



# Neligh Trail Towns Accelerator Program

## Trail Towns Plan & Proposal

November 2025

## Introduction

The Trail Towns Accelerator program, facilitated by Bike Walk Nebraska, supports communities along The Cowboy Trail. Bike Walk Nebraska is a 501(c) non-profit organization with the mission to make biking and walking more accessible and safe across the state.

This program supports trilside communities in assessing, providing, and planning trailhead access and attractions, as well as community-wide safety improvements.

### Program Goals

- 1 Identify a designated, safe, connected, and clearly communicated route from the trail to town.
- 2 Educate community representatives and residents on how to harness the trail as an asset.
- 3 Coalesce facilitation findings, assessments, and other community plans to identify opportunities to foster trail town culture, safety, and access.
- 4 Provide recommendations, resources, and, as available, funding for trilside initiatives and needed infrastructure.



### What's in this proposal?

Working alongside the Economic Development Agency for the City of Neligh and the Village of Clearwater, Bike Walk Nebraska hosted a half-day facilitation to audit and assess Neligh as a trail-friendly town in September 2025.

This proposal includes recommendations, ideas, and resources to support three key areas of trail investment for the community. All information within this proposal is based on the findings and discussion from the audit and assessment, the City of Neligh's Strategic Plan 2025 - 2030, and trail town best practices and standards.



## How the Trail Can Support Neligh

It's a local amenity first.  
Anything the Neligh community does to support and better connect the community to the Cowboy Trail and other amenities, will, first and foremost, better serve the residents. **What's good for the community is good for any would-be visitors.**

It supports Neligh's long-term vision.

- Improving Public Infrastructure
- Expanding Recreation Attractions & Amenities
- Enhancing Community Beautification
- Providing Better Public Safety Services
- Supporting a High Quality of Life



## About the Cowboy Trail



### 317 Miles Across Nebraska

The Cowboy Trail is the longest rails-to-trails conversion project in the country, running alongside 29 trail-side communities. It currently runs continuously from Norfolk to Valentine, with an additional 15 miles between Gordon and Rushville. A further 24 miles are scheduled to be completed near Hayspring by the end of 2026.

### Connecting the Nation

The Great American Rail Trail is a planned cross-country 3,700-mile trail system from Washington, D.C. to Washington State. Nebraska is home to the longest section of the trail, including the Cowboy Trail.

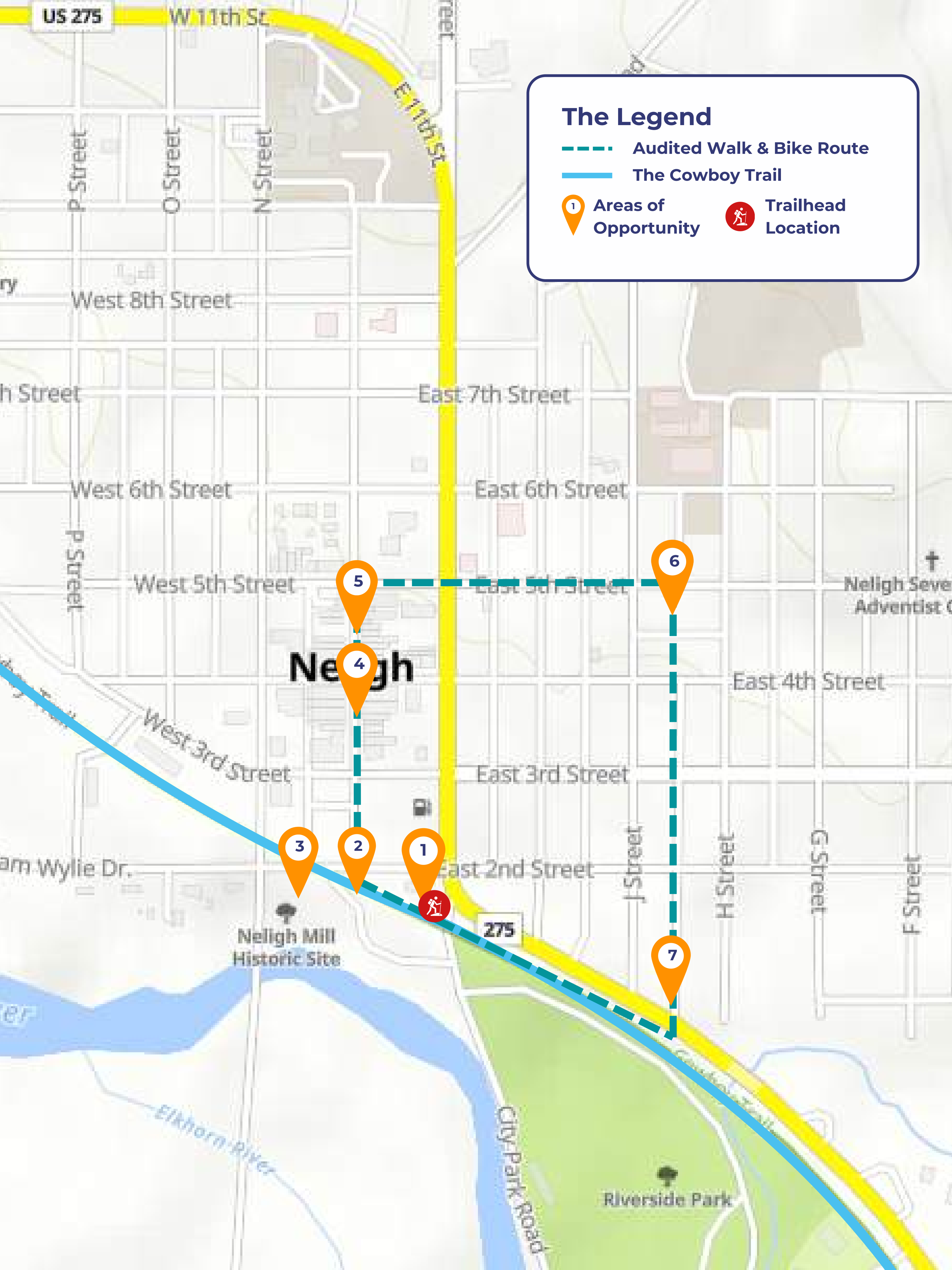
## Areas of Opportunity as a Trail Town

Neligh is a thriving city well-positioned to become a vibrant trail town.

Here are three areas of opportunity identified through the audit and assessment conducted in September 2025.







### The Legend

-  Audited Walk & Bike Route
-  The Cowboy Trail
-  Areas of Opportunity
-  Trailhead Location

# BIKE WALK

NEBRASKA

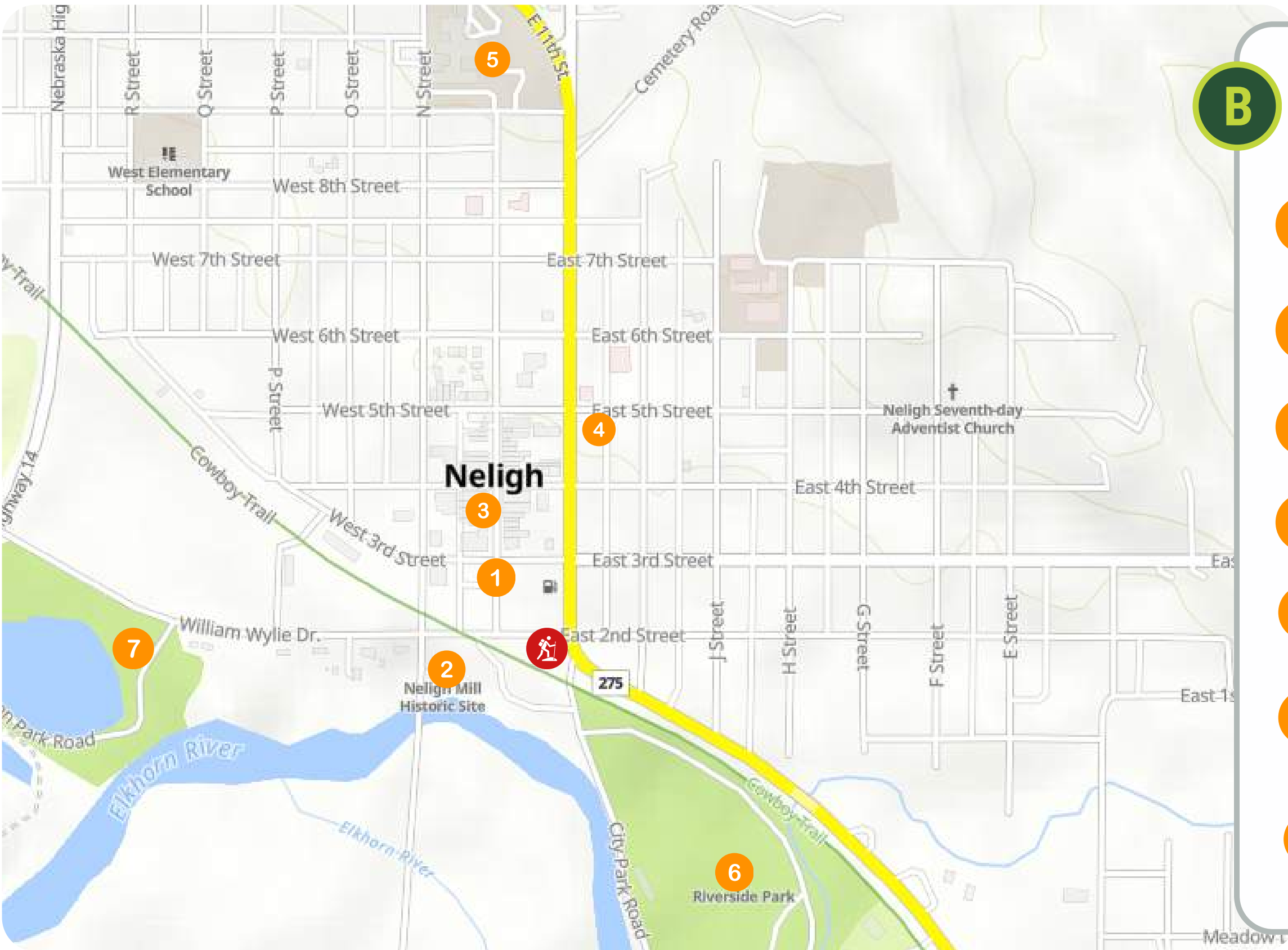
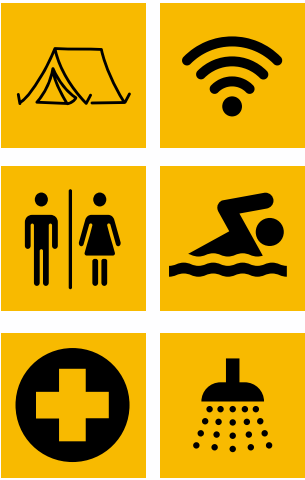
## 1 Trailhead Features & Access Trailhead Signage

The sign will be 36" x 24" with a simple wood frame. It will feature a map of the town and destinations for trail users. This will be purchased and installed by Nebraska Game & Parks.

## A Sign Title: "Connections to Neligh"

## C Proposed Amenities to List on the Sign

- Camping
- Public Wifi
- Public Restrooms
- Pool
- Hospital/Medical Services
- Public Showers



## B Proposed Map Information

- 1 Main Street / Old Mill Business District
- 2 Historic Site: The Neligh Mill
- 3 Grocery Store
- 4 Historic District
- 5 Hospital/Medical Services
- 6 Camping, Showers, Restrooms, Wifi & Pool
- 7 Camping, Showers & Recreational Amenities



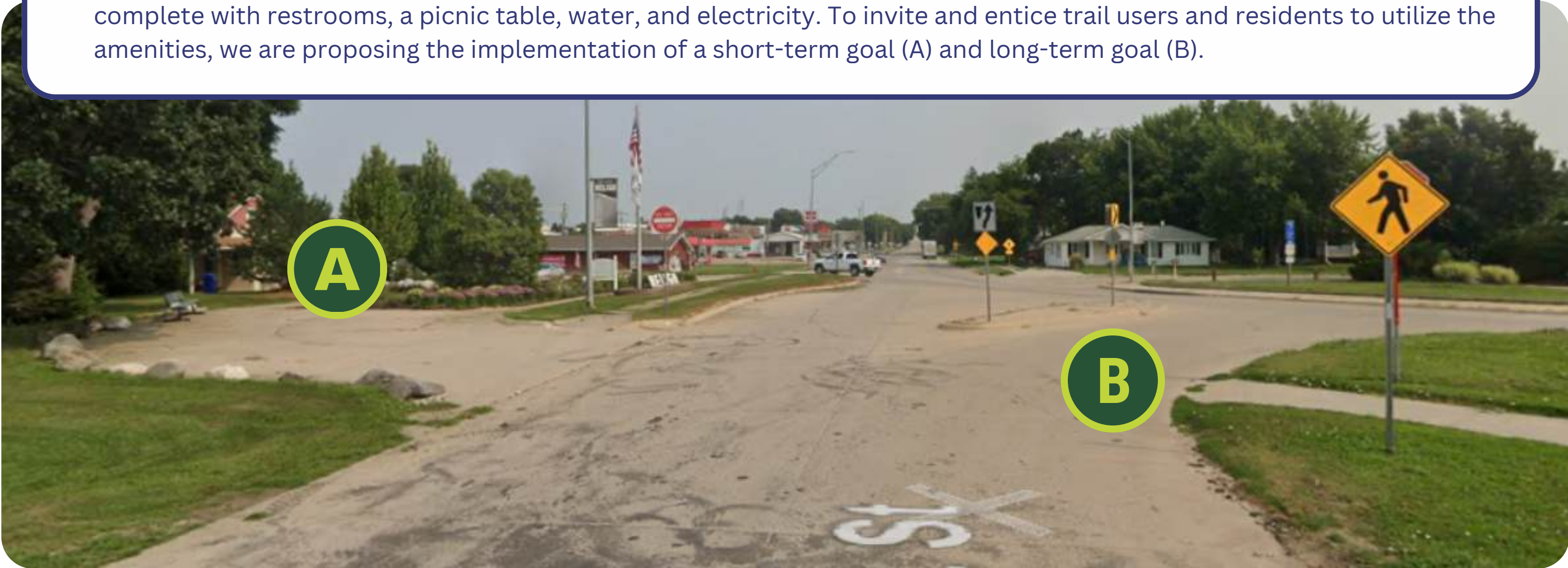
This section of the proposal is based on the Nebraska Game & Parks signage standards. It is a sample; the exact design and icons will change, and the details have not yet been reviewed and finalized by the Commission.



1 Trailhead Features & Access

Trailhead Signage: Wayfinding

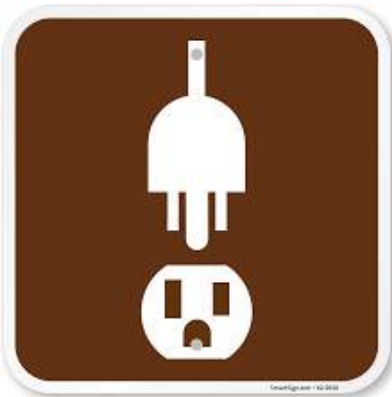
Neligh has done a wonderful job curating a shaded and comfortable trailhead area by the economic development office, complete with restrooms, a picnic table, water, and electricity. To invite and entice trail users and residents to utilize the amenities, we are proposing the implementation of a short-term goal (A) and long-term goal (B).



A Short-Term Goal  
Trailhead Amenity Wayfinding Signs

Consider listing the following information, along with other features/directions that serve trail users and residents alike.

- Restrooms
- Electrical Hookup
- Visitor’s / Welcome Center
- Old Mill District
- Riverside Park
- Neligh Historic Mill



B Long-Term Goal  
Rolling Out the “Maroon” Carpet

Installing an art crosswalk where the sidewalk crosses Riverside Park Rd to the Economic Dev. Office is a project that could beautify, inject community pride, clearly communicate to trail users, and enhance safety.

(see visual ideas on page 7) **Learn more:**  
[“Crosswalk Art for Street Safety & Community Building: 5 Best Practices”](#)





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Route to Connect Trail to Town  
**Connecting Users to Main Street**

The Cowboy Trail runs directly next to the entrance into Main Street/The Old Mill District, providing a high-impact opportunity to draw traffic into the area.



A

**Pointing the Way**

During the audit process, it was noted that newcomers didn't know where Main Street was from the trail.

Trail users will enter Neligh and ride along Main Street and the Old Mill from both the east and west.

Consider adding two wayfinding signs at (A) for Main Street, other key markers, and the trailhead at the economic development office.



Permanent Signs Example



Temporary Signs Example



Signs are an invitation.  
Signs are like invitations enticing trail users and residents to engage with different areas of the community. They're also the top item requested from communities and trail users alike.

Product Link:  
[Walk Your City Signs](#)



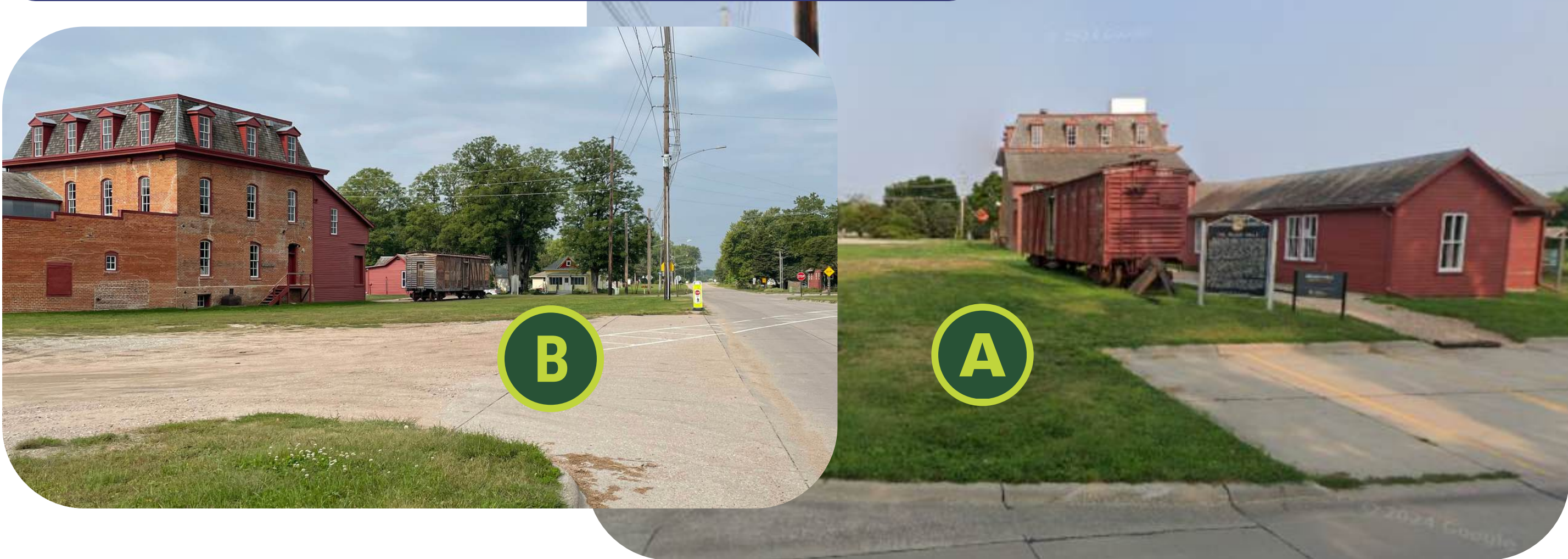
3

Highlighting Amenities & Offerings

Visiting the Neligh Mill Site

The Neligh Mill is a historic site worth highlighting and welcoming visitors to. In accordance with Neligh’s Historic Preservation Commission Strategic Plan, a modest investment could go a long way toward promoting community engagement, education, and awareness.

Again, you will find both a short-term goal (A) and a long-term goal (B) below.



A

Short-Term Goal  
Beautification of the Area

Sometimes, something as simple as a well-curated garden area and other beautification measures can invite people to experience an area more comfortably.

The mill already features interpretive historical signage, and planting pollinators, trees, or other greenery can support what’s already established.

Bring in the community.



Planting or establishing a garden is a great way to invite community groups and individuals to engage in the trail, historic sites, and Neligh as a whole.

Think of inviting youth groups, public health departments, or teachers and their classrooms to participate.

B

Long-Term Goal  
Refreshing the Crosswalks

To highlight the crossing for both safety and visibility, consider refreshing the crosswalks connecting the trail to Main Street.

Another opportunity to instill community branding and pride would be to pursue an art crosswalk (just like at the trailhead area). Not only are they visually stunning, but they also significantly reduce crashes.





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Route to Connect Trail to Town  
**Addressing Walkability Barriers**

Neligh has a thriving and vibrant Main Street area, with hard work going into improving the facades and filling empty retail areas.

A few walkability barriers exist on the sidewalks of Main Street, which, if addressed, would make the area more accessible for residents and visitors to explore.

A

The intermittent stone benches create pinch points on sidewalks and ramps, reducing space for folks using mobility devices or strollers.

B

The stairs and ADA ramp leading up to the Pinnacle Bank entrance leave that section of the sidewalk unnavigable for those using wheelchairs or other mobility devices.



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Route to Connect Trail to Town  
**Implementing Bike Parking**

A request that emerged from the audit was to explore seasonal bike parking on Main Street. Below are a self-constructed option (left) and a manufactured option (right).

If the community would rather highlight the current bike parking currently like the one alongside the ESU 8 building, here are some ideas to point out their availability.

- Place a bike parking sign within the vicinity
- Paint it a bright color to help it stand out
- Invest in simple, temporary bike racks to be used during special events



Bikes mean business.

One parking spot can accommodate multiple bike riders, compared to one car. It's also been found that bicycle riders tend to spend up to 5 times more at local businesses than car drivers.



Self-Constructed Example



Manufactured Example

**Product Link:** [Bike Corral – Modular, Freestanding Bike Parking Solution](#)





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Route to Connect Trail to Town  
**Wayfinding to the Trail**

The underpass connecting H Street to Riverside Park is a spectacular opportunity to provide residents with safe access to the outdoors and high-quality recreational amenities.

**A Two-Way Street**

Bike Walk Nebraska is advocating for the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission to create signage and graphic standards for communities to point back towards the trail.

If the designs are established, communities will be asked to invest in signage in support of the trail, as Nebraska Game & Parks is investing in signage to support the community.



Sidewalk entrance from H Street to the underpass.



Sidewalk entrance from Riverside Park to the underpass.

A

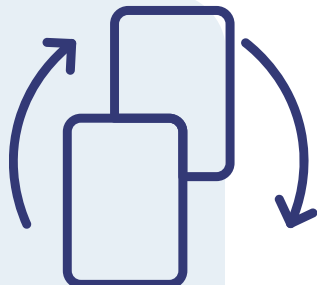
**Pointing the Way**

We propose a series of directional signs to encourage the use of the underpass rather than crossing above ground at HWY 275.

Additionally, we suggest prioritizing the area directly around the park (A) first, and then additional signs further out in the residential area along H Street. An additional consideration is to place signs along H Street from the elementary school to the end.

**Keep it consistent.**

Many signs are included in this Trail Towns proposal, and the most important thing is to ensure they're consistent across the community. If Neligh has a signage standard, we recommend applying it to this proposal.



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Route to Connect Trail to Town  
**Safely Rounding the Curve**

A safety barrier identified on the route was the bushes alongside the sidewalk off H Street, leading to the overpass, which were infringing on the line of sight and physical space of the walkway. We recommend keeping those cut back.







## Funding Options

### Grant Funding

A series of grants are available, but due to each funder having unique requirements and funding priorities, Bike Walk Nebraska will work alongside the community to source funding based on what recommendations in this proposal that Neligh choose to pursue.

It's also encouraged to propose the recommendations listed for any larger grants the community is pursuing, whether for parks, road construction, or historic preservation. Walkability, tourism, economic development, and access to the outdoors interact with many other areas of life.

### Sponsorships & Partnerships

Consider reaching out to businesses that benefit from increased trail usage, community members, or public health districts to ask them to invest in one of the recommendations in the proposal. Even an incremental investment is a good step forward!

## Looking to the Future

### Invest alongside other improvements.

When reviewing the City of Neligh's Strategic Plan 2025 - 2030, it outlines the use of a one-half percent sales tax to support public infrastructure improvements.

It is most efficient and effective to ensure any adjacent infrastructure, such as sidewalks, crosswalks, signage, or other pedestrian needs, are completed concurrently with any construction.

### Keep learning.

We highly recommend listening to this webinar hosted by America Walks and Main Street America. It showcases ideas and discusses the connection between walkability, economic development, and community quality of life in rural towns.

Scan the code to the right or [click here for the direct link](#).



### About Bike Walk Nebraska

Bike Walk Nebraska is the only statewide advocacy nonprofit pursuing active transportation.

We catalyze, collaborate, and lead initiatives and projects across the state within three key areas of focus: advocacy and policy, active tourism and economic development, and community education. Learn more at [www.bikewalknebraska.org](http://www.bikewalknebraska.org).

### What is active transportation?

**Active transportation is human-powered transportation, predominantly biking, walking, and rolling.** It's also sometimes called active mobility, soft mobility, or active transport. At Bike Walk Nebraska, we support all vulnerable road users, but focus most of our efforts on cyclist and pedestrian safety, access, and infrastructure.