

A Guide to Valley Junction

Photos & Layout | Savannah Dennis

Historic Valley Junction is a unique area of West Des Moines that offers shops, restaurants, galleries and other things to do. The mismatched buildings that each have their own look make the area stick out in the surrounding neighborhoods. Between the cat cafe, a DIY studio, antique shops, art galleries, and restaurants of all kinds, there is always something to do during a visit.

The Historic Valley Junction Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and sharing the history of the area, supporting small businesses and engaging and connecting the community that surrounds them. With that work, the foundation also hosts a variety of events such

as the farmers market, All Iowa Bash, art festivals, Music in the Junction Concert Series and others.

The iconic arch entrance can be found on 5th Street off of Railroad Avenue in Des Moines, but there are shops all down 4th, 5th and 6th Streets. The area was originally settled in 1846 and was a stop on the Underground Railroad. In the late 1800s more land was purchased and the downtown area was established. As malls were built, the area has faced adversity but continues to thrive.

1 Outside of Atomic Garage, a vintage store in Valley Junction, this sign emphasizes the vintage aesthetic that is found inside the store. They sell and rent vintage records, assesories and clothing from the 1980s.



4 The 50+ Jelly Belly flavor options found amid the bulk candy supply at Nan's Nummies. They also have homemade chocolates, cookies, cupcakes, fudge, kettle corn and other sweet delights.

5 This unique building design that appears to be from a fantasy movie is actually an art gallery. The Kavanaugh Art Gallery houses art from over 100 artists that are available for purchase. They also do custom framing and ship their artwork all over the world.

6 A neon sign advertising Bing's in their storefront window. They offer all sorts of home and outdoor decor but also have a supply of games, books, cards and even socks.



8 Outside the Bing's shop, a red, metal sculpture holds locks of all shapes and sizes with names on them. It is similar to the Pont des Art pedestrian bridge in France that is known for the lock locks attached to it by tourists.

9 A marquee sign that features changing messages hangs above the Theatrical Shop that lives on 5th Street. They sell dance gear, costumes, wigs, makeup, hats and fabric.



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2 The view down 5th Street of Valley Junction at night. Many buildings have lights on them which gives the bustling street a bright, warm energy when combined with the lit up trees.

3 The colorful and stylish painted exterior of the Atomic Garage store. They sell and rent vintage records, assesories and clothing from the 1980s.



7 The bright storefront of the A-Okay Antiques shop, which lights up the entire street at night. Inside find a wide variety of mid-century-modern style items including juke boxes, slot machines, toys, furniture, lighting, jewelry and art.



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11 A neon sign for The Knotty Nail inside the storefront window. The Knotty Nail is a DIY studio where crafters can create string art, gnomes, front door decor, macreme plant holders, wreaths and custom keychains, among many other projects. They offer private workshops, public workshops and take-home projects that can be delivered.

10 Key Key the cat focuses on the people wandering around the Coffee Cats Cafe. The cafe currently has five cats that quests can play with, and even adopt, while drinking their beverages. They partner with the Animal Rescue League who provides them with cats in need of adoption.