Rebuilding Gillette Avenue for the 21st Century presents an opportunity to influence a lifetime of memories. Aim high and let all experience the energy of Gillette.

**Storytelling.** Great downtown streets are economic and transportation environments, but are also places of memory and community celebration. Gillette Avenue provides an opportunity to tell the dual stories of Energy and Exploration... the energy of the land and the people, and the exploration of both human and natural resources to unlock that energy.
Downtown Gillette is the traditional focus of the city’s civic, financial, professional, and a large share of commercial life. From its roots in railroading and western expansion, Gillette’s growth was propelled by the resources of the land. Oil, natural gas, uranium, and above all coal fed a nation’s demand for energy and Gillette’s rapid and periodic growth. As the city grew, its original town center extended southward along Gillette Avenue and perpendicular to the Burlington tracks. And while other activity centers have emerged as the city’s population passed the 30,000 mark, Downtown remains the city’s heart with its mix of uses and attractive, pedestrian-scaled character. In addition, the avenue is a place of civic importance to citizens: county and city government and Twin Spruce Junior High are all either along or near the Avenue.

Gillette’s municipal investments have recognized the role of Downtown in the community. Major achievements have included the Gillette Avenue street reconstruction and streetscape development of the 1980s, and the continuing public art program. The current need to reconstruct Gillette Avenue’s aging infrastructure creates an opportunity for new energy in the public realm that can create a fertile environment for new investment and activity in the city center. The city has a rare opportunity to celebrate its history, culture and values in the physical environment of its traditional main street.

The setting of the street advances the telling of the story. Topographically, Gillette Avenue starts in a valley, at the railroad and climbs a hill, terminating at 7th Street and Twin Spruce Junior High. This topography also has historic symbolism, as the city evolves from its roots to the heights of a future reflected in the achievements and explorations of its youth. Gillette is widely known as the Energy Capital of the Nation. Thematically, the ideas of energy and exploration work together at many levels and can form unifying motifs and subjects for storytelling for the district.

This document presents urban design concepts for Downtown Gillette that focus in its main street and its possibilities as an economic and physical environment. It is intended as a guide to the community and designers whose responsibility and mission will be to create a street and district that pulses with life and creates memories.
DEVELOPMENT PLAN

In 2007, the City of Gillette retained RDG Planning & Design to prepare a Downtown Development Plan. The primary purpose of this plan was to explore the possibilities opened when the market for a town center built for a community of 4,000 expanded by almost ten times. The 2007 plan identified overall goals and a specific development program intended to take advantage of this expanded market by creating an urban, unified city center. Downtown development would be sustained by:

- Expanding the development area of Downtown Gillette, and expanding the district’s reach to surrounding blocks.
- Taking advantage of the city’s expanding markets and greater customer population.
- Increasing the number of reasons for people to do better places for people.
- Introducing new uses into the downtown mix that would expand active hours.
- Identifying and strengthening key business niches.
- Unifying the north and south sides of downtown, and strengthening links to other parts of the city.

In 2013, the planned reconstruction of Gillette Avenue represents a dramatic initial public action toward generating what Alex Garvin describes as a “sustained and widespread private market reaction.” The Development Plan on the facing page places the Gillette Avenue corridor in its urban context and identifies sites for exactly this kind of positive private market reaction. Appropriate projects will reinforce the quality of downtown and encourage reinvestment by neighboring properties. They will also improve the customer convenience and experience of shopping, working, living, or simply being in the district.

The following description presents the elements of a downtown development program, put in motion by the Gillette Avenue project.

Pedestrian Overpass Connection. The railroad-operated pedestrian overpass provides access to the north side of the city. This utilitarian structure can become a significant downtown feature if enhanced by feature of downtown through accent lighting and an art installation or other defining element at the base of the stairs. The path for pedestrians between 1st and Gillette and the base of the stairs should also be reinforced, creating a dual use zone for both vehicles and people. Cooperation with the BNSF is necessary to take full aesthetic and functional potential of this landmark at the foot of the street.

2nd Street Gateway. The downtown environment should provide a sense of arrival to 2nd Street motorists. This both marks the district and encourages traffic to slow as it crosses Gillette Avenue. The 2nd and Gillette intersection should create energy that encourages potential customers to explore the district and unifies a district divided by a busy highway. Special lighting can give this entry point a different character by day and night.

This key gateway should establish streetscape icons that are carried out throughout the main street district. Vertical art monuments, landscaping, signage, art pedestals, and furniture should be consistent and reinforce area themes. Better crossing design would improve pedestrian safety by increasing the visibility of people crossing 2nd Street on foot.

Dining Veranda. The elevated terrace around the historic post office at 3rd Street, coupled with the projected opening of a brewery/restaurant presents an excellent opportunity to establish downtown’s first outdoor seating area. Ornamental railings may enclose this veranda that can wrap around to 3rd Street, and a passage-way south of the building leads to rear-side parking.

Telephone Plaza. The telephone building on the 400 block presents a blank wall to the street. This area should be productively developed as a linear public space equipped with sheltered bike parking, seating, landscaping, public art, and vendor locations.

3rd Street Convertible Street. Downtown Gillette lacks the public event space offered by a courthouse square or public green. In such a situation, shared use (or convertible) streets can be designed and outfitted to serve as public space and venues for events. Third Street east of Gillette Avenue is a natural candidate for such a place. It is central to the district and may be periodically closed without significant impact to traffic flow.Adjacent buildings may be retrofitted to include visitor services.

Passageways. Gaps between buildings can be designed as small passageways that connect parking and business fronts. Pathways should have new concrete walks with sconce or suspended lighting.

Kendrick Parking Garage. The half-block site on the west side of Kendrick between 3rd and 4th, now used largely for surface parking, is an excellent site for eventual parking garage development. Topography and design allows such a garage to “fly over” the existing drive-through bank on 4th Street and accommodate street level storefronts at 3rd and Kendrick. Eventual execution of this project will require a public/private partnership.

Post Office Circulation. Significant but easily implemented traffic and parking changes on the Post Office block of Kendrick can greatly improve access to this important facility from both directions. The plan recommends:

- Providing full two-way circulation on the Post Office block. This is accomplished by dividing traffic movements south of 4th Street on a portion of the City Hall site, and north of 3rd adjacent to an existing office building. Any parking stalls lost north of 3rd are replaced by parking off an improved alley to the east.
- Existing diagonal parking can be retained as is or enhanced with an upgraded median with landscaping and public art.

5th Street Civic Plaza. The intersection of Gillette Avenue and 5th Street can be designed as a small public space located midway between the school and 3rd Street. The space can be used as a small gathering space and drop off for visitors to the County Courthouse or George Amos Building.

6th Street Intersection. Sixth Street’s upgrading to east-west collector status makes this intersection another logical entrance point into Downtown. Therefore, streetscape features here should allude to those provided at 2nd Street.

1Alex Garvin, author of The American City: What Works and What Doesn’t
Twin Spruce Crossing Improvements. The southern anchor of the district is Twin Spruce Junior High School. The 7th Street intersection should give priority to the pedestrian, retrofitting the intersection to discourage crossing at angles. Vertical and interpretive elements consistent with those used along the street should also be installed here to complete the composition.
The Urban Design Concept for Gillette Avenue
Gillette Avenue and 2nd Street Intersection. The arrival to Gillette’s central business district uses lighting and special features to celebrate the energy and traditions of the city. From a functional perspective, intersection nodes are designed to provide both amenity and safety, guiding pedestrians to visible crossing points.
THE GILLETTE AVENUE CONCEPT

Downtown’s streets and gateways communicate the district’s health and character to customers. An affordable streetscape program should support the business community by creating a street with detail, color, and customer accommodations to the street.

To develop the Gillette Avenue concept, the design team met with the City, property and business owners, and interested members of the community in both individual interviews and large group discussions. These discussions, combined with previous visual preference exercises by the downtown community, created the framework for this Downtown Urban Design Plan.

The key concepts for Gillette Avenue were thus born out of public process. And this public process led to a composition of design features and themes united by the dual ideas of ENERGY and EXPLORATION.

- ENERGY. Energy reflects Gillette’s growth by capitalizing on energy locked in the ground and energy liberated by the creativity and commitment of its citizens.
- EXPLORATION. Exploration links Gillette’s past founders and pioneers to the future of its young, who will continue to explore arts, science, technology, and culture.

The development of these themes in the public environment should recognize and unify the different character and roles of segments of the Avenue. These segments include the railroad and early history of the city (1st to 2nd), commercial life and history (2nd to 4th), civic life (4th to 6th), and the future symbolized by the school (6th to 7th).

Participants helped define a set of goals for the reconstruction of Gillette Avenue, and include:

- Replacing the Aging Infrastructure. Aging underground utilities must be replaced to provide a sound foundation for Downtown’s future.
- Upgrading the Public Realm. A revitalized public environment supports existing businesses and encourages new public and private investment. With reconstruction, Gillette Avenue should be a great street for walking, dining, art, shopping, and enjoyment for the whole community. People should be attracted to return to the area and want to return. A strong economic environment causes existing enterprises to prosper and reinvest, and new businesses to locate in the district.

- Gateways. Downtown’s key entry points should be defined by signage, landscaping and graphics.
- Improving Parking and Customer Convenience. Downtown should provide adequate and convenient parking without allowing parking to dominate its fabric and character. Directional information and location should guide people to parking clearly and directly. Connections the avenue to existing parking, providing new parking where possible, and identifying a location for a parking structure will help the district support current and future businesses.
- Creating Public Places for Activities. Public events such as farmers’ markets, art shows, street concerts and dances, and sales bring people and add life to city centers. Downtown Gillette lacks space for these and other events. The Gillette Avenue redesign should include a public commons, on a temporary or permanent basis, that can accommodate these important activities.
- Telling Gillette’s Stories. Downtown should be a permanent, public art exhibit for visitors and residents that develops the themes of energy and exploration. This adds layers of rich meaning that enhance the experience of being downtown.
- Design Standards. Public investment in the streetscape should encourage private reinvestment in buildings, which should be guided by guidelines that maintain consistency with the character and scale of the street. Appropriate façade upgrades should restore windows to original scale, replace inappropriate storefronts, and include awnings, doors, and other features that add scale. However, absolute uniformity is neither necessary nor authentic. A companion document, the Downtown Gillette Facade Manual, identifies policies that encourages preservation and adaptive reuse.
- Thematic zones (right): Segments of Gillette Avenue are defined by land use types and roles in the district. These can provide a context for interpreting the energy and exploration themes.
Public Involvement

Design team and community members discuss concepts for the Avenue at the planning studio.

Street features that add interest and scale

Mature trees

Outdoor seating

Inviting to people

Brick pavers

Versatile public space

Walking space

Results from previous visual preference survey helped guide design priorities. Top-rated images are displayed below.

Walking space

Low lying landscaping

Pedestals

Seating areas

Crossovers
PROPOSED STREET SECTIONS

Typical right of way (property line to property line) on Gillette Avenue is 100 feet. The typical street section provides two travel lanes and diagonal parking, separated by a safety strip demarcated by a contrasting pavement color. Landscape zone width adjusts to variation in ROW width. Plant materials, trees, outdoor seating, and art are located in a landscape zone, separating parking from the main walking path of the sidewalk. Detailed design of the “landscape zone” should adapt to individual conditions, such as grade changes at the George Amos Building or special design areas such as the Fifth Street plaza or the area adjacent to the telephone building. Sidewalks are constructed of standard concrete, while the flexible landscape zone could have contrasting pavement color and materials. If pavers are used, care should be taken to prevent heaving and separation.
PROPOSED DESIGN ELEMENTS

Design elements should be made of attractive and durable materials. They should be used where required by function and program, but overuse of street furnishings should be avoided.

LIGHTING THE STREET

Upgrading Light Fixtures

Gillette Avenue’s current fixtures are in good condition and provide adequate ambient light. The replacement of the street offers an opportunity to upgrade the lighting to an LED system. Benefits of LED lighting include better control and programming of light, ability to vary light levels depending on conditions, and providing flashing lights at specific addresses for emergency response vehicles. LED lights also conserve energy, using only about 20% as much electricity as traditional lights.

Alternative lighting styles may be used. Considerations include the height and width of the pole, appearance and scale of the fixture, light distribution and photometry along the street, and potential attachments and electrical outlets.

Intersection Light Fixtures

Supplementary lighting currently used at the 4th Street intersection should be the new standard for all intersections along Gillette Avenue.

Lighting Art

Phase 2 of the streetscape project should include a detailed guidelines for lighting individual art features. Directional lighting mounted to buildings or poles and uplighting may also be considered. Special care should be given to art that is installed in dark locations, particularly near the First Interstate Bank at 3rd Street.

Catenary Lighting System

A suspended lighting system would provide accent lighting at the center of the street that also recalls historic lighting patterns on Gillette Avenue. Suspended lighting is recommended in special focus areas, such as the 100 block, where interpretive features concentrate on the founding and early years of the city, over the convertible street at 3rd Street east of the Avenue, and along passageways linking the main street to parking and adjacent streets.

Structural design of the system should be appropriate to Gillette’s winter and potential wind loads.
LIGHTING AS A DISTINCTIVE FEATURE

As discussed earlier, the development of Gillette is inextricably tied to resources that are harnessed to create energy: uranium, oil, and coal.

The Avenue’s design concept includes a series of vertical monuments that reflect the common forms used for extracting these energy resources. Art and light along the street and especially at points of special interest unify the district and symbolically represent community themes.

**Form.** The triangulated open form of these custom light features represents the tower or drill form. Blue light symbolizes the energy channeled from the resource’s extraction. To maintain scale, the maximum height of tower elements should generally be in the range of 12 to 16 feet.

**Blue LED Lighting.** Blue light can be provided with mid-range power and provides a distinctive color avoids interference with traffic control colors. Blue accent LED lighting has been used in a number of transportation-related applications, including streets and trails.

**Corridors and Pathways**

Rural Iowa and Des Moines, IA

Far left: Blue LED lights frame a trail corridor over the Raccoon River.

Left: Southeast connector bridge uses LED lights to reinforce the arrival to downtown, connect to the river, and add color and interest.

**Accents**

Springfield, IL and Rochester, MN.

Far left: Blue LED lighting used as accents in the streetscape for Capital Avenue, leading to the State Capital.

Left: Backlighted signage on college campus.
Gillette Avenue Looking North

Second Street is a barrier that divides the 100 Block from the balance of the street’s retail core. The 100 Block hosts one of the City of Gillette’s iconic restaurants and other important businesses. The block is also the primary connection that the City has to the railroad tracks.

Improving the physical and visual connections of Gillette Avenue on either side of 2nd Street will improve customer mobility, and expand the identity of the district. Lighting, gateway monuments, framing the street with lights suspended on catenary, improved sidewalk crossings, and landscaped corners link the northern section to the downtown core.
2nd Street Gateway looking East.

Travelers approaching downtown on 2nd Street from the west become aware of the business district once they see the First Interstate Bank tower. However, a tight view corridor hides Gillette Avenue and does little to slow traffic by marking the district entrance.

A sequence of lighting along 2nd Street on the blocks immediately east and west of Gillette Avenue effectively announces arrival at the main street district. This sequence on the west approach is provided by building-mounted sconces.
2nd Street Gateway looking West

2nd Street Gateway looking West. An analogous lighting sequence would also define the district gateway to 2nd Street motorists approaching from the east. Free-standing lighting features, using the drill and light motif discussed earlier, provide an edge to the surface lot on the north side of the street. These elements provide visual interest and provide an introduction to the features and character executed at finer grain along Gillette Avenue.
Federal Avenue Plaza
Mason City, Iowa

Federal Plaza is a permanent public space designed to allow emergency vehicles to access adjacent properties, while providing a gathering space that can be programmed for activities and used by adjacent businesses and the community.
The 3rd Street Promenade in Santa Monica, California, is designed as a convertible street for outdoor performances, farmer’s market, and retail stores. The street has since been permanently closed for pedestrians and businesses. A nonprofit organization manages and maintains the space.

The Church Street Marketplace in Burlington, Vermont, was first developed during the 1970s with temporary closures for special events that eventually led to the creation of a permanent pedestrian mall. Management and maintenance of the space is overseen by General Growth Properties, a large for-profit organization.
5TH STREET INTERSECTION

Fifth Street links the Campbell County Courthouse with Gillette City Hall, one block to the east of Gillette Avenue. The area in front of the Courthouse presents an opportunity for a small civic space for gathering and for convenient pick-up and drop-off that interprets the city’s civic heritage.

Adding curb extensions and corner nodes here increases the amenity area, shortens the crossing distance for pedestrians and calms traffic. Elements of the space’s design should include seating, shade, landscaping, interpretive elements, and locations for public art.

The materials and furniture of this space should be consistent with those used in other parts of the corridor, particularly the 3rd Street convertible street/plaza discussed above.

7TH STREET CROSSING

Twin Spruce Junior School is located at the head of Gillette Avenue at 7th Street. While 7th Street currently functions as a cross-town collector, the city plans an eventual shift of this movement to 6th Street. This change will relieve traffic at the school’s front entrance.

The intersection is congested during the morning and afternoon when parents and buses drop-off and pick-up students. Safety problems at these times can be caused by students using improvised routes rather than designated crossings. The offset between the school’s entrance and the sidewalks tend to reinforce this pattern.

Bringing crossings closer together will encourage students to use them. An entrance redesign could create a sense of a gathering area, while directing students to intended crossings. This in turn increases both functionality and safety.
**CORNER INTERSECTION DETAIL**

**Gillette Avenue and 2nd Street Intersection Diagram.** Proposed configuration reduces the crossing distance of Gillette Avenue from about 70 feet to 32 feet. The expanded nodes provide landscaped areas bounded by a pedestal that for public art. These pedestals should also be used for seating. The form of the planter/pedestals directs pedestrians away from the building to the corner of the intersection, improving pedestrian visibility and safety.

The light tower markers discussed earlier flank the intersection, strengthening the quality of gateway at the highway intersection. Upgrading the traffic signal from a galvanized mast arm to a powder coated contemporary design would further distinguish 2nd and Gillette from standard highway intersection.
FURNITURE

The style and design of the furniture along the street works best when all elements are part of a consistent design vocabulary. Products should resist adverse weather, and be stocked for future replacement.

Trash Receptacles
The trash receptacles should be consistent throughout the district and located near gathering spaces, restaurants, bars, and areas with traffic.

Bicycle Parking
Bicycle parking should be convenient to business fronts, but avoid obstructing the walkway. Simple individual inverted “U’s” or similar forms are most efficient and least intrusive. Schoolyard or wave racks should be avoided.

Bollards
Gillette currently uses internally lighted bollards at intersections. Additional bollards could be placed at locations to prevent personal injury or possible damage to art or streetscape features.

SEATING AREAS & PEDESTALS

The design proposes raised stone pedestals near intersections and at strategic locations along the block.

Seating Areas
Raised pedestals can be arranged at various heights. Pedestals should be used in place of benches when possible to provide greatest flexibility and avoid duplicative use of free-standing elements.

Public Art and Planters
Pedestals should be made to accommodate public art - permanent or temporary. Planting pots may be placed on the pedestals, as well.

Barrier and Direction
The pedestals define an edge to landscaped areas and direct pedestrians to crossings. They also protect people and improvements from possible vehicle damage.
SEATING AREAS & RAILINGS

Outdoor dining areas create activity along the street and expand the business opportunities in the district. State and city codes are vague about serving meals and alcohol in outdoor seating areas on public sidewalks. Gillette should clarify its regulations, using legislation in other states as models. Typical definitions and use permissions include:

- **Sidewalk cafe.** Outdoor dining area on the sidewalk permitted to serve food. Permits may be offered for alcohol sales, typically if directly adjacent to the building.

- **Beer Garden.** Enclosed serving area on private property separated from a sidewalk, with permission to serve alcohol.

- **Courtyard.** Enclosed dining area on private property separated from a sidewalk, with permission to serve food and alcohol.

This plan recommends a unified system of railing for the entire district, designed and installed at the time of implementation. Restaurants, bars, and the proposed brewery are excellent locations for creating enclosed spaces with the use of a railing. Individual property owners are responsible for funding and installing railing and furniture for outdoor dining areas.

The design of the railing system may be customized with elements consistent with thematic concepts. One concept shows a channel of lighting running parallel to the top of the railing with perpendicular stiles suggesting atomic structure.

Wind Blocks

Wyoming’s climate is subject to strong winds. Wind blocks placed near outdoor dining areas can help shelter outdoor seating areas from wind.

LANDSCAPING

Gillette’s cold semi-arid climate with somewhat high temperature swings and limited rainfall (about 2 to 3 inches per month in the April through October) is particularly stressful for landscaping. Planting grasses, shrubs, and flowers require ongoing maintenance and additional watering to maintain a quality and appealing street environment. Materials should be selected that can thrive under the city's climatic conditions.

- **Shrubs** – Fritschiana Spirea, Shrub Rose
- **Perennials** – Prairie Dropseed, Yarrow, Liatris, Blanket Flower.

**Xeriscaping and Stormwater**

Xeriscaping uses dry climate materials that require little maintenance throughout the year. The parking lot at City Hall is an example of both xeriscaping and successful stormwater management. In downtown, typical practice will use conduits that direct stormwater away from businesses. However, green infrastructure should be incorporated where possible.
Gillette Avenue facing south from Chop House. A clear walking path separating outdoor dining space along the face of the building from street amenities along the curb - planters, shade trees, bicycle racks, lighting, and art pedestals.