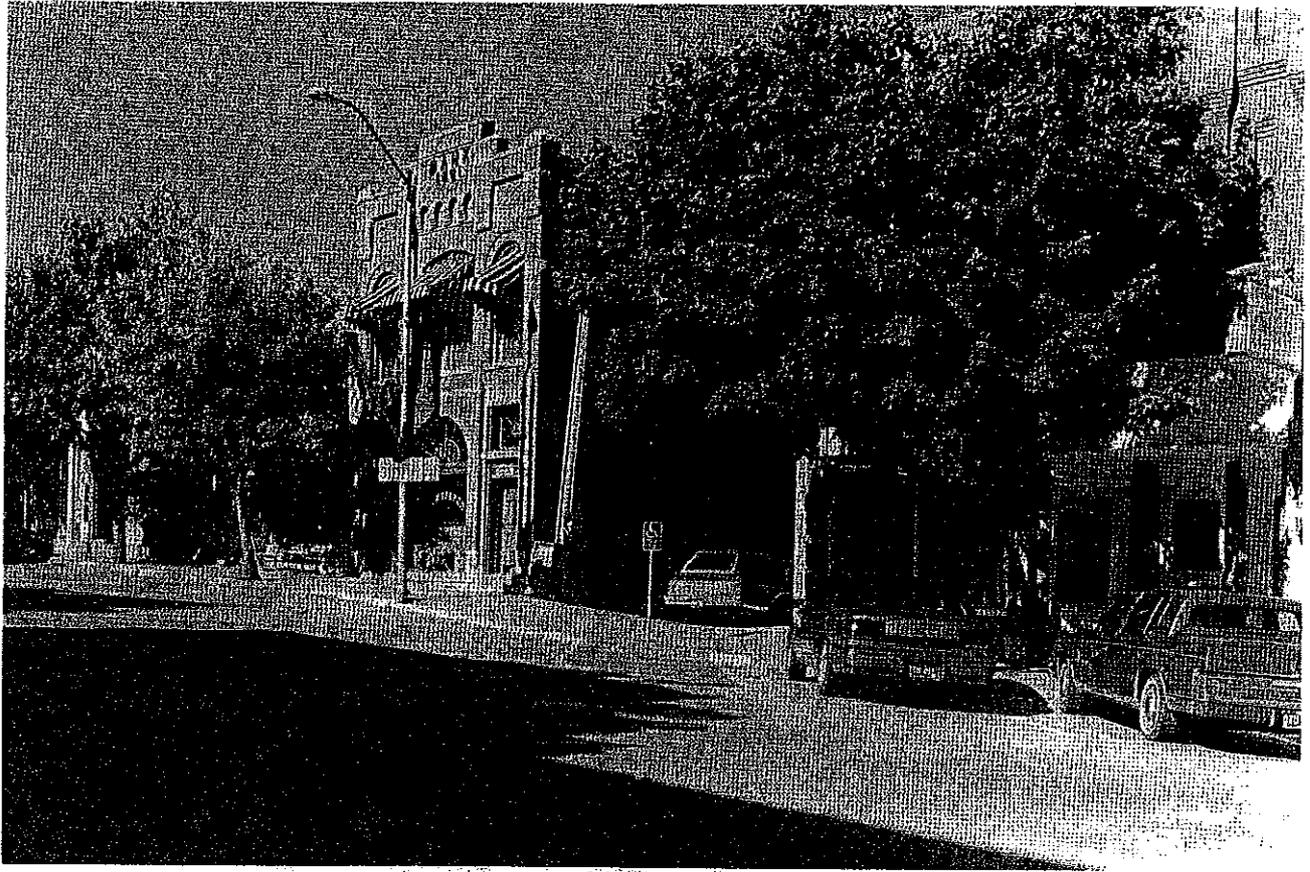


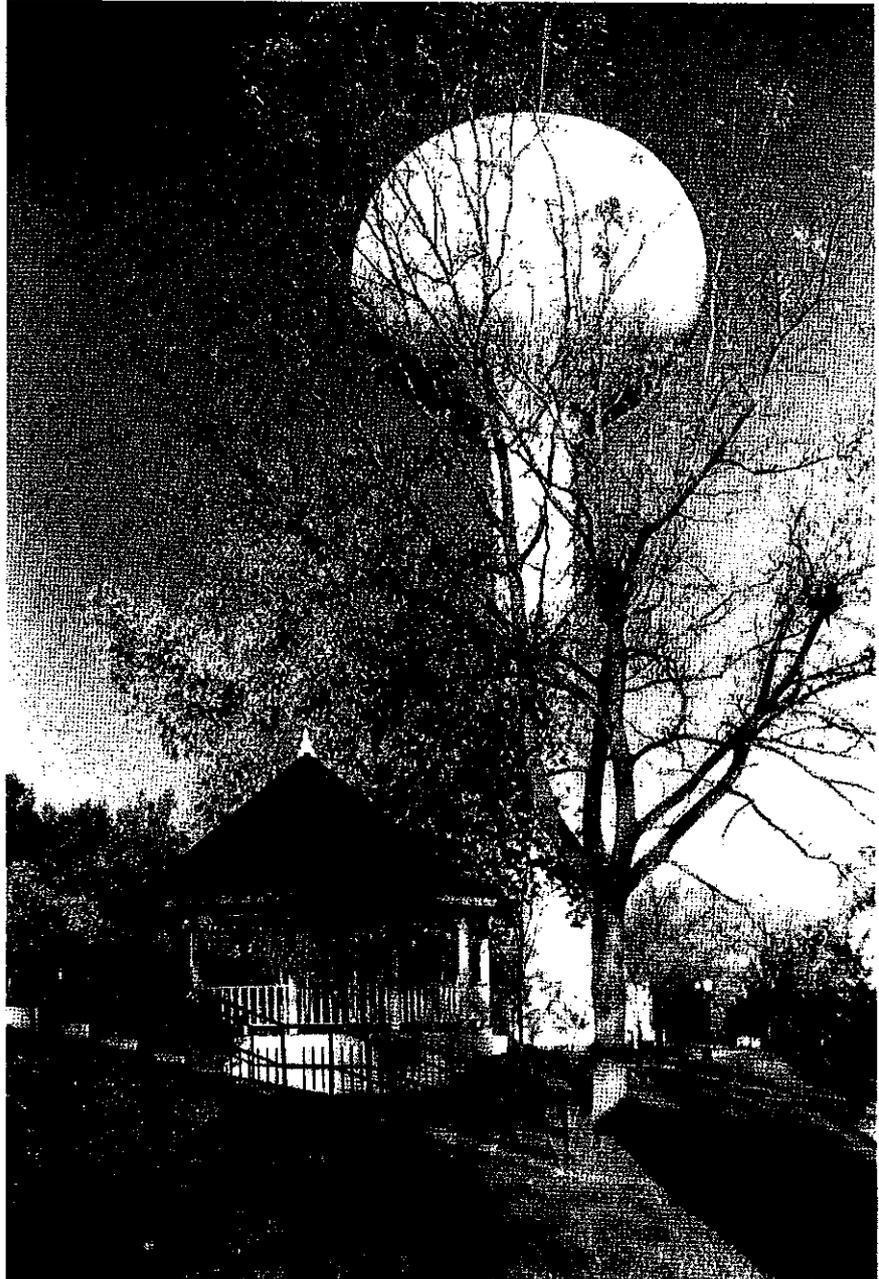
UPTOWN DEVELOPMENT PLAN



First Street.

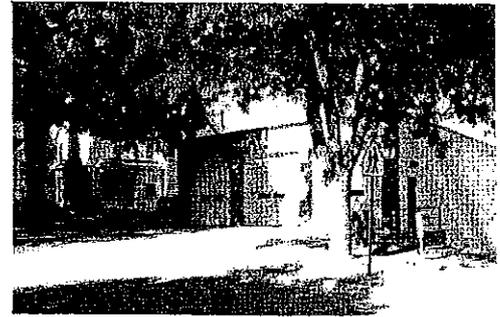
QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

6



The water tower and gazebo in Memorial Park. Mount Vernon's public service system should be designed to support the town's development objectives.

QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES



INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC FACILITIES FOR MOUNT VERNON

Mount Vernon should renew its physical infrastructure to conserve its present resources, maintain quality services, and build value for the future.

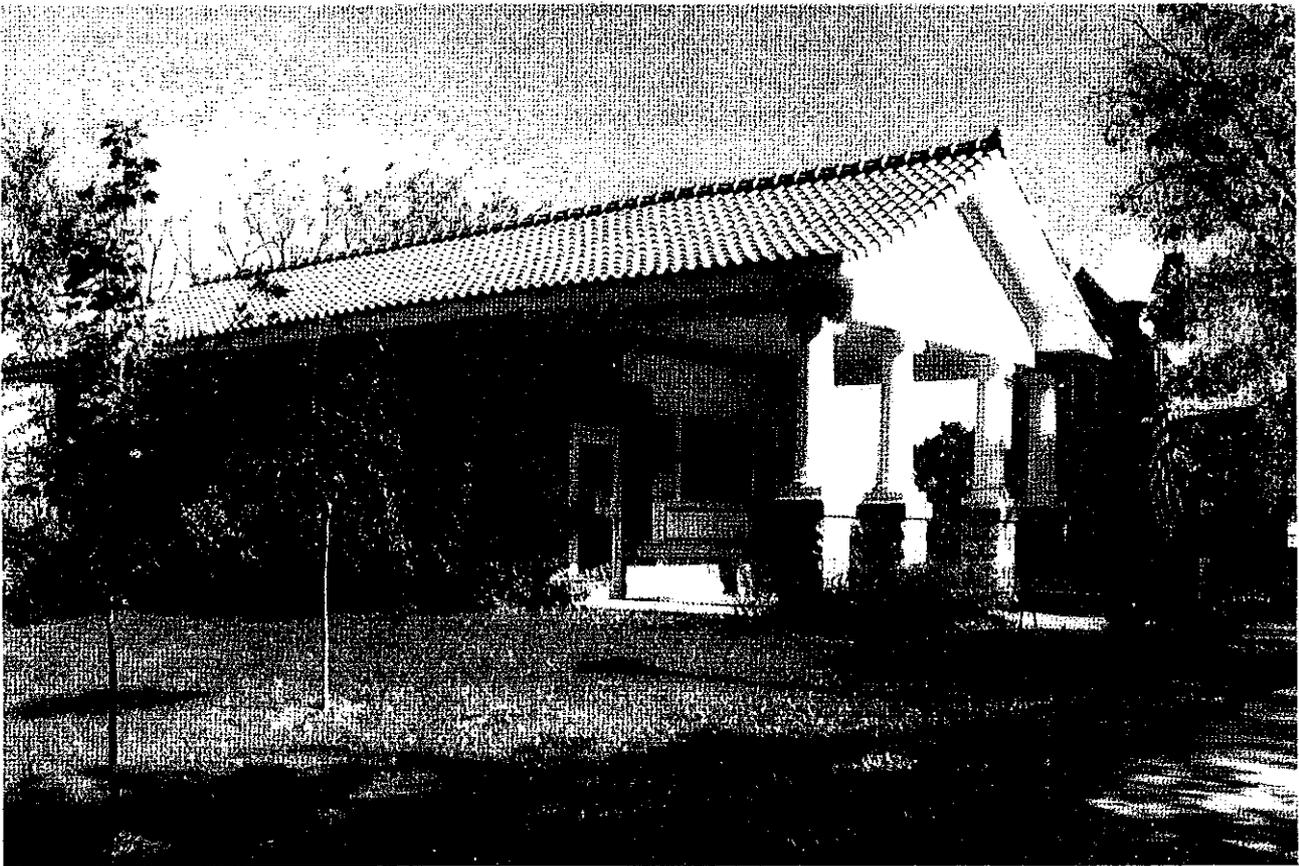
Mount Vernon's physical improvements represent major capital investments in the community. The city's utilities infrastructure, streets and sidewalks, and municipal structures are substantial capital assets. The performance of these assets in response to community needs is vitally important to the city. Indeed, residents' satisfaction with their community is often tied closely to their perceptions and experiences with these basic resources.

This element of the Plan for Mount Vernon evaluates operation of the facilities, assesses the physical condition of these resources, and suggests policies and actions to protect and improve these investments. This section of the plan discusses the need to encourage the preservation of viable existing infrastructure and the development of new facilities to ensure the continued good services and convenience of residents. It further assesses the need to maintain high standards of local mobility by maintaining a good street and sidewalk system. In addition, the plan proposes measures to ensure that Mount Vernon can continue to protect capital facility investment through systematic maintenance. The city should support these planning efforts, which will enable Mount Vernon to offer good quality public services during the next century.

In addition, the Mount Vernon Plan contains many related projects that would support the city's existing quality of life, and support visitor and tourism services. These projects include the proposed Uptown development plan, development of a business park, and the evolution of a Green Network open space system. Taken together, these public facility projects strengthen the community's historic resources, recreation potential, and business climate.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC FACILITIES FOR MOUNT VERNON

Meeting the significant needs of capital improvement rehabilitation requires an investment in the town by Mount Vernon's residents, businesses, and to some extent by the State of Iowa. Individuals will support reinvestments, if the city can demonstrate them to be necessary and cost-efficient. In an era of limited financial resources and growing capital needs, projects that will obtain the broadest community support will be those which also fulfill strategic improvement objectives, and help to implement the vision for the future of the Mount Vernon.



Mount Vernon Visitors' Center in Memorial Park. This unique structure, formerly a private office, is a center of activity and a welcoming gateway to town.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC FACILITIES: GOALS

This section presents the goals which will be accomplished through the theme of providing quality public services and facilities. In continuing to provide good municipal service to its taxpayers and users, Mount Vernon should:

■ ASSURE THAT UTILITIES SYSTEMS CAN MEET CAPACITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY DEMANDS.

Mount Vernon is free from many of the environmental quality problems that affect large cities. People in every community expect good performance from their water, sewer and drainage systems. Clean, high quality drinking water and pollution control are important local issues. The City recently completed a difficult and comprehensive rehabilitation of its water supply and treatment facilities.

Mount Vernon's active and well-informed citizens support one of Iowa's most progressive recycling and solid waste reduction programs. Mount Vernon is now focusing attention on its aging sanitary sewer interceptor lines and treatment plant. Maintenance needs and federal treatment mandates require a new strategy to make sound capital investments and safeguard water quality in the streams that receive the city's wastewater. Upgrading these utility systems is consistent with Mount Vernon's commitment to provide high quality services, re-invest in its historic built environment, and support intelligent measures to protect the environment.

■ IMPROVE AND EXTEND STREETS IN A MANNER THAT SUPPORTS DESIRABLE DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS.

New streets and improvements to existing streets should be made in a manner that reinforces the policies of the growth concept of this plan. Priority should be given to those new projects which provide solutions to existing problems. Additionally, the city must anticipate its growth, and make necessary improvements that will encourage development in areas that provide the greatest benefits to the city.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC FACILITIES: GOALS

■ PROVIDE SAFE MOVEMENT FOR ALL RESIDENTS OF MOUNT VERNON.

The transportation system should provide for safe movement. Roads and intersections which create traffic conflicts and potential collision points should be corrected. The system should be easily understood and clearly identified for visitors.

It is also important to recognize that not all people travelling in Mount Vernon are using motorized vehicles. People are likely to be walking or bicycling in areas near schools, parks, and in neighborhoods with young families. The city should be safe for pedestrians who must cross busy intersections as well. Hazards such as crossings at arterial streets or at railroads should be addressed to prevent potential safety problems.

■ MAINTAIN THE QUALITY OF MOUNT VERNON'S PUBLIC SERVICES IN THE MOST ECONOMICAL WAY POSSIBLE.

This section of the plan inventories and evaluates the city's major facilities, including:

- City Hall/Police Station.
- Other public safety facilities, such as the fire station.
- Other city-owned buildings, including the Visitors' Center.
- Public works, utilities, and park maintenance and storage facilities.
- All park and recreation facilities.
- The city's infrastructure, including drainage, water system, solid waste disposal, and the sewage treatment plant.

These public services facilities are very important to the future of Mount Vernon, and the city's ability to maintain quality services and accept new development.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC FACILITIES: GOALS

■ SEEK THE GREATEST POSSIBLE EFFICIENCIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATION OF FACILITIES.

Infrastructure and public services costs can be minimized in many ways, including efficiencies and maintenance savings realized through good planning and programming. Savings frequently can occur through such techniques as facility sharing, consolidations, joint-use, the appropriate location of improvements, and budgeting for routine maintenance. Simply stated, the City of Mount Vernon cannot afford redundancies in the development and operation of facilities or the provision of services. By avoiding duplication and encouraging inter-agency cooperation, the City can often enjoy increased quality and reduced costs. The public facilities plan will address these possibilities.

■ REHABILITATE AGING INFRASTRUCTURE TO MAINTAIN THE QUALITY SERVICE LEVELS EXPECTED BY RESIDENTS.

Mount Vernon is similar to most communities in its need to reconstruct portions of its aging infrastructure. Infrastructure systems in Mount Vernon which need particular attention include streets, sidewalks, the sanitary sewer collection and treatment system, and storm sewers. The city has already undertaken detailed survey and study work to assess the condition of these support facilities that are too often taken for granted. Mount Vernon plans a comprehensive program to address structural problems with these systems. To finance and implement these projects will be one of the City's greatest challenges.

STREET AND SIDEWALK ASSESSMENT



This section examines the current conditions of Mount Vernon's vital infrastructure and public service system. It examines four basic components: the city's streets; its public facilities, those structures and resources which provide the home bases of major municipal operations; its infrastructure systems, including sanitary sewers, stormwater management, water distribution, solid waste disposal; and its open space network of parks and recreational facilities.

ASSESSMENT OF STREETS AND SIDEWALKS CONDITION

■ Functional Categories

The Street Classification Map shows Mount Vernon's functional classification of major streets and highways. A street segment must be designated as part of the State's federal aid system to be eligible for federal funding assistance for major improvements.

Mount Vernon's street system consists of a local grid configuration in older sections of the city, bordered on the north by the right-of-way of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, and the south by US Highway 30. The city's grid configuration was platted on the diagonal, which was in contrast to the later ordinal "east-west" alignment of the railroad. The nation's earliest transcontinental road, the historical Lincoln Highway, was aligned through the city's principal business district on First Street. The Old Lincoln Highway route also abutted Cornell College and extended east to the City of Lisbon. The city's other major regional highway, Iowa Highway 1 has its origins as an early route linking Northeast Iowa to the former State Capitol in Iowa City. This route remains a busy regional arterial and is aligned through Mount Vernon along First Avenue, crossing the old Lincoln Highway in the center of the city's traditional business district.

In later years, US Highway 30 (Lincoln Highway) was re-routed as a bypass south of the community. Its construction created a controlled access east-west regional highway that removed truck and regional traffic from the center of Mount Vernon, and fostered the development of several highway-

STREET AND SIDEWALK ASSESSMENT

oriented industrial and commercial uses south of the city.

Mount Vernon's traditional street patterns are interrupted on the city's edges by natural and man-made barriers. Cornell College, the railroad, and US Highway 30 create limitations to grid street extensions on the west, north and south, respectively. Spring Creek and its ravine create a barrier to street extensions in the east part of the city. As a result, only a few streets can be developed across or around these barriers to link newly developing areas to the traditional city. These connecting routes are themselves community features, serving as umbilical collector streets leading into the town center.

The current federal aid primary system consists of major highways that serve Mount Vernon. These include US 30, a major regional highway routed south of Palisades Road at the south edge of the community; and State Highway 1, which is routed along First Avenue. These highways intersect nearly one-half mile south of Uptown Mount Vernon. US 30 is designated as an expressway, providing limited access and high-speed regional transportation access. The State of Iowa Department of Transportation has further designated US 30 as a future free-flow Commercial and Industrial Highway, with plans to expand the route to a four lane divided highway. These plans include a south by-pass of Mount Vernon for US 30, to be constructed during the next twenty years. The federal aid urban system includes other streets designed to circulate traffic through Mount Vernon.

Taken together, internal traffic movements within Mount Vernon are relatively well-distributed to avoid congestion throughout the core residential areas of the city. In contrast, traffic movements outside the core area are concentrated on a few cross-neighborhood collector streets which intersect with major highways. For example, US Highway 30 is a significant barrier outside the established city, and effectively concentrates local traffic upon Highway 1 and Country Club Road, which each intersect with US 30. Collector routes in the city include 1st Street, College Boulevard, North 6th Street, Lisbon Road and South 3rd and 7th Streets, Country Club Drive, and Palisades Road.

The urban system's most important discontinuities involve north-south traffic movement in the far north and far east parts of the city. Most traffic movements in the northeast part of the city east of A Avenue are indirect and discontinuous. The railroad, though busy, is not now a major barrier since development areas north of the city are sparsely populated. Despite the perceived barrier of the railroad, many roads enter the community from the north, including the historical Lincoln Highway, Springville Road, and Ink Road/State Highway 1. Local access from the west is provided along the historical Lincoln Highway, Palisades Road, and Bryant Road. US 30 and Lisbon Road provide the only major access to the east. Connections from the south are limited to Country Club Road and Highway 1, which provides a major crossing of the Cedar River less than 3 miles south of Mount Vernon.

■ Effects of the Planned US 30 Bypass on Local Mobility

The planned construction of the US 30 bypass of Mount Vernon and Lisbon is designed to improve the level of service within the high traffic volume Cedar County to Cedar Rapids corridor. Upon its completion, the bypass will provide a four-lane highway to replace the existing two-lane facility. This improvement is intended to result in a higher level of service, reduced travel time throughout the project corridor, and fewer vehicle accidents. The construction of the present US Highway 30 left the city with a "hard edge" on the south, preventing the easy extension of neighborhood streets across the road. The new planned bypass will repeat this barrier farther south, creating a parallel corridor of two major roads south of the city. Local street access to land parcels between the parallel roads will be limited by the configuration of the new highway. Resolving this concern is one of the city's most important transportation system challenges.

The most effective solution is to reconfigure the system of major roads and intersections south of the city. The network of existing streets can be shaped into a complete network of circulator roads which loop through the land parcels between the parallel road corridors, and then directly lead to the highway. These improvements are able to circulate traffic around the US 30 corridor, improve traffic flow and

efficiency of turning movements. The solution has the added benefit of opening access to several vacant parcels for future development as a business and research park, or for distribution uses.

For Mount Vernon to grow successfully to the west, east and north, new development must be directed to achieve city land use goals and expand cross-community mobility. The community must also seek ways to link this growth to the existing Uptown business community. Improvements and modification will be required on both the major street and federal aid systems.

■ Paving Status and Condition of Streets and Sidewalks

The preparation of this plan included a city-wide survey of street and sidewalk conditions in June, 1994. Maps addressing street and sidewalk conditions summarize the results of this survey, highlighting significant street condition problems facing the city now and into the planning period.

• *Residential Streets*

The street system in Mount Vernon is a continuous network in the older grid of the original town. Connections are less direct in the far eastern part of the city, where the streets depart from the straightforward and direct routes established by the town founders in the older parts of the community.

Recent developments to the east of the city have platted indirect street patterns, depending upon one local street to serve as an umbilical link to the arterial street or highway. As a result, movement becomes concentrated on one street and can induce congestion. The lack of multiple collector streets to move traffic within neighborhoods can disrupt geographical orientation, may confuse visitors, and can make delivery of municipal and emergency services more difficult. To counteract this tendency, it is critical that movement toward arterial streets be more evenly distributed on several collector routes for each neighborhood. This will be most important in the east part of the city. These links are especially critical for Uptown, as new residential development occurs farther from its traditional retail center.

Mount Vernon has relatively few instances of unimproved or gravel streets. The few gravel streets that exist are on remote, rural edges of the city. The areas of the city that have substandard or unpaved streets include:

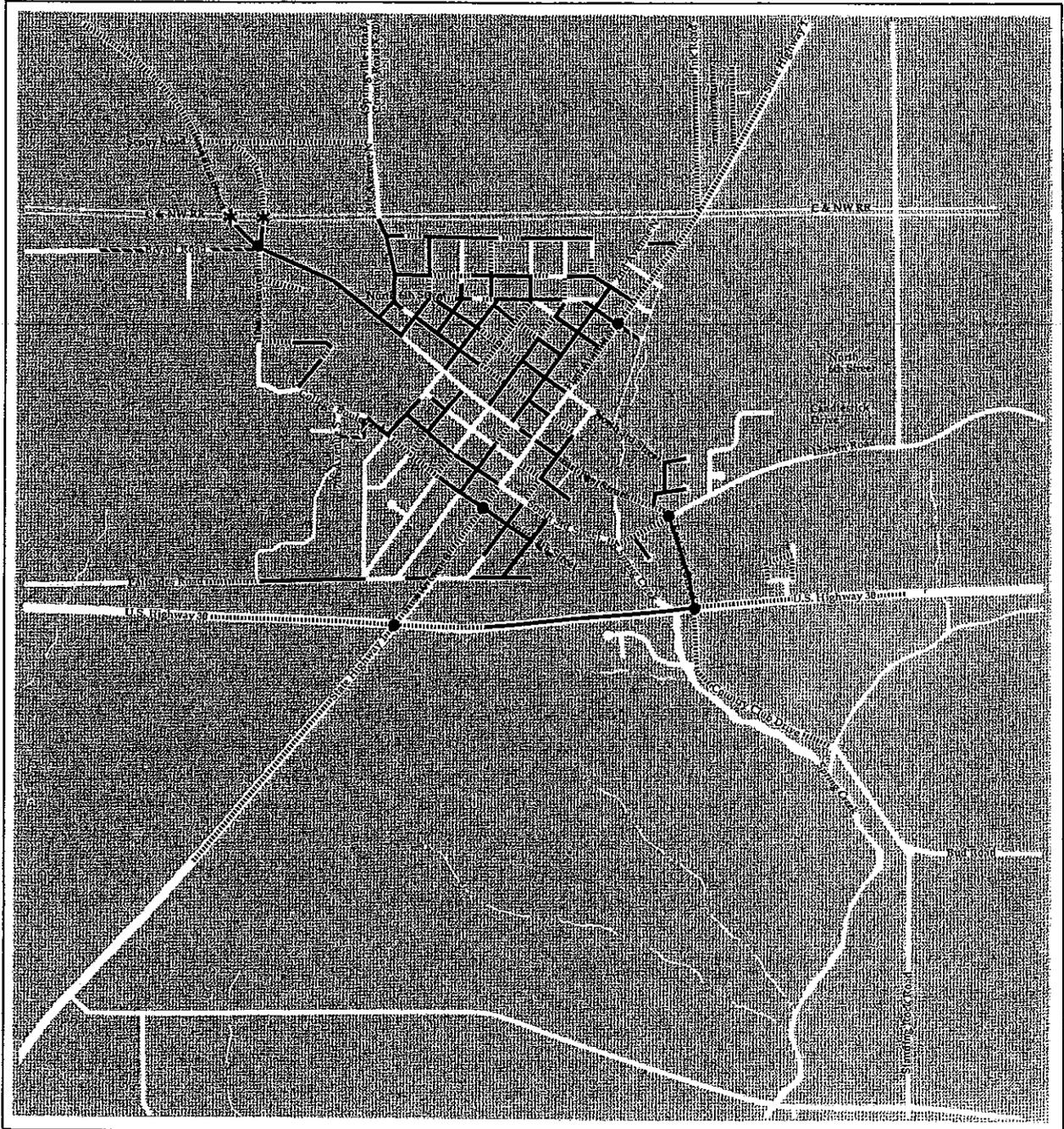
- *Southwest Mount Vernon:* Palisades Road to the west of South 3rd Avenue, and Bryant Road west of 10th Avenue.
- *North Mount Vernon:* Ink Road north of Colonial Estates mobile home park; East 6th Street; and East 3rd Street to the east of A Avenue.

In areas experiencing substantial new development, such as along Bryant Road, it is important that these streets be brought up to urban paving standards.

Some paved streets in Mount Vernon show signs of deterioration. Pavement deterioration in Mount Vernon is largely a function of the age of the street, the traffic wear, and the quality of the initial roadbed. In general, neighborhoods that experience the most significant deterioration in pavement surface include:

- *Major regional routes,* including US 30 and Highway 1.
- *Southwest Mount Vernon:* Portions of Palisades Road, 10th Avenue, Bryant Road, MacGregor Lane, Summit Avenue, D Street, South 4th Street between South 3rd and 5th Avenues, and 1st Avenue south of South 3rd Street.
- *Northwest Mount Vernon:* Segments of residential streets in Ash Park such as North 7th Street and North 6th Street; roads on the northwest approach to the city such as Soby Road and the historic Lincoln Highway; and the following older streets on the northwest edge of Uptown: North 2nd, 3rd and 4th Streets, and portions of North 3rd and 4th Streets.
- *Southeast Mount Vernon:* East 1st Street east of the Middle School, South 1st Avenue to the south of 3rd Street, East 7th Street to the east of Nature Park, and portions of South 2nd Street and South A Avenue on the southeast edge of Uptown.

STREET REPAIR NEEDS



Street Infrastructure Repair Needs

-  Major Rehabilitation
-  Moderate Rehabilitation
-  Minor Rehabilitation
-  Bridges with Rehabilitation Needs
-  Intersections with Repair Needs

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■ Street Improvement Priorities

Based on the street condition inventory, Mount Vernon's highest street improvement priorities are those that:

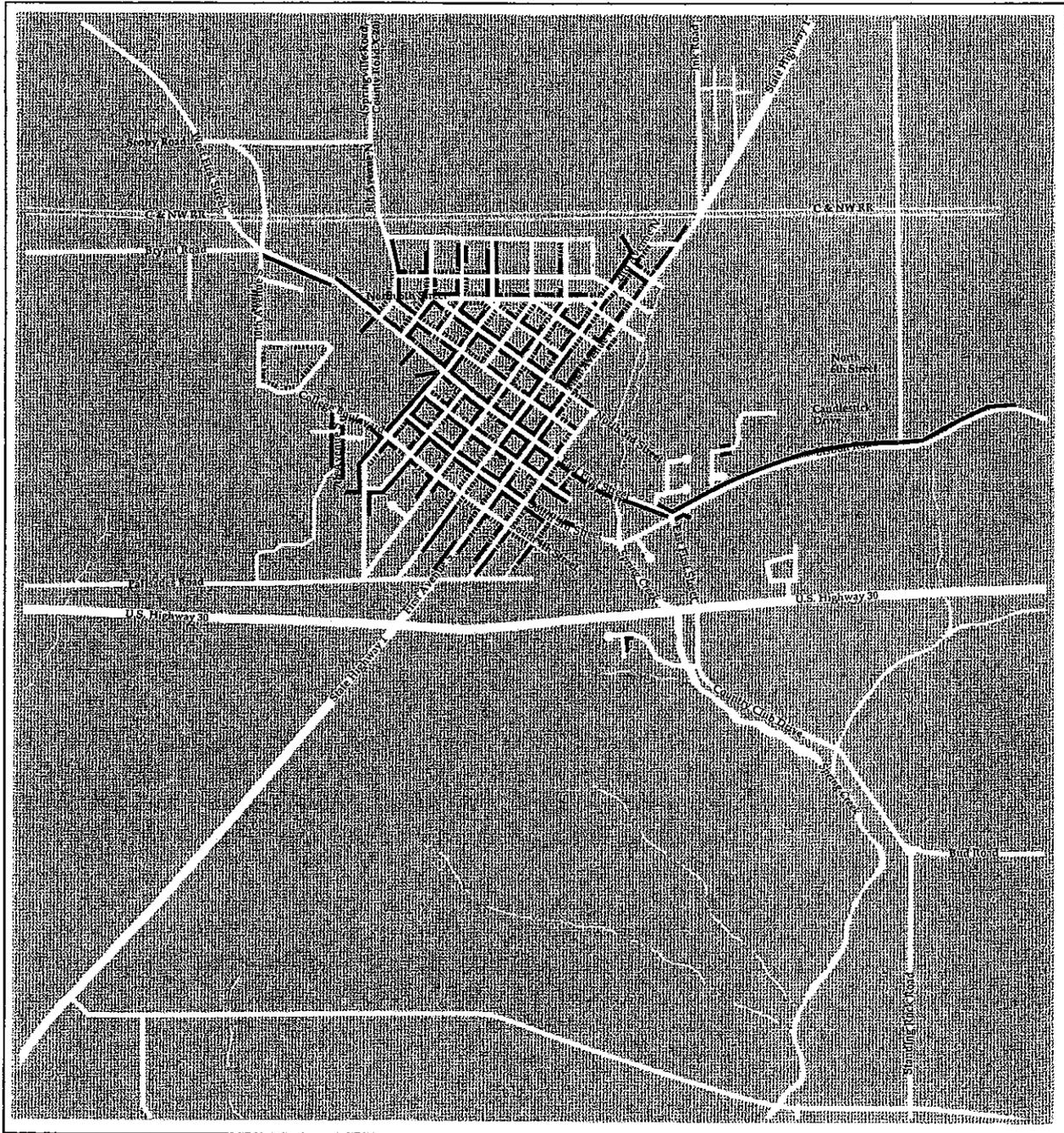
- Improve traffic congestion problems along urban streets by providing alternate ways to distribute movements.
- Connect newly developing areas to existing collector streets and Uptown.
- Help to open significant tracts for new residential and business park development.
- Increase mobility for cross-community trips between residential areas and regional highways.
- Improve or eliminate safety problems caused by configuration, site distance, or other condition-related problems.
- Are located in key areas critical to the successful implementation of the city's intended development plan.
- Are requested by property owners who voluntarily work to establish special assessment districts to finance improvements.

The city must continue to assign any available resources to upgrade older streets. In general, Mount Vernon should invest the largest part of its resources in projects that correct community-wide problems and further the intended development plan. High priority should be given to neighborhood street improvements that improve the city's traffic circulation patterns, and that encourage growth in areas that are most beneficial to the city and its existing infrastructure.

■ Sidewalks

The traditional, historic core of Mount Vernon offers a complete network of sidewalks. This system contributes to the ease of walking, strolling, and daily interaction among neighbors, which is a hallmark quality of life in the city. The sidewalk network has been extended north to reach Davis Park, west to the Cornell College athletic complex, and southwest to reach Washington Elementary and the Mount Vernon Community High School. In addition, the "Boardwalk" trail provides a continuous, 6 foot wide pedestrian and bicycle route linking Mount Vernon to Lisbon. Adjacent neighborhoods are well connected to this system.

SIDEWALK CONDITION



Sidewalk Condition

- Sidewalks Present; Good Condition
- - - Sidewalks Present; Need Repair



Many newer subdivision developments outside the core of the city lack sidewalks. Although these housing areas were initially developed on the remote edges of the city, they have matured into substantial neighborhoods which are now unserved by sidewalks. The city has obtained a \$35,000 grant to construct a sidewalk across the railroad separating Davis Park and the Colonial Estates mobile home park. However, residential subdivisions in the west, north, east and southeast parts of the city lack internal sidewalks, and remain isolated from the city's traditional sidewalk network.

The condition of Mount Vernon's network of sidewalks is related to the age of the neighborhood infrastructure. The need for sidewalk repair corresponds to the need for housing rehabilitation in many of these areas. Large sections of the older, established neighborhoods in Mount Vernon have sidewalks that need substantial repair, while some links in older parts of the city have been replaced or are still in very good condition. Sidewalks exist in some outlying and newer areas of the city built before 1970, and are generally in very good condition. Areas in greatest need of sidewalk rehabilitation include:

- *Southwest Mount Vernon:* Intermittent segments along College Boulevard, 10th Avenue, and 1st Avenue; mid-block segments of South 2nd, 4th and 5th Avenues; and scattered segments along blockfaces in the older neighborhood west of Uptown.
- *Northwest Mount Vernon:* Links along North 2nd Street; North Second Avenue between Uptown and Davis Park, several segments in the Ash Park historic district; and scattered segments along blockfaces in the older neighborhood northwest of Uptown.
- *Northeast Mount Vernon:* Sidewalk segments along North 1st Avenue and North A Avenue.
- *Southeast Mount Vernon:* South 1st Avenue, South A Avenue, and South 3rd Street.

The Cornell College district is an especially important location for pedestrian improvements. The area has the largest

number of pedestrians in the city, outside of Uptown Mount Vernon. Once the campus edge, 1st Street has been enveloped by the college, which has rehabilitated many older homes for use by college services. The city should continue to work with the college to provide barrier-free access and improved safety at crossings of 1st Street, including improved crosswalk signage and lighting.

Sidewalks are absent in almost every area that lies on the periphery of the city. As development continues, these areas are enveloped by the city and sidewalk connections become important. In order to avoid later taxpayer-funding for the installation of such sidewalks, the City of Mount Vernon currently requires that any new housing construction must include sidewalk construction.

Recent development has extended the city outward, to the south and east. The city has a relatively complete network of sidewalks along the major regional routes serving these areas, Highway 1 and Lisbon Road, respectively. By contrast, sidewalk connections south of South 7th Street (along Palisades Road and US Highway 30) are virtually non-existent. It is important to note that sidewalks are necessary along highways to provide safe passage for pedestrians within commercial and business park developments. In all communities, the edge of town is continually shifting, and pedestrian transportation must be extended along with it.

■ Sidewalk Improvement Priorities

Based on the sidewalk condition survey, high priority improvements should be those that:

- Improve pedestrian connections to schools and parks.
- Provide sidewalk access between residential and commercial areas.
- Improve safety along busy arterials by constructing separate walkways for pedestrians.
- Complete pedestrian connections which provide access to recreational trails of the proposed Mount Vernon Greenway.
- Connect newly developing and outlying areas to existing traditional neighborhoods.
- Are located in key areas critical to the improvement of

neighborhoods.

- Are requested by property owners who voluntarily establish special assessment districts to finance improvements.

PUBLIC FACILITIES IN MOUNT VERNON

■ Inventory of Facilities

The City of Mount Vernon owns buildings and structures that are used in meeting municipal responsibilities for public services. City Hall, public safety departments and the city's Visitors' Center are located on the west edge of the city's traditional business district. Other services, including the library, community pool and utility facilities are distributed around the city. The following discussion inventories and evaluates Mount Vernon's public facilities. This assessment is based on existing conditions and potential community needs.

• *City Hall and Police Department*

The City moved into its new City Hall on the west end of Uptown in March of 1989. The building faces First Street, the city's most important community street, and has become an important anchor for the central business district. The building project provided the important redevelopment of a key Uptown blockface, and created an outstanding municipal office facility. The main level of the building contains administrative offices for the city, the police department, the Lisbon-Mount Vernon Ambulance Service, and a community conference room. The lower level is accessible via an elevator, and contains the council chambers, an office for the water superintendent and water system controls, and a room with kitchenette donated by the American Legion. The building meets the city's present and expected space needs, and meets standards of the recent federal Americans with Disabilities Act. The maintenance and service operations could benefit from relocation nearer to the sites most important to their operational responsibilities.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

City Hall. This facility, built in 1989, was carefully designed to fit into the context of First Street.

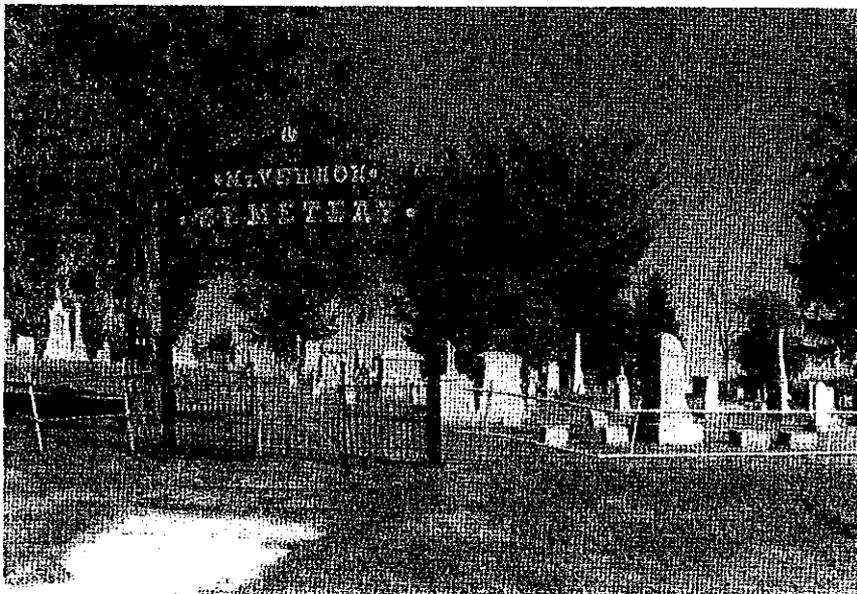


Cornell College/Mount Vernon Library. The college/community partnership that operates the library is one of only two such facilities in the country. The library has recently undergone a major renovation program.

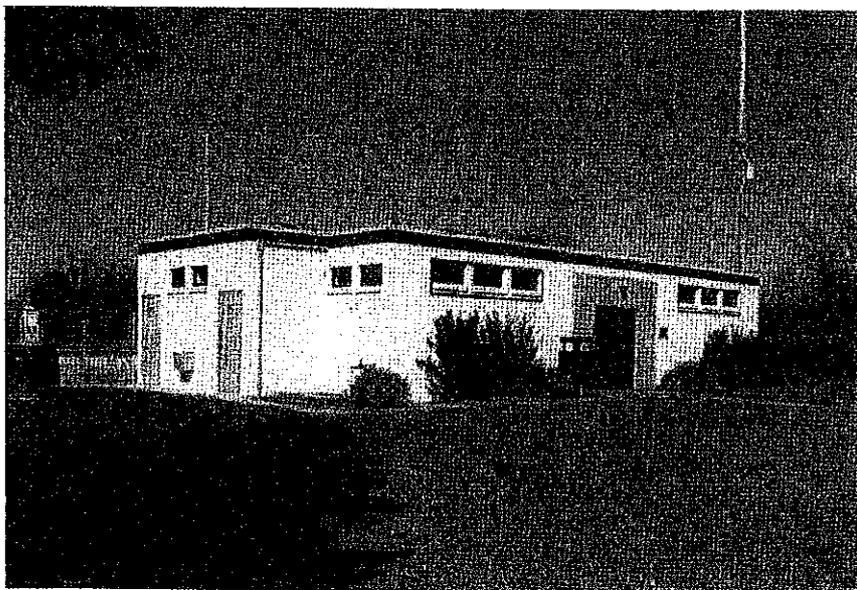


PUBLIC FACILITIES

Mount Vernon Cemetery. The cemetery, at Lisbon and Country Club Roads, forms an important and highly visible entrance to the city.



Davis Park Pool. This major outdoor recreation facility was renovated in 1981-82. In addition, Mount Vernon residents are eligible for membership at Cornell College's Small Life Fitness Center.



- *Fire District Station*

Fire protection services are based in a structure located on the block west of City Hall. Built in the 1970s, the fire station is a jointly-owned facility of the Mount Vernon Fire Department and the Linn County Fire District #1. The jurisdiction of the rural fire company was the first recognized fire district in Iowa. The district and the city each own one-half of the building and its equipment. The district owns additional equipment, including a new fire pumper that was financed through passage of a recent special assessment levy.

The district has an independent levy authority under Iowa law, limited to 0.27 per \$1,000 assessed valuation. While operational and geographic efficiencies could be obtained by the complete integration of the two fire services, Fire District #1 has a long history and tradition which is valued by its members. There have been measured efforts to discuss consolidating the rolling stock of the two fire services.

The building housing these fire service organizations has limited expansion potential within the very compact confines of its Uptown setting. New equipment purchases will eventually create a need for a facility study, to consider the merits of relocation. The City of Mount Vernon and the Board of Trustees of Fire District #1 can benefit from cooperative efforts that consolidate capital and operating costs, maintain a high level of service, and respond to the traditions of the district.

- *Visitors' Center*

The City of Mount Vernon owns and operates a Visitors' Center located in Memorial Park. The historic structure initially served as a law office, and was moved to the park in 1991 to make way for the construction of a new building for Mount Vernon Bank. The pavilion was relocated by a campaign organized and funded by local volunteers. The Visitors' Center contains a meeting room that can be reserved by community organizations, offices for the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce, and restrooms accessible to disabled persons. The Visitors' Center is in very good condition and exhibits no repair needs.

- *Public Library*

The Mount Vernon Public Library is operated through the facilities of Cornell College. The city's library has been co-located with the Cornell College Library since it was deeded to the college by the Carnegie Endowment. The college is completing a multi-million dollar renovation of the building, which will resolve several accessibility problems. The City of Mount Vernon contributes approximately \$25,000 annually toward the operation of the combined library facility, which is one of only two in the nation operated in this way. No other facility needs are evident.

- *City Maintenance Facility*

City maintenance operations are headquartered in a facility located east of Davis Park, west of First Avenue (Highway 1) and Cass Street. The maintenance facility was purchased by the city in 1981 and converted for its present use. The facility contains seven vehicle bays, equipment and materiel storage for road maintenance and snow plowing, sanitary sewer operations, and maintenance of public buildings and parks. No major facility needs are evident. Other remote structures throughout the city are operated by the water and sewer departments for water pumping, storage and distribution, and wastewater treatment.

- *Mount Vernon Cemetery*

The city operates Mount Vernon Cemetery, which is located southeast of Lisbon Road and Country Club Road in the southeast part of the city. The cemetery presents a highly visible, park-like setting adjacent to US Highway 30. The City of Mount Vernon manages the facility, and maintains a professional contract for landscape maintenance. A storage structure is present and in very good condition, although it is not presently in use. The cemetery is expected to require expansion within the next twenty years, and sufficient three acres of adjacent land has been reserved for this purpose.

- *Municipal Pool*

Aside from the city parks themselves, the city's major

recreation facility is the municipal pool and bathhouse, located in Davis Park west of 1st Avenue. The pool is operated and managed by a volunteer board, the Mount Vernon Parks and Recreation Commission. The pool was renovated in 1981/82 with proceeds from a bond issue that was retired in 1994. Although the city has been diligent in repairing cracks, caulking and structural maintenance of the pool, it remains a struggle to meet repair needs with available resources. Future improvements have been envisioned for the pool, although cost and timing issues have not been fully resolved. Construction of a new bathhouse and installation of a water slide have been most often mentioned. The pool is a highly popular, well-maintained and managed seasonal attraction. In colder seasons, area swimmers can use the indoor pool at the Small Life Fitness Center at Cornell College, where Mount Vernon residents are eligible for memberships.

- *Other Major Facilities*

The city's wastewater is treated at a plant located southeast of the city south of US Highway 30, along Spring Creek. The City of Mount Vernon has retained a professional engineer to evaluate the needed size and relative costs of a new treatment plant. Such a facility is needed, to overcome rising maintenance costs for the aging facility and meet new federal pollution control standards. The present treatment facility is adjacent to Hillcrest Country Club, a privately owned golf course.

- **Public Facilities Priorities**

Mount Vernon has an excellent inventory of public facilities. The City has constructed a fine municipal building, administered an outstanding record of maintenance and repair, and entered into cooperative facility agreements with Fire District #1, Cornell College, and other service providers. Still, some facility needs require attention. Based on the analysis, Mount Vernon's highest public facility priorities are:

- *Continued rehabilitation of aging infrastructure.* Older sections of Mount Vernon contain capital improvements that are nearing the end of their lifespan. Deteriorated segments of streets, sanitary sewers, sidewalks, and water lines must

be scheduled for repair on a rotating basis to prevent unexpected and costly failures. The most important projects involve costly sanitary sewer construction, including rebuilding the North 6th Street sanitary sewer interceptor, and a new wastewater treatment plant.

- *Maintenance and improvement of the municipal pool.* By its very nature, the pool is an expensive and popular community feature. The City's ongoing preventive maintenance program should delay major rehabilitation needs. Continued effective management of the facility will sustain its popularity, and should support a future community campaign to add amenities.

- *Future development of a new fire protection facility.* There will be a need in the future to establish a new building in Mount Vernon sized to accommodate the growing vehicle and equipment needs of the community's fire protection services. This decision will involve cooperation between the City and Fire District #1. Site criteria to locate a new facility should focus on: a central location based near to the city's oldest and largest at-risk structures, and a site along a major street providing direct access to both a US 30 interchange and a major road serving the rural district jurisdiction. Sites along Highway 1 should be favored. Such a study should also consider the re-use of the present building, in light of the potential vehicle and equipment needs of the police, city maintenance and ambulance services.

- *Reassignment of Space at City Hall.* The City should continue its efforts to upgrade utility and maintenance structures, and consolidate utility staff offices with the facilities they administer. This should include the relocation of the water system controls and water superintendent. The Lisbon-Mount Vernon Ambulance Service should be relocated, possibly to the existing Mount Vernon Ambulance building. This reassignment of space will be precipitated by space needs of city administration and law enforcement, who must respond to growing statutory requirements for operational programs, public records and evidence storage.

INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS

This section presents an inventory and evaluation of the city's existing infrastructure systems. These include the systems for sanitary sewer, stormwater drainage and storm sewers, water distribution and storage, and operations for the collection, transfer and disposal of solid waste.

■ Sanitary Sewer

Mount Vernon's sanitary sewer system is an almost invisible service that is vital to the community. The system operates in harmony with the city's topography, relying on gravity flows through the downhill swales and slopes of the city. A natural ridge line bisects Mount Vernon, with Uptown and the college perched above the rest of the city. This hill forces the sewer system into one basin north and one basin south of First Street. Sewer lines in these basins collect wastewater from developed areas and move it toward larger interceptor pipes sized 12 inches or larger. The city's network of sewer pipes is undersized in many older parts of the city, with small 4 and 6 inch lines which gradually transition to larger 8 inch lateral lines leading to the interceptors.

Flows in the basin in the north part of town are directed to an aging interceptor pipe which flows under North 6th and North 5th Street. This interceptor leads to the east to Spring Creek, where the pipe turns south and extends to the wastewater treatment plant near US 30. Flows in the basin in the south part of town are directed to a newer interceptor beneath developed areas south of the college, near Washington Elementary School and across the southwest neighborhood. The interceptor follows a zig-zag path to eventually align with South 3rd Street. The south interceptor flows to Spring Creek, where it outfalls into the north interceptor.

The largest trunk interceptor in the city is 15 inches in diameter, and extends along Spring Creek from near the Middle School football field to the wastewater treatment plant. Housing areas east of Spring Creek are served by 8 inch sewers that flow west into this trunk interceptor.

In a few isolated areas, the city's natural topography

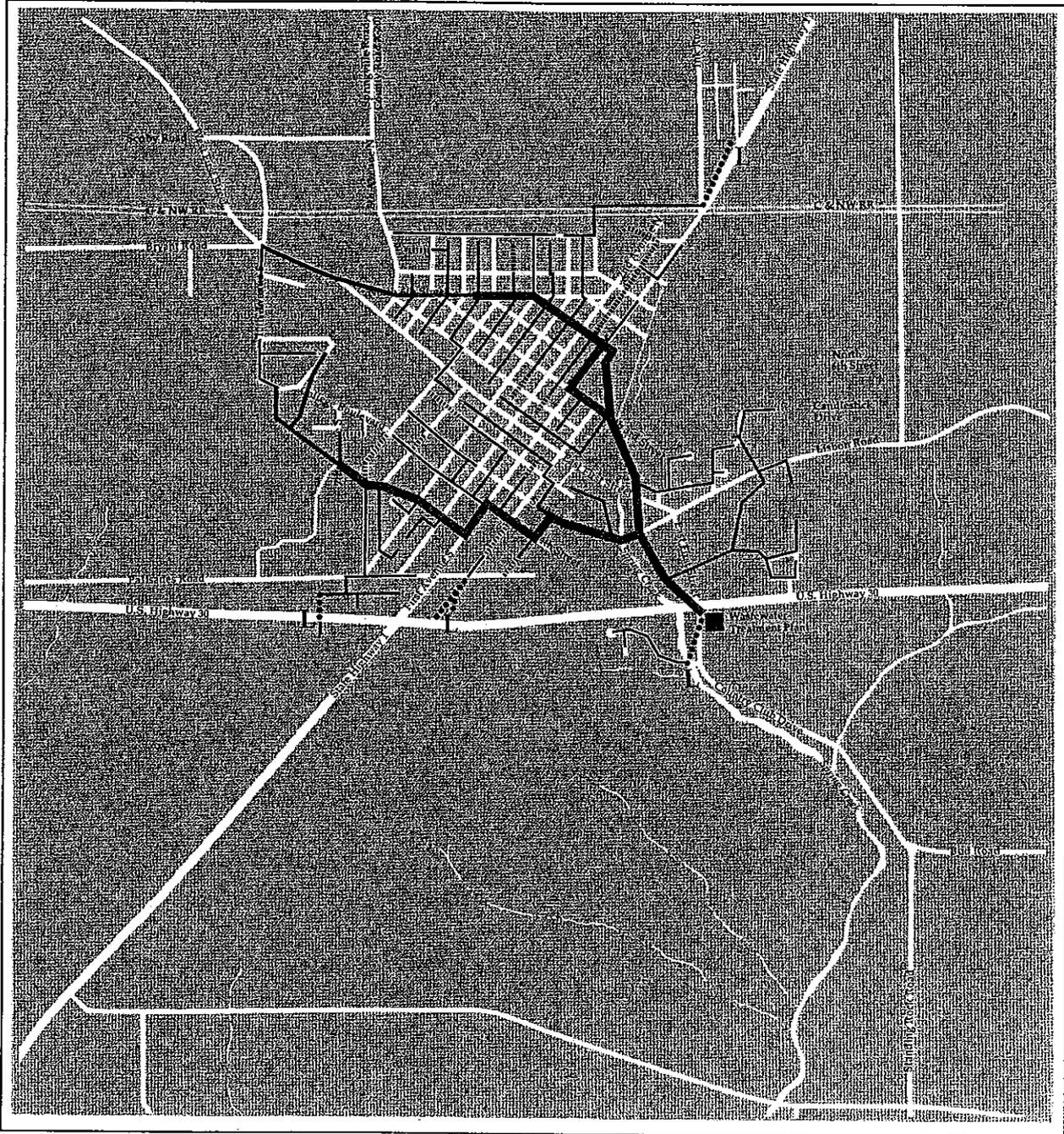
prevents natural gravity flows, and sanitary lift stations are required. The city operates two such lift stations: a southwest lift to serve the Ford dealership; and a southeast lift to serve the new Oak Ridge subdivision. The city's lift stations are in very good condition. The Oak Ridge development is actually south of the city's treatment plant, and the lift counteracts this conflict of geography. Should the wastewater treatment plant ever be relocated, the Oak Ridge lift could be dismantled. Several private lifts have been installed to overcome topographical problems with sewer service to the Colonial Estates mobile home park, the Pizza Hut on US 30 and the Chapel View Manor apartments on South 7th Street. The city has no maintenance responsibilities for these private lift stations.

Mount Vernon's wastewater is treated at a facility near Hillcrest Country Club prior to its outlet into the north fork of Spring Creek. The facility is a trickling filter plant constructed in 1947, and remodeled in 1968. The plant treats about 346,000 gallons of wastewater per day, with an intended design capacity of slightly more than 550,000 gallons per day. Solids collected from the wastewater treatment process are land applied to farm fields as a soil conditioner, a process that will be affected soon by new 503 regulations to be promulgated by the State of Iowa.

An analysis of Mount Vernon's sanitary sewer system identifies the following major issues:

- **Aging sewers.** The age of Mount Vernon's sanitary sewer infrastructure poses challenges to effective service. Mount Vernon was one of earliest communities in eastern Iowa to build a sanitary sewer system, with some elements of the system dating to 1897. The oldest sewers in the city are located in residential areas immediately to the north and south of Uptown Mount Vernon. Age of sewer lines affects rate of deterioration, capacity to convey sewage, and can be an indicator of other problems. One of these problems is the once common (but now discouraged) practice of cross-connection between sanitary sewers and storm sewers. The City must identify segments that are of greatest priority and prepare to engage in selective reconstruction projects.

SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM



Sanitary Sewer System

-  6 inches and under
-  8 inches
-  10 inches
-  12-15 inches
-  Sanitary Lift Stations
-  Sanitary Force Mains
-  Wastewater Treatment Plant



• **Infiltration and Inflow of Stormwater.** During recent heavy rains, the plant has been forced to handle volumes of more than 1.2 million gallons per day, due to inflow and infiltration of stormwater into the sanitary sewer system. Infiltration and inflow have caused runoff and basement flooding in Mount Vernon as recently as July 1993, when heavy rains fell upon already supersaturated ground. The City of Mount Vernon has received funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assess the extent of infiltration and inflow. The City used these funds to retain Municipal Pipe Tool of Hudson to smoke test the system and televise underground lines to observe problem areas. The City has notified residents to disconnect downspouts and sump pumps from the sanitary sewers, but the extent of compliance to this request is uncertain. Infiltration may also occur through deteriorated seals on city manholes, although this has not yet been evaluated.

The City is currently in a preliminary phase of engineering design to correct the problem by reconstructing the major north interceptor sewer (and its manholes) beneath North 6th and North 5th Streets. This interceptor was built before 1906, and some sections are seriously dilapidated. The cost of this project may exceed \$1.5 million, but would reduce extraneous flows to the wastewater treatment plant. It is far more affordable and desirable to reduce extraneous flows than to force the wastewater plant to treat potentially limitless rainwater and groundwater that finds its way into the system. Indeed, experience has demonstrated that the the plant cannot handle these volumes. Federal environmental protection standards for wastewater treatment are increasingly strict, complex, and expensive. The City should do all it can to ensure that all volumes of water that are to be subjected to the treatment process truly belong in the system. This will prevent the community from overspending its treatment finances, or adding unnecessary wear, stress, and depreciation to equipment.

• **Obsolescence of the Wastewater Treatment Plant.** Sanitary sewage treatment in Mount Vernon occurs in an aging plant built and remodelled long before the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency, the federal Pollution Control Act, and the Clean Water Act. In spite of this, the City

has been able to keep the present plant in compliance with state environmental regulating agencies. However, these early rounds of federal standards are soon to be supplemented by additional mandates which will require the city to build additional steps into the treatment process. The City must evaluate whether these additional capital outlays are better spent by an addition, or reconstruction of the plant. The city has begun building reserves into the sewer capital fund. Maintenance of equipment at the sewer treatment plant poses an additional challenge. The city has had difficulty obtaining parts for old equipment, and encountered serious delays when parts had to be specially fabricated. A recent need for another motor for the lift station in the plant basement required an upgrade of wiring and installation of an auxiliary motor control, demonstrating that the obsolescence of the facility increases the costs of even basic alterations.

Related to the obsolescence is the location of the treatment plant. Once on the edge of the city, the plant's site is actually upstream from some of the city's recent housing development. The Oak Ridge subdivision lift station was installed to respond to this problem. Relocation of the plant could eliminate the need for this lift station.

The city's development has encompassed the plant, causing public relations problems between the city's plant and new residents. The plant is in compliance with all environmental standards, but is perceived negatively. Spring Creek is an intermittent stream, and normal water conditions in winter and early spring often fail to provide enough natural oxygen to promote natural growth of bacteria and algae. This natural phenomenon receives added public scrutiny from homeowners near the plant, where a seasonal grey scum can develop on rocks along the creek. To rectify this natural, but unsightly condition would require the city to oxygenate the creek, not a usual responsibility of a municipality. Should the city choose to fund such an effort, it could construct an aeration tank. However, the small size of the present plant site may limit the city's ability to implement such a project. The city's consulting engineer is developing limited, interim measures to counteract this effect.

The 1994 Wastewater Treatment Study by Shoemaker and

Haaland Engineers evaluated these issues. The study recommends replacement of the existing facility with an entirely new treatment works at an estimated cost of \$5 million at a more distant location southeast of the city. This recommendation is based on findings that the design efficiency, coordination of technical construction and ease of operational management would be greater with a total replacement facility. While the decision to replace the plant may be technically prudent, it raises difficult issues of financial affordability for the City of Mount Vernon. Construction on this scale could represent a serious cost burden to the community, in addition to existing sewer use fees.

- **Growth Management and Sewer Construction.** The city must ensure that sanitary sewer connections and lift stations which are constructed by private developers are adequately sized to provide for adequate capacity for future adjacent development. In addition, the city should encourage sewer policies that result in the ultimate abandonment of individual septic fields serving rural estates along Spring Creek south of the city, in favor of connection to the city's sewer system. This would be facilitated by the southward relocation of the wastewater treatment plant.

■ Sanitary Sewer System Priorities

The successful operation of Mount Vernon's sanitary sewer system is a tribute to the city's ability to effectively manage obsolete infrastructure. Based on the analysis, Mount Vernon's highest sanitary sewer system priorities are:

- *Continued rehabilitation of aging infrastructure.* Mount Vernon should continue its ongoing program to monitor and undertake preventive maintenance on older lines and man-holes.
- *Reconstruction of the north sanitary interceptor.* The City should embark on the reconstruction of the north sanitary interceptor beneath North 6th and 5th Streets. Completion of this project is important to upgrade capacity, reduce potential for flooding, and reduce the cost of any proposed new sewer plant by blocking extraneous water from the system.

- *Inflow inspection program.* The City of Mount Vernon must renew efforts to ensure the disconnection of drainspouts and sump pumps from the city's sewer network. In some rare cases, this may involve reconstruction of old sewer feeder lines from homes to the street. Nonetheless, measures to reduce inflow must be enforced.
- *Construction of a new treatment plant.* The City of Mount Vernon should continue to build its sewer fund and act upon the recommendations of the Wastewater Facility Study and construct a new plant. The ideal facility site would be located south of the planned US 30 Bypass crossing of Spring Creek. Should cost considerations make this remote site unlikely, then the plant should be located along Spring Creek at least one-half mile south of its present location (south of the intersection of Country Club Road/Standing Rock Road and Bud Road).
- *28E Intergovernmental agreement with the City of Lisbon.* The City of Mount Vernon should enter into an intergovernmental agreement with its neighboring city to the east to work out details of shared investment in a wastewater treatment plant and equipment. Lisbon's treatment plant outfall is less than one-quarter mile south of Mount Vernon's plant outfall, along the common Spring Creek watershed west of Fairway Drive. The two cities could more successfully afford to meet the demands of federal regulations and future development by establishing a combined modern plant. Joint development in phases provides greater efficiency and economies of scale, and broadens the revenue base and likelihood of receiving grant assistance. This project would require each city to extend its major trunk interceptor at least three-quarters of a mile to reach a new plant, enabling new users south of Mount Vernon and southwest of Lisbon to "tap on" to the overall system.

Cooperation between Mount Vernon and Lisbon would ensure better environment protection, allowing rural septic systems along the creek to be tied into a new unified treatment plant. A new plant would consolidate pollution control and treatment for all the wastewater generated along this stream, and could be a model program with increased appeal as a target of grant assistance.

■ Storm Drainage and Flood Prone Areas

Mount Vernon's drainage system is extensive, and includes swales, storm sewers, and the Spring Creek drainage basin. The city's direct responsibility is limited to storm sewers. Mount Vernon's hilly topography facilitates rapid drainage from the center of town to more level residential areas to the north and southeast edges of the city, and into Spring Creek.

An analysis of Mount Vernon's storm sewer system identifies the following major issues:

- **Flooding along North 6th Street.** As mentioned previously, some homes at the bottom of the hills of north Mount Vernon can experience basement flooding, as the rapid discharge of water struggles to move across north neighborhoods, while sanitary sewers backup due to stormwater infiltration. The implementation of the sanitary sewer improvement program recommended in the Mount Vernon Plan will relieve most of these problems.

- **Street flooding on Highway 1 near Cass and 2nd Avenue.** A major drainage problem involves the circuitous drainage pattern of the city east of Davis Park. Drainage in the upper watershed of Spring Creek begins southeast of the railroad and First Avenue (Highway 1), but winds back into the developed city to the west in a storm sewer pipe beneath Cass Street and North Second Avenue. This winding pipe eventually returns flows east under Highway 1, but has insufficient capacity to handle larger storm events. As a result, flooding on the highway as deep as one foot can occur, along with severe basement flooding. This interferes with regional travel, and could block emergency vehicle access to areas north of the city.

- **Spring Creek as a major drainageway.** The city's drainage is heavily dependent upon the ability of Spring Creek to convey stormwater. Thus far, development has not encroached upon the creek and low-lying adjacent lands. In fact, much of the creek serves as a natural greenbelt through the east part of the city. The city's strong public interest in preventing flooding would be a basis to require establishment of easements along the creek, leading to a system of

greenbelts that can function as stormwater conveyance channels.

■ Drainage and Storm Sewer System Priorities

The successful conveyance of stormwater in Mount Vernon will require a concerted effort to correct flooding problems and ensure that new development provides structures to handle the runoff it generates. Based on the analysis, Mount Vernon's highest drainage and storm system priorities are:

- *Increasing the capacity of the 2nd Avenue storm sewer.* This storm sewer must be improved to carry increased flows east toward Spring Creek. Capacity must be available to accept added volumes that will result from the reconstruction of the north sanitary interceptor sewer beneath North 6th and 5th Streets. The disconnection of sump pumps, drainspouts and runoff in association with this project will redirect water into the street and the existing storm sewer pipe.
- *Construction of an engineered detention basin along Spring Creek northeast of the Middle School.* Alleviation of street flooding on Highway 1 near Cass Street can be corrected through the construction of an on-stream detention basin to move ponding to a less developed area east of the highway. This pond should be engineered in conjunction with efforts to increase the capacity of the 2nd Avenue storm sewer.
- *Dedication of drainageways as greenbelt corridors.* The City of Mount Vernon should require that all new major drainageways utilize open channels instead of sewer pipes. The drainageway swales can be maintained for several important reasons, including: to provide efficient flows, to filter pollutants from surface runoff (consistent with forthcoming federal environmental mandates on runoff water quality), to jointly serve as greenbelt corridors for trails and bikeways through newly developing areas of the city.
- *Enactment of a Spring Creek Environmental Overlay District.* The City of Mount Vernon should establish a zoning overlay district to be applied to land in the upper watershed on Spring Creek. The overlay district would include special requirements for development in this area, designed to ensure

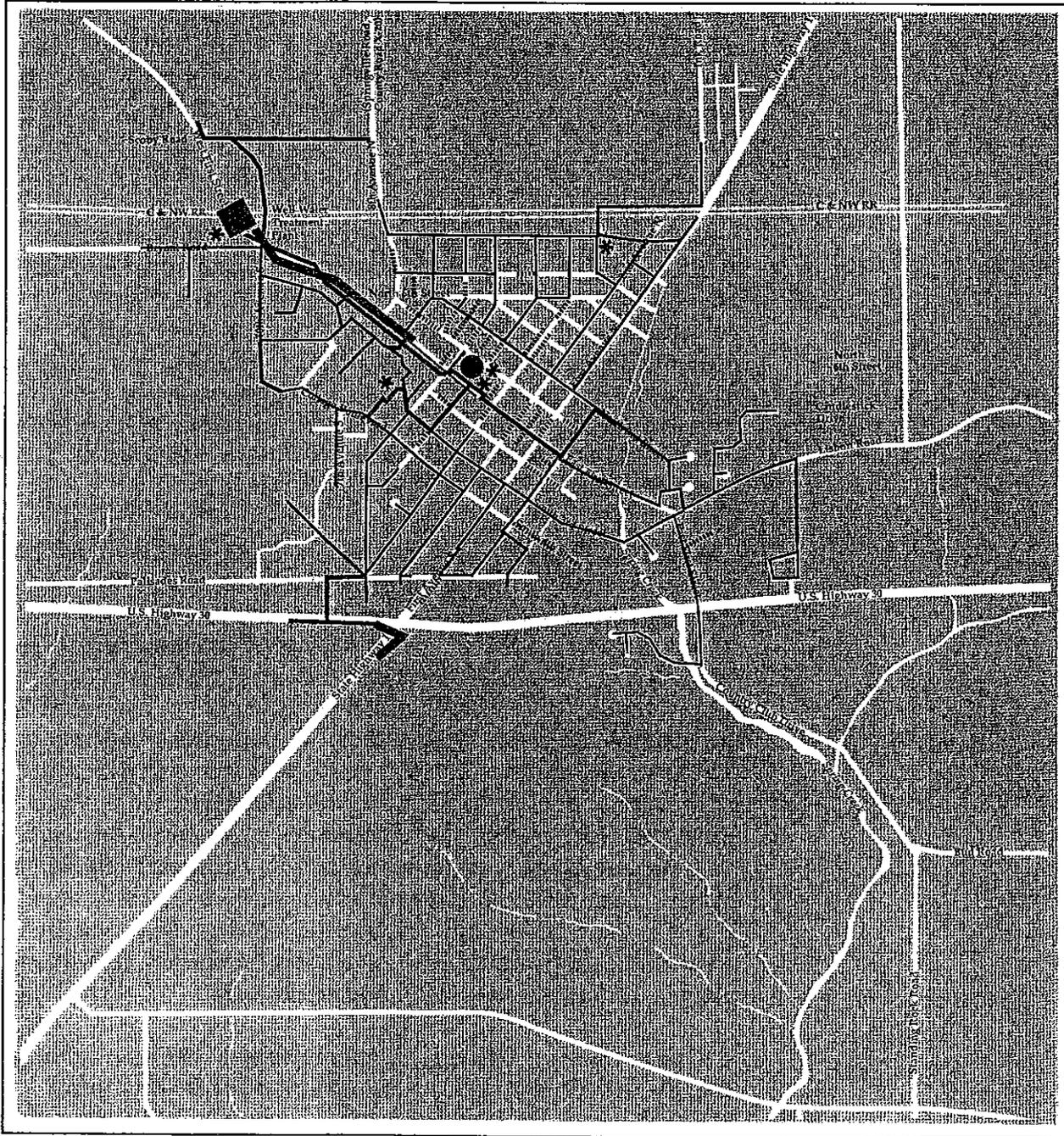
that stormwater runoff is managed on-site (or contributed to a jointly funded detention basin) to prevent overburdening this watershed. A detailed study of the Spring Creek drainage basin should be performed as a preliminary stage of enacting the district. The study should assess capacity and conditions of the existing drainage infrastructure, and identify needed changes. Projected upstream runoff volumes should be calculated based on the land use assumptions of the 1994 Mount Vernon Plan. A schedule of improvements and implementation costs, as well as the legal tool of the overlay zoning regulations would provide the city with a comprehensive stormwater management solution to the problems in the upper Spring Creek basin.

■ Water Distribution System

Mount Vernon obtains its water supply from wells drilled into two aquifers beneath the city, the Jordan and the Silurian. Traditionally, the city's water has been drawn from the more shallow Silurian aquifer, through wells drilled about 400 feet deep. In recent years, the city's first well has been abandoned, and Wells #2, #3, and #4 have been exhibiting declining production capacities. This led the City to drill a new well in 1972 (#5) into the deeper Jordan aquifer, more than 1600 feet below the surface of Memorial Park. Well #5 initially served primarily as an emergency backup well due to problems during construction. Well #6 was drilled into the Silurian aquifer in 1987 at Prairie Park on the northwest edge of the city. It was not extensively used due to its interference with private wells near Scoby Road, and a higher than desired concentration of iron and manganese.

An investigation in 1988 determined that water from Wells #5 and #6 was of sufficient volume to play larger roles in supplying the city's needs, and could be treated to achieve better water quality. As a result of this study, the city rehabilitated Well #5, and built a water treatment plant served with a combined supply from Wells #2, #3, #5 and #6. The city learned from previous engineering studies that future good well fields were most likely to be found at sites located north and west of the city, at least 7000 feet from existing wells. As a result of passage of an \$800,000 bond issue, a treatment plant was built in 1992 at Prairie Park. The plant

WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM



Water Distribution System

-  Mains: 4 inches and under
-  Mains: 4-6 inches
-  Mains: 8 inches
-  Mains: 10 inches and over
-  Supply Wells
-  Water Treatment Plant
-  Elevated Reservoir

0 800 2400



location on the northwest edge of the city allows for eventual connections to possible future wells. Private wells along Scoby Road were connected to the city water supply to resolve the interference issue.

Analysis of the water system identifies these major issues:

- **Water Supply Capacity.** The city's recent improvement program added a new well, and rehabilitated and acidized existing wells to boost producing volumes. The system's present capacity of 790,000 gallons per day is above the present consumption of about 340,000. The City has sited its new water treatment plant at the northwest edge of the city, near projected future well sites. Taken together, these actions ensure that Mount Vernon will have access to abundant water for the future.
- **Water Quality and Treatment.** During the city's transition to this new, treated water supply, it was necessary to bring into the system a new blend of water, and to calibrate the treatment process to achieve optimum adjustments of quality and taste. This brief period of transition caused public complaint about tap water, although the system remained in environmental health compliance. Complaints were due primarily to the addition of the lower quality Jordan water and the necessity of chlorinating the water at the treatment plant, a process that had not previously been done but is required by state standards. Public sensitivity to changes in the water supply demonstrated that the water utility is an important factor in the quality of life in the community. After the improvement program of the City of Mount Vernon was completed, the supply was re-balanced for taste.
- **Water Storage.** Municipal water storage facilities include an elevated 535,000 gallon reservoir located in Memorial Park, built in 1982 to replace a smaller tower at the same location. The tower is in excellent condition and exhibits no repair needs. No additional storage needs are evident.
- **Water Main Replacement.** The city's water is in compliance with all health standards regarding lead and copper, but the age of mains is a maintenance concern, especially for pipes that are stressed with constant pressurization.

- **New Water Mains.** The City has gradually moved the source of the water supply to the west and northwest edge of town. By contrast, new housing development has predominantly occurred to the east and southeast of the city. Mount Vernon must make strategic upgrades to transmission mains to better distribute flows to the various parts of the community and extend the water distribution network to serve growth. In many cases, these upgraded lines will directly benefit residents of the traditional city, by replacing older and undersized lines with more reliable mains delivering better service pressure and volumes.

- **Water Pressure and Fire Flows.** During the summer of 1994, Mount Vernon initiated a flow test to establish pressures and volumes of various parts of the city water system. This information will allow water maintenance staff to identify any areas of inadequate pressure and flows. The City plans to color code hydrants as a sign to fire fighters of the level of capacity of each hydrant.

- **Hydrant Standardization.** Mount Vernon's water system was one of the first in eastern Iowa, and still has equipment that pre-dates the establishment of universal standards for fire hydrant threads. As a result, several threads are in use, and fire fighters must carry various adapters to connect to hydrants. This causes significant delay in emergency responses. In addition, parts for some of the oldest threaded hydrants are unobtainable. The city has been converting about four older hydrants per year to the American Standard thread.

■ Water System Priorities

Mount Vernon's water system has been completely updated in recent years and represents a high quality investment in the future of the community. Few major supply needs are evident, due to the extensive improvement program of the past few years. Remaining needs involve enhancements to basic water infrastructure to increase reliability and cost efficiency, and to benefit fire emergency response efforts.

Based on the analysis, Mount Vernon's highest water system priorities are:

Implementation of a multi-year water distribution improvement program. The primary need of the water system is to replace key parts of the older infrastructure with modern mains, new meters, new valves, and standard threaded hydrants. The City should implement these nine replacement priorities (contingent where noted) identified in the Water Distribution Program, including:

1. South 7th Avenue main expansion to increase flow capacity between the college and community schools.
2. South 10th Avenue main expansion to increase capacity between the water treatment plant and Summit Avenue (contingent on South 10th Avenue improvements).
3. North 8th Avenue main extension to increase flow capacity.
4. South 7th Street main project to increase capacity and enhance distribution system in the south part of the city.
5. Replacement of old mains near North 3rd Avenue and North 4th Street to improve capacity and reliability, and establish a higher capacity transmission loop across North Mount Vernon.
6. Replacement of old mains near North 6th Street to improve capacity and reliability, and establish a higher capacity transmission loop across North Mount Vernon.
7. First Avenue main expansion to increase capacity between the railroad and North 3rd Street (contingent on 1st Avenue improvements).
8. South 4th Avenue main project to increase capacity and enhance the distribution system in the southwest part of the city.
9. Replacement of old mains along 2nd Avenue south of Uptown, to improve capacity and enhance the distribution system in the southwest part of the city.

Water main extensions and service loops. Extensions of transmission and looped service mains can help prevent service disruptions during main breaks and repairs, and offer water service to newly developing areas. The City should implement six extension priorities (contingent where noted) as identified in the Water Distribution Program, including:

- A. Main extension to complete a service loop on the southwest side of the city from the community schools to the US Highway 30 commercial district.
- B. North 8th Avenue main to complete a service loop to the existing water line on Scoby Road. (This project will also serve the proposed residential village to be built north of the railroad and described in earlier sections of this Plan).
- C. South A Avenue transmission main to upgrade capacity and complete a service loop to the existing water line on 7th Street East (contingent upon Highway 30 development).
- D. US Highway 30 main project to extend water and a service loop through development parcels south of US 30 between Highway 1 and Country Club Drive (contingent upon future development).
- E. First Street East transmission main to upgrade capacity between Uptown Mount Vernon and residential areas on the east edge of the City (contingent upon 1st Street improvements).
- F. Northeast water transmission loop between the Candlestick subdivision and First Avenue (Highway 1) in the north part of the City (contingent upon future development in this area).

Adaptation of water meters to ease water administration efforts. The City of Mount Vernon should install outside meters on water feeder lines, to allow water reading services to avoid interference with personal privacy and building security. New homes are required to provide this feature. Relocating meters from basements will allow any trained city staff member to access meter data in an efficient manner. In conjunction with this effort, the City should replace old

meters and retrofit others with current technology, wiring and system controls. This includes touch pad readers, and the capacity to accommodate the potential for using telephone lines for remote meter reading operations.

Assurance of wellhead protection for well sites northwest of the city. The City and Linn County should coordinate future land use and zoning policies to ensure that land development practices do not establish uses that could pose a threat to city water supply. Urban land use and rural agricultural land management practices may also affect water quality. The City should implement all enabling legislation of the State of Iowa to create a wellhead protection policy, based on environmental engineering data to ensure that well fields are protected from risk of contamination.

■ Solid Waste Collection, Transfer and Disposal

Mount Vernon leads Linn County and most communities in Iowa in managing its solid waste to encourage volume reduction and recycling. Residents and businesses pay a monthly fee in order to access the City's program, which offers a discount program to assist low-income households. The program is operated as a joint effort of the Mount Vernon/Lisbon Reduction and Recycling Committee and the city councils of Mount Vernon and Lisbon.

A recycling bin is provided to each address, to be placed at the curb for voluntary weekly collection of the following items: some plastics; newspapers, chip board, cardboard and magazines; tin and steel cans; plastic and aluminum beverage containers; and glass jars and bottles. Non-recyclable items must be placed in a container marked with an authorized tag. At present, the charge-by-container fee is \$1.75 for each approved container, which cannot weigh more than forty pounds. Tags are used to encourage waste reduction and recycling, and to assign costs fairly: the less trash a household creates the less it pays. Tags are available at local retailers and city halls. Solid waste and recycling collections are performed by Freiburger Waste Services, Inc. of Lisbon under municipal contract by the two cities. Disposal of bulky refuse items, furniture and white goods also requires use of tags.

Residents are encouraged to recycle grass clippings and garden waste themselves. If disposal is preferred, they must use the charge-by-container program. Leaves are collected without additional charge by the two cities on a weekly basis in autumn and spring. Residents may rake leaves to the curb, where they are vacuumed and sent to a composting site. Similarly, brush is collected without additional charge on a monthly basis throughout the growing season. Participants must bundle and place brush at the street for pick up by the City. Leaves, brush and yard waste are returned to the city after composting as a soil amendment and landscape mulch.

The solid waste analysis identifies the following issues:

- **Volume Reduction.** State law has set reduction thresholds for solid waste generated by Iowa communities. Statutory requirements call for a 25% reduction by 1995 and a 50% reduction by 2000. Volume reduction can extend the useful life of existing landfills, whose tipping fees have increased from \$8 to \$40 per ton between 1988 and 1992. The solid waste program of the City of Mount Vernon will enable the City to meet this threshold and promote individual and environmental responsibility.
- **Landfill Availability.** Refuse from Mount Vernon that is not able to be recycled is transported to the Linn County Landfill. Landfill space is adequate to meet the future needs of the City, although regional solid waste management efforts must be monitored to protect the City's interest.
- **Regional Waste Management.** The Linn County and Cedar Rapids solid waste agencies and landfills are combining in 1994 to form Bluestem, a regional solid waste consortium. As participating Linn County communities, Mount Vernon and Lisbon are eligible for membership in this management organization. However, the terms of representation on the policy committees are under negotiation, with smaller cities seeking to maintain a strong, effective voice in the midst of a huge regional consolidation. Mount Vernon residents have been among the most progressive and supportive residents in the county, as measured by participation in recycling and waste reduction. There is local interest in gaining sufficient

representation to promote that approach on the regional level as well.

■ Solid Waste Priorities

Based on the analysis, Mount Vernon's highest solid waste and recycling priorities are:

Continuation of the successful reduction and recycling program. The city's most appropriate solid waste disposal strategies during the planning period involve continued efforts to reduce the waste stream which eventually goes to the landfill. The community has instituted an aggressive, community-wide education program, and created a program that enjoys widespread support. This is a landmark accomplishment.

Preservation of Mount Vernon's interests through Bluestem. The City should protect its solid waste and landfill interests by active membership and policy-making in the new Bluestem agency. Mount Vernon should promote on a metropolitan level those values of personal and environmental responsibility that have been hallmarks of the city's own program. Because the future availability of landfills cannot be assured, the City should monitor metropolitan solid waste practices and facilities to prepare for the future needs of residents.

Monitoring state and federal solid waste laws. The city should monitor new state and federal environmental mandates which could affect the operation and costs of solid waste collection and disposal.



PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITY ANALYSIS

Mount Vernon's park facilities are particularly important to the city's overall quality of life. This section examines the city's park and recreation system and includes all city-owned and operated facilities. Facilities are evaluated in three ways:

- *Existing population service standards.* This analysis relates Mount Vernon's park and recreation facilities to accepted service standards for the city's population.
- *Future population service standards.* This analysis considers the effects of the future population growth on the City's park facilities and suggests ways to maintain accepted service standards for the city's population during the next twenty years.
- *Park inventory and assessment.* This analysis reviews and evaluates each city-owned park and recommends possible changes and improvement needs.

These assessments provide the basis for the recommended park improvement program established in the Plan. An accompanying map locates the city's major parks and recreational areas.

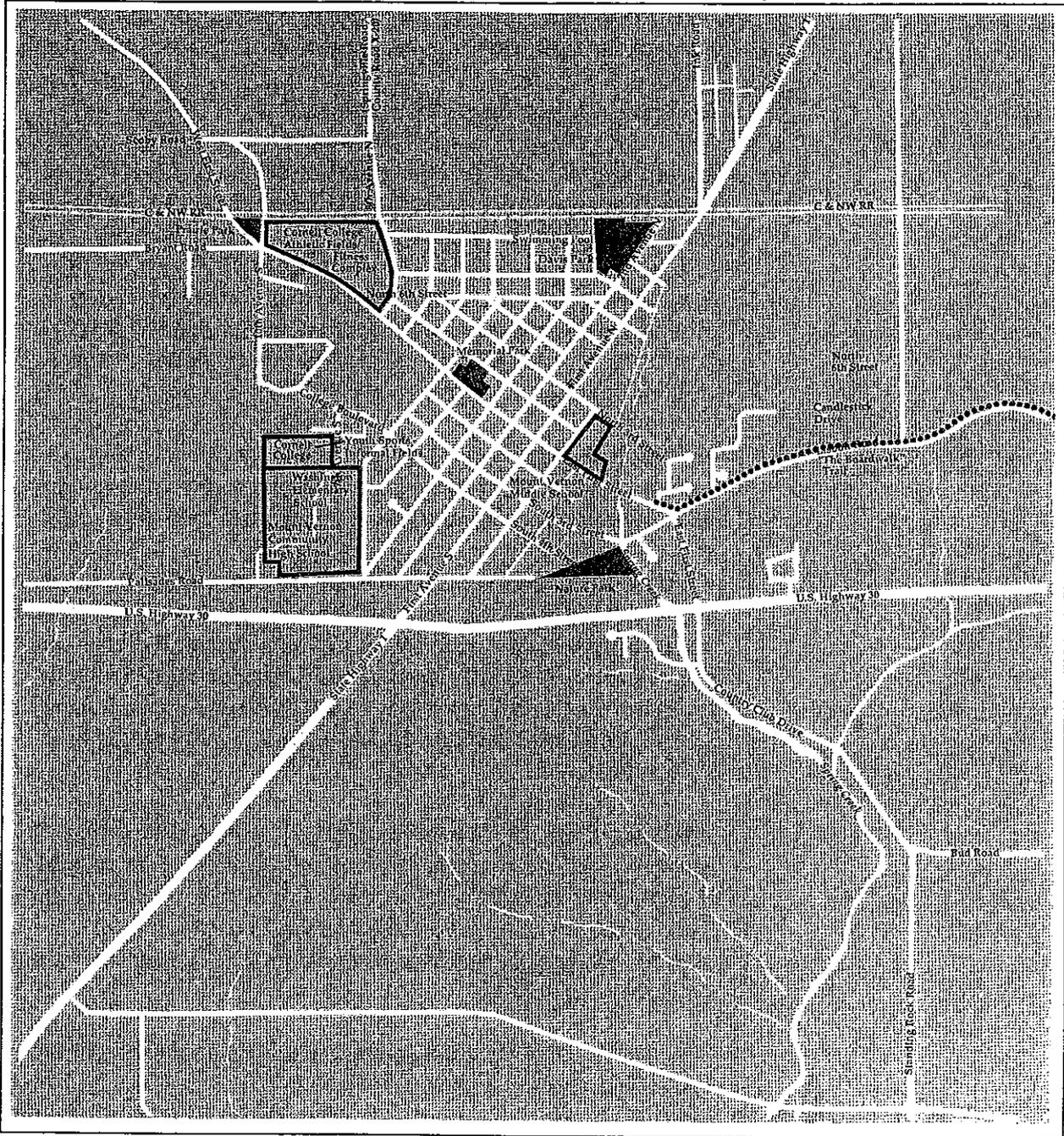
■ Existing Population Service Standards for Parks

Mount Vernon offers recreational space at municipal sites at Davis Park, Memorial Park, Nature Park and Prairie Park. With the exception of the municipal pool and other facilities located at Davis Park, Mount Vernon's active recreational facilities are located on school properties. Playgrounds and ballfields are located on the grounds of Cornell College, the Middle School, and the Washington Elementary/Mount Vernon High School campus. A recent community-wide, volunteer-based project constructed two huge new playground structures, which were installed at Washington Elementary and Mount Vernon Middle School.

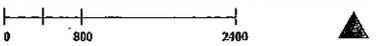
Evaluation of community's recreational facilities based on the Iowa State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and other national standards shows that Mount Vernon is well served by its existing facilities, when school recreation is included in the City's parkland inventory. The following analysis relates the city's existing facilities to its served population. The analysis identifies the following issues:

- **Municipal Parks.** Mount Vernon contains four city parks comprising about 15.6 acres. This represents a deficit of 26 acres below statewide and national standards for total park ground, when these municipal parks are considered in isolation.
- **Recreation at School Sites.** Mount Vernon contains more than 3 acres of recreation sites on the grounds of the Mount Vernon Middle School, and about 28 acres on the joint campus of Washington Elementary and the high school. When this recreation land is included in the City's total, Mount Vernon far exceeds park standards.
- **Recreation at Cornell College.** The college contains more than 22 acres of recreation sites on the north edge of its campus. Citizens of Mount Vernon have access to these facilities, which further expand the community's supply of parkland.
- **Facilities Provided Based on Current Population.** Mount Vernon is adequately served (on a population basis) by most important recreational facilities, including football fields, swimming pools, baseball fields, softball fields, tennis courts and golf courses. Cornell College represents a great asset to serve local needs, with significant land holdings and facilities dedicated to recreation. Mount Vernon provides trail recreation along the Boardwalk, a 6 foot concrete path that extends east of the City along Lisbon Road. This trail can be the foundation for future trail extensions. Because recreational trails are heavily used and involve only moderate costs to develop and maintain, they are one of the most cost-efficient recreational investments the community can make. The City of Mount Vernon, Linn County, the state Departments of Natural Resources, Economic Development, and

PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES



**Parks and
Recreation Facilities**



Cultural Affairs, and private corporate sponsors could each play a role in creating a community-wide trails network.

■ Future Population Service Standards

Current parks could accommodate projected increases in Mount Vernon population and still remain within state and national standards for park spaces, as long as schools continue to provide most of the community's active recreation areas. However, growth in population without a corresponding expansion of park land would erode the level of service and accessibility to parks that Mount Vernon residents have come to expect.

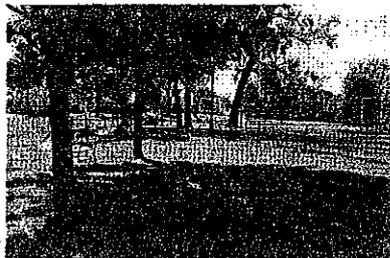
The following analysis relates the city's facilities to its potential future population growth, as projected in the earlier sections of this plan. The analysis reveals the following issues:

- **Parks to Serve New Residents.** The Mount Vernon Plan projects the city's future population at 5,000 persons in 2015. This represents about 550 additional housing units during that period. Based on a park dedication standard of 0.04 acres per unit, future growth will require the dedication of 22 additional acres of parkland in the city over the next twenty years.
- **Balanced Geographical Growth.** Present growth in Mount Vernon is focused on the east end of the community, an area which is geographically distant from existing parks. The city development concept seeks to balance future growth, and includes planned housing to the west and north of the city as well.
- **Facilities Provided Based on Future Population.** Even with a increase in population to 5,000 persons, Mount Vernon can remain adequately served (on a population basis) by most important recreational facilities, including football fields, swimming pools, baseball fields, softball fields, tennis courts and golf courses. Since many of these facilities are located on school properties, the sports organizations will have to coordinate use with school programs. To assure adequate flexibility in scheduling games, the city should assign a portion of each new park for active recreation, such as

neighborhood ballfields and soccer fields, and practice fields for youth sports leagues. The need for recreational trails will grow with the population. Mount Vernon will need to expand trail-based recreation opportunities for such uses as bicycling, walking and cross-country skiing.

■ Park Facility Assessment

The following assessment evaluates city parks, their recreational facilities and amenities. Most of Mount Vernon's park facilities are in very good condition. Major park facilities include:

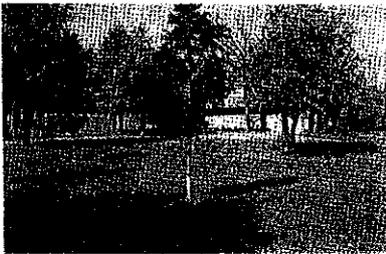


Davis Park. This 3.5 acre community park is located northwest of North 2nd Avenue and North 7th Street, and contains the municipal pool, a playground and two ballfields. This heavily used park is a major facility for active recreation, and also serves a neighborhood park function for north Mount Vernon. The municipal pool is sited near the railroad at the north end of the park, and is a popular facility. The pool has been rehabilitated in the recent past, and is in good condition, although it represents a significant maintenance obligation for the City. The outdoor pool is served by a bathhouse (with two indoor and two outdoor restrooms), and a concession area with two restrooms. All pool restrooms are accessible to disabled persons.



Memorial Park. This 1.8 acre community park is a classic town square that serves as one of the most important "image" sites in Mount Vernon. The steeply sloping park fills a city block, and contains mature trees, a gazebo, picnic areas, playground equipment, a water tower and landscape displays. This park is a vital part of the streetscape along 1st Street between Cornell College and the central business district. The park also contains a Visitors' Center sited adjacent to 1st Street, which contains offices for the Chamber of Commerce, a community meeting room and restrooms accessible to disabled persons. All facilities are in excellent condition, although playground equipment is older and could be updated.

Nature Park. This open space in south Mount Vernon is located northwest of US 30 and Country Club Road. The 10-acre site once served as a borrow pit for sand and gravel owned by the Iowa Department of Transportation. When the site became surplus, it was obtained by the City of Mount Vernon for use as a naturalistic recreation area. The heavily wooded park currently contains a quarry pond, fishing and boat dock, picnic facilities, and an unpaved nature trail. The road which serves the site, 7th Street East, is unpaved as it approaches the park. Engineering costs were obtained to pave the road, but the project was deemed to be expensive for such a small, unimportant segment of street. This park is a rustic recreation area, and the few structures present are in very good condition. The City has created a master plan for the property, which includes benches, establishment of a proposed prairie area, and additional trail and landscape features.



Prairie Park. This 0.6 acre park is located at the northwest edge of the City, adjacent to the historical Lincoln Highway. As such, it serves as an entrance park for the community. An historic wooden bridge that once carried Lincoln Highway across the railroad still stands at the edge of the park, along with reproduction period lighting and an original highway segment of exposed brick paving. The City has sought funding to restore the bridge, which is reported to be the last standing wooden bridge of its kind in the state. Prairie Park is also the site of Mount Vernon's water treatment plant and a supply well. The park essentially functions as a landmark site featuring public works projects that played important roles in the history of Mount Vernon.



The Boardwalk Trail. This recreational trail extends two miles between the Mount Vernon Cemetery and the City of Lisbon along Lisbon Road. The concrete trail follows the north side of the road through a rolling countryside of historic rural estate homes and farmland. The Boardwalk provides Mount Vernon with a unique feature that could strengthen the city's attractiveness as a good place to live and visit. Such a facility serves recreation needs and can support tourism. Trails have been identified by the State of Iowa as one of the highest priorities for funding and development over the next five years.

Informal Ballfield Complex. Cornell College permits the recreational use of about 5 acres of vacant land it owns immediately north of the high school playing fields. Local sports organizations utilize the area as an informal practice and ballfield complex for soccer and other youth sports. The site is a valuable resource to meet local league practice and play demands.

Playground Equipment. The City and schools have participated in a grass-roots, community project that resulted in new and updated playground equipment at Washington Elementary and Mount Vernon Middle School. These playsets represent state-of-the-art equipment and meet needs for the twenty year future.

Restrooms. The City of Mount Vernon does an excellent job of providing restrooms in city parks. Each of the restrooms in the parks is in compliance with new federal mandates established by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

■ Park Facility Priorities

• *Creation of a linked recreational network.* Mount Vernon should use its planning and subdivision authority to establish a system of trails to link new subdivisions to the traditional city. Just as new subdivisions should be integrated into the whole of the existing town, new parks should be integrated into a linked network of open spaces. The concept of a linked pedestrian system, connecting city neighborhoods, parks, schools, and Uptown Mount Vernon completes the network of community open spaces. The trails network is envisioned to include on-streets bikeways, trails through parks and school grounds, as well as separated Class I bikeway trails, such as the Boardwalk.

• *Development of Spring Creek ravine with a greenbelt trail.* This project would provide a facility for such important and increasingly popular recreational pursuits as walking, running, bicycling, and cross-country skiing. The Spring Creek trail can be developed as an exclusive walkway/bikeway with a grade separated crossing of 1st Street. A recreational trail system along the Spring Creek Greenbelt would complete a one mile trail along drainage corridors in the east

part of the city, and can link new subdivisions with the community's existing parks and activity centers. Further extensions between Nature Park and Davis Park would complete the city's existing parks facilities.

- *Enhancement of existing city parks.* Mount Vernon should institute an ongoing park improvement and rehabilitation program through its capital budgeting process. Projects would be developed on a regular basis, utilizing a variety of funding sources, including general revenues; parks bond funds; local contributions; and grants from private and public sources. Specific improvements by park should include:

- Davis Park.* The City should continue preventive maintenance of the pool, and begin to structure a community-based funding strategy that could result in the installation of leisure pool amenities. Ballfields and playground equipment at the park receive heavy use and should continue to be upgraded to meet these demands.

- Nature Park.* The City should pursue its plans to make naturalistic improvements to this park.

- Memorial Park.* The City should continue its present maintenance and landscaping program, and should update the playground equipment in the park.

- Prairie Park.* The City should continue to seek grant funds to restore and maintain the historic Lincoln Highway wooden bridge. Interpretive signs should be installed to relate the historical significance of the site to residents and visitors. The City should establish a floral display marking the entrance to the site.

- *New parks as "village greens."* Mount Vernon should develop three new parks in conjunction with future housing development. Each of these three parks should be integrated into the subdivision design as Village Greens, or focal points for patterns of development that are characteristic of the traditional character of Mount Vernon. The town should assure the dedication of village greens in three areas:

- West Village: on the west side of the 10th Avenue South extension, to the west of the high school.

- North Village: north of the railroad and east of Springville Road.

- East Village: north of the Candlestick subdivision.

• *Tree Planting and Site Enhancement Program.* Mount Vernon should establish a parksite improvement program and continue its annual tree-planting program. Trees should be planted in order to:

- Replace trees that are dying.
- Improve the appearance and setting of parks.
- Provide shade and climate relief.
- Provide screening of incompatible uses or facilities.

Prairie and Davis Parks could benefit from a proposed tree planting program. The site enhancement program should also include the installation of attractive, uniform park identification signage. This program should be funded and implemented on an annual basis as part of normal park budgets.

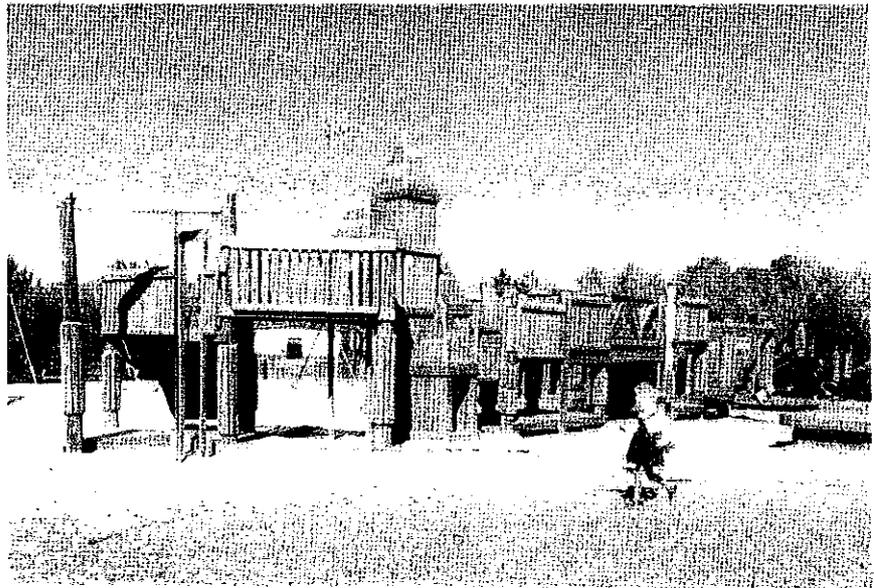
The development of a tree nursery at Nature Park could be an important addition to the Mount Vernon park system. The nursery could serve other city parks, the schools or even provide replacement trees for the City's streets and boulevards.

QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

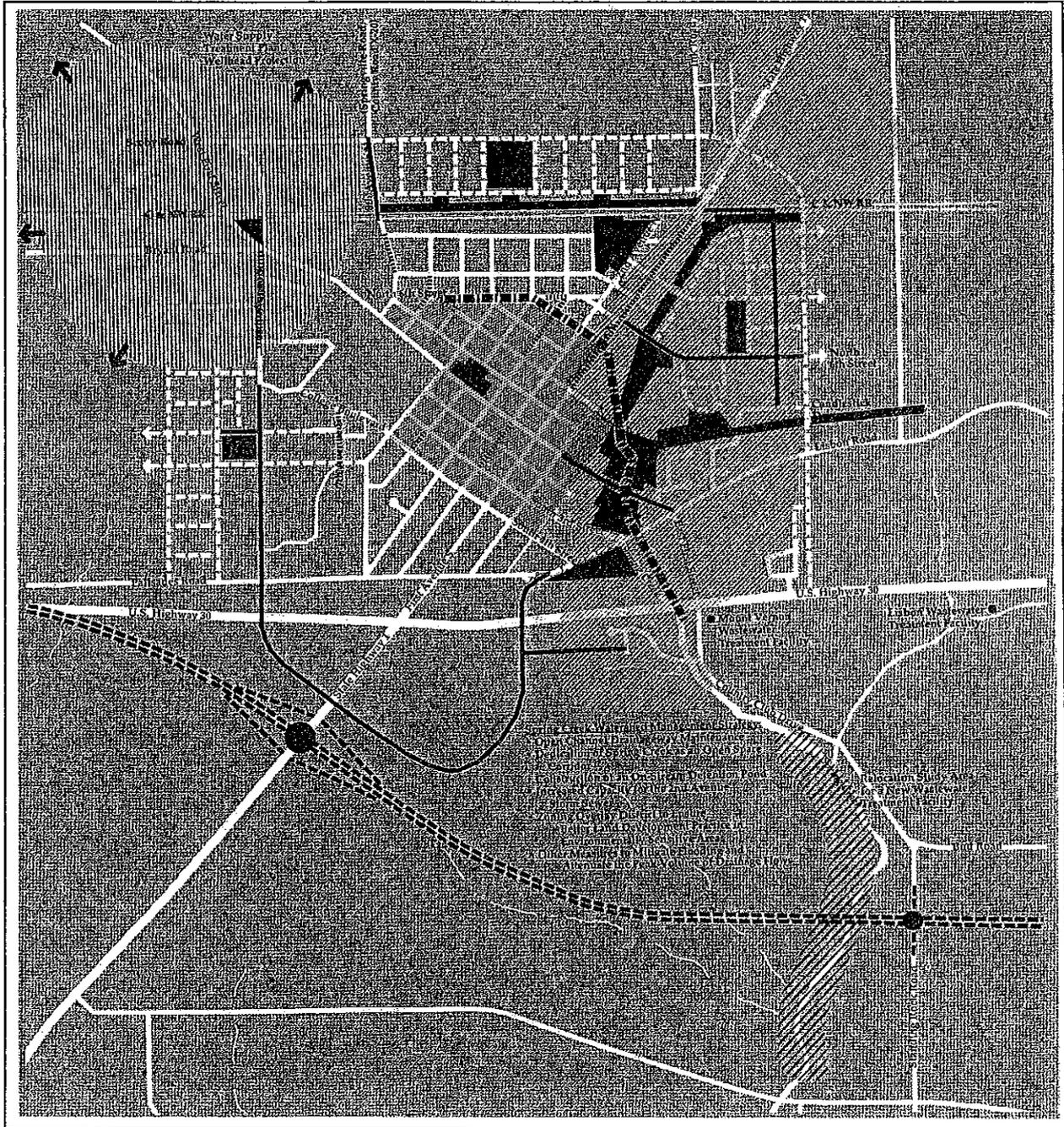
Spring Creek Ravine. This open space provides a vital greenway link, connecting new growth in the eastern part of the community to the park system. In addition, it provides a unique environment for nature study.



The School Campus. Open space and recreational facilities at Washinton Elementary and Mount Vernon High School provide important resources for the community. The partnership of the city, the school system, and Cornell College provides a complete system of facilities that are available to community residents.

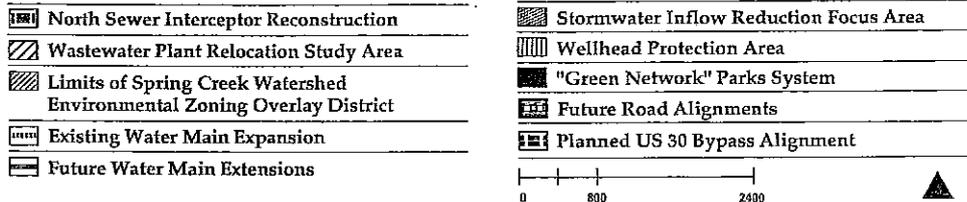


QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES PLAN



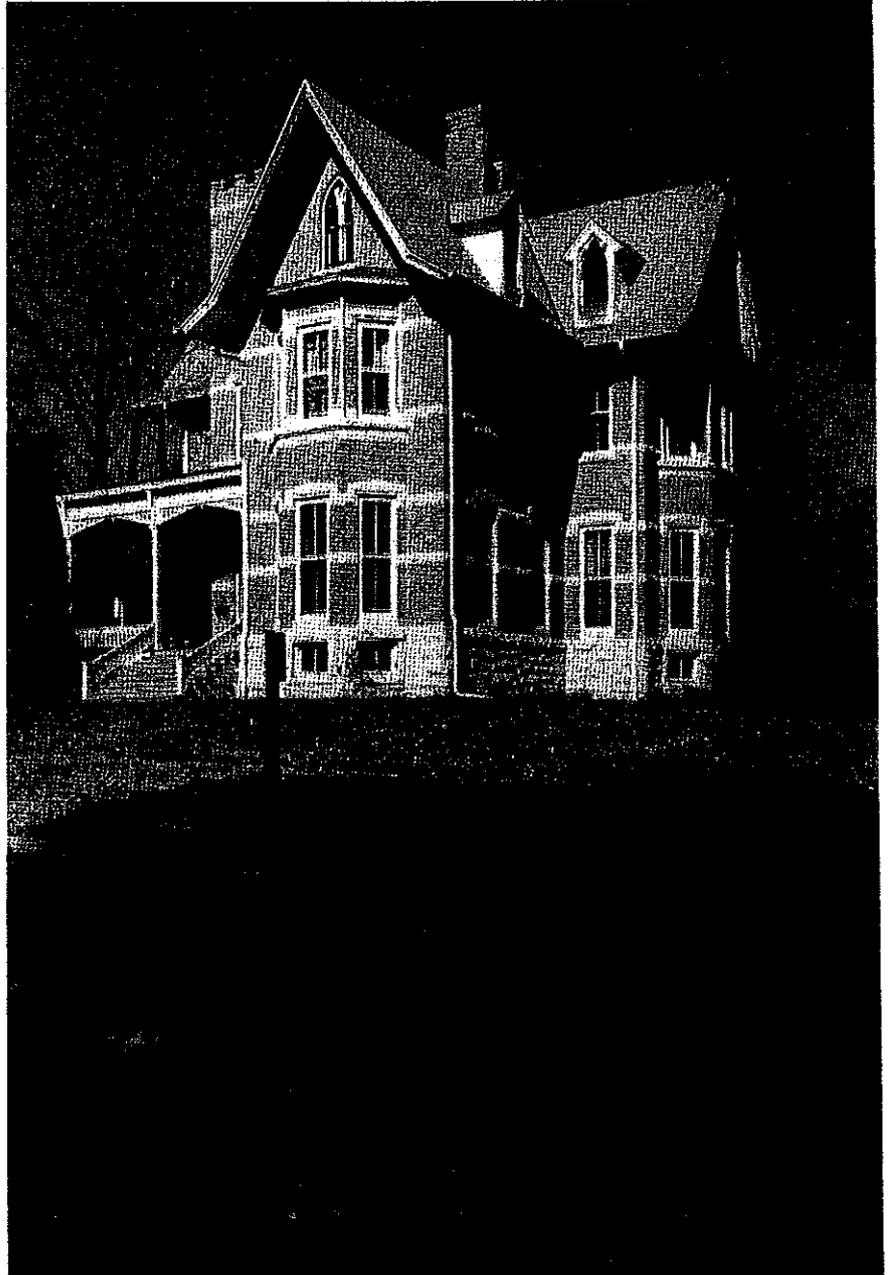
Quality Public Services

Summary Map



IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

7



IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN



AN ASSESSMENT OF FINANCIAL AND SCHEDULING ISSUES

Mount Vernon should implement the visions and actions presented by the plan through a realistic program that is in step with the resources of the community.

This section addresses the relationships among the projects and policies suggested by the Mount Vernon Plan, and examines issues related to implementation of the plan by both public agencies and private decision-makers. These key areas include:

- **Financial Characteristics and Constraints.** The fiscal condition and priorities of Mount Vernon have a vital impact on the community's ability to implement the plan. This discussion considers the recent fiscal history of the city and examines vital development financing issues.
- **Implementation Schedule.** This schedule summarizes the actions contained in the detailed plan and establishes a time schedule for their execution. The schedule can be used to track progress of the plan.

FINANCIAL ISSUES IN MOUNT VERNON

On the following pages, the Mount Vernon Plan addresses the need to place development goals within the context of financial constraints. Fiscal issues and capabilities have a large impact on the implementation of goals and recommendations. The city's ability to meet its development goals is largely determined by its financial condition. This section will examine several important concerns, including:

- Mount Vernon's financial context, including its recent budgetary and expenditure trends.
- Methods of development finance, including mechanisms used to fund infrastructure, redevelopment, and economic development programs.
- Key challenges facing Mount Vernon as it moves to implement this plan for ongoing community development.

THE FISCAL CONTEXT

■ The Fiscal Context

From an overall perspective, Mount Vernon finds itself in very good financial condition.

An examination of Mount Vernon's year-end budget figures over the past few years illustrates generally rising levels of governmental disbursements and receipts. Figures have risen sharply in several instances to cover major capital projects of the community, including construction of First Street, a new City Hall, and a new water treatment plant. The city has enjoyed an increase in total assessed valuations over the past few years. Still, Mount Vernon remains predominantly residential, with few major major commercial or industrial developments to diversify the city's local property tax base.

The City of Mount Vernon enjoys financial stability and a positive outlook for financial expansion and growth. The Mount Vernon Plan has devised a strategy to encourage new business park development in conjunction with the planned US 30 Bypass project, which offers promise of a larger local employment and tax base in the future. This development is to be implemented in a carefully designed manner that preserves the traditional residential character of the city. By protecting this special character, the city intends to sustain recent increases in residential property values and home re-investment, while capturing new revenues from a larger, more diverse base of commercial business park land uses.

• *Municipal Budget Context*

Mount Vernon's recent budgeting history has been characterized by moderate spending increases consistent with service demands, inflation rates and the increasing costs of rehabilitating deteriorated, aged infrastructure. Mount Vernon has embarked on a systematic capital program to upgrade its water and sanitary sewer treatment systems, its older streets, and key public facilities, such as City Hall.

Mount Vernon's budget receipts have three primary sources: property taxes, charges for services and intergovernmental transfers to the city in the forms of grants and entitlement funds.

THE FISCAL CONTEXT

• Revenues

Property taxes have traditionally represented the largest category of tax receipts for the City of Mount Vernon. Trends regarding these receipts are summarized in Table 7-1.

Property tax receipts exhibit a constant upward trend since 1989, but they have not alone been able to meet the city's increasing needs for revenue to cover costs of services and capital projects. As a result, when considered as a proportion of total receipts, property taxes have at times declined and risen in importance as a component of the city's budget. This was especially true in 1991 and 1992, when proceeds from First Street and water treatment bonds constituted more than 29% and 48% of the city's receipts, respectively.

The available source of bond proceeds has allowed the city to mitigate the potential of yet higher property taxes, as illustrated by a comparison of the levels of property tax receipts and the City's total disbursements over the period. By this measure, the share of property tax burden has declined as a proportion of the City's overall spending. It has also been supplemented by a broader variety of alternative revenue sources, including bond proceeds, charges for services and intergovernmental transfers.

Tables 7-2 through 7-4 illustrate revenues collected through charges for services, intergovernmental transfer payments and licenses and permits over recent years.

TABLE 7-1: Property Taxes as a Component of Total Receipts, 1989-1994

	Property Tax Revenues	Index 1988=1	% of Total Receipts	% of All Disbursements
1988-89	454,896	1.00	33.29	45.20
1989-90	505,430	1.11	30.14	34.21
1990-91	529,832	1.16	27.89	26.88
1991-92	538,369	1.18	24.26	19.61
1992-93	565,895	1.24	46.12	29.62
1993-94	591,519	1.30	46.02	33.87

Source: RDG Martin Shukert, Inc., 1994;
City of Mount Vernon.

THE FISCAL CONTEXT

TABLE 7-2: Charges for Services as a Component of Total Receipts, 1989-1994

	Charges for Services	Index 1988=1	% of Total Receipts	% of All Disbursements
1988-89	335,018	1.00	33.29	33.29
1989-90	370,393	1.10	30.14	25.07
1990-91	538,354	1.61	27.89	27.31
1991-92	830,679	2.48	24.26	30.25
1992-93	818,806	2.44	46.12	42.86
1993-94	871,822	2.60	46.02	49.91

Source: RDG Martin Shukert, Inc., 1994;
City of Mount Vernon.

TABLE 7-3: Intergovernmental Receipts as a Component of Total Receipts, 1989-1994

	Intergovt'l Revenues	Index 1988=1	% of Total Receipts	% of All Disbursements
1988-89	216,053	1.00	21.47	21.47
1989-90	223,226	1.03	18.16	15.11
1990-91	222,972	1.03	11.55	11.31
1991-92	264,884	1.23	7.74	9.65
1992-93	255,353	1.18	14.38	13.37
1993-94	333,930	1.55	17.63	19.12

Source: RDG Martin Shukert, Inc., 1994;
City of Mount Vernon.

TABLE 7-4: City Licenses and Building Permit Fees as a Component of Total Receipts, 1989-1994

	Licenses and Permit Fees	Index 1988=1	% of Total Receipts	% of All Disbursements
1988-89	8,707	1.00	0.87	0.87
1989-90	14,510	1.67	1.18	0.98
1990-91	10,595	1.22	0.50	0.54
1991-92	11,603	1.33	0.34	0.42
1992-93	8,895	1.02	0.50	0.47
1993-94	13,927	1.60	0.70	0.80

Source: RDG Martin Shukert, Inc., 1994;
City of Mount Vernon.

THE FISCAL CONTEXT

Table 7-2 reveals that charges for services represent the fastest growing revenue source for the City of Mount Vernon, and include direct user fees related to operations of the cemetery, water service, sanitary sewer, garbage collection and the landfill, recreation programs, the swimming pool and concessions. In 1994, these charges represented the largest source of the receipts in the municipal budget.

Table 7-3 illustrates the recent pattern of intergovernmental receipts. These have risen substantially over the period, and were boosted in 1994 by more than \$64,000 in flood relief and FEMA contributions made in response to record rains that inundated key city infrastructure in 1993. Many grants available to cities are based upon income thresholds, and these limited funds are increasingly awarded through competitive applications. It has been difficult for Mount Vernon to secure intergovernmental grants, due to the relative income stability of the community. Still, the city has renewed efforts to remain in the competition, and has recently received nearly \$200,000 in grant awards for trees, bike path and sidewalk construction. With the exception of the entitlement Road Use Tax, it is difficult to project the future availability of intergovernmental funds.

Table 7-4 shows that Mount Vernon does not heavily burden local residents with licenses and permit fees, which are a less significant part of the city's revenues. Such revenue includes license fees for cigarettes, beer and liquor, as well as service fees charged for building permits. Although these revenues have increased, they have not become a more important part of the city budget. Increases in 1994 can be attributed to larger receipts for building permits, which in 1994 reached their highest level in 6 years - more than 40% above 1991 permit fee levels.

In conclusion, revenue and receipts demonstrate a trends of isolating municipal costs into specific charges for services provided. These service charges have increased as a proportion of the city's budget. By separating these charges from property tax receipts, Mount Vernon has been able to avoid additional dependence upon on property taxes. Service charges and higher intergovernmental receipts have supported a growing diversification of the city's revenue base.

THE FISCAL CONTEXT

• Expenditures

Mount Vernon's municipal expenditures are classified into four program areas. These categories represent specific cost centers within the municipal budget, and allow the city to coordinate its policy goals with its program expenditures. They include facilities, equipment and salaries for:

- Community Protection, including police, fire ambulance and civil defense.
- Human Development, including parks, pool, and services such as historic preservation, community and visitor's centers, the library, and animal control efforts.
- Home and Community Environment, including road replacement and repairs, utilities and engineering services, street lights, tree plantings, beautification, economic development and TIF fees, cemetery and cable television functions, and efforts such as local compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Policy and Administration, including office support, maintenance and supplies for City Hall. This program area covers municipal responsibilities relating to insurance, professional legal and accounting services, planning and zoning, and compensation to elected officials.

Tables 7-5 through 7-8 illustrate the recent history of program expenditures for each of these portions of the municipal budget.

**TABLE 7-5: Expenditures by Program Category:
Community Protection; 1989-1994**

	CP Program Expenditures	Index 1988=1	% of All Disbursements
1988-89	214,715	1.00	21.33
1989-90	250,902	1.17	16.98
1990-91	265,760	1.24	13.48
1991-92	243,603	1.13	8.87
1992-93	242,259	1.13	12.68
1993-94	278,113	1.30	15.92

Source: RDG Martin Shukert, Inc., 1994;
City of Mount Vernon.

THE FISCAL CONTEXT

**TABLE 7-6: Expenditures by Program Category:
Human Development; 1989-1994**

	HD Program Expenditures	Index 1988=1	% of All Disbursements
1988-89	101,103	1.00	10.05
1989-90	130,168	1.29	8.81
1990-91	104,993	1.04	5.33
1991-92	118,595	1.17	4.32
1992-93	130,705	1.29	6.84
1993-94	141,231	1.40	8.09

Source: RDG Martin Shukert, Inc., 1994;
City of Mount Vernon.

**TABLE 7-7: Expenditures by Program Category: Home
and Community Environment; 1989-1994**

	H& CE Program Expenditures	Index 1988=1	% of All Disbursements
1988-89	573,012	1.00	56.93
1989-90	837,553	1.46	56.70
1990-91	1,303,100	2.27	66.10
1991-92	2,141,976	3.74	78.00
1992-93	1,281,167	2.24	67.06
1993-94	1,069,585	1.87	61.24

Source: RDG Martin Shukert, Inc., 1994;
City of Mount Vernon.

**TABLE 7-8: Expenditures by Program Category:
Policy and Administration; 1989-1994**

	PA Program Expenditures	Index 1988=1	% of All Disbursements
1988-89	615,166	1.00	61.12
1989-90	258,361	0.42	17.49
1990-91	297,449	0.48	15.09
1991-92	241,809	0.39	8.81
1992-93	256,300	0.42	12.42
1993-94	257,696	0.42	14.75

Source: RDG Martin Shukert, Inc., 1994;
City of Mount Vernon.

THE FISCAL CONTEXT

As noted in Table 7-5, the Community Protection Program has increased over the period. Expenditures peaked at their highest proportion of the municipal budget in 1989. By 1994, the Community Protection program had become the city's second largest expenditure category, behind replacing aging city infrastructure. The Mount Vernon Plan anticipates and recommends additional expenditures in this program area to provide a new fire protection facility to meet equipment demands for the area's fire emergency operations.

Table 7-6 illustrates the pattern of expenditures of the Human Development program, which is the smallest portion of municipal expenditures. These outlays rose dramatically in 1990 when the city appropriated funds to assist with the Visitors' Center project, and have again increased since 1993 due to rising maintenance costs at the swimming pool. The Plan calls for increased preventive maintenance of the pool, which will require additional expenditures in this program area.

Table 7-7 relates recent history of expenditures in the city's largest budget category, Home and Community Improvement. Expenditures for utility and street capital projects have traditionally consumed between 61% and 78% of the municipal budget. Expenditures within this category expanded dramatically after 1990, when Mount Vernon initiated reconstruction of First Street and the city water treatment plant.

The Mount Vernon Plan anticipates and recommends further capital projects which will have an important influence on the municipal budget in the next five years. Planned projects will reconstruct a major interceptor sewer in the north part of the city, and relocate and/or rebuild the sanitary treatment plant. These utility projects will require that the city enter another period of capital investment similar to the 1991/92 period, when the Home and Community Environment category comprised a much larger share of the municipal budget than at present.

By contrast, the Policy and Administration program of the municipal budget has remained a relatively stable over the period, as shown in Table 7-8. Administration expenditures

DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

have declined from a peak in 1989, attributable to the capital costs of construction of the new City Hall.

■ Development Finance and Constraints

Mount Vernon, as a delicately balanced traditional community, views future economic and population growth with a watchful eye. Such growth is not sought for its own sake, but rather on the limited terms that it will be planned, will contribute to the city's policy objective to preserve its traditional character, and will expand municipal revenues to support those objectives. Mount Vernon's image and reputation are keys to future financial security. But preserving the infrastructure that underlies a beautiful older community is an expensive task. Just so, future financial security depends upon broadening the city's tax base through supportive business development. As such, Mount Vernon supports an investment oriented approach to development and infrastructure finance, creating incentives to encourage new development when such projects are consistent with community goals. This section will review Mount Vernon's current policies and constraints in the area of infrastructure and development finance.

• *Transportation*

Mount Vernon has a variety of funding sources available to assist and finance development and improvement of its transportation system. These sources include:

- Road Use Taxes, utilized for street development and maintenance. Table 7-9 illustrates that Road Use Taxes have increased steadily over the period. Cities across Iowa have become dependent upon these funds to complete key transportation infrastructure improvements. In Mount Vernon, these receipts have increased by more than 52% since 1989, although they have comprised a relatively consistent proportion of the budget. Improvements from this fund were budgeted at \$212,510 in the 1993-94 budget year, to finance realization of the city's five-year street plan, street maintenance, and alley improvements.

- Federal Aid Urban System/ISTEA (Intermodal Surface

DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

TABLE 7-9: Intergovernmental Receipts: Road Use Tax Receipts, 1989-1994

	Road Use Tax Revenues	Index 1988=1	% of Total Receipts	% of All Disbursements
1988-89	139,515	1.00	13.86	13.86
1989-90	161,926	1.16	13.17	10.96
1990-91	166,470	1.19	8.62	8.44
1991-92	198,215	1.42	5.79	7.22
1992-93	198,359	1.42	11.17	10.38
1993-94	212,510	1.52	11.22	12.17

Source: RDG Martin Shukert, Inc., 1994;
City of Mount Vernon.

Transportation Efficiency Act). This program, administered through the Iowa Department of Transportation, finances improvements and reconstruction of streets and highways on the Federal Aid system. The proposed classification of this system in Mount Vernon is presented in Chapter 6: "Quality Public Services." ISTEA funds are provided on a Federal/local matching basis. Local matches are derived from general revenues or general obligation bonds. ISTEA

- RISE Funds. This state program provides assistance to roads that have specific economic development benefits. In the past, Mount Vernon has been awarded RISE funds for road access, curb and gutter, and storm sewer work related to establishing a new business in the community. Although the \$48,000 grant was not activated due to reasons related to the enterprise itself, the city may seek future assistance from RISE funding for similar capital improvements for job creation.

- General Revenues. General revenues, still primarily derived from property taxes, are used for basic street maintenance costs. These funds are rarely used for capital outlays on the street system. Mount Vernon's general fund expenditures have been a decreasing proportion of total expenditures.

- General Obligation Bonds. G.O. bonds, which pledge the faith and credit of the city to debt repayment, are used for

DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

the construction of new streets. The city's bonding capacity is discussed later in this section. Bonds represent an increasing proportion of each of Mount Vernon's recent budgets. Since 1990, the City has completed key infrastructure projects using capital bond obligations (repaid through road use taxes), including the reconstruction of First Street. Bonds and rising sewer service charges will play an increasing role in the municipal budget in the near future.

- Other categorical grant programs. In 1994, Mount Vernon tendered an application for a nearly \$750,000 grant for stormwater mitigation from FEMA. The proposed project would alleviate flooding by lowering the grade of Highway 1 in the north part of the city. The grant requires a 20% local match and is an example of Mount Vernon's commitment to explore alternate grant programs to meet critical local needs.

- Entrepreneurial agreements. To accelerate State road improvements, the City is negotiating a participating agreement with IDOT. Under this agreement, Mount Vernon may administer several proposed improvement projects for Highway 1, expected to include overlay resurfacing, lane alterations, and curb and gutter along Highway 1 north of US 30.

• *Sewer and Water Systems*

The City owns its water system, generally relying upon revenues to maintain and expand the water distribution network. For 1993-94, water revenues were \$299,323. Nearly \$90,000 in debt retirement for water capital improvements is derived from these revenues. The water fund, retiring outstanding G.O. debt on the improvement of the system and well construction, amounts to just under \$210,000 in 1993-94. In 1994, the city's outstanding obligation for water treatment plant revenue bonds amounts to \$825,000.

The city's sanitary sewer system operates in much the same way. The system is normally maintained and expanded through the use of sewer use fees. Sewer revenues for 1993-94 were \$277,908. Mount Vernon exhibited no outstanding bonded indebtedness for its sewer system in 1994. Expenditures for operations and debt retirement could be expected to increase in future fiscal years, with the implementation of

DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

planned sewer projects.

The city does not presently offer any sewer or water installation incentives for development, although it recently reduced connection fees for commercial and industrial users to reflect the true cost of initiating services. Major development projects often fall outside of the financing capacity of sewer use fees. Sewer extensions to such developments require the use of general obligation bonds or external funding sources, such as grant funds. Where gravity-flow sanitary connections can be made, incremental extensions create a smaller burden on the overall financing capacity of the city. However, in some cases, system-wide public policy could require major utility extensions and coordinated construction of sanitary sewer lift stations.

- *Redevelopment Financing*

While Mount Vernon has traditionally not offered tax abatement to aid major development, the City has adopted a tax increment financing ordinance. A TIF district has been applied to outlying development sites on the periphery of the city's core. As an incentive program, TIF delays the immediate return of new tax revenues to the city in exchange for encouraging development. Since the base year 1992, the City's TIF district generated incremental growth of \$5 million, with revenues that could be used to benefit specific developers, low and moderate income housing development, or public improvements supporting development. The City requires evaluation of requests by a TIF Review Committee and redevelopment agreements with those benefiting from TIF to specify the obligations and responsibilities arising from the assistance. The City also makes available, on a case by case basis, direct economic participation of up to \$5000 through a previously enacted Resolution of Economic Participation.

In the future, potential TIF areas could encompass major regional commercial, research and office development sites along the US 30 Bypass corridor. Incremental taxes from these areas could be used to assist with the financing of service roads, new streets, sewer and water lines, and other infrastructure improvements discussed in detail in Chapter 6: "Quality Public Services."

DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

• *Bonding Capacity*

Mount Vernon operates under a bonded debt limit equal to 5% of its estimated valuation, which is about \$77 million. As of June 30, 1994, this limit stood at \$3.85 million, against an outstanding applicable G.O. debt of \$1.47 million. Debt that applies against the city's limit includes general obligation debt and other bonds, including Tax Increment bonds. On the other hand, revenue bonds are not applied against the debt limit. Revenue bond obligations totalled \$825,000 in 1994.

Bonds, existing reserves, and rising sewer service charges may play an increasing role in the municipal budget in the near future as the city rebuilds a major interceptor sewer in the north part of the city, and relocates and/or rebuilds the sanitary treatment plant.

In the next few years, several capital bonds of the City of Mount Vernon will reach maturity, releasing the city from existing annual debt service payments of more than \$65,000 by the year 2000. These bonds and their annual obligations include:

- 1982 pool bonds to be retired in 1995; \$15,000
- 1983 water system bonds to be retired in 1996; \$25,000
- 1987 well bonds to be retired in 2000; \$25-30,000

In spite of this, City obligations will not rise or fall appreciably over the coming years. Other existing bonds have been structured to overtake these existing retiring instruments. Therefore, not much additional opportunity will be created to recycle debt service capacity to meet new capital needs. This has an important effect upon Mount Vernon's efforts to fund continued rehabilitation and replacement of its aging utility infrastructure.

This capacity limit, as well as limits on tax burdens on the citizens of Mount Vernon, creates constraints that affect the timing for implementing key plan recommendations. These major challenges are discussed in the next section.

KEY FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

■ Key Financial Challenges

Given its current fiscal context and facility needs, Mount Vernon faces the following significant challenges:

- *Wastewater Treatment Plant*

Mount Vernon has infrastructure problems relating to the conveyance and treatment of wastewater. Replacement of the city's present wastewater treatment plant was discussed in detail in Chapter 6: "Quality Public Services." A new plant is needed due to the age and obsolescence of the present facility. The city will find it increasingly challenging to continue to meet federal and state environmental mandates with the aging facility. In addition, a sound wastewater plant is vital to the city's continued economic growth and ability to accommodate additional office and research park development. The cost of this facility has been estimated by the city's consulting engineers at nearly \$3 million. Related to this challenge is the need to rehabilitate an aged interceptor sewer serving the north part of the city at a cost of nearly \$1.5 million. These future expenditures constitute a significant financial challenge for the city.

In order to accomplish both projects fully and simultaneously, the City would have to nearly double sewer use revenues. The hardships of such a reality almost ensure that Mount Vernon will have to use a combination of funding sources to augment or substitute for user fees in the financing of this vital facility. The City of Mount Vernon has convened a citizen's advisory committee to help identify the best solution and financing strategy to meet facility needs. The City seeks to determine how to do the most to resolve the problems with the least amount of capital outlay.

Beyond sewer use fees, the city has been accumulating excess revenues generated by the sewer system of nearly \$400,000. These reserves are a key resource for improvement financing. The City may consider TIF revenues or G.O. bonds, which would be applied against the city's bond limit, decreasing its ability to finance other needed improvements. Continued increases in total assessed value could help to moderate this effect.

KEY FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Potential policy directions of facility development include:

- Use of existing reserves to the maximum feasible extent.
- Improvement of sewer lines on an incremental basis as accumulated funds permit, as opposed to *en masse* improvements that require bonding and repayment.
- Use of alternative and creative financing sources.
- Work to minimize initial capital costs, consistent with good practice and long-term life of the facility.
- Attempt to secure guarantees on minimum fee payments by major users.
- Seek grant sources that reduce the city's debt financing requirements.
- Cooperative planning with the adjacent City of Lisbon to seek potentially mutual advantages in shared wastewater facility development.
- The use of low interest State loan funds to assist with the extension of service to developments.
- Encouraging developments in areas that require lower-cost, incremental sewer extension.

• *Transportation System*

The city's transportation system is another key element in its ability to grow. Projected 1996 Road Use Taxes will finance a maximum improvement program of \$220,000 annually. While this accommodates basic road and street improvements, it is inadequate to fund fully new road extensions and improvements needed to open the business research park growth center envisioned by the Mount Vernon Plan.

To meet transportation challenges, Mount Vernon should:

- Make maximum use of funds available to the Federal Aid Urban System.
- Issue general obligation bonds within the city's debt structure for key road improvements.
- Aggressively pursue RISE funds for road projects which benefit the business research park growth areas.
- Search for other state grants.

• *Park Development*

In the past, park land has been acquired through donation or

KEY FINANCIAL CHALLENGES • SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM

through the normal course of private subdivision development. Development has been financed through general revenues, and through private, civic and volunteer-source funds from community sports organizations. These funds are sufficient to finance small scale improvements or limited ballfield development, but they may not be adequate to create regional or community-scale features such as recreational trails. The planned trails system is an example of such a large-scale facility that must be financed outside of the general fund budget. The project provides a significant benefit to the citizens of the community.

Policies to aid the development of these facilities include:

- The use of State funds, such as grants through the Iowa Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program and Iowa Statewide Trails Plan funds. Mount Vernon was recently awarded a \$25,000 REAP grant to fund enhancements to Nature Park.
- The development of a corporate sponsorship program, in which area Linn County corporations adopt and finance trail segments.
- Use of other private and foundation contributions.
- Potential funding of trails using transportation enhancement funds available to IDOT through the 1992 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). Mount Vernon has recently been awarded ISTEA grants to complete sidewalk and trail improvements.

Ultimately, Mount Vernon, while in very good financial condition, faces a number of major capital facility demands that stretch or exceed its financing capacities without outside assistance. These financial constraints become a key element in the development of an implementation schedule. The implementation schedule is contained on the following pages.

■ Short-Term Work Program

The scope of the Mount Vernon Plan is both ambitious and long-term. Each of the many actions and policies described in the plan can contribute to the betterment of the city. Because presenting a twenty-year development program at one time can appear daunting, this section of the Plan isolates the

SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM

ten most important policies and actions which Mount Vernon should undertake in the very short term. Many of these items are organizational or statutory, setting in motion the forces that will lead to the realization of the entire plan. Others are substantial capital projects.

The following actions are the key, foundational steps which Mount Vernon's city government, businesses, organizations, and citizens should implement within the next two years. In accomplishing these tasks, Mount Vernon can capitalize on its key opportunities, and meet the challenges of changing land use, regional transportation, and demographic dynamics.

1. Adopt an official map that pre-plans the layout of future streets and open spaces.
2. Update zoning/land development ordinances to create regulations that will affect the traditional development patterns most desired by the community.
3. Enforce the Mount Vernon Plan's urban growth limit, defining the outer edge of community growth.
4. Pursue improvements to Highway 1 to increase safety, intersection and pavement characteristics.
5. Relocate/reconstruct the wastewater treatment plant; and rehabilitate/rebuild the north sewer interceptor.
6. Monitor and guide the development of a US 30 Bypass south of town, in a near-city alignment that supports the development policies of the community.
7. Support planned business and research park development south of the city near the US 30 Bypass; support new commercial development which complements rather than replaces existing businesses.
8. Expand and enhance Uptown commercial areas.
9. Continually monitor and maintain aged infrastructure.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

10. Establish a Green Network of trails and environmental corridors unifying new growth areas to activity centers in the traditional town.

■ Implementation Schedule

This section presents an implementation schedule for the recommendations of the Mount Vernon Plan, summarizing most of the actions proposed by the plan.

Each action is listed in order of appearance in the plan document and is given a specific time frame for implementation. In this way, the Implementation Schedule can be used to monitor the progress of the plan - a very important part of the annual update and planning forum process that will be necessary to keep this document dynamic and up to date.

In addition, the themes to which actions apply are indicated on the chart below, as well as within the schedule.

The schedule, combined with the previous discussion examining the city's financial condition and ability to fund capital projects, will provide important guidance in programming major improvements. Increasingly, Mount Vernon will take advantage of innovative mixes of funding to accomplish its various development objectives. These mixes will involve private participation in financing projects of mutual interest to the public and private sectors.

Legend for Implementation Schedule Theme References

P	A Profile of Mount Vernon
TC	A Timeless City
G	Growth and Land Use
TT	Traditional Town in a New Century
U	Uptown Mount Vernon
Q	Quality Public Services
I	Implementing the Plan

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Action	Themes	Within 2 Years	Within 5 Years	Within 10 Years	Within 20 Years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratify the Development Constitution for Mount Vernon, abiding its basic principles. 	TC, IT	•			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt an official map that pre-plans the layout of future streets and open spaces. 	TC, G, IT	•			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update zoning/land development ordinances. 	TC, G, IT	•			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce the urban growth limit, as defined in the Mount Vernon Plan. 	TC, G, IT	•			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish design standards for development within the proposed research and business park. 	TC, IT	•			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage research and business park development. 	G, IT, I		•	•	•
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement improvements to enhance the Uptown commercial area. 	TC, IT, U		•	•	•
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street extensions to support development in the Village Growth Centers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extend 6th Street. - New street north of high school. - Extend 10th Avenue. - Build northeast circulator road. 	G, IT, Q		•	•	•
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand and enhance Nature Park. 	G, IT, Q	•			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquire land for greenway along a Spring Creek environmental corridor. 	IT, Q		•	•	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Mount Vernon Greenway along the Short Line ROW. 	IT, G		•	•	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize new open spaces and parks as traditional village greens. 	IT, Q	•	•	•	•
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the C&NW Greenway in the north part of the city. 	IT, Q			•	

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Action	Themes	Within 2 Years	Within 5 Years	Within 10 Years	Within 20 Years
• Construct a pedestrian crossing of the C&NW RR, linking the proposed C&NW greenway to Davis Park.	TT, Q			•	
• Organize a Housing Partnership to develop affordable housing.	G, TT	•			
• Establish a neighborhood/housing rehabilitation program.	TC, G, TT		•		
• Upgrade alleys parallel to 1st Avenue as pedestrian greenways.	TT		•		
• Develop restrictive sign standards for the 1st Avenue corridor.	TT	•			
• Repair the historic Lincoln Highway bridge over the C&NW RR.	TC, TT, Q		•		
• Preserve and protect corridors along entrances to the community.	TC, TT	•	•	•	
• Install ornamental street lighting along 1st Street.	TC, TT			•	
• Establish an Uptown Partnership to promote the commercial core area.	TT, U		•		
• Open lower walk-out levels of Uptown buildings for commercial use.	TT, U		•	•	

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IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Action	Themes	Within 2 Years	Within 5 Years	Within 10 Years	Within 20 Years
• Develop backyard plazas and walkways in Uptown Mount Vernon.	U		•	•	
• Create a mid-block greenway in the N-S alley between 1st/2nd Avenues.	TT, U		•		
• Expand Uptown parking supply.	TT, U		•		
• "Green Streets" improvements to South 2nd Street.	TT, U			•	
• Install thematic lighting at key Uptown intersections.	TT, U		•	•	
• Corner node enhancement Uptown.	U		•	•	
• Support the adaptive re-use and rehabilitation of key Uptown buildings, especially at the 1st Avenue 1st Street intersection.	TT, U		•		
• Facade rehabilitation in Uptown.	TT, U	•			
• Implement a program of historic preservation and design review.	TT, U	•	•		
• Adopt an Historic Preservation Ordinance.	TC, TT, U	•			
• Continue a city-wide street paving rehabilitation program.	Q, I	•	•	•	•
• Continue a city-wide sidewalk rehabilitation program.	Q, I	•	•	•	•
• Monitor city and rural fire equipment needs, in anticipation of a future building project.	Q, I	•	•	•	
• Secure the resources to construct a new fire station.	Q, I				•
• Increase maintenance program for the swimming pool	Q, I	•			

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Action	Themes	Within 2 Years	Within 5 Years	Within 10 Years	Within 20 Years
• Equip pool with leisure amenities and facility enhancements.	G, Q, I		•		
• Reassign City Hall space with the relocation of water and service staff to other sites.	Q		•		
• Enact major treatment plant construction to meet the city's wastewater treatment needs.	G, Q, I	•			
• Rehabilitate/reconstruct the North sanitary sewer interceptor.	Q, I		•	•	
• Ensure culvert reservations beneath the US 30 Bypass to allow the eventual southward extension of sewer outfall.	G, Q, I	•	•		
• Relocate the wastewater treatment plant to meet very long-range needs.	G, Q, I				• (beyond)
• Intensify preventative maintenance of older sewer lines and manholes.	Q	•			
• Renew the city's inflow sanitary sewer inspection program.	Q	•			
• Establish a 28E agreement with Lisbon for long-range sewer planning.	Q			•	•

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IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Action	Themes	Within 2 Years	Within 5 Years	Within 10 Years	Within 20 Years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the conveyance capacity of the 2nd Avenue storm sewer. 	Q		•		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct a retention basin along Spring Creek to the northeast of the Middle School. 	G, TI, Q		•		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enact a Spring Creek Environmental Overlay District northeast of the city to ensure environmentally sensitive patterns of development. 	G, TI, Q	•			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update aged components of the water system: water mains, meters valves. 	Q		•		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade fire protection capabilities by changing all hydrants into standard-thread devices. 	TC, TI, G, Q			•	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct new water service loops in village development growth areas. 	G, Q	•	•	•	•
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a tree nursery at Nature Park. 	TC, TI, Q	•			

ABOUT THIS REPORT

■ The Mount Vernon Plan was composed on Macintosh computers in ReadySetGo 4.5a and set in Palatino. Project manager was Martin H. Shukert, AICP. Principal authors were Martin Shukert and Jeffrey P. Johnson, AICP. Other contributors included Matthew Carpenter. Report design and photography by Martin Shukert. Graphics by Martin Shukert and Jeffrey Johnson. Photo processing was by Professional Darkroom Services, Omaha, Nebraska. Photo-mechanical reproductions by A&G Litho-Printing of Omaha, Nebraska. Printing by Pip Printing, Omaha, Nebraska.

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