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## REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

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# University of Northern Iowa Mixed-Use Destination District

Location: Cedar Falls, Iowa



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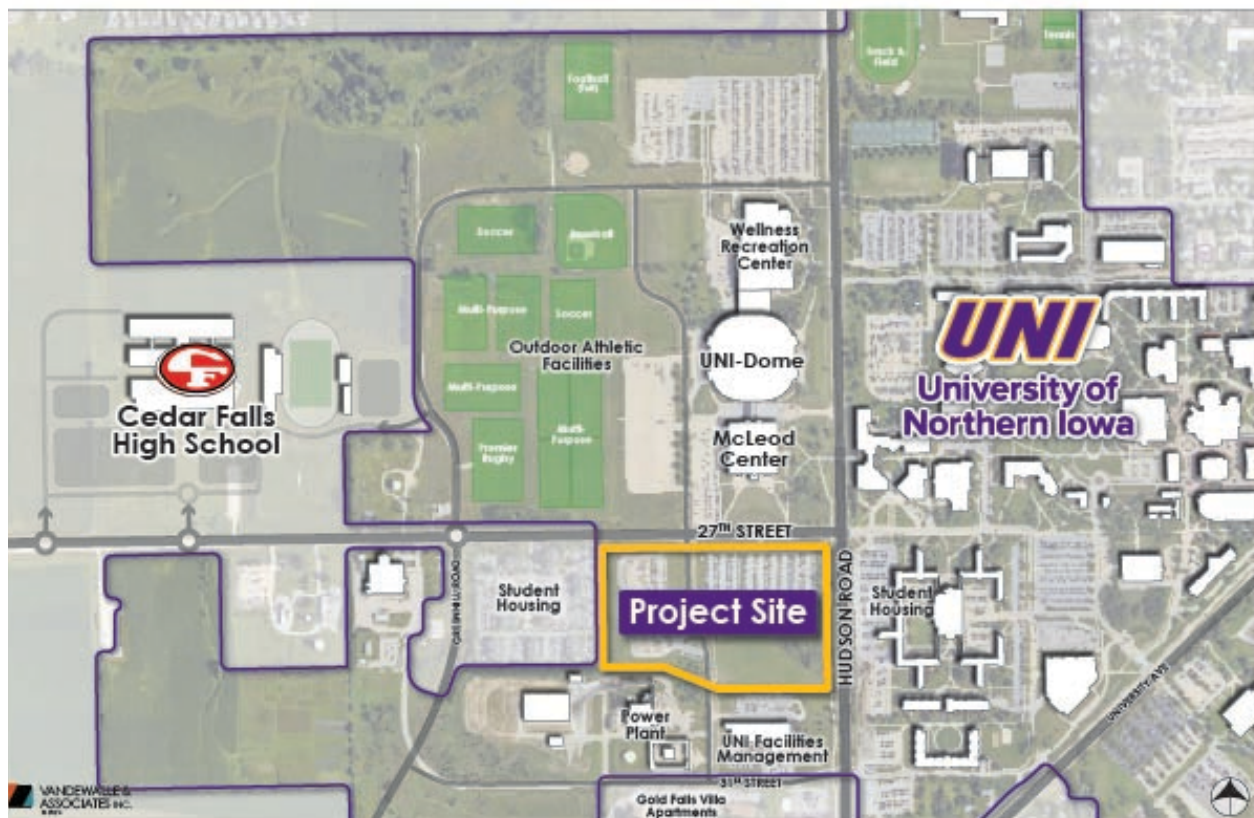
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# 1. Introduction

## Development opportunity

The University of Northern Iowa (“University” or “UNI”) is soliciting qualifications and information for a Master Developer or Site-Specific Developer (“Developer”) to develop a transformational mixed-use “Destination District” on UNI campus land adjacent to the UNI-Dome/McLeod Center and Academic Campus. The project is envisioned to create an active campus and community destination, support and enhance the gameday and ‘everyday’ experience on the southwest portion of the campus and strengthen the connection between the campus, athletic facilities, the recently completed Cedar Falls High School campus and the emerging neighborhood to the west. The vision for the project includes a mixture of lodging, restaurant, mixed-use housing, potential campus facility, retail and commercial services; all organized to create a pedestrian oriented experience. The vision also includes an amenity rich plaza/open space that will host events and game day activities.

The goal of this solicitation process is to engage a Master developer or development team to implement, finance, operate, and maintain these mixed-use assets through public -private partnership in which the Developer would ground lease the university-owned land. Development Teams are invited to submit their proposals for the development of the site, including information on their development expertise, prior experience in successfully implementing comparable projects, proof of financial capacity, experience with ground lease projects and a creative vision for implementing the project.



## Solicitation process

The University envisions a two-step process. Initially developers will submit qualifications that include a summary of their experience, team members, general project approach and interests and financial capability. Following evaluation of the responses, the university will select two or more finalists to submit refined proposals that include the proposed development program, site concept plan/massing diagrams, general operating and financial plan, and schedule. The university will select a developer(s) and issue an Intent to Award to the top evaluated Developer or team, which will then enter into negotiations with the university for the final project detailing and selection.

RFQ Issued	June 25 <sup>th</sup>
Pre-Submittal Question Submittal Deadline	July 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Proposal Submittal Deadline	August 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Interviews (If necessary)	September/October *
Notification of Selected Proposal(s)	End of Calendar Year *
* subject to change	

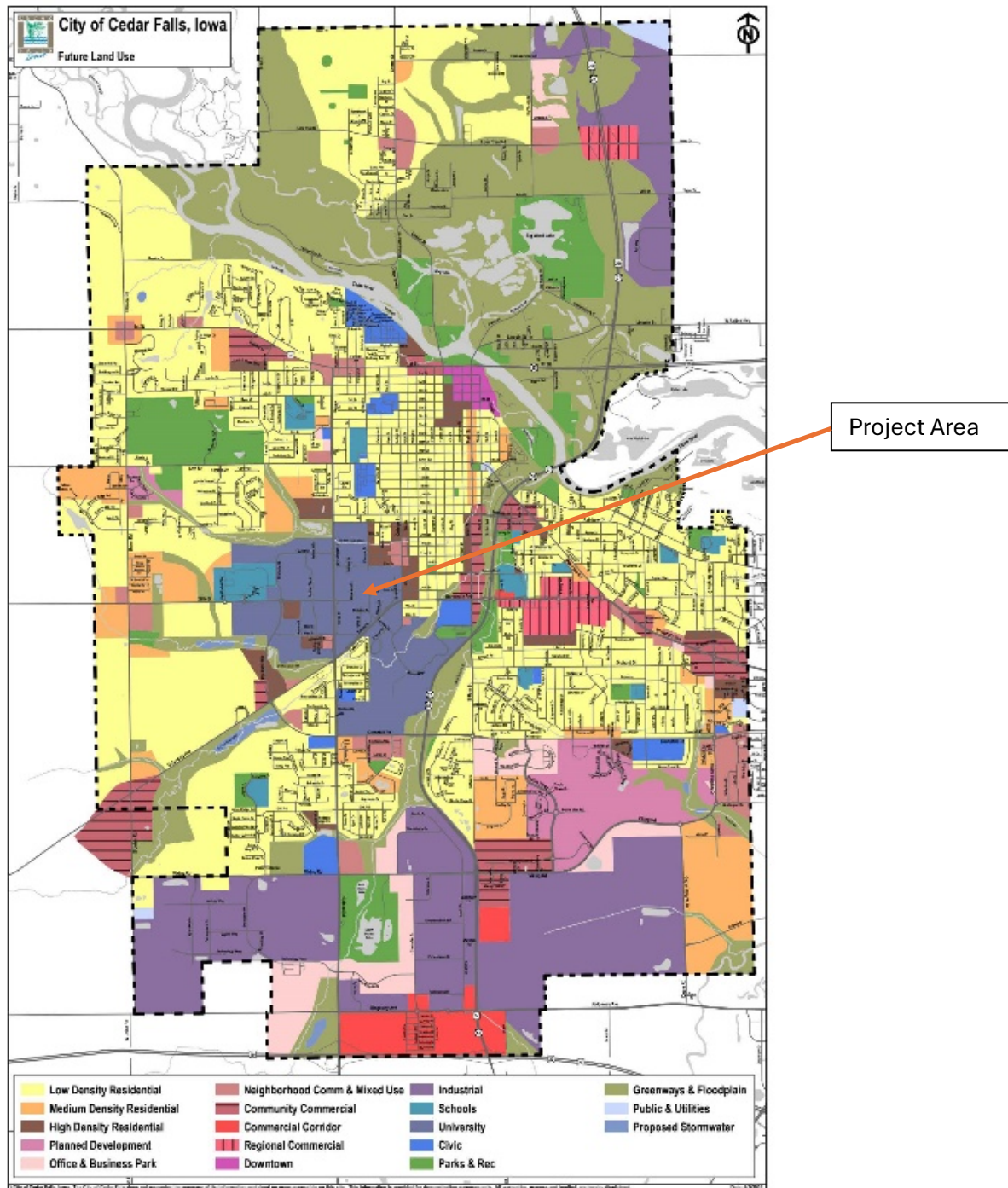
## About the University of Northern Iowa

The University of Northern Iowa, located in Cedar Falls, was founded in 1876 and is one of three public universities in Iowa. Today, the campus covers 810 acres and consists of five colleges: Wilson College of Business, Education, Humanities Arts & Science, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Graduate, Research, & Online Education. Consistently ranked second in the “Top Public Schools Regional University Midwest” category by U.S. News & World Report, and AACSB Accredited, UNI offers a tight knit community/campus life, more than 160 majors, minors & certificates, and a 98% career placement rate; all coupled with 17 Division 1 Athletics teams and vibrant arts & entertainment facilities. UNI’s enrollment has grown the past two years and has approximately 9,300 undergraduate & graduate students.



## About Cedar Falls/Waterloo

Cedar Falls, population 41,000, is part of the Waterloo-Cedar Falls MSA with an overall population of 165,000. Home to the University of Northern Iowa and located along the banks of the Cedar River, the City of Cedar Falls features a historic downtown, vibrant neighborhoods, regional/international employers such as John Deere and Target, and features access to the region through the Waterloo Regional Airport and regional transportation connections with Interstate 380, Avenue of the Saints, Highways 20, 27, and 58. Cedar Falls is also a significant tourism destination with 2024 sports tourism impacts of more than 440,000 visitors and \$44.2 million of economic impact.



## 2. Existing conditions

### Adjacent Campus and Athletic Facilities

The approximately 18-acre project site is located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Hudson Road and West 27th Street. The well positioned infill site is surrounded primarily by campus uses. Directly to the north are the university's ~120 acre Athletic campus, to the east across Hudson Road is campus student housing for over 2,000 students. To the south, campus maintenance facility as well as the campus powerplant. The abutting property to the west is UNI's recently acquired Trailside Apartments, a 480 bedroom resident apartment complex completed in 2001. The project is being integrated into UNI campus housing.

The City of Cedar Falls anticipates significant residential growth along the 27<sup>th</sup> Street/North Union Road corridors, with the adjoining area forming the largest future residential growth area in the city. Plans for this area call for low density, medium density, high density and planned commercial uses focused on the areas immediately adjacent to the project site.

Additional details related to notable adjacent uses and facilities:

**UNI-Dome:** This newly renovated multi-purpose indoor stadium hosts over 500,000 visitors per year and serves as a hub for athletics, community, business and cultural activities. The 12,000-seat facility hosts UNI football, track and field, softball practice, games and tournaments. The UNI-Dome has over 40 single and multi-day events annually, and its events draw 200,000 visitors from outside the county every year. Other notable events include the Iowa State High School Football Championships, concerts, farm shows, sports camps and clinics, graduation ceremonies, and other large convening events.



**McLeod Center:** The 6,650-seat basketball and volleyball facility, constructed in 2006, hosts games and tournaments for men's and women's basketball, volleyball as well as wrestling and various other events including graduation ceremonies. The University is currently planning a \$14 million practice facility to support student athletes with enhanced facilities.

**Indoor/Outdoor Athletic and wellness facilities:** A sprawling 120-acre athletic/recreation facility campus lies just to the north of the site. In addition to the UNI-Dome and McLeod Center, the athletic campus includes a campus Wellness Recreation Center, Tennis Complex, Outdoor Track and Field, outdoor turf football field, Soccer field, Baseball and softball field, Rugby Field and five multi-purpose fields and multiple parking lots that provide space for over 2,000 cars.

**Cedar Falls High School Campus and Stadium:** A new \$112M Cedar Falls High school campus opened in the fall of 2024 along 27<sup>th</sup> Street west of the project site. The 70-acre campus contains over 300,000 sq feet of academic and auxiliary space to accommodate 1800 students. The campus includes a stadium, auditorium, performance center, with future expansion plans for an athletic performance center and a competition swimming facility.



**Gallager Bluedorn Performing Arts Center and Strayer-Wood Theater:** The Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center (GBPAC), opened in 2000, is home to three state-of-the-art concert halls: the 1,680 seat Catherine Cassidy Gallagher Great Hall, Davis Hall, and Jebe Hall. The facility hosts more than 300 performances each year including the UNI School of Music, the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony and regional events.

The Strayer-Wood Theater hosts UNI plays, musicals, and operas with two performance spaces.

**Hudson Road and West 27<sup>th</sup> Street:** The site is at the signalized intersection of Hudson Road (Minor Arterial) and West 27<sup>th</sup> Street (Collector Street). Hudson Road sees approximately 32,000-35,000 trips per day and West 27<sup>th</sup> Street has approximately 2,000-5,000 trips per day. Traffic numbers are projected to increase in volume due to the new High school, adjacent roadway improvements and the buildout of the primary growth of area for Cedar Falls to the west. The site is also served by a nearby signalized intersection at the corner of 31<sup>st</sup> and Hudson Road.



### 3. Development Site



**General description:** The 18 acre site is generally flat and gently slopes to the south and east toward the existing stormwater facility. Currently the majority of the site is surface parking serving campus residence halls and staff and for major events held at the UNI-Dome and McLeod Center. The existing student parking is planned to be relocated to new parking areas east of Hudson Road, with some stalls remaining in the SW corner of the site in support of the proposed wrestling facility.

**Utilities:** The site is served by adjacent sewer and water and contains a campus steam tunnel that runs along the east edge of Panther parkway and east -west through the site south of the West 27<sup>th</sup> street ROW. Stormwater management for the site currently drains to the existing stormwater basin and drainageway on the east side of the site which is sized to address a majority of the stormwater management needs of the site; final site design will need to verify best practices for stormwater management. Overhead electrical transmission lines exist along the West 27<sup>th</sup> Street frontage and should be evaluated for undergrounding as part of the project.

**Traffic and Circulation- Hudson Road and West 27<sup>th</sup> Street:** The site is located at the southwest corner of the signaled intersection of Hudson and West 27<sup>th</sup>. Panther Parkway bisects the site and provides direct access from West 27<sup>th</sup> Street and West 31<sup>st</sup> Street.

## 4. Development program and goals

### **Strategic Goals of development for UNI**

The overarching goal of the university is to transform the site into a vibrant mixed-use district that is an activity hub for campus & the community through a public private partnership with a developer.

The following strategic objectives guide the development and selection process:

- Adds public/private vibrancy and fresh energy to the southwest campus area and midportion of the City
- Provides supportive uses to the campus and deepens the connection with the regional community
- Enhances and supports the game days and event experiences
- Helps attract and retain new students, athletes, staff and faculty to the University
- Augments the quality of life in the community, increasing tourism and supplements the guest experience
- Attracts additional investment to the campus and community
- Performs financially and generates a ROI for the University

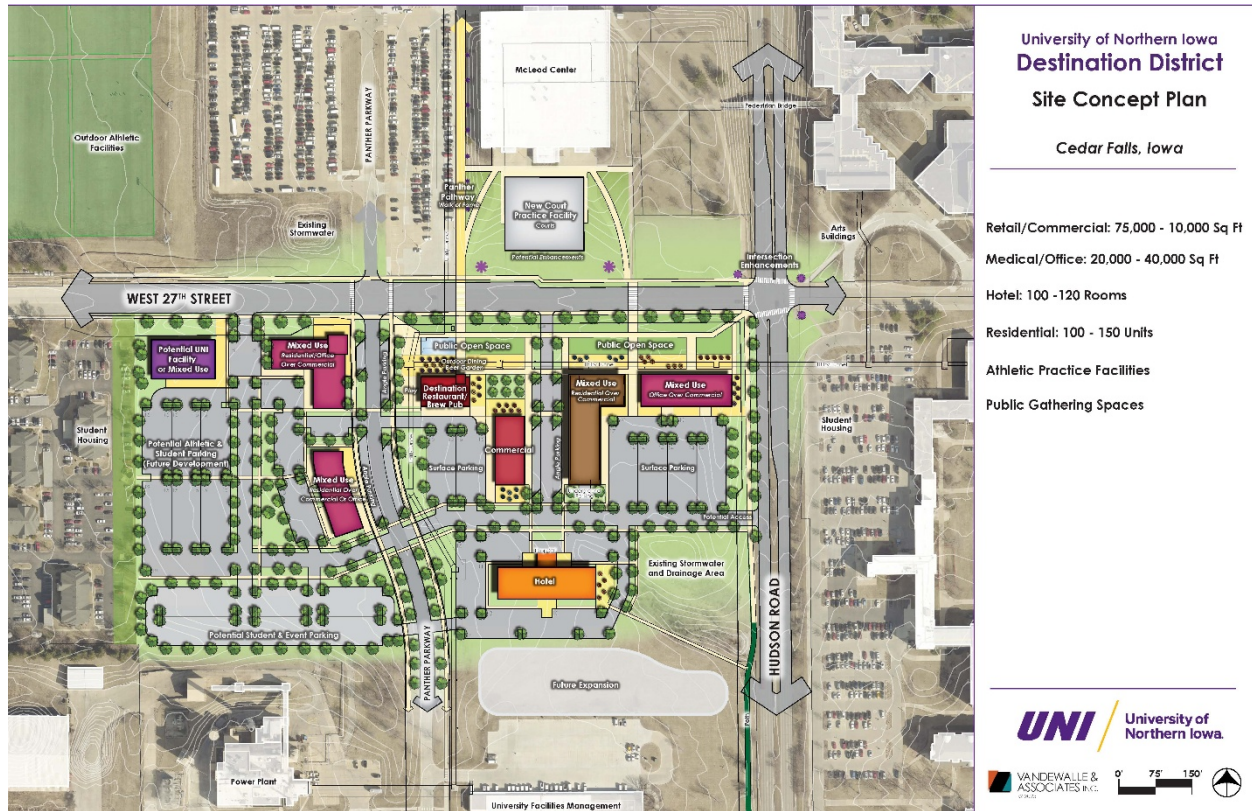
### **Development alternatives**

UNI selected Vandewalle and Associates, an urban development, planning and design firm to prepare a Concept Development Plan and assist with developer selection process and implementation. Through the summer of 2024 several alternatives were developed to determine and discussed with the UNI Panther District Committee which selected the concept development alternative shown below. The university is open to additional concepts, ideas, uses, and site configuration, based on the strengths of the developer. The developer is expected to adhere to the general overarching design guidelines and vision.



## 5. UNI Development Concept Plan

The Development Concept Plan strives to create a new vibrant mixed-use district and activity hub for the western edge of the UNI campus and the greater Cedar Falls community. Capturing regional traffic and destinations along West 27<sup>th</sup> Street/Hudson Road the project combines a focus on pedestrian-oriented site/building design, daily convenience services/retail, and regional sporting events to facilitate an urban mixed use environment featuring destination restaurants and retail,



market focused residential living, office, and lodging opportunities.

### Key Components & Guidelines

#### **West 27<sup>th</sup> Street Events Plaza**

Building placement along West 27<sup>th</sup> Street will frame a new public open space spanning from West 27<sup>th</sup> Street to the mixed-use buildings south of the existing steam tunnel easement. This open space will be designed to create opportunities for outdoor dining/gathering spaces, activity spaces, and seating; as well as hosting game day/large event programming.



## **Uses**

The project incorporates opportunities for retail, residential, office, and lodging uses within the site, each arranged to create synergy and complimentary uses. Buildings along the plaza are required to have first floor commercial uses with upper story uses spanning market rate residential or office space. Lodging is incorporated into the site at the terminus of the McLeod Center/UNI-Dome viewshed/axis. Building heights span from tall one-story/mezzanine destination restaurant to 3-4 story mixed use buildings, arranged per the master plan to preserve key viewsheds up Hudson Road to the UNI-Dome and create an urban environment along the events plaza. Additional locations for one-two story commercial uses front along the western edge of Panther Parkway. The university is evaluating a potential wrestling practice facility, integrated along the western edge of the site, as well as support parking for students and events.

## **General Site Use Allocation**

The uses within the project should implement the goal of a vibrant mixed-use environment with active first floors and range of complementary uses.

The Site Concept Plan projects the following mix of uses as a potential way to configure the site.

Retail/Commercial	75,000-100,000 sq. ft.
Medical/Office	20,000-40,000 sq. ft.
Hotel	100-120 rooms
Housing	100-150 units
Potential Wrestling Practice Facility	TBD
Student Parking	TBD

Housing incorporated into the site should be structured in a way so as to not compete with the on-campus student housing and should focus exclusively on non-student housing.



Illustrative Vision Concept Plan





Illustrative Events Plaza Character Sketch

### **Building Entrances & Windows**

Buildings are required to front onto the plaza or street frontage with usable primary entrances and permeable store fronts on the first floor. Outdoor seating and ancillary active uses are encouraged. Secondary entrances are allowed to the parking areas, but tenant spaces are required to orient out to the plaza or street frontages.

The first-floor retail frontage design is required to feature clear vision glass and entrances to create visual access into the retail spaces. Window may not be obscured by window clings, signage, furniture placement, or other treatments that reduce the visibility and connection with the plaza or street frontage.



## Key Visual Relationships

The concept design creates several overlapping key sight lines to create movement and visual interest throughout the project:

### Plaza Commercial Terminus

The mixed-use building west of the Panther Parkway/West 27<sup>th</sup> Street intersection holds a key location as the western edge of the West 27<sup>th</sup> Street Events Plaza. Architectural detailing and entrances should be designed to take advantage of this highly visible location.

### Hotel/McLeod Center Axis

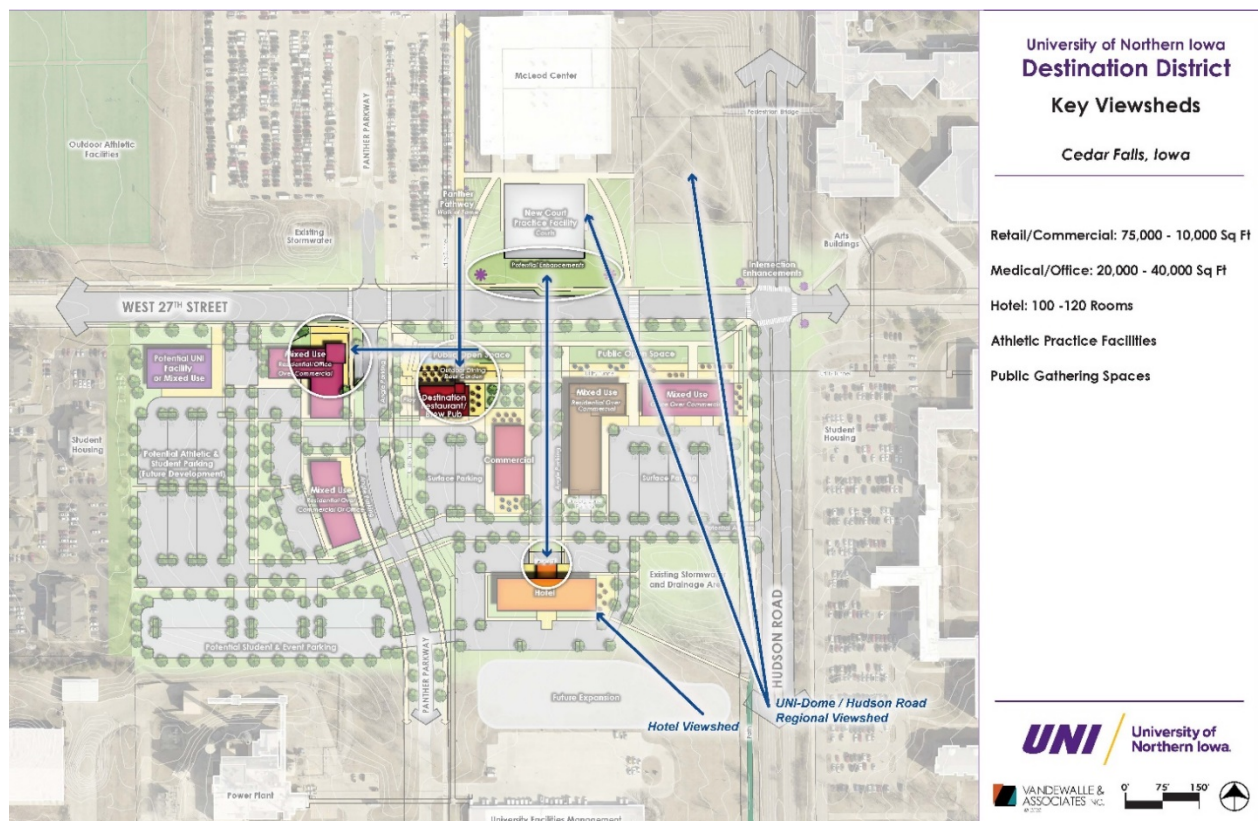
The primary entrance for the Hotel is designed to be on-axis with the site line to the McLeod Center/UNI-Dome Complex to create clear visual and functional connections between the regional destination and the hotel.

### Panther Pathway

The Panther Pathway connection along the western edge of the McLeod Center forms a key link between the project and the primary UNI-Dome entrance.

### Hudson Road/UNI-Dome Regional View Corridor

The regional viewshed north along the Hudson Road Corridor to the UNI-Dome forms regional ties to the site. Building design and heights in the project have been designed to maintain this key regional sight line.



### **Hotel Placement**

Lodging on the site is incorporated south of the West 27<sup>th</sup> street mixed use buildings arranged in an axial relationship with the McLeod Center entrances and driveway. The primary hotel drop-off/lobby entrance shall be placed on the north side of the building on an axis with the view line. Additional vehicular access is supplied from Panther Parkway and potential access to Hudson Road. The University anticipates a hotel with national brand recognition.



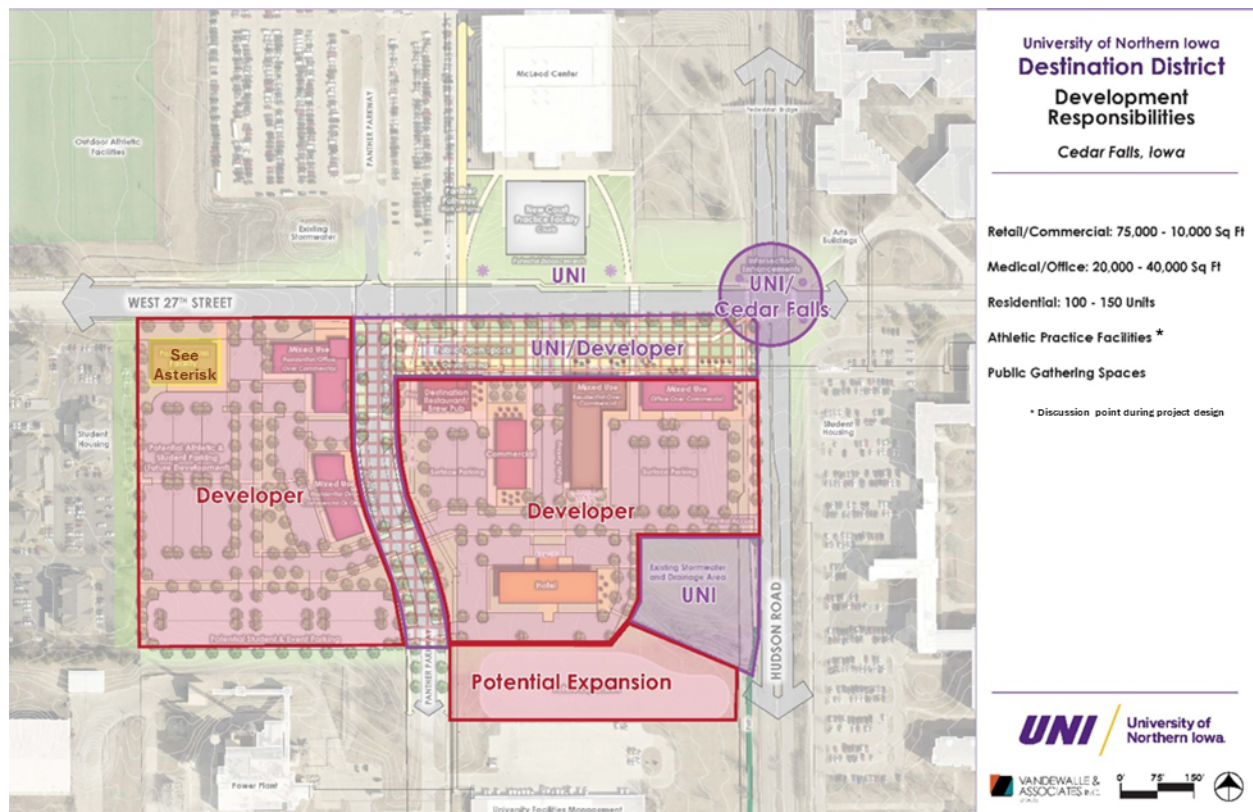
### **Parking**

Parking for the project is required to be placed per the master plan so that the buildings hold the primary frontages and screen parking from the public open spaces. Underground parking may be incorporated as desired. Student parking and University support parking may be located west of Panther Parkway to potentially replace a portion of the existing parking stalls and will be finalized as part of the design of the project.



## Development Responsibilities

The development plan anticipates a public/private partnership that will include components led by the development team and components undertaken by UNI. The development team will be responsible for all mixed use, commercial, housing, circulation, and parking components on the development lots. UNI will partner with the developer for any improvements to Panther Parkway, the 27<sup>th</sup> Street Events Plaza, UNI facilities, and will work with the City of Cedar Falls on Hudson Road/27<sup>th</sup> Street intersection pedestrian improvements. Final configurations and responsibilities will be determined during the course of the project design with the following general distribution based on the site concept plan configuration.



## 6. Schedule and submission

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Submittal information, along with evaluation and selection criteria, is available in the University bidding portal. Project submissions must be delivered electronically via the University's bidding portal at [uni.ionwave.net](http://uni.ionwave.net). Complete submittal packets are due by 4:00 PM on August 22<sup>nd</sup>.

## 7. General Conditions

If there is a discrepancy between this document, and the materials found in the online bidding portal, the bidding portal documents prevail.