

CHAPTER 5:

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

+ DOWNTOWN

Overview

Springfield has a great amount of pride and a high quality of life. It is family-oriented, with low crime and walkable neighborhoods. With fun, family-centered events (such as all the parades and the library programs for all ages) these qualities are what make Springfield unique. This chapter aims to preserve and promote the unique character of the community, guide downtown development, and beautify Springfield.

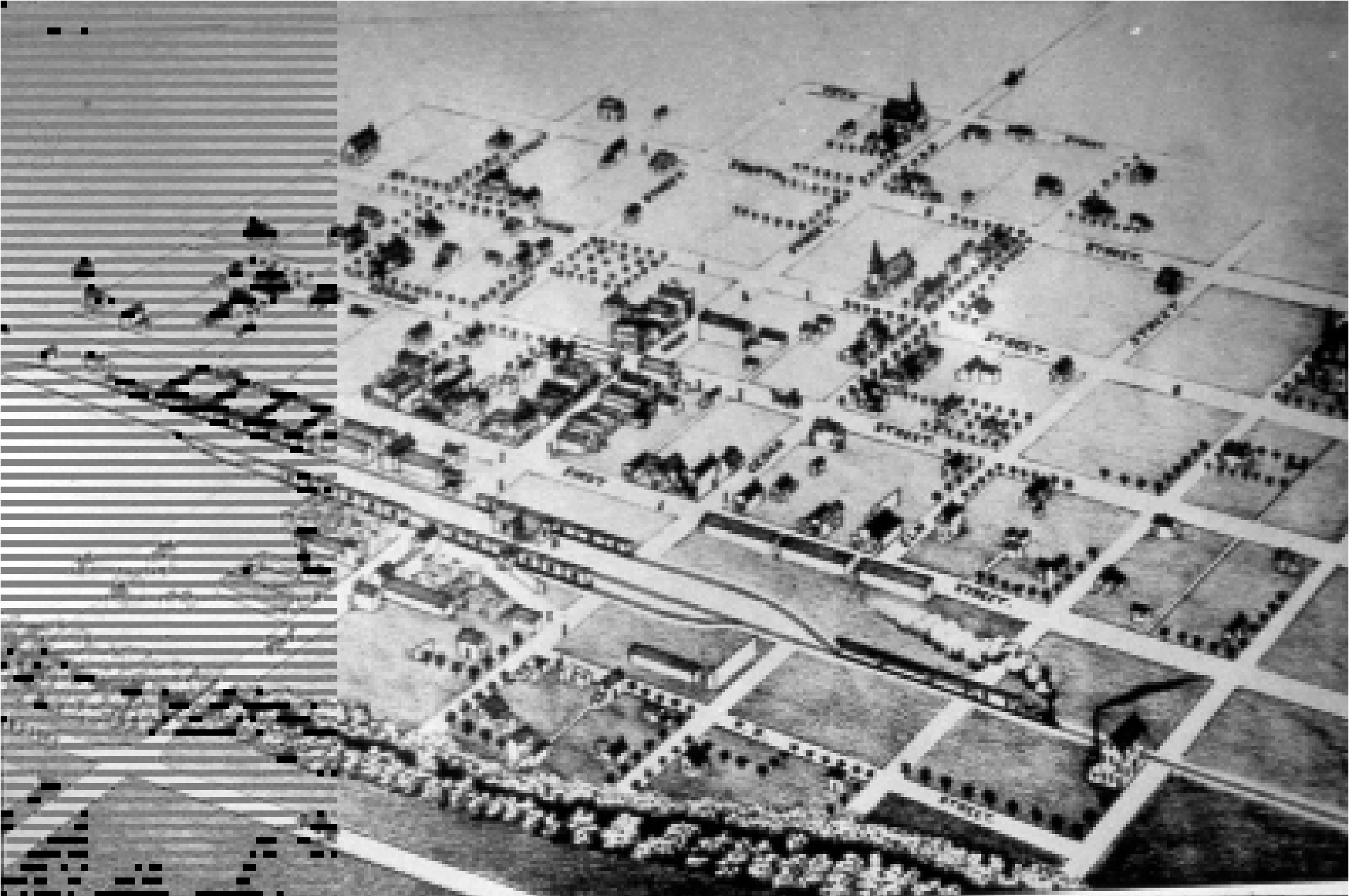
This Chapter will overview the following:

- Public Input Summary
- Key Initiatives + Strategies
- Goals, Policies, and Action Items

Education in Springfield

Springfield is home to a new elementary school that opened in 2022. Springfield Platteview Community Schools (SPCS) has been a pillar of community pride, fostering exceptional students in academics, athletics, and vocational pursuits.

Serving over 1,200 students from Preschool through 12th grade across 90 square miles of Sarpy County, SPCS has earned an "Excellent" rating from the Nebraska Department of Education in both 2023 and 2024. This achievement highlights the dedication and hard work of our students, educators, leaders, and the entire community.



WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE COMMUNITY

Community Identity Related Public Input

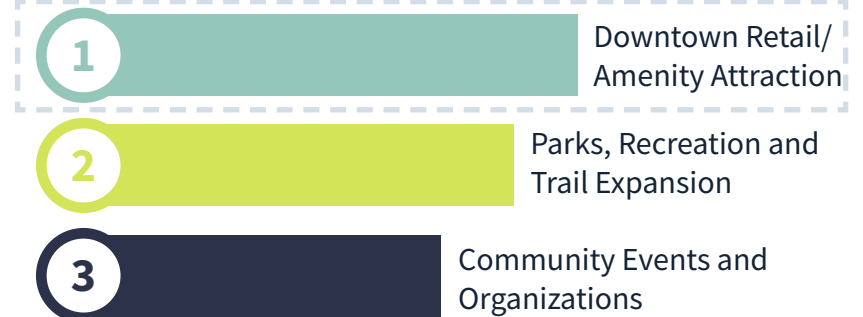
Springfield residents love the unique small-town feel. Residents want to preserve their high quality of life as the community grows. They believe that the ability to safely walk and bike to key amenities within the community is a strong indicator of maintaining that cherished small-town feel.

There is a clear need for a safer pedestrian connection on Main Street from Highway 50 to Downtown across the creek, along with a desire to develop a vibrant downtown area with appealing amenities. Opportunities for beautification, such as planters, landscaping, street trees, fountains, community gardens, gateway signage, and public art, are also highly regarded.

Community events and organizations are seen as crucial to fostering a lively, welcoming environment. By tapping into agritourism—highlighting the downtown fairgrounds and the winery just south of town—Springfield has the potential to become a cultural and entertainment hub.

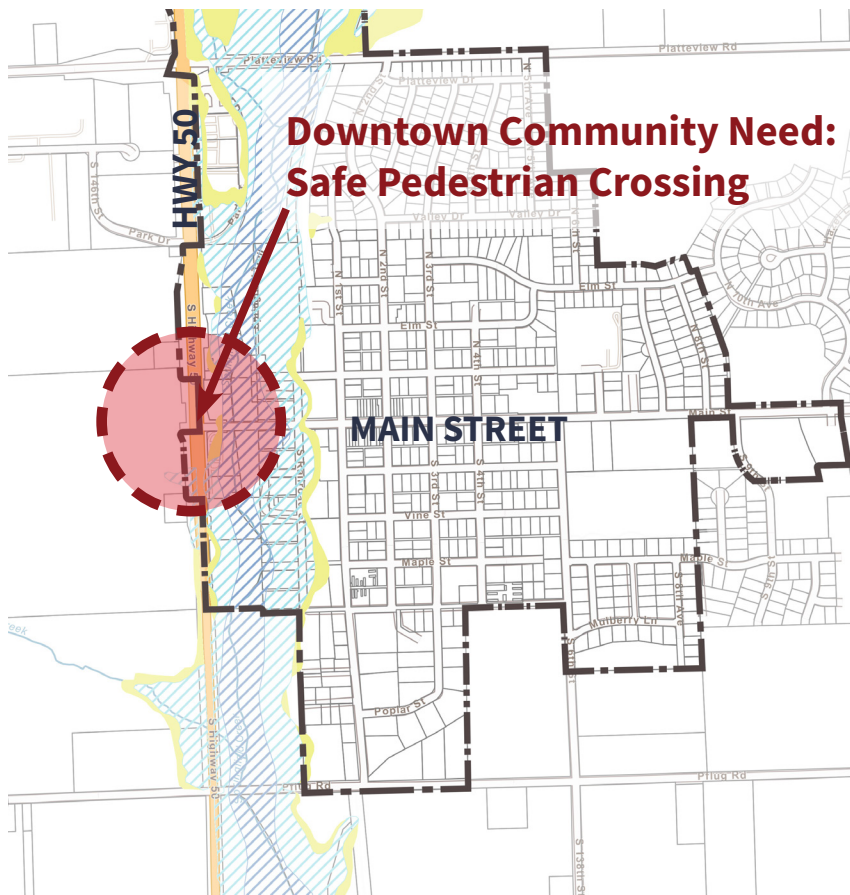
Residents also highlighted the New Elementary School, Library, Fairgrounds, and local downtown businesses as favorites. However, there are concerns about the unappealing look of Highway 50 as the town's main entrance and the poor aesthetic of the street connecting it. Finally, there is a strong desire for more shops along Main Street to enhance the downtown experience.

Mentimeter Voting Results (online)



Priority Ranking Activity Results

- 1 Downtown Retail/Amenity Attraction
- 2 Community Events/Organizations
- 3 Streetscaping/Beautification



Most Preferred Beautification Improvements



STREET TREES



GATHERING SPACE + AMPHITHEATER



STREET FURNITURE/OUTDOOR CAFE SEATING

KEY INITIATIVES + STRATEGIES

Key Initiatives + Strategies

Springfield can use several initiatives and strategies to enhance its identity and downtown area. These include revitalizing streetscapes to create more attractive and functional public spaces, elevating the downtown district to foster a vibrant community hub, establishing welcoming gateways that signify entry into Springfield, organizing community events that bring residents together and celebrate local culture, and promoting Springfield to highlight its unique character and appeal. These initiatives will help strengthen the community's identity and ensure long-term success.

Strategic opportunities for Springfield's identity and downtown are categorized into the following:

- Streetscapes
- Downtown
- Gateways
- Community Events
- Promoting Springfield

Streetscapes

Streetscapes significantly enhance the overall look and feel of a community, making it more inviting and aesthetically pleasing. Well-designed streetscapes can improve the functionality of public spaces, providing safer and more enjoyable environments for pedestrians and cyclists. They also contribute to the economic vitality of an area by attracting visitors and encouraging local businesses to thrive. Moreover, streetscapes foster a sense of community pride and identity, creating spaces where residents can gather, interact, and celebrate their local culture.

In Springfield, the focus on different types of streetscapes—highway beautification, community beautification, and downtown beautification—ensures that every part of the town benefits from these enhancements, ultimately leading to a more cohesive and vibrant community.

Highway Beautification

Highway beautification involves median treatments (i.e. street trees, landscaping, or unique branding elements) and standard DOT light poles with custom Springfield branded banners, creating visually appealing entrances to and through the town.

Community Beautification

Community beautification focuses on adding street trees, unique-to-Springfield vehicular and pedestrian light poles with Springfield branded banners, limited site amenities such as benches and bike racks where appropriate, elevated paving design, and utility wraps.

Downtown Beautification

Downtown beautification includes street trees, enhanced landscaping, planters, benches, bike racks, trash cans, and unique-to-Springfield pedestrian light poles with Springfield branded banners, all of which contribute to a vibrant and welcoming downtown area.

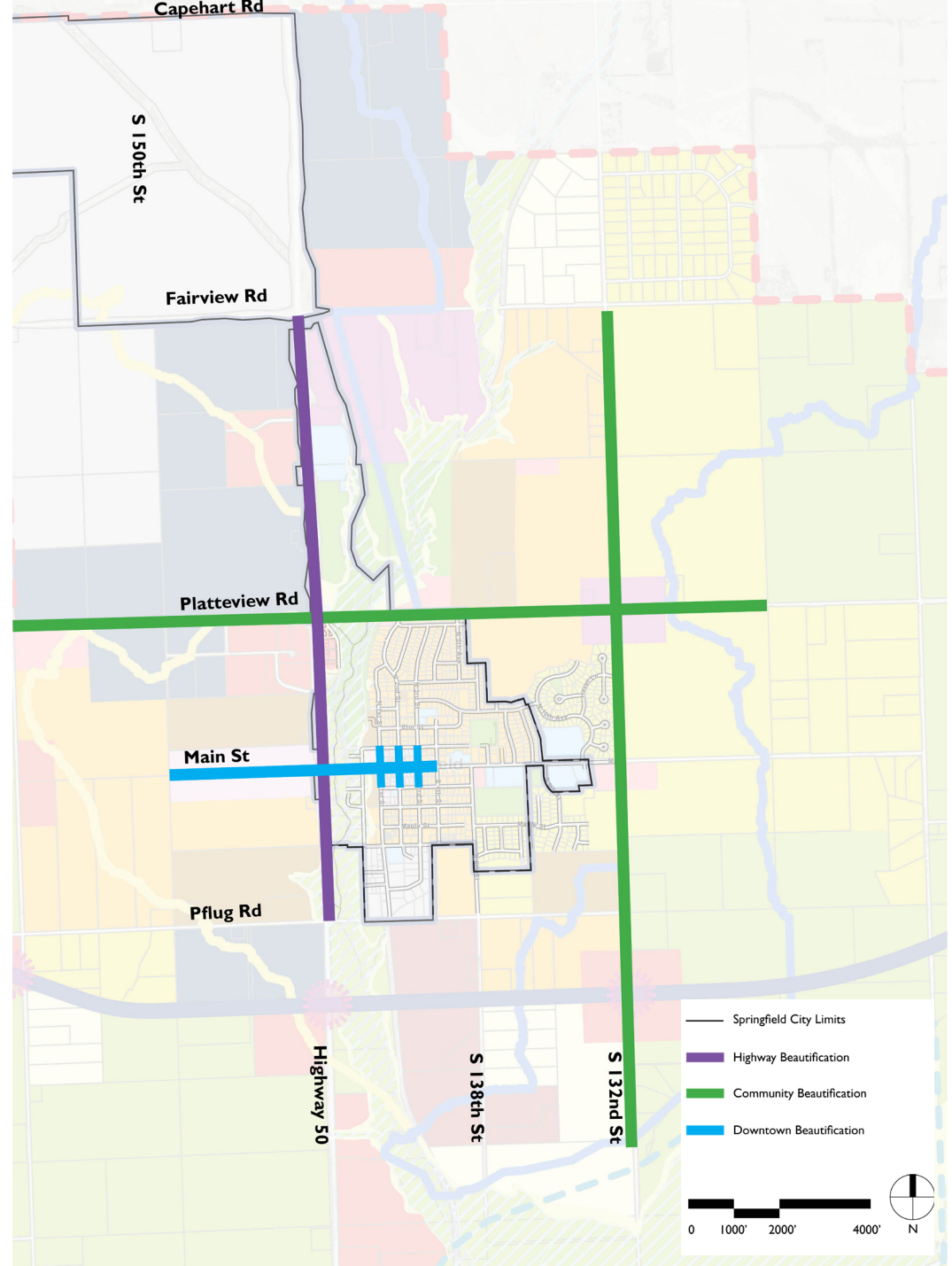


FIGURE 5.1 // STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENT MAP

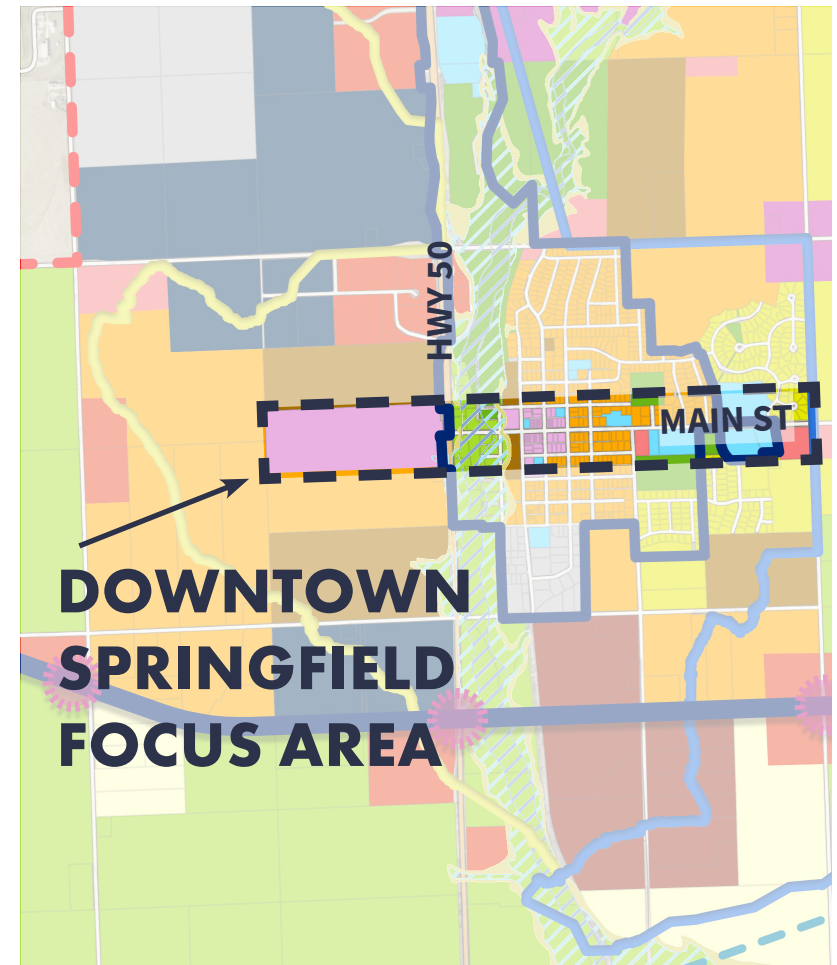
KEY INITIATIVES + STRATEGIES

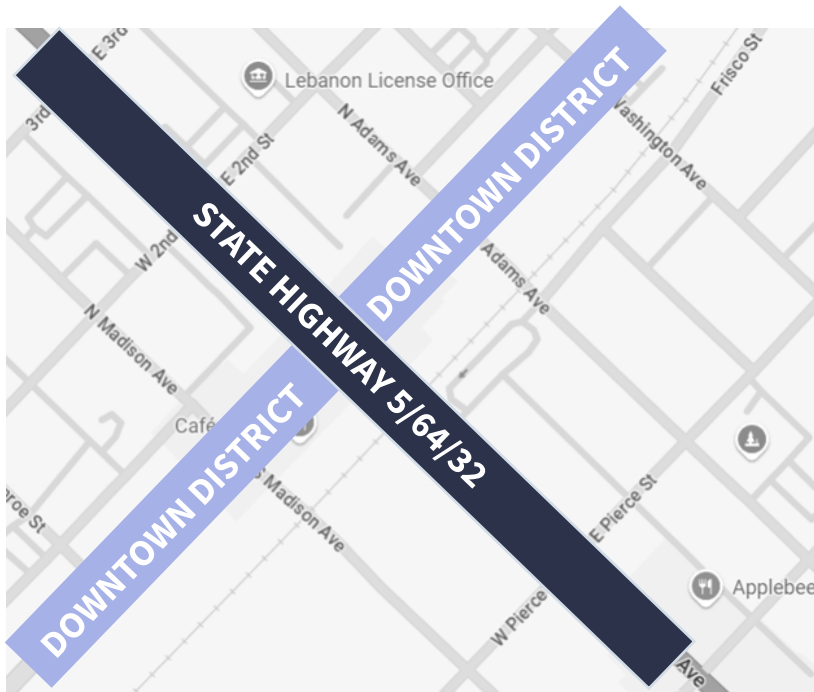
Downtown

The Future Land Use Plan proposes expanding the existing downtown area across Highway 50. This contiguous expansion will bolster the long-term success of the district, embracing existing downtown businesses and enhancing their prosperity through the proximity and adjacency of walkable, mixed-use buildings ranging from two to three stories.

Coordination with the NDOT will be crucial to maintaining a pedestrian-friendly environment across the highway, ensuring seamless connectivity between land uses.

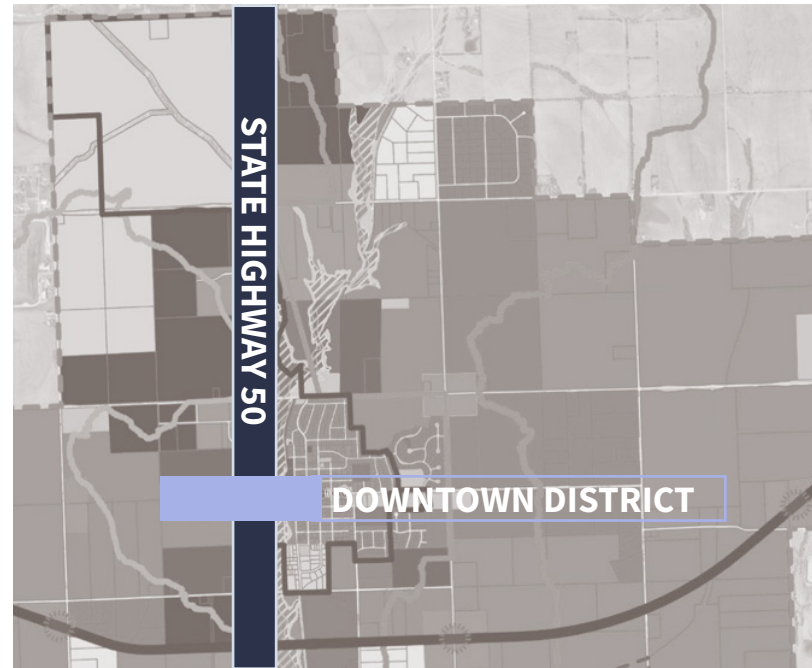
A successful example of this approach can be seen in Lebanon, Missouri, where the downtown area, serving approximately 15,000 residents, is bisected by a state highway. This highway accommodates around 10,500 annual average daily traffic, including 3,000 trucks. In comparison, Springfield's future downtown district would be divided by Highway 50, which has an annual average daily traffic of 11,715 vehicles, 1,230 of which are trucks. Strengthening the district with branding and signage will help signify to both passersby and residents that this is the heart of the community.





LEBANON, MO

FIGURE 5.2 // DOWNTOWN DIVIDED BY HIGHWAY COMPARISONS



SPRINGFIELD, NE

Lebanon

- **10,500** average daily traffic
- **3,000** trucks

Springfield

- **11,715** average daily traffic
- **1,230** trucks

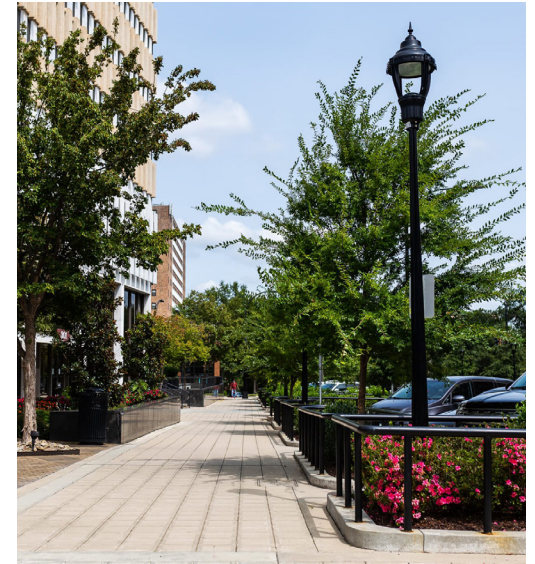


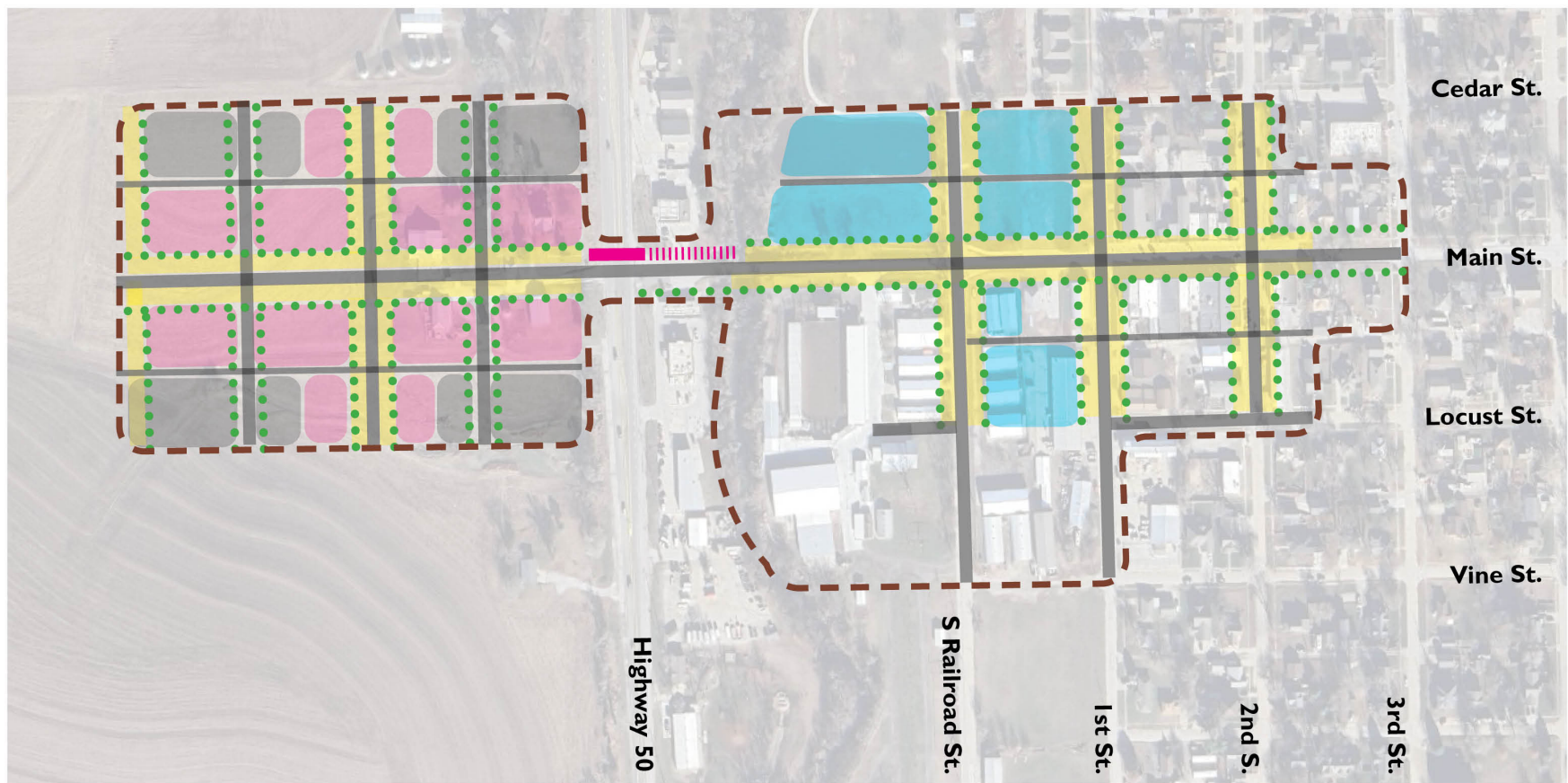
KEY INITIATIVES + STRATEGIES

Strong Downtown Characteristics

Downtown enhancements will help elevate Springfield's downtown into a vibrant, well-connected hub that reflects the community's unique character. Strategies to help raise downtown include:

- Establishing a program for business improvement funds for businesses to apply for improvements such as new storefronts and building infrastructure.
- Maintaining and expanding where possible more on street parking with new and infill development downtown.
- Providing strong and safe pedestrian connections that connect the new district with existing downtown.
- Beautifying streetscapes that incorporate items such as planters, landscaping, public art, unique paving designs, and brand incorporation.





- DOWNTOWN DISTRICT
- NEW DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY
- INFILL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY
- PARKING
- ON STREET PARKING
- PED BRIDGE
- PED BRIDGE OVER HIGHWAY
- STREET ENHANCEMENT

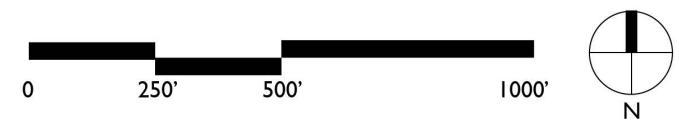


FIGURE 5.3 // DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENTS MAP

KEY INITIATIVES + STRATEGIES

Gateways

Another way to showcase Springfield's pride and welcoming environment is through the creation of gateways. These gateways serve as inviting points for people entering the community, setting the first impression of how residents view their hometown.

Gateways should prominently feature the name of the community, possibly accompanied by a slogan, and incorporate the new Springfield brand and/or logo. These monuments should be situated within a landscaped environment, with plantings in both the background and foreground to enhance their visual appeal. Additionally, gateway monuments should harmonize with the natural surroundings and be constructed from durable materials to ensure they stand the test of time.

Primary Gateway

Primary gateways are located and positioned to serve visitors and community members alike along high-volume traffic roadways. Primary gateways should be appropriately sized and legible for cars that go over 45 miles per hour. Ensure gateways have sufficient right of way at key intersections to accommodate the monument feature.

Secondary Gateway

Secondary gateways are located along roads with slower speeds and are designed to serve the community and show local pride. Ensure gateways have sufficient right of way at key intersections to accommodate the monument feature.

Community Events

Springfield embraces a rich array of community events that are integral to its culture and traditions, such as the Halloween Parade, Holiday Lights Parade, and Springfield Days Parade. The Sarpy County Fairgrounds has recently expanded its programming beyond the annual fair, offering additional entertainment for the community. This initiative has further activated the downtown area, providing more activities for residents. In 2024, Springfield held its first farmer's market, marking another milestone in community engagement. Springfield should continue to find ways to host consistent and high-quality events to attract visitors and keep residents actively involved in their community. Continue to leverage and partner with the fairgrounds.

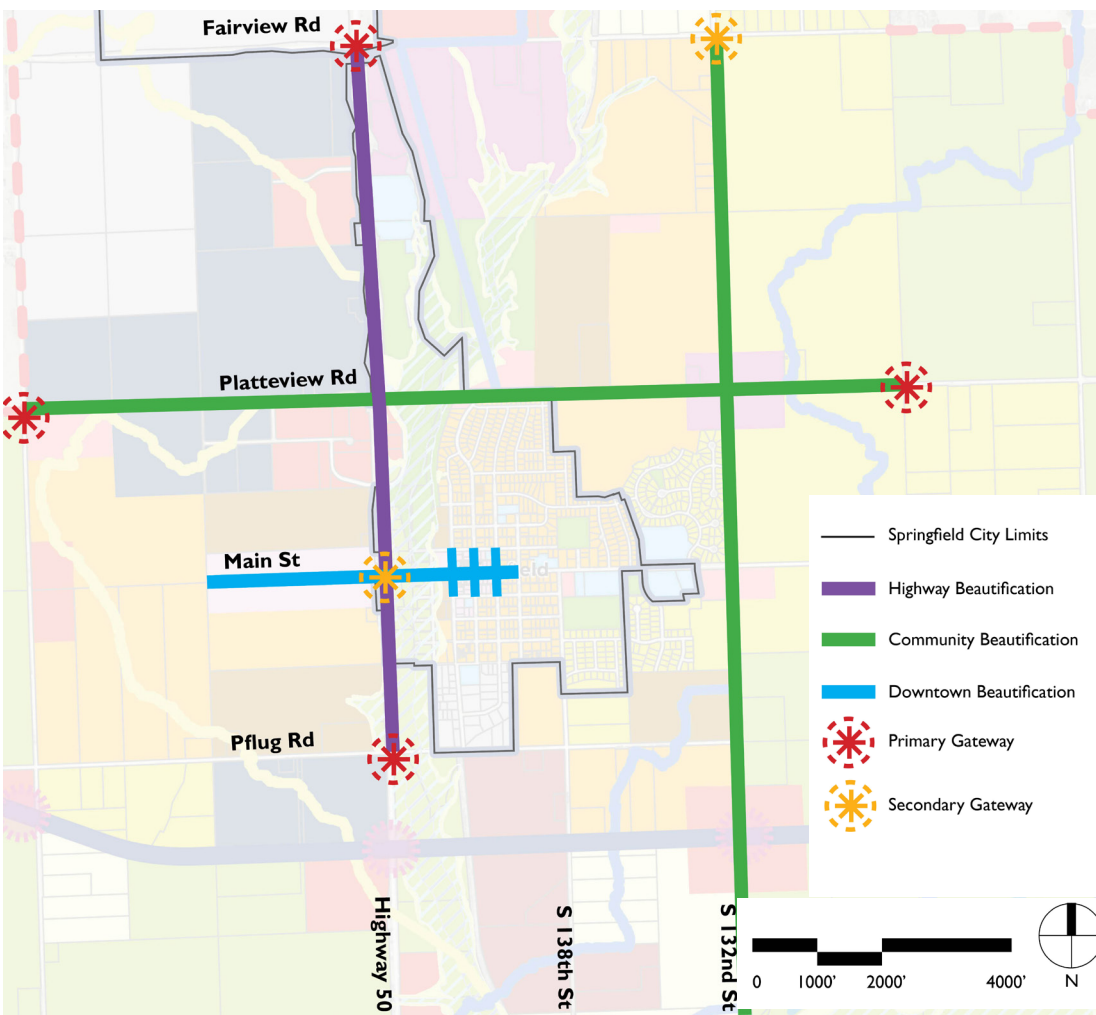


FIGURE 5.4 // GATEWAY IMPROVEMENT MAP



FIGURE 5.5 // PHOTOS FROM SPRINGFIELD EVENTS

KEY INITIATIVES + STRATEGIES

Promote Springfield

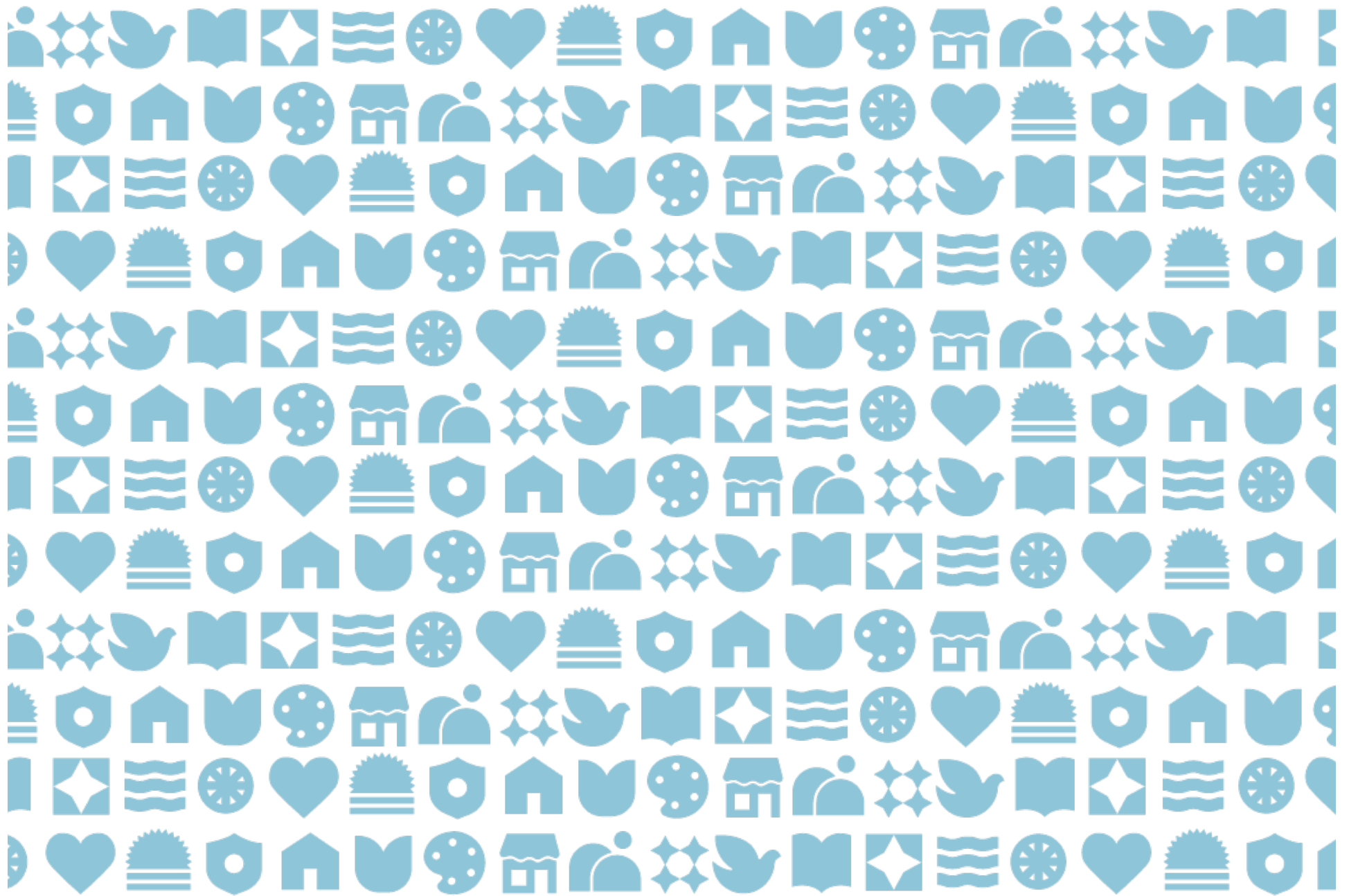
Promoting the Springfield community can be achieved through a multifaceted approach. First, showcasing life in Springfield is essential to highlight the vibrant culture, events, and everyday experiences that make the community unique. This can be done through engaging content that captures the essence of Springfield's lifestyle.

Second, leveraging recent branding efforts to expand the marketing campaign will help reach a broader audience and reinforce the community's identity. By utilizing the new Springfield brand and logo, the marketing campaign can create a cohesive and recognizable image.

Lastly, continuing to improve consistency in the application of the Springfield Brand across all platforms and materials will ensure that the community's message remains clear and unified. This consistency will strengthen the brand's impact and foster a sense of pride among residents and visitors alike.



FIGURE 5.6 // SPRINGFIELD CITY LOGO



GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS

GOAL CI-6: ENHANCE SPRINGFIELD'S COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND AESTHETIC APPEAL THROUGH STRATEGIC BEAUTIFICATION PROJECTS, BRANDING INITIATIVES, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS.

Policies

P-6.1	Incorporate the Springfield brand into the built environment to reinforce community identity and pride.
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Action Items

AI-6.1	Implement landscaping, median treatments, and light poles with custom banners along major and minor arterial roads to create visually appealing entrances to Springfield.
AI-6.2	Enhance collector streets throughout the community with street trees, vehicular and pedestrian light poles with banners, limited site amenities, and utility wraps to improve the overall streetscape.
AI-6.3	Improve downtown aesthetics by adding street trees, enhanced landscaping, expanded on street parking where possible, planters, benches, bike racks, trash cans, and pedestrian light poles with banners to create a welcoming and vibrant downtown area.
AI-6.4	Position primary gateways along high-volume traffic roadways with appropriately sized and legible signage for cars traveling 35-45 miles per hour to ensure clear and attractive entrances to the community.
AI-6.5	Position secondary gateways along slower high-volume traffic roadways to showcase community pride and create a sense of arrival.
AI-6.6	Identify and continue to host major Springfield events that are consistent and high quality to attract residents and visitors, with a focus on agritourism and the rural arts.
AI-6.7	Continue to showcase life in Springfield through various marketing efforts to promote the community's unique character and attractions.
AI-6.8	Leverage recent branding efforts to expand the marketing campaign and reach a broader audience.
AI-6.9	Continue to improve consistency in the application of the Springfield brand across all initiatives to strengthen community identity and recognition.
AI-6.10	Explore funding and grant opportunities to enhance the community tree canopy.

GOAL CI-7: ELEVATE SPRINGFIELD'S DOWNTOWN INTO A VIBRANT, WELL-CONNECTED HUB THAT FOSTERS DEVELOPMENT AND SHOWCASES EXCEPTIONAL AESTHETIC APPEAL.

Policies

P-7.1	Work to preserve Springfield's small town charm as it grows by promoting a sense of place and belonging through infill development and strong downtown characteristics.
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Action Items

AI-7.1	Provide a safe pedestrian connection across the creek to connect Highway 50 and future development to the west to Downtown.
AI-7.2	Promote infill development along Main Street with buildings that promote transparency (i.e. first floor windows).
AI-7.3	Establish a downtown business improvement program focused on façade enhancements and major infrastructure renovations, such as roof and HVAC systems, to support the revitalization of downtown businesses.
AI-7.4	Conduct a study to explore the potential for extending on-street parking on Main Street, particularly west toward the creek, to accommodate future development and maintain the urban character of downtown.
AI-7.5	Work with local schools to create job and volunteer opportunities for high school students within the community and downtown.
AI-7.6	Study ways to provide a safe pedestrian route across Highway 50 to enhance the connection between the existing downtown area and the future commercial development west of Highway 50. Consider exploring the idea of a future pedestrian overpass and at grade enhancements.
AI-7.7	Implement vegetation buffers for non-historic downtown businesses without retail storefronts to enhance the aesthetic appeal and create a more cohesive streetscape.
AI-7.8	Apply to become a Creative District through the Nebraska Arts Council's Creative District Program.