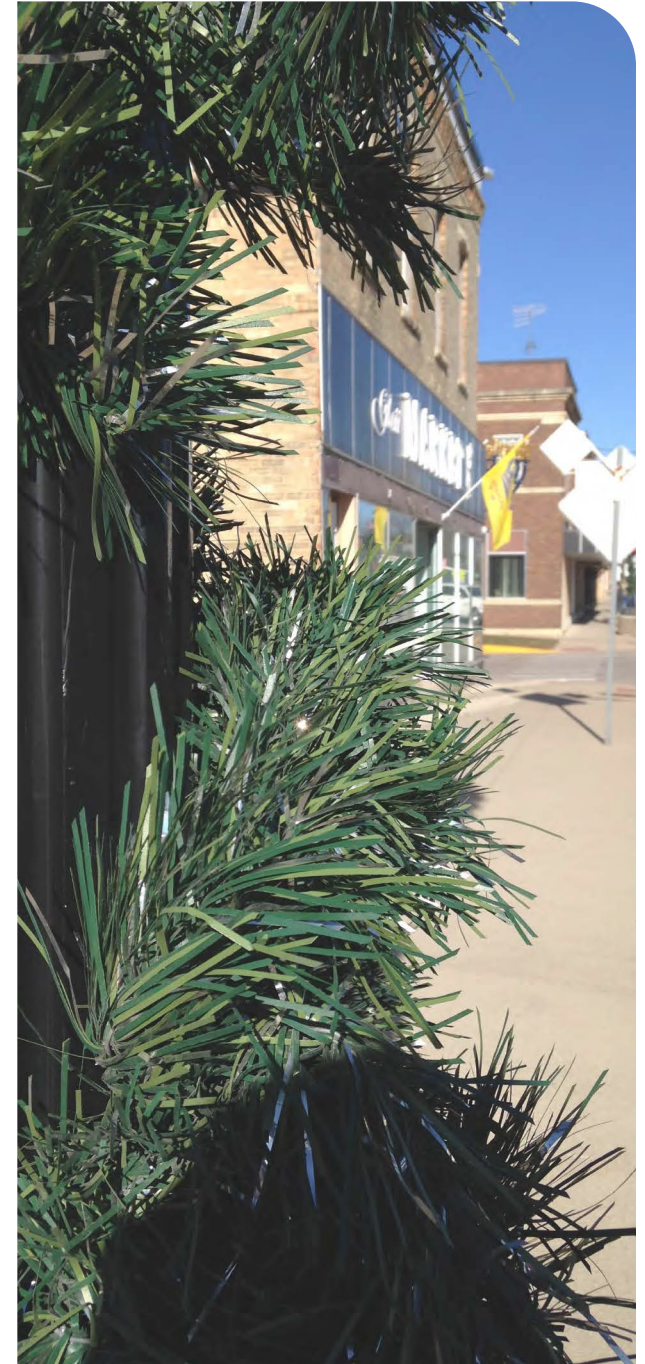
Downtown, with several vacant storefronts and prominent historic structures, presents the most obvious opportunities for retail and restaurant development because of its visibility and central location. However, even these opportunity sites have challenges due to building age and condition. Many buildings require expensive remodeling and renovation, and depressed real estate values may make it more difficult to secure financing for building projects.

The western and eastern parts of the planning area have larger parcel size and vacant or underdeveloped parcels that could be more attractive for industrial or wholesale commercial development. One agricultural parcel, across from thermoset plastics manufacturer Norplex-Micarta, was planned for residential development in the 1990s and early 2000s. Though some development has occurred on the far northeast part of this area, most is still agricultural land. This parcel, within city limits and close to the city's wastewater treatment plant, a county road, and an existing large industrial business, is a potential expansion area for future industrial development. This greenfield site is not within the planning area, but it could have a direct impact on both future site re-use of brownfield sites and the development of area-wide transportation assets. The top opportunities sites in Postville are included in the analysis of brownfield sites in this plan.

## Overcoming Challenges

Dependence on macro-scale economic and policy frameworks create local fragility and vulnerability to changes that are outside of the control of local actors. Access to capital and financing is limited, with low real estate values and low median income both contributing to a lack of investment. Postville no longer has a locally-based bank that is focused on the community.

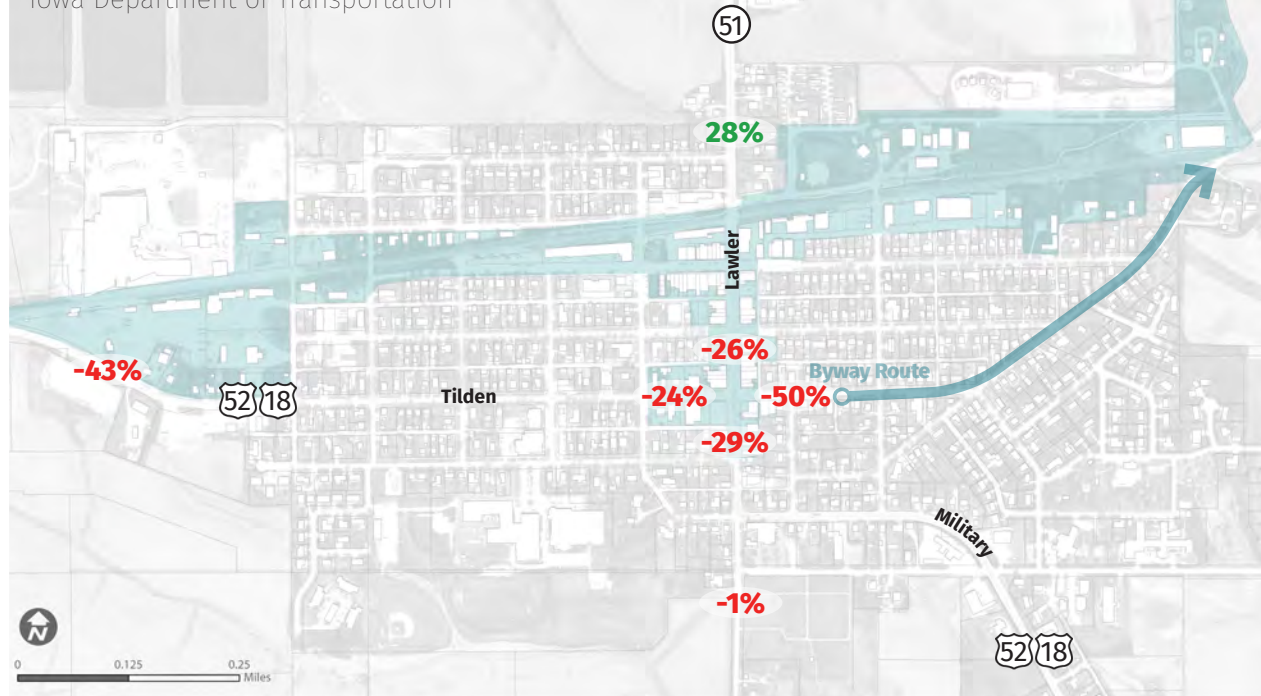
What niche can Postville create to distinguish itself from neighboring communities, attract new residents, grow its businesses, support entrepreneurs, and create a more positive image? Further diversification of the economic base and robust civic engagement will help to create a more resilient community, and by showing leadership in these fields Postville can build a regional model as a small town that works.





## Changes in Annual Average Daily Traffic, 2000-2017

Iowa Department of Transportation



## Highways

### Put your bait on the highway.

*Roger Brooks, tourism consultant<sup>31</sup>*

Thousands of people who pass through Postville every day are already experiencing the city in some way. What is that current experience, and how can it be shaped in a positive way to attract visitors and new residents and businesses?

The *Driftless Area Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan* (CMP) recognizes opportunities for communities to make these routes attractive for visitors and boost local businesses by drawing additional customers. Several of these suggestions, including an entrepreneurial center, trail development, stormwater management as landscaping, interpretive signage, and trail development, are a part of this plan, which was itself a suggestion within the CMP.

Traffic counts in Postville have declined since 2000, despite a stable population. This may be due to the loss of a major employer in 2003 when the Iowa Turkey Processors facility was destroyed in a fire, with a loss of over 200 jobs.

Despite the byway designation, eastbound Tilden Street at Lawler has lost the highest percentage of traffic compared to its 2000 level.



## Recommendations

### Driftless Area Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan

#### All communities

- Community branding showing unique & interesting characteristic of each
- Interpretation and preservation of historic resources
- Signage and wayfinding

#### Postville

- Byway interpretive hub at beginning of byway
- Cross-marketing sign
- Interpretive signage
- Downtown revitalization
- Community Kitchen & Entrepreneur Center
- Brownfield Reuse Planning
- Trail Development
- Stormwater Project
- Williams Creek Restoration

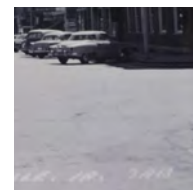
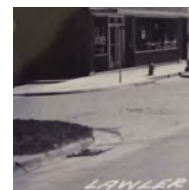
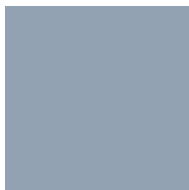
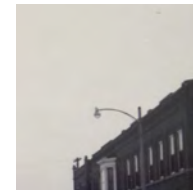
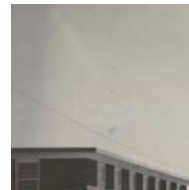
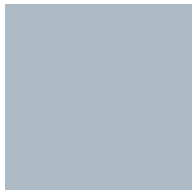
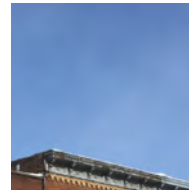
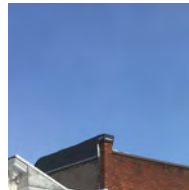
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Postville, Iowa

# Community Engagement

Brownfield Area-Wide Plan





## Community Outreach & Engagement: Towards a Community Vision

Many Postville residents are not actively involved in civic affairs. Voter turnout among younger residents is low; fewer than 100 people voted in a recent school bond election. City office holders serve for additional terms for lack of anyone willing to run to replace them. The local government and school board do not reflect the diversity of the town.

Local leadership is well aware of these problems, but no effective means of addressing the issue has yet been found. This planning effort was an opportunity

to engage with residents in an untested way. Its successes and failure should be demonstrative for future efforts by local leaders to maximize community participation in civic affairs.

Since the 2008 immigration raid, there have been few instances of community-building and planning in Postville, but the most impactful was the town's preparation for a 2017 statewide bicycling event that passed through the town. The beginning of the Brownfield Area-Wide Planning process presented an

opportunity to correct this deficit and bring together people from disparate backgrounds and beliefs to share their vision for Postville.

Wherever possible, the advisory committee leading the planning effort sought to involve and engage with underrepresented populations and ensure that they are able to participate in the planning process. This plan is the result of hard work and capacity-building on the part of Postville leaders, but it is only one step in what must be a continuous and iterative process of community-building.

Residents of Postville participated in the planning process since its beginning in spring 2017. Because the people of Postville have various cultural and social backgrounds, a variety of methods were used to shape the priorities and direction of the plan. These included letters to property owners within the planning area, direct outreach to community leaders and business owners from various backgrounds, social media tools, engagement with students and teachers in the high school, middle school, and elementary school, press releases and interviews, posters advertising participation opportunities, interactive posters directly soliciting input, and public open house events.

The different communities in Postville offer differing ideas of what the town needs and should be prioritized



Even the youngest Postville residents had the chance to talk about the future of their town.

in a plan. There are differing perspectives from younger and older Postvillians, those who have lived in Postville for longer than 10 years and those who are recent arrivals to the community, and between the descendants of original settlers and the various cultural groups who arrived later. Nonetheless, common themes emerged after additional outreach and engagement activities.

Finding appropriate dates and media to successfully engage with different communities within Postville can be challenging due to varying religious and cultural customs, work schedules, and mistrust of projects or initiatives that appear to be initiated by the federal government. A lack of cooperation from property owners and landlords in the city has complicated past efforts by the city to remediate blighted properties, and perceived missteps by previous city officials have diminished trust in city government among sectors of the population. Because of prior experience with landlords and property owners, city officials may be weary of direct involvement with any properties. Any proposal or project that needs to access brownfield testing or remediation funding from the state of Iowa for a specific site plan or development may need to take into account the need to find an organization that could receive state and/or federal funds.

### Advisory committee

A steering committee consisting of diverse community leadership from various backgrounds

and cultures guided the planning process. The steering committee included city council members, local bankers, business owners, representatives of major employers, faith leaders, county leaders, and active community members. The committee shaped the direction of the plan, the goals of the plans, and the elements included in the plan. Most importantly, they are a leadership team that will outlast the brownfield planning process and be responsible for implementing the elements of the plan.

### Publicity

Publicity efforts included traditional media outlets, creating an online presence, using posters and flyers, and social media. The town newspaper, which published 11 articles related to this project from spring 2017 to winter 2019–2020, has a limited readership among younger and more diverse population groups in the area and is mostly focused on its existing audience of older white residents. Online engagement, including a website and social media presence, was a more effective means of engaging directly with community members from different backgrounds. The Postville Planning website became “Our Postville” in an effort to feel more inclusive and solicit greater feedback regarding planning efforts in the area. Consensus among the advisory committee was that initial names such as “Planning for Postville” or “Postville Planning Project” were too abstract and failed to capture the attention of the public. In addition, the name “Our Postville” has utility beyond the current brownfield



**Social media engagement was most successful when highlighting local businesses**

planning effort, and could be the name of a new community and economic development group in the future.

While generally more successful than print publicity, online outreach had mixed results. This outreach succeeded in reaching a population that was not present at events or otherwise engaged with planning initiatives. Facebook posts in particular were effective at driving engagement. Instagram was also used, though with a lower engagement rate.

Overall, though, responses to social media engagement, including web presence, were limited

in effectiveness for driving feedback for planning purposes. This could be due to a low population base, a younger population that may not have access to smartphones due to socioeconomic status, and elderly population. The most popular posts on social media, two of which were viewed over 6,400 times, were posts that involved local businesses and historical features in downtown Postville, showing that there is strong interest in supporting local businesses and sharing more of Postville's history.

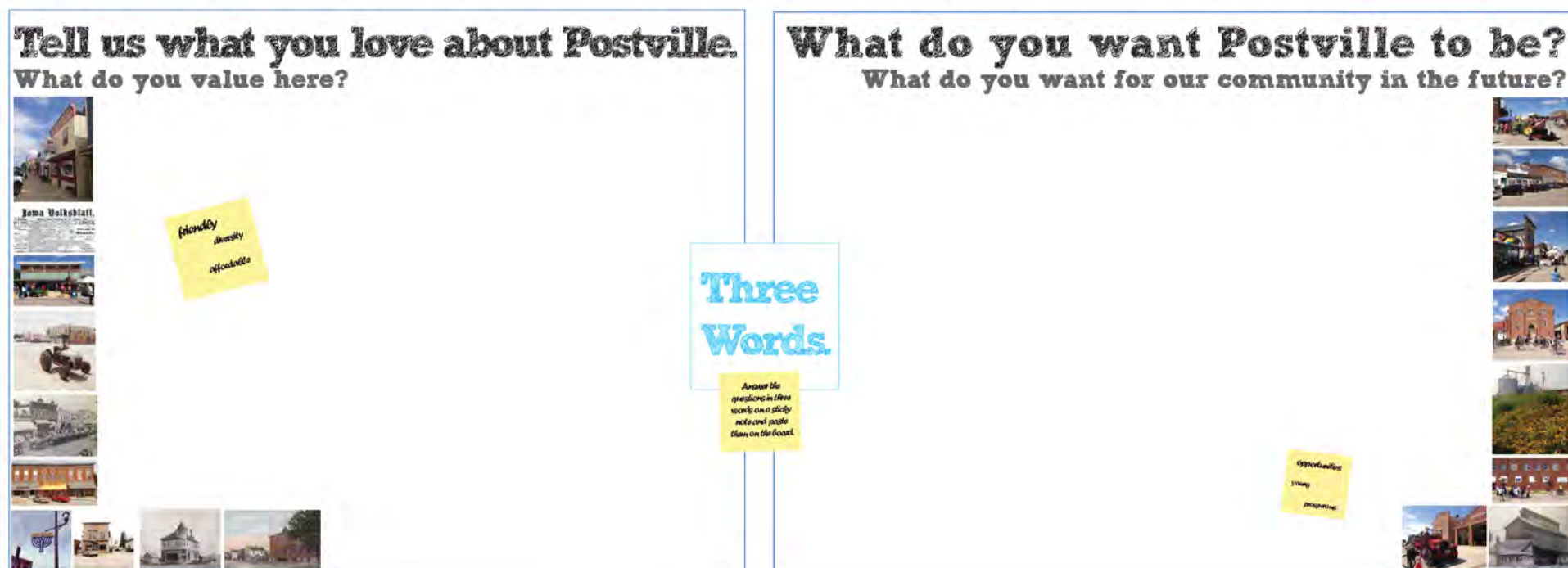
Feedback boards were placed in locations throughout Postville to both publicize this planning project and

collect information about redevelopment preferences and ideas. Large posters (3'x4') were created to display at public places around Postville. Posters were placed in FreedomBank, Fidelity Bank, the Postville Library, the recreation center, and at the Agristar break room. A total of 164 residents left feedback on boards from 11/23/17 to 12/7/17. The posters were also used when talking to high school business classes and middle school geography classes.

### Community-focused outreach

Several strategies were employed for this effort. First, spaces shared between all populations in Postville

were identified as crucial centers for reaching people from different backgrounds. This includes the recreation center, the library, and the school district. While this strategy helped to reach and get input from community members from many groups, there were still gaps in participation among the Jewish and Somali communities. Building familiarity and trust was identified as a key priority, so local businesses catering to ethnic and religious communities, as well as religious gathering places such as the Chabad center and Islamic Society, were key places for engagement with Postville residents.



Community members had many opportunities to share their ideas about the strengths and needs of Postville.



Interaction with local business owners was critical to accessing the informal networks that form a significant part of the knowledge base and social interaction for members of the various subgroups in Postville. Much like a diverse urban neighborhood, the downtown stores– Mexican, Guatemalan, Somali, and Kosher– serve as a social hub and information source for residents, and a first point of contact in Postville for newly-arrived residents working at Agristar. Older residents of the town lament the lack of a coffee shop or bakery because the loss of that institution deprived that subgroup of its own gathering place and news spot; the Postville Bakery, an institution in the ground floor of a downtown building that burned in 2009, featured prominently in a 2000 documentary about the town and in a 1998 book as the primary social hub in an older, far less diverse Postville.

Specialty stores that cater to local immigrant groups or religious groups were a key part of outreach. RCD staff built a relationship with the owners of the Somali, Kosher, Mexican, and Guatemalan stores, becoming a familiar presence there.

This phase of the planning process primarily involved developing materials and strategies for outreach to the various populations who live in Postville. But because 35% of Postville residents are under the age of 19, it was essential to engage with young people through the school district in order to find out what they value about Postville and what changes or additions that would like to see in their community.

## School Engagement

The day following the first planning open house in October 2017, 80 faculty and staff members from Postville Community School District went through the open house presentation and left their feedback about what Postville needs. Later the same week, the third-grade classes at Postville– 66 students in total– shared their thoughts about what they like about Postville and what they would like to see in their community.

Students from high school business classes and from middle school geography classes had the opportunity to learn about this planning project and give their ideas for how to make Postville better. A similar presentation and discussion was held in three middle school geography classes. A total of 76 students were engaged through these presentations and discussions.

High school students designed a project to ask their peers about what Postville needs and how we can make our community better. Fifty-seven high school students responded to questions that were asked in small groups. The ideas, suggestions, and input from the students were incorporated as an important part of public feedback in the planning process. The students were also able to vote on different community needs using a version of the public outreach posters that were placed in various locations in Postville.

Given the demographic situation in Postville, engagement with younger people, who are also

of more diverse backgrounds than older people in Postville, is essential in order to understand how people currently perceive Postville and what needs exists that may not currently be met. Postville Community School District is eager to partner with RCD on a variety of environmental education and community betterment projects, including planning and execution of projects within the planning area and the planning process itself.

## Direct outreach

Each property owner in the planning area was mailed a letter in Spring 2017 informing them of the opportunity to help shape a new plan for Postville and inviting them to be a part of the planning process. While some property owners did respond to the letter with encouraging words, few volunteered time to be a part of a steering committee or long-term implementation committee.

In Summer 2018, business owners throughout Postville were mailed postcards inviting them to a planning meeting. This was more successful than previous mailings, with 20 people who had not attended previous meetings or engaged with the

**“Postville is industrious and compassionate.”**

*Advisory Committee member*

planning effort online in attendance at the meeting, which was focused on how to use the brownfield planning effort as a first step in creating long-term resiliency for residents and businesses.

### Open Houses

The first public meeting was attended by only 25 residents, or slightly more than 1% of the town's estimated population. The varying schedules of Postville residents due to differing plant shifts, cultural, religious, and social restrictions, and the school schedule made the open house format the most practical for residents to be able to attend. At the open house, people were asked to share what they value about their community, what they would

like for Postville in the future, what kinds of projects they would prioritize in the plan, and what sites they would most like to see change. Many attendees had questions about sites or ideas presented, and several discussed their own ideas for Postville at length with RCD staff.

RCD next hosted a presentation, question and answer session, and public open house at the recreation center that focused on next steps in the process. Small communities with limited resources have redeveloped downtown buildings, rebuilt district-wide infrastructure with pedestrian and stormwater management best practices, and assisted building owners with renovation of brownfield structures

and sites. This conversation focused on the lessons that can be drawn from these communities to create momentum for change and durable institutions that can sustain initiatives over the long-term. Many business owners and leaders who had been involved in previous Postville initiatives and projects shared a long-term perspective on the development and trajectory of the town, and contributed to a discussion about how to shape the future of the town. Many of the attendees of this meeting had not been previously engaged through other events.

RCD also partnered with the recreation center to present planning materials in an Open House format at the first annual "Healthy Postville" wellness fair in Spring 2019. The event, which was attended by hundreds of residents, provided a venue to update the community on ideas, strategies, and redevelopment analogs from other communities. While response to this event was positive, the demographic makeup of the attendees did not reflect the demographic makeup of the town as a whole; few Jewish or Somali families attended, perhaps due to increased hours at Agristar ahead of the Jewish High Holidays that year.

RCD staff also spoke to local civic organizations. The Postville Lions Club and the Sunrise Club both invited RCD to present data and explain the planning process in 2018.



## Results of Outreach & Engagement

### Key questions

Postville, like many rural communities, does not have much experience with the creation of area-wide or community-wide plans. Outreach started with basic questions that the plan can address:

- What do you love about Postville?
- What is the biggest need for Postville right now?
- In 3 words, describe your vision for Postville in 2027.
- How can we use this plan help to meet these needs?
- How can we build capacity for change?

The responses from Postville residents, employees, businesses, and civic leaders was varied, but all agreed on the need for positive change. Postville residents also shared a common sense of pride in their community and a desire to change the image of the town.

### Advisory Committee Perspective

Members of the steering committee met quarterly throughout the planning process to discuss plan elements, Postville needs, and how to best achieve the goals and elements that will create a stronger and more resilient community.

Committee members indicated a desire to move beyond negative events that still color public perception of the town, to overcoming the image of



Results of public outreach: What should our plan focus on, and what vision do you have for Postville for the year 2027?

a community in disarray. One member simply noted that through adversity and diversity, “Postville works.” Replies varied when asked to envision how they would describe Postville in 2027, but responses generally touched on quality of life, entrepreneurial culture, and openness to newcomers.

Important themes emerged from the feedback from residents. A plurality of respondents (41%) prioritized the attraction of new businesses or entrepreneurs as the highest priority for the city and the planning process. Most people in Postville are well aware of the need to attract more investment in the community in the form of new business. The specific type of





Most common words in response to the question “What do you love about Postville?”



Most common responses to the question “What is your vision for what Postville can accomplish?”

business varied among age groups, but food-oriented businesses were at the top of nearly everyone’s “wish list” for Postville. For high schoolers, this means fast food establishments where they can spend time with friends and find employment, while for adults, a new place to meet friends for coffee, get a quick breakfast, or have lunch was a higher priority. The former bakery, in a historic downtown building, was a gathering place for older adults to get coffee and light breakfast items and functioned as a community hub. The bakery had been closed for several months before a fire destroyed the building in 2009, leaving a vacant lot and an unmet community need. Teenagers were especially keen to find a new or updated place to hang out with friends, get a bite to eat, and find after-school employment. Though Postville does have many opportunities for full-time employment, few part-time employers such as retailers and food establishments exist in the town.

The second theme was that Postville residents need more opportunities for activity. Younger people were especially supportive of the idea of new soccer fields or a futsal court, or a skate park. Older residents advocated for a new playground, an extension of the existing Postville trail, pickleball, tennis courts, and soccer facilities. Public amenities were also a higher priority for older residents, the most popular of which were new or renovated public spaces, restoration of downtown buildings, and pedestrian improvements. None of these ideas were nearly as popular as new places for dining and socializing, but they could be

**“Living here is a big commitment.**

**People always ask, ‘What is there to do here?’”**

*Director of Mesivta of Postville, on the difficulty of recruiting teachers and families to Postville*

an important part of engaging with younger Postville residents. The city does have a recreation center—until 2019, a YMCA— that hosts basketball leagues, volleyball, community fitness classes, and other events, and any proposed new recreational facilities should not duplicate existing amenities.

From the public outreach results, the primary focus for redevelopment strategies will be providing facilities and spaces for new small businesses to thrive. The possibilities for redevelopment range from renovation or rebuilding existing structures to building a business incubator or improving public infrastructure and amenities as a larger effort to help re-brand the town and create a narrative that moves beyond the events of 2008.

Postville residents who responded to planning efforts did not seem to assign a high priority to amenities and aesthetic improvements such as public art, public plaza or gathering places, community gardens, or streetscaping improvements downtown. The one improvement that did receive a higher

priority from respondents was the idea of restoring or renovating downtown buildings and the ballroom at the fairgrounds, which are both high-visibility for residents and visitors alike. Downtown buildings, when renovated, can also meet business facility needs and housing needs through upper-story housing.

## Employee perspective

Norplex-Micarta, a large employer in town, shared the results of an employee questionnaire from 2017. It asked for basic demographic information, residence, business demand, and possible improvements to downtown. Of the 113 responses- about 150 people work at the plant- 85% were from people over the age of 45, and 74% were from people who do not live in Postville. The questionnaire found that 46% of employees would like an additional restaurant or place to get coffee, though only 29% have bought at least one meal in town in the last month. Façade renovation and pedestrian safety were the most highly ranked downtown improvements, with public art ranked as the least important of six options.

The demographics and residence of Norplex employees is different than that of Postville, but there are many commuters into the town, which could help to create demand for an additional lunch or coffee business. According to an Iowa State University report, Postville has roughly 1,800 jobs and 2,100 people, with 1,200 employees who commute into Postville every day.<sup>1</sup> Reaching these employees may be a challenge, but it will be worthwhile to bring to the

**WHAT DOES OUR TOWN NEED?**  
¿QUE NECESITA POSTVILLE? MAXAA U BAHAN POSTVILLE?

**CONTRIBUTE TO THIS PLANNING PROJECT**  
How should we improve older industrial and commercial areas of Postville?  
Your ideas will help determine which places are the highest priority for redevelopment or improvement, and what kinds of improvements or infrastructure might get built.  
Please contact us with your ideas and opinions about what Postville needs and what you think Postville should look like in the future!

**WRITE YOUR IDEAS HERE!**  
ESCRIBA SUS IDEAS AQUÍ  
HALKAN KU QOR FIKRADHAAGA!

**CONTACT US**  
f/postvilleplanning

**PLANNING PROJECT AREA**

Posters left at local banks, schools, and the recreation center to solicit public comment during winter of 2017-2018.  
Over 200 people left replies on the posters.

local business community ideas for businesses that may have more demand than Postville demographics would suggest.

## Overall Themes from Engagement

### Downtown Postville is a top priority

Downtown is recognized as an underutilized asset. Building condition in the planning area varies, but along the high-visibility downtown corridor there are several prominent derelict buildings. Restoration or renovation of these structures will likely be

a high priority for the community in the future. Downtown has plenty of storefront space available for businesses, and a total of 195 parking spaces- of which forty-two are off-street public parking.

Much of the planning area is within TIF districts established by the city between 2002 and 2006. TIF financing is currently not fully utilized and could be a source of funds for potential infrastructure improvement and grant or loan programs for businesses and property owners to make façade improvements.



## Postville Chamber Perspective:

### What does Postville need?

- Financing options for new businesses / small business owners
- Building rehabilitation
- New housing
- Re-branding
- Marketing business opportunities, especially cost of living

### Postville can monetize its unique assets

Postville has more jobs than residents, according to data from Allamakee County Economic Development. Agristar, Norplex-Micarta, Hall Roberts Son, and the Farmers Union Cooperative employ many residents of the surrounding counties and communities. There may be an opportunity for additional service-related businesses in Postville due to the number of people working and passing through the town; many employees and residents have noted the need for another restaurant or coffee shop.

Postville has many potential attractions for visitors, such as its diversity, its immigrant past, or its most famous resident, the Nobel Prize-winning John R. Mott, but these are not well represented in the town in through regional tourism and visitation efforts.



Postville residents of all backgrounds turned out to welcome bicyclists during the 2017 RAGBRAI



Even though the Driftless Area Scenic Byway starts in downtown Postville, few residents, employees, or businesses are aware of it. Creating a defined “hub” or starting point will encourage people to include Postville in their exploration of Northeast Iowa.

Postville is known for its diversity, and the town has embraced this image with its “Hometown to the World” slogan. On Lawler Street, a Lubavitcher Hasidic synagogue shares a building with a Somali store, which are across the street from another Somali store, a Glatt Kosher market, and a mosque. Greene Street has a Mexican grocer, a Guatemalan grocer, a Spanish-language Pentecostal church, and a Mexican butcher shop and restaurant. A national climate less favorable to immigration from these populations could pose a long-term threat to the viability of these businesses and to employee recruitment at Agristar. It will be important to find ways to diversify small businesses beyond niche markets.

There have been some attempts to build on the town’s diversity in marketing– a “Hasidic Jewish Walking Tour” was developed in the 2000s, and the Postville slogan is “Hometown to the World” – but there may be more opportunities to build on diversity through food or cultural events to attract tourism and show community strengths, especially given the need for more restaurants noted above. One link to Postville’s history as an immigration hub is its German past. This heritage could be another part of the town’s identity as a multicultural mosaic.



Improvements to downtown buildings and new businesses were popular ideas

### Benefits from infrastructure improvements

Sidewalk and crosswalk conditions need improvement, as noted in the Safe Routes to School plan for Postville completed in 2010.<sup>2</sup> The schools, recreation center, and city parks and recreational fields are well utilized by all communities in Postville, but not connected with an intuitive or safe pedestrian network. The city has a mixed-use path that currently runs for eight blocks along the Canadian Pacific railroad tracks, but this trail does not currently connect any major trip generators. Any extension of the path toward the west and neighboring community of Clermont would likely pass through or adjacent to the potentially catalytic redevelopment site at 715 W. Tilden Street.



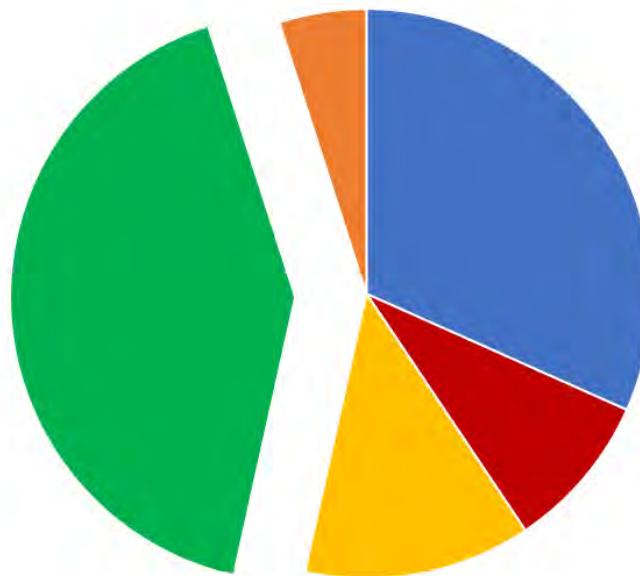
**41%** New businesses

**30%** Sports / Recreation

**12%** Public Amenities

**10%** Art & Culture

**7%** Other ideas



In contrast to many surrounding communities and the state of Iowa, Postville is a young town. With 36% of the population under 20 (compared to 24.5% in Allamakee county and 26.5% in Iowa),<sup>3</sup> it will be critical to create investments that will be seen as valuable in order to retain the population. Because of the prevalence of non-driving populations in Postville, safer pedestrian routes were identified as a priority, although few respondents chose this item as during planning outreach. Several people who did express concerns about pedestrian safety clarified that they were concerned about criminal activity while walking, not speeding vehicles or unsafe crossings.

#### Control the narrative

In 2018, ten years after the immigration raid that made Postville nationally known, media outlets expressed interest in stories about how the town has changed. It will be critical to “change the narrative” for this community and show that the town is in a different place and is ready for a different future. Though Agristar remains the largest employer, the largest kosher meatpacking plant in the United States, and the primary driver of the town’s diversity, the ownership of the plant and the relationship with both the surrounding region and Postville has changed. Committee members felt that important ways to physically reflect the changes in Postville and Agristar would be the reuse of the catalyst site on the west side of town adjacent to Agristar and other important “gateway” sites that leave a first

impression of Postville. These include the main intersection in town and Lawler and Tilden streets as well as the RCD site at 101 E. Greene Street.

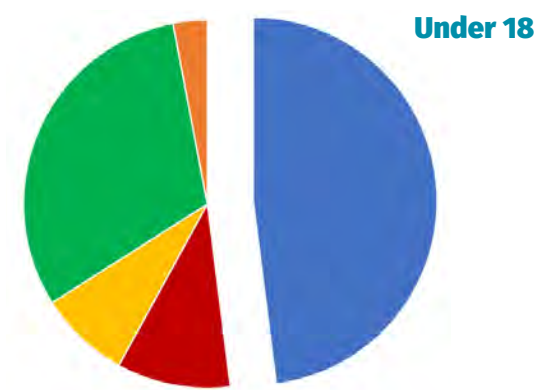
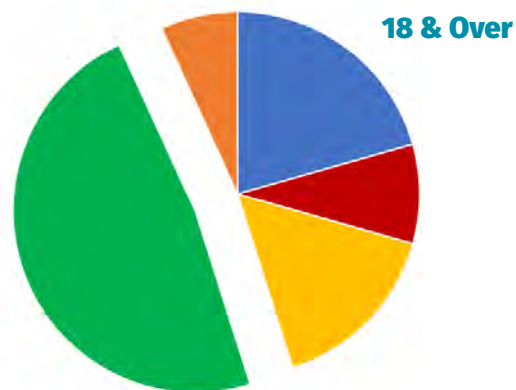
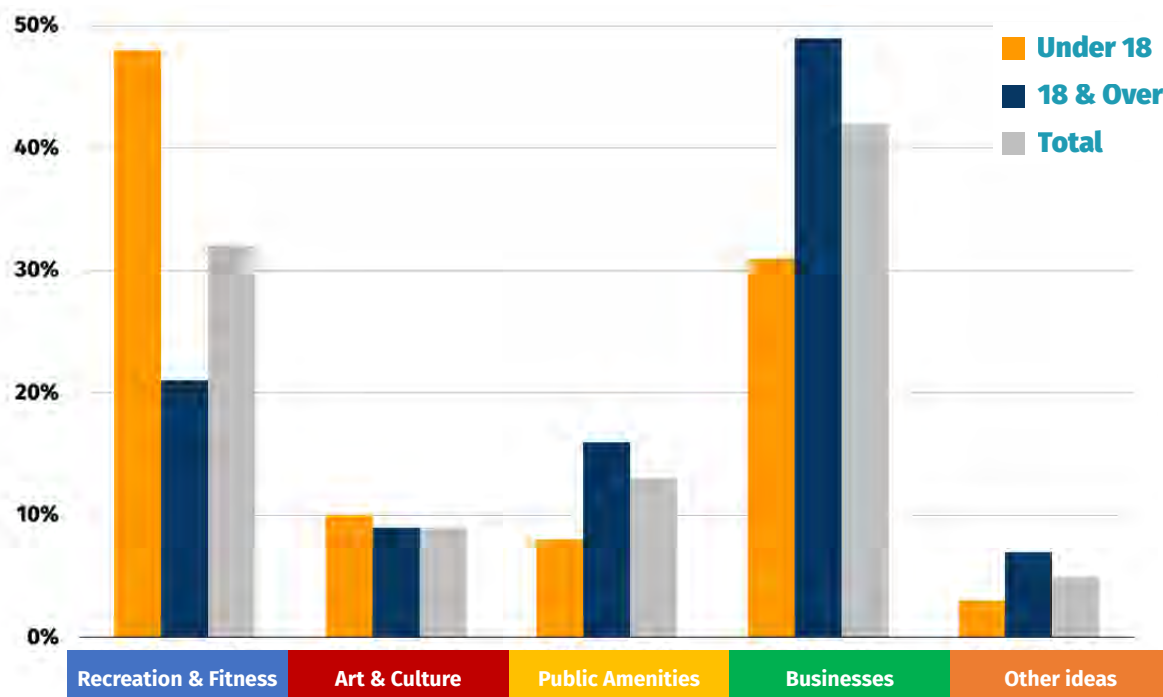
Conversations with local leaders indicate that a perception of decline and stagnation is still present even among residents of Postville. Though many people and businesses are making efforts to improve or develop properties in the city, a stigma about instability and crime remains. However well-intentioned, commemorations, articles, and other media that focuses on 2008 and the aftermath of the immigration raid reinforces negative images of Postville and the communities that still live here.

#### Postville is a crossroads for Northeast Iowa

A major farm-to-market road, Iowa 51, is coterminous with the town's main street, Lawler Street, and Tilden Street carries US highways 18 & 52. Traffic counts from 2013 show that over 3,500 vehicles travel on Lawler Street every day. Greene Street, another primary downtown street, is a primary truck route for local deliveries to and from Hall Roberts Son and the Farmers Union Cooperative. Truck traffic could pose a challenge to downtown revitalization due to noise, emissions, and potential for damage to masonry buildings due to vibration. Planning efforts will have to take into account the need to accommodate both terminal and through truck traffic within the city.

Though far from major urban centers or even from regional cities, Postville could still capitalize

## Results of outreach by age group







on regional tourism by building on its diversity. Tourism in Northeast Iowa has increased in the last ten years, mainly from flatter parts of the state, and Postville can add a niche attraction by showcasing its diversity. The Driftless Area Scenic Byway starts in Postville, but there are currently no obvious reasons for travelers to stop in the town.

Postville has a history of diversity initiatives aimed at creating common spaces and events for all communities that call this town home. However, many of those initiatives have fallen by the wayside after the 2008 immigration raid, including the Taste of Postville, KPVL Community Radio, the Diversity Council, the Judaic Resource Center, and the Hasidic Jewish Walking Tour. Restarting or rethinking previous initiatives will be a starting point for creating a new narrative about Postville.

### **Momentum and community cohesion**

In 2017, the annual RAGBRAI (Register's Annual Great Bike Ride Across Iowa) route passed through Postville, and representatives from all sectors of Postville were present to welcome riders as they came through town. Sambusas and other Somali food, kosher hot dogs, mariachi music, and tractor rides were all part of the celebration. Many riders were surprised to find the diversity of the town in rural Northeast Iowa. Business owners and residents were pleased with the response that they got from the riders.

Anecdotally, the event may have helped to dispel the malaise that lingers after the 2008 immigration raid. In conversations, property & business owners and Postville residents talked about how positive the event was for the town's self-image, and several downtown building owners have undertaken minor

### **"Postville works."**

*Advisory Committee member*

renovations since. An ice cream shop opened in August 2018 in a formerly vacant building, and two other downtown building owners have talked about opening a new business but are unsure of what type of business there may be a demand for in the region—this will be an opportunity to include entrepreneurs and small business owners in implementation and community-building activities. In addition, there seems to be a move to restart the town's former celebration, the semi-annual Taste of Postville. In previous years, the event attracted a regional crowd for food, crafts, and music from the many different cultures that live here.

Mistrust continues to be an issue facing community betterment and civic improvement, as many residents (particularly within, but not limited to, the Jewish community) mistrust the local government because of previous code enforcement and city ordinance misunderstandings, misdeeds by previous elected officials at the local level, or poor communications exacerbated by a lack of English language proficiency. A legacy of the raid and continued tension about immigration policy at the national level are reasons that many in the local Hispanic community also do not trust non-Hispanic people; anecdotally, there are

stories of undercover federal agents scoping out the town in the months prior to the May 2008 raid.

Demographic challenges have been mentioned previously, but another dimension is the civic leadership of the town. City government does not reflect the diversity of Postville, and relationships between local institutions and the different sub-communities in Postville are underdeveloped. This leads to mistrust of the local government because of a lack of familiarity with policies, procedures, and people; this is particularly pronounced among the Orthodox Jewish community.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the city is operating at capacity in terms of human and financial resources. With few resources to spare, the city does not have the ability to take on larger-scale projects or initiatives, or to embark on ambitious ideas for public engagement. The city and civic organizations reflect the demographic divide in the city between a rapidly aging cohort descended from the first settlers in the area and a very young and diverse population. There is a demographic gap among people who are able or willing to participate in civic affairs, with few residents involved who are younger than 70. In many ways, Postville is experiencing the same macroeconomic stressors as neighboring communities throughout the Midwest, but its position is made more vulnerable because of a lack of community cohesion and a dependence on a single large employer for its resident and school base.

*“People will stay if they feel like they belong.”* One advisory committee member summarized the need to

engage with and involve people from all communities in order to create lasting change. A potentially catalyzing influence of the brownfield planning process is the organization of community leadership across sector and ethnic lines. Organizations such as a betterment association, Chamber of Commerce, or improvement district can provide stability, leadership, direction, and focus that will be necessary for the successful completion of long-term projects.

Downtown redevelopment, reuse of important civic structures, a sustained re-branding or imaging effort, and the creation of additional housing units are goals that smaller neighboring communities have been able to achieve under the direction of a unified, resident-led leadership structure. Postville has strong business leadership, civic leadership, and volunteerism with the local school system, but these individuals and entities are not organized around common projects or activities. It’s not just a question of making a better place to live; an economic development expert pointed out that “the younger population is our next workforce” and that Postville will need to be a place where people want to live if it is to survive.

Volunteerism can quickly get “maxed out” in a small town— the number of people who have the ability, time, and desire to be involved with projects is limited. This problem is especially acute in a town with a high percentage of lower-income working adults, many of whom have limited resources, dependents, and scarce free time. Where existing



***“People will stay if they feel like they belong.”***

*Advisory Committee member*

leadership exists in Postville, it tends to skew against the current demographic profile of the town. There is a missing middle demographic of working-age, post-child-rearing, pre-retirement adults who are able to dedicate their time and resources to community efforts. Where other communities have found success, there is a unified element: a paid organizational director dedicated to providing leadership and visioning for the community, and bringing together disparate actors to advocate for a common purpose.

Postville has dedicated business owners and civic leadership, but it continues to struggle against macroeconomic forces and lacks a strong community cohesion outside of the school district. Well-paid employees of local companies do not live or spend money in town, and many buildings are owned by landlords from outside the community who have not taken interest in the success of the town. Because of a lack of support in personnel and from the public, the local government is reluctant to take the lead on ideas or initiatives to improve downtown properties or recreational assets.

### Community organization

Although Postville has community pride, a core group of engaged residents, a responsive and effective local governance, and a strong business community, it would benefit from a dedicated coordinating organization. Brownfield and grayfield redevelopment sites are throughout the community,

and the city is situated in a region with scenic natural resources and excellent access to educational institutions and transportation infrastructure. Postville's challenge is a lack of organizational infrastructure that provides a framework and dedicated personnel to advocates and plan for community success.

Coordination and cooperation among existing businesses in downtown Postville is limited to nonexistent. Although a few businesses contribute to community betterment activities such as seasonal street decoration, there is no long-range planning nor coordinated branding and marketing or business assistance offered for entrepreneurs. There are also communications and trust barriers between local government and local businesses. As a result of this limited coordination, the city and businesses community have limited resources to address pressing issues such as property condition, support for entrepreneurs, grant procurement and management, and programming.

A dedicated economic development, promotion, and community betterment organization to manage projects such as downtown revitalization, new events, business assistance and marketing, and forming partnerships with regional entities is needed to implement plan elements and lead other initiatives that will create a more inviting place to live, work, and invest in property. Many of the suggestions from outreach and engagement touched on this theme and

## **“The younger population is our next workforce.”**

*Advisory Committee member*

included suggestions for new projects or initiatives that will help boost the city:

- Support from community for small businesses
- Need for “safe & economical spaces” for small businesses and entrepreneurs
- Access to capital is the biggest challenge for entrepreneurs
- Trail improvements
- Foster quality workforce and attract quality jobs to Postville so people move back
- Partnerships with UERPC, NEICAC for housing, lead remediation
- Farmers Market for Postville
- “Doors Open” Postville event to show businesses and history
- Collective marketing by smaller grocery stores and other business to draw shoppers from the entire region
- Brochures and publicity

In order to accomplish these things, Postville residents and businesses will need to come together to coordinate them through a new organization focused on the town or hire someone to do so. While these are outside of the scope of traditional



## “We’ve got it all, right here in Postville.”

*Advisory Committee member*

brownfield area-wide planning, the need for change in Postville is acute and has a direct impact on the viability of redevelopment of brownfield sites. Local leadership returned to a common theme: making people feel like they belong and providing them with the tools to make incremental changes is critical. These improvements can create the perception that Postville is a better place to live, which will create momentum for further change and encourage additional investments by residents and businesses.

Within Plan Scope		Outside Plan Scope
Infrastructure	Asset Building	Social Change
Create new recreational amenities	Create & Recruit Business	<i>Foster Diverse Youth Leadership</i>
Connect with regional assets	Empower Entrepreneurs	<i>Create Employment Pathways</i>
Mobility enhancements	Showcase Diversity & History	<i>Promote Civic Engagement</i>
Creative downtown building reuse	Brand Postville	<i>Building Diverse Community Leadership</i>
Improve Visual Presence	Improve Housing Options	
Create new Gathering Spaces		

**Initial ideas for plan focus after public engagement**

## Project Goals

Goals of the planning process were determined with guidance from the steering committee, as well as known Postville conditions and conversations with business leaders and community members from various backgrounds. All agree that Postville has assets that will serve the community well if developed properly.

## Preliminary Emphasis of the Plan

These goals informed the development of three overall scenarios, with objectives for each that will advance these goals. Some goals do not fit within the scope of the current planning effort, but could be complementary to ideas that the plan suggests for implementation. A rebranding campaign, for example, will require significant investment in human resources and capacity building. However, since the ability to implement these projects will be critical for the success of the implementation of this plan, they are included as ancillary elements.

## Our Postville

Postville is a unique place, and setting the stage for increased economic growth and redevelopment require unique solutions that reflect the reality of the town's demographics, social and economic status, and regional position. Brownfield reuse and redevelopment can be achieved through long-term problem-solving, and depends on the success of efforts that are not part of a traditional brownfield planning process.

The advisory committee formed from this project has a vision for how to bring together disparate community elements and continue discussions and planning about how to improve the lives of Postville residents and create a positive trajectory for the town. Our Postville was chosen as the name for the group because of its inclusiveness, and because it indicates that the town is taking the initiative to create its own future. This has been driven by perceptions of Postville as a place of decline, poverty, and crime. "It's all right here," said one committee member- diverse cultures, products and languages from around the world, easy access to regional educational opportunities, affordable housing, outdoor recreation, and employment.

The group hopes to be able to work on implementation of the plan and other community-wide improvements, as well as marketing, promotion, branding, and business and entrepreneurial support. The "sense of belonging" cited by a committee member as a vital



Posters promoting Postville entrepreneurs and community members as part of planning engagement

part of small-town life can be enhanced for all residents through a group dedicated to "food, art, diversity" and the assets that set Postville apart. The group will build community capacity through short-term projects, fostering ability, confidence, improved community self-image, and a renewed community "brand." It will undertake programs, projects, affiliations, training, and meetings that are analogous to the functions of a traditional economic development and community betterment organization.

## Places for change

A common theme emerged quickly : Gateway sites. All the sites given top priority are prominent for visitors passing through Postville and for employees of Postville businesses, and give a first impression of the community and influence or reinforce negative perceptions about the town.



### Lawler & Tilden

This intersection is the most prominent part of the city, but at one point had three vacant structures at its corners, including 203 S. Lawler (pictured above). This was the number one site that residents would like to see improved, with 46% of respondents saying that redevelopment here should be a top priority.

### 715 W. Tilden:

A chain-link fence around a gravel-strewn concrete slab, this site still has a lone tree from what was once a woodlot, visible in aerial photos through the 1970s. Its location at the eastern entrance to town along US52/18 makes this a top priority for residents who want to change Postville's image and create a new asset at the site. This was the second-most popular site for redevelopment, with 28% of respondents saying it should be the top priority.

### 110 S. Lawler

This site, in the center of downtown, was formerly home to a tall Italianate commercial building that housed the Postville Bakery. It was destroyed in a 2009 fire, and is now vacant except for a telecom utility structure at the rear of the lot. Residents expressed a preference for a public use of the space. This lot, prioritized by 13% of respondents, was the third most popular for redevelopment, with many respondents saying that redevelopment here should be a top priority.

### 210 S. Lawler

Another corner of the Lawler and Tilden intersection was home to a veterinary clinic, which burned down in 2000 and was not rebuilt. The gravel lot became part of the grocery store's parking lot until that store closed in early 2019.

### Lawler & Williams

This intersection is at the heart of downtown Postville, but has wide street crossings and little street life to keep people engaged and walking through downtown.



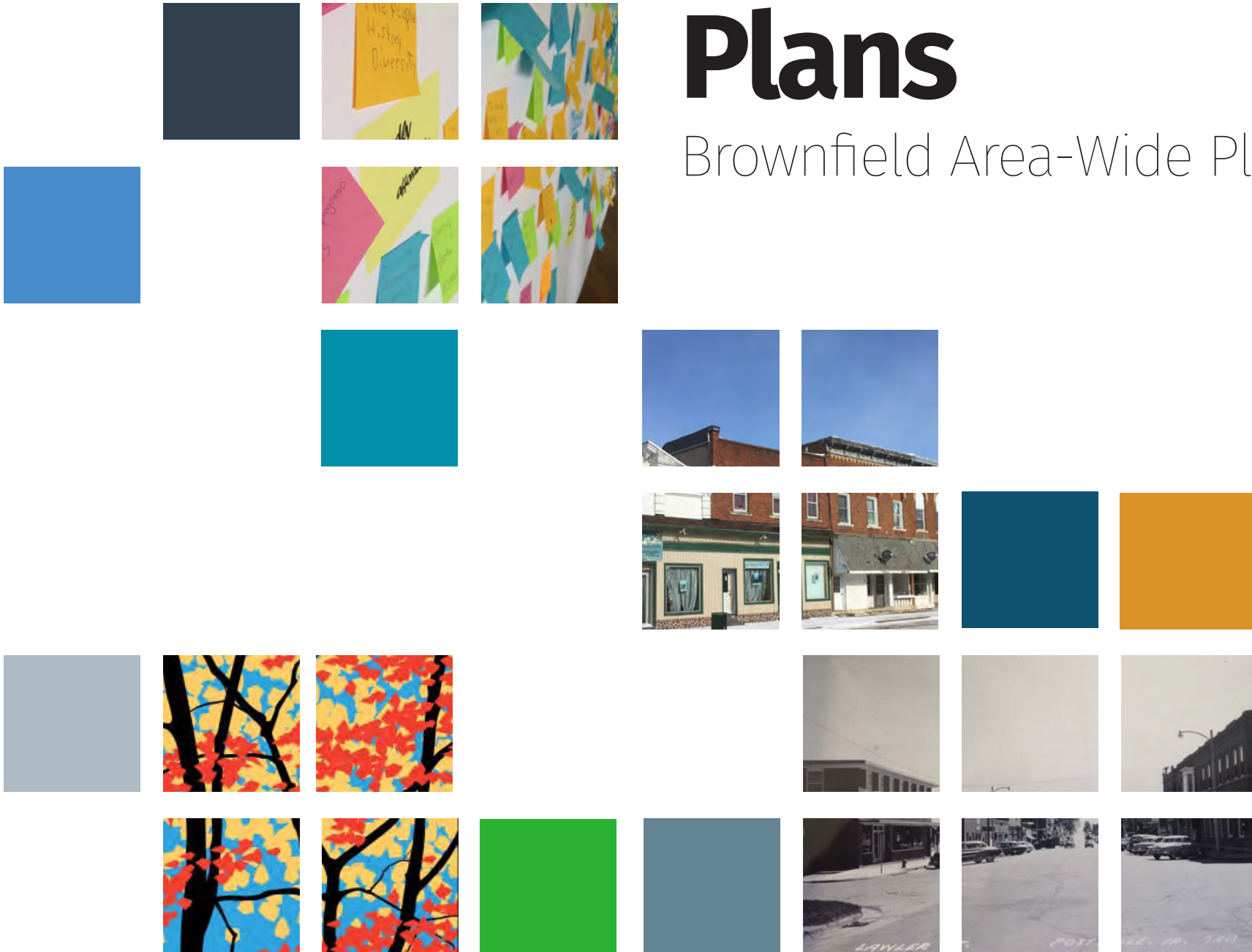
**Endnotes**

- 1 Iowa State University Retail Trade Analysis Report for Postville, 2017. Online: <https://www.icip.iastate.edu/retail/city>
- 2 Postville Safe Routes To School Plan, Northeast Iowa RC&D, 2010.
- 3 United State Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2017. Online: [data.census.gov](https://data.census.gov)
- 4 In 2019, the first Jewish city council member to serve since 2004 was elected, becoming only the second person from that community to serve in a city elected office.

# Postville, Iowa

## Plans

### Brownfield Area-Wide Plan



## Brownfield Area-Wide Plan

This brownfield plan is unusual for its scope. Postville has multiple needs that will need to be addressed before sufficient market demand can develop for redevelopment of many properties. Meeting community needs through strategic investment in infrastructure and entrepreneurial assistance can help provide a more stable investment climate for private investors, residents, and visitors.

Visibility, brownfield status, and reuse potential helped to determine priority sites for Postville's brownfield area-wide plan. The plan will address broader issues facing the community through investments in these sites. Both area-wide and site-specific problems are addressed within this plan.

### Vision statement

*Postville is a place where the American Dream can be achieved, with opportunities for business, education, and recreation, and cultural and social diversity that contribute to a high quality of life. Our innovative, niche-driven business climate offers opportunity for the youth of this region, and residents have access to quality, affordable housing options.*

This vision is a reflection of the way that Postville leaders view their community and the potential that it holds for the future. It is a statement of values that will guide the planning process and the implementation of the plan.

### Strategies

The brownfield steering committee developed three overall scenarios for brownfield redevelopment focus, building on extensive conversations with community members and local leadership from a variety of sectors as well as research into existing conditions and market conditions. The three include an emphasis on different parts of a successful community.

Each has its own elements and goals. These strategies are not exclusive, but broad categorizations of possible projects that could be pursued within the brownfield sites identified within this plan. The categories are a useful tool for organizing redevelopment possibilities and determining what kind of prioritization each may receive.

The first prioritizes retaining, expanding, and attracting new large businesses and employers by preparing sites for development, improving truck routes, pursuing a "clustering" strategy for creating and attracting additional kosher food manufacturers, and providing supplemental infrastructure for large manufacturers.

The second scenario emphasizes improvements to resident quality of life, prioritizing investments

in recreational facilities, development of safe multimodal transportation options, development of additional housing resources in the community, and creating new opportunities for residents through the development of entrepreneurial assistance and educational pathways.

The final scenario that will be presented emphasizes improving the marketability of Postville as a place to live and visit through efforts such as public art projects, downtown revitalization, community events, redevelopment of prominent town "gateway" sites, and improved marketing and branding for the community.

This latter strategy encompasses many of the expressed desires of advisory committee members and residents, who wish to see Postville overcome the stigma of the 2008 raid and its unfounded reputation as a crime hot spot. These conversations emphasized a commitment to creative placemaking as an economic development strategy and selling Postville's unique assets. These are not mutually exclusive, but rather mutually reinforcing elements that will help to prioritize projects and redevelopment sites based on which strategy the committee wishes to emphasize.





## A Great Place to Visit: Promote Postville & Sell Our Strengths

Postville needs to tell its own story and sell itself to visitors and potential future residents. This strategy will build on the strengths, history, and capacity of the town to ensure that it builds a strong regional identity that attracts visitors, businesses, and residents.

Growing entrepreneurial activity and a service and retail sector that reflects diversity will give visitors a reason to stop, attract more residents, and change the image of the town. Postville can utilize its prime highway location and proximity to outdoor recreation resources to build a retail and food niche that will be unique in the region and show the diversity that defines the town. Postville was home to a Nobel Prize winner, a regionally significant German-American community, and retains several physical vestiges of its past. These assets should be retained, restored, and used to tell the story of the town, its people, and its heritage.

This strategy will focus on building on the unique aspects of place that make Postville the “Hometown to the World” and help to attract visitors and future residents and retain the young population that is growing up here. Opportunities could include local foods, public art, restoration of historic assets, interpretation of unique and historical aspects of place, and other elements that make the city stand out regionally. The town currently boasts a recreational center, a diversity festival, and more

synagogues and mosques per capita than any other city in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Diversity and history are assets that entrepreneurs and small businesses can build on to help sell experiences and products that will draw visitors to the “Hometown to the World.” Entrepreneurial support, newly renovated spaces for small businesses, enhanced streetscape and aesthetic improvements to downtown and community entrances are important parts of this strategy. While funds may not be available for large-scale, transformative infrastructure projects, a smaller-scale, incremental approach to community development using “creative placemaking” techniques will likely yield better results for Postville by empowering residents and giving the opportunity for critique and refinement of various elements and proposals.

### Goal: Improve Community Entrances

#### Byway & Gateway area improvements

Postville’s location at the beginning of a Scenic Byway and at the center of a four-county region can be used to help stimulate additional business investment and visitation.

#### Create new attractions or iconic landmarks

Many small Iowa communities have embraced large, bold art projects that create a memorable impression for visitors and help the town to stand out. Because of its unique assets and location, Postville has an

opportunity to create a memorable experience for byway travelers.

#### Landscaping & Stormwater management practices

Postville can become a leader in stormwater management while creating better downtown spaces for people on foot. Adding plants and street trees will help slow traffic, create more visual interest for downtown visitors, and enhance the desirability of Postville as a place to live, visit, or do business.

#### Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations

At the end of 2018, there were 3,007 electric vehicles registered in the State of Iowa. By 2030, that number is projected to grow to over 100,000.<sup>2</sup> Postville, in partnership with other northeast Iowa communities, Scenic Byways, and local business and utilities, has an opportunity to be an “early adapter” and provide a needed resource for people traveling through the area. Even a DC fast charging station can take 20 minutes or more to provide a charge to an EV, while the more common Level 2 chargers commonly take hours. People charging vehicles can use this time to visit local restaurants and businesses and explore the community. It will also contribute to a positive image of Northeast Iowa and Postville as a future-ready community.



## Goal: Create more foot traffic / visitation for small businesses

### Creative placemaking

This can take several different forms, both of which have the goal of activating public spaces and creating opportunities to build community identity and cohesiveness. Critically, many creative placemaking elements are relatively inexpensive to try out on a temporary basis. Communities from New York City to Sheridan, WY have experimented with streetscape changes and art and design elements through creative placemaking processes.<sup>3</sup> In Postville, there are two primary forms that it could take:

- *Pedestrian infrastructure and streetscape ideas:*

These can be used as low-cost methods to try out different ideas during the warm months or during events. Community support can build around these ideas if they are implemented in a way that is transparent and shows the value of change for resident quality of life and for businesses and visitors. These should incorporate pedestrian safety and landscaping elements in order to emphasize the role that walkable, safe streets can play in creating a desirable place to live and visit.

- *Art projects:* Art can show local identity, build civic pride, and create a reason for visitors to stop and spend time in a place. Postville does not have a clear, positive image regionally, and showing off its diverse culture and unknown history through iconic art pieces will help define the

town. Low-cost murals and other projects can enliven underutilized or vacant spaces and create gathering places and public events for residents.

### Restore & reuse downtown buildings

Downtown is the highest priority and most visible part of the planning area but is currently underutilized. There are multiple ways in which to meet the challenges that downtown Postville's large, older building downtown building stock presents:

- **Downtown facades:** Many small towns have found that investing in existing historic downtown building stock is the ideal way to provide renovated and usable space to entrepreneurs and new businesses and help to create a more inviting place for visitors and residents, who will be more likely to use businesses in a space that feels more comfortable.
- **Renovate 2nd story apartments:** Creating viable housing downtown will involve renovation, asbestos and lead paint removal, and energy-efficiency measures. This will create clean, cost-effective housing that is in demand in Postville.
- **Re-use / remodel interior spaces:** Many communities have used grants or financing programs to help building owners or tenants make the renovations necessary to house a new business.
- **Remediate hazards:** Potential site hazards from previous building and land uses can be



Downtown alley



Annual Lag B'Omer parade



analyzed and remediated using state brownfield assistance.

- A place for people to visit: While local businesses have invested in flower boxes during the summer months, downtown has no street furniture, pedestrian safety measures, landscaping, or street furniture. Incremental additions of useful, low-cost features will help create a more appealing place for residents and visitors to walk and use local businesses.
- Incentivize additional storefront businesses downtown: Investments in downtown amenities, attractions, and pedestrian features will support existing businesses and create a climate more conducive to the attraction of new businesses.

## Goal: Tell Our Story

### Interpretation of historical assets

Postville has a history that is not shared with visitors or even current residents. A series of interpretive panels can showcase interesting historical elements and the current state of the town for visitors and residents and create an additional attraction. Bilingual or multilingual historical displays can help to close this knowledge gap and show a connection between current residents and the immigrants of the 19th century.

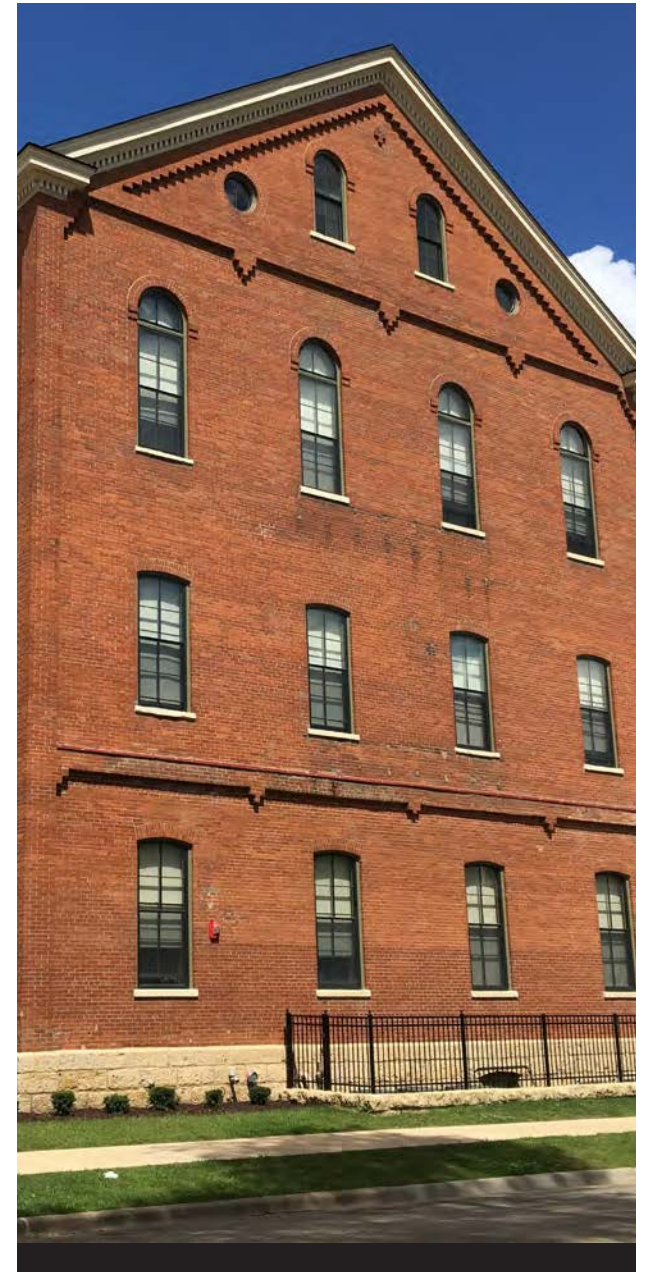
### Historic preservation

Many historical landmarks in the city are not well preserved. Incentives or funding for historically-appropriate rehabilitation of buildings, as well as

the preservation of known landmarks like Turner Hall and the John Mott home, will ensure that these elements of the past can be appreciated by future generations.

Social and economic development initiatives are outside the scope of this plan, but will be useful to help address the following challenges that were identified by residents and members of the advisory committee:

- Need/Desire to change the narrative about the community: Postville has an image, but it is not the image that most residents or businesses would like outsiders to embrace.
- Capitalize on unique aspects of community: Postville once held a yearly diversity festival that highlighted music and food from the various cultures of its residents. Interpretation of this diversity, arts projects, food businesses, and new events can help attract visitors to Postville.
- Make community more competitive regionally for visitor dollars: marketing is beyond the scope of a brownfield plan, but infrastructure, building, and site improvements will help present a more positive image of the town for people passing through on regional highways and build “pride of place” for residents.



**Steeple Square, a successful historic preservation project in downtown Dubuque that provide affordable housing**





Bicycle tourists park outside Turner Hall during the 2017 RAGBRAI. The building is an important part of Postville's German-American heritage



## A Great Place to Work: Empower Entrepreneurs & Support Local Businesses

Postville will build on its strength as a regional employment hub, with redevelopment focused on ways to attract new employers, support current large employers, and create a dynamic business community where enterprises can scale up. The city continues to invest in large-scale infrastructure, including water, sewer, roads, stormwater, and other needs of large employers. Postville can offer lower costs for operations and construction than other communities, as well as a well-connected location and high number of potential employees.

The community will need to identify larger parcels of land with easy access to transportation infrastructure and city services in order to make this an effective strategy. A new industrial park or tax incentives like those offered in nearby communities could be additional elements of this strategy, but Postville should focus on incentivizing development in areas served by existing infrastructure first. The needs of specialized industries should be considered when making investments in additional infrastructure and building and site improvements.

Existing small businesses also may be in a position to scale up in size given the right conditions. In Vernon County, Wisconsin, a defunct factory was transformed into production, warehouse, and office space for value-added food businesses. Rental rates are kept low, allowing businesses to invest more money in expanding production, marketing, and

product development. It may be possible to identify similar enterprises in Postville that have limited capital available to build their own warehousing and storage facilities, but may still be well-positioned to scale up and become employers. Meeting the needs of these smaller enterprises could be a successful economic development initiative.

### **Goal: Create & retain higher-wage employment**

#### **Expanded business park or industrial sites**

The existing Postville business park was created in the early 2000s and now has few easily developable acres remaining. Expanding opportunities for businesses to locate within a new business park in the northeast part of the city could decrease truck traffic in the central part of the town, encourage industry clustering, and help redevelopment of key brownfield sites adjacent to downtown. While this may seem counterintuitive for brownfield planning, which seeks to find productive reuse for sites that are served by existing infrastructure, increasing economic growth, city revenue, employment, and population are all benefits that will work in favor of downtown and brownfield site redevelopment.

#### **Workforce development and career training**

While Postville residents do have access to a community college 20 miles away, many of the residents who would benefit from services such as English language classes, High School Equivalency

Diploma classes, or specialized training do not have access to transportation to access these resources. A permanent space for training and classes that help Postville's population become better-skilled will lead to higher-wage employment by residents and create more demand for goods and services in the city.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Entrepreneurial assistance**

Small-scale enterprises and new entrepreneurial ventures could both benefit from business counseling and development services. New businesses could also capitalize on Postville's diversity to build a unique local brand, bringing "experiential" food and retail to downtown and creating a regional destination. Partnerships with local and regional economic development and educational institutions could make Postville into a regional hub for small business start-ups. Entrepreneurial support could focus on further developing regional niche industries such as Kosher foods, plastics, trailer manufacturing, value-added food products, and beer.

#### **Business incubator & entrepreneurial center**

Food-based businesses are one of the primary ways that Postville can capitalize on its diversity and provide a pathway to success for recent immigrants. Analogous centers in rural Wisconsin provide examples of how a food-based entrepreneurial center can build on an existing economic strength and provide new opportunities for residents to pursue their own business ideas. Warehouse space was



identified as a critical need for small businesses in the region that is not currently met in any Northeast Iowa community.<sup>5</sup>

### Goal: Improve tax base

#### Site preparation & contaminant testing

Potential property owners and existing businesses and owners may not be aware of conditions created by previous land uses. Assistance with Phase 1 assessments at potential brownfield sites will clarify potential liabilities and may allow for utilization of tools to finance cleanup and remediation activities.

#### Marketing of sites & incentives

Postville remains a relative “unknown” outside of the region due to its small size and relative isolation from major population. However, low costs, labor availability, and transportation infrastructure could allow the city to be competitive for large manufacturing or agricultural value-added facilities.

#### New & existing tax incentives

Several surrounding communities offer tax abatement for new construction. This could further disadvantage Postville because of the potential for business to seek lower taxes and higher returns in other towns in the region. Postville does have a tax abatement program for downtown properties and several Urban Renewal Areas where Tax Increment Financing could be used to fund improvements.

### Goal: Create industry cluster(s)

Postville has industries that set it apart from other towns of its size in Iowa: a thermoset plastics manufacturer that employs over 150 people from around the region, as well as one of the largest Kosher meat facilities in North America.

#### Kosher foods

Kosher foods are a niche market that may have expansion potential. Postville’s large industries and diverse population create the opportunity to focus on a specific specialization and attract more industry within that sector. Because Postville has a long history with value-added food products and Kosher meat in particular, there is an opportunity to expand into other parts of this specialized industry. Expansion of the specialized Kosher foods market could capitalize on the existing Jewish community facilities available, an amenity not encountered outside of urban areas, and create more demand for agricultural products from the region. The Kosher slaughterhouse and meatpacking plant has brought a market for kosher foods to this town and, more importantly, created a niche industry that requires specialized skills. Because there is already a concentration of Kosher food experts in Postville, there is potential for additional Kosher food processing and manufacturing.

Postville is easily accessible to many of the 1,200 dairy farms in Iowa<sup>6</sup> and many in eastern Wisconsin, and some dairy farmers ship to a regional Kosher

dairy in southwest Wisconsin. Growing demand for Kosher products and falling milk prices may present the opportunity for dairy farmers to sell a specialized product and for Postville to expand its existing niche industry by creating a kosher dairy processing facility and creamery. Growing concentration in the dairy sector will create additional pressure for smaller dairy farmers and co-ops to specialize in order to survive; a potential price premium added by Kosher certification could incentivize investment in Kosher-certified transportation and processing. Kosher food processing also create additional demand for specialized services such as Kosher-certified bulk specialized services associated with the industry, such as Kosher-certified tank and transport washes.



A new ice cream shop downtown



Commercial building south of downtown in “Cabbage Hill,” the early business district and German neighborhood



View of the original grain elevator of Hall Roberts Son, a business that has operated at the same location since 1864

Image: Postville Historical Society

In addition to Postville’s Agristar, another value-added kosher food business in Allamakee County creates frozen Kosher pizzas and burritos. Northeast Iowa Kosher food production businesses have access to markets in Minneapolis, Chicago, Denver, and smaller cities throughout the middle of the country.

### Thermoset Plastics

Postville has invested in infrastructure that can support large manufacturing facilities that use significant amounts of water. Industry segments that feed into or from the supply chain from that company may find an advantage from proximity to Norplex-Micarta.

Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) has a history of working with large employers and cities, such as East Penn Manufacturing, Transco, and the City of Oelwein to create employment training programs and career pathways. Creating a specialized knowledge cluster could utilize brownfield sites and create economic conditions that will support a high quality of life in Postville for decades. NICC and Agristar have begun discussions about a career pathway program, but as of 2019 this was not finalized.

### Malted Grain

Nationally significant breweries in nearby communities have expressed an interest in transitioning to locally-produced or finished products for their inputs. The limited number of grain malting facilities in the upper Midwest, along

with a steady increase in the number of brewing and distilling companies in the region, could represent an opportunity for new businesses to enter the market to supply area breweries. A malting facility would also create demand for a new specialty crop in the region, allowing area farmers to diversify their output and reduce their dependence on global commodity markets.

## Goal: Improve connectivity / transportation network

### Roads / truck routes / new alternative routes

One challenge for downtown and residential development in central Postville is the amount of truck traffic that passes through downtown and residential side streets. This creates noise and particulate emissions that affect respiratory health and contribute to depressed property values and disincentivize redevelopment. New alternatives routes could also facilitate easier access to and from sites for industrial and manufacturing facilities.

### Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Stations

Becoming an “early adopter” of EV charging will benefit Postville by providing a reason for people in electric vehicles to travel through Northeast Iowa and for them to stop in Postville. It will also bring a positive image to the town as a future-ready community. Transportation accounts for 21% of Iowa carbon dioxide emissions,<sup>7</sup> and incentivizing electric vehicle use will help the local economy while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Because Postville

is part of a regional economy, commuters from other communities will find EVs more feasible for use for their daily travel.

## **Goal: Utilize existing strengths & infrastructure capacity**

### **Development-ready sites**

Postville will need to provide development-ready sites and partner with regional and state economic development leaders to market their availability. This will stimulate additional employment opportunities and bring more workers and residents to Postville.

### **Additional childcare**

The Postville community childcare center is well-utilized by both residents and workers, and there is unmet demand for additional childcare facilities. An expansion of the existing facility or an additional well-designed childcare program can help to alleviate the critical regional shortage; 40% of regional childcare providers have closed in since 2014, according to the advocacy group Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral, leaving only 516 childcare spaces in Allamakee County, while there are an estimated 1,738 children under the age of 10 in the county.<sup>8</sup>

### **Consolidating parcels to aid redevelopment**

Many retailers require development parcels of one acre or greater, easy access from highways or high-volume roads, and adequate space for parking, all of which often make greenfield development more viable than development in smaller, less easily

accessible central city parcels. Consolidation of smaller parcels along with remediation of brownfield concerns will make these more competitive for future development.

### **Solar energy development**

Partnerships with local utilities and the Allamakee Energy District could help expand innovative investments in renewable energy to Postville and Allamakee County. This could include shared solar facilities, rooftop solar installation in downtown Postville, or electric vehicle charging stations. Installation of renewable energy sources through distributed generation has the potential to reduce energy costs for businesses and residents.

### **Why this strategy**

Focusing on Postville's businesses and employers can build on the existing strengths of the city and create economic resilience well into the future. The elements outlined above offer the following advantages:

- **Higher manufacturing wages:** Data show that manufacturing employment in the region accounts for a higher share of wages than other sectors.<sup>9</sup> Higher-wage jobs based in Postville will create more demand for local businesses. A greater concentration of these jobs in Postville will encourage a greater number of employees to reside in Postville.
- **Center for regional employment:** With existing infrastructure, Postville has the capacity for

industrial growth and competitive utility rates and land prices.

- **Transportation access:** Postville is along two major US highways linking Minneapolis, Dubuque, Indianapolis, and Milwaukee, with a major east-west freight rail line running through the center of the city.
- **Affordability:** Even within an affordable region, Postville is an affordable place to live and has the potential to provide needed workforce housing.
- **Industrial clustering:** Clustering of like industries can help to build a manufacturing or industrial niche that will attract additional employers and higher-skilled workers.
- **Land valuation:** Tax burdens for large businesses located in Postville are lower than in surrounding communities because of lower property valuation in the community.



## A Great Place to Live: Asset Building & Increasing Community Capacity

In order to become a choice community for workers and residents of Northeast Iowa, Postville will invest in quality of life amenities that will help retain younger residents, attract employees in search of affordable housing, and retain older retirees. Postville has a young population, with nearly one-third of residents under legal driving age. In addition to providing safe and functional transportation infrastructure that meets their needs, encouraging walking and bicycling could help businesses by incentivizing mobility to and from retail and service businesses by the captive market of non-drivers.

Additional recreational amenities, retail and service businesses, and community facilities will help retain existing residents and improve their well-being. While Postville has many assets that other communities do not enjoy, maximizing the potential of these resources could give the community an edge when attempting to carve out a regional niche and attract additional residents.

One critical element for this strategy to succeed is to ensure that the community is meeting the needs of all residents. Partnerships with the school district, Northeast Iowa Community College, and local employers can help provide pathways to employment, English language learning, and entrepreneurial training. Access to quality housing, businesses, and additional amenities can help create conditions that will allow residents to thrive and create conditions

that will foster additional demand for real estate. Community members have commonly expressed a desire to have access to additional places to gather, such as a coffee shops or restaurants, or new public spaces that invite use.

Postville is in close proximity to state forests, trout streams, and rolling hills that are well-known for their recreational qualities. Many newer residents in Postville who relocated to the town in order to pursue jobs may not be aware of the availability of these recreational assets and amenities. Creating connections to these resources through the development and extension of parks and trails will create these connections, increasing quality of life for current residents and creating an amenity that is becoming more common among towns and cities in the region.

### **Goal: Create a place where mobility is open to all residents, regardless of age or ability**

#### **Walking and bicycling improvements**

This is a critical element for Postville residents of all ages, but especially for the high percentage of residents who are not able to access their needs by automobile. Age, religion, and culture are primary reasons that residents do not drive, but improving pedestrian experience and connectivity will improve the experience of Postville for all residents and encourage active behavior.

- Permanently marked, prominent crosswalks on Lawler Street at bike trail, Greene, Williams, Tilden, and Post and along school walking routes
- Bumpouts at corners on Tilden and Lawler Streets
- Filling in gaps in the sidewalk network that would connect to Dollar General and Casey's
- Signed routes for pedestrians on designated routes between schools, parks, employers, stores

### **Goal: Enhance recreational assets and create new opportunities for recreation**

#### **Recreational projects**

Community engagement and participation around recreation can unite residents from all backgrounds, promote healthy lifestyles, and re-use challenging brownfield sites. Planning for new facilities will involve residents, students, and leadership from the public and Jewish schools. Involvement in the development of these projects will bring together people in disparate communities around a common pastime. Younger residents will benefit from additional investments in sports facilities and other recreational amenities that are easily accessible and meet their needs. While none of the current planning area sites are large enough to accommodate these ideas, partnerships with the school district and with the recreation center could help bring additional recreational activities to Postville at other sites. Youth comments indicated concern about the state of the

current soccer field- a low-lying area that is often wet- and a desire for futsal courts. Adults would like to see access to tennis courts and Pickleball courts. Ideas for increased recreational amenities included the following:

- **Futsal:** Like a miniature version of soccer, this sport is growing in popularity and does not demand large parcels for suitable facilities. Marshalltown, Iowa constructed two Futsal courts in 2018 that now attract teams from around the region.
- **Soccer:** Although a popular sport for Postville youth and adults alike, the current soccer facilities have inadequate drainage and are not always suitable for playing.
- **Recreational trail extension:** The current trail is limited in size and cannot be extended to the west along its current route. Opportunities of a trail extension currently exist to the northeast of the city, where a right-of-way for a future trail has been secured along Williams Creek beyond the current city trail. Right-of-way is open on a new expansion of the trail to the east as a mowed path. Residents would like to see additional trail extensions and have indicated a preference for a loop around the city that would connect parks, schools, residential areas, and the recreation center.



St. Paul's Lutheran Church, a part of Postville since the 1860s

- **Pickleball:** This sport is growing in popularity and there are no facilities in the region constructed for it. This could promote the use of the sport locally and also provide an attraction for people from out of town to visit.
- **Skate Park:** Requiring little space, a skate park could help to give local students and youth another facility to use and spend time outdoors. There are no places for skateboarders in Postville currently.
- **New Playground:** Given the number of small children in Postville, new facilities for children should be a high priority. A new 501(c)(3) has formed to raise funds for a new playground at the elementary school that will be accessible to all children in the community.

## Goal: Create new gathering spaces

### Teen center

Adults and youth alike identified the need for a place for younger people to spend time and “hang out” with friends.

### Community hub for social services

Many services are offered in Postville for both lower-income and immigrant residents, but these services are scattered at different sites and at different days and times. Consolidation of social services into a single facility would help create greater awareness of the services available, and increase access and utilization of resources such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), WIC, job training, and food assistance. This will have long-term benefits for residents, employers, and businesses.

### Expanded library space

The current library does not have sufficient space to accommodate all users, especially during colder months. Additional space would allow the library to serve more patrons and display more of their extensive collection of Postville history items.

### Downtown business recruitment

New businesses downtown will encourage residents to stay in town for their shopping needs and will create new gathering places. New businesses, especially restaurants and coffee shops, were the highest priority for students and younger Postville residents. At least two entrepreneurs have expressed

an interest in opening a coffee shop, one on Greene St. and the other on Lawler St.

### New / improved public places

Utilizing existing public areas such as rights-of-way to create a more inviting public space will encourage greater use. Vacant brownfield sites could also be turned into low-cost plazas that serve community needs.

## Goal: Improve housing options

### Downtown 2nd story apartments

Renovating unused or underutilized housing stock in the city can help to boost supply, create updated and desirable housing stock, increase property values, and stimulate more investment downtown. Funding from multiple sources could be used to renovate properties, addressing problems such as lead paint, affordable housing, and downtown revitalization.

### Remediate housing hazards

Over 75% of Postville’s existing housing stock was constructed before 1980, with nearly 60% built before 1960.<sup>10</sup> This makes it highly likely that hazardous substances, including lead and asbestos, are present in housing stock. In addition, few homes have radon mitigation systems. Renovation of existing housing stock will help to create greater options for people looking for housing in Postville and for residents who are looking to improve their living situation.

**A lot of these people coming into our rural communities are arriving with high levels of education, with earning power, with experience, and with children.<sup>16</sup>**

*Ben Winchester on new residents in rural communities*

## Why this strategy

Postville will need to work to retain existing residents, entice former residents to return, and remain competitive regionally for residents and businesses.

Ben Winchester, rural sociologist at the University of Minnesota-Morris, studies migration to and from small towns. His research adds to the idea that Postville should invest in amenities, aesthetics, and marketing:

- Small towns in the midwest are seeing an increase in the number of 30–45 year olds with families because of the “boomerang” effect; this is counter to the “brain drain” narrative about rural places.
- Many people move to small towns in spite of employment opportunities, not because of them, and quality-of-life considerations are “paramount;” pace of life, family, access to



recreation, and community life are key factors in attracting new residents.

- Most people who move from cities to small communities consider 3 to 5 towns, and a positive first impression has a critical influence on the decision about where to move.

In addition, Winchester recommends that towns embrace distinctive, place-based marketing that reflect regional assets and opportunities rather than a generic “middle of everywhere” marketing campaign to attract residents.<sup>11</sup>

While the economic base of Postville is diversified and stable, adding resident amenities will create further momentum for the town and lay the groundwork for an inclusive and engaged population:

- High number of people who can’t drive: This is a barrier for access to employment, goods and services, and amenities that are offered only in other regional towns. Creating more businesses and amenities in town not only improves Postville, it also opens greater access.
- Accomplish several objectives: The elements of this strategy will help existing businesses recruit new employees,, create a better quality of life for all residents, and help the city become more competitive regionally for residents and businesses by improving downtown public and private spaces, creating new gathering places, creating more activity spaces for people of all ages,

and providing opportunities for educational access and economic mobility. (landscape/streetscape/pedestrian enhancements)

- Creates incentives for private investment & raises land/property values: Investment in high-quality public spaces will attract additional private investment and show that Postville is a well-maintained town.
- Buy-in to regional initiatives and identity: Recreational links and development of the scenic byway information create a link to other communities in the region and encourages use of byway businesses and amenities. It also has the potential to create a strong identity for Postville at the beginning of the byway.
- Discretionary spending: Postville discretionary spending that currently goes outside the community can be redirected to Postville businesses.

Ideally, Postville is a place that people chose to live because of its quality of life and access to opportunity. Improvements to recreation, additional services, and business recruitment and retention are important parts of this strategy.



**Though Postville was built around the railroad, it is not a major factor for current industries**



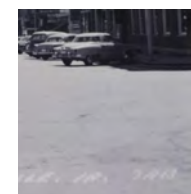
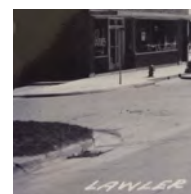
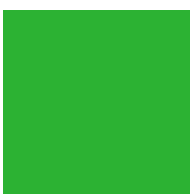
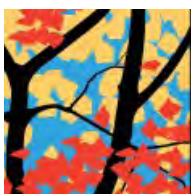
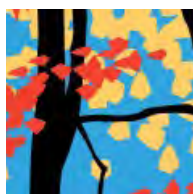
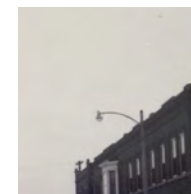
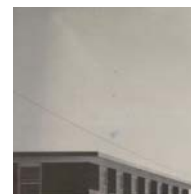
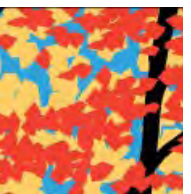
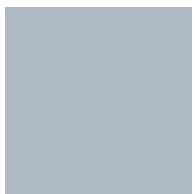
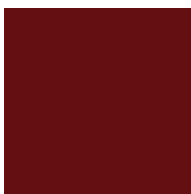
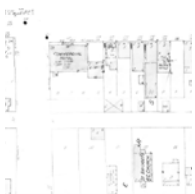
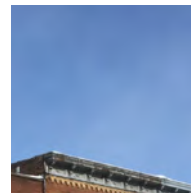
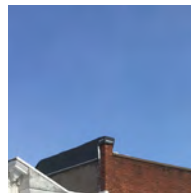
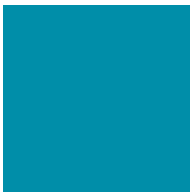
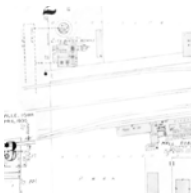
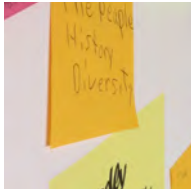




# Postville, Iowa

## Site Plans

### Brownfield Area-Wide Plan





# Redevelopment Plans

## Overall strategy

The three overall area strategies require differing public and private infrastructure and facilities. Some sites fit better with one strategy than another, but all sites can be used to help further the goals and objectives outlined above. Like the objectives themselves, there are many commonalities and overlap of redevelopment goals at each site.

## Parcel analysis

Key brownfield redevelopment sites were determined using a potential for change matrix for each site, through conversations with community members and leadership, and through research into past and current land use and conditions that will have an effect on redevelopment. Some sites will likely require a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment to determine if conditions warrant further investigation and cleanup. Planning use after redevelopment will determine which sites with a Recognized Environmental Condition will need a Phase II ESA and possible remediation.

The sites vary in size, location, land use, and potential for reuse, but will contribute in some way to at least one of the three overall redevelopment strategies of creating a better place to live, a better place to work, and a better place to visit. This plan focuses on high-visibility sites that have the potential to impact the image of Postville. Proposed uses should be designed as walkable, interconnected, children-friendly spaces that reflect local culture and provide for a safer and more stimulating environment for people of all ages and cultures.

Proposed redevelopment elements at each site are classified as Short-range (1-5 years), Medium-range (5-10 years), and Long-range (10+ years). They are also labeled with the overall redevelopment strategy to which they contribute. Area-wide plans include the creation of a robust pedestrian infrastructure, implementation of a stormwater management strategy that utilizes innovative best management practices, and a thriving downtown core.

## Intended outcomes

- Increased private and public support for economic investment in brownfield sites
- Adoption of policies that encourage incorporation of stormwater best management practices and greenspace development on brownfield properties
- Restoration of downtown “second story” brownfield sites for use as safe, affordable housing options
- Increased property valuation and decreased vacancy rates, resulting in increased city tax revenues and improved city services
- Restoration of the stream corridor and public access to outdoor recreation
- Improved pedestrian access from affordable housing to work, school and recreation
- Improved community image, economic redevelopment new businesses
- Development of a comprehensive city pedestrian network and green space
- Increased understanding and informed action by low-income and minority community members with regard to brownfield sites where they work and live
- Healthier residents from improved air and water quality
- Creative use of abandoned and ancillary manufacturing spaces
- Increased understanding of environmental justice concerns

## Identifying Key Sites

Sites with known brownfield concerns were prioritized for reuse. Sites were determined using data on known environmental hazards, previous land uses as shown in historical documentation, or by known current or near-past land uses.

### Redevelopment potential

Several data points were used to rank sites from 0–15, with higher numbers having higher potential for redevelopment. Potential for redevelopment was determined by the following data points.

#### Parcel Size

Score of 0 to 3

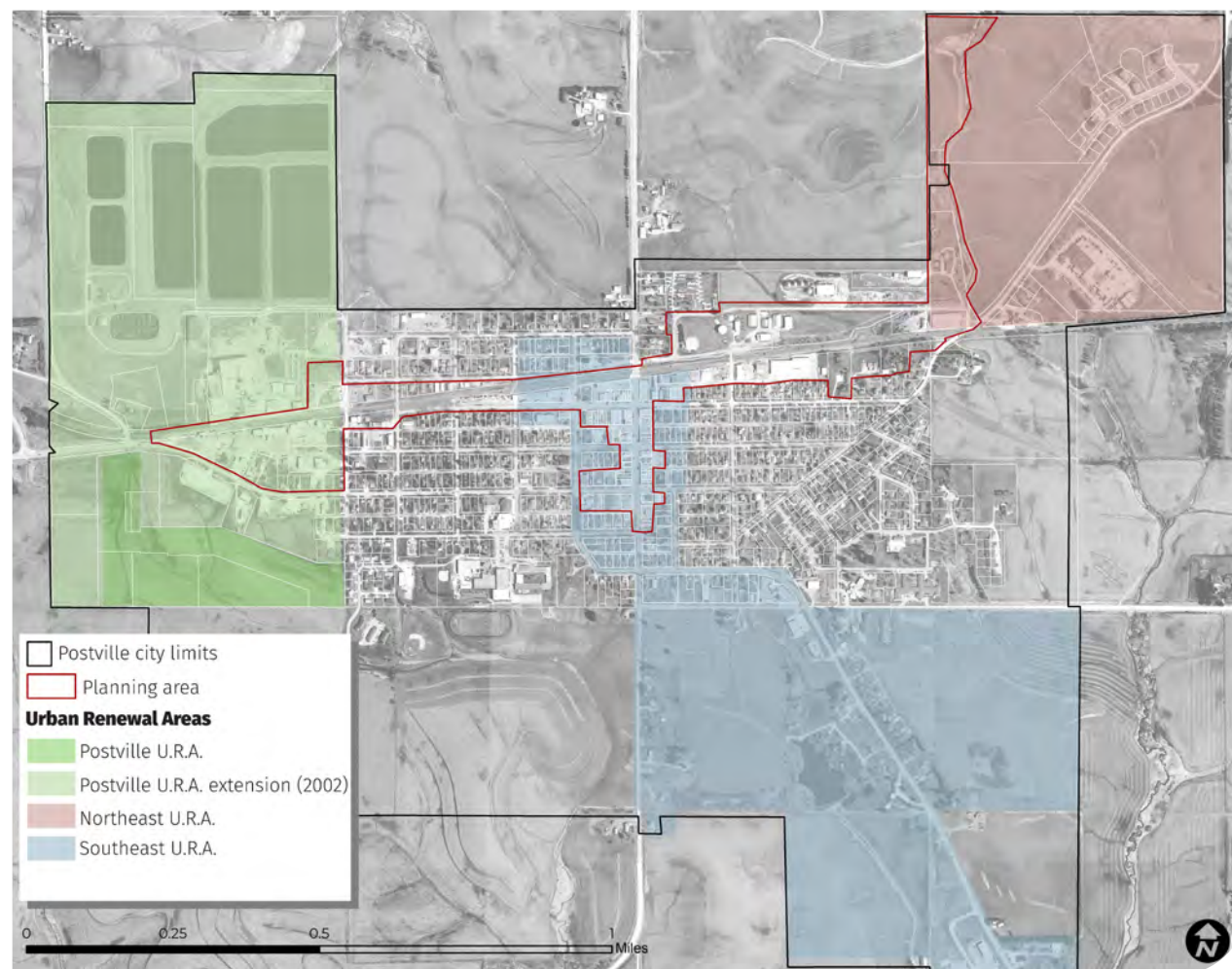
Parcel size is ranked, with only parcels over an acre in size receiving a 3 score and parcels less than 7,500ft<sup>2</sup> receiving a 0 score. Larger parcels may present a better opportunity for redevelopment because of greater flexibility in site plans and land use. They are also more likely to be competitive with greenfield development sites because of existing infrastructure and services, even when barriers to redevelopment exist.

#### Valuation

Score of 0 to 3

Overall parcel assessed valuation per lot square footage, including both land and building valuation. Land value per square foot as determined by the county assessor is scored, with higher assessed values receiving lower scores. Parcels with lower value per square foot

Value per sq. foot	Improvements to value ratio	TIF district	Total area	Highway frontage	Vacancy status	MAX POTENTIAL SCORE
0= \$10 & greater	0= .33 & greater	0= not in TIF	0= <10k	0= none	0= occupied	15
1= \$5 to \$9.99	1= .2 to .29		1= 10k-25k	1= state		
2= \$2 to 4.99	2= .1 to .19	1= in TIF	2= 25k-50k	2= federal	3= vacant	
3= less than \$2	3= less than .1		3= >50k			



Urban Renewal Areas designated by the City of Postville, where the city may pursue Tax-Increment Financing for major projects

present more opportunity for redevelopment than parcels with higher value. Compared with surrounding communities, the value proposition of land in Postville yields greater square footage.

### Improvement to value ratio

Score of 0 to 3

Parcels with lower *Improvement to Value* ratios score higher. Parcels with no existing structure or a structure that represents less than 25% of total parcel value are more likely to see redevelopment because of the costs of removing or remodeling existing structures. Potential for lead and asbestos in older structures, which can contribute to brownfield classification, make this an especially high barrier to overcome for redevelopment.

### Vacancy

Score of 0 or 3

Parcels with no current use are scored 1; occupied parcels are scored 0. Parcels and structures are more likely to be redeveloped if there is no current economic activity associated with them. Vacant commercial, residential, and industrial parcels and buildings are common throughout downtown Postville and the rest of the brownfield area.

### Building condition

Scores of 0 to 3

Parcels with higher scores have buildings in better condition.

	location	Value per sq.ft	Improvements to value score	TIF district	Total area	Highway frontage	Vacancy status	TOTAL SCORE
1	251 S LAWLER ST	3	3	1	1	2	3	13
2	715 W TILDEN ST	1	3	1	3	2	3	13
3	241 S LAWLER ST	3	3	1	1	2	3	13
4	601 W TILDEN ST	3	1	1	1	2	3	11
5	210 S LAWLER ST	2	0	1	1	2	3	9
6	164 W TILDEN ST	1	1	1	1	2	3	9
7	167 W TILDEN ST	1	1	1	0	2	3	8
8	142 S LAWLER ST	0	2	1	0	2	3	8
9	128 N LAWLER ST	0	3	1	0	1	3	8
10	203 S LAWLER ST	1	0	1	0	2	3	7
11	112 N LAWLER ST	0	2	1	0	1	3	7
12	111 W GREENE ST	0	3	1	0	0	3	7
13	111 N LAWLER ST	1	0	1	0	1	3	6
14	119 S LAWLER ST	0	1	1	0	1	3	6
15	120 W GREENE ST	0	2	1	0	0	3	6
16	110 S LAWLER ST	1	0	0	0	1	3	5
17	150 W GREENE ST	1	0	1	0	0	3	5
18	125 W GREENE ST	0	1	1	0	0	3	5

### Highway frontage

Score of 0 to 2

Parcels scoring 2 have frontage on the federal highways; parcels with state highway frontage score 1, and parcels with no highway frontage score 0. Buildings with frontage on state and national highways scored higher due to their accessibility and visibility.

### TIF Districts

Score of 0 or 1

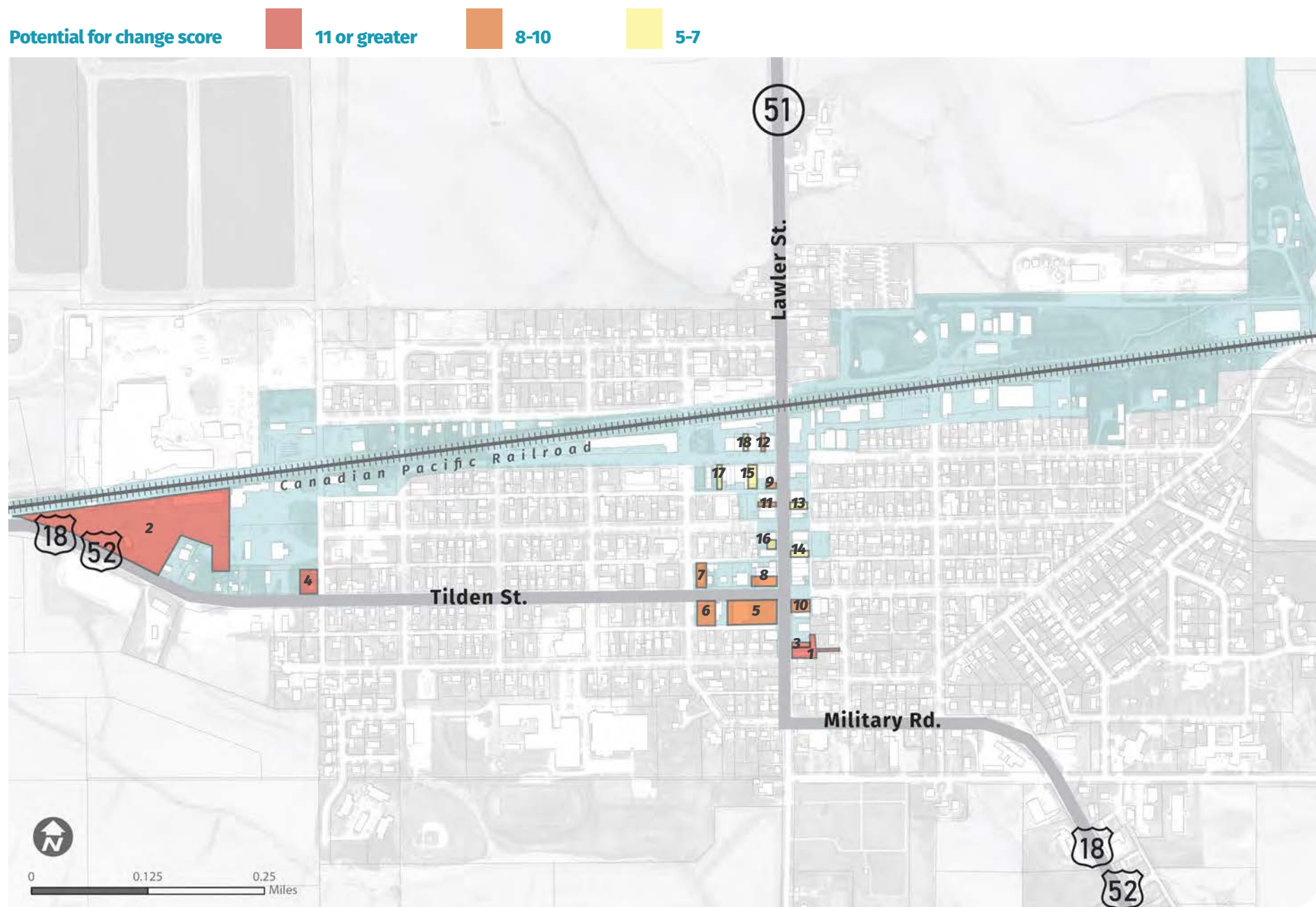
Parcels within an Urban Renewal Area scored 1, while those outside of such areas scored 0. Postville has designated several Urban Renewal Areas that

overlap with the current planning area. Parcels falling within these areas scored higher because the potential to use tax-increment financing for area-wide improvements.

This analysis is intended only as a starting point using easily accessible quantitative data. Other metrics, including current ownership, land use, parcel history, and brownfield status, will be important factors in considering redevelopment priorities. Qualitative factors such as community support, current ownership, and long-term planning will be key factors in determining which sites are most likely to see actual redevelopment or reuse.



## Sites with highest change potential





Postville prairie, with interpretive sign

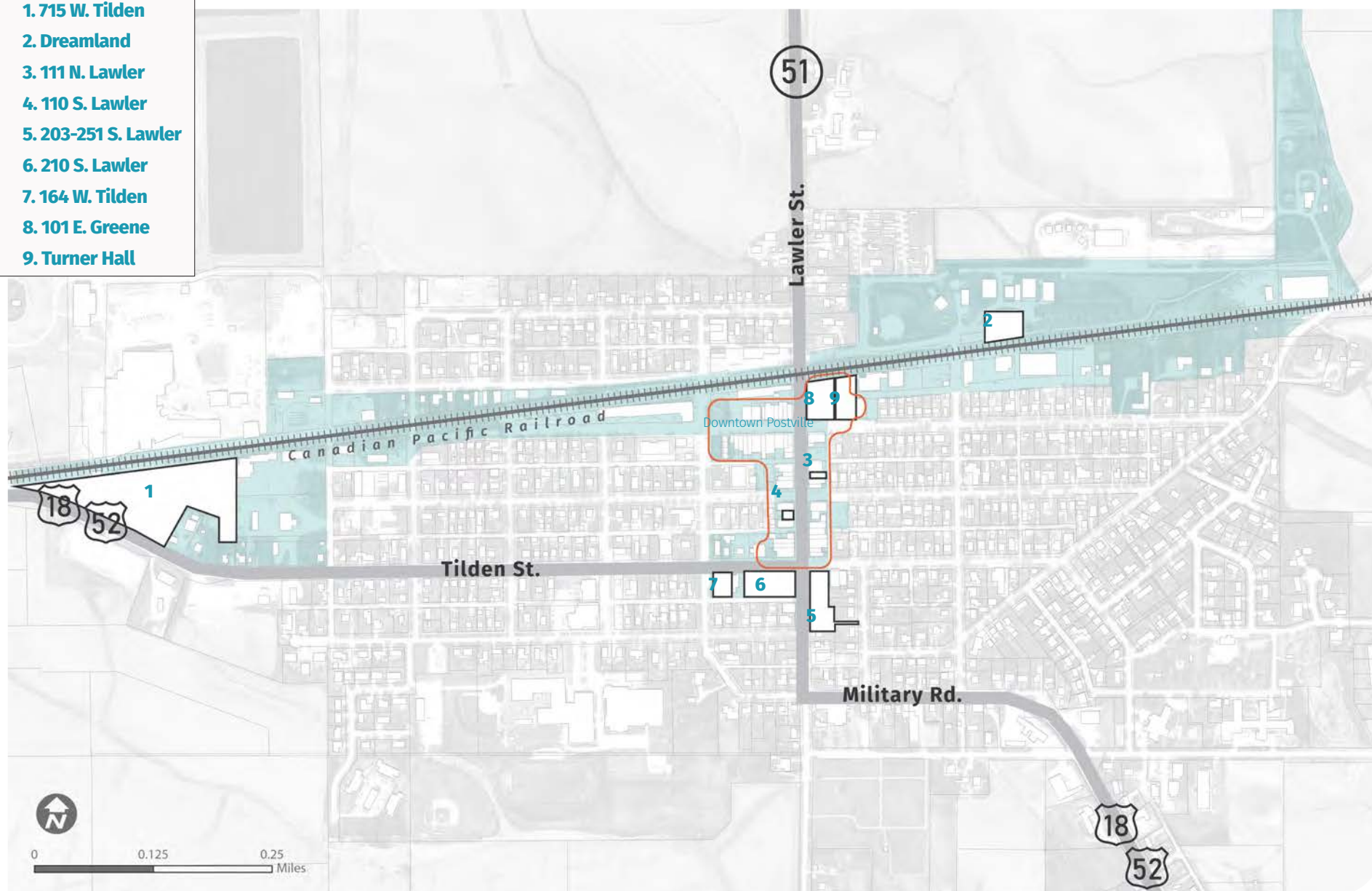
#### Redevelopment of these sites will:

- **Challenge the regional image and narrative about Postville.** This has been repeatedly identified as a top priority for this plan.
- **Build community.** Realization of plan elements will not happen without additional time and effort invested in community organization. This starts with building familiarity and exchanging knowledge between different social, ethnic, and religious groups within the town.
- **Strengthen the community's capacity for leadership and change.** Identifying leaders from different backgrounds and enabling them to take charge of prioritized projects or lead new projects will increase the capacity and ability of the town to create meaningful change, whether through physical redevelopment of brownfield sites or investments in education, training, and civic engagement. Providing "small wins" can help demonstrate existing capacity, increase confidence in local leaders, and provide pathways for others to build leadership skills.
- **Increase visitation and demand for goods and services downtown.** Creating interest and setting Postville apart from other communities is key to creating demand for goods, services, and real estate in Postville.
- **Create a network of residents invested in positive changes.** Residents working together on common projects will help to build bridges between disparate ethnic, religious, and social groups, not all of whom have significant investment in shared civic life and institutions.



## Highest priority sites

1. 715 W. Tilden
2. Dreamland
3. 111 N. Lawler
4. 110 S. Lawler
5. 203-251 S. Lawler
6. 210 S. Lawler
7. 164 W. Tilden
8. 101 E. Greene
9. Turner Hall

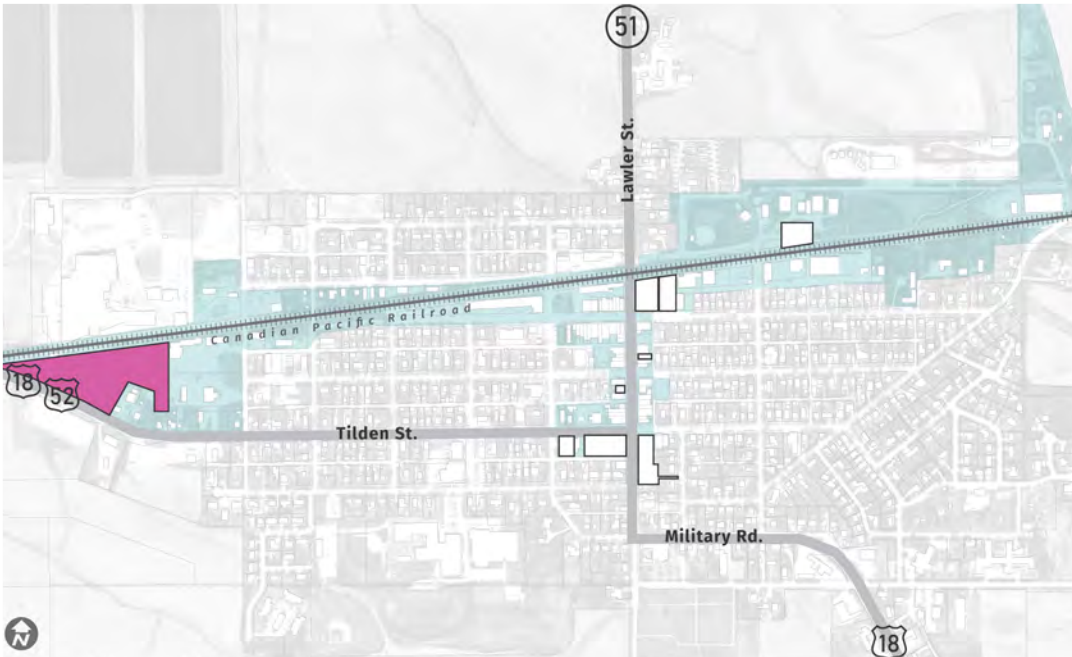




## Priority site: **715 W. Tilden**

Site Score: **13**    Public Priority: **High**

Visit



### Goals

#### Short-range

- Improve site aesthetics to create a better image for the city and Agristar

#### Medium-range

- Create permanent or semi-permanent art, imagery, or signage that promotes and creates an identity for Postville and Agristar

#### Long-range

- Find economically productive use of private, publically-inaccessible parcel

### Objectives

- Create iconic, memorable sign or public art that helps define Postville for highway travelers
- Install solar power generation at site for use by Agristar
- Ensure continued utility of site for Agristar, including access to storage, utility buildings, truck and trailer parking, railroad right-of-way access, and circulation pathways
- Create areas for native plantings and pollinator habitat at site

This catalyst site is a high priority for redevelopment, according to community leaders and city officials. Iowa Turkey Products, the former facility occupying the parcel, burned in 2003, and the site has been empty ever since. The current owner, Agristar Meat & Poultry, has indicated a willingness to discuss the future of the site. The city had entered into discussions with Agristar in 2016, but no plan of action was finalized at that time. A 2016 partnership with the University of Iowa School of Engineering produced a plan for landscaping, stormwater management, and truck parking at the site.

## Key challenges

### Brownfield-related

Buildings or parts of buildings that burned in 2003 were likely constructed before 1978 and may have contained asbestos and lead. No brownfield concerns from previous land use are known. Proposed re-uses, which do not involve public use of the site, re-use for new construction of habitable building, or a real estate transaction, would not likely necessitate in-depth brownfield site assessment.

### Non-brownfield-related

Large concrete slabs cover much of the parcel, with few unpaved green spaces. Redevelopment of the site could mean high costs for removal of these slabs.

## Brownfield Area-Wide Plan Elements

	Time Frame			Strategy		
	Short	Mid	Long	Live	Biz	Visit
715 W. Tilden	Medium-term			Visit		
Phase 1 assessment	•				•	
Removal of concrete/site remediation <i>(if needed)</i>		•				•
Solar array			•		•	
Tree and landscape buffer		•		•		•
Iconic signage or art piece			•			•



A few older trees remain on the site



Foundation of former buildings remain



## Operational business

Because of concerns about operations, privacy, and liability at the site, Agristar has expressed a need to keep the site private and not publicly accessible. Agristar needs to continue to use part of the lot for business activities while retaining control over 100% of the parcel. Because Agristar is a wholesaler, it is unlikely to see the same benefit from investment in site aesthetics that a retail business would. However, improvements to the site would ameliorate persistent public relations problems for both Postville and Agristar, which have continued to suffer from the reputation of AgriProcessors. Any improvement would send a strong message that both the city and company are have a long-term commitment to the betterment of Postville. This could even help with the acute labor shortage at the plant, since many people in Northeast Iowa are not aware of the improvements in safety, sanitation, hiring practices, and labor management since the plant was sold in 2009.

## Key partners

### Agristar

The owner of the site will need to commit to any planned changes or agree to an alternative ownership or long-term lease arrangement with another entity.

### City of Postville

The city has an interest in the success of Agristar and the well-being of the community as a whole, and will be the leader for any potential changes.

## Economic Development group

Local or county economic development can assist with feasibility studies, fundraising and financial planning for projects, and research into analogous projects for funding sources.

### Allamakee County Energy District

This newly-incorporated group assists businesses and homeowners with energy audits, energy-efficiency upgrades, and renewable energy installation planning.

## Opportunities

### Native plantings & landscaping

These elements are relatively inexpensive to install in the short-term, though there is limited space due to a high percentage of the parcel remaining covered in concrete foundation of former ITP buildings. Native habitat and pollinator-friendly landscaping will improve the aesthetics of the site as well as provide additional stormwater management benefits. The plantings, when used with both existing trees and newly-planted, hardy trees have the potential to screen parking and utility areas. Native prairie and pollinator habitat are goals of state and regional entities and will improve the aesthetic of the site while keeping it relatively inaccessible to the general public. Screening plantings on the north side of the site are unlikely to negatively affect the performance of potential solar photovoltaic generation on-site.



The city of Manning, Iowa re-branded the town with a bold, eye-catching sign along a highway

Image: City of Manning



Robert Indiana's "Love" (Ahava) Sculpture in Israel,<sup>17</sup> an example of a distinctive sculpture that builds on Israeli identity through the use of Hebrew characters





**Postville's existing native prairie at the eastern end of the Fairgrounds site, along the trail**



**One idea for how a trail, native plants, trees, and new sign could improve the aesthetics of the site**

### Art piece and sign

The site already serves as a visual entry point for Postville, and the image given by this gateway site has the potential to be vastly improved with investments in signage or even an art piece. Its visibility along major highways that lead into the city means that the site could be a key piece of a rebranding effort by hosting an iconic installation. Instead of greeting visitors with a vacant lot, the site will show the identity and aspiration of the community.

### Solar panels

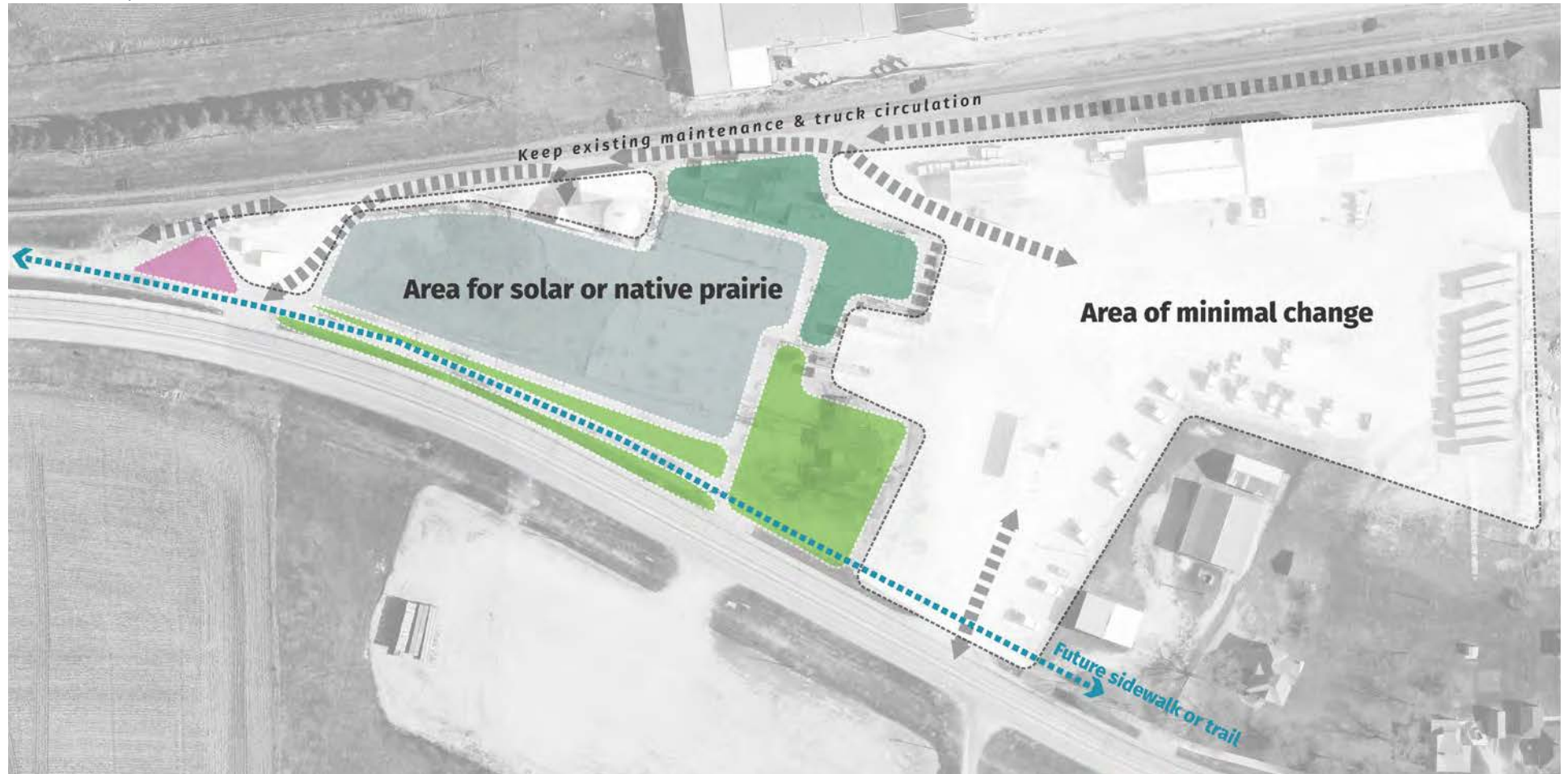
Installing solar photovoltaic panels at the site can serve multiple purposes and creates an economically beneficial and viable re-use for the site that is not encumbered by high-cost site preparation costs. A major business could benefit from reducing the amount of power purchased from the investor-owned utility that serves the site; the utility announced significant projected rate increases starting in 2019. Tax credits, grants, and low-interest loans are available to agricultural businesses in rural areas. Installation of a power generating solar array could help to build Northeast Iowa's solar industry and provide a "first" for the community and an example for other area businesses. Many states have pioneered the use of brownfield sites for solar "brightfields" projects, but this model is not currently in use in Postville. Project partners could include Alliant Energy, Allamakee Energy District, and the USDA.

The success of this proposal will depend on many factors. Depreciation schedules, tax situation of the

business, payback schedule for cost savings (10 years is the norm), and the rate paid will all factor into the decision about whether or not this would be a viable investment for Agristar. Given the size of the facility and its refrigeration needs, Agristar is a very large consumer of electricity. The current large user rate from Alliant Energy is \$0.08/kWh, higher than neighboring investor-owned utilities and higher than electric co-ops. The state of Iowa does allow for net metering, or the selling of electricity generated by privately-owned solar panels back to the electrical utility at a rate favorable to the owner of the panels. While federal tax credits have expired for solar installations, it may still be possible to recoup a substantial investment in solar power generation at the site, especially if favorable depreciation rates are factored in. Alternatively, the site could be home to a solar array built by a third party that leases the site. Alliant Energy is looking for potential locations for a community solar project that would serve Northeast Iowa.

Luther College in Decorah, Iowa may provide a useful template for Agristar. The college installed a 725.76kW ground-mount solar array near its campus in 2015 for \$1,600,000, bringing total campus solar power generation to over 1MW. Partnerships and financing could make a solar power facility a feasible and worthwhile investment for the company.

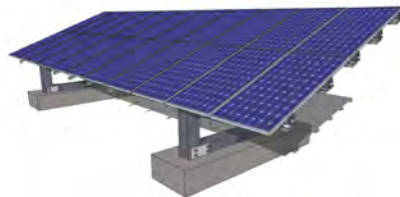
## Priority site: **715 W. Tilden**



 Native plants



 Solar array



 Tree buffers



 New landmark







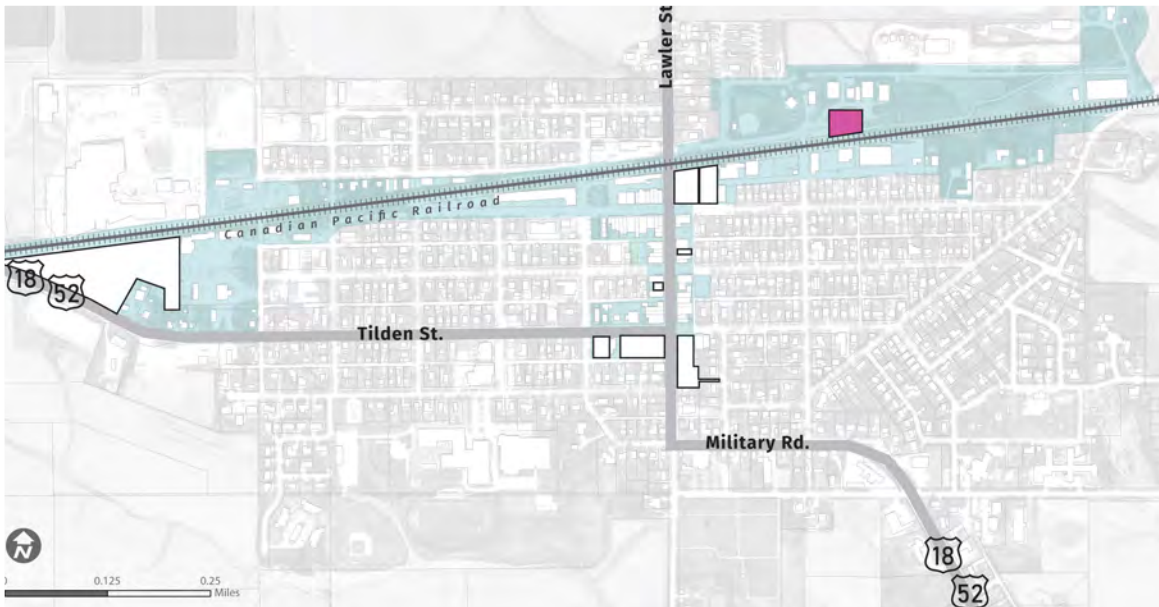
The current appearance of the site from west Tilden / US52, looking east



## Priority site: **Ballroom & Fairgrounds**

Site Score: **N/A** Public Priority: **High**

Visit



### Goals

#### Short-range

- Stabilize roof and other building elements
- Remove and replace Ash trees on property

#### Medium-range

- Bring together stakeholders to discuss options for building re-use and timeline or building disposal options
- Research analogous buildings and re-uses, as well as state and federal resources that may be available.
- Create suitable business plan for property

#### Long-range

- Renovate or remove Dreamland Ballroom and re-configure signage, parking, and landscaping to encourage greater use by regional residents and organizations

### Objectives

- Remove obstacles to greater usage by regional and local residents: Although the ballroom is one of only two in the region, it is rarely used for events. Building condition and non-accessible facilities are the two biggest obstacles to greater utilization.
- Find management structure that works: The Big Four Fair Board has renovated many buildings that are used regularly for the fair and by community groups. However, successful management of the ballroom as an events space will require building a greater institutional capacity or hiring an external manager.

## Key challenges

### Brownfield-related

Asbestos may be present in building materials in Dreamland Ballroom and other older structures.

### Non-brownfield-related

There is limited current capacity for a volunteer organization to run an event space.

## Key partners

### Big Four Fairgrounds Board

The Fair Board has a long-term lease on the property as a part of their use of the entire Fairgrounds campus. Reuse of the building needs to be compatible with the long-term vision and maintenance plan of the board.

### City of Postville

The city owns the property and may decide the final use of the property and funds expended on its maintenance and renovation. The city has not taken an active role in the management of the property in recent decades.

## Opportunities

### Replace restrooms with ADA-compliant facilities

The existing restrooms are not accessible for people with disabilities and difficult to use for older adults.

### Insulate structure and install HVAC system and new wiring

The building is not currently efficiently climate-controlled, making it unusable in winter and summer

## Brownfield Area-Wide Plan Elements

	Time Frame			Strategy		
	Short	Mid	Long	Live	Biz	Visit
Dreamland	Medium-term			Visit		
Landscaping	•					•
Signage	•					•
Lead and asbestos testing & abatement		•		•		•
Remodel facilities			•	•		•



Old signs and an ash tree in at Dreamland Ballroom



## Priority site: **Ballroom & Fairgrounds**



 Solar panels



 Replace trees & add'l landscaping



 New signs

**BIG FOUR** Fairgrounds  
City campground  
DREAMLAND  
BALLROOM 



months. In order to make investments in climate control function, the attic and walls of the building should be insulated with an appropriate amount of cellulose insulation.

### **Replace windows and lighting**

The current fenestration is blocked, making the interior of the ballroom dark.

### **Replace signage**

Current signs are not well maintained and do are not inviting for people who are unfamiliar with the property.

### **Replace Ash trees at campground**

Emerald Ash Borer has been found in Northeast Iowa, with many trees in the area weakened by the insect. The City of Decorah, twenty miles away, has already removed all Ash trees on city right-of-way; removal and replacement of these trees will need to be addressed before it becomes urgent.

### **Install solar panels on buildings to offset electricity usage**

The reduction in solar panel costs and the use of ductless air source heat pump systems for climate control could help minimize utility costs for the Fair Board.

### **Similar models**

Research by the Our Postville committee has found that analogous event facilities are popular and heavily used, with many in the region turning a profit for their owners. A new events space in nearby Waucoma, for example, was paid off by the city in under ten years through revenue generated by event rentals. This does require active management and a well-researched business plan. Because of the scope of work needed to make Dreamland competitive for with other regional facilities, any required financing may require a longer amortization period. One key opportunity area that was noted by the committee was a lack of effective marketing and internet presence for existing event rental spaces in the area. Effective marketing could give Postville's Dreamland a competitive advantage and greater visibility, especially with an investment in new signage.



**Interior of Dreamland Ballroom**



**Most of the trees at the campground and fairgrounds are Ash**

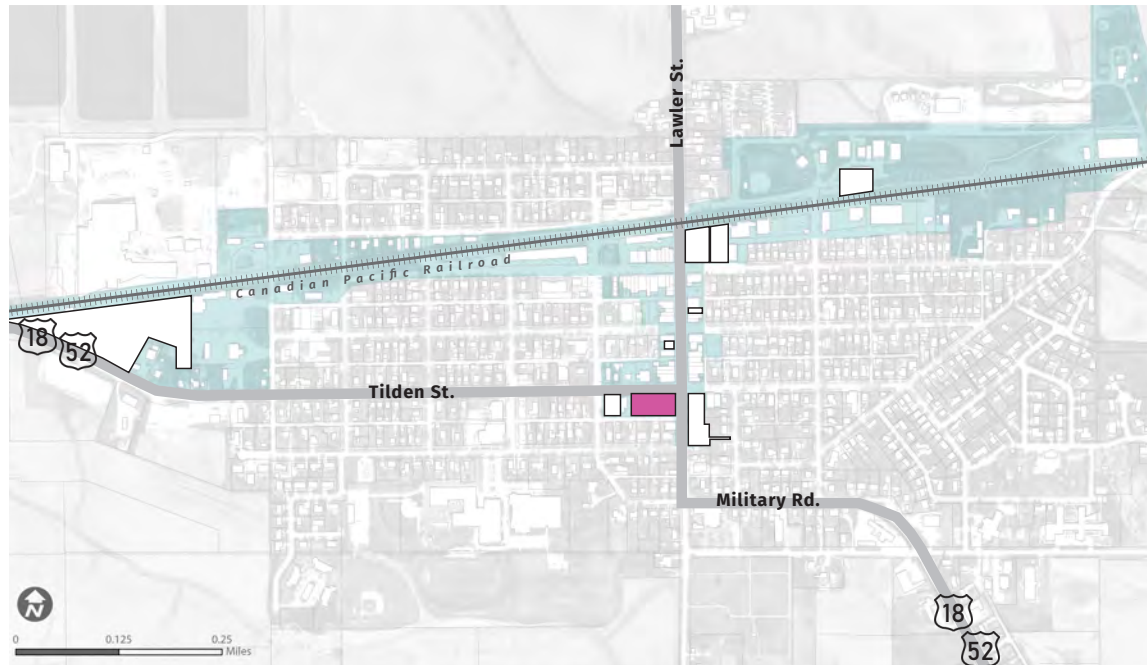
## Priority Site: **210 S. Lawler**

Business

Visit

Live

Site Score: **13**    Public Priority: **High**



### Goals

#### Short-range

- Improve site aesthetics with landscaping and signage

#### Medium-range

- Install stormwater management best practices and permanent landscape and pedestrian safety features

#### Long-range

- Redevelop site with anchor business

### Objectives

- Improve sidewalks and pedestrian facilities through bumpouts, patterned or stained concrete crosswalks, and permanent landscaping
- Create Postville sign and visitor information station that announces community events and encourages travelers to stop
- Create space for weekly farmer's market



This lot is at the most prominent location in Postville, located at the intersection of two federal highways and a state highway. A four-way stop with over 4,000 vehicles per day passing through, the intersection of Lawler and Tilden is also where two federal highways meet and the Driftless Area Scenic Byway begins. Now a parking lot, it was the site of a veterinary clinic until that building was destroyed in a 2002 fire. Because of its potential for high-visibility impact and to link many local and regional attractions, it has the highest potential for redevelopment and can serve as a focal point for downtown, Postville, and the region. The site has been proposed for various improvements that will maintain its use as a parking area but also serve byway visitors, highway travelers, and residents in need of a gathering place. Pedestrian safety and stormwater management can drive improvement plans, but the Iowa DOT will need to approve any potential changes to the roadway and right-of-way. Landscaping, including stormwater management best practices, interpretation and wayfinding of local and regional routes and attractions, and crosswalk improvements, including bumpouts, are proposed as a part of site improvements.

## Key challenges

### Brownfield-related

There are no known brownfield concerns with the site. An older building that housed the veterinary clinic burned in 2002, but the age of the structure has not been determined, nor its prior use. A Sanborn map

## Brownfield Area-Wide Plan Elements

	Time Frame			Strategy		
	Short	Mid	Long	Live	Biz	Visit
210 S. Lawler	Short-term			(all)		
Site testing / demolition / remediation	•				•	
New building	•				•	
Signage and pedestrian improvements	•			•		•
Landscaping improvements	•			•		•

from 1930 shows that the site had a filling station and storage; the station appears to be located in what is now right-of-way for south Lawler Street / US52 / US18.

The Iowa DNR LUST database lists an underground tank at the Postville Ford-Lincoln-Mercury dealership at this address, but gives no information about any known leaks.

### Non-brownfield-related

- **Traffic:** Truck traffic is a high percentage of through traffic on the two federal highways, which make a right turn at the intersection. Trucks require a wide turning radius that is not compatible with reduced crossing distances through corner bumpouts. Alternative pedestrian safety measures, such as stained concrete, should be considered in order to draw more visibility to crosswalks and pedestrians who use them. Sidewalks are not clearly marked on



A trailer with a moveable-type sign at the site served as a town bulletin board for years



either the east or the north sides of the lot, and the intersection has been widened to maximize potential turning width for trucks. In addition, crosswalks are painted and not well marked.

- **Private ownership:** The only grocery store in Postville used the site for its parking and the owner of the parcel may not be amenable to significant site changes that could jeopardize the lease of the site.
- **Current uses:** Semi-trucks use the site for parking because of the ease of pulling into and out of the lot, which has no curb or defined sidewalk on the its eastern edge. The site is also used for selling foods by the Postville Lions Club and high school booster groups and for collecting redeemable cans and bottles to help fund school projects. Future uses will need to show a compatibility with or improvement for current uses of the lot.
- **Maintenance:** The city may be reluctant to take on the responsibility of maintaining improved rights-of-way or signage on the lot.

## Opportunities

### DASB hub

A byway hub will promote the route to travelers and provide information about attractions and businesses along the byway. It will also draw attention to the fact that the byway starts in downtown Postville.

### Lunch stop

Workers in Postville, as well as people passing through on highways, have few options to eat. A new food establishment will provide jobs and generate activity downtown.

### Landscaping and stormwater management

Given the central location of site along highways and at a “gateway” for both downtown and for the DASB, the appearance of the site impacts impressions of the town. Improved pedestrian safety- through improved sidewalks and possibly bumpouts- will encourage people to cross the street to visit other businesses downtown. Well-maintained rain garden plantings will complement similar stormwater sites in other parts of town. Planting trees will help to bring additional shade and make a more attractive place for visitors and shoppers to stop.

### Pedestrian safety

Because of the need to maintain large turning radii on the southwest and northwest corners of the intersection for truck traffic, traditional bumpouts or curb extensions may not be feasible. Other communities have worked with the Iowa DOT to create solutions that satisfy pedestrian safety needs while allowing for the free flow of through traffic and commercial traffic. One solution is to use colored or patterned pavement for crosswalks to draw attention to the pedestrian zone.



East and North edges of the parcel have new, well-defined, sidewalks that are maintained after winter weather

## Redevelopment Success Story

Site testing / demolition / remediation	Yes
New building	Yes
Signage and pedestrian improvements	Yes
Landscaping improvements	Yes

Ideas and plans for this site were discussed from 2017-2019 during the part of the planning process with the most public input. After the former Quillin's grocery store closed in 2019, a regional convenience store chain purchased the site. The site was cleared in summer 2019, with a new store expected to open in early 2020. In addition to gasoline and snacks, the store will carry grocery staples such as milk, eggs, and bread.

Redevelopment of the site accomplishes a long-term goal of site re-use of the former gravel lot where a veterinary clinic was destroyed by fire in 2002. The site was previously a car dealership, and the 1930 Sanborn map indicates a filling station on the parcel. The new store, which includes new sidewalks, medians, and landscaping, also accomplishes the short-term goal of improving site aesthetics.

A new business on this site will generate significant traffic downtown and will increase the number of people traveling through Postville who stop in town, boosting neighboring businesses and incentivizing further investment.



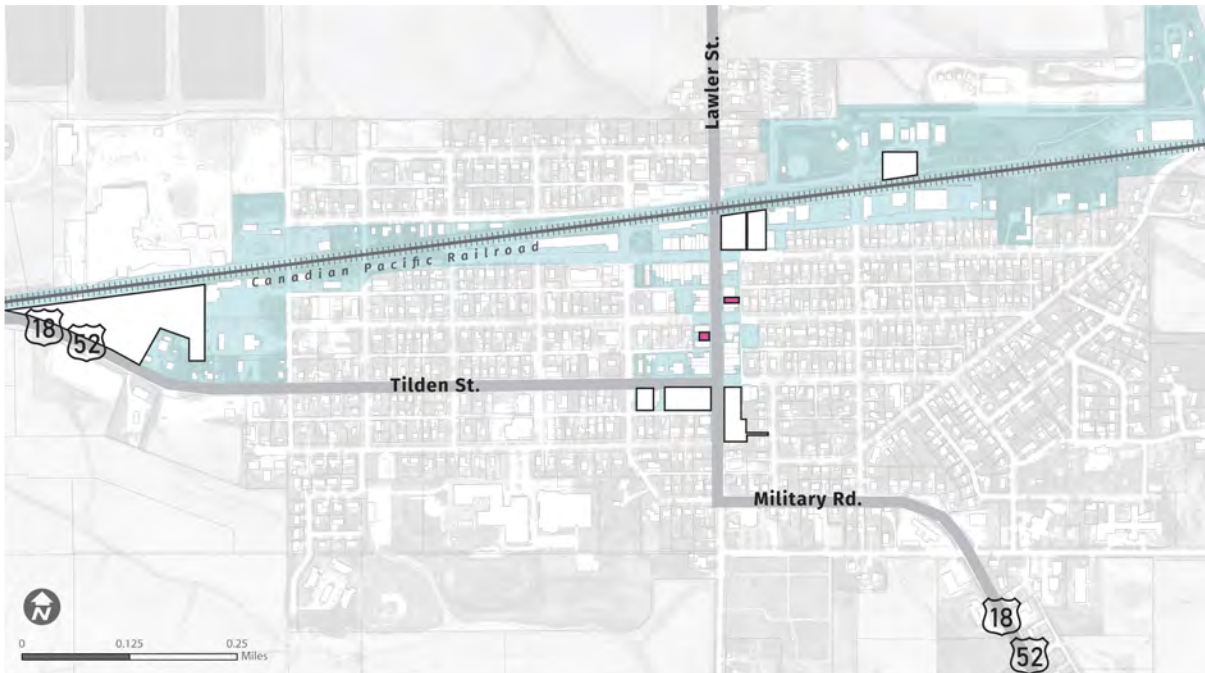
Demolition of building at 210 S. Lawler, summer 2019



## Priority Sites: **110. S. & 111 N. Lawler St.**

Site Score: **7.5** Public Priority: **High**

Visit



### Goals

#### Short-range

- Stabilize sites and prevent further deterioration of grounds and surrounding buildings
- Improve aesthetics of site for residents, visitors, and businesses
- Create welcoming space for downtown visitors
- Use space to showcase Postville history and culture

#### Long-range

- Build new structure or permanent amenities on site that will serve new or existing businesses

### Objectives

- Use public art and signage to show unique history of Postville & of the sites
- Create areas for people to walk and sit
- Use landscaping to create interactive and welcoming space
- Create connection with neighboring food & beverage business
- Improve site conditions through landscaping and planter boxes
- Install historical interpretation or public art to create draw



This vacant lot at 110 S. Lawler is in the middle of downtown Postville. A large Italianate commercial building that occupied the space burned in 2009, leaving a gap between the corner building and a long-standing appliance business. Ten years after the fire, there is support for fixing this “gap” downtown and utilizing the space as an asset that will serve resident needs and help drive visitors to adjacent businesses. The site is currently owned by a local telecom utility and used for storage and display by the appliance business. The current owners have expressed a willingness to lease part of the lot for a public use such as a plaza.

The former building on the lot at 111 N. Lawler, demolished after its roof collapse in 2018, was built in the 1910s as an auto dealer and service garage. There are no plans for reconstruction or reuse at the site. Next to the town’s only bar, the lot is semi-enclosed. On the wall to the left are visible stone lintels from a building that was moved in the 1910s and burned around 1980. The wall has outlasted both buildings, and could serve as the spot for a mural or historical interpretation. This site has many similarities to 110 S. Lawler, but neighboring businesses may be more compatible with a different approach to reuse. Because ownership is in limbo on this property, the city may have an opportunity to assume control of the site through the state-sanctioned 657(a) process for abandoned or blighted property. This process could take up to 18 months to complete.

## Brownfield Area-Wide Plan Elements

	Time Frame			Strategy		
	Short	Mid	Long	Live	Biz	Visit
111 N. Lawler	Short-term			Visit		
Phase 1 assessment	•				•	
Site leveling & paving	•				•	
Landscaping	•			•		•
Mural / public art	•					•
Signage	•					•
Seasonal outdoor dining / beer garden		•		•		•
110 S. Lawler	Short-term			Visit		
Mural	•					•
Screening	•					•
Pavers	•			•		•
Landscaping	•			•		•

### Key challenges

#### Brownfield-related

- 110: None currently known, but debris from previous building demolition may have been used as a part of the fill for the lot. This creates a potential for asbestos contamination under the ground and may limit major site reuse potential without major clean-up activities.
- 111: The former building was built as an auto dealer and service shop and used continuously for that purpose until its 2018 demolition following partial roof collapse. Prior to demolition, the building was tested for asbestos. None was found. Petroleum contamination is possible in the soil underneath the surface of the former building and at the rear of the lot. However, all building materials were disposed of off-site, and 6” of new soil was added to the top of the site. For intended future uses the site is unlikely to require remediation for either hazardous substances or petroleum contamination.



**110 S. Lawler is used by NEIT for utilities and by a neighboring business to display goods**



**Walls have been stabilized around the 111 N. Lawler site**

### Non-brownfield-related

- 110: The site is owned by NEIT, which needs to maintain current access and parking at the site. Liability for public use will need to be assumed by a third party through a lease agreement. Lawn equipment is displayed at the front of the site, a use that will likely need to be incorporated into future plans.
- 111: Neighboring owners may see little incentive to improve the property or work together on site reuse because of a depressed commercial property market. City-initiated demolition has resulted in a lien on property. The current private owner may not want the site made available for public use.

### Key partners

#### Property owners

Northeast Iowa Telecom has indicated a willingness to work with an economic development group or the city to improve the aesthetics at 110 S. Lawler while maintaining a space for a local business to display their goods. Property ownership is currently unresolved at 111 N. Lawler.

#### Economic Development group

Local leadership will move these projects forward. Businesses and residents alike will benefit from improvements.

### City of Postville

The city's help may be required to resolve the ownership question at 111. City material and labor could also be useful for elements of these projects.

### Chabad of NE IA

This Jewish group recently raised funds to remodel the building that now houses the Kosher Market and Jewish Welcome Center, and its leaders would like to improve the space next door at 110. The organization is also interested in a mural project on the south side of the building at 102 S. Lawler that houses its Jewish Welcome Center.

### Postville Community Garden

Small raised beds publicize the garden and can show what kinds of vegetables can be grown in this climate.

### Opportunities

#### Murals / art

A mural does not impinge on current or future uses, and give the opportunity to show unique history and contributions of Jewish community and / or Postville history in a way that can be unique, engaging, and iconic for the town. Public art investment will help to spur additional foot traffic and private investment in nearby downtown buildings. At the 111 site, the north wall of the building to the south tells the story of the town's growth. Part of a building that was originally constructed ¼ mile to the south in the German neighborhood of Cabbage Hill, it was moved to its current location along with the rest of the

building after the central business district had moved north to take advantage of proximity to the railroad. Interpretive panels or murals could help tell this story as a part of a larger project to use Postville's culture and history to attract visitors and businesses.

The Chabad of Northeast Iowa has expressed interest in putting a mural on the south wall of the building it rents. The property owner has given consent for this project. The theme of the mural will likely include elements of Jewish history, scenes from rural Jewish life in Postville or historical scenes from Poland, or a meaningful, positive phrase from the Chabad movement. This could be the first phase of an eventual renovation and reuse of the vacant lot adjacent to the center.

### Seating / gathering place

An outdoor gathering area for people of all backgrounds and ages in Postville to use was a priority for nearly everyone who engaged with the planning process. This includes compacting and paving the existing turf at 111 N. Lawler, with additional fill added as necessary and a paver system or poured concrete surface on at least part of the site. Stabilization of an adjacent brick wall will also be a high priority.

### Place-making elements

In order to improve aesthetics and create conditions for future reuse, planter boxes, lighting, and seating

could be added to create a new public space that could host food trucks or a beer garden.

### Community garden planter boxes

The Postville community garden, outside the planning area, is well-utilized. Using part of 110 for additional community garden planter boxes is a low-cost means of adding landscaping and will give more residents the chance to learn about and be involved in the existing community garden. Small raised-bed community gardens will promote the larger community garden and improve the aesthetics of the site and will improve the pedestrian experience for visitors to downtown Postville.

### Interpretive panel(s)

Alone or as a part of a larger walking tour of historical and cultural Postville sites, interpretive panels can help to establish more activity downtown and use a unique asset of the town. Potential topics include the Jewish community, kosher foods, the visit to town in 1916 of the Ringling Brothers circus, or John R Mott.



The building at 111 N. Lawler before demolition



The building at 110 S. Lawler during a circus parade in the 1910s

Image: Postville Historical Society



## 110. S. Lawler St.



Still image from animated video at [OurPostville.com](http://OurPostville.com) that shows various redevelopment sites throughout the planning area

Mural or public art



Planter beds



Interpretive panels



A simple downtown plaza in Whitewright, TX makes use of the remaining facade of a former building

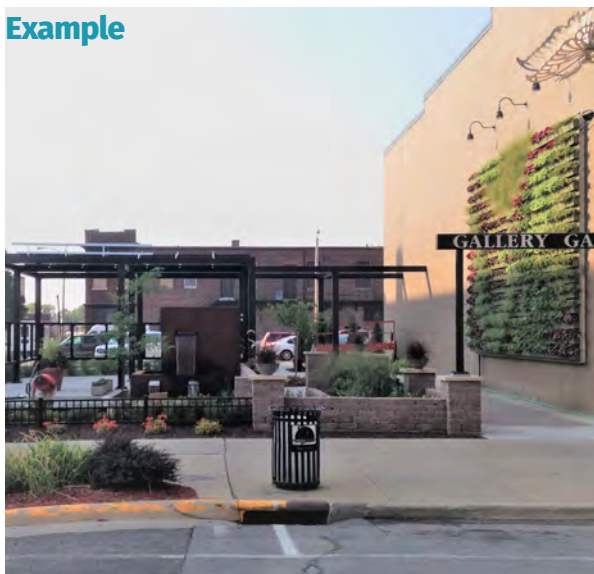
Photo: Alphabet Corporation / Google Maps, 2019



Iowa Falls used a vacant lot to increase parking capacity

## 111 N. Lawler St.

### Example



A new plaza in Marshalltown, IA includes a “living wall,” water feature, sculpture, native plants, and an elaborate pergola structure

### Example

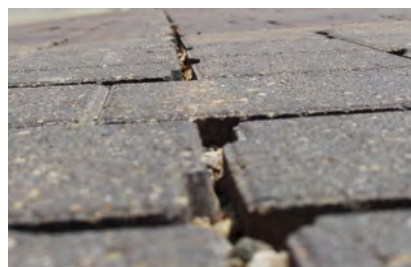


Another vacant lot in Iowa Falls became a pocket park



Still image from animated video at [OurPostville.com](http://OurPostville.com) that shows various redevelopment sites throughout the planning area

### Pavers



### Street furniture



### Business partnerships

#### Plaza Sponsored by

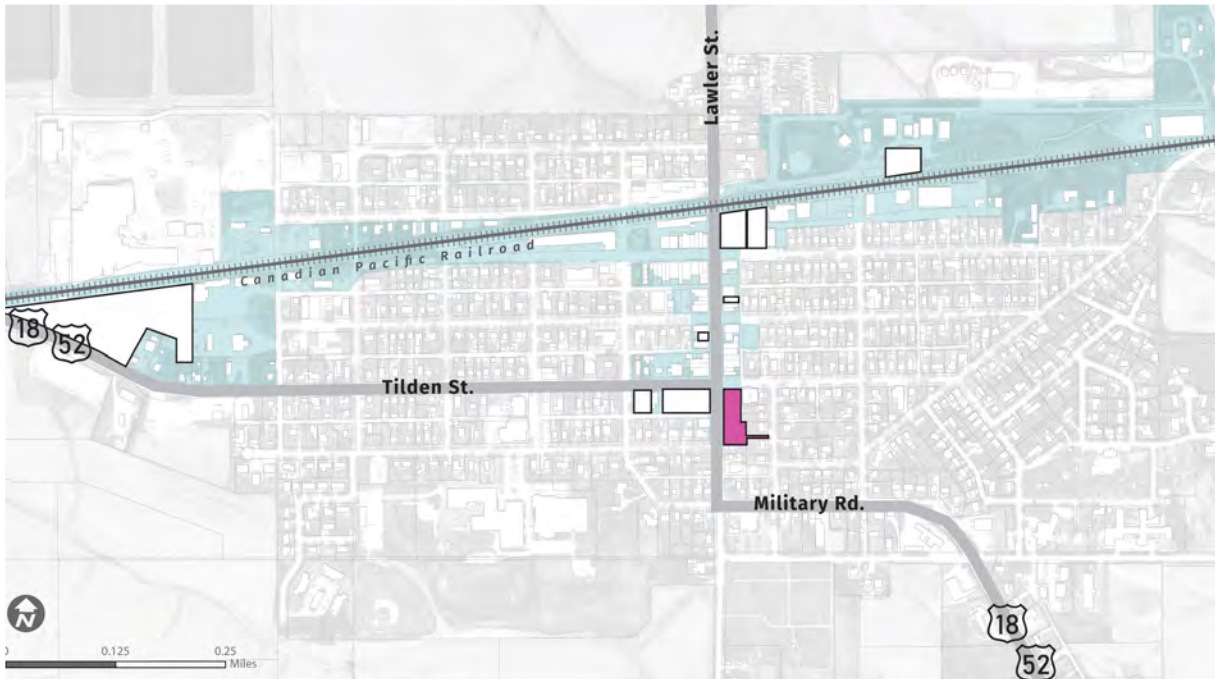
- Business Name
- Organization



# Priority Site: 204-251 S. Lawler

**Business**

Site Score: **13** Public Priority: **High**



## Goals

### Short-range

- Create a positive image for highway travelers arriving at the 4-way stop

### Medium-range

- Use location to create “gateway” for Driftless Area Scenic Byway

### Long-range

- Create an “anchor” at the gateway to both downtown Postville and the Driftless Area Scenic Byway with new business and visitor amenities

## Objectives

- Install wayfinding signage and DASB visitor information hub
- Determine site status & future land uses compatible with potential RECs, 15-year deed no-compete deed restriction, and site location
- Consolidate smaller parcels and remediate brownfield concerns on sites, including removal of existing structures
- Improve crosswalks and pedestrian access to site from the west and north
- Create areas for trees and landscaping to encourage foot traffic



Built in the 1950s, the service station at 204 S. Lawler went out of business in 2017. The underground storage tanks were removed shortly afterward. The rear part of building is currently used as an office for a local petroleum and heating oil vendor, while the front of the building, including the shop, remains vacant. An analog for reuse is Viroqua, Wisconsin's Kickapoo Coffee, which repurposed a gas station of similar vintage and layout in 2017 for a new coffee shop.

With parking space and a prominent location at the intersection of three highways and the beginning of the Driftless Area Scenic Byway, it has the potential to house a regionally-supported business that would be visited by Byway tourists, highway travelers, and locals alike. Deed restrictions stemming from the purchase and closure of this gas station by a regional chain would prevent the site from being used for any business that sells food or beverages.

Small lot sizes have been identified as a key constraint for redevelopment in central Postville. The buildings and lots to the south of 204 at 215, 225, and 251 S. Lawler were listed for sale in spring 2019. Combined, all four lots are nearly an acre in size. Given the prime location of the lots, brownfield remediation and parcel consolidation in this area are feasible long-term steps that could lead to redevelopment.

## Brownfield Area-Wide Plan Elements

	Time Frame			Strategy		
	Short	Mid	Long	Live	Biz	Visit
203-251 S. Lawler	Medium-term			Biz		
Phase 1 assessment(s)	•				•	
Site remediation (where/if needed)	•				•	
Signage and pedestrian improvements	•			•		•
Landscaping improvements	•			•		•
Driftless Area Scenic Byway hub		•			•	•
Electric Vehicle Charging Station		•			•	•
Site demolition / consolidation		•			•	
New commercial structure			•		•	



203-251 S. Lawler in 1910, during a Decoration Day parade

# Priority Sites: 204-251 S. Lawler

Two adjacent properties at 203 and 205 S. Lawler were recently sold to entrepreneurs. One new business, an auto repair and sales shop, opened in Winter 2019, while another, a coffee shop and deli, is scheduled to open in early 2020. Another business just south of 205 remained open, and a large, vacant building across the street was significantly remodeled with a new restaurant anticipated to open in early 2020. As a part of redevelopment, two underground gasoline storage tanks at 203 were removed in 2018. The original plans for this site outlined above may still have utility as a long-term catalog of potential needs and improvements, especially with regards to Driftless Area Scenic Byway information.



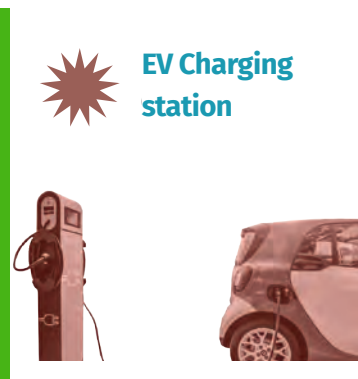
**Pedestrian safety**



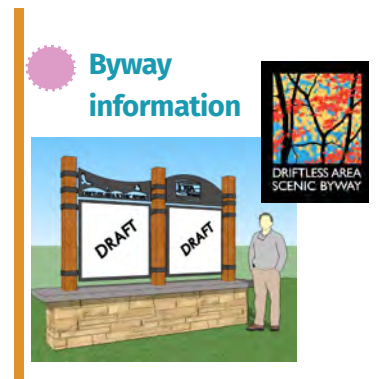
**Stormwater management**



**New Building site**



**EV Charging station**



**Byway information**



## Key challenges

### Brownfield-related

Historic resources and current land use indicates that all lots have been used for automobile services since at least the 1950s. Fuel tanks at 204 were removed in the summer of 2017 but contaminant plumes may still exist. No additional LUST sites are listed at these addresses in the Iowa DNR LUST database. A small leaking tank was removed in 1990 and given a certificate of No Further Action (NFA) by the Iowa DNR in the early 1990s. After fuel tanks were removed in 2017, the site was listed as NFA by Iowa DNR in 2019.

### Non-brownfield-related

Costs for parcel consolidation and building rehabilitation or demolition are likely to be significant, and deed restrictions on future re-use limit the potential businesses that could use the space.

## Key partners

### Business and property owners

Any additional development needs to be compatible with the existing businesses at this corner. Long a site for automobile services, it can continue to serve passing travelers with additional information about regional attractions and through enhanced aesthetics.

### Driftless Area Scenic Byway Board

This group can coordinate with local businesses, the Iowa DOT, and property owners to provide information and a gateway to the byway in Postville and raise funds to realize the project.

## Opportunities

### Landscaping in ROW & pedestrian safety improvements

Boulevard trees, stormwater-friendly landscaping elements, and planter boxes will all help to provide a more welcoming place. This will encourage both foot traffic to the business and greater use of the Driftless Area Scenic Byway.

### Interpretive sign site

Accessible by all modes of transportation, this spot is at the center of town, with good views of other potential landmark sites and businesses. Information at the site will help get people out of their cars and explore Postville.

### Driftless Area Scenic Byway hub

This is an alternative location for the byway informational hub. This location has the advantage of being on the southeast corner of the intersection, giving traffic from the US highways coming from the west a direct view of both the information hub and the beginning of the route on the far side of the intersection. A byway hub will need to either be located on public right-of-way or have the cooperation of the property owner.



Site use in the 1970s

### Reuse of existing building for new business or removal of structures

With three buildings built before 1978, all parcels could contain lead or asbestos. While there are numerous analogs for food-related businesses repurposing vintage gas stations in the area, this is not an option at this site until deed restrictions expire in 2032.

### Parcel consolidation

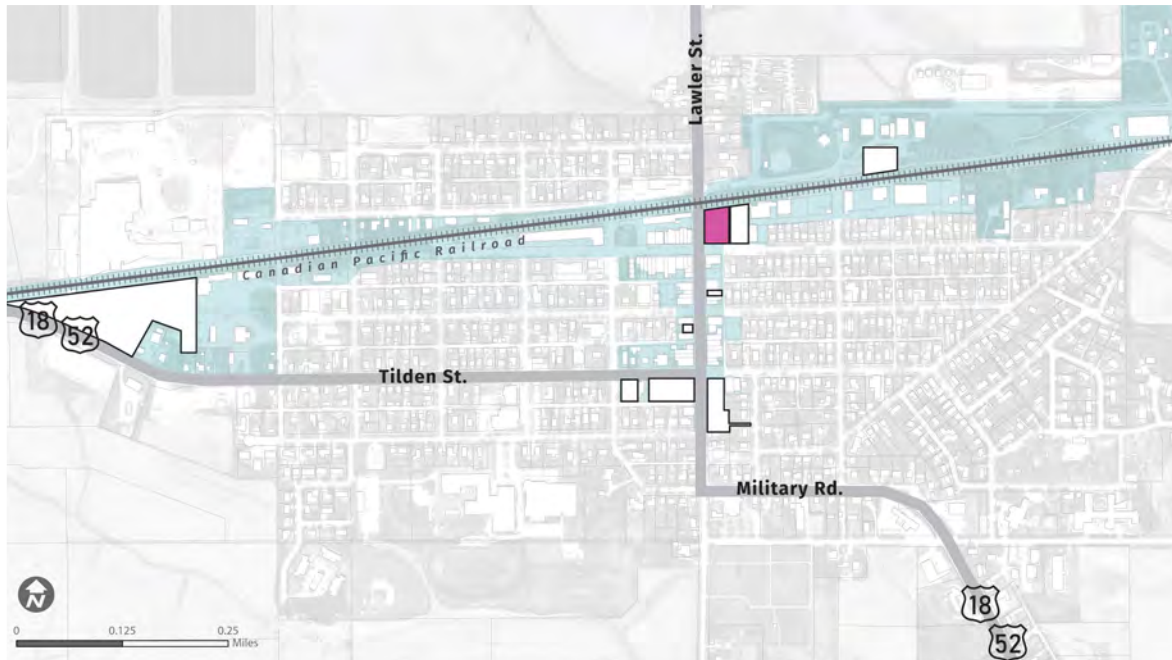
Depending on business conditions, consolidating these parcels and remediating any other RECs in the future could help to create a build-ready site for future developers that can compete with greenfield sites on the edge of the town.



## Priority Site: **101-109 E. Greene St.**

**Business**

Site Score: **n/a** Public Priority: **Low**



### Goals

#### Short-range

- Improve site aesthetics at prominent downtown intersection
- Provide space for new farmer's market

#### Medium-range

- Clear building and prepare for re-use.
- Determine any environmental hazards and plan for remediation

#### Long-range

- Create business incubator and/or job training center that meets the needs of diverse community and helps residents build employment skills
- Re-purpose prominent, centrally-located downtown site for business incubator and entrepreneurial hub
- Incubate small businesses and help existing entrepreneurs scale up
- Encourage more entrepreneurs and small businesses start and stay in Postville by providing key services and facilities in-town

### Objectives

- Utilize visibility of site to improve image of downtown Postville through public art and landscaping features
- Use urban stormwater best management practices on site as a demonstration for other communities and other local property owners
- Improve crosswalks and pedestrian access to site from downtown & RCD campus

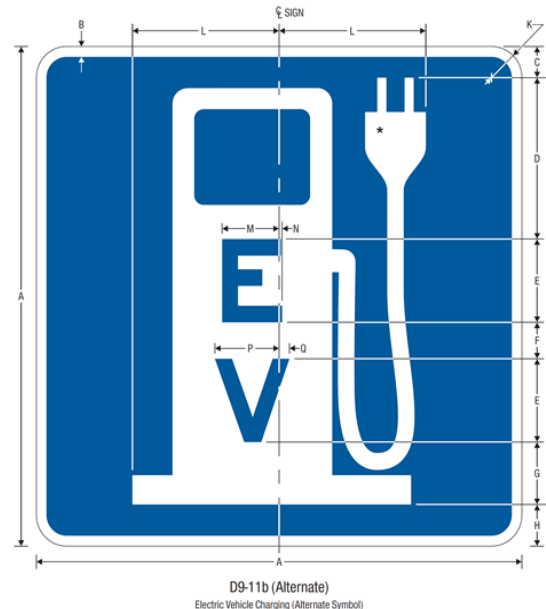
- Install public-use electric vehicle charger(s) on site or adjacent city-owned parking stalls
- Provide venue for future Farmer's Market along sidewalk and adjacent parking areas
- Prepare vacant building for re-use by removing debris and junk
- Determine environmental hazards or barriers to re-use and mitigate
- Create office, storage, and community kitchen space

This site has the potential to have a transformative effect on Postville's identity, economy, and community. This corner of Postville has been the locus of its activity and its historical heart almost since the incorporation of Postville. The oldest and largest commercial block downtown, a business operating in the same location since 1864, and city hall are across the street from the corner of Lawler and Greene Streets. Adaptation of vacant and historic properties to meet contemporary needs will ensure that this part of Postville continues to function as a regional hub in coming decades.

The Northeast Iowa RCD site hosts a regional stormwater management best practices demonstration site, which includes permeable paving, native landscaping, fruit trees, and bioretention elements. It also has a public art piece installed as part of the a Byways of Iowa art project in 2019. A large vacant lumber storage shed could be transformed into a hub for entrepreneurs or a job

## Brownfield Area-Wide Plan Elements

	Time Frame			Strategy		
	Short	Mid	Long	Live	Biz	Visit
Driftless Area Business Hub	Long-term			Biz		
Phase 1 assessment	•				•	
Site remediation (if applicable)		•			•	
Building reconstruction			•		•	
Parking and landscaping	•				•	
Business incubator & community kitchen			•	•	•	•
Farmers Market space	•			•	•	•
Electric Vehicle Charging Station		•			•	•



Prominent signage will highlight the availability of EV charging stations

Image: MUTCD, FHWA, USDOT

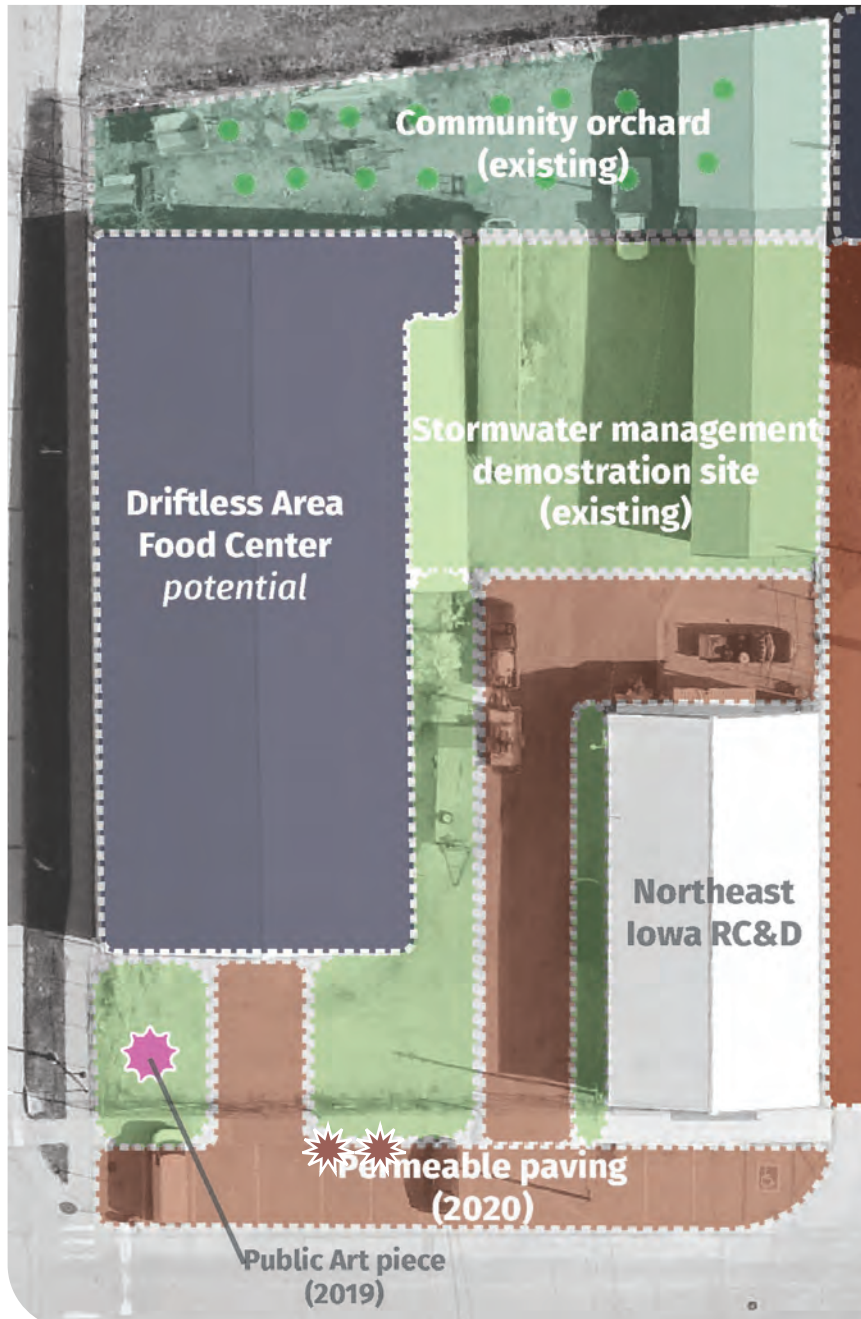


A Farmers Market will bring people downtown and provide access to fresh produce

Image: Iowa Valley RC&D / Jessica Rilling



## Priority Site: **101-109 E. Greene St.**



### Stormwater Demonstration site



### EV Charging station



### Interpretive panels



### Permeable paving



### Business center



### Iconic art piece







Potential for remodeled building with new art piece, permeable paving, and stormwater demonstration site



Newly planted bioretention areas, 2019



Interpretive panels give information about site elements in English & Spanish



A community orchard was planted in late 2018



A stained-glass globe was installed at the site in 2019 as part of a Byways of Iowa Foundation public art project

training center to meet the needs of local employers, or removed entirely for new construction.

The Driftless Area Food Enterprise Center idea is modeled on other facilities found in small towns in Wisconsin and other states and provides a regional facility for entrepreneurs creating value-added products from local agricultural products. The goal of the center is to help entrepreneurs get established and then scale up production by providing low-cost production, storage, and office spaces for rent, as well as business counseling and other services on-site. The center could attract entrepreneurs from around the region and build demand for diverse agricultural products, as well as assisting small businesses get to a point where they can become job creators.

The current pole shed building could either be cleared, with a new building constructed in its place, or completely renovated, with new concrete floors, secure doors, a renovated facade, new electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems, and windows. Facilities installed could include dry and cold storage areas, office space, a commercial kitchen, and a loading area.

## Key challenges

### Brownfield-related

The RCD site was used as a lumberyard for approximately 100 years prior to 1990 and may contain hazardous substances.

### Non-brownfield-related

Numerous items remain from previous use as lumber yard and storage facility. There are limited site access points for large vehicles.

## Key partners

### Northeast Iowa RCD

This Northeast Iowa nonprofit will be the key partner for site re-use. The organization has found creative reuse and economic development strategies for a variety of communities, individuals, and businesses throughout Northeast Iowa.

### USDA Rural Development

The USDA could provide financing through several different programs with either grants or loans.

### Allamakee County Economic Development

This organization will be an important part of promoting the center as a regional asset and a liaison to the Northeast Iowa Business Network, Northeast Iowa Community College, and regional business sector boards.

## Opportunities

### Building replacement or renovation

The current building on site will be repurposed as the business incubator and community kitchen or completely demolished, depending on the feasibility of reuse. Retaining the building will involve pouring a foundation, insulating the walls and roof, and installing electrical and plumbing systems. Exterior work includes creating a loading dock, aesthetic

improvements to the south and east facades, and public entryway points.

### Improvements to site

Many overall site improvements have already been undertaken, including a regional stormwater management best practices demonstration site with bi-lingual interpretive panels and native vegetation. A public art piece was also installed in Fall 2019.

### Farmers Market

A designated location for a weekly farmers market will establish the event as a reliable source for fresh produce and other locally-produced items. A market can provide an easy entry point to entrepreneurs, supplement existing grocery store offerings with additional locally-grown produce, create a new attraction for people from out of town, and provide a community-building exercise. Signage should be installed to show the market as a lasting and vital part of downtown Postville.



## Farmers Market

Many towns across Iowa have had success with local farmers markets. Not only is it an easy starting point for potential entrepreneurs who grow or prepare food, it's also an attraction and an opportunity to strengthen community ties. Northeast Iowa RCD is working with Postville residents to pilot a market in summer of 2020 at the RCD site downtown.



The farmer's market in Decorah has spurred several entrepreneurs to try their hands at selling value-added products in addition to locally-grown fruits and vegetables



## Business Incubators

Gays Mills, Wisconsin | Population: 525

### Gays Mills Economic Development

#### Kickapoo Culinary Center

USDA Rural Development

The Kickapoo Culinary Center follows a food-based economic development strategy that empowers entrepreneurs to test business ideas using locally-grown products.

Viroqua, Wisconsin | Population: 4,362

### Vernon County Economic Development

#### Food Enterprise Center

USDA Economic Development, local finance

Providing assistance and removing barriers for would-be entrepreneurs will help create demand for building space, build workforce skills, and create a stronger local economy.



# Priority Site: **Turner Hall**

Site Score: **n/a** Public Priority: **High**

Visit



## Goals

### Short-range

- Stabilize and maintain historic German-American social hall

### Medium-range

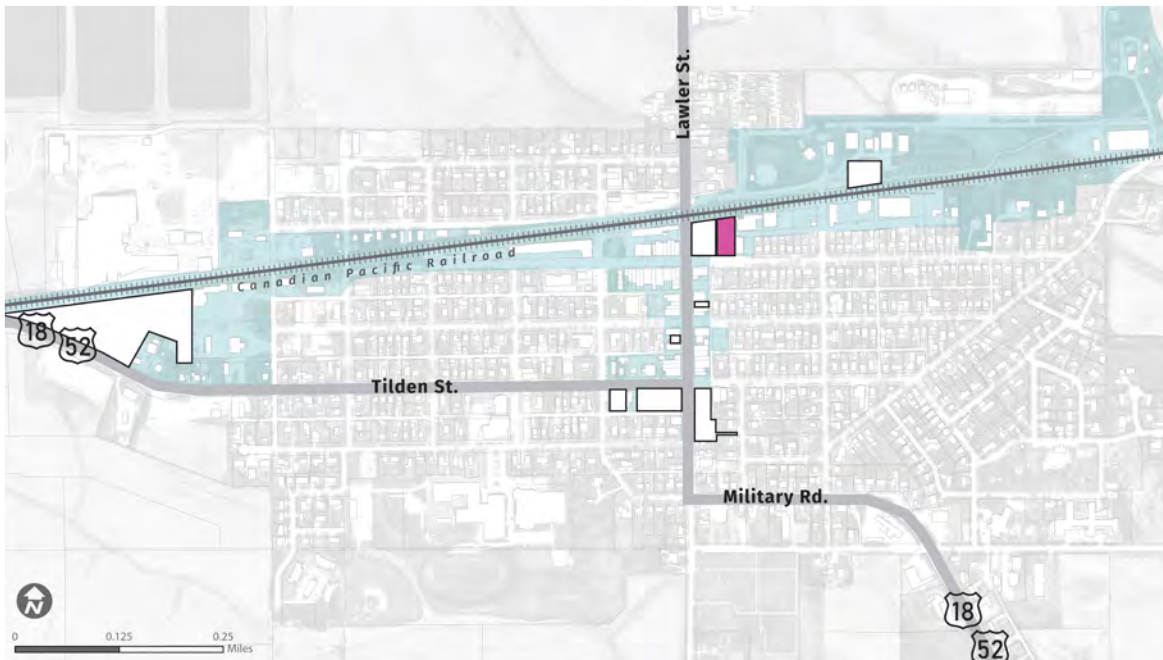
- Create exterior elements that invite visitation, use, and tell the story of the building
- Determine any environmental hazards and plan for remediation

### Long-range

- Showcase historical resources in Postville
- Provide central gathering space and provide a venue for emerging social needs while consolidating city-owned property.

## Objectives

- Create landscaping and plantings around Turner Hall to invite foot traffic
- Improve crosswalks and pedestrian access to site from downtown & RCD campus
- Provide additional historical interpretation of building
- Renovate building for additional new community uses



Turner Hall is the iconic Postville structure and the key to understanding its German-American history and identity. This building, which has few brownfield concerns aside from asbestos and lead paint, could be a key catalyst site that could help to meet community needs by becoming a hub for services, information, and visitors. Turner Hall is associated with John Mott, the German community, and city government. Postville currently has no displays of historical or cultural items and maintains three separate buildings. Moving the library to Turner Hall along with a historical museum could help to provide an attraction and re-use an important structure to serve a purpose similar to that for which it was constructed. Renovation of this landmark building could provide a catalyst for private investment in other downtown buildings, including brownfield sites, nearby.

Key challenges

Brownfield-related

Turner Hall likely contains lead paint and asbestos.

Non-brownfield-related

The only NRHP-listed building in the city, Turner Hall has been used for storage, offices, and private events as a rental space since city hall moved in 1991. Repurposing the building for additional and more intense public use will entail significant cost and alteration to interior spaces and exterior lot layout. ADA accessibility will be a key issue in repurposing the building.

Brownfield Area-Wide Plan Elements

	Time Frame			Strategy		
	Short	Mid	Long	Live	Biz	Visit
Turner Hall	Long-term			Visit		
Remediate lead and asbestos		•		•		•
Replace windows		•				•
Design and planning		•				•
Landscaping and signage		•				•
Demolition and rebuilding, west wing			•			•
New library and community meeting spaces			•	•		•



Turner Hall shortly after its opening in 1913

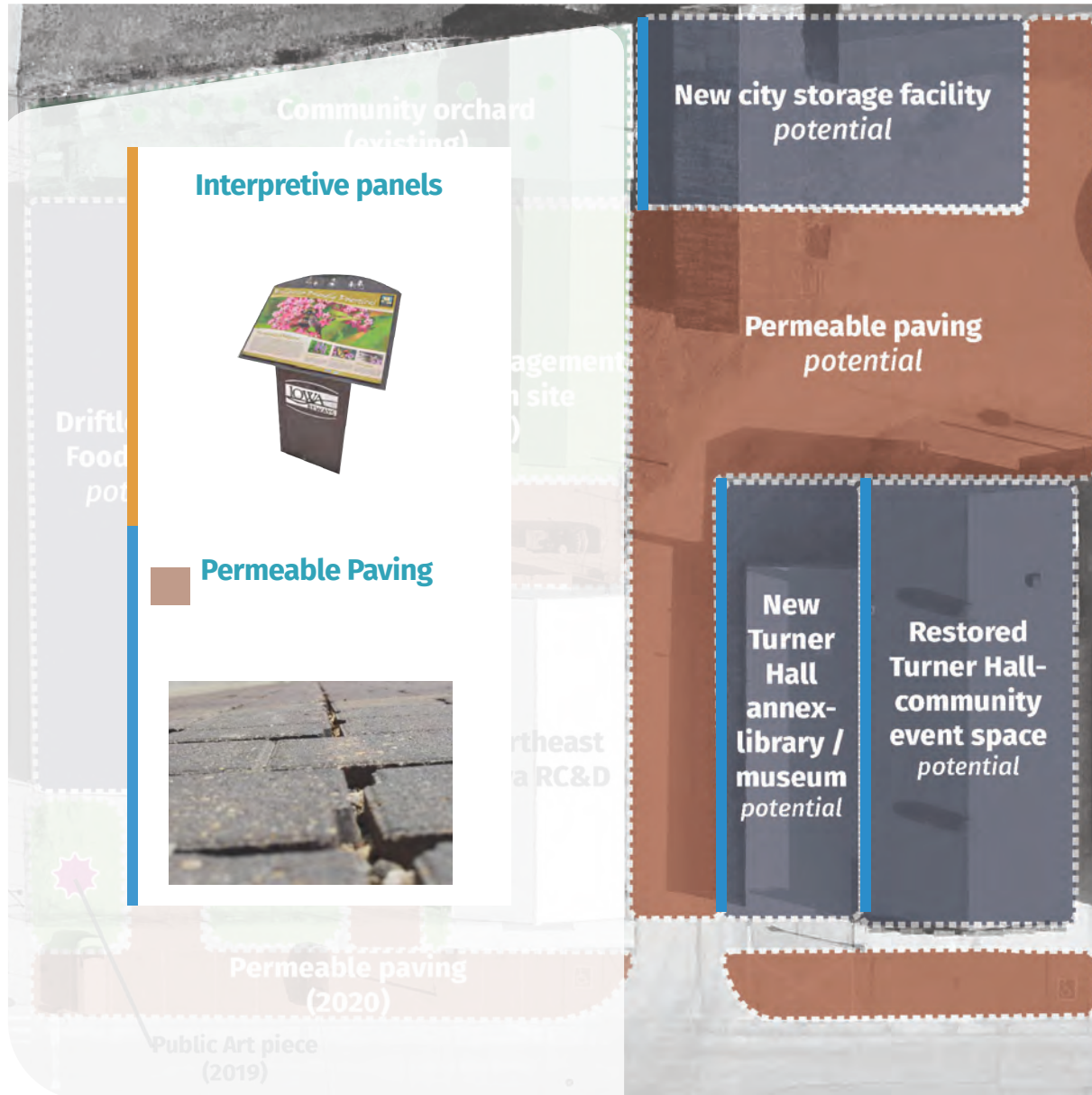


Detail of main entrance to the Hall

Image: Postville Historical Society



## Priority Site: **Turner Hall**



### Key partners

#### City of Postville

As the owner of this municipal asset and public library, the city will need to lead the effort, along with other organizational partners, to restore and repurpose the building.

#### Postville Historical Society

The society will have an opportunity to display historical photographs and artifacts that tell the story of the town and its people.

### Opportunities

#### Stabilization of exterior

Though the building has been well maintained, the roof and other elements are reaching the end of their useful life and will need to be replaced within 5-10 years. The funds spent on this work could be leveraged for additional funding to expand the scope of work to include additional interior elements or exterior lot improvements.

#### Improvements to site

The narrow alley adjacent to the building is used by large trucks to reach businesses to the east of downtown, despite the availability of two alternative on-street routes. Re-routing truck traffic, creating a landscaped link between the RCD garden and Turner Hall, and creating landscaping elements in front of the Turner Hall will create a more inviting public space for all users.



### Historical Museum

Though there are numerous photographs and items that have been stored by the Postville Historical Society that tell the story of the city's founding, growth, and culture, there is no place to display items for viewing by the general public. Providing display space within a newly-renovated Turner Hall creates a new attraction and point for civic pride.

### Library use

The current library building is limited in size and capacity for expansion, despite heavy usage by the Postville community. A newly renovated library inside Turner Hall could share space with the historical museum, eliminating the need for additional staff or hours. An historically-appropriate renovation could also provide space for private meeting rooms for use by ESOL classes and business counselors, and a larger community kitchen could be rented by food-based entrepreneurs.

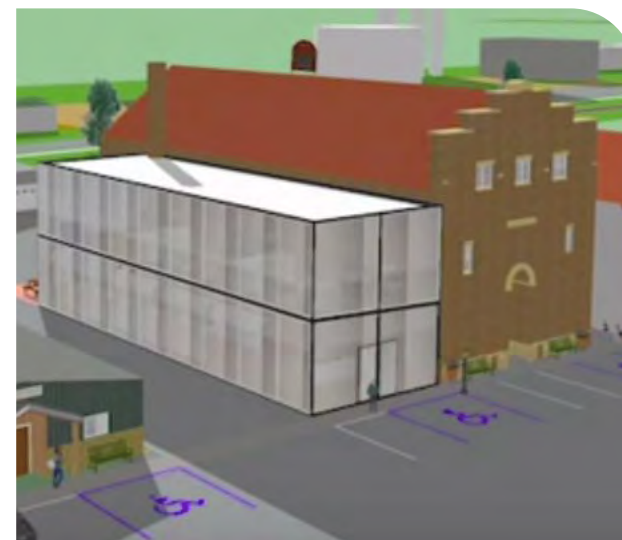
### Meeting rooms

Postville currently has no spaces that are available for small-group meetings, such as English Language classes and High School Equivalency Diploma classes. These classes are often forced to meet in local churches for lack of a better space, but this creates problems because many of the students are not church members and do not feel comfortable meeting in a church space. Creating new meeting spaces in the library would help to alleviate this problem

and provide a “neutral” space that people from all religious and cultural affiliations feel comfortable using.

### Social services hub

Many services available to residents, such as the food pantry, SNAP, children's health services, and unemployment assistance, are scattered at various sites and at different times of the day, week, and month. Providing a centralized hub for these services will eliminate confusion for beneficiaries and promote collaboration between sectors.



A basic concept of how a library space could be added to the western side of the building



An REO Speedwagon owned by the Postville Fire Department

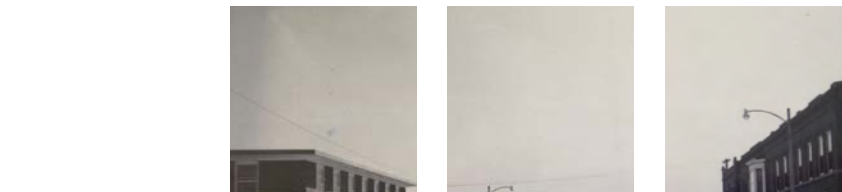
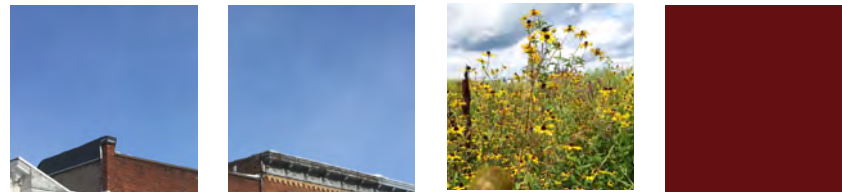
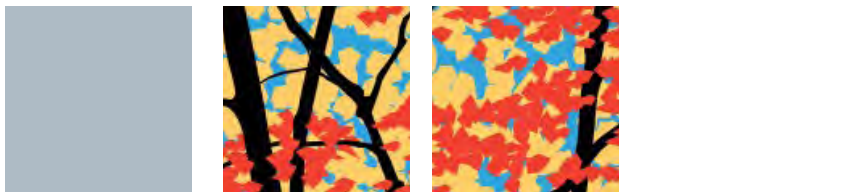
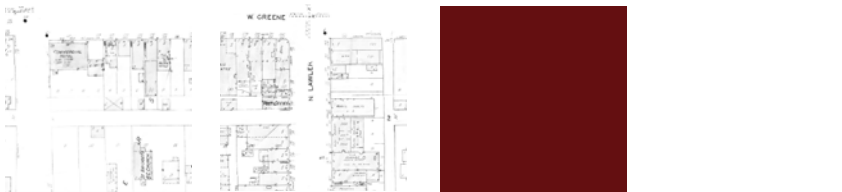
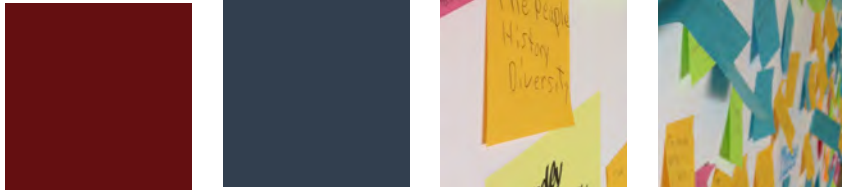




# Postville, Iowa

## Area Plans

### Brownfield Area-Wide Plan





# Transportation

## Goals

### Short-range

- Use creative placemaking to determine what kinds of changes might be appropriate and supported in Postville

### Medium-range

- Work with regional and community partners, including the Iowa DOT, to determine the feasibility of pedestrian safety elements along state and federal highway routes in town
- Finalize priority walking and bicycle connections in town
- Create truck routes through and around the city to separate heavy traffic from other road users

### Long-range

- Extend sidewalk network to connect with future trails or extensions
- Create connections via trail or sidewalk routes to disconnected areas of the city
- Connect existing and future trails to other communities

### Objectives

- Ensure direct access to major industrial and business sites through designated routes
- Install pedestrian safety features downtown and at key crossing sites
- Extend existing or create a new trail that connects Lull's Park, schools, and other destinations

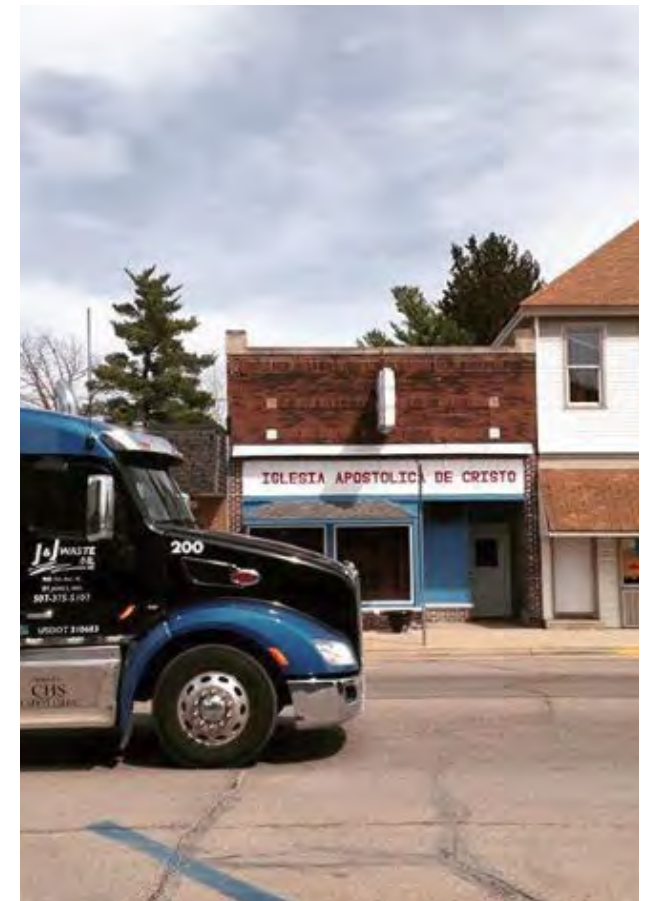
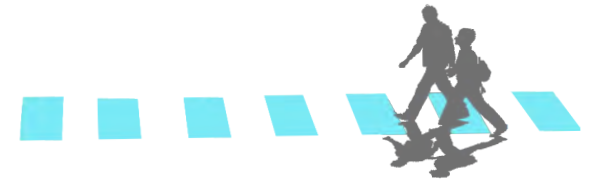
Area-wide transportation proposals work together to ensure that the transportation network in Postville

functions well for all users. Active transportation & recreation improvements will benefit residents of Postville who do not or cannot drive, as well as create conditions that encourage physical activity. Designated routes will help industry move goods efficiently while avoiding conflicts with other users.

### Trail extensions

Communities throughout the Midwest, including neighboring towns in Northeast Iowa, have invested in trail systems that provide both a recreational asset and a safe, protected option for walking and bicycling to and from destinations. Postville's existing trail could serve both purposes if extended in any direction. This amenity will help Postville to be more regionally competitive for residents and provide existing residents with a new recreational option. Long-range trail plans could include connections to an isolated residential area to the northeast of Postville, the city's largest park, schools, and frequently-used businesses via a loop trail. Right-of-way acquisition and funding sources for long-term maintenance are implementation challenges.

Recreation trails in the region are heavily used, especially if they connect communities or regional destinations. Trail counts from 2018 for the Prairie Farmer Trail connecting Calmar to Ridgeway in nearby Winneshiek County averaged 122 per weekend day from June to August.<sup>12</sup> Postville trail extensions could serve a transportation purpose for people who



Transportation and human-scaled buildings downtown

live in housing or work at places that are disconnected from the existing sidewalk network.

The 2019 Regional Planning Agency Long-Range Transportation Plan notes that while the existing Postville trail is not a part of the Iowa Department of Transportation “backbone” trail network in the region,<sup>13</sup> there are opportunities for expansion. One extension could connect the existing trail to housing units that are currently only accessible by car, creating a safe pedestrian and bicycle route to shops, jobs, and services in town. Another would connect Postville with Clermont along a former railroad right-of-way, part of which has been converted to a trail near that community.<sup>14</sup>

### Pedestrian network

There are two primary reasons for Postville to invest in improving pedestrian conditions: the high percentage of residents who are unable to drive, and the benefits to residents, visitors, and businesses of having more foot traffic downtown. As a small town with few outlying areas not connected to the pre-1930 street grid, Postville has a great potential to increase the number of trips made on foot for the majority of its residents by creating a pleasant and safe pedestrian network. This proposal builds on Safe Routes to Schools planning undertaken in 2010–2012 and fits with other proposals for downtown streetscape and safety as well as stormwater management and landscaping. A city-wide pedestrian network will have safety measures such as prominently marked or

## Walkability and Great Streets

Jeff Speck, an urban planner who has studied pedestrian networks and urban “walkability,” notes four components to what he classifies as “great streets:”

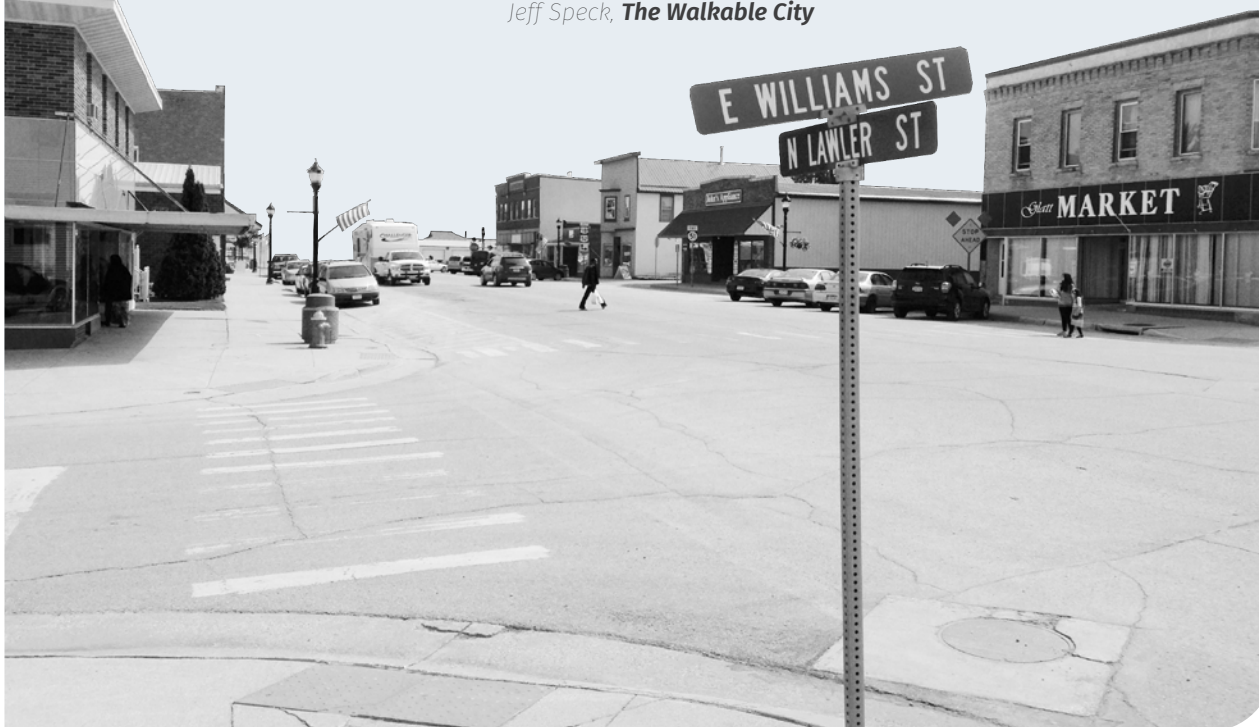
**Useful.** There must be places to go that are worth going to.

**Safe.** People need to feel safe visiting the street.

**Comfortable.** Time spent in the street needs to be pleasant and enjoyable.

**Interesting.** The street can’t be monotonous, but instead needs to have some life to it.

*Jeff Speck, The Walkable City*



raised crosswalks, 5' or greater sidewalks, pedestrian bumpouts, and possibly lower speed limits, and will also include amenities such as wayfinding signs, street trees, sitting areas, landscaping elements, and interpretive signage. These amenities are particularly important on streets that are also federal or state highways, or that have a high degree of commercial traffic. Currently, highways act as barriers and discourage walking to destinations, even though the city is only 1.5 miles across at its widest point.

### Key partners

Iowa Department of Transportation. The Iowa DOT manages highways that run through downtown

Postville, and would need to approve any changes to the roadways.

### City of Postville

The city will be responsible for managing infrastructure projects.

### Local businesses

Involving business leaders will be essential to ensure that investments are supported.

### Key challenges

#### Expense

Instead of a single large-scale project, community leaders can invite the public to comment on small

tests of potential changes to street layout or turning radii. Designs can be modified, and a schedule of improvements can be included with street overlay, rebuilding, or striping. The city may find more willingness to adapt to changes if property tax levies are not changed to fund them.

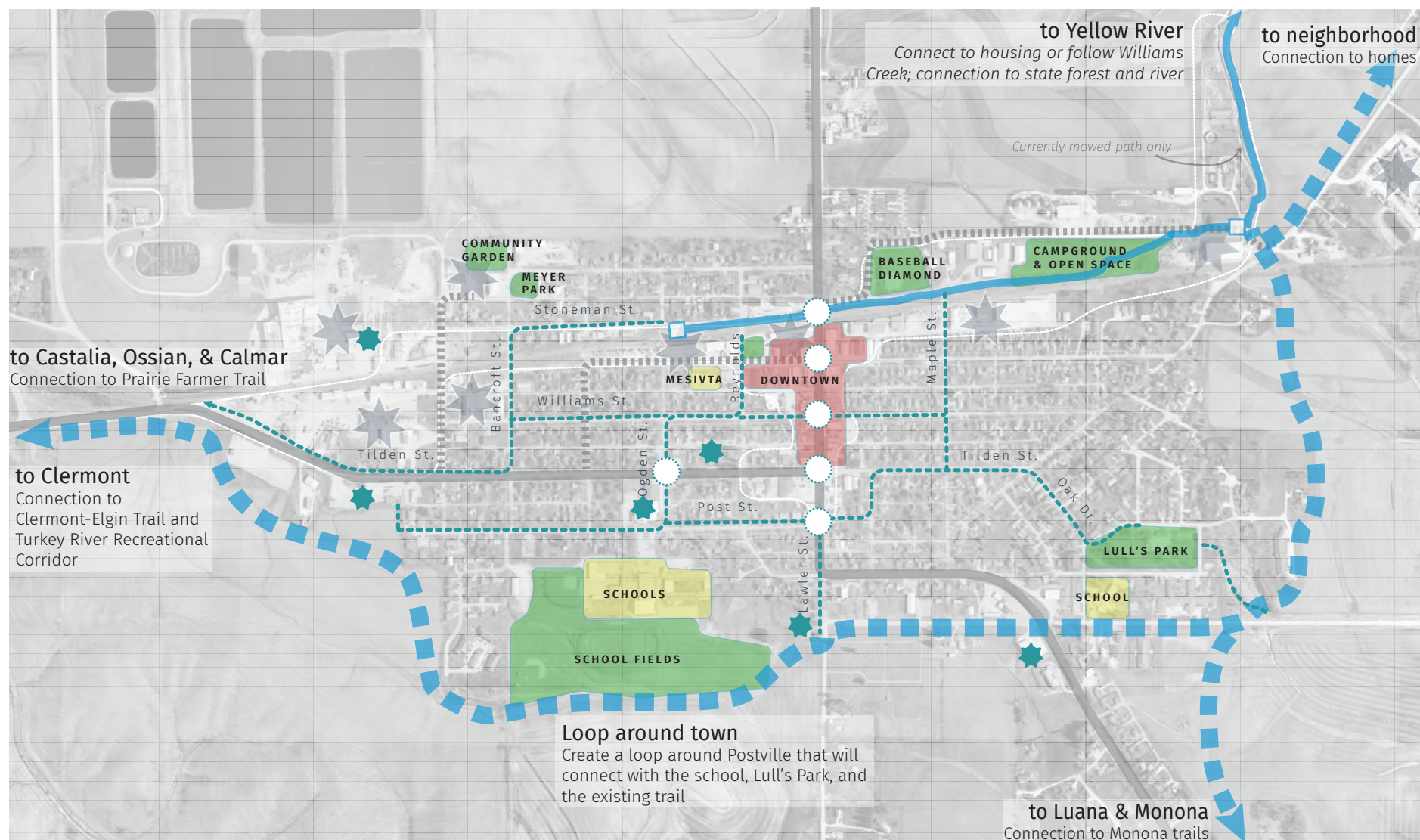
### Jurisdiction

Postville's "main street" and primary roads are under the jurisdiction of the Iowa DOT.





## Transportation and recreation



- Existing Trail    - - - Pedestrian network    — Highway
- ■ Potential Trail    ○ Priority intersection    - - - - - Potential Truck Route
- ★ Point of interest    ★ Truck traffic generator

## Opportunities

### Crosswalk improvements and signage

Crosswalks are heavily used by residents of all ages to get to and from recreational areas, religious buildings, downtown businesses, and schools. Traffic and salt/sand applications during winter degrade paint quickly. Marking crosswalks with prominent signs, including flashing signals, and permanent markings such as stained or patterned concrete will make the crosswalks more visible and encourage drivers to yield to pedestrian traffic.

### New or improved connections between trail and sidewalks

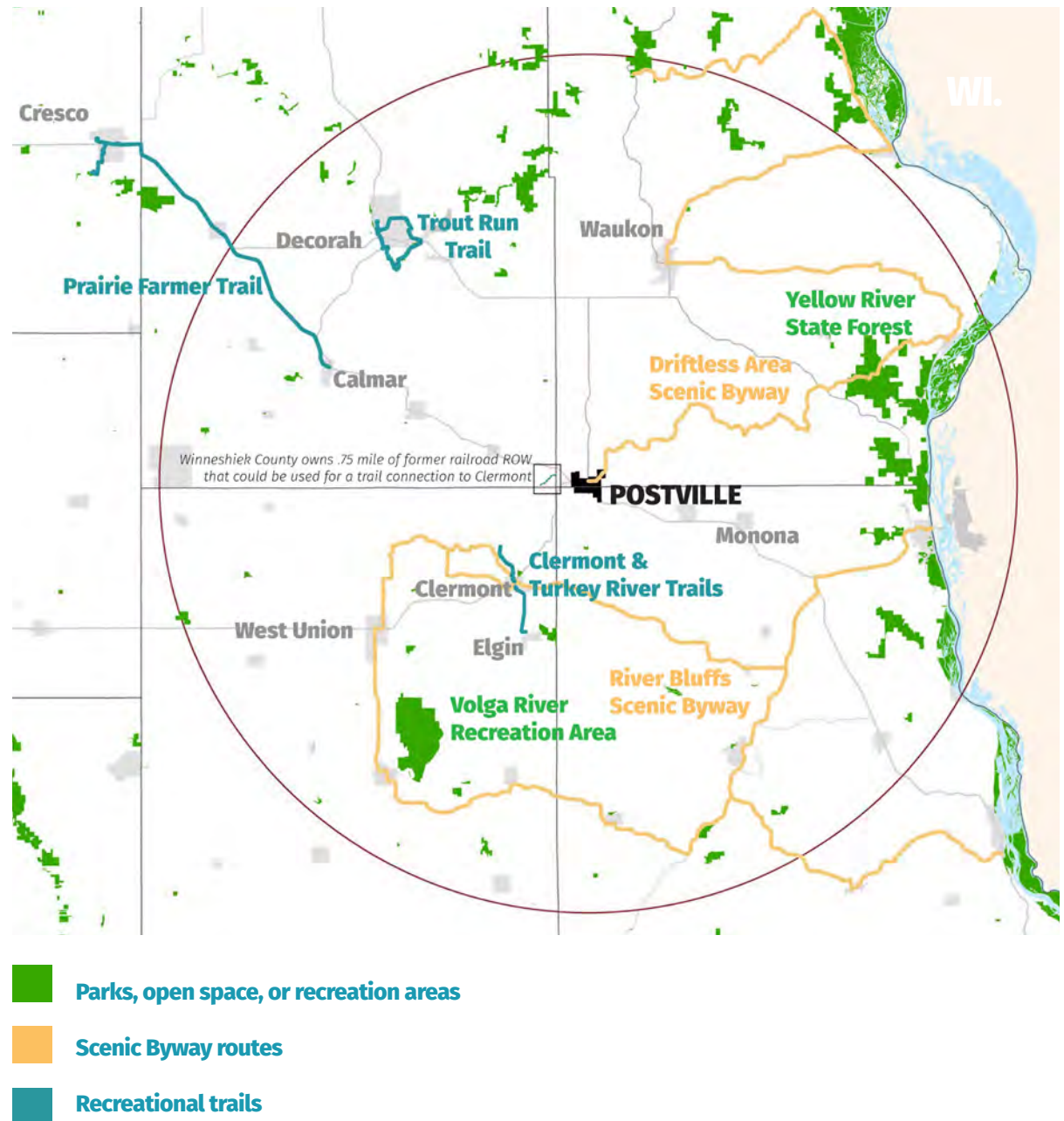
Connecting Postville's existing and future trail to existing points of interest, sidewalks, and pedestrian routes make it more useful for residents encourages more recreational activity and makes more areas of the city accessible without using a car. This will be part of a larger pedestrian route network through the town.

### Bumpouts and visibility improvements

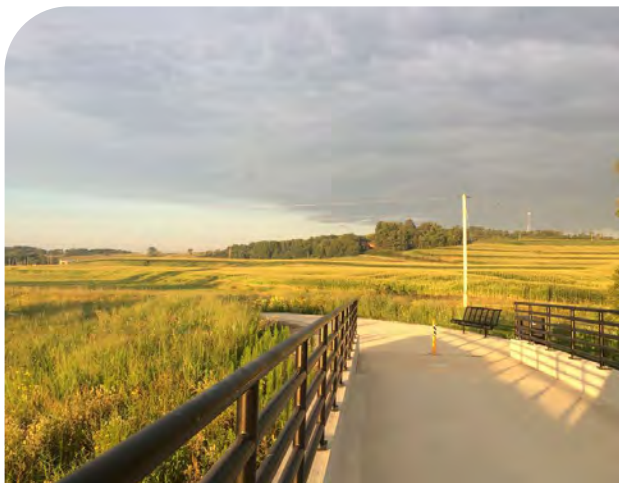
Safer corner crossings, as well as aesthetic improvements to prominent sites, can be created by installing curb "bump-outs" at intersections to shorten crossing distances and enhance the visibility of pedestrians, especially children. Safer and more inviting walking conditions will encourage more pedestrian traffic downtown.

## Proximity and connections to recreation

Recreational amenities within a 25-mile radius of Postville



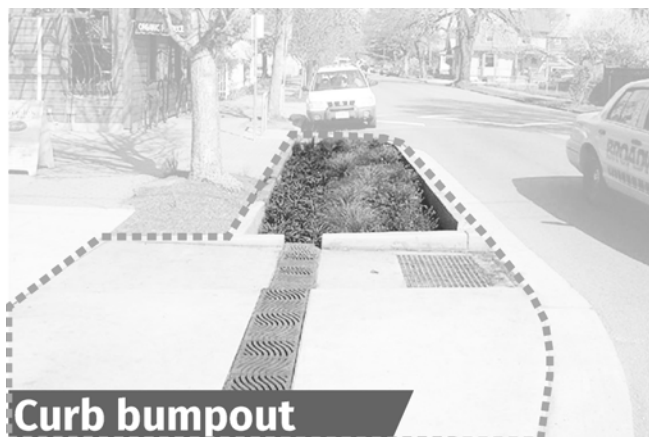




**Traffic restriction**

Pedestrian safety enhancements increase visibility for people on foot, create greater barriers between vehicles and people, and create slower speeds through designs. Higher vehicle speeds are correlated with greater fatality rates in vehicle-pedestrian crashes. A few of the infrastructure improvements that cities have made to improve pedestrian safety include traffic restrictions, curb bumpouts, and raised crosswalks.

The Turkey River Recreational Corridor, above, connects the communities of Elgin and Clermont along the Turkey River. The Prairie Farmer Trail, below, connects Calmar and Cresco. Planning is underway to extend both of these trails to connect nearby towns. With a smooth, separated surface, the trails serve as both recreation and as a potential commuter route between towns during warmer months. During the winter, snowy trails are used for cross-country skiing and for snowmobiling.



**Curb bumpout**



**Raised crosswalk**



Electric vehicle charging stations are not common in rural northeast Iowa, despite having two major US highways and a robust local renewable energy sector. Adding a charging point for travelers will help to increase the number of people who stop and spend time in Postville, and send a signal that Postville is a community that is well-connected to current transportation trends.





### Electric vehicle charging stations

Charging stations for electric vehicles will serve travelers on US highways going through town. Downtown charging stations, along with additional businesses, programming and events, and other improvements to the walkability of downtown Postville will encourage more people to stop and spend time and money downtown, encouraging additional investment in the area by activating the space with a greater number of people on foot.

### Wayfinding

Key points of interests will be signed in a way that users of all transportation methods- bicycle, pedestrian, automobile- will easily be able to find their destinations. Points of interest include the schools, library, downtown, trail, campground, prairie, Dreamland ballroom, recreation center, community garden, parks, and swimming pool.

### Designated truck routes

Light industry and value-added commodities will continue to be the primary drivers of Postville's economy. Well-maintained, signed truck routes ensure that the city can meet the needs of business and industry while also pursuing its goals of making a safer and more pleasant experience for pedestrian and bicycle users.



Postville's diversity made it one of the most popular stops along the 2017 RAGBRAI route





Postville's diversity made it one of the most popular stops along the 2017 RAGBRAI route



# Downtown Postville

## Goal for area

Revitalize downtown Postville as a commercial hub, regional attraction, and heart of the community.

## Short-range

- Create a positive image for highway travelers through downtown

## Medium-range

- Improve the condition of downtown buildings
- Increase the number of businesses open downtown

## Long-range

- Make downtown the focus of Postville civic life
- Create a comfortable, safe environment for residents and visitors of all ages and backgrounds

- Renovate and improve downtown apartments to create additional housing options and provide for more downtown residents

## Objectives

- Emphasize connection to regional Byway through signage and visitor hub
- Use memorable public art or historical markers to create identity for Postville at key sites
- Create better experience when walking in downtown Postville through pedestrian safety measures, landscaping features, signage, and façade improvements
- Renovate buildings to house new business
- Incentivize the renovation of upper-story housing units, including remediation of lead paint and asbestos hazards
- Create public spaces for events at key sites

Downtown is the heart of cities and towns of all sizes. Postville has lost businesses, residents, and activity to peripheral sites and to neighboring towns as rural areas have increasingly become regional economies. Many small business owners are working hard to keep downtown as the center of the community, but civic leaders and businesses can also work together to make improvements that will increase the number of people stopping in and spending time and money downtown. As the literal and symbolic center of the community, the health of downtown sends a signal about the viability and desirability of Postville. In order to build a regional niche and ensure the success of local entrepreneurs, investments in brownfield and grayfield downtown properties will need to capitalize on Postville's assets while retaining its affordable advantage and cultural diversity. People who stop in Postville and get out of their cars are more likely to visit local businesses and spend money. There are a lot of directions that downtown improvements can take, and it's up to Postville leadership to determine what will best serve the needs of their community.





## Downtown Postville



- Building individually eligible for NRHP listing
- Contributing building to potential NRHP district
- Building meets CDBG standards for facade rehabilitation grant
- Building that meets both CDBG and NRHP criteria
- Byway connection
- Gateway area
- Upper-story housing existing, former, or potential
- Colored or patterned concrete
- Landscaped bump-outs
- Public art piece

### Support investment in historic buildings

Downtown buildings have the potential to house a new generation of businesses and entrepreneurs. These businesses can help grow Postville, attract more visitors, and bring more residents to the town. Re-using historical structures ensures that they will continue to help define the character of the community into the future.

### Capitalize on regional tourism

Creating a distinct district and linking Postville to regional tourism resources will increase the number of visitors and create more demand for goods and services.

### Define gateway areas

Gateway areas define a distinct area or district, like downtown. Improving major intersections will give definition to downtown and help orient visitors. **People are already passing through downtown Postville- show them why they should stop here.**

### Create a safe, appealing place to walk

Downtown Postville must be appealing to residents and outsiders as a place to spend time in order to be competitive for shoppers and visitors. Creating points of interest and a pleasant, safe place to walk are important infrastructure investments that can boost downtown.

### Support investments in housing

Local employers have identified high-quality housing as a critical need for Postville and the region. Renovating existing second-story units preserves historical buildings, brings additional people (customers) downtown, and helps meet a housing need.

## Key challenges

### Brownfield-related

Many smaller brownfield sites exist that have land use histories involving automobile service, railroad storage, or other industrial uses, but building age also indicates that hazardous materials are likely present throughout downtown Postville, especially lead and asbestos. Buildings throughout downtown have unutilized upper-story apartments which could generate income when hazards are properly remediated.

### Non-brownfield-related

Property value and demand for retail space will be ongoing challenges for financially viable building renovation or construction downtown. There is limited support within local governments for large-scale infrastructure investments or changes, and

limited financial or organizational capacity to lead large initiatives.

## Key partners

### Property owners

Property owners will prioritize the projects that will help to bring additional visitors to downtown and value to their properties.

### Our Postville

A local economic group can lend time and fundraising experience to projects.

### City of Postville

The city will be a key partner in organizing- and possibly financing- various projects.

## State of Iowa

The State of Iowa has many programs targeted toward rural community revitalization and downtown-specific projects, including public art.

### Private partners

Inclusive, innovative projects that reflect the Postville population- young and diverse- may be eligible for funding from private partners.

## Opportunities

### Streetscape and pedestrian safety

Many elements can be incorporated into a strategy that encourages people to stop downtown, walk around, and visit stores and attractions.

- Short-range placemaking elements: Temporary benches, planters, pedestrian safety improvements, and other elements can help make a more inviting place for residents and visitors alike. Public art, “pop-up” temporary storefronts, and events foster community involvement and can help residents and entrepreneurs envision potential long-term changes and set goals for how downtown can look and function.
- Long-range landscaping and pedestrian safety changes: Investments in permanent pedestrian safety and landscaping, including stormwater management best practices such as planter boxes and permeable paving systems, can be informed by temporary placemaking interventions to see what kinds of changes are effective in attracting



Historic building with original fenestration, corbeling, and cornice. A “ghost sign” for French Oil Company is also visible

additional people and investments downtown and which kinds of changes need to be re-examined or reworked.

### **Historical walking tour and interpretation**

A series of well-designed, compelling informational displays will tell the story of Postville's past, including the Neutral Ground, Joel Post, early businesses, German immigration and culture, and current diversity.

### **Byway entrance and hub**

Visitors passing through Postville may not realize that it is the beginning of the Driftless Area Scenic Byway. Signage and a visitor information hub will encourage people to stop and spend time in Postville.

### **Landscaping and trees**

Landscaping, especially trees, creates a place where people want to spend time.

### **Farmers Market infrastructure**

Integrating Postville into regional markets, attracting people and highway travelers to a central Postville location, providing a community event, allowing residents to test out business ideas, and giving space for vendors to meet the need for fresh produce are some of the benefits of hosting a farmer's market. Infrastructure for a market would include dedicated accessible and visible lot space, space for signage, and space for visitors to rest and relax.

### **Public Art**

Investments in murals and sculptures that reflect Postville's current diversity and its past will generate activity downtown and contribute to a more positive image of the town. Innovative art has the potential to attract visitors and could lead to further investments in downtown buildings and businesses.

- Murals: Small communities throughout the Midwest have invested in mural programs that assist property owners with the costs associated with hiring an artist to design and execute a mural on their property. Blank walls throughout downtown Postville provide a ready context for projects.
- Public art pieces: Iconic art pieces will lend a greater definition to the downtown area. Sculpture and other forms of interactive public art can be used to create an attraction and activate a vacant or underutilized space. The city of Belle Plaine, Iowa, activated a public space and turned a vacant lot into an interactive attraction by installing an artist-designed "sound park" that encourages children to explore and experiment.

### **Building improvements**

These changes will help ensure that downtown buildings can compete for new tenants and encourages entrepreneurs to set up shop downtown. Creating viable and enticing "white box" spaces that are ready for business tenants will meet a critical need, but creative thinking that requires a variety of funding sources and partners.

• Brownfield hazards remediation: These can serve as a primary impediment to reuse of a site because of the cost of remediation and fears about exposure to liability. Building renovation and reuse can take advantage of several state and federal programs if local support and matching funds can be secured.

• Storefront renovation: Renovating storefronts can help to create conditions that invite additional investment. Though this can largely be a cosmetic transformation, it can help set the stage for larger projects and improve the aesthetic experience of a community, which forms a "first impression" for many visitors and highway travelers.

• Building renovation or reconstruction: One of the most common barriers for new businesses is the cost of renovating or rebuilding space. Within a community of limited financial means, an organization dedicated to rebuilding commercial spaces to rent out to entrepreneurs can overcome this barrier while preserving the town's history and creating infrastructure that will be useful for decades into the future.

• Upper-story housing. New or remodeled housing units can both remediate potential health hazards from building materials such as lead-based paint and asbestos. New housing units will meet the needs of local businesses and help employers attract and retain residents locally.

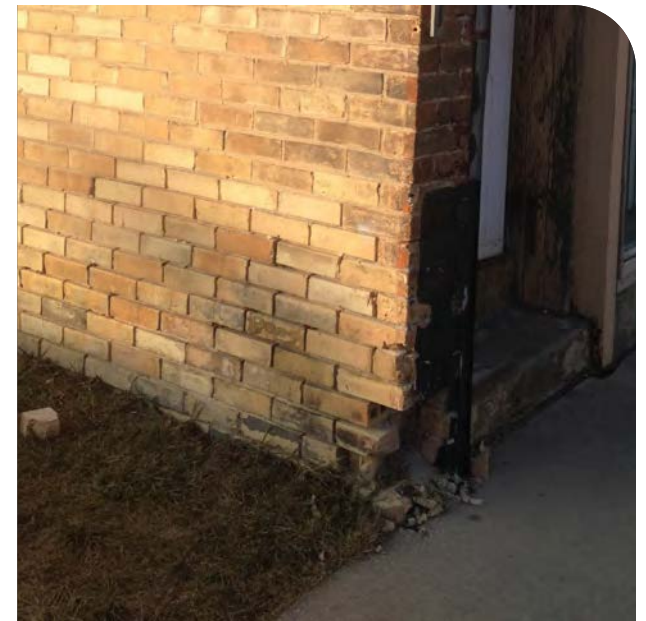


## Historic district

Capitalizing on unique or unusual historical resources is a common economic development strategy for small, rural communities. One tool that many communities have pursued is listing historic districts or structures on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), which can increase the number and amount of financial incentives or credits available for investors in the structures. Turner Hall is the only Postville building on the NRHP. In the absence of large-scale private investment, it may not make sense to devote resources to the NRHP nomination process. Few buildings in downtown Postville retain their full historic architectural integrity, and these buildings- with the exception of several on West Greene Street- are scattered throughout downtown, making the establishment of a historic district difficult. Utilization of tax credits and grants available to National Register properties requires a high level of expertise and a commitment to rigorous restoration standards that can add significant costs to a project.

Iowa Economic Development Authority has funds available through the Community Development Block Grant Program that can be used for façade renovation and upper-story housing construction. While this program is also lengthy and requires significant financial commitment from private and local partners, it could make sense as a part of a long-term redevelopment strategy for downtown. The funds are only available if a district is found to have at least a minimum percentage of buildings contributing to “slum and blight” conditions.

Postville has a history and historic resources that can contribute to its identity for decades to come. Public art, interpretive panels, exhibitions, and other cultural projects should be used to call attention to historic resources and to tell the story of the town in a way that the action of designating a historic district alone cannot.



**Building condition in downtown Postville varies, but masonry problems are acute in several buildings, including both spalling and deterioration of brick and erosion of mortar. Many communities offer financial incentives or assistance to property owners to maintain good building conditions downtown.**

## Eligibility for Historic Preservation Programs



- Building individually eligible for NRHP listing
- Contributing building to potential NRHP district
- Building meets CDBG standards for facade rehabilitation
- Building that meets both CDBG and NRHP criteria

**46**

Buildings in potential NRHP district

**23 / 50%**

Contributing buildings to potential NRHP district

**13 / 28%**

Could meet CDBG slum & blight criteria



## Downtown Success Stories



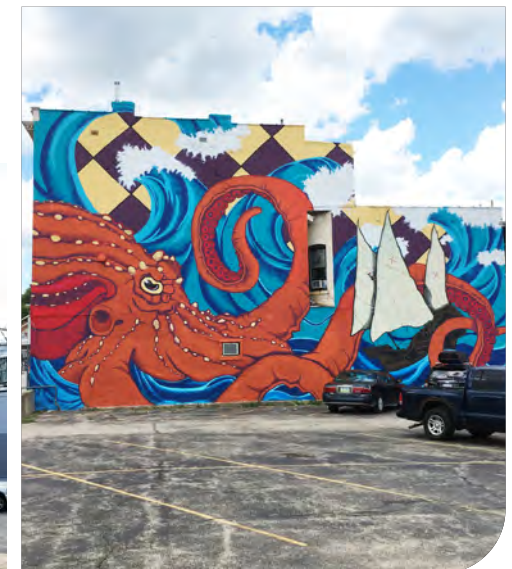
### State Center, Iowa: Downtown Building Renovation

State Center has remodeled many buildings in its historic downtown, all of which are now home to new or expanded businesses. Despite its small population, the town was able to pull together local resources, state funding, and volunteer labor to complete projects.

*Images: State Center Economic Development*

### Dubuque, Iowa: Downtown Murals

With a local art group, VOICES, Dubuque has brought artists from around the world to paint murals on buildings throughout its historic downtown. These murals vary in theme, size, and style, and there are currently enough to merit an entire mural walking tour.

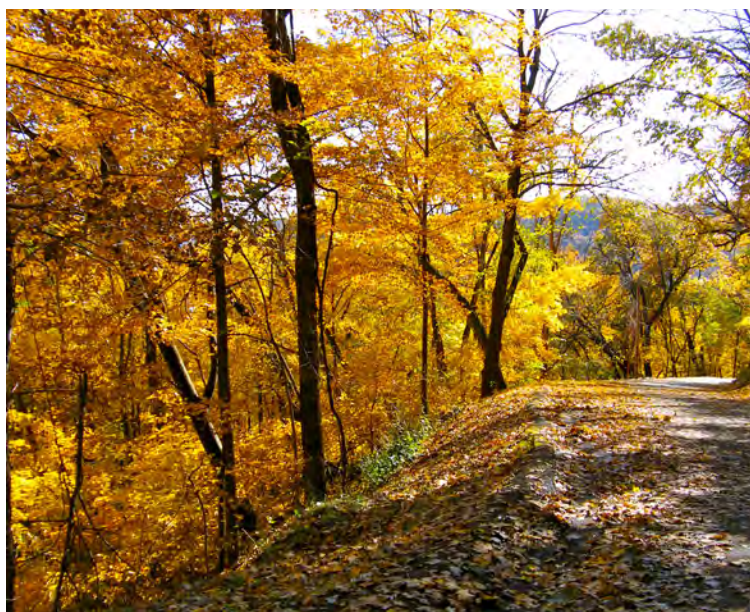
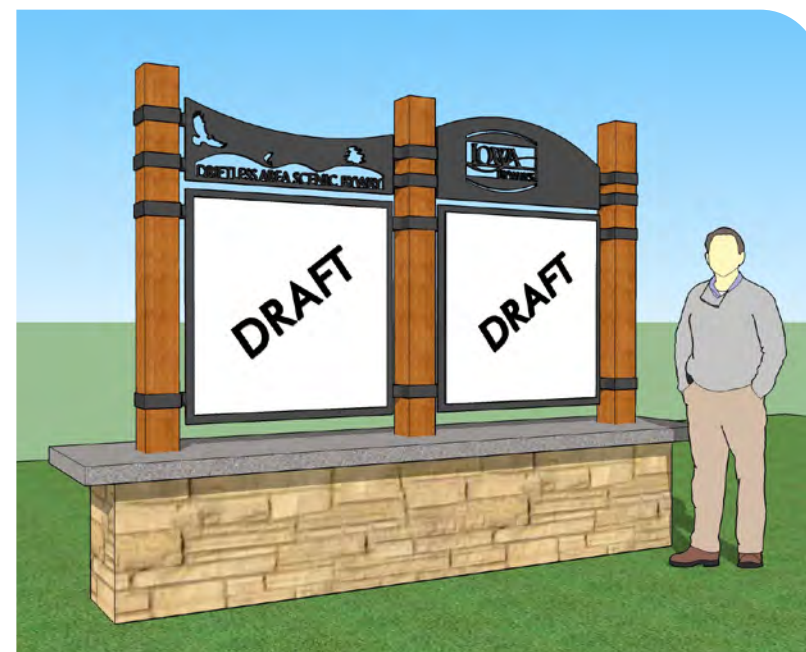
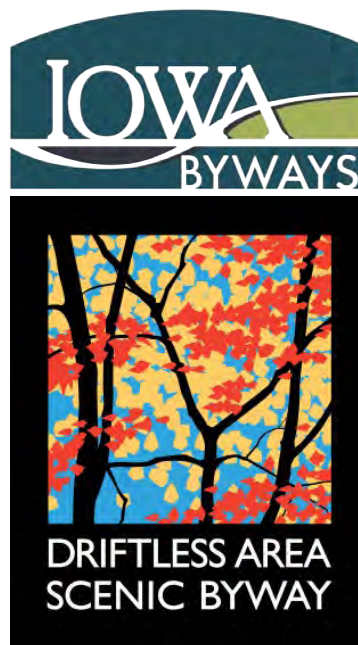




## Driftless Area Scenic Byway

Postville's proximity to natural assets is one of its strengths, but its strategy to take advantage of this proximity is underdeveloped. Iowa's Scenic Byway system encompasses hundreds of miles of highways and backroads that show regional history, distinct landforms, and local culture. Postville has the opportunity to capitalize on its location at the start of the Driftless Area Scenic Byway, considered the most scenic in the state. The region already brings in thousands of tourists from around the Midwest every year, but few of them stop in Postville.

Several sites in Postville could host an information hub for the byway, directing visitors to stop and pointing them to sights in and around Postville as well as along the remainder of the route.





# Stormwater improvement

## Goals

### Short-range

- Determine which stormwater practices may be appropriate in various areas of the city

### Long-range

- Ensure low-cost and effective stormwater management throughout the city
- Create utility infrastructure that enhances city aesthetics
- Increase green space and pollinator habitat within the city



Native plants are an important part of RC&D's urban stormwater management best practices demonstration site in Postville

## Objectives

- Use green stormwater management at key, highly-visible ROW throughout the city.
- Work with property owners to install large areas of restored native plantings and wetlands (where appropriate) to slow and infiltrate runoff
- Install permeable and/or grass pavers where effective as part of the demonstration site



Part of Dubuque's extensive network of downtown "green alleys," with permeable pavers

Landscaping, wayfinding, and stormwater management improvements will improve how visitors and residents experience Postville and encourage people to stop and spend time in the community, creating opportunities for businesses and greater demand for commercial and residential development. Showing leadership in innovative best management practices, improving existing rights-of-way, and providing habitat are a few of the benefits that Postville will gain by following through with investments in stormwater best management practices (BMPs). Spurred by a 2017 Community Development Block Grant low-interest loan to rebuild the city's wastewater treatment plant, the city committed to using State Revolving Fund interest to develop several sites using stormwater BMPs. These practices can be incorporated into existing capital plans for replacement and maintenance of alleys, parking areas, rights of way, pedestrian spaces, and other areas of the city and implemented as staff time and city budgets allow. A regional stormwater management best practices site was installed at a former brownfield site within the planning area during this planning process, providing an example for other towns and businesses in the area.



Pedestrian-friendly corner bumpouts in Belle Plaine, Iowa, also serve as stormwater management infrastructure and landscaping



## Stormwater management proposals



Existing bioretention or native planting area

Potential grass or permeable paver area

Restored riparian area

Potential bioretention or native planting area

Stream

## Key partners

### City of Postville

Installation of BMPs at city sites will begin in 2020, and the city can continue to take an active role in promoting the installation of various practices on publicly-owned parcels.

### Northeast Iowa RCD

A regional stormwater management demonstration site will be completed in 2020 at RCD. This will serve as an example of various approaches to slowing and filtering stormwater runoff on an urban site, and will bring local government and institutional leadership from around the region to tour and learn more about the practices.

### Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS)

State funding is available for projects that have the potential to reduce nutrient loading and sedimentation in priority watersheds. Williams Creek, which starts in Postville as a drainage ditch, flows into the Yellow River, a sensitive area with a high level of biodiversity.

## Key challenges

Like all projects, funding is the primary obstacle for implementing stormwater management best practices. Some leaders have expressed concern about long-term maintenance of rain gardens and biocells, as well as the durability of permeable pavers. Consultation with other communities that have

installed pavers and other BMPs will help determine the functionality, maintenance needs, and long-term durability of these practices.

## Opportunities

### Bio-retention

These stormwater management practices can be used to create additional low-maintenance green space and improve the quality of water that flows into area creeks and rivers. This includes several types of bioretention:

- Rain gardens are used in places that drain quickly. These are usually planted with native vegetation. They tend to be smaller than other bioretention structures.
- Biocells are designed to improve water quality through filtration, and typically cover a larger area than rain gardens. They are often planted along parking areas, sometimes through the placement of curb cuts that allow water through instead of directing it to a storm drain.

### Street Trees

Trees can help absorb runoff from permeable surfaces. The urban tree plan for Postville recommends trimming, replacement, and additional plantings to maintain Postville's existing tree canopy. There are opportunities to enhance the pedestrian environment and the experience of downtown Postville and adjacent areas by planting additional street trees to

shade the sidewalk, calm traffic, and mitigate "heat island" effects.

### Natural vegetation

Areas of natural vegetation can be incorporated into bioretention areas, improving pollinator habitat while providing low-maintenance and hardy landscaping.

### Wetland areas

Iowa has lost 89% of its wetland areas since 1900.<sup>15</sup> Restoring an emergent wetland area can help improve water quality in small watersheds, provide wildlife habitat— Iowa is within the North American Flyway migratory corridor, and the Yellow River State Forest is a bird area of international significance— and even provide an educational and recreational asset.

### Permeable pavers

For areas where a durable surface needs to be maintained, such as parking areas, city streets, and even alleys, permeable pavers can be used to minimize stormwater runoff and permit infiltration through a layer of rock. Like other BMPs, permeable pavers both slow and clean runoff, and they can provide an aesthetic benefit as well. Charles City and Dubuque have installed extensive networks of permeable pavers.

**Endnotes**

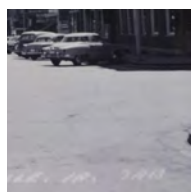
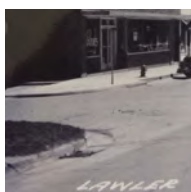
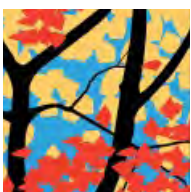
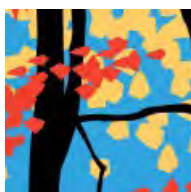
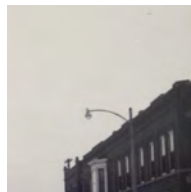
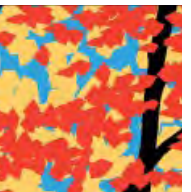
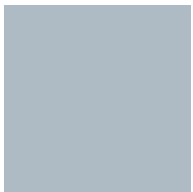
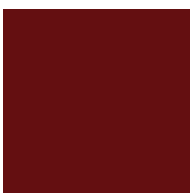
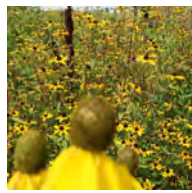
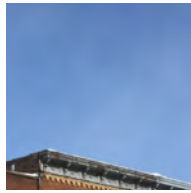
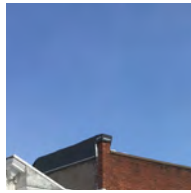
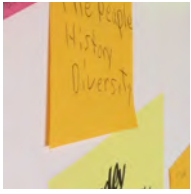
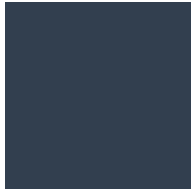
- 1 With 119 synagogues in metropolitan Philadelphia (Jewish Federation of Philadelphia; online at [jewishphilly.org](http://jewishphilly.org)), that city is often cited as having the most synagogues per capita in the US. However, given a metropolitan area of roughly 6,000,000 people (data.census.gov), that gives a per-capita ratio of 1 per 50,000 residents. By contrast, “metro” Postville is estimated to have 5,500 residents within a 15-minute drive, and has two active congregations, giving a per-capita ratio of 1 per 2,750 people.
- 2 “Advancing Iowa’s Electric Vehicle Market.” Iowa Economic Development Authority, 2016. Online: <https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/our-agency-detail-resources/6620>
- 3 “Creative Placemaking.” Online: <https://www.planning.org/knowledgebase/creativeplacemaking/>
- 4 Employers have specifically cited English-language proficiency as a barrier to career advancement. (Conversations with employers, May 2018.) One, in the healthcare industry, found that Certified Nursing Aids had difficulty communicating with patients; another, who managed a local manufacturing facility, was hesitant to hire people with English-language limitations because of the complexity of instructions in the workplace and the high risks entailed by a potential accident.
- 5 Conversation with small business owners in Decorah, Iowa, October 2018.
- 6 University of Iowa Extension, 2018; conversation with Extension agent, February 2019.
- 7 US Energy Information Administration, 2016. Online: <https://www.eia.gov/environment/emissions/state/analysis/>
- 8 Iowa Childcare Resource & Referral, 2018; United State Census Bureau, 2018. Online: data.census.gov
- 9 Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018. Online: <https://www.bls.gov/data/>
- 10 Allamakee County Housing Study, Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, 2018. Online: <http://www.uerpc.org/allamakee-co-housing-study.html>
- 11 University of Minnesota Extension, “A Rural Brain Gain Migration.” Online: <https://extension.umn.edu/economic-development/rural-brain-gain-migration>
- 12 Data from Winneshiek County Conservation Board, Summer 2018.
- 13 Iowa Department of Transportation Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 2019. Online: <https://iowadot.gov/iowainmotion/modal-plans/bicycle-pedestrian-plan>
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# Postville, Iowa

## Implementation

Brownfield Area-Wide Plan



## Implementation

Postville, like most small rural municipalities, does not have the resources readily available to commit to large-scale infrastructure changes. Incremental changes— at potential brownfield sites, and through steady, long-term commitment to a vision— will change the perception of the town and create a reason for people to want to be here as visitors or residents. Where demand does not exist, it can be created. Opportunity exists through the people, geography, history, and built environment of the town.

### Organizational Structure and Long-Term Sustainability

The table is not set for the successful implementation of many large-scale projects included in this plan. Organizational structure and long-term sustainability are the most critical parts of creating brownfield redevelopment and reuse strategy. While the overall scope of these initiatives is beyond that of a brownfield area-wide plan, the elements in the plan will not be realized without them. The creation of this plan will ultimately only be a first step toward removing barriers to redevelopment and reuse of a site or building.

Postville will need to start with small, incremental changes and continued extensive public participation in decision-making, which will continue to be a challenge in a diverse community. Infrastructure changes will not build community capacity or revitalize the town; new large-scale investment will

not solve problems that are rooted in macroeconomic forces. The idea that infrastructure investment alone, even if supported by external funding sources, does not spur revitalization is supported by the research of place-based marketing and branding expert Roger Brooks. He notes that programming, not infrastructure, is the most important part of a successful downtown space.<sup>1</sup> In order to create lasting positive changes in Postville, investments in opportunity infrastructure, physical well-being, and activity for youth and children will need to be supported. This will require a long-term commitment from city leadership and community members who share a positive vision for Postville.

### Our Postville

As a means of reaching a wider audience and creating additional community buy-in, the Postville planning advisory committee created a name and logo that reflect the diversity of the town and the desire to work together as a community. Our Postville is an informal group that has directed the planning process, including much of the form and content of the plan. The Our Postville website and social media have been popular sites for Postville residents to read about plan elements, proposals, as well as other projects relevant to the town. The positive response to this informal group suggests that there may be support for a permanent, incorporated Postville-centered 501(c)(3) to manage grants and



18 likes

postvilleplanning RAGBRAI was a great time here in Postville and everywhere else too! We got to show off our "Hometown to the World" and spread the word about our great quality of life here in northeast Iowa. Looking forward to seeing more sambusas for sale soon...  
#ourpostville #postville #postvilleplanning #iowa #ia #driftless #neia #ragbrai #diversity #chabad #somalidiaspora #sambusa #kosher #agristar #norplex #bicycle #midwest #downtown #guatemalan #mexicanculture #kosherhotdog #tefillin #smalltown #rural

**An early social media post from the planning effort before the name was changed to Our Postville**

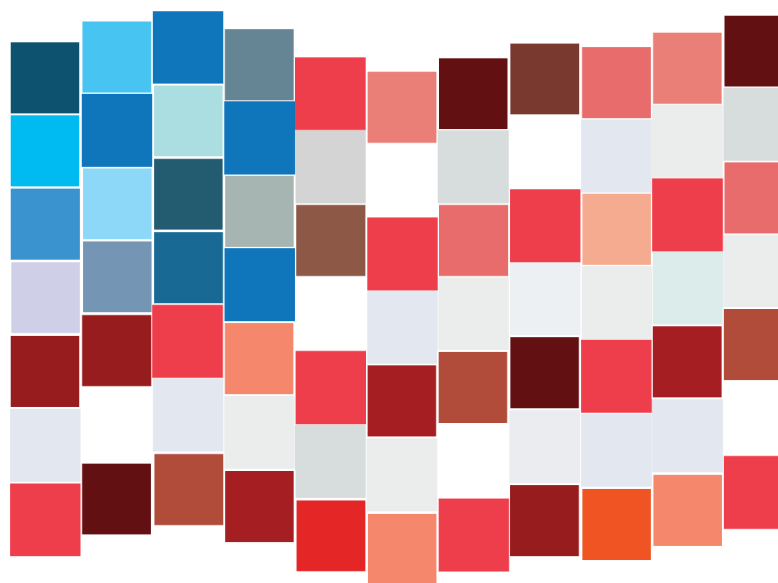
designations, branding, marketing, events, and other activities that will create a livelier and more cohesive community.

Analogous small towns studied as success stories share common elements: dedicated funding for community improvements, marketing, and event planning, and paid staff dedicated to community betterment. A future Postville group should hire a coordinator that will have the knowledge and

expertise necessary to write successful grant proposals, apply for and manage programs and designations, and hold community capacity building activities that will help to incubate a culture of civic engagement and entrepreneurialism. This group will be a key part of creating a resilient community and will build on Postville's diversity and economic assets. Improving quality of life is the basis for ultimately creating greater demand for real estate, and redevelopment and revitalization, in Postville. A study of the effects of placemaking infrastructure concluded that "...results indicate that design installation can have a significant and positive impact on civic trust in the local community, but only when activated with programming interventions." A recent study noted that visibility, approachability, and flexibility are key parts of making a successful space regardless of budget;<sup>2</sup> these are all functions not of one-time funding sources, but of a sustained investment in organization, capacity-building, and leadership development within the community.

Postville leadership will need to determine which sites and elements in this plan can best help achieve the goals of making the town a great place in which to live, visit, and do business, and which can help give compelling answers to the following questions:

- » **What makes Postville a place worth investing in?**
- » **Why should people who work in Postville also live in Postville?**
- » **What interest should an individual, organization, or entrepreneur have in making this community a desirable place to visit, live, or start a business?**



A logo idea for Our Postville, representing the differences and commonalities of the community



## Successes since 2017

In March 2017, Northeast Iowa RCD began the brownfield planning process by contacting business and property owners within the plan area. Community capacity to effect change is not always readily apparent, but since the planning process began, the community has experienced many small successes.

### Site-specific changes

1. The City of Postville, Allamakee County, and the Iowa DOT worked together to add flashing speed beacons along the southern and western highway entrances to enhance traffic and pedestrian safety through town.
2. A new convenience store opened at 720 W. Tilden.
3. A local construction business expanded at West Tilden St.
4. A specialized manufacturing business expanded on West Williams St.
5. The city and a local business worked together to install stormwater bioretention on Greene St.
6. A new ice cream shop opened downtown.

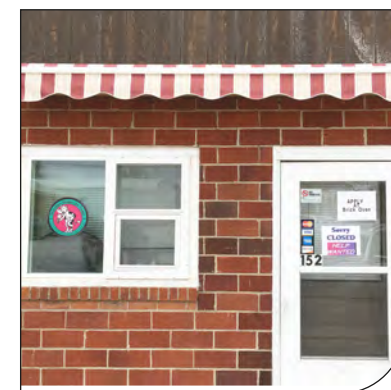
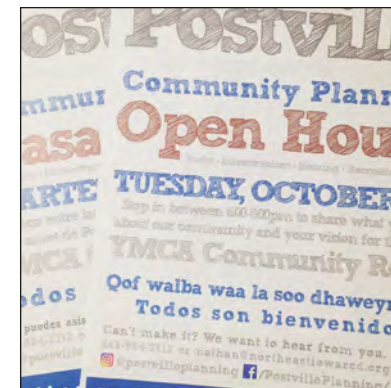
7. A local ethnic foods market expanded to offer a greater variety of grocery items, including fresh produce.
8. The Islamic Center of Postville purchased and renovated a downtown building for a community center and worship space.
9. The building at 102 S. Lawler was remodeled, with a new facade and a new organization- the Jewish Welcome Center of the Chabad of Northeast Iowa.
10. A new restaurant is projected to open in 2020 in a large downtown building that was significantly remodeled.
11. A new convenience store is under construction at 210 S. Lawler with a completion date in Spring 2020.

12. A new business opened at 203 S. Lawler.
13. A new business is renovating the former auto parts store on south Lawler St., and plans to open in Spring 2020.
14. The city designated street adjacent to the private Jewish school Torah Education a school zone, with slower speed limits and school zone signs.
15. A dilapidated grain storage structure in a residential area was removed, with a new building to be constructed in 2020.
16. The Big Four Fair Board renovated buildings at the fairgrounds ahead of the 100th anniversary of the fair.
17. The Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade was completed in 2019.
18. A new trail right-of-way was secured along Williams Creek, and the creek was restored with native vegetation along its banks and the removal of debris from the creek bed.
19. A new citizen-led group, the Postville Elementary Parent-Teacher Organization, incorporated a nonprofit with the initial goal of raising funds to build a new playground. As of fall 2019, the group has raised over 50% of its fundraising goal.
20. A dilapidated structure at 111 N. Lawler St. was removed by the city.
21. A new pharmacy opened in a renovated downtown building in 2018.
22. A public art piece was installed at 101 E. Greene Street.
23. A regional stormwater management best practices site, funded by the US EPA, was created at 101 E. Greene with a projected completion date of June 2020.



### Area-Wide Successes

24. Hundreds of residents and businesses came together to put on a welcoming spectacle for the 2017 RAGBRAI bicycle ride, which brought over 10,000 cyclists through Postville.
25. Hundreds of Postville residents have tested their homes for lead paint and radon and are taking steps to remediate these hazards.
26. A new annual health fair started in 2019. Healthy Postville was supported by residents and businesses throughout the region.
27. Members of Postville leadership came together to support projects and ideas from this planning process.



## Organization: What works

A few helpful analogs and frameworks for reference are presented. While they are all reflective of the scale and community from which they are developed, they all have commonalities that will be useful for the future development of Our Postville or another community-focused group. Priority redevelopment sites and the challenges associated with each were examined in the light of macro-scale economic development and demographic challenges faced by small, rural communities. It was helpful to explore success stories from the region to find commonalities and key drivers behind those successes. While these communities provide examples of elements and infrastructure that would fit well in Postville, the key take-aways for business and civic leadership are the need for institutional framework and dedicated funding to empower Postville to undertake various projects.

**State Center, Iowa** This community of under 1,500 residents leveraged Main Street Iowa assistance and funding with local support to rebuild or renovate 6 downtown buildings. It stimulated over \$1.9 million in private investment in its now-thriving downtown. Postville residents and leaders would like to renovate historic downtown buildings for future businesses.

**Manning, Iowa** Another isolated rural Iowa community of under 1,500 people rebranded their town, renovated 17 downtown buildings, improve the downtown streetscape, and continues to work with existing businesses and entrepreneurs to bring additional employment and investment to the town. Postville can work with entrepreneurs and businesses to create and maintain quality career pathways.

**Gays Mills, Wisconsin** The Kickapoo Culinary Center follows a food-based economic development strategy that empowers entrepreneurs to test business ideas using locally-grown products. Postville has many immigrant communities with culinary traditions that can be used to create unique business opportunities as well as ample access to locally-grown produce.

**Viroqua, Wisconsin** Providing assistance and removing barriers for would-be entrepreneurs will help create demand for building space, build workforce skills, and create a stronger local economy. At least two potential brownfield sites in Postville could be configured to meet the needs of a small business and entrepreneurial support center.

**Maquoketa, Iowa** This community implemented an extensive program of downtown improvements that enhanced the experience of pedestrians and motorists alike. Postville's downtown and key highway-adjacent sites currently create an experience for visitors, but this experience can be vastly improved through investments in pedestrian infrastructure and placemaking elements that create a more inviting space.

**Community Investment Trust, Portland, OR** A group of minority-owned small businesses formed a trust to purchase the commercial center in which they were located, which is now run as a cooperative. This preserves the commercial space for small businesses in the face of redevelopment pressure and allows the trust to offer reduced rental rates to entrepreneurs looking for space to rent. A similar organization in a rural town like Postville could focus on

financing for renovation costs, which are often prohibitive for prospective small business owners.

**Community Development, Elkins, NC** A grassroots, community-based economic development strategy started with an informal gathering of concerned residents who planned events to celebrate their town's history and culture. The group then organized to become a nonprofit that has invested in downtown public spaces, promotional activity, and programming. The group is membership-based, with a low yearly membership fee, providing an easy way for (literally) buy-in even for people of low income.

**Northeast Investment Co-op, Minneapolis, MN** This organization has renovated several buildings in an aging commercial node of northeast Minneapolis through a cooperative funding mechanism that allows residents to invest in the restoration of their neighborhood. The investment allows entrepreneurs to avoid expensive renovation and remodeling costs while starting their businesses. The renovated spaces were rented to carefully-selected entrepreneurs with a quality business plan. The buildings now house a bakery, bicycle repair and sales shop, and the nation's first cooperative brewery. The NEIC plans to renovate other structures in the neighborhood.

**Oswego, NY** Community leaders in Oswego noticed that the deterioration of a few properties within a neighborhood often led to the deterioration of neighboring properties. The city and the Oswego Renaissance Association were able to give homeowners 1:1 grants to rehabilitate their home and preserve quality housing stock.



## Lessons

While these communities offer interesting examples of what organized residents, civic leaders, and businesses have been able to accomplish, they don't tell the entire story. In the past, Postville has also been home to organizations that help to create and manage events, support local businesses, and promote the community. The lack of long-term sustainability of these organizations has direct lessons for brownfield redevelopment, since that redevelopment is in turn at least partially dependent on micro-scale community building as well as macro-scale economic factors. In other words, what do the above communities have that Postville does not have? Conversations with leaders from other towns confirmed that the following were essential to creating and sustaining success:

### Community betterment organizations.

Organizations, usually with 501(c)(3) status, with dedicated board members, a strong base of local support, and a sustainable funding source are the drivers of success. In the case of Main Street communities, this is continual funding for an employee that can serve many economic development functions. Other communities, like State Center and Manning, have endowments that are used for community improvement projects.

### Demographic cohesion and trust

In a small town as diverse and young as Postville, future success—or even viability—of existing economic

**Design installation can have a significant and positive impact on civic trust in the local community, but only when activated with programming interventions.**

*Sadin, Meredith. "If You Build It, They Might Not Come: Animating City Spaces."<sup>5</sup>*

and political institutions will depend on how well they are able to incorporate people who represent this youth and diversity. Building the capacity of people from various backgrounds will strengthen institutions by creating trust among different populations and ensuring stability through periods of demographic flux. The Postville Community School District and Northeast Iowa Wellness and Recreation Center can offer examples of successful integration of diverse and young perspectives into institutional structures, and they are both widely used and highly regarded by all Postville residents. Starting with small projects can help boost both confidence and build relationship and skills to take on larger initiatives. "Go for the small wins, and you'll get to the big wins," said one Main Street Director. He noted that the structure provided an organizational blueprint that justified membership costs associated with the program.



**Postville has many assets, but they are not always effectively advertised**

### Frameworks for success

Main Street Iowa, Iowa Great Places, Chambers of Commerce, and Economic Development groups can help provide ideas, assistance, networking, and even funding for projects and initiatives.

### Policies to boost growth and investment

In addition to authorizing a new hotel/motel tax to bring revenue dedicated to economic development, the city has existing programs that could be utilized in partnership with developers. The city of Postville has designated Urban Renewal Areas in which it is authorized to use Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to pay for the costs of infrastructure associated with new development or redevelopment. Most of the city falls into one of four such areas, including nearly all of the planning area. TIF is most effective when used

with large-scale development led by a single entity or consortium, such as new housing subdivisions or large industrial facilities.

A smaller-scale policy that is also in place is tax abatement. Property owners are eligible for abatement of 100% of taxable improvements to a property for up to five years if they apply for and are awarded abatement by the city. This policy could be changed to promote outcomes that the city would most like to see, such as offering greater incentives for residential development or downtown development.

### Identify top priorities

Dedication to a project is vital for its success. Working on achievable top priorities first builds trust and capacity, and makes it easier to find additional resources (both people and financial).

### Focus on a single project at a time

A record of accomplishment will generate greater publicity and enthusiasm than multiple unfinished projects attempted at the same time. In addition, starting small with limited funds and leadership capacity will not constrain the number of projects and initiatives that can be undertaken.

### Designate project leadership

Existing leadership structures include the Chamber of Commerce, the Postville Elementary Parent-Teacher Organization, the Chabad of Northeast Iowa, other faith-based organizations, and the Postville Lions Club. An incorporated 501(c)(3) *Our Postville* group could bring together members of

these organizations, representatives from the school system, and business leaders to work on economic and community development. Alternatively, these groups could each take leadership of different objectives found within this plan that fit with their organizational mission.

### Build on success

Building on success will be defined by what leaders, community members, and initiatives are able to have the most positive or influential outcomes, as well as changing economic and demographic factors in the city and region.

### Starting Small:

#### *Creative Placemaking & 'Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper'*

One popular revitalization strategy is called “*Creative Placemaking*.” This strategy calls for quick, easy-to-implement projects at vacant or underutilized sites. Projects are usually, though not always, led by community groups with a high degree of participation by local residents. While many of the projects undertaken are temporary, their intent is to change the perception of how a space can be used, as well as to build local capacity to enact positive changes in areas with few resources.

Creative placemaking can be used to involve community members who may not participate in traditional planning or development process in shaping the way their town or neighborhood is experienced. This can be anything from arts projects—such as the student-painted mural in

nearby Waterville—to temporary sidewalk seating and planters that extend curbs and create a more inviting environment for pedestrians.

With a “*Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper*” (LQC) approach to placemaking, community members can come together to effect change quickly, without a reliance on outside funding or institutional action. LQC projects are temporary interventions in the built environment that set the stage of longer-term transformation.

LQC is related to a phenomenon called “Tactical Urbanism,” outlined in a book of the same name: instead of emphasizing solutions, tactical urbanism are resident-led responses to perceived problems with existing physical infrastructure. Capacity-building, iterative learning, and the creative and efficient use of resources are cited as the primary characteristics of tactical urbanism.<sup>3</sup> Using these approaches to the design and use of public spaces allows cities to test out ideas and adapt them to community needs before committing to expensive and disruptive permanent changes.

New temporary curb bump-outs, plazas, gardens, and other tactical urbanism ideas can enhance festivals and events that bring people into town, and the activity helps to show how people will react to potential changes.

## Go for the small wins, and you'll get to the big wins.

*Conversation with small-town economic development director*

Creative placemaking is a process where community members, artists, arts and culture organizations, community developers, and other stakeholders use arts and cultural strategies to implement community-led change. This approach aims to increase vibrancy, improve economic conditions, and build capacity among residents to take ownership of their communities.

*American Planning Association<sup>6</sup>*

Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper is a placemaking strategy that empowers communities to create great places in their neighborhoods, cities, or regions. Short-term LQC improvements - whether it's new amenities, programming, art, or design changes - are part of a larger and more permanent vision for a particular site.

*Project for Public Spaces<sup>7</sup>*



Creative use of public space during events can inform long-term design decisions



Creative Placemaking project in Marshalltown, Iowa



## Funding Strategies

A sustainable, long-term local civic development group that promotes economic opportunity, activates public spaces, organizes and manages events, and sells Postville to potential businesses, visitors, and residents is a necessary first step. Short-range funding and grant sources can help to implement specific projects and initiatives of this group once it is functioning. The most relevant potential funding sources for various projects included in this plan are included in an appendix.

### Grant funds, low-interest loans, and other one-time revenue sources

There are grant programs for a variety of capital projects that cover all of the types of projects proposed in this plan. However, operating and management expenses— including personnel costs over a long time period— are not often accounted for, especially with large-scale federal grants. Postville is a community with a limited tax base, little desire to raise taxes, and stable but not growing population and real estate values. Before embarking on a capital project, Postville should ensure that it will be able to maintain the investments it makes in public infrastructure. This should inform priorities for the city— what do residents want to pay for? Which, if any, projects are important and impactful enough to merit raising taxes?

Hotel/Motel Tax Receipts, 2012-18								
		Population	Per capita, 2018	FY18	FY16	FY14	FY12	% Change, 2012-18
Peer cities	<b>West Union</b>	2,346	\$8	\$20,536	\$32,370	\$35,607	\$37,409	-45%
	<b>Waukon</b>	3,894	\$6	\$23,917	\$23,683	\$20,945	\$7,758	208%
	<b>Cresco</b>	3,776	\$10	\$38,817	\$41,400	\$38,333	\$36,623	6%
	<b>Decorah</b>	7,701	\$60	\$469,719	\$354,719	\$295,757	\$269,646	74%
	<b>Lansing</b>	999	\$24	\$20,238	\$10,765	\$3,041	\$3,855	425%
	<b>Independence</b>	6,050	\$17	\$104,532	\$101,273	\$103,567	\$82,972	26%
	<b>Manchester</b>	5,016	\$9	\$45,993	\$50,895	\$49,102	\$57,167	-20%
	<b>Average</b>	4,942	\$28	\$160,121	\$129,413	\$112,867	\$103,410	55%

Other communities in the region have raised significant funds from a hotel / motel tax, even with few available rooms

### Partnerships with developers, including nonprofit entities, to expand the availability of housing

A new Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program available through the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) has successfully created new units of housing in downtown Ottumwa, and other programs give tax credits for developers, who could also take advantage of Postville's TIF districts and tax abatement program. Tax credits are available for private developers that build housing through the State of Iowa's Workforce Housing Tax Credit and the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC, or Section 42). Older buildings or vacant lots could qualify for the Brownfield / Grayfield Tax Credit or the Historic Preservation Tax Credit. If coupled with tax or other incentives and federal or state affordable housing programs, it is possible

that a combination of these resources could create a financing stack that would "pencil out" for a developer even given the challenges of Postville's real estate market.

### Dedicated funding

While dedicated funding sources can provide some of the possible resources for projects, it will be critical to prioritize local funding sources and other resources from the community and region that can be used as match in order to secure grant funds. A dedicated source of city funding can be used to hire economic development staff, match funds for small projects, and promote local events and businesses. A first step is to identify existing funding sources and the opportunities to leverage for project grant funding, but a longer-term goal is to create a secure and stable

source of potential matching funds that can be used for projects identified in this plan. This could take the form of economic development funds, a revolving loan fund for small businesses or property owners, a surcharge on goods or services, an endowment fund, or even crowdsourcing. As an example of Postville's existing capacity to accomplish this, the Postville Elementary Parent-Teacher Organization has successfully raised funds to provide match for a new school playground that will have a total cost of over \$100,000.

### Regional cooperation

Greater cooperation and partnerships between local governments and regional organizations can help leverage resources, take advantage of relative strengths, and build relationships that can lead to successful project development and management. Several initiatives in the region provide a template for regional cooperation: Northeast Iowa Community College's Sector Boards, which bring together business, civic, educational, and economic development leaders across the region to strengthen competitiveness and ensure that area residents have access to living-wage jobs. Iowa Scenic Byway Boards promote existing attractions and businesses along designated scenic byway routes, which pass through multiple municipalities and counties. The Northeast Iowa Tourism Association is a partnership between 7 county economic development, chambers of commerce, and tourism organizations that promotes the region as a destination. These organizations

can help identify and market a regional niche for Postville, and assist with projects that will lead to greater employment or new visitor amenities.

### Local policies

Municipal policy can also play a role in helping to encourage greater investment in Postville. Permitting and fees for development, current zoning and regulation, and inspections processes could be streamlined or at least clearly explained in order to reduce barriers to comprehension and avoid misunderstanding or ambiguities. Translation of materials into different languages and explaining processes can also assist property owners and businesses with development and construction.

A neighboring community has had success with offering and promoting tax abatement for new development. The city of Decorah offers 5-year, 100% tax abatement for new residential construction. From 2015 to 2018, this program incentivized the construction of 57 new units of housing valued at \$21,900,000, with a total taxable value of \$12,400,000 and an addition \$175,000 in revenue generated for the city.<sup>4</sup>

Postville does not yet have a hotel/motel tax, despite having a motel within the city limits. In Iowa, Hotel/Motel taxes are capped at 7%, which is the rate that most municipalities elect when implementing the tax. Analogous communities in the region have raised between \$7.00 – \$17.00 per capita annually from the hotel/motel taxes, near the Iowa statewide

**...what do residents want to pay for? Which, if any, projects are important and impactful enough to merit raising taxes?**

average of \$18.49 collected per capita. These funds are often used for economic development, tourism and promotion, and quality of life projects, or to fund an organization dedicated to those purposes.

Other cities have used Self-Supporting Municipal Improvement Districts (SSMID) and Tax-Increment Financing (TIF) to support targeted investments in a specific area.

A SSMID is a means of “self-taxation” by property owners to pay for improvements within a designated area. Petitions for proposed SSMIDs must be brought to the city with the signatures of at least 25% of property owners within the district boundaries. The city council then must approve the petition through an ordinance and file it with the county recorder. A SSMID has been created in downtown Decorah, and many larger communities around the state.

## Recommended Actions

### Organize Our Postville as a formal group

Use this group to promote existing assets such as unique local businesses, the Big Four Fair, Dreamland Ballroom, Postville Diversity Festival, and other places and cultural activities that are unique to Postville. Bring together business and community leaders from different backgrounds to accomplish projects and fundraise for priority projects.

### Identify key project partners

Organizations with differing missions will find it helpful to pool resources and efforts when they align around common causes. Buy-in and leadership from diverse business leaders, including both small businesses and large employers, is critical for future plans.

### Get projects accomplished within two years

Projects don't need to be large or expensive in order to be impactful, but they do need to reflect a community's vision and hopes. Visual changes can have a powerful impact on how people feel about a place.

### Actively engage with minority and underrepresented community members

Postville's continued vitality depends on the involvement of residents from all backgrounds. Actively engaging with newer residents ensures that activities will reflect the priorities of all residents and inspire greater participation.

### Find youth involvement activities

New events, active participation in art projects, and new recreational facilities will make local youth feel more invested in Postville.

### Identify sites and buildings that will need testing for hazards

The most common potential hazards within the planning area- and most of central Postville- are lead-based paint and asbestos. Any future rehabilitation of structures must consider abatement of these hazards.

### Establish funding streams for marketing, promotion, and redevelopment

A dedicated hotel/motel tax, a citizen-funded nonprofit community betterment group, or an affiliation with local businesses could all raise funds for various activities that promote and enhance business and resident well-being in Postville.

**You have to have the 'glue' for everyone and everything to stick together.**

*State Center Economic Development Director, on organizational framework*





## Project Timeline

Site reuse will depend on market factors, funding availability, and the prioritization of project by leadership. Nearly all potential projects have action steps that can be realized by 2022. This includes the following for the four top priority sites:

### 715 W. Tilden

Initiate new discussions with Agristar management and ownership regarding the future of the site. Several proposals have been put forward in previous years; these should be a basis of future negotiations. The city may have leverage to prompt action if it meets the criteria for a blighted property.

### 111 N. Lawler

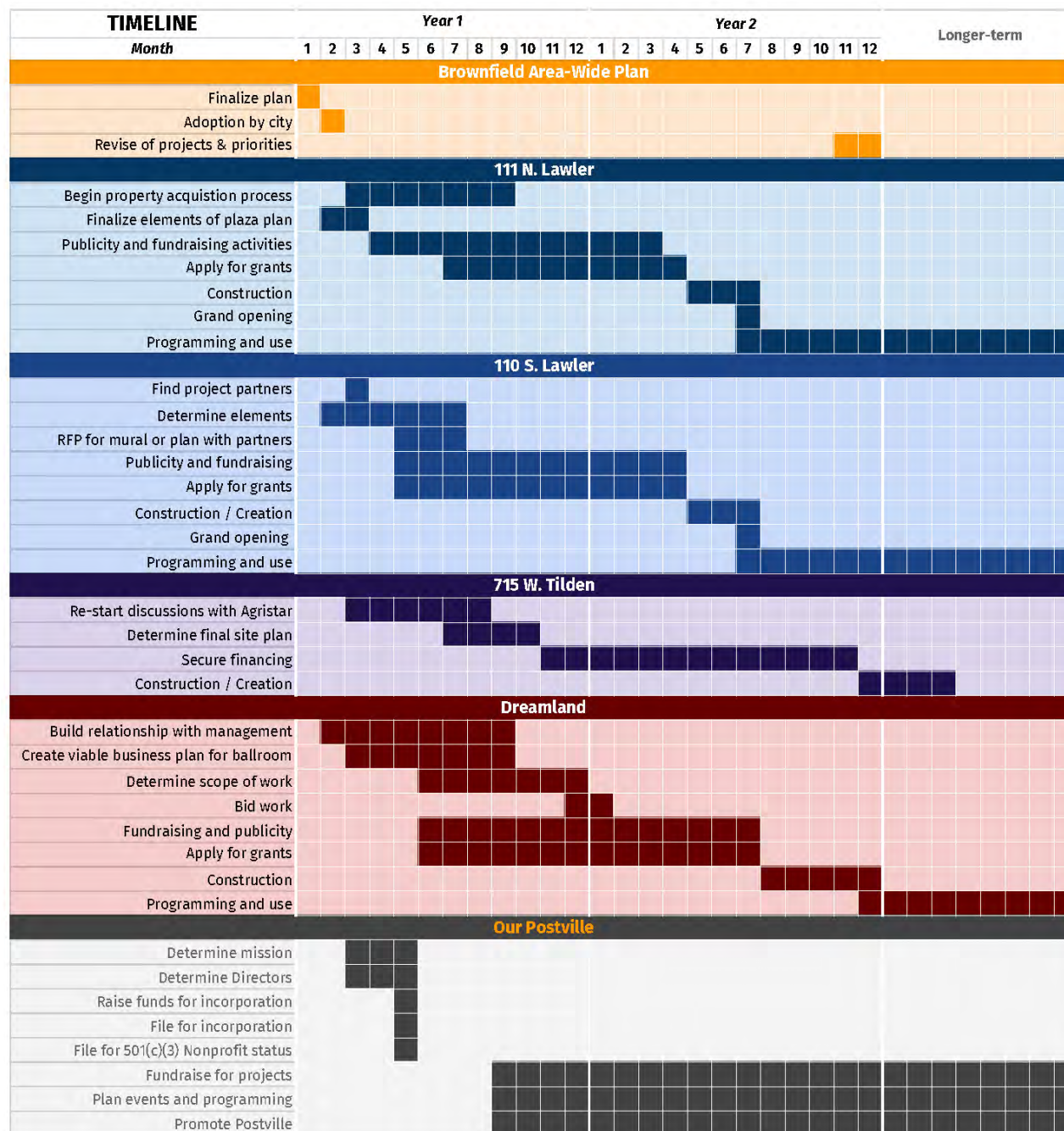
The City of Postville had sold the delinquent taxes on this property and may be willing to take title. A pro-forma Phase 1 site assessment may be required as a part of legal condemnation. Fundraising and bids for a mural, site work, landscaping, and pavers could begin as soon as the city takes possession.

### Dreamland ballroom

Initiating discussions between the city, the Big Four Fair board, and interested residents is the first step toward coming together for a common vision for this unique asset.

### 110 S. Lawler

The owner of this site, Northeast Iowa Telecom, is willing to work with the city or a nonprofit organization to create a plaza or otherwise improve this site adjacent to the Chabad of Northeast Iowa and an appliance store in the middle of downtown Postville.



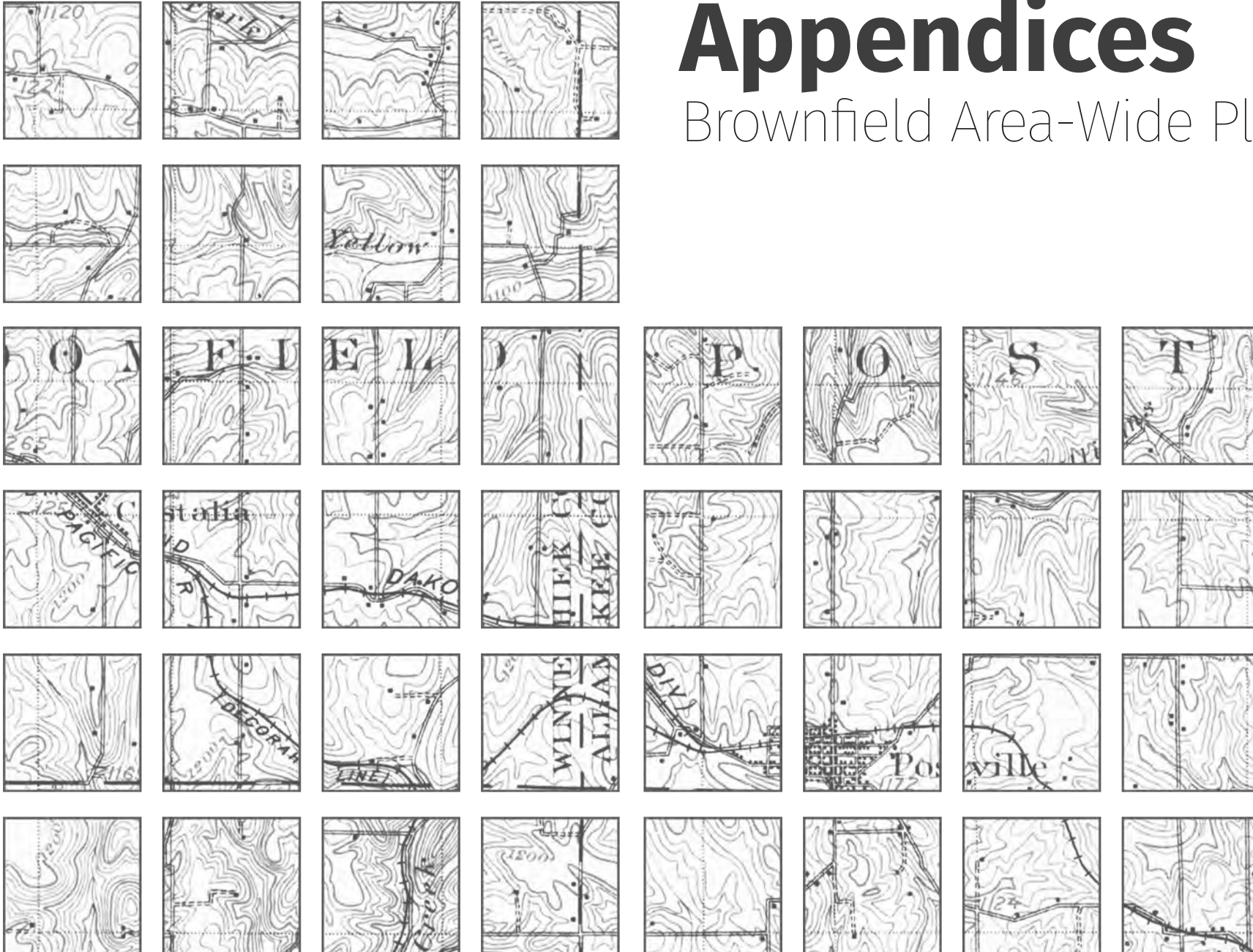
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# Postville, Iowa

## Appendices

### Brownfield Area-Wide Plan





# 1. Recommendations

Moving forward with the projects and initiatives discussed in this plan will require a coordinated, long-term effort and dedicated individuals. As noted, some of the most important work needs to focus on community capacity-building and creating bonds of trust- parts of a process that are no less critical than data collection or site plans, but often under-emphasized in planning efforts. Many ideas will both elements that are inside and outside of the scope of brownfield area-wide planning.



Recommendations	Time frame	Partner	Strategy			Brownfield Planning scope			Outside planning scope
			Live	Biz	Visit	Community engagement	Business engagement	Real estate demand	
<b>Rebranding</b>									
Involvement with regional tourism initiatives	Current	ACED / Our Postville			•	•	•		•
Promote & build on unique assets of Postville: diversity, history	Short	Our Postville			•	•	•		•
Initiate "Create Placemaking" activities to build support and capacity for long-term change	Short	Our Postville / City / Schools	•		•	•		•	•
<b>Redevelopment</b>									
Promotion of local businesses	Short	Our Postville / ACED	•	•					•
Utilize Iowa DNR, Iowa Economic Development, and EPA funding to identify and remediate hazards at key sites	Medium	City / Our Postville	•	•			•	•	
Assistance to entrepreneurs	Medium	Our Postville / UERPC / RCD	•	•			•		•
Business counseling	Medium	RCD / NICC		•					•
Utilize Iowa DNR, Iowa Economic Development, and EPA funding to identify and remediate hazards at key sites	Medium	City / Our Postville	•	•			•	•	
Lead restoration and sale of vacant buildings	Long	Our Postville	•	•	•		•	•	
Increase utilization of TIF and tax abatement incentives for large development / building or site rehabilitation	Long	City		•				•	
Facilitate easier access to startup capital for entrepreneurs	Long	Our Postville / SBDC / NICC		•					•
<b>Capacity-building</b>									
Identifies funding sources and potential to leverage funding for projects	Short	Our Postville / city	•					•	
Create guides on relevant city codes and available resources for property owners, entrepreneurs, and newcomers	Short	Our Postville	•	•			•		•
Facilitates dialog between community groups and cultures	Short	Our Postville / School / community groups	•		•				•
Consider hotel / motel tax	Short	City / ACED							
Consider creating SSMID or other small-area taxing authority for downtown	Mid	Our Postville / City							
Join or learn from existing programs and initiatives such as Iowa Great Places and Main Street Iowa	Long	City / Our Postville / RCD	•	•			•	•	
Host trainings and discussions for future leadership and entrepreneurs	Long	Our Postville / NICC	•	•					•
Focus on engaging under-represented groups in Postville	Long	Our Postville / School / community groups	•	•					•
Encourage civic participation and engagement	Long	Our Postville / School / community groups	•						•
Involve youth in planning and activities	Long	Our Postville / School / community groups	•						•

## 2. Funding sources

Funding from a wide array of sources is available for projects included in this plan. A few of those sources with reliable annual or biannual funding streams are included as recommendations. Many other, particularly private grant funding sources, that are not listed here may be worth pursuing depending on project-specific conditions. Crowdfunding and local donations are a recommended source of matching funds, and can also help grow local support for a specific project. Additional funding is available through programs like Main Street Iowa and Iowa Great Places that require a great deal of planning and community involvement, but which can also provide structure and support for projects.

Small Projects and/or Placemaking Resources						
	Name	Type	Maximum	Match	Eligible Entity	Notes
Private Grants	Alliant Energy	Grant	\$5,000	-	Non-profit	Parks, trails, education, and environmental projects (no arts/culture)
	Black Hills Energy	Grant	Unclear	-	Non-profit	Community development, education, youth, arts & culture, environment
	Walmart	Grant	\$5,000	-	Non-profit	Community betterment
	Paint Iowa Beautiful	Grant	-	Yes	Non-profit	Paint only
	Community Foundation	Grant		Yes	Non-profit	Community betterment
IA Dept. of Cultural Affairs	Art Project	Grant	\$10,000	1:1	Non-profit	Art experience, artwork, or arts education
	Arts Build Communities	Grant	\$10,000	-	Non-profit, local gov't	Art to address a civic challenge or issue facing the community
	Capacity-Building	Grant	\$5,000	-	Non-profit, local gov't	General support for nonprofit arts & culture organizations
	Cultural Heritage	Grant	\$10,000	1:1	Non-profit, local gov't	Projects that create jobs & provides access to a "cultural heritage experience"
Nat'l Endowment for the Arts	Our Town	Grant	\$200,000	1:1	Non-profit, local gov't	Creative Placemaking
	Challenge America	Grant	\$10,000	1:1	Non-profit, local gov't	Bringing arts to underserved populations; min. project cost \$20,000
	Art projects	Grant	\$100,000	1:1	Non-profit	Cultural heritage and diversity emphasis
	Humanities Iowa- small	Grant	\$3,000	1:1	Non-profit, educational, gov't	Public art projects
	Humanities Iowa- Large	Grant	\$20,000	1:1	Non-profit, educational, gov't	Public art projects



## Business and Downtown Resources

Name	Type	Maximum	Match	Eligible entity	Description
<b>Revolving Loan Funds</b>					
Allamakee Clayton Electric Cooperative Revolving Loan Fund	Low-interest	?	-	City / Private / Nonprofits	\$10k min., below prime rate.
Allamakee Clayton Electric Cooperative REDLG	0% loan	?	-	City / Private / Nonprofits	Max. \$360k
Allamakee County Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund	Loan	\$40,000	-	Private	Max. 30% of project total (up to \$40k); \$50 app. fee
UERPC Revolving Loan Fund	Low-interest		-	Private, Non-profits	\$5k-\$150k; \$100 app. fee; Min. 10-25% equity
IEDA Nuisance & Abandoned Buildings Fund	Low-interest		-	City	1 to 3%; 0% if pop. <2,000
Iowa Energy Center	0% loan	\$1,000,000	-	Private	0% loan; minimum \$25,000 / up to 50% of eligible costs (at least \$50,000)
<b>Tax benefits</b>					
City of Postville Abatement	Abatement	-	-	Private	100% abatement for three years on improvements
NPS/IRS Historic Tax Credit	Tax Credit	n/a	-	Private	10% of Qualified Rehabilitation Expenditures (must meet NPS standards)
IEDA Historic Preservation	Tax Credit	n/a	-	Private	Credit of up to 25% of Qualified Rehabilitation Expenditures
IEDA Brownfield / Greyfield	Tax Credit	n/a	-	Private / Non-profit	24% of qualifying costs for BF/12% for GF; must be vacant / blighted / obsolete / underutilized
IEDA Workforce Housing	Tax Credit / Refund	n/a	-	Private	10% of sales tax (refund); credit based on new investment used in first \$150k of value
<b>Grants</b>					
Iowa DNR Derelict Building Program	Grant	\$50,000	Yes	City / County	Funds for asbestos testing / removal, phase 1 & 2 ESA, building deconstruction, and building renovation
Iowa DNR Asbestos	Grant	\$25,000	No	City / County	Up to \$25k for testing & removal of asbestos
CDBG Downtown Revitalization Fund	Grant	\$500,000	Yes	City / County	Funds for facade improvement, upper-story housing, green infrastructure; need to survey conditions
IEDA Community Catalyst Building	Grant	\$100,000	Yes	City / County	Up to \$100k for improvements to prominent/catalyst building; prefer NRHP standards
Iowa Energy Center Grant	Grant	\$1,000,000	?	Private / Non-profit	Must demonstrate benefit to Iowa ratepayers

## 2. Project costs

Costs for these projects are based on 2019 estimates and a review of similar proposals or completed projects in other Iowa or midwest communities. Depending on the site conditions, labor market, material costs, and other external factors at the time of construction, costs could vary widely from the rough estimates shown here.

Up to \$10,000	\$	715 W. Tilden	\$\$\$\$	GGGG	
\$10,000-\$25,000	\$	111 N. Lawler	\$	G	
\$25,000-\$100,000	\$	110 S. Lawler	\$	G	
\$100,000+	\$	Dreamland Ballroom	\$\$\$\$	GGG	
Less than 1 year	G	203-251 S. Lawler	\$\$\$\$	GGGG	
1-2 years	GG	101 E. Greene St.	\$\$\$\$	GGGG	
2-4 years	GGG	Turner Hall	\$\$\$\$	GGGG	
Over 4 years	GGGG				
Individual groups or sponsors					
A few partnerships					
3+ partnerships					
Many partnerships					

Estimated monetary, time, and personnel inputs to implement plan elements at various sites, above, and estimated costs from a 2017 pocket park proposal in nearby West Union, right. Other estimated project cost ranges are shown on the following page.

Pocket Park, West Union			
Budget	Picnic table	\$200	Mat'l only; labor donated
	Pet Waste Station	\$200	
	Grass	\$1,000	
	Misc.	\$200	
In Kind	Barn board fence	\$200	Donated mat'l
	Bike rack	\$100	City
	Trash can	\$100	City
	Topsoil	\$100	City
	Brick & Limestone	\$1,000	City
	Paint	\$2,000	Paint Iowa grant-match
	Plants	\$250	Donated
	Lift Rental	\$250	Donated
	Labor	\$3,000	City & community members
	Insurance	\$75	Annual expense
	Misc.	\$200	Donation

<i>Elements</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>High Estimate</i>	<i>Low Estimate</i>
<b>Dreamland</b>			
Landscaping	\$5,500	\$6,875	\$4,125
Signage	\$6,500	\$8,125	\$4,875
Lead and asbestos testing & abatement	\$25,000	\$31,250	\$18,750
New ADA-compliant restrooms	\$115,000	\$143,750	\$86,250
New electrical	\$35,000	\$43,750	\$26,250
HVAC system	\$35,000	\$43,750	\$26,250
New paint, fixtures	\$25,000	\$31,250	\$18,750
Solar panels (20kW)	\$30,000	\$37,500	\$22,500
Cut and replant 16 Ash trees	\$75,000	\$93,750	\$56,250
15% Contingency	\$52,800	\$66,000	\$39,600
	<b>\$404,800</b>	<b>\$506,000</b>	<b>\$303,600</b>
<i>Elements</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>High Estimate</i>	<i>Low Estimate</i>
<b>111 N. &amp; 110 S. Lawler Pocket Parks (each)</b>			
Site preparation: leveling, gravel	\$7,500	\$12,500	\$5,000
Trees	\$500	\$500	\$250
Mural / public art	\$17,500	\$25,000	\$12,500
Pavers @ 3000 sq ft	\$17,500	\$25,000	\$12,500
Outdoor furniture	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$1,500
Fence, signs, misc	\$2,500	\$5,000	\$1,500
15% Contingency	\$7,200	\$10,575	\$4,988
	<b>\$55,200</b>	<b>\$81,075</b>	<b>\$38,238</b>
<i>Elements</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>High Estimate</i>	<i>Low Estimate</i>
<b>715 W. Tilden</b>			
Phase 1 assessment	\$3,000	\$3,750	\$2,250
Removal of concrete	\$175,000	\$218,750	\$131,250
Solar array (400kW)	\$825,000	\$1,031,250	\$618,750
Tree and landscape buffer	\$50,000	\$62,500	\$37,500
Iconic signage or art piece	\$50,000	\$62,500	\$37,500
15% Contingency	\$165,450	\$206,813	\$124,088
	<b>\$1,268,450</b>	<b>\$1,585,563</b>	<b>\$951,338</b>



### 3. Building Survey

This brief survey of overall building condition was based on the criteria established by the Iowa Economic Development Authority for its Downtown Revitalization Fund programs that are funded through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). Applicants for these funds must meet US Housing and Urban Development goals relating to either Slum & Blight or Low & Moderate Income. Establishing Slum & Blight conditions through an analysis using these criteria would satisfy the HUD requirement. A preliminary, brief survey of downtown Postville buildings follows.

#### Establishing Slum & Blight Conditions for CDBG Programs (where relevant)

- Define area (must be contiguous)
- 25% of buildings within area must be in “Fair” to “Poor” condition (CDBG guidelines)
- Basic inventory for for each building within area required with application:
  - General description
  - Facade picture
  - Itemized scope of work and cost
  - Pictures of storefront, windows, doors, stairs, & every blighted element
  - Rating for each blighted element
  - City resolution that meets IA Code 403



## Downtown Building Condition

Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor / 1, 2, 3, 4

#	Street	Overall	Storefront/ Signage	Doors	Windows	Ext. Walls
<b>West Greene- North</b>						
103	W. Greene	2	2	2	2	2
109	W. Greene	2	2	2	2	2
111	W. Greene	2	3	2	2	2
113	W. Greene	2	2	2	2	2
117	W. Greene	2	2	2	2	1
125	W. Greene	3	2	3	3	4
133	W. Greene	2	2	2	2	2
139	W. Greene	2	2	2	2	2
<b>West Greene- South</b>						
104	W. Greene	2	2	2	2	3
112	W. Greene	2	2	2	2	2
120	W. Greene	2	1	2	1	1
124	W. Greene	1	1	1	1	1
132	W. Greene	1	1	1	1	1
138	W. Greene	3	4	3	3	3
140	W. Greene	2	2	3	2	2
144	W. Greene	2	1	2	2	2
150	W. Greene	2	2	3	3	1
152	W. Greene	2	2	2	3	2
<b>North Lawler- East</b>						
101	N. Lawler	2	2	2	2	2
107	N. Lawler	2	2	2	2	2
111	N. Lawler	Demolished 2018				
123	N. Lawler	2	2	2	2	2
125	N. Lawler	2	2	2	2	2
139	N. Lawler	2	3	2	4	2
147	N. Lawler	2	2	2	1	2
<b>North Lawler- West</b>						
100	N. Lawler	2	2	2	3	2
112	N. Lawler	3	3	3	3	3
120	N. Lawler	2	2	2	2	1
128	N. Lawler	3	3	3	3	3
136	N. Lawler	3	2	3	3	2
142	N. Lawler	2	2	2	3	2
<b>South Lawler- East</b>						
103	S. Lawler	2	3	1	2	3
111	S. Lawler	1	1	1	1	1
119	S. Lawler	3	3	3	3	3
125	S. Lawler	1	1	1	1	1
131	S. Lawler	2	2	2	2	2
135	S. Lawler	2	2	2	2	2
145	S. Lawler	2	2	2	2	2
149	S. Lawler	2	3	2	2	2
<b>South Lawler- West</b>						
102	S. Lawler	1	3	1	1	1
118	S. Lawler	1	1	1	1	1
128	S. Lawler	1	1	1	1	1
132	S. Lawler	2	2	2	2	2
136	S. Lawler	1	1	1	1	1
142	S. Lawler	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Average</b>		<b>1.89</b>	<b>1.96</b>	<b>1.91</b>	<b>1.98</b>	<b>1.84</b>

## 4. Community Development Block Grant Programs

### Downtown Revitalization Fund

- Town of more than 1,000 residents can qualify for up to \$500,000
- Must meet HUD Slum & Blight National Objective, and requires:
  - Comprehensive building survey
  - City resolution
  - Application that shows extent & seriousness of building deterioration as well as proposed activity to eliminate the slum & blight
- Minimum of 8 buildings must be enrolled in the program for grants less than \$500,000; minimum of 10 buildings for grants greater than \$500,000
- No new construction / activity allowed between period when building is enrolled in program and when renovation starts
- No first floor residential units are allowed in buildings funded by the program
- Must secure commitment from property owners early in the process
- Engage a historic preservation architect early; must have familiarity with Iowa Green Streets criteria
- Scoring system: Maximum 40 points; unlikely that 25 or below will receive funding
- Must have match for 36% or more of total cost (55% or greater preferred)
- Section 106 Historic Preservation Review required for projects

### CDBG Downtown Upper-Story Housing

- New program from IEDA in 2020; information not yet available
- Unit costs likely need to be \$200,000/unit or under; one demonstration community renovated a building for \$500,000, producing 1 studio apartment and 2 one-bedroom apartments
- Pilot program launched in mid-2010s; one community in Iowa structured their program to require:
  - 51% of units rented to Low or Moderate Income (LMI) households
  - Maximum gross rents (rent + utility costs) set at 65% of HUD's Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) limit

### CDBG Downtown Green Streets

This program funds large-scale infrastructure investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and/or stormwater management best practices.

*Example:* West Union, Iowa Pilot Project in early 2010s included district heating, permeable paving, bioretention, and pedestrian-friendly intersections.





Intersections were rebuilt, permeable pavers installed, and bio filtration measures created as a part of the landscaping in downtown West Union as a part of a CDBG Green Streets demonstration project. *Rendering: Fehr Graham*



## 5. Bureau of Economic Analysis data



The federal Bureau of Economic Analysis tracks data on regional employment and wages throughout the United States based on North American Industry Classification codes. Data for two sectors, education and healthcare, are not completely available for Northeast Iowa in part due to concerns about data anonymity.

Complete data sets for various geographies and years are available at [bea.gov/data](https://bea.gov/data).

<b>4-COUNTY DATA</b>		<b>2001</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>% change</b>
<b>Employment by place of work</b>							
<b>Total employment (number of jobs)</b>		<b>47,744</b>	<b>46,818</b>	<b>45,672</b>	<b>46,539</b>	<b>46,487</b>	<b>-3%</b>
<b>Farm employment</b>		6,758	5,669	5,531	5,851	5,742	<b>-15%</b>
<b>Nonfarm employment</b>		40,986	41,149	40,141	40,688	40,745	<b>-1%</b>
<b>Private nonfarm employment</b>		35,095	35,070	33,836	34,570	34,629	<b>-1%</b>
<b>Forestry, fishing, and related activities</b>		114	154	0	0	0	<b>*</b>
<b>Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction</b>		145	153	0	30	31	<b>-79%</b>
<b>Utilities</b>		211	157	104	0	0	<b>*</b>
<b>Construction</b>		2,956	3,380	3,374	2,996	3,188	<b>8%</b>
<b>Manufacturing</b>		6,367	5,292	3,762	4,301	4,170	<b>-35%</b>
<b>Wholesale trade</b>		1,802	1,871	1,712	1,718	1,812	<b>1%</b>
<b>Retail trade</b>		4,990	4,940	4,625	4,724	4,771	<b>-4%</b>
<b>Transportation and warehousing</b>		1,134	627	209	0	0	<b>*</b>
<b>Information</b>		467	447	375	358	345	<b>-26%</b>
<b>Finance and insurance</b>		1,370	1,381	1,686	1,680	1,612	<b>18%</b>
<b>Real estate and rental and leasing</b>		776	833	1,028	1,108	1,219	<b>57%</b>
<b>Professional, scientific, and technical services</b>		375	1,037	1,172	439	1,286	<b>243%</b>
<b>Management of companies and enterprises</b>		0	154	45	56	71	<b>*</b>
<b>Admin. &amp; support &amp; waste mgmt &amp; remediation svcs</b>		992	1,090	721	789	709	<b>-29%</b>
<b>Educational services</b>		n/a	n/a	n/a	76	89	<b>*</b>
<b>Health care and social assistance</b>		n/a	n/a	n/a	692	682	<b>*</b>
<b>Arts, entertainment, and recreation</b>		1,125	1,174	956	853	798	<b>-29%</b>
<b>Accommodation and food services</b>		2,350	2,251	2,247	2,326	2,292	<b>-2%</b>
<b>Other services (except gov't and gov't enterprises)</b>		2,474	2,637	2,598	2,477	2,655	<b>7%</b>
<b>Government and gov't enterprises</b>		5,891	6,079	6,305	6,118	6,116	<b>4%</b>
<b>Federal civilian</b>		383	355	353	292	295	<b>-23%</b>
<b>Military</b>		342	326	305	287	257	<b>-25%</b>
<b>State and local</b>		5,166	5,398	5,647	5,539	5,564	<b>8%</b>
<b>State gov't</b>		237	245	244	230	213	<b>-10%</b>
<b>Local gov't</b>		4,929	5,153	5,403	5,309	5,351	<b>9%</b>



## 6. Our Postville (Postville Betterment group)

The Postville Planning advisory committee evolves into Postville Betterment group, a 501(c)(3) with board and hired coordinator. Our Postville becomes the city's primary economic development and community betterment group, and will focus on entrepreneurial support and revitalization activities. This group will hire a coordinator that will have the knowledge and expertise necessary to write successful grant proposals, apply for and manage programs and designations, and hold community capacity building activities that will help to incubate a culture of civic engagement and entrepreneurialism. This group will be a key part of creating a resilient community and will build on Postville's diversity and economic assets, performing the following functions in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, City of Postville, Allamakee County Economic Development, and other organizations:

- Complements the work of the chamber and economic development groups
- Manages designations (Iowa Great Places, Main Street Iowa, or any other potential designation or affiliation)
- Serves as a vehicle to take title, restore/rehabilitate, and sell buildings
- Leads and coordinates events & promotions
- Facilitates rebranding and community-building effort through Our Postville
- Develops capacity building exercises and projects for local leadership
  - Hosts trainings & discussions
  - Focus on underserved / underrepresented communities
  - Civic engagement activities
  - Youth involvement
  - Promotes “creative placemaking” activities and public art that help attract attention to the community, increase community pride, and build support for longer-term projects
- Example: *Build a Better Postville* capacity-building information sessions to explore ideas, concepts, organizations, events and other relevant items with business community
- Creates guides: regulatory guide, funding and resources guide (RLFs, etc), physical infrastructure guide (building/capital funding access, historic building renovation, Alliant rebates/incentives)
  - Promotes and recruits local businesses
  - Assists entrepreneurs
  - Business counseling
  - Business incubator space & Community kitchen manager (if / when applicable)

# #OURPOSTVILLE



IS A PLACE  
WHERE THE  
**AMERICAN DREAM**  
CAN BE  
ACHIEVED,

WITH **OPPORTUNITIES** FOR  
**BUSINESS, EDUCATION, AND**  
**RECREATION,**

AND CULTURAL AND SOCIAL  
**DIVERSITY** THAT CONTRIBUTE  
TO A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE.

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FIND OUT HOW WE'RE WORKING TO MAKE OUR  
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Lo que me encanta de Postville

## #betterpostville

What we need to improve  
Lo que debemos mejorar

## #nextpostville

What I want to see in Postville  
Lo que quiero para Postville






Your pictures will help shape our effort to plan for the future. Be involved-share your Postville!

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CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT AT 563-864-7112 OR  
NATHAN@NORTHEASTIOWARCD.ORG



Advisory committee work has included informational & promotional posters for the planning effort, above, as well as long-term branding through posters and other planning promotions, right

## 7. Arts & Culture Project Ideas

These ideas were discussed, but not implemented, during the planning period. Depending on community support, one or more of these projects could be realized within 2–3 years. An extensive conversation with film faculty at Vanderbilt University helped develop a film and photography project idea, while other projects draw on previous experience from Northeast Iowa RC&D and other partners.

### Film project

This project would explore Postville through the eyes of its youth, showing the strengths of the community, its young population and diversity, and give their perspective on coming of age in an isolated, diverse rural area. This will build leadership, allow young residents to explore creative activities to which they may have had limited exposure, and encourages involvement from all communities within the town. One model for project outcomes is the Oxford Project, in which a photographer created a portrait of most people in a small town and then revisited the portraiture 20 years later, allowing the people of the town to tell their story while documenting personal changes. Vanderbilt University (or other institution) staff, faculty, or student aide(s) could edit video, create the final product.

### Potential themes:

- What do you do here? What do you want to do?
- What do you like here?
- Interviews with someone outside your culture, or elderly adults who have lived through changes
- Show us a family, cultural, or religious tradition that has meaning for you





## Interpretive panel walking tour

A simple project could share photographs and historical trivia from Postville's past with residents and visitors alike, and give new residents an appreciation for the city's past, including past immigrant groups. Panels should be bi-lingual in order to serve the greatest number of people, and can highlight historical resources that still exist in the town. This potential project would have the support of the Postville Historical Society.

### Potential topics / boards

- Neutral ground, Military Road, and Joel Post's Halfway House between Fort Atkinson, IA, and Fort Crawford, WI
- Hall Roberts and his early commercial success
- Diamond Jo Reynolds and the history of the Mississippi River commerce
- Railroad history: The Milwaukee Road
- John S Mott, 1st mayor of Postville, and his more famous son, Nobel Prize winner John R. Mott
- German history: the Iowa Volksblatt, Cabbage Hill neighborhood, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Turner Society & its hall
- David B. Henderson, Civil War veteran & US Representative
- "Always has been a melting pot:" the history of immigration in NE IA
- Postville baseball- Postville once had a professional team

**Northeast Iowa RC&D has extensive experience in creating interpretation for various topics throughout Northeast Iowa communities. This panel is installed at Postville's native prairie area.**









