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Reinventing Old Capitol Mall

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A concept plan for the City of Iowa City Department of Economic Development

Field Problems in Planning, 102:210

Graduate Program in Urban and Regional Planning
The University of Iowa

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Professor Heather MacDonald, instructor

Professor Jerry Anthony, faculty advisor

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Acknowledgements

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to those who contributed to the successful completion of this project.

We would first like to thank Steve Nasby and the Iowa City Economic development department for giving us the opportunity to work with them on this project. We appreciate the time and effort put in to provide us with information and guide us in our endeavor. We hope that our ideas and recommendations will be useful to the city as it strives to promote growth in the downtown Iowa City area.

We would also like to thank the following people for their contributions to this project:

Professor Heather MacDonald, the field problems coordinator for her persistent encouragement and advice

Professor Jerry Anthony for his suggestions and patient guidance during the development of this project

Professor Alan Peters for his assistance with the 3-D modeling

All those who participated in the interviews
Executive Summary

Scope & Purpose

Our team set out to create a conceptual plan for the Old Capitol Mall in order to revitalize the underutilized site.

Methodology

Figure 1

Developed a profile of the study object and the area.

Identified needs and opportunities.

Evaluated approaches to mall redevelopment.

Presented recommendations.

Findings

Iowa City's downtown has a diverse market. Although many students live, work or study in close proximity to downtown, there are other potential downtown users and consumers. Scientists, engineers, architects, designers, educationists, artists, musicians and entertainers whose economic function is to create new visions, new technology and/or new and creative ideas abound in Iowa City. Some of these people seek an urban lifestyle that offers social and physical amenities as well as cultural events and entertainment. Iowa City already provides much of what attracts this group of people to the city, e.g. cultural diversity, locally owned upscale shops, mom-and-pop restaurants, and a large research university. Nevertheless, more can be done to foster an environment that attracts more of them to "live, work, and play" downtown. We believe we can accomplish this providing a center that brings innovation, entertainment, culture, and arts under one roof.
Recommendations

We recommend that the Old Capitol Mall be reinvented as The Iowa City Center for Creative Arts and Innovation. To make it a destination point for residents and visitors, we recommend improving the mall's civic role, promoting a mix of uses that enhances the environment for the creative class, using the site to provide downtown with a new green space and a new experience, and reconnecting the mall with its surroundings. To achieve this we propose functional as well as physical alterations to the current structure.

Functional alterations include:

- Providing commercial space on the first floor (retail, restaurants, and entertainment).
- Providing offices, incubators, exhibition space, and a food court on the second floor.
- Incorporating housing in two new levels.
- Promoting civic activities such as cultural and historical displays, musical events, fashion shows, art and science displays, arts and craft fairs, film festivals, and food and wine tasting.

Physical alterations include:

- Creating gathering spaces within the structure by adding indoor landscaping, water features, and tables and chairs.
- Adding windows to the first and second floors.
- Building a glass tower to help trigger curiosity of passers by.
- Building an intensive green roof over the second floor.
- Building a ramp that leads people from the pedestrian mall to the green roof.
- Incorporating a café with outdoor seating on the green roof.
- Adding two new floors (in a u-shape) above current structure.
The Old Capitol Mall, located at 201 South Clinton Street in downtown Iowa City, is a cause of concern for the City of Iowa City. The Mall was built in 1981 by the Old Capitol Limited Partnership, and has changed ownership half a dozen times. In the past few years the mall has been plagued with low patronage, low occupancy rates, and bankruptcy. The mall was recently sold to a group of local investors for about $9.62 million, less than half of what it was once worth (Press Citizen, 2003).

Despite several revitalization attempts by various owners, the mall has continued to decline, creating economic and aesthetic problems for downtown.

The economic problems include lost tax revenue for the city, lost investment opportunities for potential business owners in search of vacant space downtown, and lost job opportunities for area residents. The aesthetic criticisms of the mall are that it presents a visual barrier separating downtown from surrounding areas. The recent purchase of Old Capitol Mall has renewed residents’ hopes for physical as well as functional improvements.

This study identifies concepts for redevelopment of the Old Capitol Mall.

We examined the current development climate downtown and assessed the area’s needs to come up with a series of recommendations for revitalizing the site. We have not included a detailed implementation plan in our recommendations. To come up with the concept plan, our team addressed the following question:

How could the Old Capitol Mall become an asset to downtown?
The boundaries of our study are: Linn Street on the East, Madison Street on the West, Court Street on the South and Jefferson Street on the North.

We approached our research question as follows:

1. **Developed a profile of the Old Capitol Mall, downtown, and Iowa City.**
   - Reviewed the history of the building.
   - Gathered data on population and economic trends in Iowa City.
   - Conducted interviews with key informants.
   - Conducted direct observations of pedestrian movement and use of the mall.
   - Analyzed data on pedestrian and vehicular movements around the mall.

2. **Identified needs and opportunities.**
   - Evaluated housing, office and retail markets.
   - Analyzed the possible interaction of the mall with future projects in the area.
3. Evaluated creative approaches to mall redevelopment.

- Reviewed literature of other malls in University towns, greyfield mall redevelopment in the U.S., and international redevelopment of malls.

4. Developed recommendations.

- Recommended functional modifications based on our analysis of downtown needs.
- Recommended physical alterations to the interior and exterior to improve the mall's aesthetics as well as accommodate the functional alterations proposed.
Recent commentators argue that the future of cities depends to a large extent on a certain category of people—people whose economic function is to create new visions, new technologies, and/or new and creative ideas.

Richard Florida, author of "The Rise of the Creative Class," refers to these people as the "creative class". According to Florida this group includes scientists, engineers, architects, designers, educationists, artists, musicians, and entertainers.

Like Florida, numerous economic development departments and politicians around the US believe the future of cities is largely dependent on the existence of these people. Consequently they believe that cities should aim to create an environment that attracts this group. This involves striking a balance between providing health, social, and cultural amenities as well as satisfying the needs of a diverse community.

According to literature consulted, these skilled professionals prefer locations that include; diversity, a well educated populace, major research universities, cultural activities and art, urban centers with higher density and downtown housing, a vibrant economy with growth prospects, and health and social amenities.

Iowa City already exhibits many of these desired features, yet it has the capacity to enhance its diverse climate. This will not only attract these skilled professionals but will also sustain its current vibrancy. The next section of this report describes these already existing features and identifies potential areas for improvement.
Site Profile
The gross building area of the Old Capitol Mall is 339,632 square feet and the parcel area is 184,776 square feet. The maximum buildable area for that site is 2,217,312 which means a twelve story building can be built in that parcel. Currently the zoning for the site allows for a wide variety of uses including residential, commercial, and religious uses. For a complete listing of permitted uses see Fig. 14

_Nestled between the University of Iowa’s east campus and Iowa City’s downtown, the mall is in a heavily trafficked location._

With the ramp, the mall covers the area from Washington on the North, Burlington on the South, Clinton on the East and Capitol on the West.

According to Brian McClatchey from The University of Iowa’s Parking and Transportation Department, estimates for the CAMBUS system show about 16,000 daily rides originating from or terminating at the Pentacrest, most likely 85 percent of these riders are students. City counts further show that during two hours of morning and evening peak periods, about 9,000 vehicles and 1,300 pedestrians (both students and non-students) pass by the intersection of Clinton and Burlington streets.

This demonstrates that people don’t need an excuse to come downtown but rather an excuse to stay. The challenge of the mall then is to attract and retain this passing market.

We conducted pedestrian counts at each of the mall entrances on weekdays and weekends, during the day and early evening hours. These counts were done in twenty minute periods. Our counts reveal that the mall is busiest during the daytime on weekdays. Mall customers were mostly people working or studying downtown during the week.
Although the university students constitute a majority of mall users, our research indicates that other groups also make use of the mall.

The primary age group using the mall is 16 to 30, accounting for 55 percent of all users. The 30 to 50 age group account for a sizeable 32 percent. This second group is made up of downtown employees who come in for lunch or use the mall for access to the parking ramp. See Fig. 15 in the appendix for charts and information from pedestrian observations.

**Figure 3 – Mall Pedestrian Counts by Age, Time of Day and Place**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Noon</th>
<th>Evening</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
<th>Noon</th>
<th>Evening</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>279</td>
<td></td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>132</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>147</td>
<td></td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>122</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>144</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>164</td>
<td></td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td>97</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend:**
- **Less than 16:** 72 (4%)
- **16 to 30:** 1055 (55%)
- **30 to 50:** 614 (32%)
- **More than 50:** 189 (10%)
Downtown Profile
Downtown Iowa City is relatively vibrant. It faces a similar issue to downtowns in other growing cities: how to accommodate growth. Accommodating projected growth will require either increased density, expansion of the size of downtown, and/or more efficient use of already existing space.

According to the Iowa City comprehensive plan, higher density housing is needed in and around the downtown. Promoting higher density residential development in the Downtown Planning District assumes that people who live downtown will walk to work (or classes in the case of university students), patronize downtown businesses, add to after hours vitality, and improve safety downtown. Higher density development in the downtown also reduces pressure on the less dense older neighborhoods surrounding the area. The new Plaza Towers, which will be 14 stories high, are a prime example of the increase in density.

There is an opportunity to introduce housing in the mix of uses for Old Capitol Mall.

Housing choices are in short supply in Iowa City. Since the late 1990’s the city has seen a decline in the vacancy rates of apartments overall. Twenty-four out of the twenty-eight luxury condominiums in the Plaza Towers pre-sold in just a few months, adding non-students to the mix of residents living downtown. Denser housing downtown will result in greater demand for commercial services and other amenities such as workout studios, green spaces, and restaurant options.

Figure 4 - Apartment Vacancy by Number of Bedrooms in Iowa City.

Source: 2003 Community Profile, City of Iowa City.
For more details on residential distribution downtown, see Map 1 in appendix.

Developers and city officials believe that the city will grow vertically, that is to say, that the downtown will increase its density before it expands across Burlington and to the South. The city considers the area south of Burlington to be most suitable for growth. New city projects reflect this; the city has begun construction of a new transportation center and daycare, and studies are underway to address pedestrian safety when crossing Burlington.

Citing old, derelict buildings as a key problem for retaining offices, developers believe there may be a market for new office space. In fact, most of the office space in the Plaza Towers has already been leased, indicating there is a demand.

*With the university being so close to the mall, there is an opportunity for the mall to provide incubator space for generating arts and innovation.*

After talking with students and recent graduates, we realized there are a lot of ideas for new enterprises waiting to happen. The mall can provide the space to bring these ideas to life through the provision of incubators. Incubators, in this case, are work spaces for people involved in the development and implementation of creative arts and technology.
The mall is missing an opportunity to fill the demand for retail space downtown.

With the exception of the available spaces in the mall, vacancy rates for retail space downtown are low. There are no spaces available for retail in the pedestrian mall. Until recently, the only vacant space was the old Pizza Palace; however it will soon open as a new night club for more mature residents.

More locally-owned businesses could be housed in the mall.

Downtown Iowa City is blessed with well-established, locally-owned businesses that employ students and permanent residents alike. More than half of the respondents interviewed believe that downtown’s charm is due to its unique locally owned shops. Many questioned the mall’s ability to support large chains given that they require a regional rather than a local market.

Residents generally agreed that the City should encourage more civic activities during the colder months to bring more people downtown.

Information was collected on respondents’ views about continuing civic activities such as festivals, arts and crafts fairs, and other events during the winter months. Students emphasized the need for more student related activities and other quality entertainment such as music venues. Those interviewed identified the Old Capitol Mall, the library, and the new Plaza Towers as good locations for civic and cultural activities during winter months.

*If Old Capitol Mall is to become a destination point downtown, it must be integrated with the rest of the area.*

Although more than half of students and permanent residents interviewed consider Clinton Street to be the downtown’s main street, they have a varied perception of downtown’s boundaries. When residents were asked to demarcate what comprised downtown some of them did not include the Old Capitol Mall.
Kevin Lynch, author of *The Image of the City*, contends that people build mental images of places based on how they find their way around an area; how they move throughout a place. Based on this, we created a map depicting how we perceive pedestrian flow downtown (see figure 7). From our study area interpretation, we concluded that there are underutilized linkage points on the Southwest corner of Clinton and Washington (close to the north entrance of the mall) as well as at the East entrance of the Old Capitol Mall. We observed broken paths along Dubuque Street and found Clinton Street and Burlington Street to be perceived barriers marking the edge of downtown.

*Stronger linkage points on the corner of Washington and Clinton Street and between the East entrance of the mall and the pedestrian mall could help reestablish the connection between the Mall and the areas surrounding it.*
Figure 7 - Study Area Interpretation

- **Linkage points**
- **Broken Path**
- **Pedestrian Mall**
- **Characterless Facade**
- **Border**
- **Downtown area**
- **University area**
- **Characterless area**
- **Residential area**
Iowa City Profile

Iowa City has a population of 62,380. Its economy is both diverse and prosperous. It is based on a major research university, a vibrant health care sector and a number of national and international businesses, including Fortune 500 companies.

The University attracts a wide variety of faculty, researchers, and students. World famous programs such as the Writer's Workshop attract diverse and creative individuals from all over the world to work and/or study at the University of Iowa.

The high number of white-collar jobs, high level of education of residents, and low unemployment levels indicate that Iowa City can afford the luxury of nurturing the endeavors of a diverse creative community.

The University of Iowa is the city's largest employer, with 23,000 employees (City of Iowa City website, 2003). The academic and research mission of the University, along with the healthcare services provided at its hospitals and clinics, have a tremendous economic impact on the area. The majority of the jobs these sectors provide are professional white collar jobs.

Figure 8 - Distribution of jobs in Iowa City, Iowa, and the U.S. (Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>U.S</th>
<th>Iowa</th>
<th>Iowa City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management and professional</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and office</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, fishing, and forestry</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction, extraction, and maintenance</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production, transportation, and material moving</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of the university, Iowa City has a very young median age, 24.8 years, yet due to the large number of professional jobs, the city's median household income is $62,900; a figure much higher than the state ($39,469), the region ($42,414), and the nation ($41,994).
Unemployment in Iowa City for 2003 was a low 3.1% as compared to the state’s unemployment rate of 4.1%.

Moreover, the labor force in Iowa City is one of the most highly educated in the United States. It has the third highest percentage of college graduates among all metropolitan areas in the nation, 48 percent of all adults. These affluent and well-educated consumers are in the market for cultural events and more sophisticated retail and services.

Figure 9 - Educational Attainment – Persons 25 Years and Older

Downtown could become an attractive location for housing the increasing number of baby boomers moving to the area.

Figure 10 - Population Pyramid

An analysis of the population trends in Johnson County shows an increasing proportion of people between the ages of 40 to 60 moving into the area. Iowa City provides many advantages for people who are retired or close to retirement such as high quality health care and recreation options.
Downtown housing will enable reduced dependence on automobiles for this group.

The demand for new housing, office space, retail and office related services, and amenities will likely increase with the projected increase in professional jobs.

Because of the region's research facilities, cultural offerings and location near two interstates, existing companies are expanding, others are relocating and new ones are starting up in the Iowa City-Cedar Rapids Technology Corridor (Press Citizen, 31 December 2003). A 2003 labor shed study conducted by the Iowa City Area Development Group and Iowa Workforce Development found that the Iowa City Metropolitan area has the potential to attract a labor force of more than 112,000 people total. The regional need to fill more than 10,000 skilled positions in the next two years (2004-2005), will mean large-scale growth for the Iowa City metro area.

Although Johnson County has experienced a growth in taxable retail sales in the recent past, the growth has been driven primarily by Coralville with Iowa City's taxable retail sales remaining relatively stagnant implying that Iowa City

Figure 11 - Retail Sales (in million $)
Summary of Findings

- The mall is in a heavily trafficked location.
- Although the university students constitute a majority of mall users, other groups besides students also make use the mall.
- If Old Capitol Mall is to become a destination point downtown, it must be integrated with the rest of the area.
- There is an opportunity to introduce housing in the mix of uses for Old Capitol Mall.
- With the university being so close to the mall, there is an opportunity for the mall to provide incubator space for generating arts and innovation.
- The mall is missing an opportunity to fill the demand for retail space downtown.
- More locally-owned businesses could be housed in the mall.

- Residents generally agreed that the City should encourage more civic activities during the colder months to bring more people downtown.
- The high number of white-collar jobs, high level of education of residents, and low unemployment levels indicate that Iowa City can afford the luxury of nurturing the endeavors of a diverse creative community.
- Downtown might become an attractive location for housing the increasing number of baby boomers moving to the area.
- The demand for new housing, office space, retail and office related services, and amenities will likely increase with the projected increase in professional jobs.
Revitalization and Redevelopment Strategies

Typically, investors who see potential in declining malls approach the revitalization process with multi-million dollar face-lifts to attract new tenants. Others opt to anchor the malls with state-of-the-art movie theaters and other entertainment venues, and still others choose to attract discount retail stores or create office and data centers. Unfortunately, the conversion of a mall into offices and data centers often means that the communities near the mall no longer benefit from the civic role the mall used to play (CNU, 2001). Even with face-lifts, declining downtown malls have a difficult time competing with larger, modern, regional malls due to their limited size and poor regional accessibility. Because these malls are less attractive to regional shoppers, the target market tends to be local.

The Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) challenges redevelopment approaches based on attracting conventional retail and remodeling. The CNU in turn proposes alternative models for reuse of greyfield malls. They believe that since most greyfield malls are far from freeways, they are perfect candidates for new urbanist reuse. New urbanist reuse means that activity is reoriented to face the street, street patterns reestablish connectivity with the streets of the surrounding community, site planning and architectural elements integrate the redeveloped mall with the area, multiple uses are integrated on the site, and public space is emphasized (CNU, 2001).

Other creative strategies for parcel redevelopment and revitalization in downtown areas focus on enhancing the indoor atmosphere and creating a unique identity to attract users. Hosting community events can contribute to creating a distinct sense of place for the mall (Daily Illini Online, 2002 and Levy Paul, 2001).

Our team considered all these possible mall redevelopment alternatives during the early stages of the project. We selected several approaches we think could work well for Old Capitol Mall given the current market demand for retail and housing in downtown. We also considered how the mall could contribute to the downtown area in the future after the completion of the transportation center, daycare, and convention center.
Recommendations

Our analysis leads us to conclude that there are unmet needs for downtown housing and for more cultural entertainment and retail space. There may also be a demand for office space and incubators. We recommend various modifications to the current structure rather than complete demolition or maintaining the status quo.

Our recommendations present a concept plan based on a central theme – generating synergy for art and innovation in downtown Iowa City. Through this we hope to provide Iowa City residents with a place where cultural activities and entertainment can take place, where the arts can thrive, and where innovation flourishes. To achieve these goals, we recommend that Old Capitol mall be converted to:

"The Iowa City Center for Creative Arts and Innovation"
The concept plan requires functional as well as physical modifications to the existing structure.

**Functional Alterations**

Given the location and the building structure of the Old Capitol Mall, we believe that a mix of uses can coexist to promote a stimulating environment where both economic and social needs are met. At the same time, locating these different uses within the same building can generate increased demand for their individual markets.

The proposed mix of uses consists of four levels:

**Level One:** The first level includes retail and entertainment targeted to the creative and diverse community that makes use of downtown. Some possible tenants that would do well in this setting and tie in with the proposed theme include:

- Local consignment stores such as The Second Act and Revival.
- Stores such as Urban Outfitters and H&M which offer trendy clothing at affordable prices.
- Other stores such as CostPlus World Market, which offers furniture, food, and housewares from around the world.
- A bowling alley with a stage for concerts which would provide a place for local and regional bands to perform, in addition to offering bowling as a form of entertainment.
Level Two: The second level can house offices, incubators, exhibitions and a food court in addition to the current movie theater.

- In line with the bid to promote culture and diversity, the Old Capitol should strive to attract vendors of ethnic foods to the food court.
- The current movie theater should offer classic films, foreign films, cult classics, independent films, and film festivals.
- We also recommend the incorporation of amenities like a gym or workout studio.

Level Three and Four: Although the site where the mall stands can accommodate up to a twelve story building, we believe a high structure would overshadow the prominence of the golden dome in the Pentacrest and disrupt the harmony of the buildings immediately surrounding it. Thus we propose the addition of two new levels of residential space above the current structure giving people more options for urban living.

- To reduce the bulk of the two new levels, we propose a u-shaped building with an assortment of units that suit a variety of housing needs (e.g. studios, live-work units, and one- and two-bedroom apartments).
- The variety of housing types should enhance the diverse community of downtown.

Many of these units will front onto a new roof top garden.

- We recommend balconies for these units.
- We also recommend incorporating a small percentage of affordable housing into the mix. This will encourage diversity of residents as well as meet social goals.

Civic Role: Civic activities during weekends and evening hours could attract more potential customers to the downtown. To enable the mall to function as a destination point for individuals and families, we recommend using the mall for various civic, cultural, and community activities.
Civic activities could include cultural and historical displays, musical events, fashion shows, art and science displays, arts and craft fairs and food and wine tasting.

Physical Alterations
The physical modifications recommended are geared towards improving the aesthetic quality of the building, attracting more pedestrians to enter, improving the transition from the surrounding areas into the mall, and creating a more welcoming ambience inside.
We propose adding a glass tower on the northeast corner of the mall to open up the building and thus trigger the curiosity of pedestrians.

In line with the comprehensive plan, we recommend the construction of a green roof over the second floor for public use. This will give residents and visitors a unique experience and attract many potential customers to the mall. The green roof can serve as an example of innovation and technology, while providing environmental benefits to the owners and the city (e.g. reducing energy costs and reducing urban water runoff). Though this recommendation may appear to cost more initially, new technology is available that eliminates the necessity for retrofitting the current roof. Since green roofs typically last two to three times longer than conventional roofs and also reduce summer cooling needs by up to 25 percent, additional costs can be recovered from energy savings in just a few years (http://peck.ca/grhcc/ 2003).

To improve the gradual transition between the inside and outside, we propose a ramp that leads people from the pedestrian mall to the green roof. The ramp not only provides continuity but also helps maintain the feeling of being in a public space. We recommend using a welcome sign to ensure the public does not feel excluded.

We recommend the creation of a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere along Clinton Street. This can be accomplished by further opening up storefronts along that street with display windows and adding
trees and landscaping to make the area more appealing to pedestrians, break up the monotony of the brick, and provide additional shade.

*Tree-lined Streetscape*

The city and the developers should also consider improving public infrastructure to accommodate and support retail expansion, tourism growth, and pedestrian access in the entire downtown and to the South of Burlington. For example, in order to address the connectivity issue between North and South Burlington, the city could consider using grassy medians on Burlington Street and/or building a pedestrian bridge. This would facilitate pedestrian movement in the area and could potentially draw more people from that end of town.

To improve the mall’s ambience and create pleasant gathering spaces, we recommend the addition of interior landscaping and water elements (fountains and ponds) in multiple areas. In addition, we recommend the use of tables and chairs in the gathering areas to create a café atmosphere that stimulates conversation and encourages people to congregate inside. Furthermore, sidewalk sales and art displays along the corridors can help create a more festive environment.

*Landscaped Atrium*
We recommend the addition of windows along the second floor to open it up to the outside and allow for natural light to flow. This reduces energy costs and has also been found to improve employee morale and productivity and reduce turnover.
Conclusion

Based on our analysis of the Old Capitol Mall site, downtown Iowa City, and the Iowa City Area, our group has come to the conclusion that rather than competing with other malls, Old Capitol Mall needs to create its own identity in downtown. By providing a mixture of uses and playing a significant civic role, the mall can generate synergy as it brings common interests under one roof. We believe this can be achieved by converting the mall to “The Iowa City Center for Creative Arts and Innovation”. This center will serve as a tourist attraction and distinguish Iowa City from other cities in the Midwest.

It is also our desire that the ideas expressed within this document will initiate in-depth discussions in the City and amongst Iowa City residents about the direction in which the actual revitalization could take place.
Appendix

Site History

The history of the mall can be traced back to the urban renewal movement of the late 1950's. The plans for development of the land on which the Old Capitol Mall stands initially started in the early 1970's when the redevelopment of downtown Iowa City was a major priority (Caliger, 1983). However its construction was delayed until the 1980's due to the electorate's opposition to urban renewal in Iowa City as well as mixed feelings about its proposed builders being downtown's sole developers (Mansheim, 1988). In the midst of the controversy between citizens and the city council, the contract for the redevelopment of downtown Iowa City was awarded to a single bidder The Old Capitol Business Center Company. The decision was taken to court by taxpayers leading to the mall's re-bidding in 1977 by various developers (Mansheim, 1988). Even after the re-bidding, Old Capitol Business Center Company, which later became the Old Capitol Limited Partnership, obtained the contract for the shopping center in 1978. By this time, they had already signed leases with the two anchors, JC Penny and Younkers.

The 900 space parking ramp on Burlington Street between Clinton and Capitol streets was built first. The mall, "The Old Capitol Town Center" was constructed in 1981 by the Old Capitol Limited Partnership with Wilfreda Hieronymus as the executive director. The project originally estimated to cost about $14.5 million actually ran up an extra $2 million because of the unexpected 22% prime rate.
Initially the mall was quite successful and downtown retail in Iowa City thrived. Big stores like JC Penny which had a store downtown moved into the mall. The mall offered retail and entertainment options that nicely complemented the often more college-oriented businesses lining downtown streets (Press Citizen, Sept 5, 2003).

In 1984, the mall was sold to Heitman Properties Ltd. in Chicago. In 1993 it was renovated, with costs amounting to $2 million dollars. Though not exclusively responsible, one of the major causes for the decline of the Old Capitol Mall was the opening of the Coral Ridge Mall in 1998. Its opening was followed by the relocation of several stores including JC Penny. The mall was sold to Madison Realty Group of Pittsburgh in 1998 (Press Citizen, 2003).

In August 2001, Freemont Investment initiated foreclosure given the more than $11.7 million dollars in unpaid loans. Subsequently in October 2002, the mall owners “Old Capitol Associates” filed for bankruptcy. Most recently the mall was purchased by a group of local investors and thus some of the hopes for physical and operational improvements have been renewed.
Maps and Charts

The number of zeros in Map 1 shows that there is a lack of residential space downtown. A lively 24-hour city center is an attractive feature of a creative community.

Figure 13 - Residential Distribution by Block

Source: Census Bureau, 2000
The table below presents the various uses that the current zoning ordinance allows on the parcel where the Old Capitol Mall sits.

**Figure 14 - Land Uses Downtown: Central Business Zone (CB-10)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permitted Uses</th>
<th>Provisional Uses</th>
<th>Special Exceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business and personal services</td>
<td>Residential (above ground floor)</td>
<td>Commercial recreational uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail establish., including</td>
<td>Elder apartment housing</td>
<td>Religious institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Halls</td>
<td>Wholesale in conjunction with</td>
<td>Schools, special private instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theaters</td>
<td>Hotels</td>
<td>Clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adult daycare</td>
<td>Transient housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Childcare centers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table below shows how pedestrians use the different accesses to the mall at different times of day and during different days of the week.

**Figure 15 - Total Counts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Noon</th>
<th>Weekday Evening</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
<th>Noon</th>
<th>Weekend Evening</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviews

The following discussion will draw upon hour long interviews that we conducted of key informants. We selected twenty people to interview; three city officials, two developers, eight business owners, seven student groups. We selected these groups because we felt they were good representatives of the diverse stakeholders. Each group was asked a specific set of open ended questions however the interviews were conducted in such a way that they were free to discuss other issues not asked directly in the questionnaire.

Questions for Iowa City Developers

Please delineate what you consider downtown Iowa City.
1. (a) Trends show that there is expected growth in Iowa City over the next couple of years. Do you think that as Iowa City grows it is going to increase its foot print or do you think growth will mean an increase in density
   (b) Do you see growth in Iowa City being more centered or suburban?

2. What proportion of new developments do you think should target students? What other groups do you think downtown should target?

3. Do you think downtown can absorb more retail, residential, office space? How much (in percentages)?

4. What are the potential uses for civic activities in downtown Iowa City?

5. What do you think are the potential uses for the Old Capitol mall site other than retail?
Questions for Iowa City Residents
Please delineate what you consider downtown Iowa City.

Insert map

1. What do you consider to be the main street in downtown Iowa City?

2. Which 3 buildings do you think are the most significant in downtown? Why?

3. Which buildings do you think contribute the least to the aesthetic quality of downtown?

4. What do you think downtown Iowa City lacks?

5. (a) Normally, lots of civic activities take place downtown during the summer time (like the farmers market, artisans fair and the summer concert series). Would you like to see these activities continue year round? (b) In order to achieve some continuity in such activities during the rest of the year, where do you think would be a good location for such activities?

6. Do you think that the mall has any symbolic value? Explain.

7. Other than retail, name one or two other uses do you think will be feasible uses for the mall?
Questions for Iowa City Downtown Businesses
Please delineate what you consider downtown Iowa City.

Insert map

1. How long have you worked (had your business) downtown?

2. Given the potential growth in Iowa City do you think the downtown area will increase its footprint or do you think that growth will mean an increase in density? Where do you think the opportunity for growth is?

3. What percentage of your clientele are students?

4. Do you feel a need to have more diverse clients? Why or why not?

5. Does having civic activities downtown benefit your business? Would you like to see these activities continue year round?

6. Who do you think should be responsible for seeing that this happens and what things do you think they can they do?

7. Should the City of Iowa City be involved in shaping the future of the mall? If yes, how? If no, then who?

8. Should the Mall be exclusively retail or should the site accommodate other uses?

- Here the author gives advice on creating a pleasant downtown retail atmosphere. Some of his suggestions include:
  1. Don't split the street in two. By this he means that visitors should be able to cross the street anywhere and that traffic should be slowed down so pedestrians don't have to compete with cars. Grassy medians are a good way to address this.
  2. Improve pedestrian lighting to make streets safe.
  3. Don't use enhanced paving. It's expensive and unnecessary.
  4. Make sidewalks wide enough to accommodate browsing shoppers, outdoor seating areas, and passers-by.
  5. Include on-street parking to make people feel safer between the sidewalk and the moving cars.
  6. Line the streets with shade trees but don't block the shops from view.
  7. Use informational kiosks and creative street signs and banners as public art.


- This study was conducted as a joint effort between Price Waterhouse Coopers and the Congress of New Urbanism. The first part of the study describes the signs of a greyfield mall. Declining malls pose several problems in a community, visual blight, lost tax base, lost job opportunities, and lost potential uses for valuable land. They suggest many of these malls are currently bus hubs, as is the case in Old Capitol Mall. The second part focuses on design strategies that communities with malls in decline can use to revitalize
them. These strategies go beyond remodeling the interior structure, instead, the CNU encourages declining malls to provide a mix of uses that include housing, retail, office, and public space.

- This article presents the importance of public/private partnerships in downtown redevelopment. It uses two cities, Cleveland and Albuquerque, as examples of how together, public and private investment can contribute to the overall success of downtown revitalization. In Cleveland, for example, the CEO’s of the fifty largest corporations formed Cleveland Tomorrow, a group that has made tremendous commitments to the revitalization process. The city in turn has granted property tax abatements and has helped developers obtain federal Urban Development Action Grants. Financing for the redevelopment projects comes from public subsidies, loans, and equity provided by the developers. In addition, one of the goals stated in their comprehensive plan was redevelopment of Euclid Ave., considered to be Cleveland’s main street. In a process involving local property owners, the city, and other residents, Clevelanders decided to convert vacant office space into apartments with ground level shops. Both Albuquerque and Cleveland focused on providing diverse housing downtown such as lofts, converted apartments, and live/work condominiums. Furthermore, entertainment, a return to the traditional Main Street, grocery stores, and pedestrianization were all of prime importance in the redevelopment of downtown.

“Karcher Mall - Today is the First day of the Rest of its Life.” 2001.
www.dlcmanagement.com/tcasebot_Karcher.htm
- This is an article about a declining mall in Nampa, Idaho. Karcher Mall was built in the 1960’s and thrived for twenty years. However, when Boise Town Center was constructed in the late 1980’s, major tenants abandoned Karcher for the new mall. The mall was sold and eventually went bankrupt much like Old Capitol
Mall. Seeing potential where others did not, DLC decided to buy the mall. Their plan included a multi-million dollar complete renovation of the interior and exterior, parking area, bathrooms, common areas, entries, and kiosks. Skylights were added and new furniture was purchased. New tenants include Jo-Ann Fabrics superstore, Kay-bee toys, Christopher and Banks, Sam Goody, Bath and Body Works, Ross Dress for Less, The Bon Marche, Emporium, and Applebees.

**Levy, Paul. 2001. Making downtowms competitive. Planning, April, 16-20.**

- In this article the author discusses different strategies for repositioning the downtown. Efforts include holding festivals and special events, increasing the restaurants and nightlife, bringing high quality retail, and converting vacant buildings into apartments and student housing. Streetscape improvements were also a part of the plan. Money for the improvements came from tax exempt bonds backed by district revenues.

**Lynch, Kevin. 1960. The Image of the City. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.**

- This book describes mental maps obtained from residents in several cities such as Boston, Los Angeles and Jersey City. The mental maps were materialized on paper through an interview process and combined with maps from many individuals. Each map is a composite image of the city that reveals the character of the place. The wide scope of this study leads to an original and vital method for the evaluation of city form. Kevin Lynch analyses the urban form and the design of the different element that compose it. Using the concepts of nodes, landmarks, paths, edges and districts he describes the visual attributes of cities and towns, paying special attention to how we find our way around, and how we build a mental image of these places.

In his book, Florida addresses the evolution of society over time and the changing needs of city residents. In line with the propositions of great minds like Schumpeter who considered development to be spurred by the innovation of the entrepreneur, Florida considers human creativity as the ultimate economic resource. He opines that the future of cities depends to a large extent on a new class of people he calls the creative class. This group according to Florida includes; scientists, engineers, architects, designers, educationists, artists, musicians and entertainers whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology and/or new and creative ideas.


- This mall was built in the 1970’s and marketed towards a lower-end clientele. The expanded mall is now a fashion center and general shopping outlet combining low- and mid-range retailers with high-end anchors. Many original tenants remain to take advantage of the new marketing opportunities. A regional advertising campaign targeted affluent homes through direct mail, radio, cable TV, newspapers, magazines and billboards. The original name was kept, because of high recognition, but a new typeface and logo indicated a revitalized shopping experience. The “garden party” design concept was carried throughout the mall using trees, grass, flowers, light and breezes, within a modernist, minimalist décor.


- Community programs are the distinctive characteristic of this mall. Under the Malls4schools program schools earn points every time parents, friends, or students shop at the mall. Participating local schools receive cash awards ranging from $5,000 to $300. The shopping center hosts a myriad of special events and activities in cooperation with numerous community organizations.
Northridge Shopping Plaza, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. 2002.
http://retailtrafficmag.com

- This 25-year old strip mall was originally built for a discount department store, supermarket and drug store. Driven primarily by the strong demographic profile of Fort Lauderdale the new owners decided to make a 250,000 sq. ft expansion of upscale retail. Most of the original center was demolished. Larger stores and two junior anchors were added. The project attracted a new retail mix, including a supermarket, fitness facilities, restaurants and a discount department store. New building elevations were created and each store provided with individual entries and separate identities. The owner had the vision and creativity to demolish and rebuild rather than do a facelift. Total redevelopment cost, including acquisition, was $30 million.

http://www.cnu.org/cnu_reports/Greyfield_Feb_01.pdf

- In their study on declining regional malls in the US, Price Waterhouse Coopers brought out some of the key characteristics of declining regional malls and the issues worth considering in attempts to revitalize and redevelop these sites. Via their study, they were able to identify some demographic and real estate characteristics of these Greyfield malls. These include private ownership, low occupancy rates, relatively small size, old and usually within reasonable distance (about 5 miles) from other regional malls or shopping centers. They provide a very rich literature review which lays out key points worthy of consideration not only in the redevelopment of Greyfield Malls but even in general revitalization efforts. They discuss the role that newly constructed malls play in the loss of Mall sales to other pre existing malls. This they use to highlight important role of size (even above location) in determining the success of certain kinds of retail activity. Other issues discussed in their literature review include the role of Anchor stores and the implication of Anchor turnovers, the role of Information Technology on retail sales and on real estate. This is used to imply
the impending doom of outdated malls without the necessary adaptive features to keep up with technological changes. Gathering data on every regional and supra regional Mall, PWC categorized malls and came up with parameters for measuring the success, decline and level of decline of Malls. Though not directly relevant to our study, their research and identified parameters (such as information technology adaptability, sales per square foot, anchor tenants, and trade area demographics) give us an idea of some of the kinds of issues to be thinking about when assessing the potential uses for the Old Capitol Mall and the consequent implications of these uses.

- This book addresses the question of "What knowledge of people and man-environment relations is necessary in order to understand environments, in order to define criteria for choice and help predict consequences of design decisions and environmental change?" It maintains that built form embodies and gives expression to rules, situations, cultural and social patterns and that the physical environment can be seen as the record of culture, beliefs and behavior. The book lists the following as disciplines of particular relevance for this analysis: anthropology, ethology, geography, archeology, history, and architecture. The author present environments as a form of non verbal communication providing cues for behavior and affirming identity. He sustains that space and time are Human, Social space and time and that a most important question is how the giving of meanings to places, things and occasions take place.

- This article discusses problems small city downtowns face and the strategies they can use to address them. The top three problems include attracting new development, attracting people downtown on evenings and
weekends, and competition from suburban malls and discount stores. The first strategy is to create a sense of place through historic preservation (one great asset small city downtowns have is strong heritage and historic architecture), bringing back the Main Street, improving pedestrianization, and redeveloping the waterfront properties. The second strategy is bringing in large activity generators. This includes large scale projects such as convention centers, sports arenas, and indoor shopping malls. This approach ranked lowest among the cities surveyed due to lack of demand for these types of venues. However, Wausau, one of the cities surveyed, constructed a 467,000 square foot indoor shopping mall in their downtown anchored by three department stores (Sears, Younkers, and JCPenney's) and containing over 60 national and regional chains and a large food court. The Wausau Center opens up directly to the pedestrian mall and the downtown is clearly visible from inside the mall. The open design prevents what the author calls "the fortress effect syndrome" from developing, meaning that blank walls and poor links to downtown do not prevent people from feeling like they are part of the action downtown. The third strategy is supplementing downtown's functions. This includes converting vacant space to housing, attracting tourists, and adding entertainment and nightlife to the mix. The fourth strategy is based on improving accessibility (changing one way streets back to two way streets) and parking (include on-street parking and deal with the perception of lack of parking).


- This 1934 building was owned by the City of Buenos Aires. The market ceased operations in 1983 and the structure as well as the area fell in disrepair and decadency. The strategy adopted for its rehabilitation was to provide the building and its uses a specific character and define its identity through design. One main feature in this strategy was the development of the concept of Incubators. New firms or starting professionals who want to initiate their own business would have access to the physical infrastructure together with funding and technical assistance. After going through a selection process the selected applicants are entitled to use the
facilities for 2 years. Design oriented retail, learning, and exhibition areas are some of the other new features in this building.


- Union Station, located in Washington, D.C., is a major train station in the nation’s capital. Union Station features a magnificent food court in the lower level for passengers to enjoy. Besides food options, Union Station houses the following stores: Victoria’s secret, Express, an antique jewelry market, a bookstore, restaurants, and gallery space. A large community area with ample seating can be found in the main entrance of the station.


- In 1998 the East Lansing City Council unanimously approved a financing plan that allowed the Downtown Development Authority to purchase University Mall. The mall was originally a Knapp’s Department Store when it was built in the 1960s — and in 1998 was home to six local businesses: Buffalo Wild Wings & Weck, WWDX (92.1-FM), Le Salon, Small Planet Food & Spirits, Splash of Color Tattoos & Body Piercing, and the Jersey Giant Submarine Sandwiches, Inc. Today a $30 million City Center stands in place of the University Mall. It includes a parking ramp, retail space and residential units. The big names especially helped bring more people shopping, and indirectly helped the individually owned stores. In this East Lansing location is the first Gap Body in the nation to have its own storefront rather than being within the main store. Mainly with students as the target some major chains are tailoring the ways to get consumers.

"**Urbana’s Lincoln Square Turns to Community Center Image.**" 2002. Daily Illini Online.
This article describes attempts made to revitalize a mall in Urbana Illinois that was in very similar circumstances to The Old Capitol Mall. Realizing that the Lincoln Mall did not fit the formula for national retailers, the mall manager and owners decided to take a different route. Hosting various community activities such as a vinyl record sale and a beauty pageant brought numerous customers in to the mall and was highly applauded by both local residents and store owners. The article points out the possible advantage of local investors including their willingness to invest more and actively see that all is done to make the mall successful. Being an important part of Urbana's downtown redevelopment initiative, which includes marketing and image plans for the downtown area and streetscape improvements, the city is doing what it can to support Lincoln Square.


This article discusses Capitol Court, a mall in Milwaukee that was in a similar situation as the Old Capitol Mall. Although the competition is the same, this mall differs from Old Capitol in that it is surrounded by a large parking lot, giving ample space for redevelopment. Capitol Court, now known as Midtown Center, had the advantage of receiving a loan from the city for demolition of the old structure. The City also designated the area a TIF district, allowing the developer to repay the loan using property taxes from the new town center. City planner Peter Park was the brains behind the town center concept, convincing the developer to line the streets with shops and incorporate smaller parking lots throughout the design. Strong emphasis was placed on pedestrian circulation and connectivity to the surrounding neighborhood. Stores in the first phase include Wal-mart, Pick 'n Save grocery store, Footlocker, and Payless Shoe Source.

- This brief article discusses the comeback of Main Street. Trends suggest people are shopping in what appears to be historical old towns. Stores typically found inside suburban malls are opting to move to stand alone buildings downtown. These chains are scattered between local merchants. Suburbanites, sick of the monotony of suburban shopping malls, are rediscovering their unique downtowns.


- This is an actual redevelopment project of Winter Park Mall in Winter Park, Florida. Winter Park Mall was built in the 1960's to compete with the town's main street retail area known as Park Avenue. While Park Avenue continued to succeed throughout the 1980's and 1990's, Winter Park Mall found itself in decline. In 1997, Dover, Kohl and Partners, an urban design firm in Coral Gables, Florida, along with Gibbs Planning group, came up with a plan for the revitalization of the failing mall. The proposal called for a transformation of the current structure in multiple phases with the main focus on creating a village atmosphere much like Park Avenue's. The plan created public space between buildings and placed entrances to individual stores in such a way as to create a sense of enclosure. The plan also emphasized the difference between the public side (front doors and store fronts) and the private side (loading docks, back doors, mechanical rooms) and the importance of facing the public side to the streets. In creating the plan, consideration was given to circulation patterns of both pedestrians and automobiles.


Iowa City, City of. 2002. *Comprehensive Plan*. Iowa City, IA.

Iowa City, City of. 2003. *Community Profile*. Iowa City, IA.


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