

Appendix A: Visioning Session Results

Session 1

What's Unique

- River
- Events
- State & local parks
- Quaint
- Options - grocery store
- Misty's
- Lake
- Hotel
- Small businesses - have the basics
- Volunteer firefighters
- Golf course
- Pool
- Hospital
- History

What's Missing

- Population
- Housing
- Entertainment - normal week to week, community groups
- Nice hotel
- More restaurants - variety (Mexican, farmv to table)
- Sidewalks
- Area for kids in winter
- More retail
- More gas stations
- Something open after 9 pm
- Gyms
- Awareness of food pantry & expansion - partnerships

Arts & Culture

- Pottery, weaving in different towns - centralized location
- Kids & adults
- Construction class
- Kids dance class
- Regular schedule of classes
- Wine & canvas - painting
- Book club for kids
- Pinterest classes
- Businesses together to plan and coordinate
- Writing class
- Biggest fitness space (walk inside)
- More theater, plays
- Livestock - FFA/4H partnership
- Villages Folk School classes - currently in different locations
- Hunting/fishing
- Sewing
- Cooking
- Don't know about classes - have to hunt
- Downtown
- Old ball diamond spot
- Fairground buildings
- Old Creamery
- Free space
- Event space
- Carving class

Downtown

- Just redid park - nice addition
- Trails - connectivity is good
- Bldgs not maintained
- Difference in different sides of road
- Brewery
- Live music at bandshell
- Steakhouses/higher end - a destination
- Coffee show - community hangout spot to attract mix of ages
- Restaurant: fish, farm to table, locally sourced ingredients = yes! And visitor appeal
- Shop with locally made items
- Nail salon
- Farmers market - 4 vendors - challenge getting people
- Cooking class
- Small groups - need to be open-minded and include all ages

Housing

- "One of greatest challenges"
- Rentals - hard to find - need to know someone - small, okay condition
- No one selling ground = no place to build
- A few apartments - low income always full
- Apartments are dated - maintenance is tough
- Growing % of retired and those on welfare - can't maintain home
- Many elderly don't have family here
- Need assisted living
- ADA accessible apartments and townhomes
- Need duplex/fourplex
- Hill Phoenix opportunity?
- More affordable smaller homes
- Newer homes = more expensive
- 3D - fit character of town
- Need to keep historic character
- County and city tax abatement

Brewery

- Hit lots of people (appeal)
- Bring people to the area
- Kalona example - tourism
- Definitely have restaurant - families
- Distilleries on upswing - same equipment
- Stone-fired pizza
- Bar/restaurant combo
- Backpocket model
- Games
- May get pushback
- Emphasize food - community gathering space
- Historical building - highlight history
- Hotel? Downtown?
- Albia brewery example - have event space

Marketing & Branding

- This is the key.
- River, parks - natural resources, outdoor recreation, hunting/fishing - YP draws
- High speed internet (fiber) - locally provided
- "I live X. I work X. I play X. I love X."
- Tie marketing to Villages
- A lot here for small town
- Play to culture - recognize tradition
- "Most current old town there is"
- Amenities per capita
- End of year bike rally
- Airport - local fly-in in June
- Lions Club
- No stoplight or train
- Canoe Van Buren
- People come here to get away
- Camping
- Signage - show community is together
- River Rumble

Jobs

- Incentives for teachers - hard to draw teachers not from here
- Hard to find skilled workforce
- Restaurants/retail - usually have help wanted signs - many close early
- Manufacturing struggling - lots of employees live elsewhere
- Low wages here
- Not a lot of openings
- Housing issue
- Lots of older population
- Healthcare - nursing - providers struggle to meet community demand - U of I partnership
- "Incentives nice but not attracting what we're hoping for"

Session 2

What's Unique

- River
- History - hotel
- State Park
- Mams Park
- No stoplights
- No fast food
- Folk school
- Museums
- Golf course
- Growing farmers market
- Ballpark complex
- New pool
- People
- Lake
- Wildlife - eagles
- Theater group & artist community
- Hospital
- Active churches
- Trails
- Strong tourism
- Festivals
- School!
- Growing population of young people
- Volunteerism
- Growing Amish population
- Best ice cream
- Van Buren players
- Roberts Center
- County fair
- Biker rally
- Camping
- Airport
- Scenic Drive
- Oldest courthouse
- Villages of Van Buren
- Bird watching

What's Missing

- Ice skating rink
- 5 bars - no other entertainment
- Nothing for kids - bowling, skating, etc.
- Pizza delivery
- Retail and specialty shops
- Affordable housing
- More daycare
- Jobs - need to diversity
- Mexican restaurant
- Nice date restaurant
- Hotel renovation as regional destination
- Way to advertise things in county - promotions, grants, etc. - marketing director

Arts & Culture

- Roberts bldg - not dedicated for this
- All activities dispersed - geographically, chronologically
- Space for the activities
- Art exhibits - classes, sell
- So many artisans
- Divide space into smaller areas
- Challenge: Recurring classes
- Some place open to public daily
- Couples dancing
- Cooking
- No dedicated nature center
- Finance, retirement, estate planning
- Live music venue
- Complement Folk School classes
- Birding
- Fitness classes
- Healthy Villages
- DIVERSE!

Downtown

- Empty buildings - usable!
- Safe - don't want to condemn more
- Make sure used by community
- Upstairs housing - a couple now (post office bldg) - look at all downtown bldgs
- BBQ & fried chicken
- Parking - loading zone
- Complete all facades
- No place to eat breakfast
- Van Buren County make items, antiques = gift shop
- Downtown sidewalk and trails
- Use the space we have

Housing

- Nothing to rent - current stock mostly single family, have to know someone, don't allow pets
- Need more units in general
- Under 100k = junk
- Over 100k = pretty good
- No mid-price
- Well kept compared to other Van Buren towns
- Average = 85k
- 120k okay
- 300k a few
- Factory employs 350 people, don't live in Keo - NFC-type program - west side of town
- Need fourplex

Brewery

- Creamery bldg, Main street, Hotel Manning - Davenport example
- Gastropub - \$20-25
- Distillery
- Tourism with Midwest focus
- More diversified tourism activities
- Galena salsa example
- Best tenderloin
- Farm to plate and organic line - consider ag
- Use county ag as a main ingredient - larver scale organic now
- What's affordable?
- Tuesday FM - small but growing
- Lots of hunters and fishers
- Bldg on Hwy 1 - just north of town
- Nathan
- FM regulations and Amish
- Art walk & FM?
- Ag program - grew from 3 to 60 students - greenhouse

Marketing & Branding

- Starts in Hotel Manning - connection people had - resurrect this?
- The Lake Lacey
- Center of county, all others spokes
- Signs along Hwy 34/218/27
- Leverage Villages a la Bahamas
- Have had billboards
- Make signage more cohesive - replace
- Kiosks
- Keo app
- Marketing brochures = beneficial
- Amana example - all signs unified

Jobs

- Every restaurant
- Difficult to bring in family practice doctors - sign on bonuses in the past, challenges with specialization (want regular hours)
- Hard to find trades - plumbers, electricians, etc.
- Transportation for hire
- People come back home - "us kids"
- Not rushed here - different tempo
- Not easy to find a job
- Teachers usually stay - differences in attracting special positions
- Science Club
- "Grow your own"
- Had jobs people like, don't have to do
- Hard to find good workers
- Lots of elderly - more want in-home help
- Great care center and assisted living
- Independent business owners - need affordable storefronts

Session 3

What's Unique

- Natural beauty
- River town
- State park
- Low crime rate
- Hotel Manning
- Outdoor activities
- Folk School
- Public school
- Large manufacturers
- Performing arts center
- Courthouse
- Trails
- Visitor center
- Ball diamonds
- Hospital/healthcare
- Golf course
- Pool
- City park
- Water trail
- Bandshell

What's Missing

- Higher end restaurant
- Mexican food
- Local foods/farm to table
- Coffee shop
- Microbrewery
- Housing - affordable, options for young families
- Sidewalks
- Youth activities
- YMCA
- Communication hub (virtual)
- Radio station
- Attract and retain teachers
- Professionals in general
- Retail
- Fitness classes
- Safe room opportunities
- Walking track, batting cages, etc.
- Public/assisted transportation
- Dog park

Arts & Culture

- "A definite"
- Folk school - current classes sellout - need a larger space
- Centralized location
- Cooking, cheese making, weaponry
- Partner with performing arts & fine arts - school partnership?
- Transportation a challenge
- Roberts building
- Include elementary students - limited spaces now
- Multi-purpose space - performances, dance hall, exhibits, etc.
- Look at what Hotel Manning used to offer
- Washington, IA, example
- Need auditorium rather than gym
- Great turnouts at events
- Nowhere to have event for 400 people
- Mix of sizes - multi-functional
- Community commercial kitchen
- Farmers market partnership
- Partner with school
- Farm to table - ag ties
- Cooking classes - strong culinary program at school
- Makerspaces
- Bleu Stem wool gathering - need value/supply chain - wool washing facility
- Art gallery
- Tie outdoor space into - Seed Savers Exchange - gardening/farming
- Community kitchen - cabin clay
- Projection/wireless built-in
- Movie - anything!
- Better communications about local products
- Sustainable farming opportunities

Downtown

- 1st & Hwy: Make focal spot - slow people down
- Parking an issue
- Abandoned bldgs or used as storage
- Only a few with great facades
- Need to keep signage in order
- Outdoor seating - shade with canopies
- More streetlife
- Beatification - welcoming sense
- Not very good at telling story
- Touristy feeling - Galena example
- Sense of place - package it
- Signage uniformity (Pella)
- Seasonal banners - festive
- Draw eye down street - plantings, etc.
- Downtown membership for beautification
- Lots of Amish making great things
- Bakery
- Antique store
- Clothing stores
- Consignment (childrens)
- Artist studio/gallery co-op (interns)
- Items sold during events - shared storefront for local items
- Evening coffee shop

Housing

- Options to downsize - duplex, fourplex, etc. - no maintenance, allow pets
- Need single family homes
- Good rentals needed
- Scattered issues: "Not too many unpleasant sites"
- Mix of socioeconomic backgrounds
- Need 2nd story apartments downtown
- Need condo
- Prices have gone up
- Upkeep & sense of pride - lack of commitment
- \$200/SF for new construction
- No rentals here
- Long term rentals - company guarantees?
- Buying derelict buildings, not housing
- Low income housing - some apartments

Brewery

- Pair with restaurant
- Simple
- Brick oven pizza
- Wine
- Old Creamery building
- \$30?
- Stage for live entertainment
- Old hardware store
- Kalona brewery model
- Tapas
- Combine with farm to table - opportunity to ship - CSA?
- Hotel
- Keep it downtown!

Marketing & Branding

- Don't market internally - people aren't aware
- No centralized location and funding stream - and time consuming
- Do you have to pay? Not a member = not on website
- Iowa Source
- Need Datebook
- Villages community calendar
- How is Keo different from other villages?
- Vision: Hotel and river
- "It's the best kept secret"
- The county "landing spot"
- Only way to go is through tourism
- Hunting and fishing

Jobs

- Need nurses, docs, teachers
- Riverside Supply - hard to fill jobs (quantity issue)
- Hospital always has openings
- Tough to get teachers - HS especially hard
- Whole county has lost population - or remained flat
- Consolidation of farms - absentee land owners
- Hidden jewel: young people coming back
- Market "rural renaissance"
- Early childhood educators
- Starting business support
- Changed shopping habits - how to make Keo a destination?
- Grow partnership between hospital and school
- Incentives for ALL professions & trades
- Must also think childcare - different hours are tough to service - need to expand offerings