

DOWNTOWN
FOR EVERYONE

A REIMAGINED DOWNTOWN BLOOMINGTON EXPERIENCE

STREETSCAPE PROGRAM REPORT
VOLUME 1

Adopted April 8th, 2024

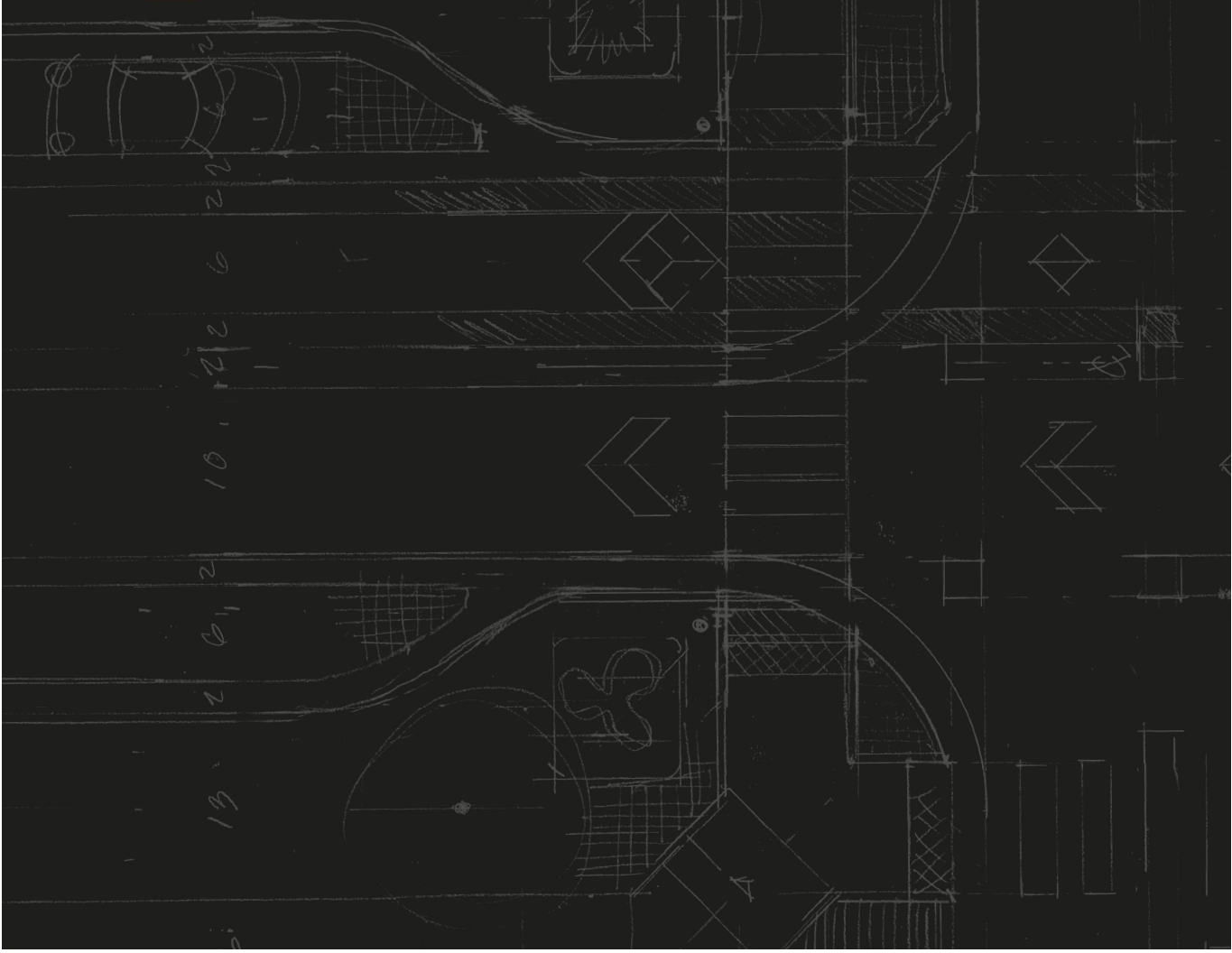


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SPECIAL THANKS

Many individuals and volunteers contributed to the development of the Downtown for Everyone Streetscape Program, including scores of public participants. Special thanks is owed to the following individuals who provided exceptional support throughout the design process.

City Leadership

It is only because of the strong commitments made by the Mayor, the City Manager, and the Councilmembers that the long-awaited revitalization of Downtown Bloomington has a viable future.

- Mboka Mwilambwe (Mayor)
- Tim Gleason (City Manager)
- Jenna Kearns (Ward 1 Council Member)
- Donna Boelen (Ward 2 Council Member)
- Sheila Montney (Ward 3 Council Member)
- John Danenberger (Ward 4 Council Member)
- Nick Becker (Ward 5 Council Member)
- Cody Hendricks (Ward 6 Council Member)
- Mollie Ward (Ward 7 Council Member)
- Kent Lee (Ward 8 Council Member)
- Tom Crumpler (Ward 9 Council Member)

City Core Team

The preparation of the Streetscape Plan would not have been possible without the attentive oversight of the City Core Team. This group of City Department representatives dedicated many hours above and beyond their normal duties to provide the Design Team with invaluable insight and guidance.

- Billy Tyus (Deputy City Manager)
- Philip Allyn, PE, PTOE (Traffic Engineer)
- Katherine Murphy (Communications & External Affairs Manager)
- Kelly Pfeifer (Assistant Director of Economic & Community Development)
- Craig Shonkwiler, PE (Assistant Public Works Director)*
- Kimberly Smith (Assistant Director of Economic & Community Development)*

*No longer employed at the City of Bloomington

Steering Committee

The members of the Steering Committee graciously volunteered their time to share their unique perspectives on Downtown Bloomington and were instrumental in setting direction for many of the design concepts included in the Plan.

- David Braun (General Manager, Connect Transit)
- Elmo Dowd (Production Systems Development Manager, Ferrero)
- Pamela Eaton (Owner, Eaton Studio and Gallery)
- Anthony Grant (Assistant County Administrator, McLean County)
- Doug Johnson (Executive Director, McLean County Arts Center)
- Jan Lancaster (Owner, The Bistro)
- Jamie Mathy (Owner, Red Raccoon Games)
- Andy Shirk (Co-Founder, CEO Council)
- Vicki Tilton (Owner, Fox & Hound Spa)
- Andi Whalen (Branch Manager, Inland Northwest Bank)

McLean County

Representatives of the McLean County Administration and McLean County Museum of History might have considered it presumptuous when the City first began considering improvements on the Museum Square. Instead, the individuals listed below were very supportive of the program, and they collaborated with the Design Team to develop the best solutions for this area of Downtown.

- Cassie Taylor (County Administrator, McLean County)
- Anthony Grant (Assistant County Administrator, McLean County)
- Cathy Dreyer (Assistant County Administrator, McLean County)
- Val Laymon (Chair, McLean County Property Committee)
- Julie Emig (Executive Director, McLean County Museum of History)
- Norris Porter (Director of Development, McLean County Museum of History)

Illinois Department of Transportation

Even though IDOT was already well into the preliminary design for the resurfacing of US Route 51, staff still dedicated time to make several visits to Bloomington to entertain discussions with the City. Staff also provided reviews and comments on technical submittals prepared by the Design Team.

- Scott Nelhart, PE (District 5 Engineer)
- Jeffrey Allen, PE (District 5 Land Acquisition and Geometrics Engineer)
- Jason Stults, PE (District 5 Studies & Plans Engineer)

Utility Companies

Representatives from utility companies attended meetings with the Design Team and provided the City with critical information about existing conditions, and shared their companies' future construction plans. The Team is appreciative for their cooperation and responsiveness.

- Bernie Anderson (Regional Manager Community Affairs, Nicor Gas)
- Adam Gangloff (Network Engineer, Frontier Communications)
- Dean Thompson (Supervisor of Distribution Design, Ameren)

Connect Transit

The staff at Connect Transit were eager to assist with coordination efforts for the Downtown for Everyone Streetscape Program and the future Transit Center. Staff from Connect Transit reviewed compatibility of future routes with the Design Team's street designs, helped provide staffing for the First Community Open House, and answered technical questions related to the Transit Center throughout the design process.

- David Braun (General Manager)
- Jacob Smith (Transportation Planner)
- Aubrey Staton (Marketing Manager)

Advocacy Groups

Advocacy Groups played a critical role in sharing their expertise with the Design Team so that solutions accommodating all users of Downtown might be incorporated into the plan.

- Conan Calhoun (Advocacy & Advancement Director, LIFE CIL)
- Patrick Dullard (Treasurer, Bike BloNo)
- Doug Johnson (Executive Director, McLean County Arts Center)**
- Dan Steadman (Manager, West Bloomington Revitalization Project Bike Co-op)

**Also contributed content for the "Public Art" section in Chapter 6 of the Report

Design Team

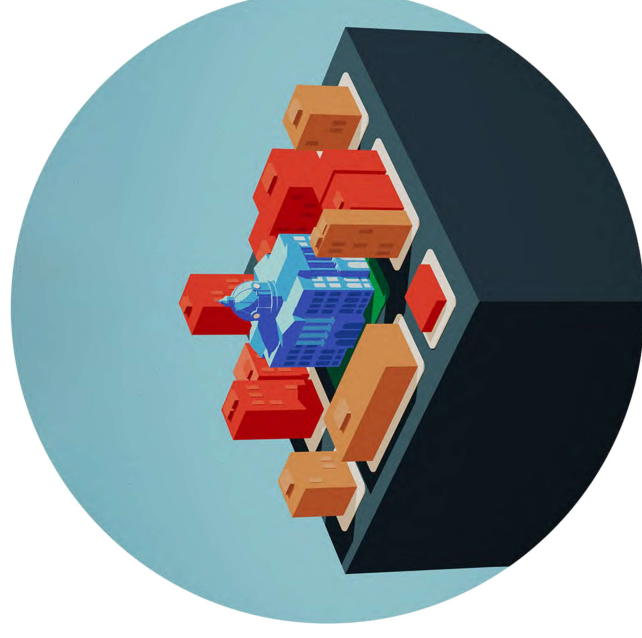
This Report makes many references to the "Design Team" which is comprised of a tight-knit partnership of design firms who have worked on many successful projects together and have a strong passion for Community Development.

- Crawford, Murphy, & Tilly, Inc. (Project Lead)
- Massie Massie + Associates
- Hewn Studio, PLLC
- Clear Design Group, LLC

Photography

Select photography by Randall von Lisk ([flickr.com/photos/myoldpostcards](https://www.flickr.com/photos/myoldpostcards/)).

Randall von Lisk
PHOTOGRAPHY



Executive Summary

The Downtown for Everyone Streetscape Program represents a generational investment in Downtown Bloomington with tremendous potential to transform the way people experience the "heart of the City." From vibrant pedestrian corridors to new public spaces for concerts to new opportunities for outdoor dining, the implementation of this program will provide immediate quality of life improvements to visitors and residents alike. But the streetscaping improvements should also provide the engine for major economic development both Downtown and community wide.

The choice by City leaders to prioritize the Downtown for Everyone Streetscape Program is one of the most impactful and forward-thinking in Bloomington's long, proud history.

A streetscaping program the breadth and depth of Bloomington's has many different elements, but all are unified by four key principles:



1 The Streetscape is **DEFINING**

The aesthetic of Downtown's streetscape will provide Bloomington with its own unique identity – quite different from the streetscapes of other Midwest cities – while still honoring and reflecting Downtown's exceptional historic architecture. The Streetscape Style (made up of various colors, materials, and furnishings throughout Downtown Bloomington) will unify all of the improvements by establishing a consistent Sense of Place. This Style, together with the many new amenities, will create a defining Downtown experience.



2 The Streetscape is **INCLUSIVE**

The proposed streetscape design truly will result in a "Downtown for Everyone" because the improvements promote inclusivity for all members of the community: overhauled access throughout Downtown for persons with disabilities, new accommodations for bicyclists, safer connections to the Downtown Core from surrounding neighborhoods, and amenities and attractions designed to provide something for all ages. Something "for everyone".

3 The Streetscape is **RESPONSIBLE**

The Downtown for Everyone Streetscape Program implements a wide variety of socially responsible improvements. This includes sustainable initiatives such as the use of energy efficient lighting and Electric Vehicle Charging Stations. It also includes designs that promote public health by making Downtown a more walkable and bikeable environment and by improving air quality by adding many more street trees.

The streetscape design is not limited just to amenities or to aesthetics; the design also integrates major infrastructure improvements such as the replacement of aged utility mains, stormwater detention to reduce flooding throughout the West Side of Bloomington as well as Downtown, improved safety for vehicle traffic, bicycles, and pedestrians, and provisions for separating the combined sewer system that is prevalent Downtown.

Finally, the Streetscape Program was developed using fiscally responsible design choices, including the selection of materials and fixtures that are both durable and easily replaceable, minimizing long-term maintenance costs.



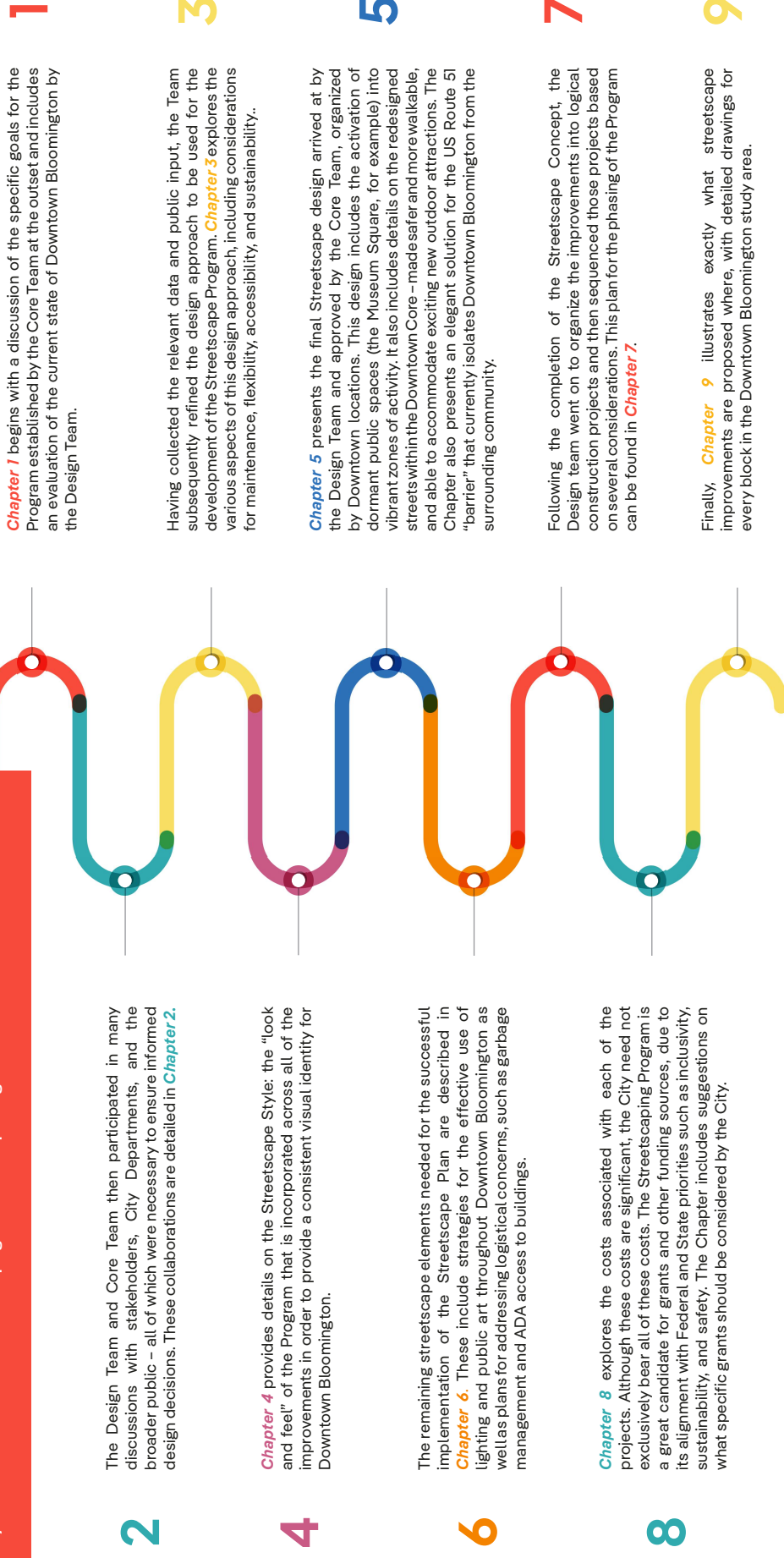
4 The Streetscape is **above all FUN**

The Design Team and City Leaders have unabashedly put forward a plan that provides places for people to come together and have fun! The Downtown for Everyone Streetscape Program establishes many new opportunities for memorable experiences – from spectacular video projection shows to food festivals hosted in new plazas to games of giant, musical chess at the Museum Square. The Program also strongly promotes the incorporation of engaging public art Downtown with many placeholders for sculptures and building murals included throughout the design.

The impact of the Streetscape Program implementation should be the transformation of Downtown Bloomington into a vibrant destination – for regional visitors as well as locals, as the buzz about what Downtown has to offer spreads. Similarly, the improvements should greatly increase the potential to attract residents who find Downtown an exciting place to put down roots.



This Report for the Downtown for Everyone Streetscape Program provides City decision makers with a clear road map for the complete revitalization of Downtown Bloomington. Its design philosophies and streetscape plans have all been vetted past City Departments, endorsed by the Steering Committee, and, on the whole, received very positively by the general public. It is with great expectation for the future success of Downtown Bloomington that the Design Team and City Core Team present this document as a major step forward in realizing Downtown's full potential. The narrative structure of the Report mirrors the journey that the Design Team and the City Core Team undertook when developing the Streetscape Program.



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Introduction & Existing Conditions

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Introduction & Existing Conditions

INTRODUCTION

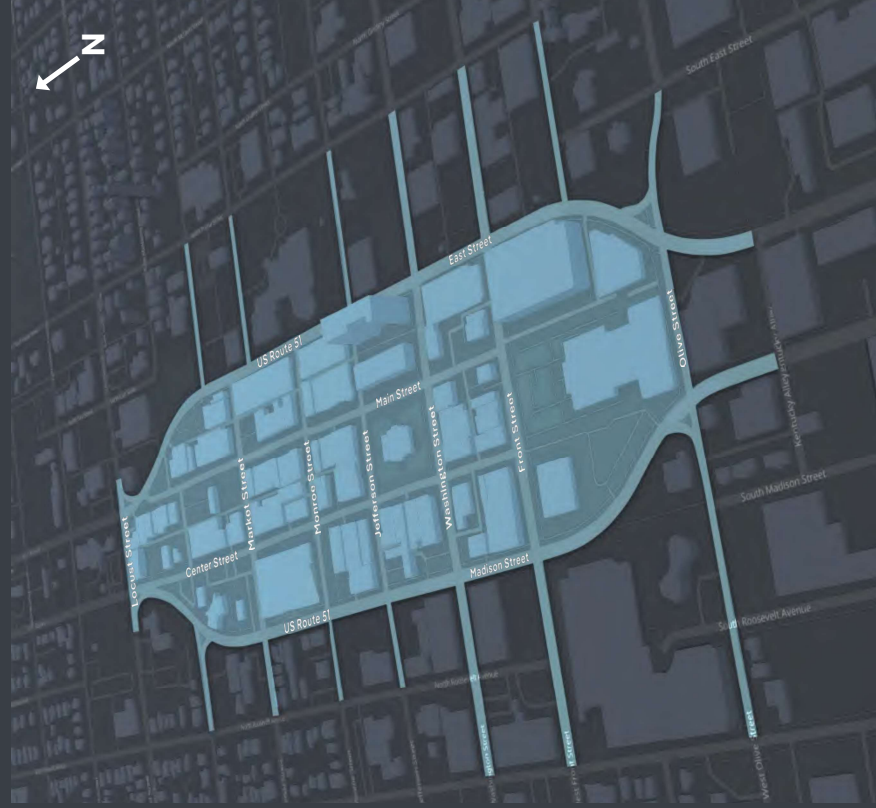
Program Background

In August 2022, the City of Bloomington authorized Crawford, Murphy, & Tilly, Inc. to begin development of a plan for the "Downtown Streetscape Project – Concept Design." The City's intent for this high-level plan was to develop a multi-year program that implements recommendations for Downtown Bloomington from the "City of Bloomington Comprehensive Plan 2035" as well as from the City's adopted "Downtown Bloomington Task Force Report" and "Downtown Bloomington Strategy" planning documents.

Because the previously adopted planning documents had already established the vision and the big-picture strategies for Downtown Bloomington, the purpose of this Concept Design was not so much to answer the question "Should we invest in developing Downtown Bloomington" as to answer the question "What exactly should that investment look like."

The mandate from City Staff to the Design Team was that this program should not merely result in a "fresh coat of paint" for Downtown. The Team was therefore encouraged to consider streetscaping improvements that accomplish more than simply improving the aesthetic – they instead evaluated improvements that might transform Downtown Bloomington into a regional destination. When considering potential solutions for Downtown, the Design Team often asked the question, "Will these improvements merely make things more enjoyable for people who already visit Downtown, or will these improvements move the needle enough to attract new visitors to Downtown?"

It should be noted that the scope of this study is limited to public streets and open public spaces. With very few exceptions, the study does not include Downtown buildings (for example, suggestions for façade improvements) or land uses (such as rezoning or business mix recommendations).



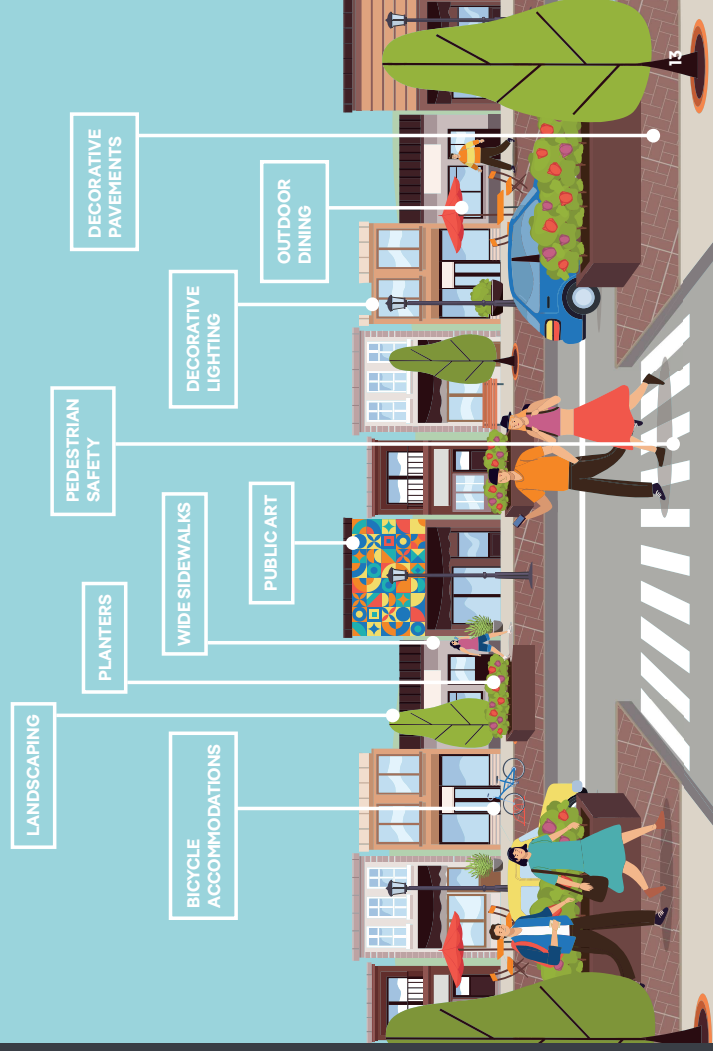
Project Limits

The City determined that the study limits for this plan should encompass the Downtown “Core” (bounded to the north by Locust Street, to the south by Olive Street, and by US Route 51 to the east and west) as well as approximately one block east and west of the Core.

What is a Streetscape?

Perhaps not all readers of this Report are familiar with what is meant by the term “streetscape”. A streetscape is the collective appearance of all buildings, footpaths, landscaping, and amenities along a street. A streetscape provides the visual identity of a neighborhood.

Some of the more traditional elements of a streetscape are shown in the below graphic. All of these elements are incorporated into the new design, but the planning efforts of the Design Team also extended beyond just decorative improvements. The Team investigated significant changes to Bloomington’s transportation infrastructure (traffic lane reductions, e.g.) in order to promote a more “walkable” Downtown. They also reviewed opportunities for activating under-utilized open spaces in order to create new Points of Interest that might attract more foot-traffic. City staff were encouraging of these efforts and reminded the Design Team that “everything is on the table”.



EATING
COFFEE
BIKING
HISTORY
THRIFTING
PAINTING
DRINKS
TATTOOS
MUSIC
BOUTIQUES
SHOPPING
BOOKS
ART
GAMING
PRODUCE
CONCERTS
FLOWERS
YOU, ME
EVERYONE

What is the Purpose of this Program?

A forward-looking, intentional plan to improve Downtown Bloomington provides many benefits to the broader community. The primary benefits of the streetscape improvements proposed by this Plan concern economic development and quality of life gains:

Economic Development

There is strong potential for a good Return on Investment (ROI) due to additional economic activity generated from both the private and public sector. Well-designed, well-maintained, and well-programmed downtowns can see increased foot-traffic, leading to increased business investment and consumer spending. Moreover, strong downtowns can improve their community's desirability, leading to bolstered real estate property values across the board as well as increased population – resulting in greater tax income for the City which can then be re-invested elsewhere.

Quality of Life

By investing in Downtown improvements, the City can improve the quality of life for future generations and can enhance community pride. Building pride in a community is a virtuous circle: when people feel that their environment is appealing and well cared for, they are more likely to take pride in their community and to work together to maintain it.

Program Goals

The specific goals for the City of Bloomington's streetscape program are enumerated below. These goals were informed by the aforementioned City-adopted planning documents as well as feedback from City staff and community stakeholders.

Improve walkability and accessibility.



Create/enhance/activate public spaces.



Facilitate greater use of public Right of Way by Downtown businesses.



Enhance the streetscape aesthetic.



Bridge the Downtown Core to the surrounding neighborhoods.



Integrate McLean County history into the Downtown experience.



Integrate public art into Downtown improvements.



Integrate sustainability where appropriate.



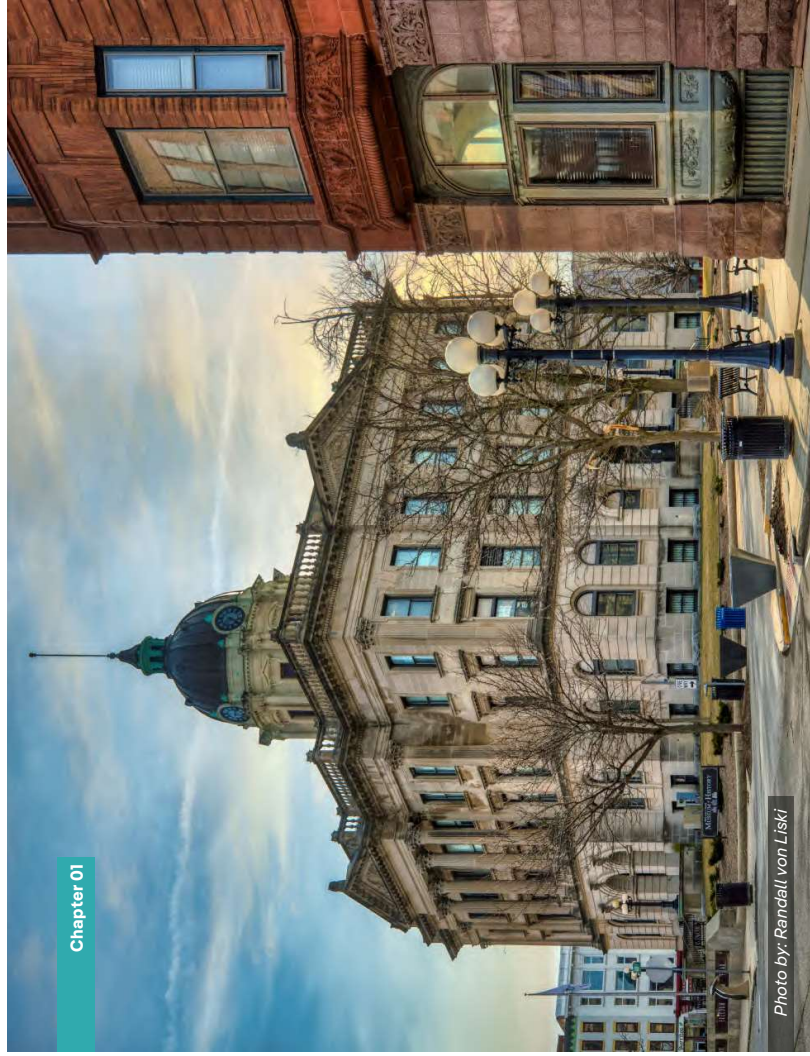


Photo by: Randell von Liski

EXISTING DOWNTOWN ENVIRONMENT

Overview

In many ways, Downtown Bloomington does not need “rescued.” Downtown has popular dining and entertainment options, hosts an arts community, and does not have excessive building vacancies. Also, Bloomington benefits from the charm of its predominance of well-preserved historic architecture.

However, the public infrastructure of Downtown Bloomington shows many signs of neglect; pavements in poor condition, cramped sidewalks, confusing parking options, and generally lacking streetscape qualities consistent with more vibrant downtowns. Moreover, Downtown is heavily vehicle-centric: the space between buildings is dominated by driving lanes and parking spaces with minimal room allocated for pedestrians and bicyclists.

It is precisely this combination of existing assets and opportunities for improvement that positions Downtown Bloomington as an excellent candidate for investment in streetscaping. The ceiling is very high for what Downtown could be elevated to with thoughtful implementation of the program goals (see previous “Program Goals” section).



Composition of Downtown Ownership

The Downtown Bloomington study area is comprised of roughly one-third public ownership and two-thirds private ownership. This distribution provides a stable base for Downtown (public-sector institutions are generally more “recession-proof” than private-sector), while still allowing plenty of opportunity for economic development (which is more pronounced in the private-sector).

As can be seen in the above figure, most of the publicly owned property is concentrated in the south end of Downtown – creating a government district of sorts within Downtown Bloomington. Within the privately owned property, venues for entertainment, restaurants, and housing are distributed widely across the study area. Retail is more concentrated within the 300 through 600 blocks of Main Street, and bars are mostly located within the 500 block of Main. The wide distribution of entertainment venues, restaurants, and housing suggest that streetscaping improvements are likely to be effective at promoting economic growth throughout Downtown and not just along certain blocks of Main Street.

Roadway Network & Traffic

The most dominant feature of the Downtown Bloomington's transportation network is US Route 51 (named East Street on the east side of Downtown and Madison Street on the west). Although this four-lane highway functions well in conveying vehicles past Downtown, it effectively severs the Downtown Core from surrounding neighborhoods as well as from assets outside of the "belloop" such as the Bloomington Center for Performing Arts, Castle Theatre, and Grossinger Motors Arena. There are both real and perceived dangers associated with crossing this highway, resulting in a barrier to accessibility. Furthermore, as a consequence of this highway being constructed through Downtown, most of the businesses have turned their store fronts away from the highway. And with very few trees or greenery along the corridor, US Route 51 now appears as a "concrete jungle" – lacking the attraction and sense of arrival that would be helpful to Downtown's success.



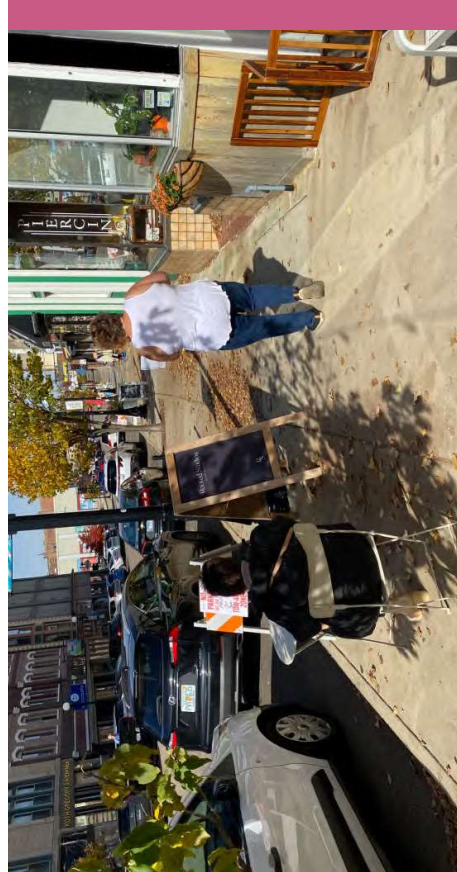
Looking north down East Street: A view of the US Route 51 "concrete jungle."

Beyond **US Route 51**, Downtown is defined by two one-way streets (**Main Street** heading northbound and **Center Street** heading southbound) as well as the east-west **Washington Street**. The latter serves as an arterial roadway and emergency vehicle route. Finally, the north end of Downtown is bounded by **Illinois State Route 9** (currently a three-lane, east-bound highway).

Walkability

A “walkable” downtown is one which is easily traversable, aesthetically enticing, and safe for pedestrians. As mentioned previously in this Report, the layout of Downtown Bloomington is heavily prioritized for vehicular traffic currently and lacks sufficient space to accommodate those on foot. Crowded sidewalks like the one shown below are not uncommon. Also, much of Downtown is dark and poorly lit in the evening, resulting in less safety (or perceived safety in some instances) for those on foot.

The consequences of a downtown that is not walkable usually include the following: less foot-traffic, less business patronage, shorter business hours, less appeal to potential residents, and an overall lack of urban energy.



A view of a cramped pedestrian corridor Downtown.

Bikeability

Similarly, a “bikeable” downtown is one which is easily traversable, aesthetically enticing, and safe for bicyclists. Only one block of the entire Downtown study area has accommodations for bicyclists (Front Street east of East Street). This location does provide a bicycle lane, but it is located immediately adjacent to parallel parking spaces. This can result in a less safe scenario when parked drivers open their doors into oncoming bike traffic.

Certainly, Downtown Bloomington could benefit from better bicycle facilities. A more bikeable Downtown could lead to improved traffic safety, improved public health, and a more inviting environment to attract visitors to local businesses.

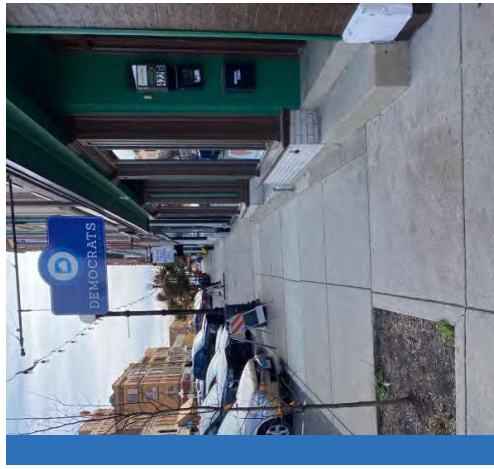


A bicycle lane on Front Street, adjacent to parking.

ADA Accessibility

Much of Downtown Bloomington is not ADA compliant. That is, it does not conform with Title II of the 2010 Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design. Building entrances similar to that shown in the image to the right are not uncommon. Steep running slopes, inadequate handrails, settled sidewalk slabs with large lips: these ADA deficiencies are regrettably commonplace Downtown.

The consequence of an environment that is not ADA-friendly is that certain people are completely excluded from visiting Downtown.



A row of inaccessible building entrances.

O Stakeholder Involvement Process

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Stakeholder Involvement Process

Considering the incredible scale of a streetscaping program that encompasses the entire Downtown, a wide range of users are certain to be impacted. These stakeholders include property owners, business owners, residents, and visitors – all of whom collectively offer valuable insight into what might make the streetscape successful. It was therefore determined early on that the Design Team would be best served not by working in a vacuum, but by collaborating with these stakeholders throughout the life of the design.





KEY STAKEHOLDERS

City Core Team

The “Core Team” was composed of key individuals from various City departments (Billy Tyus and Katherine Murphy from City Administration, Philip Alllyn and Craig Shonkwiler from City Engineering, and Kelly Pfeifer and Kimberly Smith from City Economic and Community Development) who met frequently with key members of the Design Team. The Core Team was instrumental in vetting various design ideas and providing helpful guidance to the Design Team at decision points.

As warranted, additional members of the Design Team were invited to join the Core Team meetings to discuss specific topics. Examples of this included inviting the Team’s Government Affairs Lead to discuss state and federal grant opportunities, and inviting the Team’s in-house advisor on IDOT (the former Director of Planning and Programming) to discuss IDOT policies and procedures. See Volume 3 for all Core Team Meeting Minutes.

Steering Committee

The Downtown Bloomington Streetscape Steering Committee was an advisory group comprised of members that represented a cross-section of Downtown’s business owners, residents, and community leaders. The group also included representatives from Connect Transit, McLean

County, the Chamber of Commerce’s CEO Council, and the McLean County Arts Center. The Downtown Bloomington Streetscape Steering Committee understood the “pulse of Downtown” and were therefore able to provide the Design Team with highly relevant feedback related to design choices.

The Steering Committee met five times during the design and discussed such topics as parking, outdoor dining, garbage management, and the design aesthetic. See Volume 3 for all Steering Committee Meeting Minutes.

McLean County

The Museum Square, located at the center of Downtown, is one of the few areas of open space in Downtown Bloomington. For this reason, and because the former courthouse building is an iconic fixture in Downtown, the Design Team developed various concepts for the Square intended to activate this space and attract large groups of visitors. But because the Square is owned by McLean County and not the City of Bloomington, it was necessary to coordinate directly with the County on any proposed improvements.

The old courthouse building is currently occupied by the McLean County Museum of History. Because the Museum operates as an independent body from the County, the Design Team met multiple times with Museum staff in order to better understand operational logistics and to ensure that any proposed concepts were compatible with the Museum’s vision for that space. Additionally, the Design Team met with staff from the McLean County’s Administration Department as well as with the McLean County’s Property Committee. See Volume 3 for meeting minutes from the Property Committee.

At each of these meetings, personnel from the McLean County Museum of History, the McLean County’s Administration Department, and the McLean County’s Property Committee all asked thoughtful questions regarding the logistics of the concepts introduced – particularly with regards to how responsibilities for maintenance and operation of the improvements would be shared between the City and the County. But in the end, it was the impression of the Design Team that all three groups were enthusiastic about the design concepts and eager to work with the City to see these implemented. Refer to Chapter 5 to see the specific improvements proposed.



DOWNTOWN BLOOMINGTON

PUBLIC OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

It was deemed important to engage the broader public at various times throughout the design process in order to accomplish the following:



Provide Updates

These updates included general information for the public, drawings showing design progress, and overall schedule updates.



Solicit Feedback

In addition to general program feedback, the Core Team sought feedback on critical design choices and therefore posed specific questions to the public. For example, the City wished to better understand whether the public valued a walkable Downtown more than a vehicle-centric Downtown.



Create Excitement

The Design Team and Core Team sought to generate excitement and momentum for the streetscaping campaign for two reasons: (1) the streetscaping program was recognized to be a generational project worth celebrating, and (2) the more engaged the public was, the more likely they would be to provide helpful feedback.

Campaign Branding

Understanding that the public is made up of many individuals, all of whom have values different from each other, the Design Team sought to connect with as broad an audience as possible by appealing to both the head ("What is the purpose of this project?" "What is our Return on Investment?") and the heart ("How will my Downtown experience change?" "What makes these improvements meaningful?"). Both objectives were accomplished by developing the "Downtown for Everyone" campaign brand.



The premise of the brand is that Downtown Bloomington is diverse in its offerings, experiences, and its peoples; that there is something for everyone Downtown. The "Downtown for Everyone" brand is in keeping with the City's previous efforts to foster diversity and inclusion. But it is also reflective of the future made possible by the streetscaping program: that is, a Downtown with better connectivity to the surrounding neighborhoods, greater accessibility for all peoples, activated public spaces that serve to connect people from different walks of life. In short, a true Downtown for Everyone experience might be realized by taking what already makes Downtown Bloomington great and enhancing through a comprehensive streetscaping program.

Project Website

The two primary vehicles for the public outreach campaign were public meetings and a project website. For the latter, the domain "DowntownforEveryone.com" was secured by the Design Team. Content on the project website included the design vision, details for each of the concepts proposed by the Design Team, an estimated program timeline, and upcoming events. For those interested, the website also included a number of "deep dives" on complex issues such as anticipated economic outcomes and walking "Level of Service" conditions.

The project website was intended not just to inform but also to inspire interest. The website therefore included a gallery of renderings that were given subtle animations while playing ambient sound, so that visitors could better understand the concepts. Additionally, the Design Team developed a short movie that could be shared outside of the website on social media platforms. This movie sought to generate engagement in the program and encouraged the audience to visit the website to share their feedback and ideas.



Website users as well as visitors at various events were all encouraged to sign up to be notified of any updates to the website. These updates included various evolutions of the design, as well as "stories" deemed of interest to those keeping up with the project.

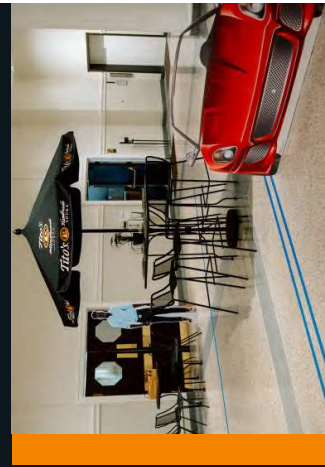
Community Open Houses

In order to capture as much feedback as possible, the Design Team also provided two in-person Community Open Houses , one on October 11th, 2023 and a second on February 13th, 2024. The Team provided experiences at the Open Houses that were not possible on the website. For example, at the first Open House, a physical mock-up of three different street sections was set up, and visitors were encouraged to walk through each space to better understand the trade-offs between pedestrian space and parking for each alternative. At the second open house, a virtual reality experience was provided that allowed users to experience the scale of proposed attractions first-hand.

In addition to these special exhibits, the Open Houses included various "stations" manned by a member of the Design Team or City Core Team for the purpose of discussing a specific topic with the community. This "come and go as you please" open house format provided excellent opportunities for direct interaction with the public.

Public Input

Both at the community open houses and on the project website the public were invited to provide general feedback, but they were also asked to weigh in on specific design choices. These choices were focused on both aesthetic and functional components of the Downtown Streetscape. The results of these surveys can be found in Volume 3. It should be noted that once the votes were compiled, there was a clear consensus with the public's preference for each of the design choices. The City decided to move forward with the same choices, not only to align the project with popular opinion but because these choices also aligned with the Design Team's prior recommendations.



UTILITY COMPANIES

The Design Team understood that to the extent possible any utilities that need replacing should be identified before the streetscaping is installed, not after. (Utility projects that follow streetscaping projects have the potential to “scar” recently installed beautification improvements – due to utility trench patching in pavements, for example.) To that end, the Design Team held a series of meetings with local utility companies as well as with City staff to collect data and coordinate future construction projects. Detailed meeting minutes for each of these meetings can be found in Volume 3. Noteworthy discoveries are listed below.

Ameren Illinois

- Ameren stated that there is plenty of electrical capacity in Downtown to accommodate further development.
- However, Ameren is not well-equipped to facilitate solar installations Downtown, because most customer services are linked to a network with protectors that prevent reverse flow.
- Depending on the exact location of any future Level 3 Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (EVCS), a higher voltage service may need to be extended – the cost of which is not covered by the City’s franchise agreement with Ameren. Lower level EVCS may be installed throughout Downtown on the more predominant lower voltage service.

Nicor Gas

- Nicor stated that there is plenty of natural gas capacity in Downtown to accommodate further development.
- Most of Nicor’s mains in Downtown have been replaced recently. Those that remain are anticipated to last “indefinitely”, Nicor stated.

Frontier Communications

- Frontier’s plans to provide Fiber to the Home (FTTH) throughout Bloomington include multi-family residential in Downtown. However, that schedule is currently on hold.
- Frontier stated that most adjustments to Frontier infrastructure due to City construction projects are relatively cheap and easy to implement.

City Utilities

- The Design Team collected information from the City Engineering and Public Works Departments related to “critical” water and sewer lines. In this instance, “critical” was defined as utility lines that City staff deem need to be replaced in twenty years or less.
- Any identified “critical” water and sewer lines that underlie a future streetscaping project will be replaced as part of that project, if not before as part of a separate City utility project.

ADVOCACY GROUPS

It is important to both the Design Team and the City that the Downtown improvements be accessible to all people. The Design Team therefore met with advocacy groups that might provide additional insight into unmet needs.

LIFE Center for

Independent Living

Downtown Bloomington is currently viewed as unfriendly to many persons with disabilities, according to a representative from the LIFE Center for Independent Living (LIFE CIL), due to the wide-ranging accessibility deficiencies. Discussions with the Design Team, then, revolved around viewing the Downtown Streetscape program as an opportunity to bring all of Downtown Bloomington into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.

It is the intent of both the City and the Design Team that all streetscape projects constructed will indeed conform to the “2018 ADA Standards for Accessible Design,” as well as the “Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)”. However, it was noted by LIFE CIL that the barriers to accessibility extend beyond the planned exterior improvements and into the buildings themselves. While interior building improvements are not part of the Downtown for Everyone Streetscape Program’s scope, City leaders expressed a commitment to working with business owners and the disabled community to work towards solutions to these barriers through other initiatives. See Volume 3 for meeting minutes.

Bicycle Groups and Constitution Trail

The Design Team also met with representatives of Bike BloNo, Friends of the Constitution Trail, West Bloomington Revitalization Project Bike Co-op, and McLean County Wheelers. The Team presented concepts for bringing bicycle traffic more safely into the Downtown Core and for providing new bike amenities for users, all of which were generally well received by the groups. Significantly, the Design Team proposed a different bike route than that shown on the City’s approved “2017 Bicycle Master Plan”. The latter proposes shared lane markings on US Route 51. However, the Design Team views bike lanes alongside the highway vehicular lanes, without a physical barrier, as potentially less safe or, at the least, as uncomfortable for casual bicyclists. The Team instead suggested that a preferable route would be to direct cyclists to bicycle lanes that could be established inside the Downtown Core. (See “Bike Route/Constitution Trail” section in Chapter 6.) All organizations provided the City with letters of support for this change, emphasizing that this new route has several benefits over the original proposal including (1) improved safety and (2) access to bike amenities and points of interest in Downtown for bicyclists. See Volume 3 for these letters of support.



Crosswalks on US Route 51 exceed forty feet long in Downtown Bloomington.

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

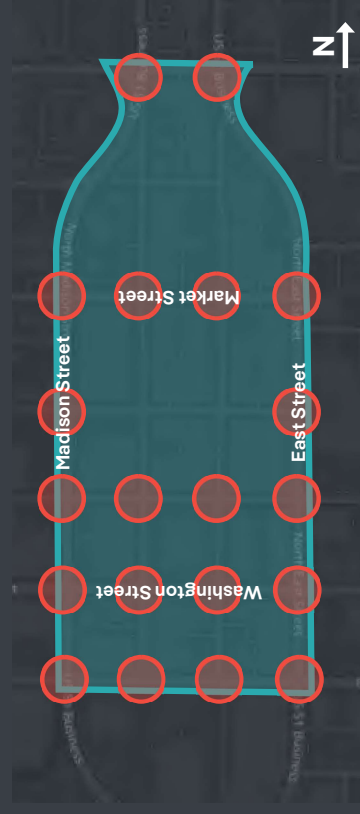
One of the major goals of the Streetscape Plan is to improve connectivity of Downtown Bloomington to the surrounding neighborhoods. As referenced in Chapter 1, the greatest barrier to that connectivity is US Route 51. The Design Team met with Engineers from District 5 of the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to discuss potential solutions. IDOT explained that they are actively working with a consultant to progress design plans for converting one of the four existing traffic lanes into an on-street buffered bicycle lane (in accordance with the aforementioned "2017 Bicycle Master Plan"). While this vehicular lane reduction may help some pedestrians and bicyclist feel less intimidated to cross the highway, the Design Team and City Core Team were somewhat skeptical that this measure would go far enough to meaningfully remove the connectivity barrier – especially since this plan did nothing to reduce the actual crossing distance at intersections.

The Design Team instead recommended reducing the four vehicular lanes down to two vehicular lanes as well as redirecting the bike route off US Route 51 into the Downtown Core onto parallel bicycle accommodations along Main Street and Center Street. (See "US Route 51" section in Chapter 5 and "Bike Route/Constitution Trail" section in Chapter 6). This two-lane reduction would dramatically decrease the crossing distance at intersections and would also provide significant opportunities for trees and other landscaping that might soften the highway corridor.

Anecdotally, it appeared this solution should work. US Route 51 is already narrowed to two lanes to enter Downtown on Main Street, and Center Street is two lanes both north and south of Downtown. Neither have any apparent bottlenecks. However, the Design Team sought to evaluate the proposed scenario using a

generally accepted engineering process: first, to collect traffic counts those traffic counts to model the existing roadway network using traffic modeling software; and third, to simulate various roadway alternatives using the same traffic modeling software in order to understand the probable effects. (See Volume 3 for traffic modeling results.)

The Design Team worked closely with IDOT Engineers to ensure that the modeling parameters chosen were deemed appropriate. In the end, the Design Team verified that a two-lane highway section with turn lanes at critical intersections should function adequately. However, IDOT District 5 is currently resolved to not move forward with any plans that involve reducing the vehicular lanes down to two. City leadership has debated next steps, but they will likely defer future action until some of the Downtown Core streetscaping projects have first been completed. For the purpose of this report, proposed drawings illustrate a two-lane section – reflecting the confidence of the Design Team and City Core Team in this solution.



Locations of intersections where traffic counts were gathered.

O Design Approach

O Design Approach

The following chapter is intended to provide insight into the Design Team's thought process as well as the motivations of the City Core Team in approving design choices.

“MOVE THE NEEDLE”

As mentioned earlier in this Report, a guiding principle of the Downtown Streetscape Concept is that the improvements need to make a substantial impact – one that results in tangible benefits for Downtown Bloomington and that positions it well for the future. To truly “move the needle” for Downtown, the Design Team centered the entire streetscape design around two key features : (1) making Downtown “walkable” and (2) activating dormant public open spaces.



Walkability

Establishing a more “walkable” Downtown means promoting a more pedestrian-centric environment, rather than the vehicular-centric environment that currently exists. Walkable downtowns typically result in enhanced enjoyment and more safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, with wider walking paths established as well as additional space for amenities like outdoor dining and sidewalk sales.

Developing a more “walkable” Downtown requires exploration of streetscaping treatments that are more substantial than simple aesthetic improvements. The City’s encouragement to the Design Team was that “everything is on the table”. Consequently, substantial treatments were indeed developed. This included traffic lane reductions as well as reconfiguring Right-of-Ways such that pedestrian space was prioritized over vehicular space.

See Chapter 5: “Streetscape Improvements” to see specific ways in which walkability was emphasized in the design.

Activating Public Spaces

The single greatest opportunity for social connectedness, community pride, and shared experiences in Bloomington lies in active, public open spaces. Well-programmed events and activities in these locations can result in the greatest injection of “life” into a city, making them more desirable for residents and business owners. Moreover, visitors’ impressions of cities are often tied directly to the quality of public spaces, making investments in these spaces crucial to realizing tourism potential.

One of Downtown Bloomington’s more glaring deficiencies is the lack of consistently active public spaces, and so the Design Team uncovered opportunities for repurposing existing open areas of Downtown for events and activities that would draw in additional visitors. In order to maximize the attraction of these spaces, the Team considered the wide range of interests that are associated with different demographics.

See Chapter 5: “Streetscape Improvements” to see how active public spaces were incorporated into the design.



FLEXIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

To the extent possible, the Design Team sought to envision corridors and spaces that could accommodate a diversity of uses, such as the ability to convert the street for the occasional use of parades, festivals, or bicycle races. This important priority affected the approach of curb “bump outs” on intersections, a typical feature of streetscapes that is used to calm traffic and shorten pedestrian crossings for more safety. These bump outs might normally be extended further into the intersection in order to divert oncoming traffic away from parked cars. However, to provide greater flexibility, the Design Team instead chose to use planters for this purpose – planters that might easily be removed to provide additional street width for events.



Flexible design is also accomplished along streets by using a curbless-street section where possible. And in public spaces, design that minimizes the amount of “clutter” placed in open areas can serve to preserve the flexibility of the space. There are many other instances of flexible design implemented by the Design Team that can be found in Chapters 5 and 6 of this Report.

MAINTENANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Just as it was important for the Design Team to make “timeless” style choices that would not soon become out of fashion, it was perhaps just as important that the Team selected materials that would not show signs of wear prematurely. This required making selections that were both durable and easily replaceable. For example, the Design Team elected to use clay pavers of a standard 4-inch by 8-inch size. Clay pavers are very durable (with a compressive strength several times higher than conventional concrete pavement) and frost resistant, and they are able to hold the color throughout their life (compared to similar concrete products where the pigments start to fade after a few years). And because the Team selected pavers of a standardized size, the likelihood that similar pavers will be available in the future is much higher, should replacement be necessary.

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Accessibility is a driving force in the design approach. The Downtown for Everyone Program is focused on improving the access between the Downtown Core and the surrounding neighborhoods as well as improving general accessibility for pedestrians, bicyclists, and persons with disabilities in the public spaces.

The Program also includes improving the accessibility between the public sidewalk and entry doors to existing buildings. However, even when exterior pathways are made accessible, there are still buildings throughout Downtown that are not accessible inside the doorway. Because of the City’s vision for seamless and safe movement throughout the entire Downtown area, the City is committed to assisting with funding ADA improvements within private property.



SUSTAINABILITY/PUBLIC HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout the concept development process, the Design Team was always on the lookout for opportunities to integrate sustainable practices into the streetscape as well as opportunities for promoting public health. The Design Team and the City Core Team enthusiastically include the following features in the program:



Improved Walkability/Bikeability

The more pedestrian and bike-friendly Downtown becomes, the less vehicles there will be on the streets – resulting in less vehicle pollutants and air pollution. Community health is further improved as visitors become more physically active.



Storm Water Detention

By using permeable pavers throughout most streets and by installing underground detention facilities in select areas, such as beneath the North Main Plaza (see below “Downtown Areas of Focus” section), storage for storm water will be created and the release rate of storm water downstream can then be decreased. This will result in reduced soil erosion and less instances of combined sewer overflows.



Increased Greenery

The streetscape design includes significantly more tree canopies, shrubs, and other plantings than currently exists. This will improve stormwater quality, reduce urban heat islands (when the City becomes much warmer than surrounding rural areas), and improve air quality.



Implementing EV Charging Stations

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (EVCS) promote the use of electric vehicles, which produce far less tailpipe emissions than gas powered vehicles, reducing air pollution. The streetscape design will include installation of EVCS at strategic locations throughout Downtown.

Energy Efficient Lighting

All new light fixtures proposed for the streetscape will include LED light sources that are more energy efficient than traditional light fixtures. This can be accomplished while still improving the overall Downtown lighting level.



Reduced Light Pollution

All new light fixtures will include better light cut-offs, resulting in less light pollution. Light pollution disrupts the natural patterns of wildlife, and the increased energy spent uplighting contributes to the increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Sustainable Materials

Wherever possible, the Downtown for Everyone Program will incorporate sustainable building materials that are either recyclable or renewable. The clay pavers used extensively throughout the Downtown improvements are an example of this – a long lasting product that is created from renewable raw material.



O Streetscaping Style



O

Streetscaping Style

The style of the Downtown streetscape is comprised of a number of elements: the colors and materials used, the aesthetic of furnishings such as benches and light fixtures, and especially the surrounding architecture. Regarding the latter, Downtown Bloomington is very fortunate when compared to many downtowns in that much of the historic architecture has been preserved. One of the charges to the Design Team, then, was that the streetscape aesthetic should be respectful to and compatible with that historic architecture.

There are many different styles that could potentially be incorporated in the Downtown streetscape. The Design Team distilled these down to three broad categories for consideration by the City: “Classic/Traditional”, “Modern/Contemporary”, and “Hybrid Blend”.



Classic/Traditional

Examples of these three Downtown style options were presented to the Steering Committee, to the general public, and to the City with the following prompt: “How do each of these styles make you feel? And what sense of place do you believe is most appropriate for our Downtown?” Responses differed, of course, but there seemed to be a few common threads with public opinion:

Traditional

The Traditional aesthetic utilizes styles and materials similar to those of the surrounding buildings constructed in the 1800s, often ornately decorated but rather limited in color variation. Many respondents suggested that the Traditional style treatment creates an environment that may not be attractive to younger demographics. Moreover, the Traditional style appears too similar to streetscapes found in many other Central Illinois towns.



Modern/Contemporary

The modern style is an aesthetic defined by simple lines, sleek materials, and minimalist details, often combined with bold colors. Many of the public comments reflected a concern that the Modern style treatment might result in a jarring contrast with Downtown's historic architecture. Also, of the three style options, the Modern style is the most likely to become outdated in the near future.

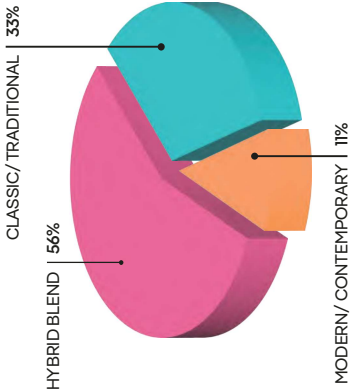
Modern

Hybrid

The Hybrid aesthetic carefully mixes styles and materials from the Traditional and Modern styles in order to honor the historic character of Downtown while introducing a new vibrance. Comments from respondents suggested that the Hybrid style may be the “Goldilocks” just-right-treatment that provides a bold look for Downtown while still being compatible with the surrounding buildings. The Hybrid style presents an opportunity to provide Downtown Bloomington with its own unique identity.



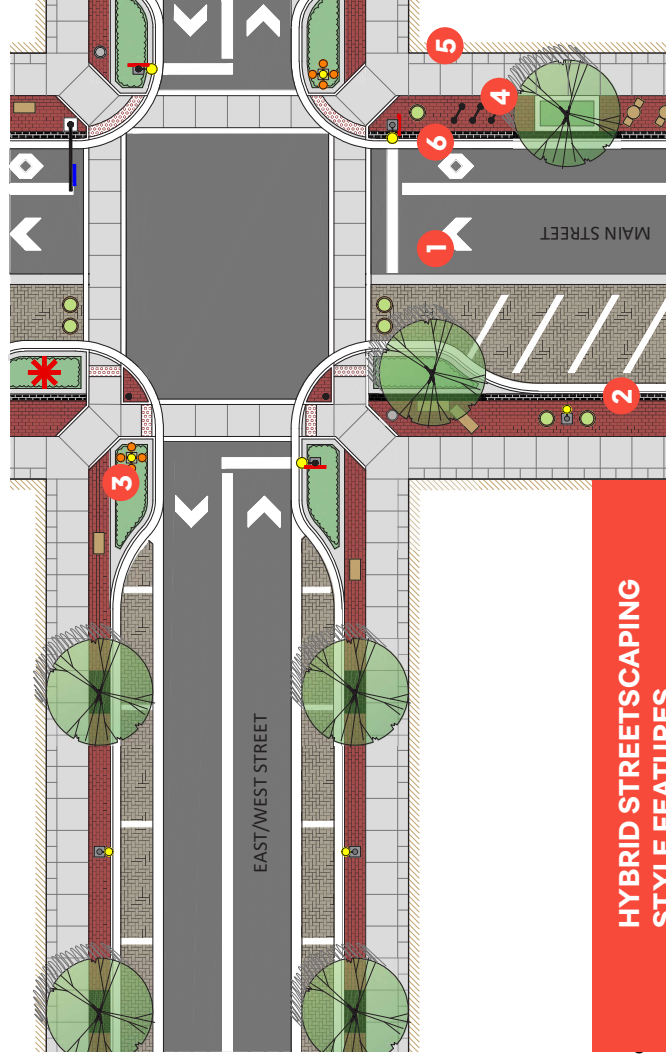
Hybrid Blend



City leaders directed the Design Team to incorporate the Hybrid style into the streetscaping design. However, even within the Hybrid style there is a wide spectrum of potential aesthetics. The Design Team therefore worked closely with both the City Core Team and the Steering Committee to narrow down the style options, ultimately selecting the Streetscape Style that is shown throughout the remainder of this report. The features that were chosen to define the style are explored on the following pages.

Results of the public survey on street style.





HYBRID STREETSCAPING STYLE FEATURES

- 1 Bold Street Graphics
- 2 Distinct Color Palette
- 3 Blended Lighting
- 4 Repetitive Use of Architectural Shapes
- 5 Concrete Scoring
- 6 Zero-Height Curb

1 Bold Street Graphics

The Design Team adopted a template for street graphics that focuses on dominant geometric shapes. Pavement markings such as parking stripes and lane markings are much wider than typical. The “one-way” pavement marking is a chevron arrow, reinforcing the City of Bloomington’s city logo. Similar chevron geometry is incorporated into the pavement markings for turn lanes and for the “flex lane” (see “Flex Lane” section in Chapter 5 for more information).

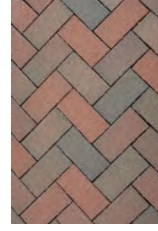


2 Distinct Color Palette

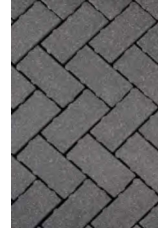
The City Core Team encouraged the Design Team to consider the use of colors that differ from the red bricks that are commonplace with regional streetscaping. The Design Team explored various options, prioritizing color choices that were likely to be considered “timeless” and paying close attention to the spectrum of colors across the existing Downtown building facades. The result was the selection of a distinct color palette that satisfies these considerations and fits within the Hybrid style.

Besides the standard gray concrete adjacent to buildings and the standard black asphalt provided for vehicular and flex lanes, the following colors will be integrated into the streetscape:

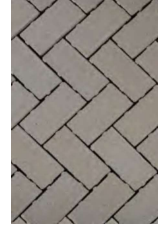
- Amenity Strip – An “amenity strip” is located alongside the gray sidewalk which designates space for things like sidewalk sales or outdoor dining. Colors for this space include a rich blend of reds, tans, and grayish blues which reflect the similar coloring of Downtown’s buildings.
- Border – A sixteen-inch wide border in a bold charcoal color provides a clear boundary between the Amenity Strip and the Parking Area.
- Parking Area – Light-gray, a color not often found in streetscapes, is used to compose the Parking Area.



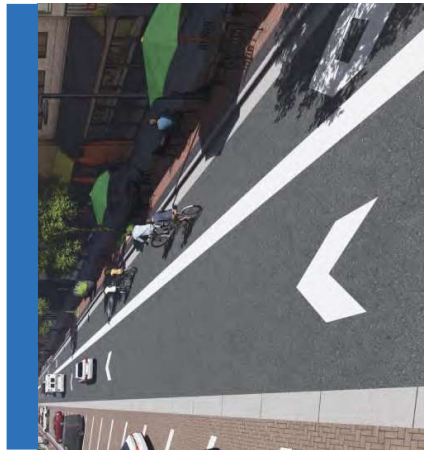
Amenity Strip



Border



Parking Area



3 Blended Lighting

Globe-style light fixtures have been prevalent in Downtown Bloomington since the early 1900s. These light fixtures project light in all directions, resulting in an inefficient light distribution that contributes significantly to Downtown's light pollution. Stylistically, the globe fixtures trend heavily towards the "Traditional" style. So, the Design Team elected to incorporate a fixture that mimics the globe style, but with a more modern take. These fixtures include an energy-efficient LED light source in a housing that resembles a "pancaked" globe, and the fixture's pole base matches the geometry of the existing globe-style pole bases, though less ornate.

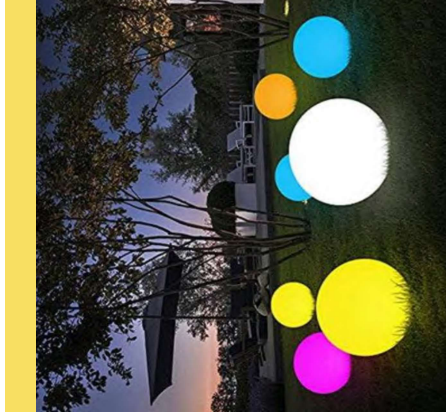
The Design Team also reincorporated the use of the globe-style light fixtures periodically throughout Downtown, but less as a functional light structure and more as an "art piece" that is interspersed sparingly amongst the new light fixtures. The scrollwork on the arms supporting the globes will be removed to make the fixture appear more contemporary. Moreover, the globe fixtures will be retrofitted with a color-changing LED light source that can be easily changed seasonally or for certain events (green and orange for Halloween, for example). The blend of the two light fixtures, existing and new, will serve to anchor the streetscape aesthetic to its historic past while also leaning towards a more modern feel.



Existing globe light fixture.



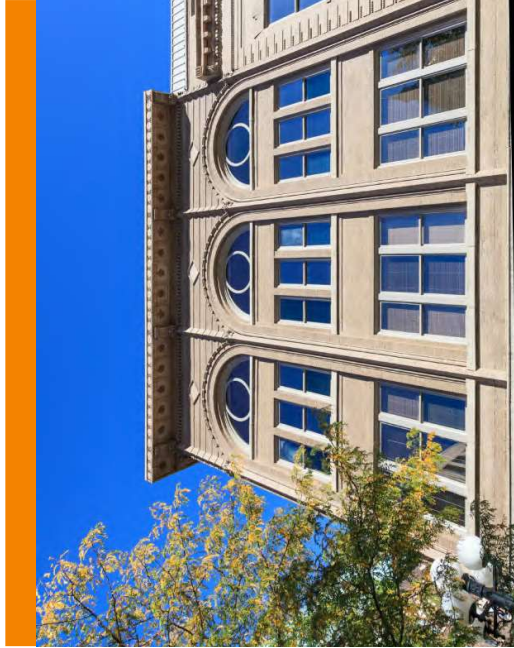
Proposed "flattened globe" light fixture.



An example of color-changing LED lighting.

4 Repetitive Use of Architectural Shapes

The Design Team's repetitive use of certain architectural shapes helps to link the various streetscaping improvements together throughout Downtown Bloomington. One such instance is the repeated use of arches and circles. A complete semi-circle arch (a "Roman arch") can be found on many of the window openings on the buildings in Downtown Bloomington, including on the old courthouse building. An example of the integration of the semi-circle arch into the Hybrid design is the circular bicycle rack shown below. The repetitive use of architectural shapes will be explored in greater detail throughout Chapter 5: "Streetscape Improvements."



The Roman Arch architectural element is located throughout Downtown.



5 Concrete Scoring

The Hybrid style will incorporate scoring into the concrete sidewalk that is in addition to conventional jointing. The scoring (a shallow cut into the concrete to create a pattern) adds visual interest to the streetscape, but also serves a functional role: Downtown businesses often make use of the space immediately in front of their buildings for small tables, signs, planters, etc. which often drifts into the pedestrian walking space. The proposed scoring, set approximately 36 inches off the face of the building, establishes a zone where placement of these items will be permitted.



Proposed sidewalk scoring.



Examples of "unzoned" business furniture.



Examples of a curbless street in Huntingburg, IN.

6 Zero-Height Curb

Wherever possible, a "zero-height curb" street section will be implemented. There may be instances where storm water management or ADA compliance behind the curb requires the use of conventional six-inch-high curbs, but elsewhere storm water will be directed to easily traversable "V-gutters". The advantages of a zero-height curb street section are two-fold: (1) as mentioned previously in this report, eliminating the curb keeps streets flexible for a number of uses, such as parades or street festivals; and (2) a curb-less section helps establish a space where streets are more accessible and pedestrian friendly.

O Streetscape Improvements

O Streetscape Improvements

Downtown Bloomington is geographically expansive compared to many other Central Illinois downtowns, with nearly seventy blocks included in the Study Area. Given this size, it is unsurprising that the various areas (or districts) of Downtown often function differently and exhibit individual dynamics. The unique characteristics of these areas present different challenges and opportunities, and, as a result, require individualized design treatments to realize their full potential. And while these design treatments vary by location, the Design Team was cognizant of the need to blanket every area with the same visual aesthetic (see “Streetscaping Style” section in Chapter 4) to ensure that all of Downtown has a consistent visual identity.

In general, Downtown Bloomington shows numerous signs of neglect: deteriorating pavements, cramped sidewalks, inconsistent parking options, and sparse decorative streetscape elements. This fifth Chapter explores the final streetscaping improvements developed to remedy those issues in order to revitalize Downtown. This Chapter focuses on individual locations Downtown and explains the treatments that were specifically applied.

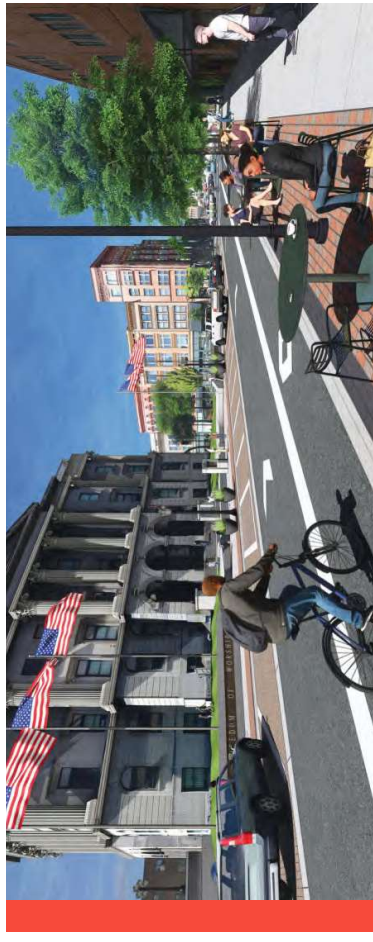
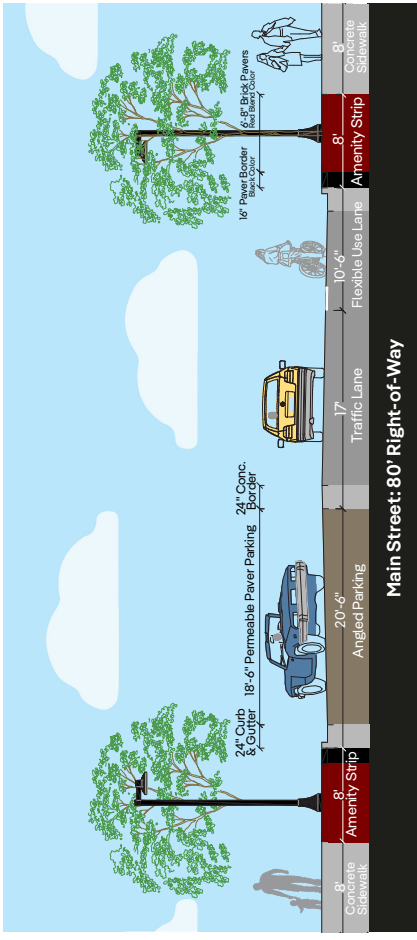




Photo by: Randall von Liski



Main Street: 80' Right-of-Way

Vehicular Traffic Lane

Because there is a finite distance between buildings on a street, an early exercise for the City and Design Team was to evaluate the space and prioritize it based on use. Users include pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles (including deliveries), business use (such as outdoor dining and sidewalk sales), and public art and other amenities. Based on a review of traffic counts (see "Illinois Department of Transportation" section in Chapter 2), it was determined that Main Street's two lanes of traffic were in excess of the single lane that is more than adequate to accommodate traffic. The proposed cross-section for Main Street eliminates this extra lane, providing additional room for other uses.

Pedestrian Space

Main Street currently contains both angled and parallel parking, on opposite sides of the road from each other. The Design Team proposed a relocation of the parallel parking to other parts of Downtown in order to free up additional space for pedestrian use on Main Street. (See also "Parking Accommodations" section in Chapter 6.) Increased pedestrian space, in turn, will increase walkability and create new opportunities for outdoor activities - critical for unlocking the full potential of Downtown Bloomington (see previous "Move the Needle" section in Chapter 3). Additionally, the increased amenity space will in most cases allow for outdoor dining to be moved from parking spaces onto the adjacent sidewalk, freeing up those spaces for parking.

It was important to both the Design Team and the City that the prioritization of pedestrian space over vehicular space first be validated as a shared value by the Downtown community. To begin with, the Steering Committee was directly asked "Would you rather have more parking in front of your business or more pedestrian space?", to which the answer given was a resounding "More pedestrian space." (See Volume 3.) The question was also posed to the broader public by providing them with a choice between three different alternatives for the Main Street cross-section, each of which represented a different prioritization of parking and walkability. The results from both the first Community Open House and the online survey were definitive: the majority of the public favored the pedestrian-friendly alternative that is represented here in the Streetscape Design. Subsequently, the Steering Committee unanimously voted in favor of recommending this section be adopted by the City. (See Volume 3.)

MAIN STREET

Main Street represents the heart of Downtown, steeped in history and exhibiting some of the most pronounced and vibrant architecture in Downtown Bloomington. Once the primary north-south road in the early days of Bloomington's history, it eventually became part of the Route 66 highway in the mid-1920s, connecting Chicago to Los Angeles. Today, it is along this corridor where entertainment and shopping most thrive and where vacancies are currently the lowest. But Main Street suffers from a lack of consistency and uniformity, and the streetscape elements that are present are dated and well worn. The street shows a strong need for reimagining and updating.



Deteriorating sidewalk pavement



Space for outdoor dining is typically only available in "parklets"

In order to maximize the impact Main Street can have in attracting residents and visitors to Downtown, the Design Team developed alternatives that leverage what works well on Main Street while correcting what does not. The streetscaping treatments proposed below have tremendous potential to elevate Main Street to a ceiling that is much higher than it has yet reached.



Flex Lane

The Design Team developed the concept of a “Flex Lane” to be incorporated into the street section, primarily for bicycle use. Bloomington-Normal is a very active cycling community, but Downtown currently provides very little in the way of bicycle accommodations. Just one street in all of Downtown has a bike lane, and bicycle parking racks are sparse. Creating the Flex Lane, a 10-1/2 foot wide dedicated path that runs through Downtown Bloomington, will be a welcome addition to both the biking community and the Downtown businesses that will benefit from increased traffic. The Flex Lane will be incorporated into the wider community bike route network (see “Bike Route/Constitution Trail Connectivity” section in Chapter 6).

The Flex Lane is also meant to accommodate delivery trucks. Currently, these trucks will stop in the middle of a vehicular lane during deliveries, stopping traffic and creating less safe conditions for drivers and delivery personnel alike. The addition of the Flex Lane provides a location outside of the dedicated vehicular lane for these trucks to conduct their deliveries, while avoiding traffic jams. The Flex Lane will similarly be used by garbage trucks (see “Garbage Management” section in Chapter 6).

Of course, the more vehicles that are sharing the Flex Lane with bicyclists, the less of a functional bike lane it will be. Therefore, a critical follow-up to the construction of these improvements will be the implementation of policies and regulations by the City that limit the operational hours of delivery vehicles and garbage trucks in Downtown to days of the week and times of day that are less likely to be in conflict with recreational and commuter bicycle traffic.



Intersections

A unique feature of both the Main Street and Center Street designs is the use of an “offset” crosswalk in tandem with curb bump-outs at intersections. Crosswalks are traditionally in-line with the walking path along streets, but the proposed design introduces a slight jog which has several effects on users:

- When walking down the sidewalk, pedestrians' line of sight is now intercepted by attractive features such as public art, trees, or colored ornamental lights (see “Streetscaping Style” section in Chapter 4), offering visual interest.
- Because a continuous line of sight is impeded when walking down sidewalks, pedestrians experience Downtown “block by block” in a cozier, more intimate manner that would not be possible without the off-set crosswalks. Decision points for pedestrians arriving at intersections now becomes more intentional, due to the jog in travel path.
- The curb bump-outs protrude into the intersection, reducing the crossing distance and resulting in a safer experience for pedestrians. The extent to which these bump-outs could protrude into the intersection is truncated, however, in order to maintain flexibility for the street so that it can be used for parades and other events (see “Flexibility Considerations” section in Chapter 3).

The offset crosswalks, as well as the other Main Street design elements, are illustrated in the above image.

NORTH MAIN PLAZA



The north end of Main Street currently terminates into an area that is geometrically awkward. Without much warning, northbound drivers suddenly find themselves in a two-pronged one-way parking lot. The only exit leads directly onto US Route 51 with no opportunity to navigate to other areas of Downtown without first driving two blocks north to Chestnut Street and circling back.

The proposed plan for this area is the construction of what has been generically named “North Main Plaza.” Features include the following:



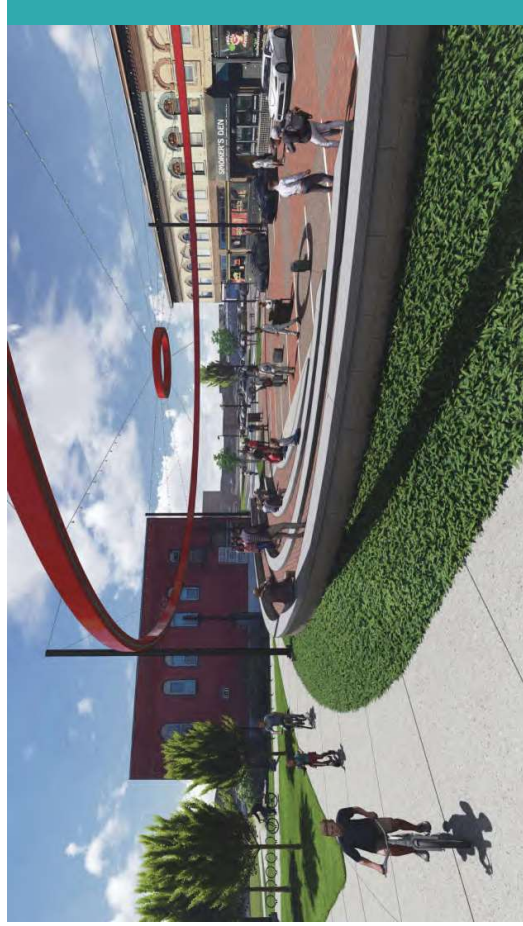
- A simplified parking lot layout.
- Conversion of the parking lot from one-way to two-way, providing drivers the opportunity to avoid a lengthy detour when returning to Downtown.
- A decorative four-foot tall concrete wall with lighting under the wall's stone cap. The wall helps to insulate the plaza area from the busy highway.



- A one-hundred foot diameter “ring” decorative structure encompassing another smaller ring, both suspended above the plaza by a system of cables and steel support poles. The rings, likely composed of steel or aluminum, will include color changing LED lighting. The rings are another example of the circular shapes predominate in the Streetscape Style (see “Repetitive Use of Architectural Shapes” section in Chapter 4), serving to tie all of the Downtown streetscaping improvements together with a consistent Sense of Place.
- String lights, along the “spokes” of the ring but also concentrated around an area east of the plaza that is dedicated for bicycle parking.

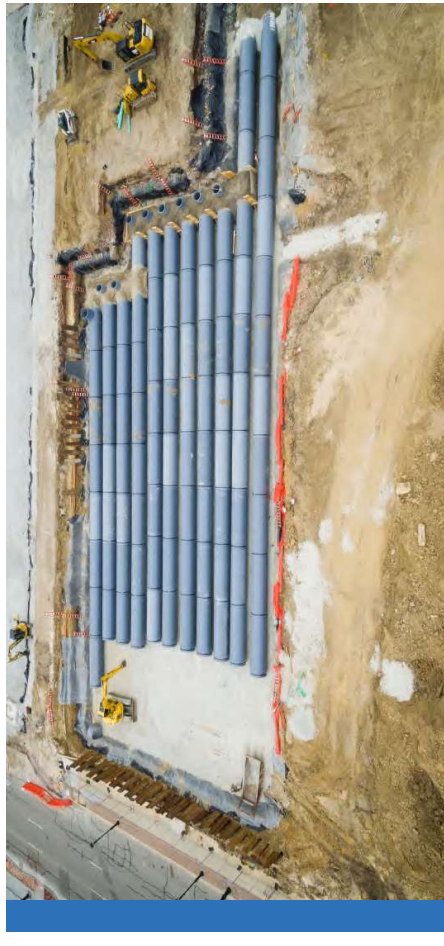


- Retractable bollards located at the interface of the plaza and Main Street. Bollards will be lowered into the pavement the majority of the time to allow continuous access to the parking, but they will be raised during events to keep out vehicles. (Bollards will still be operable by emergency providers.)



- Amphitheater seating to accommodate audiences for small concerts and events. The elevated seating will also buffer much of the plaza from the busy highway nearby.
- Use of colored pavers throughout the plaza that serve to create an inviting setting for events, while still delineating individual parking spaces.
- A wide, multi-use path flows through the area, connecting the bicycle accommodations on Main Street to the US Route 51 corridor to the north.

Another significant feature of the North Main Plaza is the inclusion of underground detention. There are periodic issues with flooding on the west side of the City downstream from the Downtown area, currently. Storm water detention is the primary means of reducing flooding, but it can be difficult to find flat enough areas where there is sufficient space to support the footprint of a detention system in the vicinity of the sewers. The area around North Main Plaza does satisfy these criteria, however. An underground detention system similar to the one pictured below can result in a significant reduction in the maximum storm water release rate and, as a result, reduce flooding in this area of Downtown.



When designing North Main Plaza, the Design Team had in mind that the City might program events in this space for a more mature demographic – reflective of the types of businesses surrounding this location. While family-friendly events could certainly be supported by this space, it was assumed that the Museum Square might be a more likely location and that North Main Plaza could benefit from a different dynamic. (See “Museum Square” section below.) This is in keeping with a directive from the City Core Team that improvements be designed to attract as many different demographics as possible.

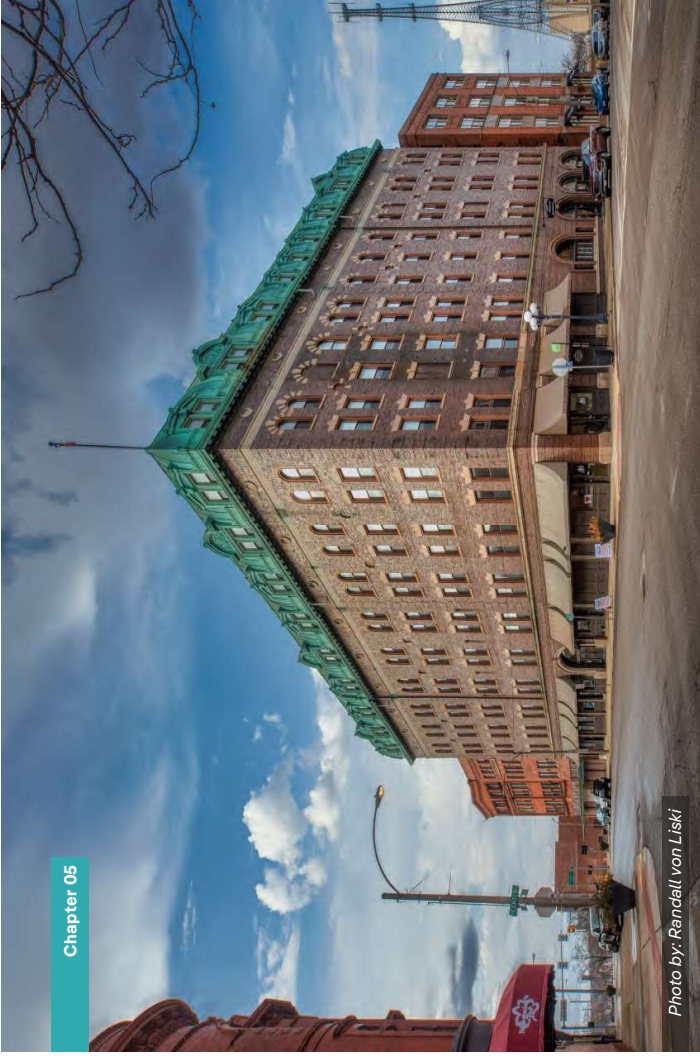
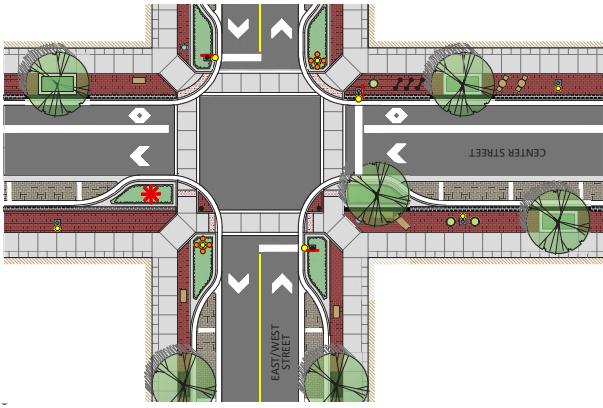


Photo by: Randall von Liski



It is anticipated that the positive outcomes of these streetscaping improvements will likely be experienced at different paces for each street. If Main Street represents low-hanging fruit where the impact of the treatment will be felt right away, then Center Street represents a slower “build it and they will come” scenario. That said, Center Street provides perhaps the greater relative growth potential and opportunity for Return on Investment, when constructed in the proper sequence. (See “Program Phasing” in Chapter 7)

It should also be noted that a major development project is scheduled for Fall 2024 construction at the 400 Block of Center Street: demolition of the existing Market Street garage and erection of a new Transit Center (see “Transit Center” section below).

CENTER STREET

Center Street parallels Main Street inside the Downtown core, the latter being one-way northbound and the former being one-way southbound. While both function similarly in the Downtown network, there is considerable difference between the activity of the two streets: Center has far less shops, restaurants, and foot traffic than Main Street.

However, the streetscaping improvements proposed for Center Street are nearly identical to those on Main Street, as the Design Team believes that this is the best treatment for this corridor. This includes the relocation of the parallel parking on one side of the street to other parts of Downtown, similar to Main Street.

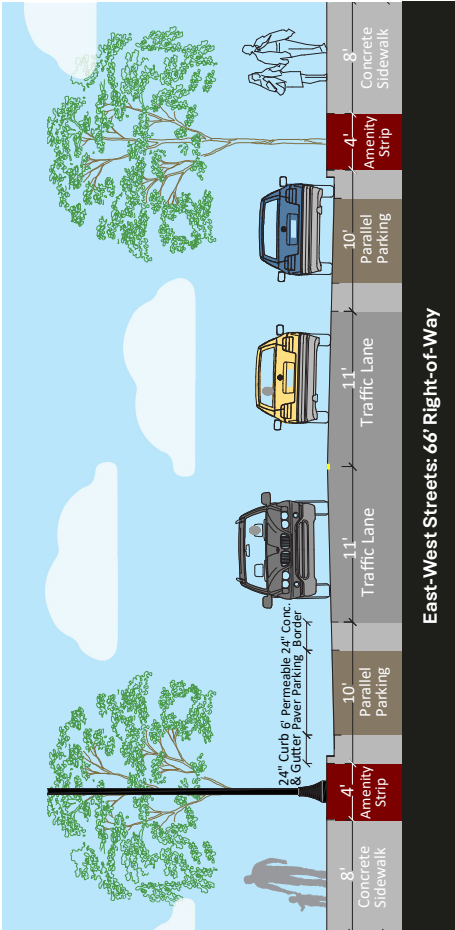
The only major difference between the two designs is that Main Street will preserve angled parking on one side of the street, whereas Center will preserve one side of parallel parking. Although parallel parking provides less parking per block than angled parking, it also takes up less space. And because the Right-of-Way for Center Street is more narrow than that of Main, it was necessary to incorporate parallel parking in order to provide the same amount of pedestrian space as was provided on Main Street.



Center Street: 66' Right-of-Way

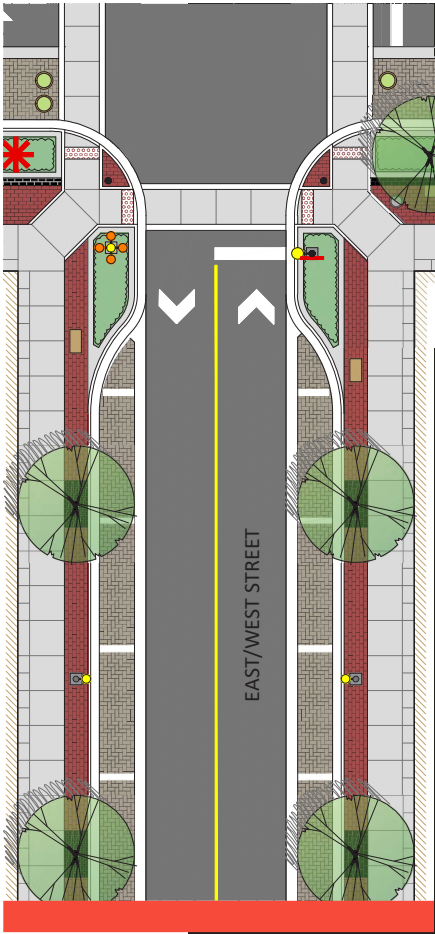
EAST-WEST STREETS

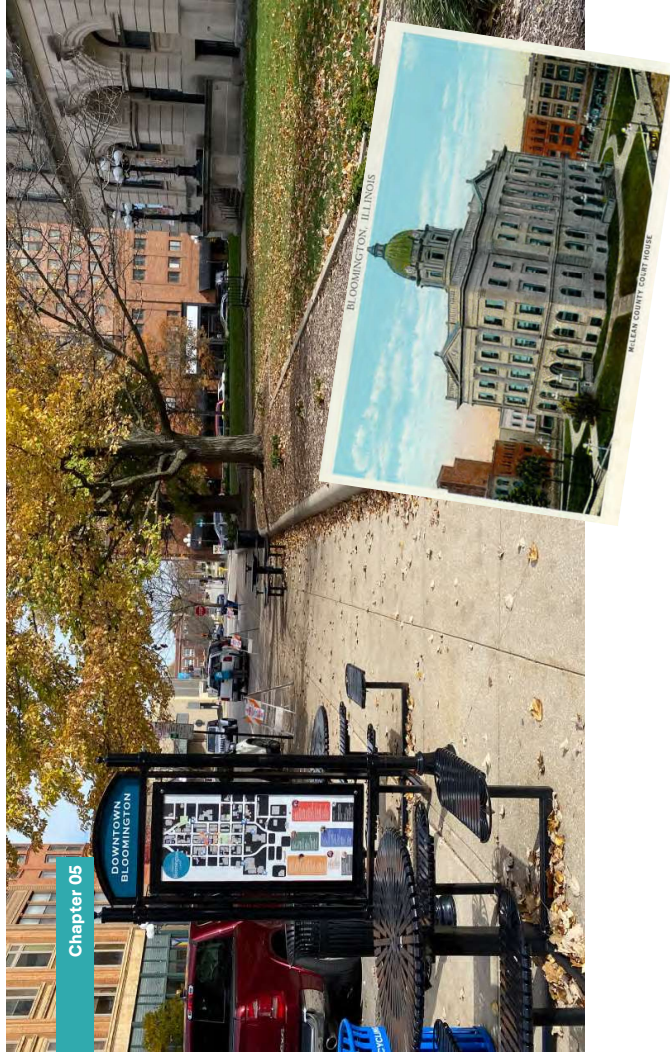
Functionally, the Design Team proposes no major changes to the East-West streets. The two-way traffic and parallel parking on both sides of the street will be preserved, and the curb lines will stay in their existing location – rather than moved inwards as is the case with Main Street, Center Street, and US Route 51 (see “Main Street,” “Center Street,” and “US Route 51” sections in this chapter). Maintaining two-way traffic on these streets makes it easy for drivers traversing the one-way streets to circle back when they have bypassed their destination. Additionally, the East-West streets provide a valuable location for overflow parking, when the more popular spots on Main Street and Center Street are taken. The Design Team was able to reconfigure space in a more efficient manner and increase the parking on these East-West streets by nearly fifty spaces. (See also “Parking Capacity” section in Chapter 6.)



The streetscaping treatment for the East-West streets will maintain the same aesthetic applied to other streets in Downtown (see “Streetscaping Style” in Chapter 4) with some exceptions:

- As discussed previously, the Streetscaping Style includes a blend of reds, tans, and grayish blues for the Amenity Strip and a charcoal-colored border separating the Amenity Strip from the Parking Area. However, because the East-West walks are not as wide as those on Main and Center, it was deemed that the Amenity Strip along with the border would look too “stripey.” The Design Team, then, chose not to apply a border but instead apply the charcoal color to four-foot by eight-foot areas surrounding tree plantings. See below image.
- Outside of the Downtown Core (defined as the region between Madison Street and East Street), the Parking Areas will not be comprised of pavers but instead use conventional paving, such as asphalt. The bold street graphics and amenity strip pavers will still be used. This will help to transition from the Downtown Streetscaping Style to that of the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Outside of the Downtown Core, when the walk is not abutted by businesses with storefronts, the area between the concrete sidewalk and the street will not be filled with the amenity strip pavers but instead with grass. Again, this helps transition the street aesthetic between Downtown Bloomington and the surrounding neighborhoods.





MUSEUM SQUARE

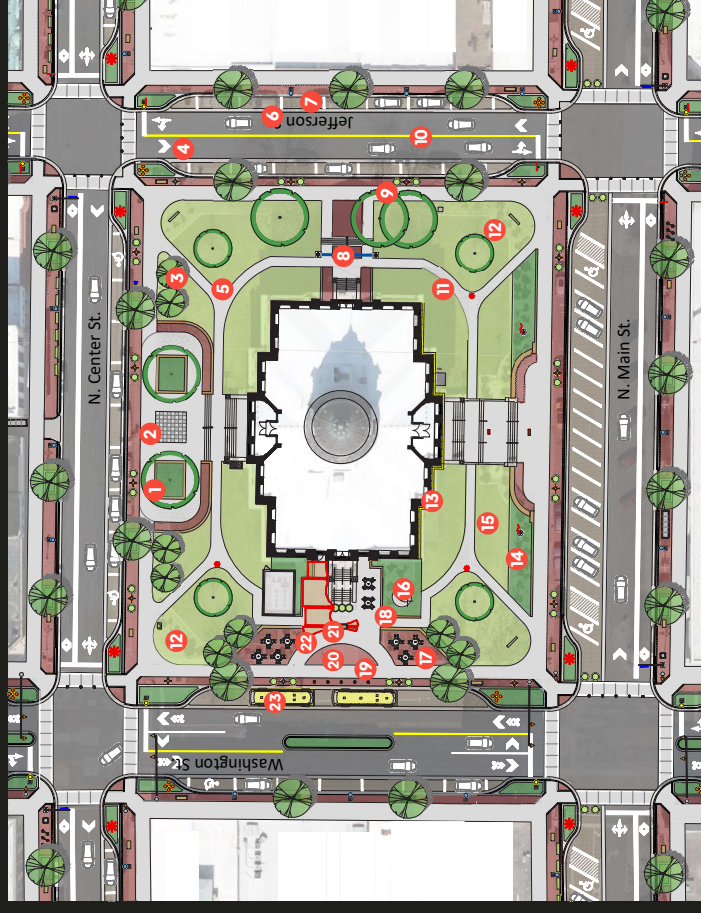
The Museum Square, particularly the old County courthouse at the center, is considered by many to be the “Crown Jewel” of Downtown Bloomington. Constructed in 1903 after a fire destroyed the original building, the courthouse standing today is an inspiring example of the American Renaissance architectural style.

The surrounding square was once open and inviting – with a ringed walk encircling the building and “spokes” extending in all directions. (See above historical image.) Today’s square is quite different, with public entrances on just one side of the building and with high curb walls and landscaping beds around the entire perimeter that discourage pedestrians from entering the lawn.

The proposed design for the Museum Square involves restoring this area to its historic, welcoming character by returning the ringed walk and connecting spokes and by removing the physical barriers around the lawn perimeter. A notable exception to the removal of barriers is the “Freedom Walls” on the east side of the Square. These walls will remain in place in order to respect the fallen Veterans honored by the memorial.

Activating dormant open public spaces is one of the major priorities of the overall streetscaping program (see “Move the Needle” section in Chapter 3), but attracting meaningful activity into the Museum Square will require more than just the addition of the ringed walk. The Design Team therefore evaluated various alternatives that target as wide a demographic range as possible, ultimately landing on a separate recommendation for each of the four sides of the Square. Each of these concepts are explored in detail below.

PROPOSED MUSEUM SQUARE IMPROVEMENTS



- 1** Seat Walls **2** “Game Board” Pavement Insert (Chess/Checkers) “Board” to incorporate musical component
- 3** Sloped Sidewalk Connection **4** Bold Pavement Markings **5** Featured Elements (4)
- 6** Permeable Paver Parking Area **7** Paver Amenity Strip (4' wide) **8** Stage Terrace with Bandshell Arch Structures
- 9** Reinstalled Globe Lights, Single Fixture **10** Street Pavement **11** Sidewalk Loop
- 12** Reinstalled Corner Signs/Monuments **13** Illuminated Facade **14** Flagpoles (2) **15** Ceremonial Lawn
- 16** Sculpture Pad (Refurbished Santa, Seasonal Artwork complimentary to Canopy, etc.)
- 17** Seasonal Display Plaza (Christmas Tree/Holiday Display)
- 18** Native Planting (Seeds of History Educational Garden) **19** Bollards
- 20** Entry Plaza with Tables and Chairs **21** Lincoln Bench **22** Sculptural Canopy **23** Bus Drop-off Lane

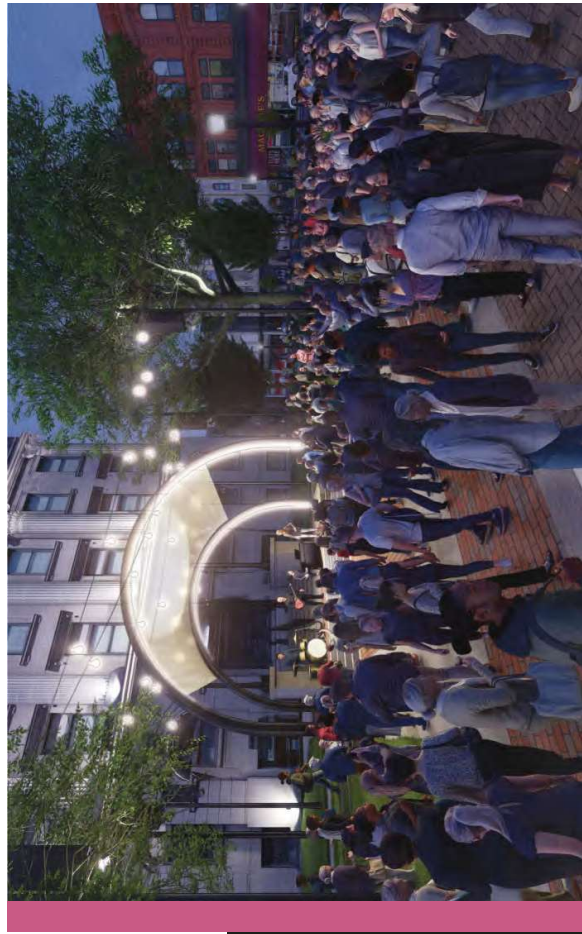
North Side

Outdoor concerts are periodically held in the Downtown Core on temporary stages, usually located within the intersection of Jefferson Street and Main Street. The Design Team instead proposed a stage terrace on the north lawn that uses the courthouse building as a dramatic backdrop for performances and with “plug and play” audio/video hookups located in nearby underground vaults that make setup for concerts easier. The stage has the advantage of “disappearing” during the day when no one is performing, because the stage terrace is a natural section of the ring walk and because there is no intention of installing permanent loudspeakers or riggings.



The stage will be framed with two bandshell structures in the shape of a “Roman Arch”, mimicking the architecture of the adjacent courthouse building and other buildings throughout Downtown (see “Repetitive Use of Architectural Shapes” section in Chapter 4). The bandshells will likely be composed of steel or aluminum and will include color changing LED lighting – very similar to the ring structures in North Main Plaza (see above section). The bandshell structures can also be used to support a screen for “Movies in the Square” events.

Along with a plaza that is comprised of pavers of the same color as those utilized in North Main Plaza, this stage terrace functions as a sister venue to the North Main Plaza. Additionally, retractable bollards, similar to those in North Main Plaza, will be installed so that Jefferson Street can be shut down for exclusive use by pedestrians.



East Side

The east side of the courthouse is historically the front entrance of the building and is architecturally the more prominent façade. The Design Team proposed installing equipment that would allow for video shows to be projected directly onto this impressive backdrop. "Video projection mapping" is a technology that can create breathtaking, memorable experiences and has the potential to make Downtown Bloomington a regional destination, not just merely an amenity for the local population.

Video projection mapping installations often utilize a climate-controlled media room with servers, projectors, and other equipment housed in them. The Design Team instead recommended use of an all-in-one external projector technology that can be mounted to light poles, is all-weather resistant, and contains all necessary equipment (such as hard drives) necessary for the video shows. These projectors include the capability to perform a 3-D scan of the courthouse building. This scan is necessary so that customized video shows can be developed that leverage the specific architectural geometry of the building to create sensational 3-D effects. Beneficially, the white coloring of the building provides a highly reflective surface that will result in increased projection brightness – contributing directly to the vibrancy of shows.

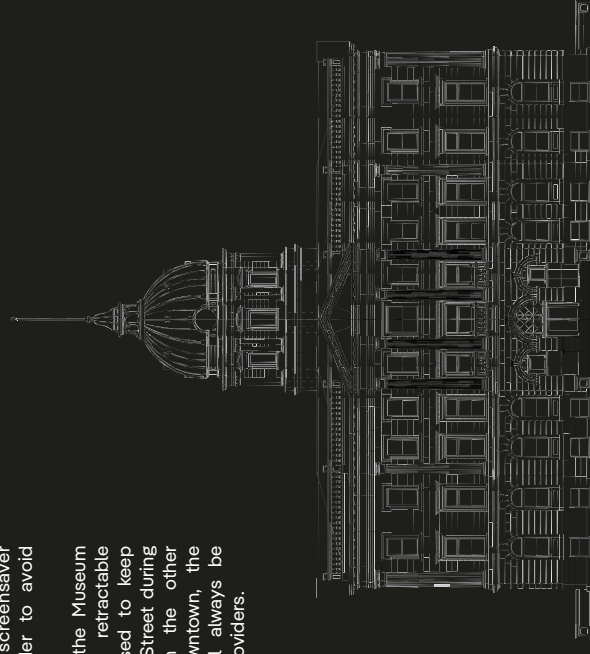


Along with the projection equipment, the Design Team recommends an initial investment in a program of shows that will provide entertainment for the first two to three years, before needing to be refreshed. The inaugural program could consist of approximately five shows with content ranging from seasonal shows (e.g. "Christmas/Holiday" and/or "Fall/Harvest" show) to local interest shows ("History of McLean County" and/or "Route 66" show). In addition to the 3-D video, these shows should contain audio that includes music, sound effects, and possible narration by voice-over talent. The program should also include approximately ten "Screensaver Loops" that consist of subtle, looped animations played in between the main shows. This program should be refreshed over the years, with new shows and screensaver loops introduced in order to avoid waning interest.

Lastly, the east side of the Museum Square should include retractable bollards that can be used to keep vehicular traffic off Main Street during certain events. As with the other retractable bollards Downtown, the Main Street bollards will always be operable by emergency providers.



Pole mounted projectors



South Side

The old courthouse is home to the McLean County Museum of History, where the visitor entrance is rather inconspicuously located on the south side of the building. The Design Team was encouraged by the Museum's leadership to develop a concept for this side of the Square that might make the visitor entrance both more remarkable and more welcoming.



Prior to the initiation of this "Downtown Streetscape Project – Concept Design" study, a member of the Design Team had developed a design for a dynamic art feature that has now been incorporated into the proposed design solution. This feature consists of a brass canopy that extends in a sectioned tapestry from the visitors entrance out towards Washington Street. This canopy would be covered with perforations in the shape of icons highlighting McLean County's heritage. For example, these perforations might tell our community's story in agriculture through images of abstracted corn leaves, or tell our story in history through images of streetcars, Lincoln's stovepipe hat, or the Route 66 emblem. On sunny days, the canopy will project shadows that outline these shapes on the below pavement, further recalling that heritage in light and shadow. This art feature will accentuate the visitors entrance and attract attention in a way that is currently lacking.

Other streetscaping treatments for the south side of the Square include an entry plaza with tables and chairs meant to entice outdoor diners. The design also includes a garden to the east of the stairs that could serve as an extension of the Museum's "Seeds of History", an initiative intended to educate the community about the history of ecology and the land of McLean County. Native plants that have recently been planted around the Square could be relocated into this area along with informational signage. At other times, the garden could simply be purposed as a flower bed in order to soften and further beautify the visitors entrance. A large pedestal will be located in the middle of this bed, meant to support sculptures (see "Public Art" section in Chapter 6).

The proposed design maintains the bus drop-off lane as well as the center turn lane on Washington Street. The Streetscape Style will be applied to Washington Street, just as with the other streets on the Museum Square, but with the addition of a landscaped median.

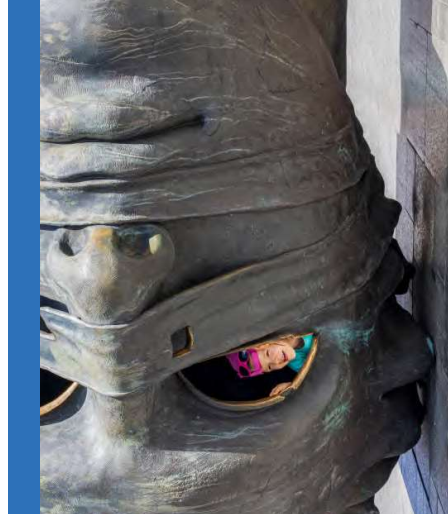


West Side

With the goal of providing attractions for a younger, more active demographic, the Design Team suggested providing placeholders on the West Side of the Square for interactive sculptures, similar to those shown below. When consulted, the Museum staff were supportive of ideas like this that might make the Square playful and inviting. Unlike sculptures exhibited elsewhere in Downtown Bloomington, the sculptures on the West lawn should be permanent and not part of the rotation (see “Public Art” section in Chapter 6).

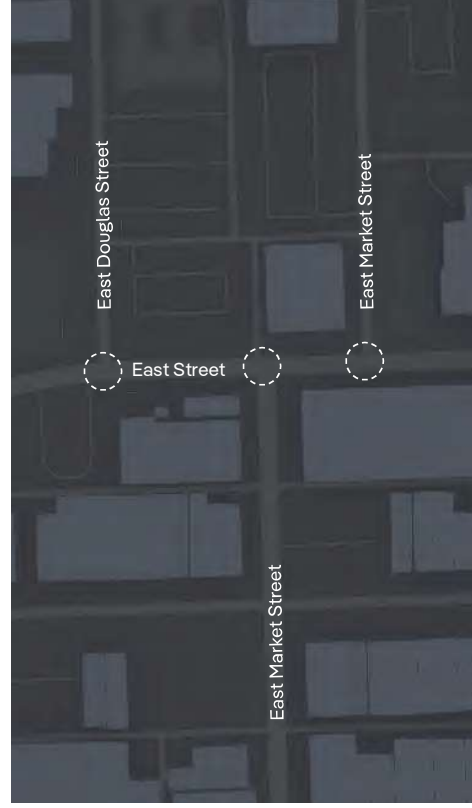
The proposed design also includes a life-size chess board integrated into the pavement at the bottom of the stairs along with giant chess pieces that can be illuminated at night. Additionally, the chess board will sound musical notes when each of the squares is stepped on.

Similar to the North Side and the East Side, the West Side will also include retractable bollards that can be raised during events to prevent traffic from entering Center Street.



BCPA / DOUGLAS STREET LOTS

To address the area around the Bloomington Center for Performing Arts (BCPA) and the Douglas Street parking lots, the Design Team developed a concept intended to solve two issues at once. The first issue to tackle was the problematic layout of three intersections, slightly offset from each other, where East Street (US Route 51) intersects with two segments of Market Street and Douglas Street. (See below image.) The problem with these offset intersections is that (1) traffic efficiency is reduced (traveling from east to west takes longer and vice versa), (2) traffic safety is reduced (two of the intersections are unsignalized), and (3) the efficient use of valuable real estate is also reduced (multiple Right-of-Ways unnecessarily clustered together take up a large amount of space).



A solution was developed that consolidates the three intersections into a single signalized intersection. This was accomplished as follows:

- By realigning the east section of Market Street so that it now passes north of the 503 N East Street building and intersects the highway directly across from the west section of Market Street,
- By adjusting the west section of Market Street such that the roadway centerline is now more closely in line with that of the east section, and
- By terminating Douglas Street at the new parking lots, rather than continuing west to intersect US Route 51.

These improvements are illustrated on the following page. Note that, as with other improvements in US Route 51 Right-of Way, the Illinois Department of Transportation will need to approve these changes.

PROPOSED BCPA/DOUGLAS LOT IMPROVEMENTS





Existing, deteriorated Douglas Street Lots

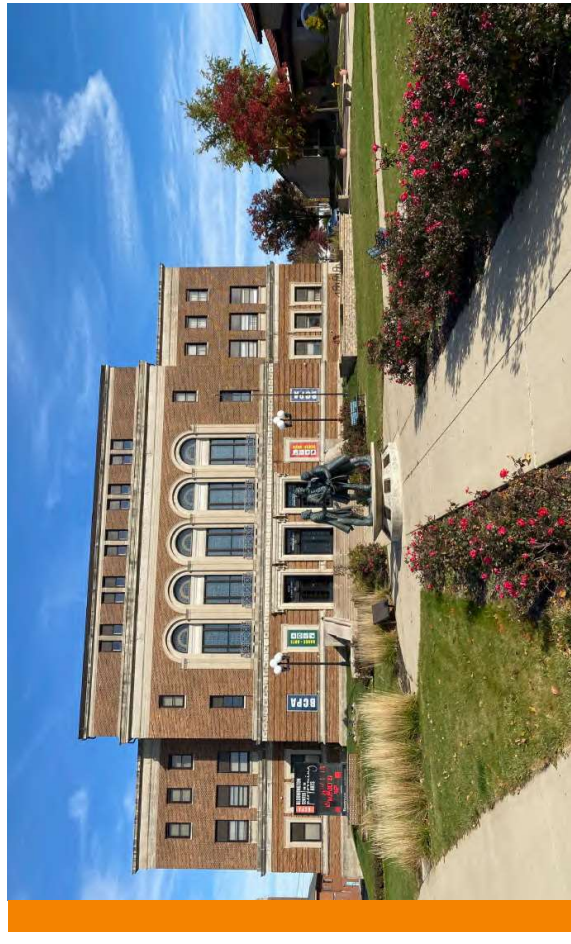
The second issue to be addressed was replacement of the dilapidated and underused Douglas Street parking lots. Anecdotal, the Design Team often heard that few of the general public are even aware that public parking is available at this location – perhaps because of a lack of prominent signage and because the aesthetics of the lot give the impression of abandoned property.

The solution to this issue involved providing more attractive parking, along with additional parking capacity. Regarding the latter, thirty-four additional parking spaces were made possible by the space created with the consolidation of the three intersections, as well as from a more efficient parking layout. These new spaces, along with new parking that was designed on the East-West streets, serve to address the relocation of parking in the Downtown Core (see “Parking Capacity” section in Chapter 6).

Landscaping, both on the interior and perimeter of these new lots, as well as a new, more park-like development of Lincoln Park south of the BCPA (see following page), will greatly increase attraction to the new parking lots. Additionally, more overt signage will be installed that alerts drivers to the parking opportunities. Finally, these parking lot improvements also provide much better access to the BCPA for visitors than currently exists.



Lincoln Park currently consists of a sparse open lawn, with a few sidewalks and the “Convergence of Purpose” statue (depicting Lincoln in the 1850s with David Davis and Jesse Fell, two of his close colleagues and prominent Bloomington-Normal community leaders). The new design involves both an extension of the park’s size and enhancement with landscaping. Arching, circuitous paths, mimicking the geometric shapes used throughout the streetscape design (see “Repetitive Use of Architectural Shapes” section in Chapter 4), are introduced, as well as the opportunity for additional public art. The “Convergence of Purpose” statue is integrated into the design, preserved in its existing location. The orientation of improvements provides yet another opportunity for a concert venue. The parking lot immediately east of Lincoln Park can be shut down and a stage placed on the pavement adjacent to the lawn, so that concert attendees can sit with their backs to the setting sun.



Together, all of these improvements proposed for the BCPA/Douglas Lots area serve to improve connectivity and safety across the highway, enhance an existing asset (Lincoln Park), and establish more attractive parking areas that have increased capacity.

US ROUTE 51

The “Illinois Department of Transportation” section in Chapter 2 includes a discussion regarding how many vehicular lanes are actually necessary to more safely and efficiently convey traffic along US Route 51. That section references both anecdotal and engineering evidence that demonstrates that a two-lane section is adequate and that it greatly improves connectivity to the Downtown Core. Because both the Design Team and City Core Team are confident in a two-lane section, it has been represented in the drawings throughout this Report.

This section of the Report will explore how streetscaping applied to the areas around US Route 51 will establish a sense of arrival and how landscaping will be included that will soften the harsh “concrete jungle” of the highway corridor. (See “Roadway Network & Traffic” section in Chapter 1.)

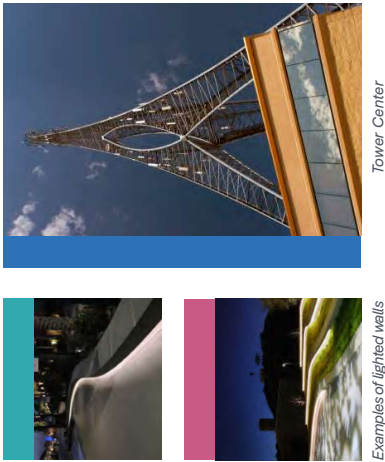
Approaching Downtown

Yet another anecdote the Design Team heard from the Steering Committee is that visitors to Bloomington often zip by on US Route 51 without having even realized they had driven past Downtown Bloomington. There is, however, an opportunity for remedying this: As drivers approach Downtown, heading North on East Street or heading south on Madison Street, the otherwise-narrow corridor opens up considerably – providing the opportunity for “gateway” structures, landscaping, and other streetscaping features that together convey a sense of arrival in Downtown Bloomington.

On East Street, near Olive Street, the gateway structure shown in the below image reflects Bloomington’s Route 66 heritage, though other designs could certainly be entertained. The bike path shown in the image follows an arching path and introduces visitors to the Downtown aesthetic. Additionally, a curving, four-foot-tall decorative wall with lighting under the wall’s stone cap (identical to the curved wall shown abutting the North Main Plaza) provides visual interest and directs attention towards placeholders for public art.



Approaching Downtown Bloomington from the south - looking north along East Street



Examples of lighted walls



Tower Center



Existing Gateway on Center Street and Mulberry Street

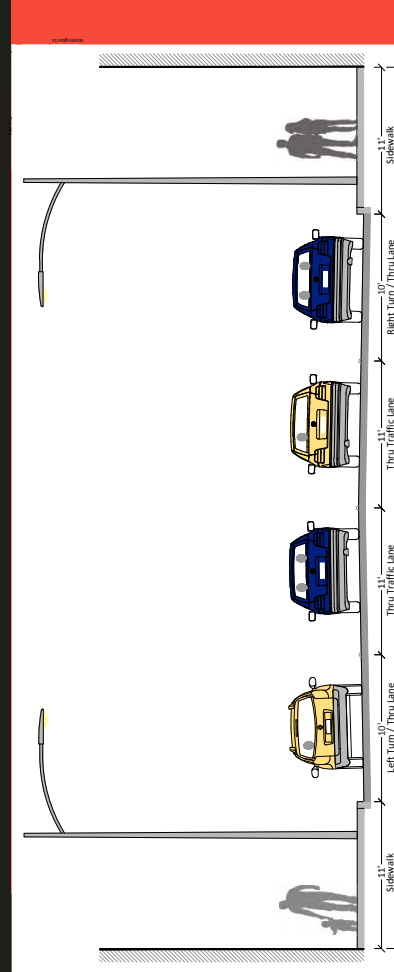


Approaching Downtown Bloomington from the north - looking south along Madison Street

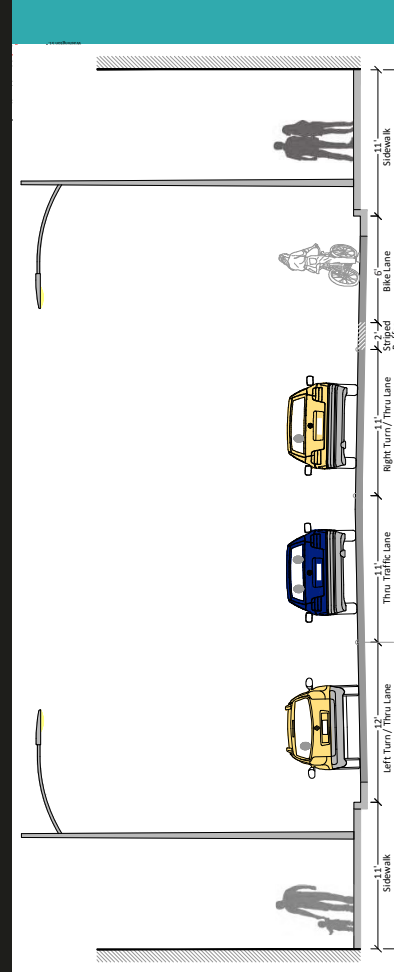
Transition Plan for US Route 51

As noted earlier in the Report, the Illinois Department of Transportation intends on converting one of the existing four vehicular lanes on US Route 51 into a buffered bicycle lane, while the City plans on ultimately reducing the highway down to a two-lane section with that bicycle lane moved off-street (see “Illinois Department of Transportation” section in Chapter 2). Although all drawings in this Report depict the Highway in its ultimate two-lane state, there is a transitional section that might serve as an interim compromise between the sections proposed by IDOT and by the Design Team.

EXISTING SECTION

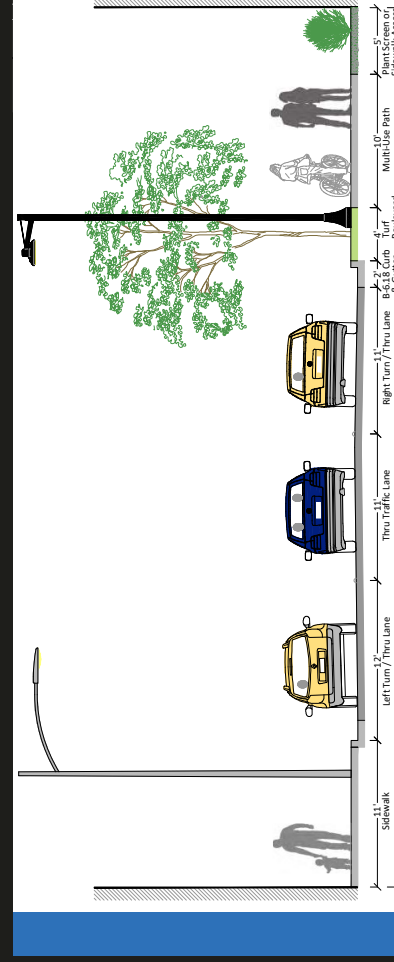


STAGE 1 - IDOT PROPOSED SECTION

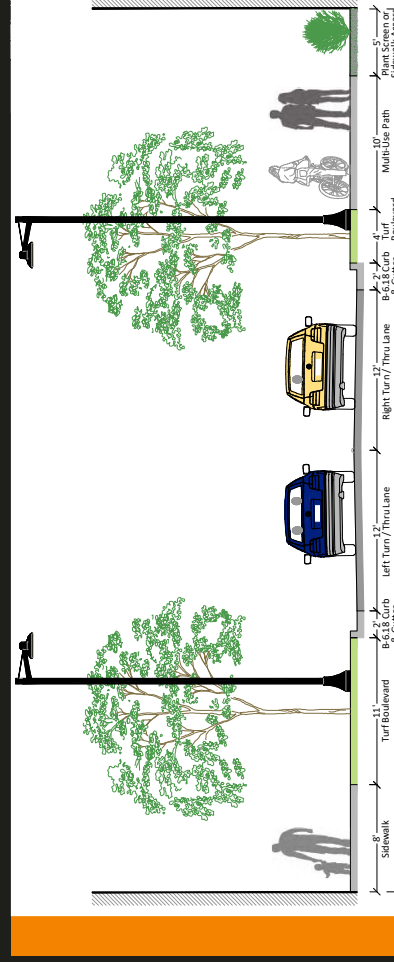


This transitional section maintains the three lanes of vehicular traffic desired by IDOT while moving the bicycle lane to a multi-use path off the street. (Many of the stakeholders, including representatives from bicycle advocacy groups, suggested that placing a bike lane adjacent to three lanes of vehicular traffic without a physical barrier feels less safe. See Volume 3.) Notably, the improvements associated with the off-street, multi-use path could stay in place when moving from the transitional section to the ultimate section. Furthermore, as illustrated on the following page, the entire succession of improvements, starting with today's section and moving through IDOT's proposed improvements to the ultimate section, requires minimal construction “re-work” when moving from one stage to the next. This results in good stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

STAGE 2 - TRANSITIONAL SECTION



STAGE 3 - ULTIMATE SECTION





WITHERS PARK

Similar streetscaping improvements as those recommended for the “Downtown Approaches” can be implemented within a revamped version of “Withers Park” – located at the Northeast intersection of US Route 51 and Washington Street. Trotter Fountain, one of the more important historic works of public art in Bloomington, will of course be preserved in its existing location; but the same arching, circuitous paths and lighted walls proposed elsewhere on US Route 51 can be used here to highlight this monument, while connecting this park with the overall Downtown identity.

Withers Park also provides a suitable location to be used as an outdoor activity area. Semi-permanent game furniture can be installed, such as outdoor foosball, table tennis, and chess.

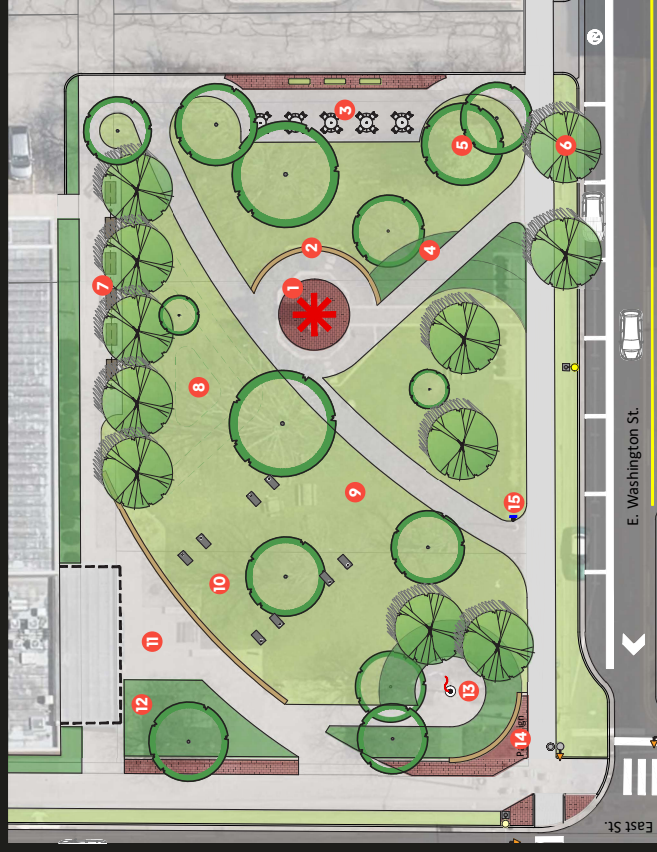


Trotter Fountain

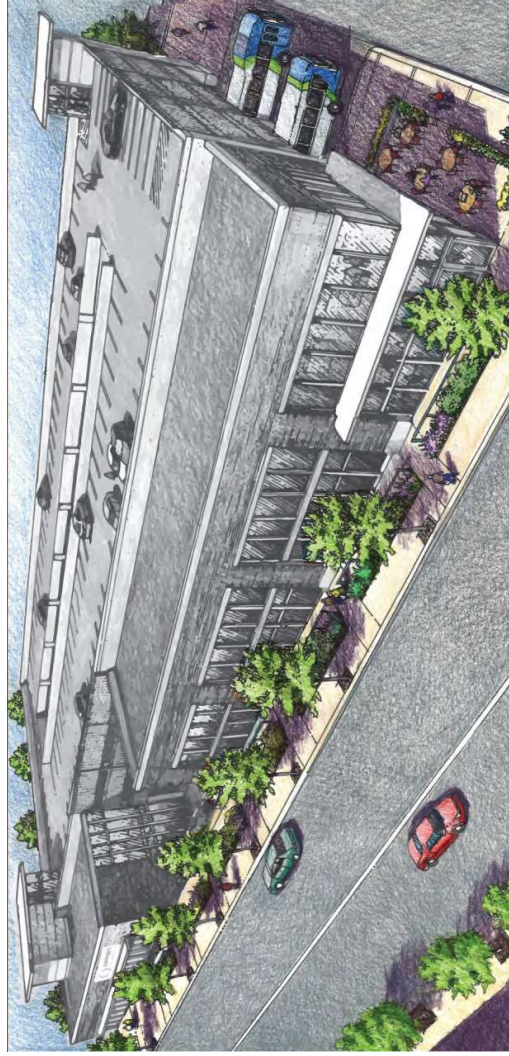


Example of outdoor game furniture

PROPOSED WITHERS PARK IMPROVEMENTS



- 1 Existing Trotter Fountain
- 2 Seat Wall
- 3 Game Tables (chess, checkers, foosball)
- 4 Butterfly/Pollinator Flower Beds
- 5 Existing Trees, typ.
- 6 Proposed Trees
- 7 Urban Swings
- 8 Low Berm
- 9 Temporary Stage Area
- 10 Lawn Game Area (Bags, ping pong, etc.)
- 11 Entry Plaza and Seat Wall
- 12 Plant Bed
- 13 Existing Flagpole
- 14 Park Sign
- 15 Existing Wayfinding Sign



TRANSIT CENTER

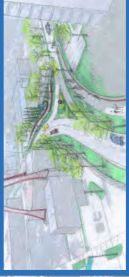
A major development proposed for Downtown Bloomington involves the demolition of the existing Market Street Parking Deck and construction of a new Transit Center for Connect Transit. Design of the Transit Center is not within the scope of this project, but the Director of Connect Transit served as a member of the Steering Committee and provided information on anticipated features for the new facility:

- Accommodation of ten buses,
- Well-lit and secure public parking,
- A climate-controlled visitor lobby,
- Leased commercial space, and
- A solar canopy to sustainability power the building.

The Design Team coordinated with Connect Transit on a number of issues to ensure that this major project will be compatible with the proposed streetscape improvements. For example, the Team coordinated with the Director to ensure that bus routes would stay clear of Main Street and Center Street. Additionally, the anticipated construction schedule for the facility (Fall of 2024 through 2026) was taken into account when developing the plan for phasing the various streetscaping projects (see Chapter 7 “Program Phasing”).

Locust St. r

PROPOSED ROUTE 9 IMPROVEMENTS
Concept shown for reference (State of IL Project)



MADISON STREET GATEWAY



TRANSIT CENTER



MUSEUM SQUARE-WEST SIDE



MUSEUM SQUARE-SOUTH SIDE

Olive St.



Mulberry St.

Market St.

Monroe St.

ROOSEVELT ST.

MADISON ST.

CENTER ST.

MAIN ST.

EAST ST.

Jefferson St.

WASHINGTON ST.

Washington St.

Front St.

GROVE ST.

ALBERT ST.



NORTH MAIN PLAZA



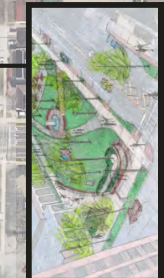
BCPA / DOUGLAS STREET LOTS



MAIN STREET



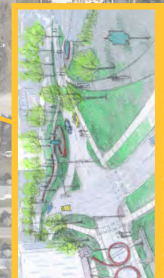
MUSEUM SQUARE-NORTH SIDE



WITHERS PARK



MUSEUM SQUARE-EAST SIDE



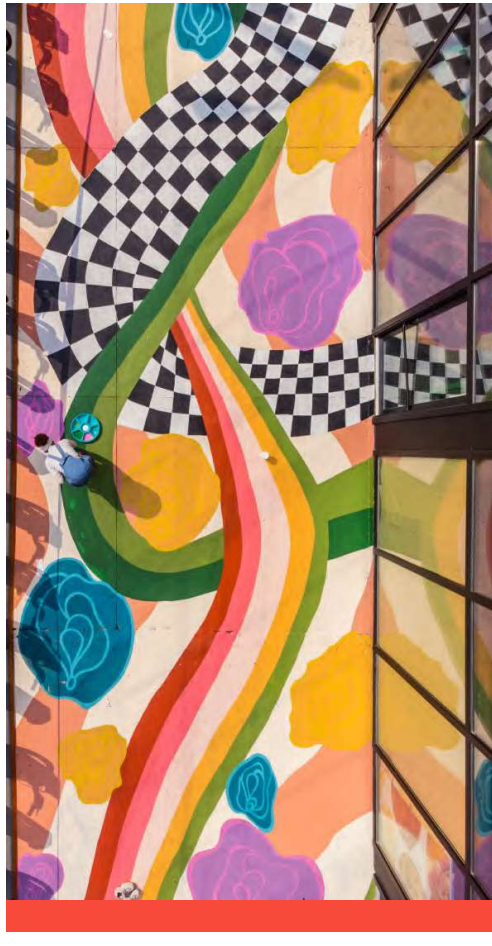
EAST STREET GATEWAY

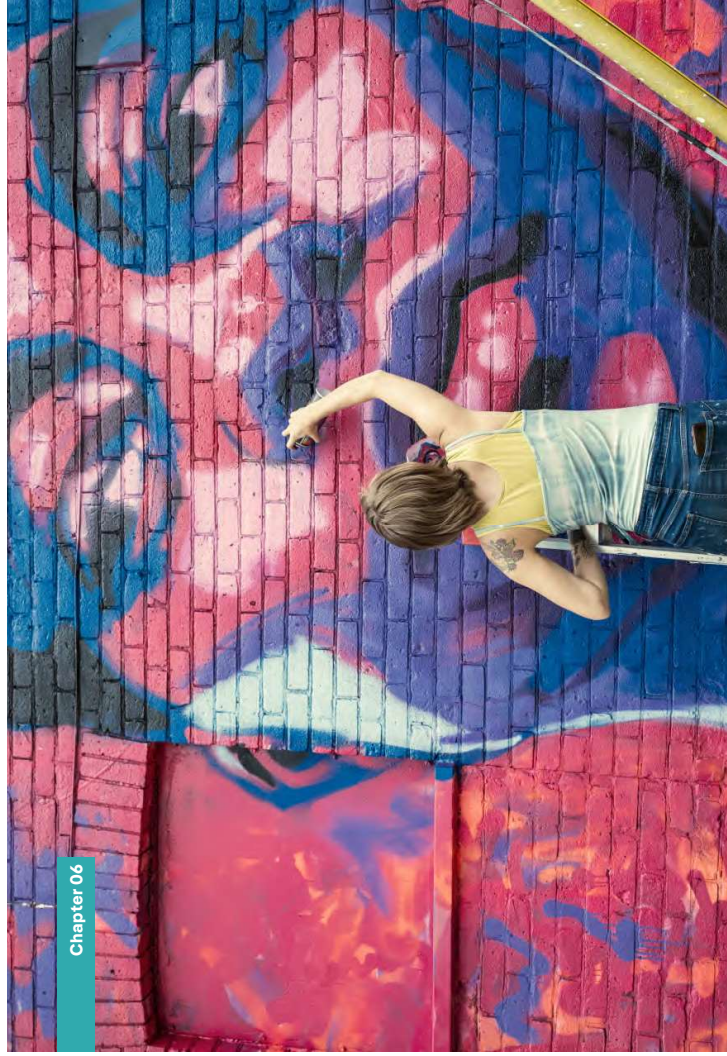
O

Additional Design Elements

O Additional Design Elements

The previous Chapter detailed the streetscaping treatments that will be applied to a specific geographic location (improvements near the Bloomington Center for Performing Arts, for example.) This sixth Chapter explores miscellaneous design elements that are planned throughout all or most of Downtown Bloomington.





PUBLIC ART

The integration of art into the Streetscape Program, although not yet explored in this Report, is nonetheless vital for enhancing Downtown Bloomington and for making it more attractive for visitors and residents. When used effectively, art is able to capture the imagination of the public and inject life into Downtown Bloomington in ways that other elements of the Streetscaping Program cannot.

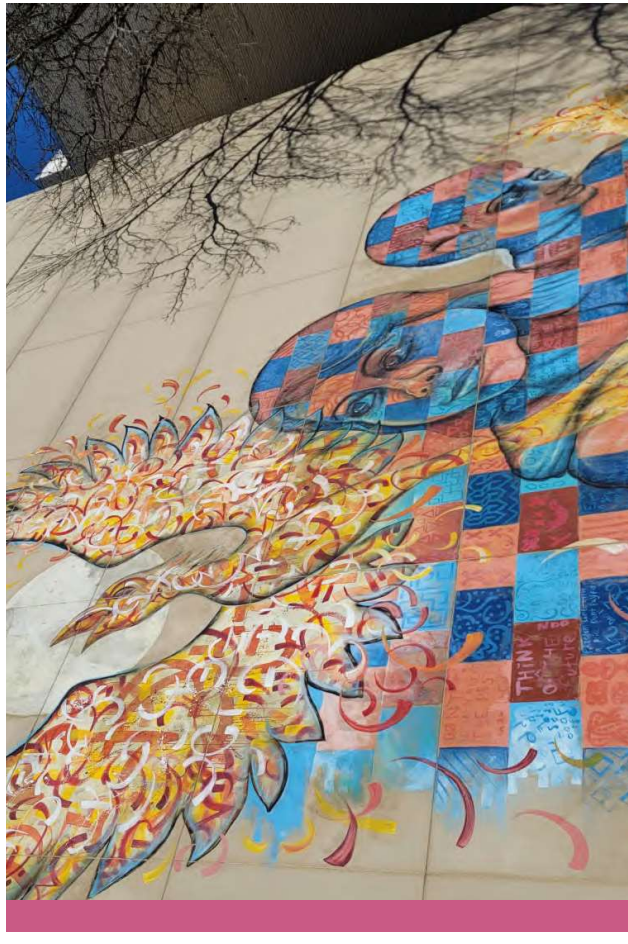
The notion of public art may conjure images of statues of historical figures, perhaps cast in bronze. However, a great variety of art forms are in fact possible (painted, cast, sculpted, welded...) as well as a vast range of subject matter (abstract, ethnic, social justice, symbolic, landscapes...), all of which have the potential of uplifting the urban energy of Downtown Bloomington and invigorating public spaces.

The purpose of this Report is not to specify the exact art that should be installed Downtown, but rather to provide guidance on effective themes and potential locations, as well as the process by which art should be curated. Note that this section of the Report does not pertain to non-physical art forms (for example, music performed at outdoor concerts or video projection shows, both mentioned previously in this Report).

Bloomington Public Arts Commission

Acknowledging that the quality of art can be subjective, it is nevertheless appropriate for a qualified body to be appointed in order to provide direction on all of the major art pieces that are curated for public areas. This body's purpose would be to ensure that the art is of proper quality and suitable thematically for the Downtown environment. The intent is not that all of the public art should be uniform, rather that the art pieces should be complimentary to each other and to the intended atmosphere of Downtown Bloomington.

The formation of a "Public Arts Commission" was approved by the City Council. This group might be used to provide the necessary organization and guidance to successfully implement this component of the Streetscaping plan. It is recommended that members of this commission be comprised of active members of Bloomington-Normal's arts community as well as those with experience participating in similar commissions.





Murals

Not all art mediums are suitable for outdoor exhibition, given the weather in Central Illinois. Public art proposed for the Downtown Streetscape falls into the category of either murals or sculptures. The former will be the first to be explored.



APPLICATION STANDARDS

There are locations throughout Downtown Bloomington where high-quality murals were painted, but protective sealants were not applied to keep the vibrant colors from fading and the paint from chipping away. In order to combat this from occurring in the future, the City should adopt standards from "Mural Arts Philadelphia" - an organization that supports the creation of public murals and has established recommendations for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the art. The more important application standards include the following: (1) proper cleaning and priming of the wall surface, (2) use of a polytab vinyl fabric adhered to the wall as the "canvas", (3) use of specialized mural quality paints, and (4) periodic application of topcoat protection to reduce the effect of sun damage.

THEMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The subject matter of Downtown murals should, on the whole, speak to a future for Bloomington that honors the dignity and potential of all people. It should be inclusive and inspiring. In a word, the murals should bring "beauty" to Downtown Bloomington.

The actual styles of the murals can and should be diverse. Several examples are explored below:



Murals can consist of paint applied directly to the wall combined with elements painted off-site to simplify the installation.



Ground level elements can create destination opportunities for photos.



Having a mural extend its picture plane beyond one side of the building can create a dynamic visual.



Murals can invoke the sensation of depth by using painted 3-D graphics or by using actual, physical elements.



Strong graphic images translate well at a large scale and make a powerful visual impression.