



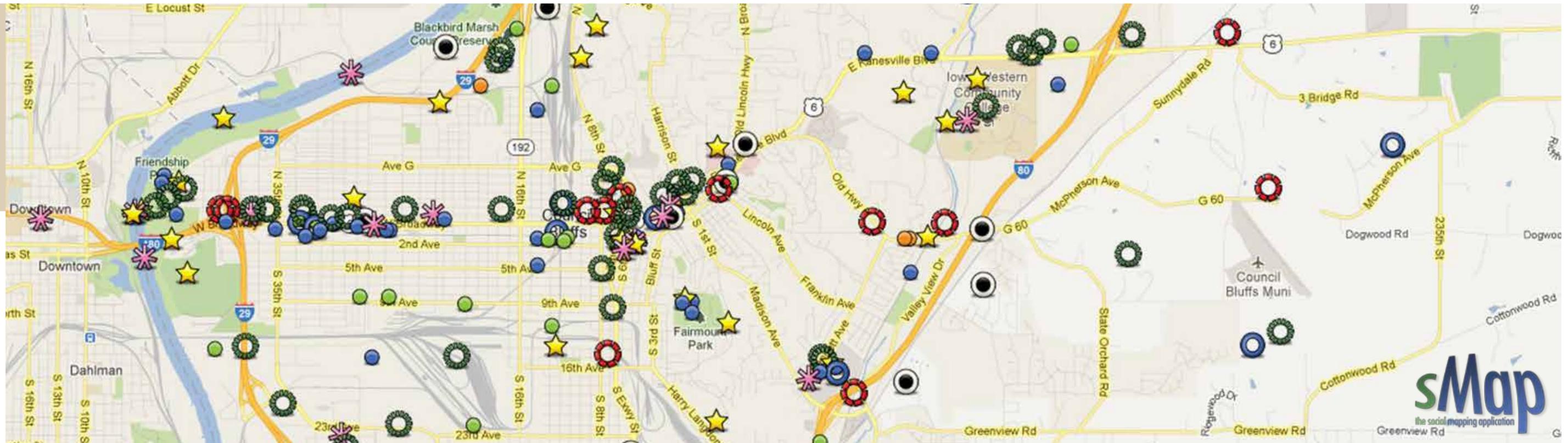
2 Community Outreach

The public engagement process for Bluffs Tomorrow 2030 involved input from residents, property owners, community leaders, government officials, and business owners for their views on the issues and priorities in Council Bluffs. Input was collected through a variety of methods in order to encourage participation from all members of the community.

Outreach methods included:

- » **Public workshops**- Worked to contribute to a collective sense of ownership for the Plan and its recommendations.
- » **Interviews with key stakeholders**- Worked to provide additional insight on particular issues facing the City.
- » **Online polling and questionnaires**- Gave key information on existing conditions, assets, and opportunities to be addressed in the Plan.
- » **sMap**- an on-line mapping tool allowed users to geographically place issues, opportunities, and aspirations.

This chapter includes a summary of the issues identified through the public outreach process. A complete and more detailed summary is provided in the Existing Conditions Presentation, on file with the City.



Opportunities for Engagement

Public Workshops

Approximately 50 residents attended a Community Workshop held in October, 2012 where they discussed the priorities facing Council Bluffs, positive steps the City could take, and important assets the City should protect. A Business Workshop, also held in October, welcomed 35 business owners and operators who were asked to share their views on issues that impacted the business community and strategies for making Council Bluffs more business friendly.

DIY Workshops

In addition to the public workshops, 61 participants across 7 groups used “Do-It-Yourself” Workshop kits. These DIY workshops gave community members the opportunity to facilitate their own meetings and provide valuable input in the planning process.

Stakeholder Interviews

Key person interviews were held with several community leaders and public officials in August of 2012. These informal conversations provided more in-depth insights to issues that are critical to the future of the community. Interviews were held with residents, business owners, representative from key institutions and organizations, developers, City staff, and other municipal agencies and governments.

Web-based Outreach

Web-based outreach efforts included three major tools. An on-line mapping tool known as sMap, allowed Council Bluffs residents to create their own map of assets, areas of concern, and priority sites for development; a MindMixer forum gave participants an opportunity to share ideas to improve Council Bluffs and discuss a vision for the City’s future; and on-line questionnaires allowed the community to provide additional information about themselves, their concerns for the community, and their favorite aspects of Council Bluffs.

Fifteen people used sMap to plot 308 points, 58 residents participated on Mind-Mixer, and 56 residents and businesses responded to the on-line questionnaires.

Visioning Workshop

In February 2013, the City hosted a Visioning Workshop that provided the opportunity for citizens to work in small groups and craft ideas for the community’s future. Using markers, large maps, and booklets, participants identified desired improvements related to neighborhoods, commercial areas, industry, transportation, recreation, the environment, community character, and other topics. The Visioning Workshop was held at the library and was attended by approximately 50 people.



Summary of Public Outreach

After months of conversations with residents, business owners, elected and appointed officials, community leaders, students, youth groups, and other stakeholders from around the City, a number of major recurring themes emerged. The following does not reflect the entirety of comments received and evaluated by the project team, but rather is a summary of all of the public outreach efforts undertaken throughout the process.

Image & Marketing

Stakeholders identified Council Bluffs' image and reputation as an issue to overcome. A common suggestion to address this was to create a strong, City-wide branding strategy to inform prospective residents and businesses about all the great things Council Bluffs has to offer.

Key Development Sites

A number of key sites around the community – such as Mall of the Bluffs, Mid-America Center, the former Bunge grains facility site, and the Riverfront – were identified as being crucial locations for investment. Residents felt that redevelopment strategies for these sites should be specific to each area, and should depend on how the site fits in with the other recommendations of the Bluffs Tomorrow 2030 Plan.

Employment Opportunities

Council Bluffs residents and businesses advocated for more and better employment opportunities. Strategies for achieving this took two common approaches: increasing jobs by supporting small businesses and providing land for new industrial users, and improving youth and workforce education to provide 21st century skills.

Neighborhoods

Council Bluffs has a storied history and quality architecture. Its neighborhoods help define its unique character, but many residents felt the condition of homes and infrastructure is an issue. Preserving the City's culture, history, and architecture depends on making sure every Council Bluffs resident has a high-quality, safe place to live. Enforcement of a strong set of local codes and ordinances was often suggested as the solution to these issues.

Transportation Network

With easy access to two interstates, two airports, the Missouri River, and the City of Omaha, location was identified as one of Council Bluffs' biggest advantages. In order to fully capitalize on this location advantage, however, residents felt that the City should improve its transportation system of roads, bridges, sidewalks, bike paths and trails, and transit options.

Growth & Expansion

Though the City is bounded by the Missouri River to the west, Council Bluffs contains a wealth of undeveloped land within its planning area. While not all of this land is suitable for development due to topography, high agricultural productivity, or available municipal services, the City has adequate room to grow. Residents and stakeholders stated that they wish to see this growth happen responsibly, with careful planning, and ongoing public input.

Service Providers

Quality local service providers such as the Public Library, Police and Fire Departments, Parks, Recreation, and Public Property Department, and an array of non-profit and community organizations, make Council Bluffs a great place to live. The educational institutions, ranging from public schools to the Iowa School for the Deaf and Iowa Western Community College, provide residents with a high-quality education. Stakeholders said that they would like to see investment in Council Bluffs Community Schools and Lewis Central Schools in innovative ways to help the youth of the community prepare for future employment opportunities.

Governmental Cooperation

In addition to managing city facilities and services, Council Bluffs is the county seat of Pottawattamie County. The community is a focal point for services and programs throughout the region. However, residents felt that greater collaboration is required to ensure that the best services can be delivered efficiently by the City, County, school districts, Iowa Department of Transportation, etc.