Design Recommendations: Public Space & Circulation

Topics covered in this section include:

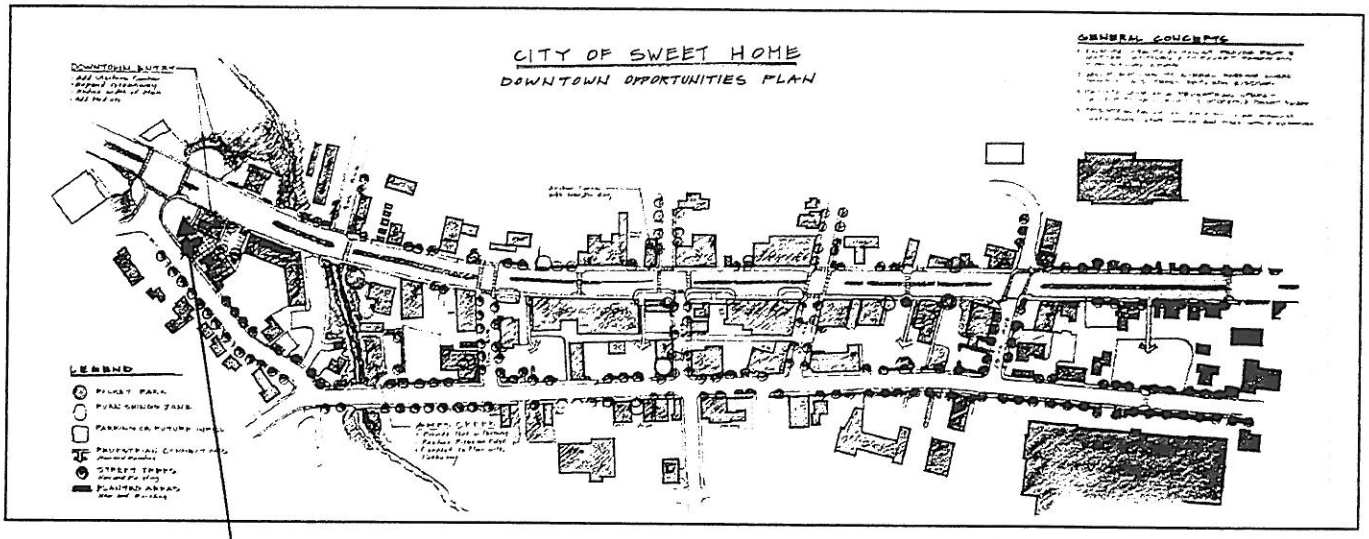
Introduction
Opportunities Plan
Gateway Development
Ames Creek
Circulation & Linkages
Streetscape Improvements
Creating People Places

INTRODUCTION

This section of Sweet Home's Downtown Conceptual Plan addresses the physical and aesthetic design of downtown's public spaces. The enhancements discussed in this section are designed to seamlessly integrate with each other to make the whole downtown district look and function better. The character and aesthetics of the public spaces in the central business district will help set the theme of, and tone for, Sweet Home.

One goal of the public space design portion of this project is to help create a stronger downtown commercial district for Sweet Home through the enhancement of open and public spaces. These spaces serve as conduits for pedestrian circulation; provide a more cohesive and inviting whole, and create a pleasant and safe environment. Another goal is to improve pedestrian circulation patterns as they are a critically important, functional element in a successful downtown environment

Two goals emerged from the public space design component of the Resource Team project: 1) the creation of flexible gathering spaces that are multi-purpose, with uses that promote 'people-activity;' and 2) the creation of public spaces that are attractive, special and loved by the community. (These will be attractive to visitors as well.)

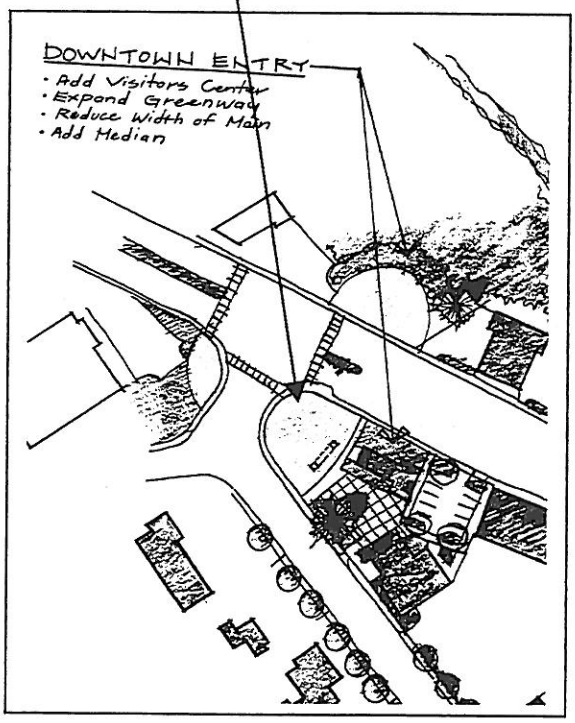


DOWNTOWN OPPORTUNITIES PLAN

The color version of the above graphic is located in the Appendix.

The Resource Team took a broad, 'big picture' look at downtown Sweet Home in terms of pedestrian nodes (or attractors), and the types of public space enhancements that are needed to help make the community more cohesive and pedestrian friendly.

GATEWAY DEVELOPMENT

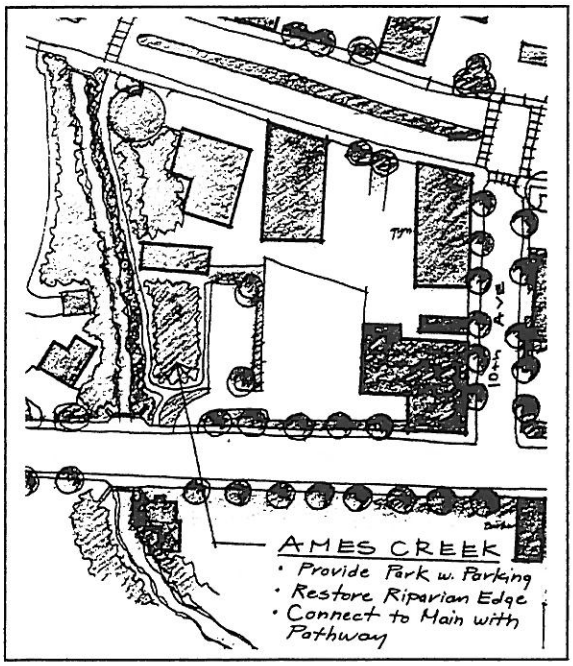


The Downtown Opportunities Plan outlined in a broad conceptual form, several recommended public space improvements for Sweet Home's business district. One of the recommendations provides a solution for making a stronger entry, or gateway, statement on Highway 228 (from the west). The Team recommends reconfiguring the site where the local Museum is located to include a Visitors' Center, attractive public plaza, expanded green space and parking. The Team recommends the old Depot, located behind McDonald's, be moved and rehabbed into a Visitors' Center/Chamber. The current location of the Chamber (in the center of town) is inaccessible from the east. Locating the Visitors' Center at the Museum would help create a strong gateway into the

community and provide a 'one-stop' for visitors to get information on local offerings and tour the Museum. A paved plaza between the Visitors' Center and Museum would feature outdoor exhibits. Maintaining the lawn at the 'point' of the property would create a green setting for the Visitors' Center and a front yard for the community, appropriate to the name *Sweet Home*. To help make this area more attractive and inviting, the Team recommends 'greening up' the corners directly to the west and south of the Museum property. The conceptual plan for this area shows the location of the depot/Visitors' Center and adjacent parking. For this configuration to occur, the shed that houses the historical farm equipment would need to be relocated.

Another recommendation that would help make this area more pedestrian friendly would be to incorporate a crosswalk at the intersection, from the Museum across Main, and narrowing of the crossing distance of Main Street with curb extensions. (These improvements will need to be implemented with ODOT's approval.)

AMES CREEK



Sweet Home is fortunate to have a natural amenity like Ames Creek running through the western edge of downtown. Restoration of the riparian edge of the creek into a more natural area will make it even more of an outstanding feature. The inclusion of a trail along the creek, linking Main and Long Streets, coupled with a better defined park, and the addition of a parking lot, would turn this 'diamond in the rough' into an outstanding natural feature in downtown.

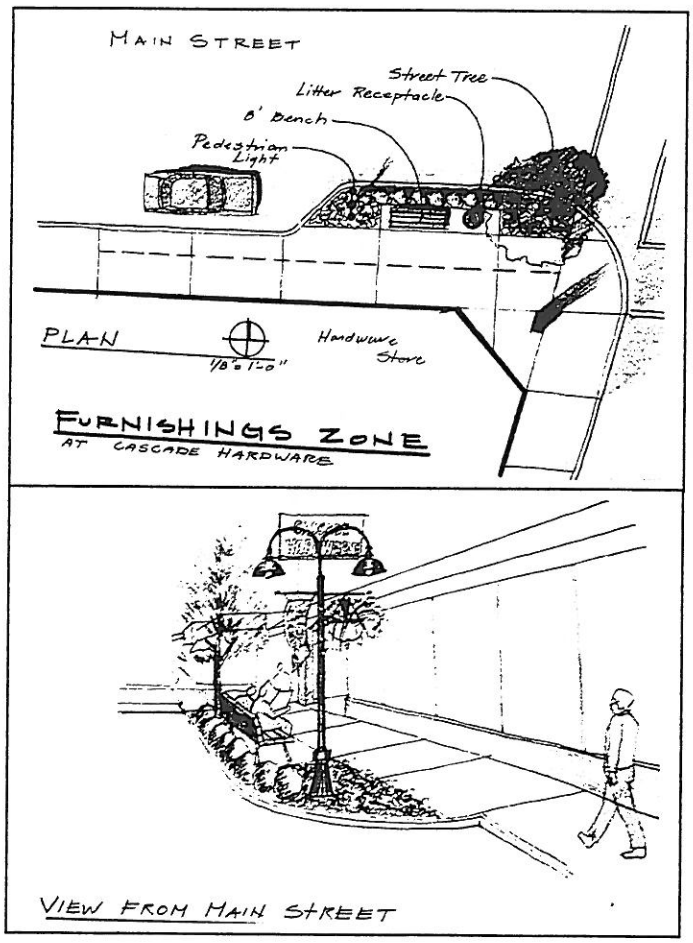
STREET TREES

Members of the Resource Team recommend the continuation of the street tree planting program along Long Street, the streets that connect Long and Main (10th, 12th, 13th, & 15th), and in selected areas along Main Street (the recommendations for Main Street will be covered in a section that follows). In downtowns, trees can create a special ambiance and frame great views. When planted along wide streets, trees can help calm traffic, offer shade and add vertical texture to otherwise bleak urban areas. They also add color,

texture and softness to an otherwise 'hard' streetscape. In particular, widening the sidewalks and adding trees along the streets that connect Main and Long will help turn these areas into inviting gateways, helping entice visitors to explore Sweet Home's commercial offerings along Long Street.

The Resource Team also recommends the continued 'plant out' of the center median strip from near the museum, to 18th Avenue. Due to the narrowness of the median, planting street trees *in* the median is not recommended as their height and bulk would visually divide Main Street and create the probability of damage to the tree limbs from passing trucks.

FURNISHING ZONES

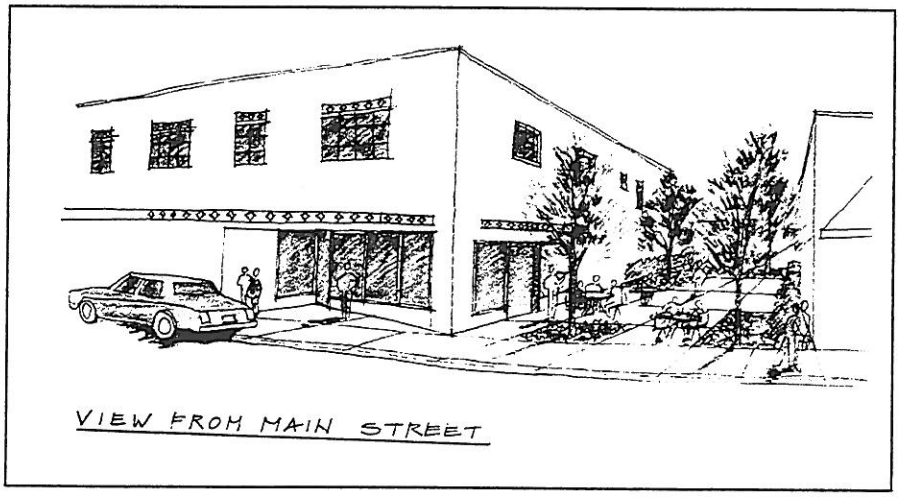


Color versions of these graphics are included in the Appendix.

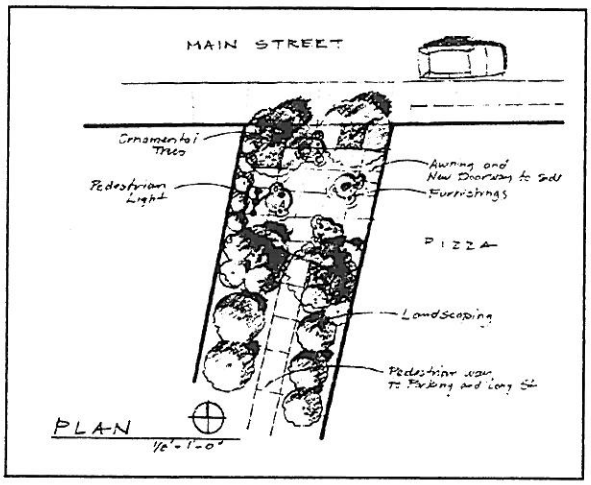
In addition to locating street trees in specific downtown locations, other pedestrian amenities should be implemented in the core area as part of an overall plan for downtown public space. However, the narrow width of the sidewalks along Main Street offers little room for amenities such as pedestrian scaled lighting, benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, etc. In response to this issue, the Resource Team recommends working with ODOT to develop 'furnishing zones' in specific areas along Main Street. Conceptually, these zones could be implemented along the south side of Main where there are curb extensions (at 12th and 13th Avenues), and in front of Key Bank. They could include lighting, benches, low plantings, trash receptacles, etc. Making these 'opportunity areas' into more people-friendly places will create a Main Street's public space that is more inviting, attractive and *active*!

POCKET PARKS AND CONNECTIONS

Since the sidewalk width on Main Street is narrow and there are limited public places for people to gather and interact, the Resource Team recommends developing pocket parks in several locations to solve this problem. An active Main Street include public 'people spaces' that encourage activity through their design and location. The opportunities to develop pocket parks along the south side Main Street exist at the following locations: at Ames Creek; the corner of the Solar Way building at 12th; between the newspaper office and the pizza parlor; next to Mollie's Bakery; and on the east side of the Rio.

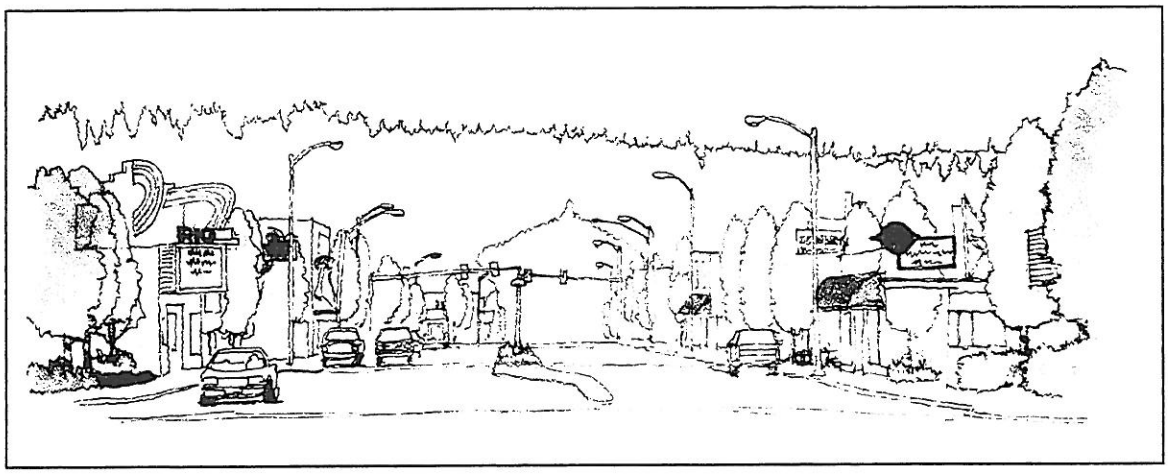


Opportunities to create pocket parks on the north side of Main Street exist at the following locations: just east of A&W; next to the Frontier Restaurant; next to the Dairy Queen and between the video store and Main Street, at the 15th Avenue intersection. On Long Street, there is an opportunity to develop a pocket park at the 12th Avenue intersection, behind the tavern.



Since all of these proposed pocket park locations are different in size and orientation, each will need to be designed individually. However, certain design elements (ie. lighting, benches, trash receptacles, etc) will need to be consistent in design for an integrated and cohesive look. Each space should contain the elements that support activity, including good pedestrian-scaled lighting for saftety and to alleviate vandalism. Several of the pocket park locations along Main Street could also provide good pedestrian linkages to Long Street- -giving visitors and residents attractive options and opportunities to 'park once and walk often,' rather than vice versa. In addition to the pocket parks, there are several other locations along

Main Street that could support more formalized pedestrian connections to better access parking.



Several of the pocket park locations could be enhanced by opening up the retail or restaurant spaces onto the park with windows and doors, and in some instances, outdoor dining could easily 'spill' out into the pocket park, encouraging even more activity.

Along Main Street, the pocket parks should include trees to help soften the street edge and add green to this urban environment. By carefully locating street trees in these spaces, and clustering plantings at other strategic locations, downtown can have the appearance of regularly planted street trees *without* compromising the narrow sidewalk space need for pedestrian circulation.

The development of downtown pocket parks as attractive, unique places will help make downtown a more inviting place for pedestrians. Sweet Home has a good opportunity to add and reshape downtown green space through pocket park development.