

GREATER DES MOINES, IOWA

Capital Crossroads



The Market Street team did excellent work facilitating our Capital Crossroads Regional Vision Plan for Central Iowa. From the inclusive process to the comprehensive final plan to the aggressive implementation phase, Central Iowa continues to embrace Capital Crossroads as our regional road map to the future.

Jay Byers, CEO, Greater Des Moines Partnership

Background

Central Iowa was at an important crossroads. Iowa's capital region had vibrant neighborhoods, a strong business community, dynamic arts and recreational attractions, and a desirable quality of life. But the region also had its challenges. Local leaders felt the time was right to take advantage of opportunities and address challenges through a clear vision and plan for Iowa's capital region. This process, branded **Capital Crossroads**, resulted in the development of a comprehensive five-year vision strategy for the region. Different than previous regional strategies, Capital Crossroads broadened the planning area beyond the Des Moines metropolitan area to include a 50-mile-radius labor shed drawn from the state capitol building in Des Moines. This "Central Iowa" geography enabled Capital Crossroads to capture the world-class research and dynamism of Iowa State University in Ames.

Led by a steering committee of 50 business and community leaders, the planning process included extensive quantitative research and qualitative outreach that resulted in the largest number of survey responses in *Market Street's* history. Over 50 interviews and 20 focus groups were held to gain input on topics such as education, diversity, health care, arts and culture, recreation, environment and quality of life. The resulting Capital Crossroads strategy was structured to focus on ten "strategic capitals" that, combined, would move Greater Des Moines and Central Iowa towards its preferred future. These capitals are:

- **Capital Core** – Strong core = Strong region
- **Business Capital** –Attraction, retention and expansion, and small business and innovation
- **Capital Corridor** – Dynamic opportunities between Ames and Des Moines
- **Wellness Capital** – Potential to become one of the U.S.' healthiest regions
- **Human Capital** – Workforce skills, capacity and social well-being
- **Social Capital** – Leadership, diversity and civility
- **Cultural Capital** – Arts supporting economy, quality of life and community-building
- **Physical Capital** – Smart planning, competitive infrastructure
- **Governance Capital** – Regionalism, efficiencies, advocacy
- **Environmental Capital** – Recreation, trails, protection, management



Implementation Highlights

Capital Crossroads implementation officially launched in September 2011. Since that time, nearly 500 community leaders have volunteered to serve on one of 11 committees focused on implementing each of the strategic “capitals.” Much has been achieved in the two years-plus of Capital Crossroads activities. Barely a week goes by in which the strategy isn’t mentioned in the local paper or cited in a community meeting for its programs. Among implementation highlights to date are:

- Secured funding for a private non-profit downtown land bank to facilitate redevelopment efforts. The Des Moines Redevelopment Company acquired its inaugural properties for a total purchase price of \$2.7 million. This purchase triggered agreements that will lead to the development of a new downtown convention hotel, a new downtown YMCA, and a new Polk County Courthouse building.
- The Cultivation Corridor brand for the corridor between Ames and Des Moines was announced with great fanfare in 2014. This comprehensive branding and messaging effort has elevated the profile of Central Iowa and helped market the region’s assets to a national audience.
- The Local Government Collaboration Project, designed to help fifteen cities and three counties in central Iowa use collaborative approaches to make their governments more efficient and effective, began implementation with their Public Works departments and Fire/Emergency Medical Services departments in 2014.
- Launched Central Iowa SourceLink, a tool to connect emerging entrepreneurs and small businesses with resources geared to fit their growth and development needs. Their website hosts a blog with informative posts, weekly webinars on topics relevant to starting and sustaining a small business, and links to resources from a digital learning library to a list of local start-up incubators to information about available local sites and buildings.
- Opened a workforce development and life-skills center for working families in an abandoned supermarket in the urban core. The center has subsequently leased out space to a new fresh produce market, thus eliminating one of Des Moines most visible “food deserts.”
- Secured the sale of a vacated downtown fire station to a local arts group to serve as an arts incubator. The Des Moines Social Club completed renovations on the building in May 2014 and now spans two buildings with a gallery, theater, restaurant, café, non-profit office space, and numerous performance spaces and classrooms.
- Launched a regional mentorship program, Community Connect, to create personal connections and peer mentoring opportunities in a small-group setting that ensures personal interactions across all generations with experienced community leaders. Three classes of mentees have already graduated.
- Launched a comprehensive cradle-through-career training alignment initiative called EDGE (Education Drives our Great Economy) in summer of 2014. EDGE coordinates the full universe of training partners, businesses, and social service providers in Central Iowa to ensure regional companies are provided with the skilled talent necessary to grow their businesses.

