RAVENNA
DOWNTOWN
DISTRICT
PLAN

"Capital cities need a "WOW" factor."
— David Dix, former publisher of the Record-Courier.
January 12, 2020 Record-Courier

IMPLEMENT

Main Street Ravenna Project

MAIN STREET
RAVENNA

RAVENNA DOWNTOWN DISTRICT PLAN

Consultant Statement

Ravenna Residents, Business Owners, Advocates, and Civic Leaders,

First, I want to thank Main Street Ravenna and the supporters of this project for the opportunity to work on this plan for my hometown, a place I feel very rooted in and influenced by more and more each day. Growing up in Ravenna, I did not always understand or appreciate all that our town has to offer in terms of both history and future potential. Returning to town in a professional capacity and spending the last year working and talking with so many long-time residents and new business owners demonstrated the values that hold the community together and the ambitions so many of us have for Ravenna and Portage County's future.

This project started with the charge of developing a plan that would demonstrate the potential of focusing the interests and efforts of local residents, business owners, and civic leaders. What follows is our team's summary of observations and proposals that illustrate how some of the ideas and strategies generated through local research and community outreach efforts might translate to the familiar spaces of the downtown from parking lots and alleyways to streetscapes and public spaces. While these proposals look detailed and complete, their intention is simply to show how the objectives and strategies outlined in the plan might eventually be translated to built projects, operational methods, and even organizational relationships. That's what plans of this type do, they identify ideas and concepts that ultimately have to be prioritized and fully developed by a design development process that considers the broadest range of perspectives and balances available resources.

The plan and the process of its development are not perfect nor complete. Our hope is that the District Plan starts discussions, raises debates, and energizes participation and investment in and about Ravenna's downtown and the community as a whole. We welcome any on-going or future opportunity to expand or focus aspects of the plan as it moves forward.

Regards,

Jason Kentner, RLA
IMPLEMENT Design Principal
RHS Class of 1994

>>RAVENNA DOWNTOWN DISTRICT PLAN

The Downtown District Plan is a 4-part project focused broadly on the potential of landscape and public space to shape the character, function, and quality of Ravenna's downtown.

Landscape and open space is a priority in the downtown plan because of the broad and affordable impact of each. Urban trees effectively reduce heat-island, stormwater run-off, and air pollution. Additionally, urban trees and open space have been shown to improve property values and business profits.

Placemaking, or sense-of-place, is a multi-faceted idea that emphasizes the history, character, businesses, and community that make Ravenna unique. The district plan includes strategies for new wayfinding signage and outdoor seating to small flexible spaces that allow and encourage new activities and amenities.

Civic Spaces are sources of community pride and identity for downtown as well as all of Portage County. The district plan illustrates the potential of spaces like the courthouse lawn as a place where the community can gather, honor, and participate together.

Bike Routes & Trails offer residents and visitors new mobility and easier access and direction. The downtown district plan illustrates potential connections within town while also incorporating necessary bike safety and parking infrastructure into the downtown creating a bike-safe and bike-friendly

The Downtown District

The Downtown District is anchored by sites and properties owned and managed by the City of Ravenna and Portage County. The sites include parking areas, vacant lands, and public rights-of-way. The limits of the study area extend along Main Street from Sycamore St. (West) to Linden St. (East) and between Highland Ave. and Hazen Ave. to the North and South respectively.
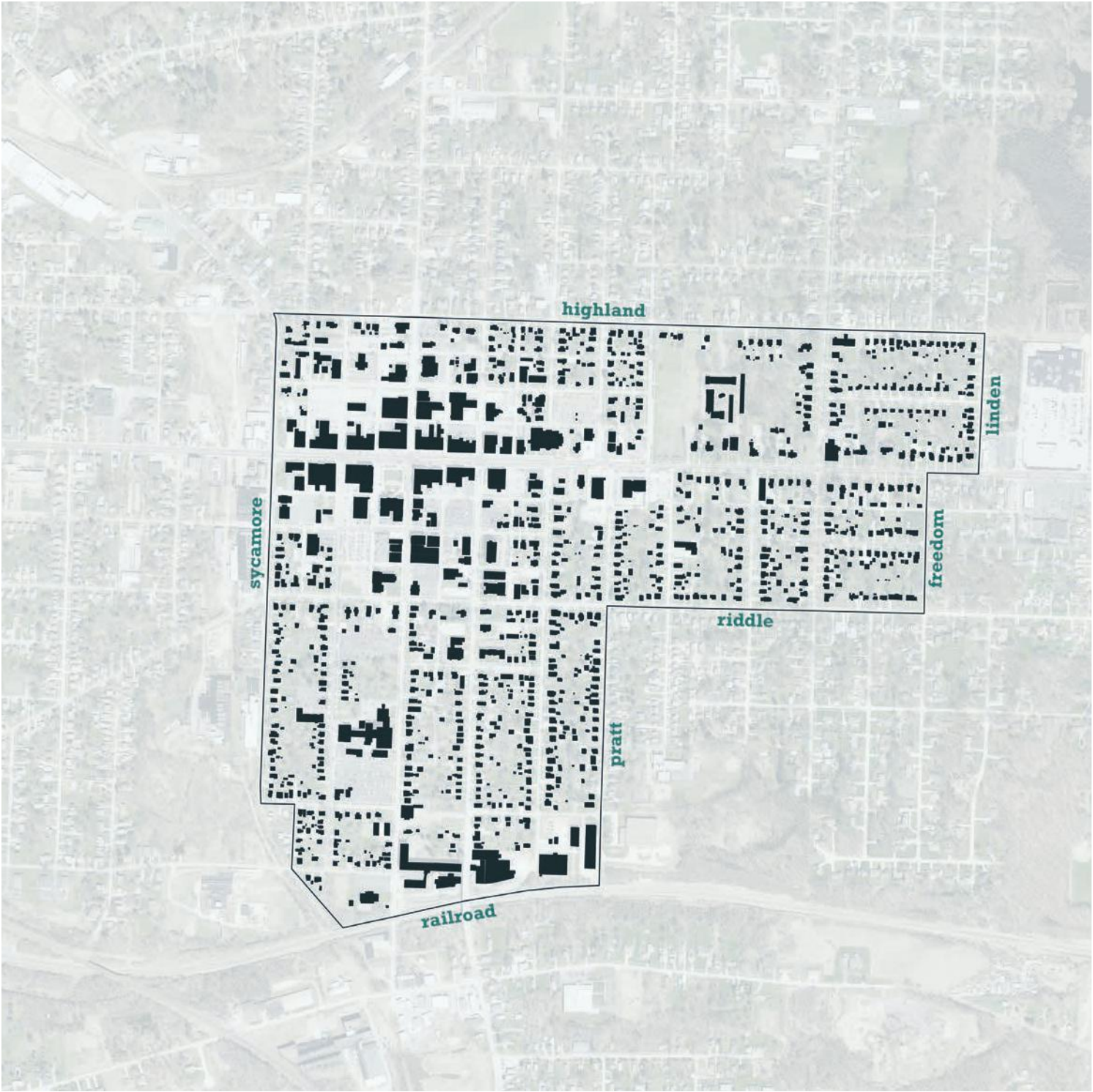

Fig. 01 Downtown District Map

RAVENNA
DOWNTOWN
DISTRICT
PLAN

>> Planning Process

The Planning Process

Through the summer and into the early fall of 2020 the project team will be working to engage with stakeholder groups, residents, and visitors through a range of efforts that due to the COVID 19 pandemic will focus heavily on social media. The group will have in-town displays in late June and monthly workshops in late July and August that will allow those interested to work directly with the project team to share and develop ideas.
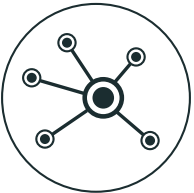
Stakeholder Groups
The District Plan was facilitated by Main Street Ravenna's Design Committee and engaged a range of community groups including but not limited to City Council and Core Group members.
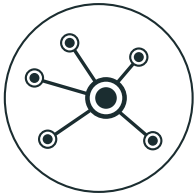
Inventory & Analysis
The project started with a month-long phase that revisited Ravenna's history and also closely inventoried everything from the number of parking spaces to the location, size, and condition of existing open spaces.

Community Outreach & Engagement
Throughout the project process the team engaged with members of the community via social media and in-person open house events hosted in downtown storefront during the summer of 2020. On-line summary presentations allowed for public Q&A.

Concept Visualization
In order to share and develop concepts, process sketches were developed and featured during outreach events. Feedback from those concepts were translated into final project goals and design proposals.

PROCESS: STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

RAVENNA BEAUTIFUL

Friends of the Flagpole

Within a 15 min. RIDE
>> It's about CONNECTIONS
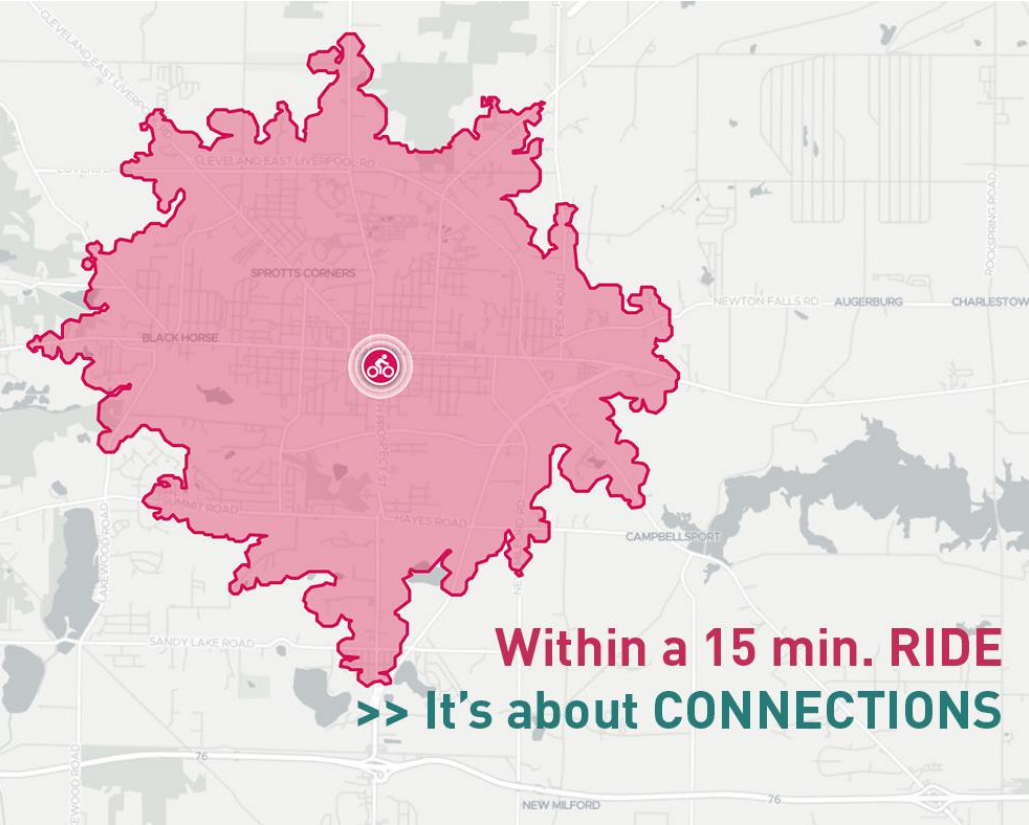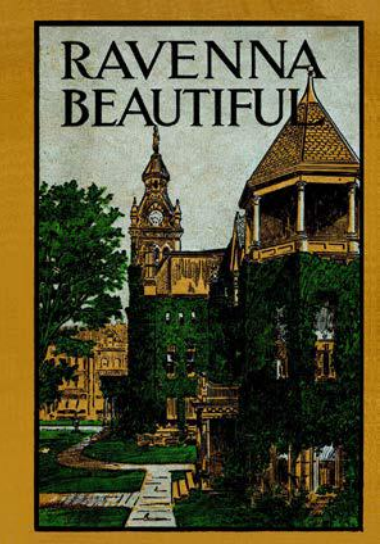
Jefferson's vision wrought Ravenna and Portage streetplans

City is one of the first towns laid out as part of Thomas Jefferson's grand National Survey

By JACK SCHAFER AND ROBERT BRUEGMANN

AT FIRST GLANCE, the plan of Ravenna looks quite unremarkable, a mere grid of streets. From an airplane flying west from Ohio it is possible to see hundreds of variations on this design from small agricultural towns in Nebraska to the giant grids of Chicago, Salt Lake City or Los Angeles.

However, the original plan of Ravenna devised by Benjamin Tappan, Jr. in 1808 is more than just a grid of streets. As one of the first towns laid out in conjunction with the great national survey of the late eighteenth century, it is also testimony to an important planning idea, and it is one of the city's defining elements to this day.

The idea of the city grid, which allowed for easy surveying and orderly development of land, dates back to antiquity, but it was mostly lost during the centuries that followed, only to be revived on a large scale during the Renaissance. In the North American colonies, most cities continued to grow in an irregular, organic way, but the grid did appear, for example in the original plat of New Orleans, what is today called the French Quarter and in Philadelphia where William Penn directed surveyors to lay out a large grid between the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers.

It was during the years immediately after the Revolutionary War that the government of the new United States took the idea of the grid and applied it on an unprecedented and vast scale, an effort that was part of the same drive to rationalize all aspects of human activity that resulted in the metric system and the decimal currency system.

Thomas Jefferson was the chief proponent of a great national survey. His vision was for the federal government to survey land quickly and inexpensively so that it could then be sold to citizens at prices that would allow Americans of even modest means to become free and independent landowners, a prerequisite in his mind for a true democracy. The result was the Land Ordinance

of 1785 in which the entire country west of the original thirteen colonies was surveyed and laid out in a series of giant grids. In this system townships 6 miles square were then divided into 36 sections, each one-mile square. These sections could in turn be subdivided into smaller plots that could be easily sold or transferred.

Anyone looking down on the American heartland from a plane will be struck by the giant checkerboard of farm holdings that resulted from this subdivision of the land. The grid of the cities echoes the larger agricultural patterns but on a smaller scale. It is an inherently democratic system that gives no priority to any particular piece of property.

Eastern Ohio was the place where this system was first tested. The first land to be surveyed was a section of Ohio along the Ohio River. A monument near East Liverpool marks the spot. Northeast Ohio followed soon after. Because Ohio was the test bed it contains many oddities. In northeast Ohio, for example, many townships are only 5 miles square. Ravenna Township ended up slightly longer from east to west than from north to south. Early settlers often chose to lay out towns at the very center of the townships. This pattern is visible in Mantus Center in Mantua Township and Hiram in Hiram Township.

When Benjamin Tappan laid out his new town of Ravenna he chose a site close to the center of Ravenna Township. He did, however, follow the logic of the survey by dividing his land into square town plots bordered by streets that were intended to be aligned on the north-south and east-west national coordinates although they do deviate just slightly from the grid.

On a map the original grid of Ravenna is clearly visible. Extending from what is now Sycamore on the west to Walnut on the east and from Highland on the north to Riddle on the south, it appears to be almost completely regular. The major exception is the widening of the principal east west street, now Main Street, into what Tappan designated as

Public Square. The Ravenna plan contrasts markedly with that of nearby Kent where, because of the irregular course of the Cuyahoga River, it made sense to let the town grow in a more organic way.

The Ravenna developers who laid out additional tracts during the nineteenth and early twentieth century tended to extend Tappan's grid but sometimes departed from it to accommodate local topographical conditions like existing roads, streams, or railroads. In some cases

these tract grids were never fully completed because portions of projected streets weren't actually opened and sold.

Only after World War II did developers break the grid mold during the period when it became common practice to lay out subdivisions with curving streets and cul-de-sacs. The Fairgrounds Subdivision of the early 50s off of North Freedom Street, and the Spring Tree development of the 70s in the NE section of town are good examples. This kind of deviation from the grid followed planning wisdom of those decades with developers favoring this street layout because it allowed for less through traffic and for more variety in the size and shapes of lots. But they did this at the cost of putting more traffic on arterials and eroding the legibility and order of the grid. It also has made it more difficult for fire, police and delivery vehicles to reach their destinations and it often means a longer car trip to get from a resident's house to a location very close by as the crow flies.

There has been a strong

movement in recent years to return to the street grid as the most efficient way to lay out cities, maintain coherence and accommodate traffic.

Proponents of the movement known as the New Urbanism in particular have argued in favor of gridded plans as a way of recovering an easily walkable city that was largely lost in the low-density developments of the postwar decades.

It will be interesting to see whether Ravenna, which started with an easy to understand and walkable grid, will expand with discontinuous curving streets and cul-de-sacs, or whether the logic of the grid that was so compelling for the 150 years of our nation's history will make a comeback and Ravenna will see a return to the spirit of the National Survey and Benjamin Tappan's original plat.

Jack Schafer is a Ravenna businessman with an interest in historic preservation. Robert Bruegmann is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Art History, Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Chicago. This is the second installment in a series that primarily focuses on Ravenna and its identity as a planned city of architectural distinction.

This photo of Portage County Courthouse construction in 1960 shows the regular pattern of 90-degree corners established by Benjamin Tappan's Ravenna downtown plan.

Ravenna and Kent contrast a rigid, regular "Jeffersonian" city grid planned by Benjamin Tappan, Jr. for Ravenna and the more informal Kent plan of a river town following the angles and curves of the Cuyahoga.

This marker denotes the spot where the historic U.S. Public Land survey, a huge undertaking, started at what is now East Liverpool shortly after the country achieved its independence.

Portage County itself is a great example of the regularity of the National grid. A rectangle divided into square Townships that are then divided into to smaller numbered square sections. This made identifying tracts easy and allowed the quick and efficient sale of subdivided land.

The 1808 Ravenna grid remained unbroken for 140 years. Here in 1941 it is still the basis for understanding the expanded city.

Advocacy & Stewardship

Moving this project forward will require regular and intentional attention. Having a group such as Main Street Ravenna at the head of the project will help ensure the life and impact of the project. They will continue to put the plan in front of interest groups, institutions, and administrations.

Programming & Placemaking

A challenge of planning projects is that they do not always result in immediate physical implementation and so it is really important to have an entity that can help to facilitate engagement with local residents and businesses. Often times, small first steps are the successes that more transformative changes are built upon. As during Covid-19, decisions and efforts of city officials can aide the momentum and connection to the plan that residents and business owners feel and build bridge to long-term project goals.

Planning & Coordination

There are a tremendous amount of moving pieces in this and any other plan. Some that are already in motion and others that will demand a long-range view and long-term commitment. If this plan is to be successful it will have to be widely-known across institutional administrations and staff in order to maximize opportunities and efforts.
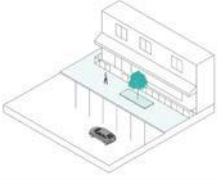
PROCESS:
INVENTORY
& ANALYSIS

PARKING TYPES

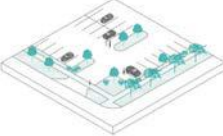| STREET PARKING	PUBLIC PARKING	MUNICIPAL PARKING	PRIVATE PARKING
• Angeled parking on Main Street • Parallel parking on streets adjacent to Main Street • Time limits on Main Street and around Courthouse • Generally marked with pavement stripes • Signage is inconsistent • Sparse landscaping	• Reed Memorial Library is the only open public lot • No marked time limits • Reasonably well landscaped	• Very large lots in area and number of spaces • Various pavement conditions and signage • Spaces in lots at county building are numbered • Lot south of Meridian is fenced and gated • Lot between Maple and Spruce is sold • Spaces in Locust Street lot are labeled reserved	• Make up more than half of all parking areas • Private, reserved, and towing signage is widespread • Parking areas behind business are typically not separated from the street with curbs, sidewalks, or landscaping • Paving condition varies widely

① W. Main St. looking west   ② Corner of Cedar Ave. & Walnut St.   ③ Corner of Locust Ln. & Meridian St.   ④ Locust Ln. looking south

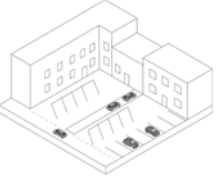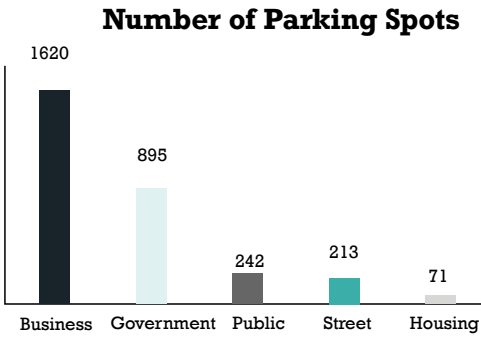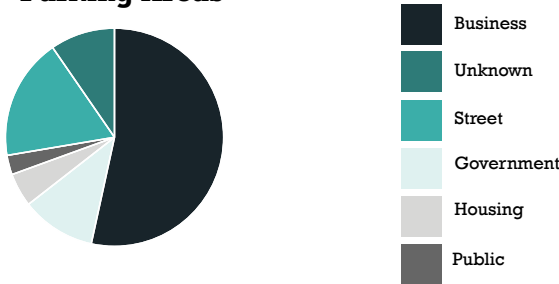|			
• Less than 10 spaces • Public parking • Good paving condition • Open to street • Sparse landscaping/vegetation	• More than 50 spaces • Public parking • Good paving condition • Designated entrances • Landscaping/vegetation present	• More than 50 spaces • Each space is reserved • Poor paving condition • Open to street • Little to no landscaping/vegetation	• Between 10 and 20 spaces • Private parking • Poor paving condition • Open to street • No landscaping/vegetation

PARKING TYPOLOGY MAP

Number of Parking Spots

Business	1620
Government	895
Public	242
Street	213
Housing	71

Parking Areas

- Business
- Unknown
- Street
- Government
- Housing
- Public

Pavement Condition

- Very good
- Good
- Ok
- Poor
- Very poor

Lot/Street Separation

open to street   separate entrances
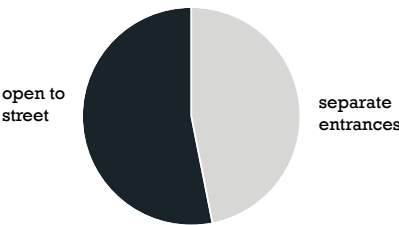
Typologies & Patterns

The effort to define and categorize existing conditions provided not only a lens for the design team to make decisions but also accelerated their development of attention to local details and patterns. That knowledge abstracts some observations but also allows specific strategies to be identified.

Data Analysis

In the absence of detailed GIS and other record data the design team took to the streets to collect a range of both objective and subjective data. A lot of attention was paid to parking because there were not only questions about the number of spaces but also the ownership, accessibility, and condition/functionality of spaces and lots.

Observations & Actions

Through the combination of typological inventory and data analysis the design team made a range of actionable observations. Many of these observations were translated to social media posts that shared how the team was developing perspectives and strategies at the onset of the project.
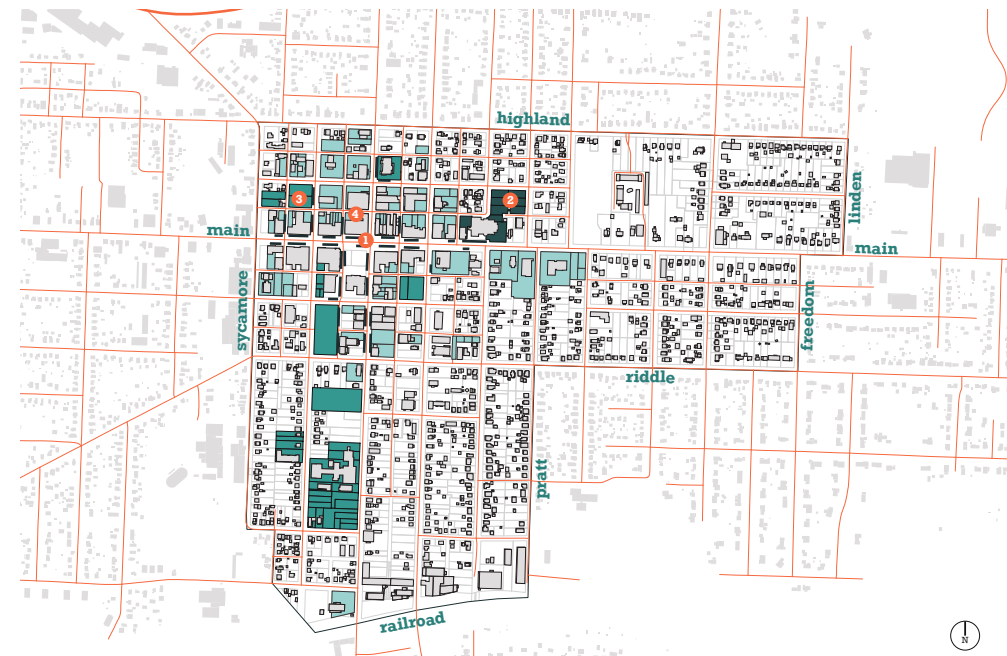
PROCESS: OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT
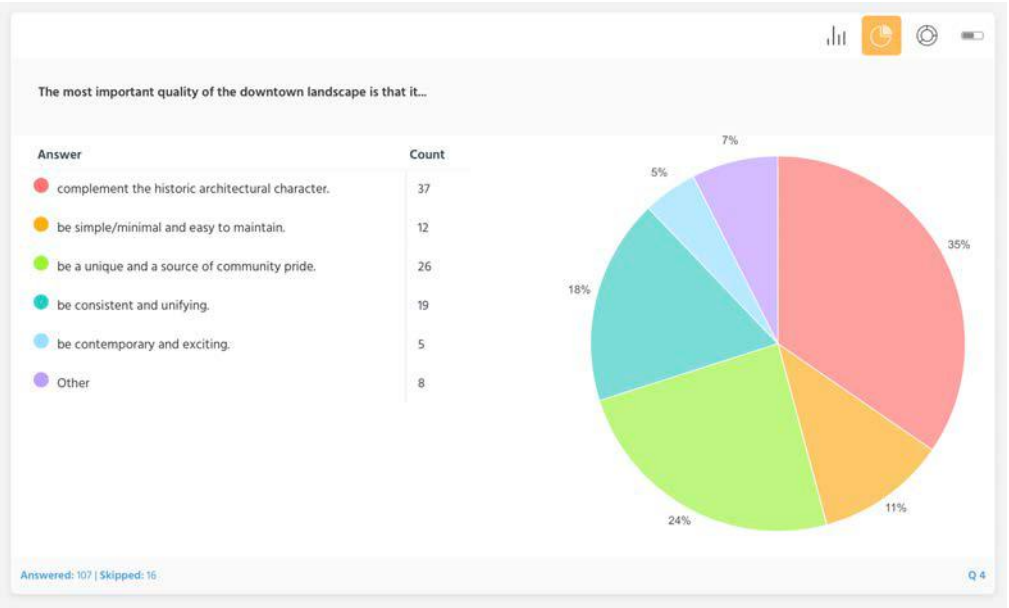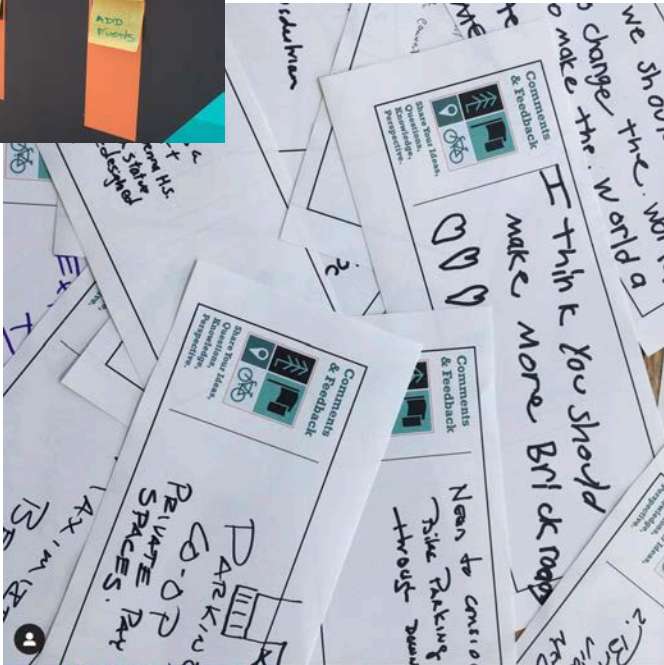
High & Low Tech

The design team utilized a broad spectrum of tools to engage the public during the pandemic. Among the most effective efforts was the creation of a storefront engagement display that not only pointed residents to our on-line materials but also allowed residents to post ideas directly on the display.
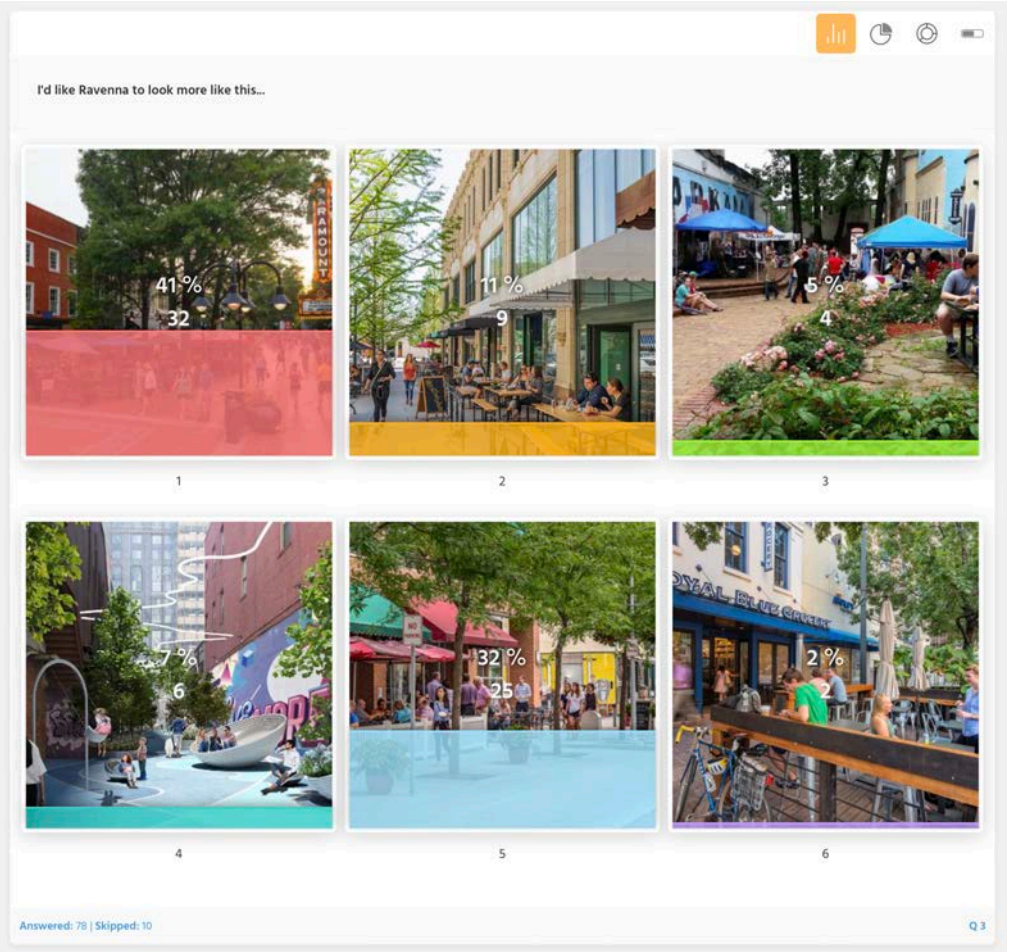
Feedback & Findings

The design team collected nearly 200 individual on-line survey responses across surveys for landscape, placemaking, and biking interests. One thing that was evident in the range of responses was an ambition and expectation for the downtown.

PROCESS: CONCEPT VISUALIZATION
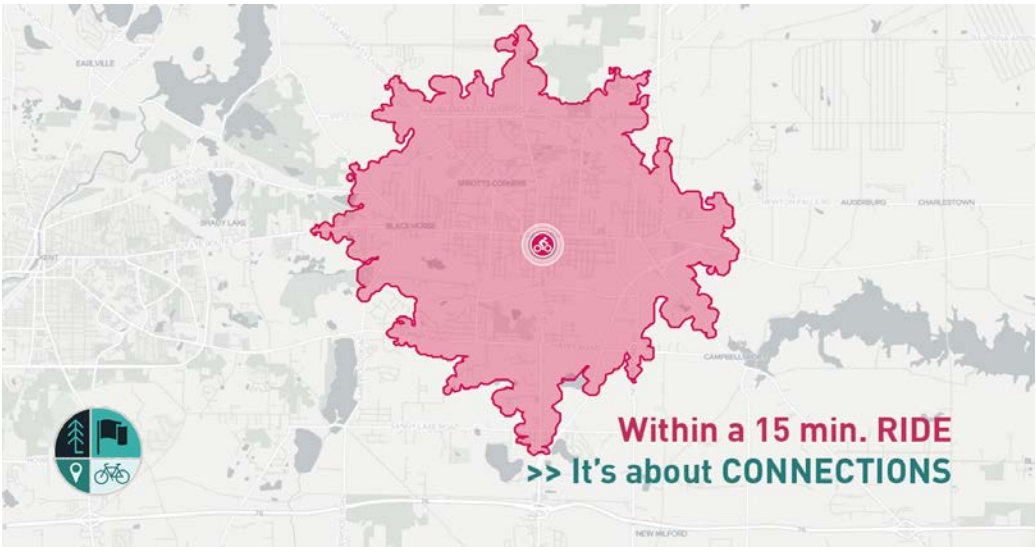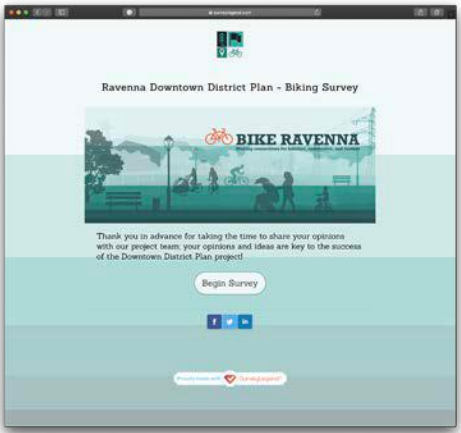
Surveys & Feedback

Collecting feedback from on-line surveys, in-person meetings, and feedback forms provided the design team with actionable feedback as well as re-inforced some of the initial concepts and observations we had made from series of site visits.

Concepts & Preconceptions

As concepts develop the design team tested them against local conditions and also did work to consider the realities of issues such as scale, distance, and cost.
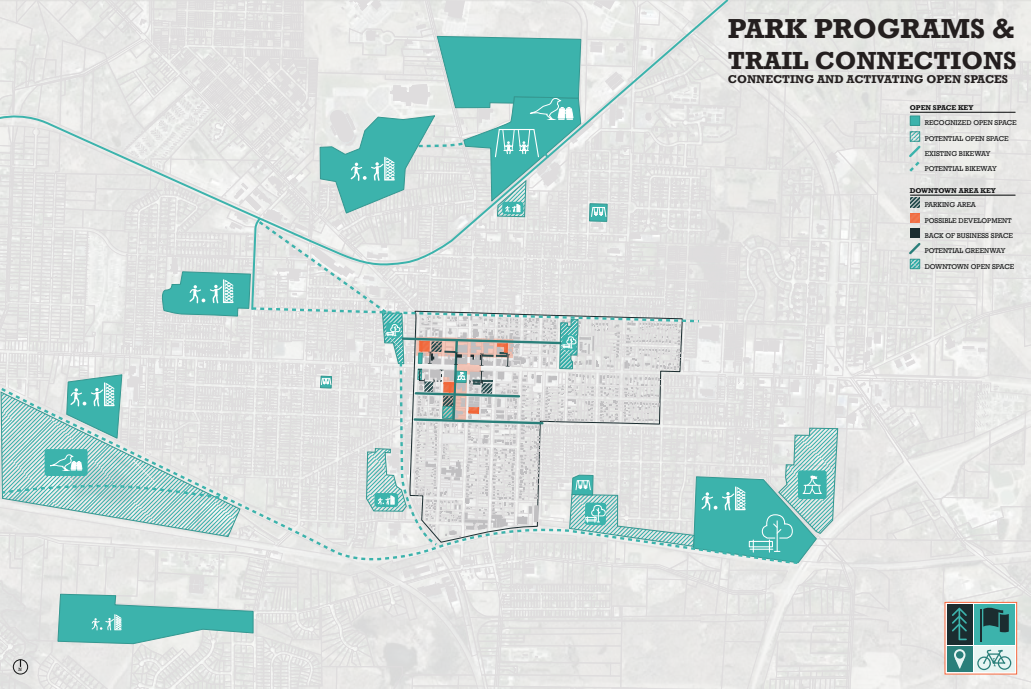
Images & Integration

Design images are developed alongside broader planning documents as a means of not only visualizing proposals but also communicating how specific elements interact and influence each other.

RAVENNA
DOWNTOWN
DISTRICT
PLAN

>> Observations

**OBSERVATION:
RAVENNA IS VERY
WALKABLE & BIKEABLE**

Action: Create attractive and easy/safe routes to and from downtown connecting local neighborhoods, employment hubs, and recreational spaces. Increase stop-over spaces and businesses so walk/ride can have multiple destinations and points-of-interest.

You can walk the length of Main Street downtown in 10 minutes!

Chapel Hill Mall

05 MIN
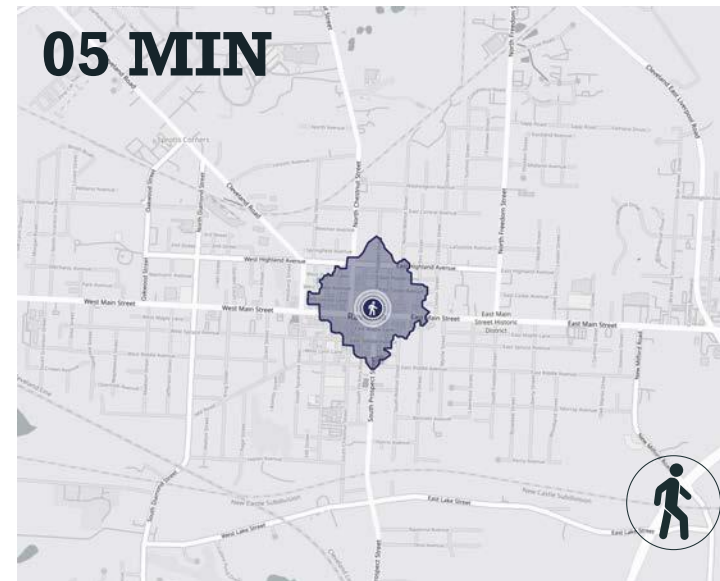
10 MIN
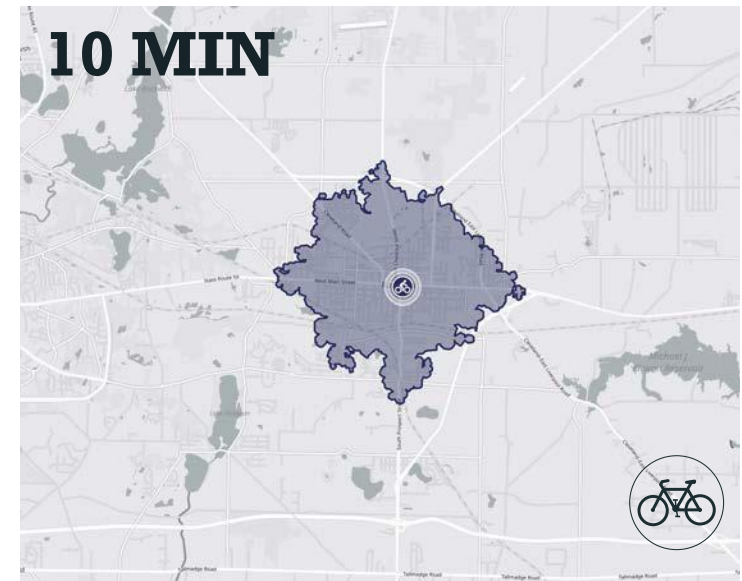
10 MIN
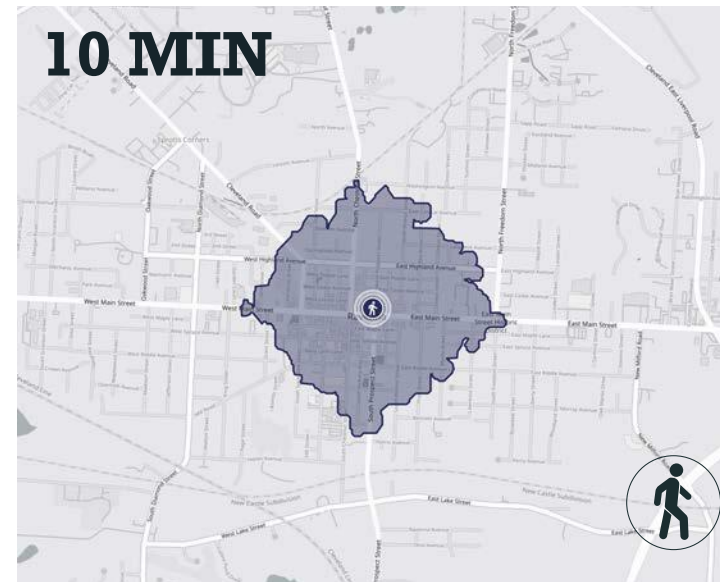
20 MIN
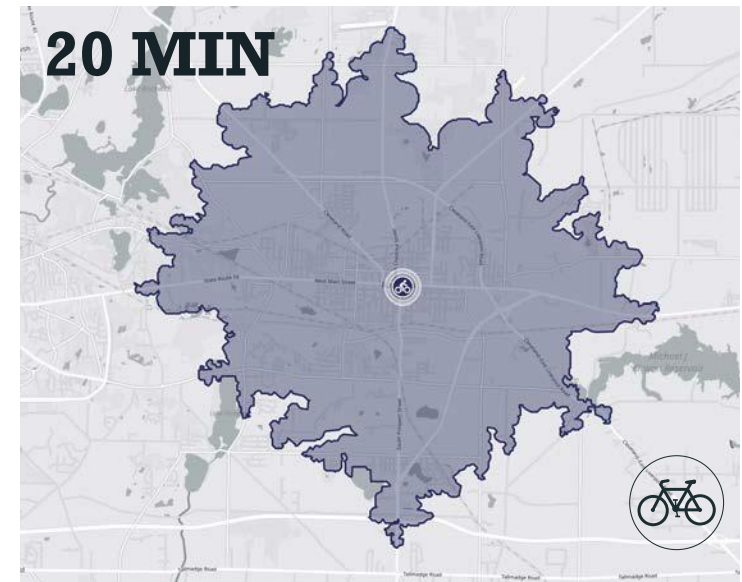
15 MIN

30 MIN
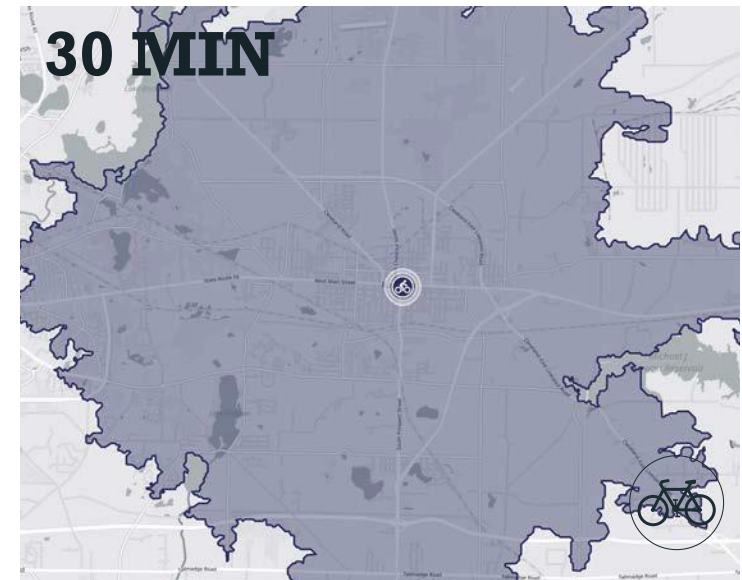
OBSERVATION: DOWNTOWN OPEN SPACES LACK PURPOSE & CONNECTION

Action: Maximize flexibility of largest and most central open spaces while offering strategy for reclaiming space at back of Main St. businesses in order to expand programming and profitability.

Open Space

Food/Drink Businesses
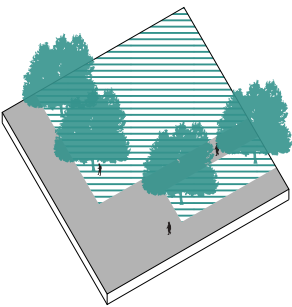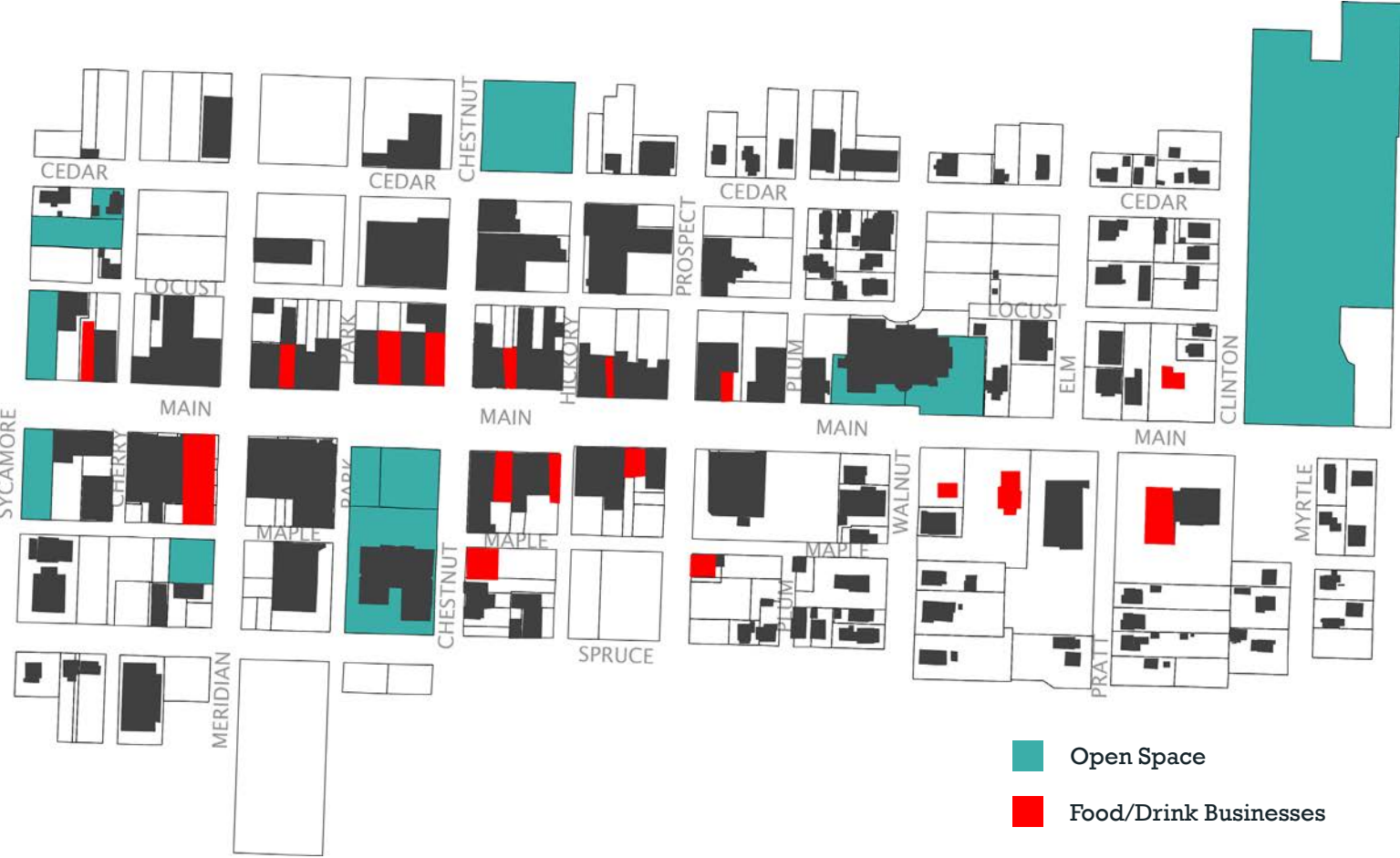
MEDIUM: COURTHOUSE LAWN

CHARACTERISTIC	location: **courthouse**		
vegetation quality	diverse	**limited**	none
canopy	**shaded**	spotty	none
accessibility	**public area**	residential area	private land
proximity to other spaces	within 250'	**250' - 500'**	+500'
site potential	**anchor/gateway**	corridor link	punctuation

Courthouse
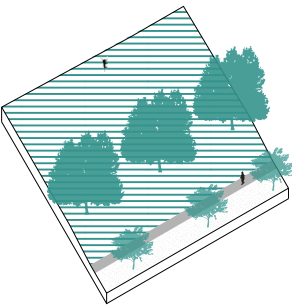
LARGE: OLD HIGH SCHOOL LOT

CHARACTERISTIC	location: **old high school**		
vegetation quality	diverse	**limited**	none
canopy	shaded	**spotty**	none
accessibility	**public area**	residential area	private land
proximity to other spaces	within 250'	250' - 500'	**+500'**
site potential	**anchor/gateway**	corridor link	punctuation

Old High School

OBSERVATION:
PARKING IS LIMITED BY ACCESS NOT NUMBER

Action: Maximize accessible parking using large public & private lots for shared and flexible public parking. Encourage businesses to re-purpose rear parking spaces to grow businesses.
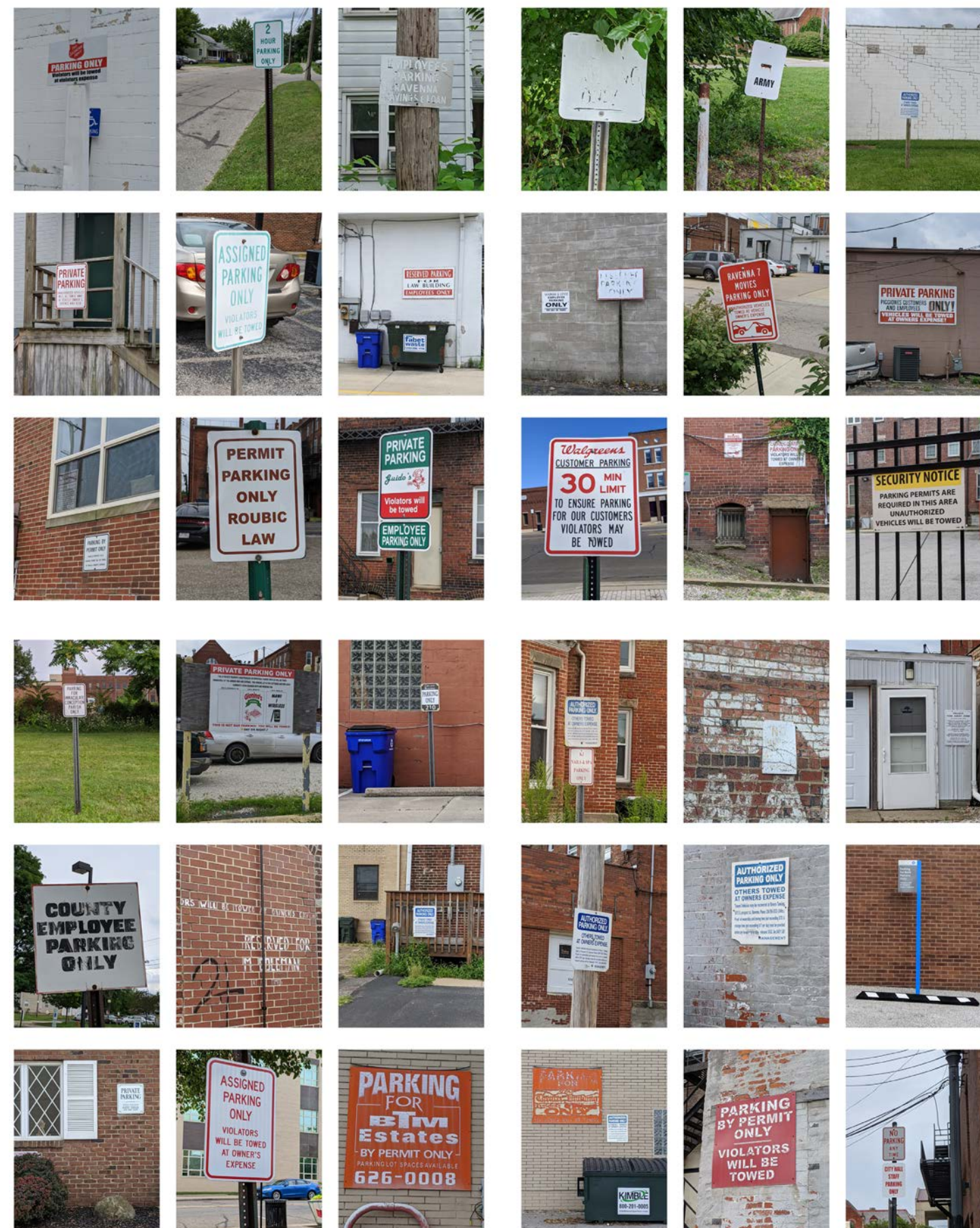
104 spaces

CIVIC DISTRICT

Defined by the blocks between Meridian Street & Chestnut Street, the Civic District is anchored by county facilities, historic buildings, and includes Ravenna City Hall and both the Police & Fire Stations.
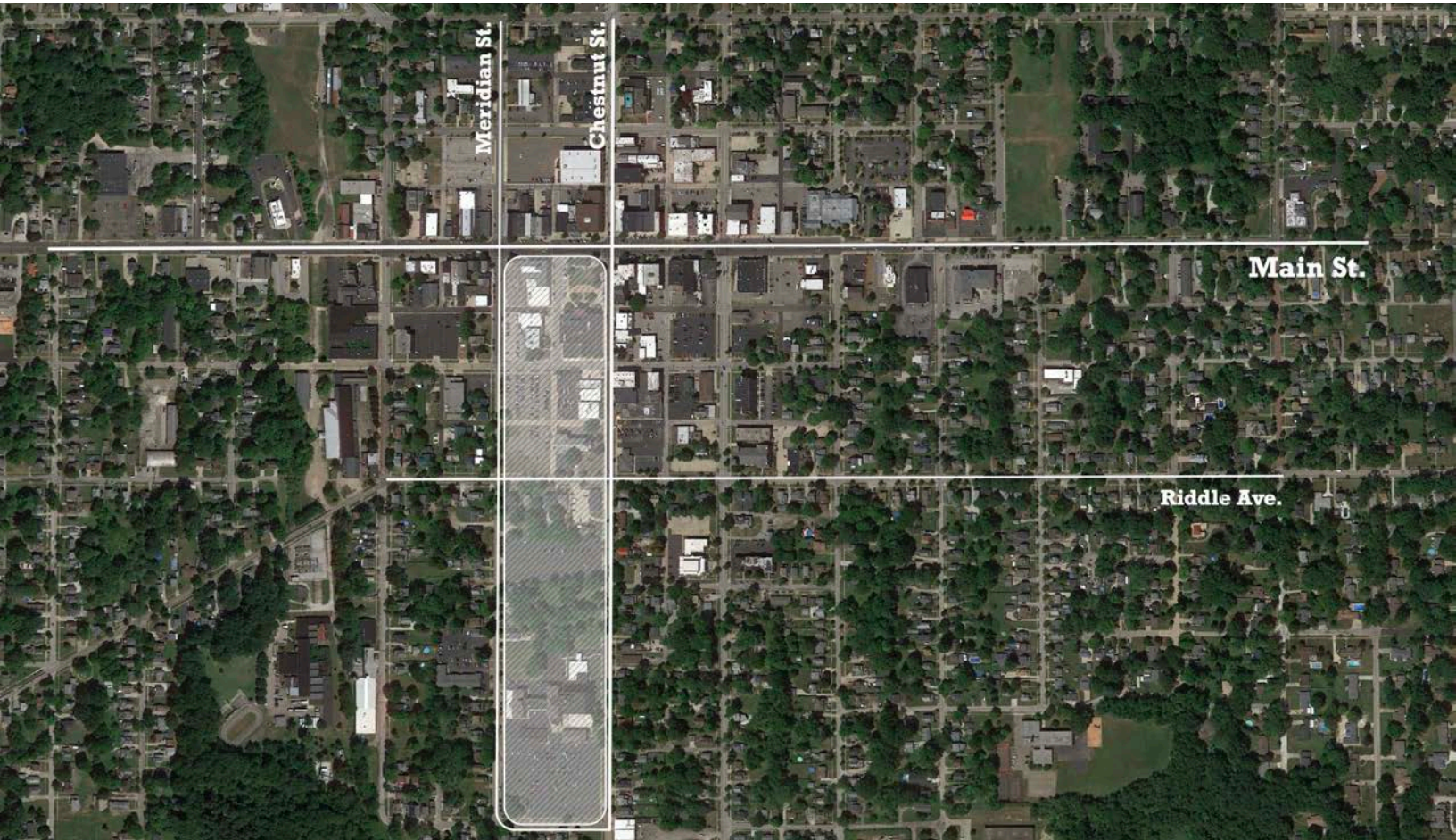
Implementation

• Maximize shared/flex parking of county lot;
• Improve pedestrian and bike connection to/from and within the district;
• Increase wayfinding signage and streetscape materials to aid navigation;
• Preserve redevelopment lots in the district to allow future consolidation of County Offices in downtown Civic Core.

Common Spaces

• Maximize flexibility of spaces;
• Create threshold and anchor spaces;
• Include programmable features;
• Improve maintenance & services.

Connected Spaces

• Create open space routes;
• Offer pleasant pedestrian spaces;
• Include points of interest & rest;
• Use materials to help wayfinding.

Flexible Uses

• Challenge dedicated single uses;
• Make spaces accessible off-hours;
• Use materials as invitation for shared uses.

CIVIC DISTRICT
CONCEPT SKETCHES

Focus of these concepts was to illustrate how landscape could be used to address a variety of issues from the function of existing spaces to the look and feel of parking and pedestrian spaces.

Concepts

• Utilize materials and plantings to define a Civic Core anchored by the courthouse;
• Create "shared" pedestrian and vehicular spaces so parking can be multi-use;
• Organize shared/public parking in the alleyways to improve visitor experience;
• Add landscape/open space to edges of large parking lots to improve aesthetics.
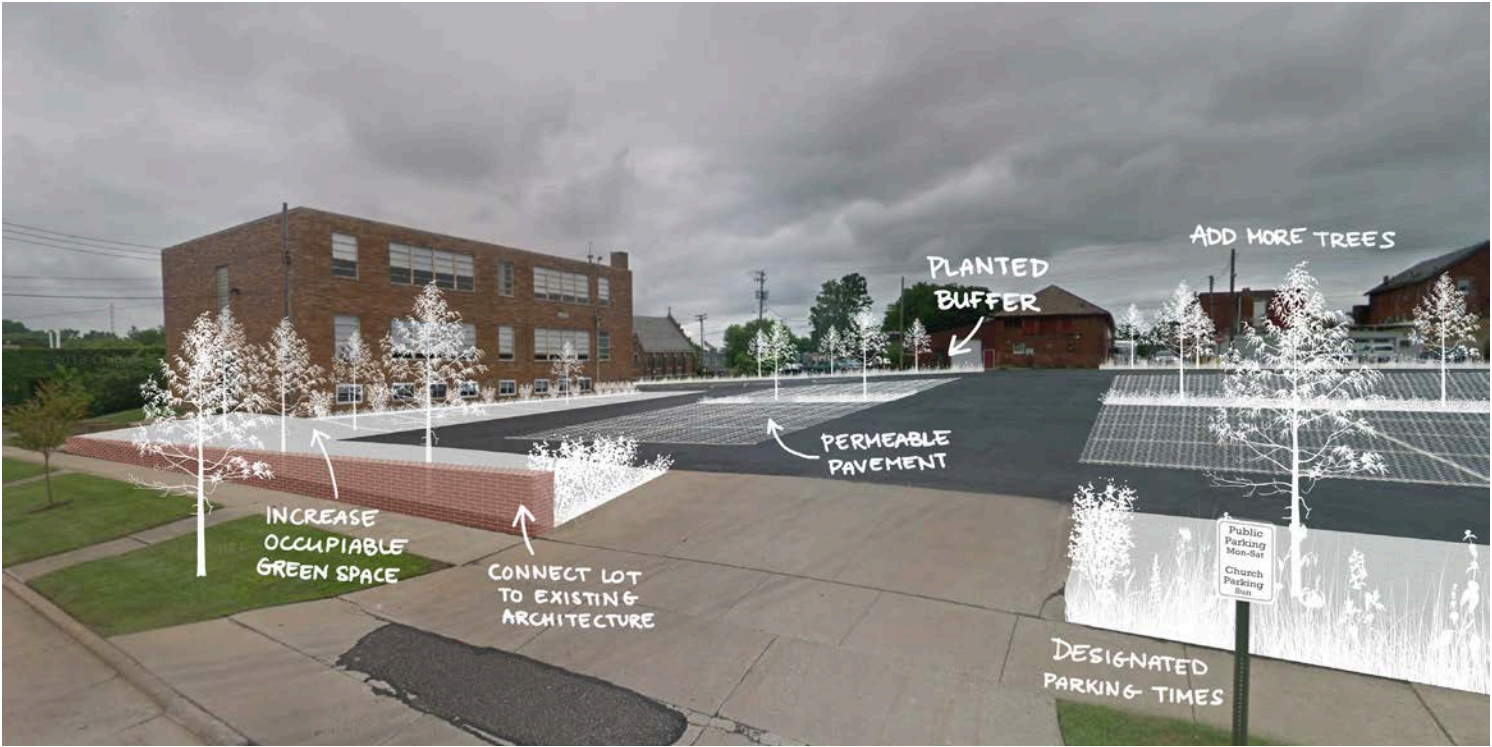
CULTURAL DISTRICT

Defined by the blocks between Main Street & Cedar Avenue, the cultural district is anchored by open space & development spaces and includes both Reed Memorial Library and the Ravenna 7 Theater.

Implementation

• Maximize shared/flex parking;
• Utilize rear lot spaces for pop-up programs;
• Unify seasonal landscape displays;
• Utilize artistic displays and murals as wayfinding signage;
• Program BIG events in the downtown using anchors of library and theater.

Use the Streets

• Large events can use downtown;
• Secondary streets have character;
• Parallel Parking spaces are least used.

Reclaim Spaces

• Private business partnerships;
• Create outdoor seating;
• Use to activate spaces off Main.

Activate Historic Buildings

• Program vacant lots to activate bldgs;
• Remove non-conforming additions;
• Preserve Industrial/Flex Spaces;
• Consider seasonal programming of vacant spaces.

CULTURAL DISTRICT CONCEPT SKETCHES

The primary concept of the district is to make use of the existing character and scale of spaces that exist off of Main St. by consolidating shared/public parking, allowing use of rear lot outdoor spaces.

overhead lights

connect to Main St.

make use of overlooked spaces

back of building space
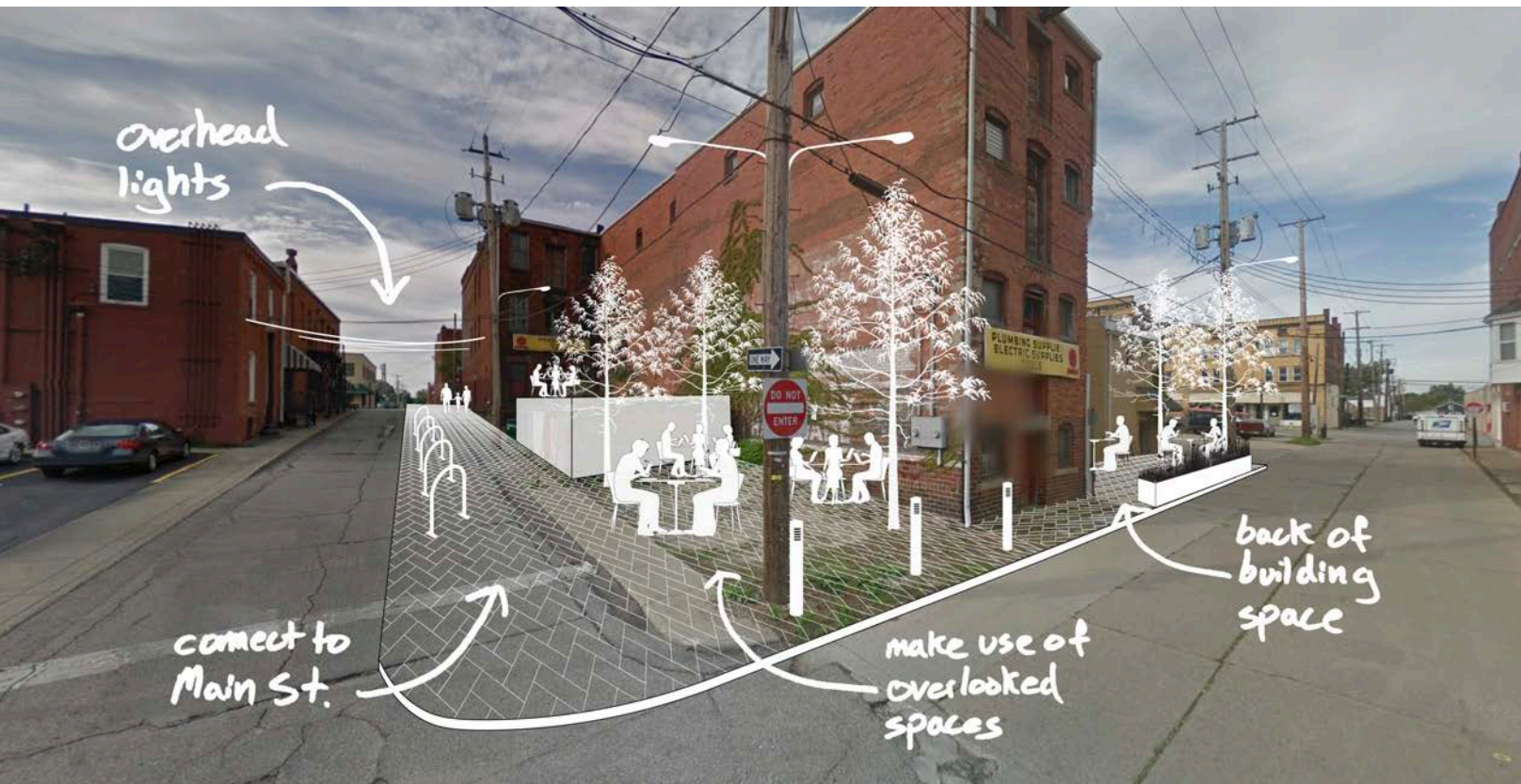
Concepts

• Use alleyways as pedestrian friendly connectors to and from Main St.;
• Program back of business spaces;
• Use alleyways for less conventional art displays and programs;
• Utilize landscape to define shared/public parking while also making programmable spaces.

ADD LIGHTS

HEDGE TO SCREEN

BUSINESS PARKING

PAY TO PARK

PARKING/ EVENT SPACE

PLANT AND DEFINE

BIG SPACE FOR BIG TREES
- remove lightly used parking

CREATING COMFORTABLE SPACE
- infill business opportunity

CAFE

KeyBank

DEDICATED BIKE LANES
- connecting to neighborhoods

S.I.D. - TREE CANOPY

The Special Improvement District, defined by the blocks between Sycamore and Clinton Streets and Highland and Riddle Avenues, focuses on increasing urban tree canopy and park space. The absence of canopy is visible in the aerial image.
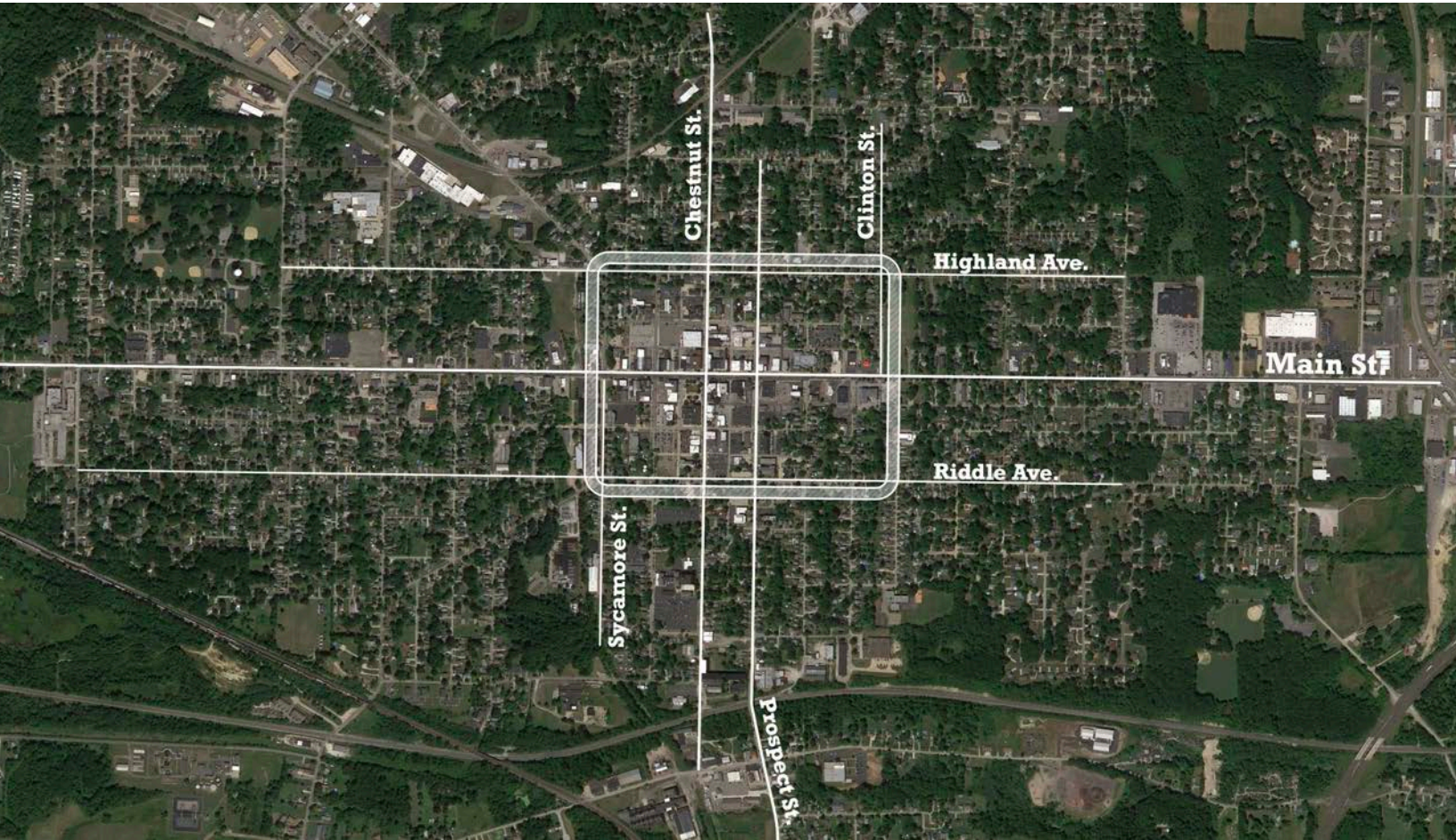
Implementation

• Reduce large lot parking areas and convert to open space;
• Create pocket parks/spaces from reclaimed rear-lot spaces;
• Do what is "easy", planting in open spaces rather than in sidewalk "pits".

See Parking Lots as Parks

• Organize spaces to reduce lot size;
• Add shade trees at edges of lots;
• Include permeable & turf paving;
• Include bike parking & amenities;
• Use signage to add character.

HOW MUCH SOIL TO GROW A BIG TREE?
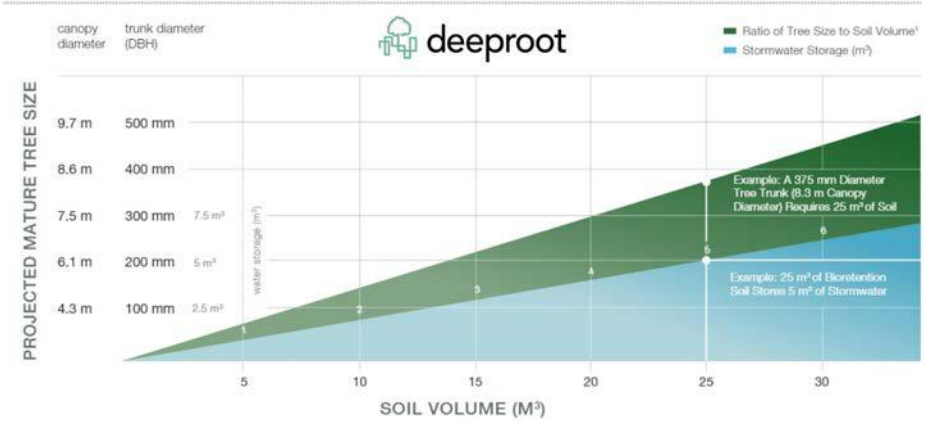
Big Trees need Big Spaces/Soil

• Create generous tree lawns;
• Remove pavement to full depth;
• Claim the space now!

Make walks pleasant

• Improve walkways between anchors;
• Add pockets and areas of open space;
• Value existing trees along routes;

S.I.D. - TREE CANOPY

In order to improve tree cover/canopy in the Downtown District existing paved area will need to be reduced and existing vacant lots will have to plant and preserve space for trees.

UNDER UTILIZED PARKING TO PARK

PUBLIC PARKING

EMPTY LOT NO MORE!

PARK WAY

WILDLIFE HABITAT

ADD STREET PARKING

ADD TREES

PARK WAY

INCREASE SEATING

PEDESTRIAN ZONE

CIVIC INSTITUTIONS

Concepts

• Create open space at edges of large parking lots facing residential streets;
• Create/leave spaces that can be programmed by surrounding institutions;
• Develop a strong pedestrian connection between downtown and county lots;
• Preserve space on sites like old High School for parks and gardens to be developed.

S.I.D. - SAFE STREETS

The Special Improvement District, between Sycamore and Clinton Streets and Highland and Riddle Avenues, focuses on increasing bike safely in the downtown with lanes on Meridian & Walnut Streets. Highland and Riddle Avenues connect local parks and school yards.

Downtown Gateways

• Create threshold parks;
• Offer destination businesses;
• Ideal places for wayfinding info.

Neighborhood Connections

• Review conditions and width of walks;
• Think of them as multi-use too;
• Ask homeowners to plant trees too.
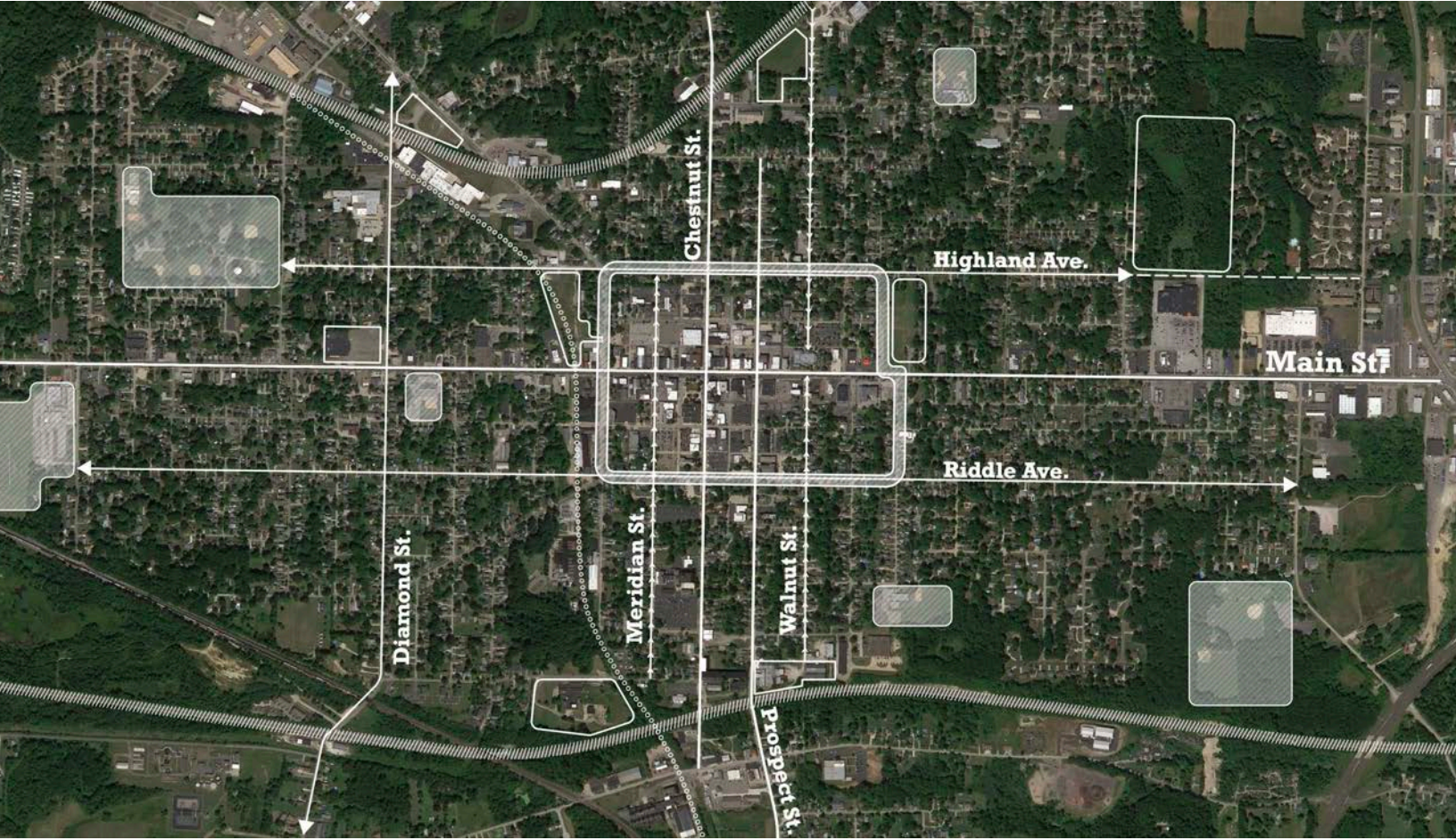
Implementation

• Establish a dedicated trail into downtown along old RR ROW;
• Use Meridian and Walnut Streets for dedicated bike lane routes;
• Plan for second rail trail to the south and plan for connector routes;
• Focus on safety signage along connector streets like Highland & Riddle.

Privilege Pedestrians

• Use materials and signage;
• Consider raised crossings to calm traffic.

S.I.D. - SAFE STREETS

These concepts illustrate some of the ideas for how to extend safe streets into the neighborhoods and incorporate them into the downtown.

LEAVE PAVEMENT FOR BIKES

UNCOVER BRICK —car travel

HIGHLAND in downtown area

Concepts

• Remove asphalt in drive lanes to reveal brick and leave ride lanes smooth;
• Where there is room in the neighborhoods simply expand width of sidewalks to allow for safe and multiple uses;
• Create dedicated lanes in the downtown where two lanes of parallel parking is present and goes largely unused/last used.

SHARED USE PATH

HIGHLAND east of downtown

MERIDIAN ST. NORTH OF SPRUCE AVE.

PARKING REMOVED FROM EAST SIDE OF MERIDIAN

PARALLEL PARKING ON WEST SIDE OF STREET

TWO-WAY BIKE LANE CONTINUES

RAVENNA
DOWNTOWN
DISTRICT
PLAN

>> District Plans

DOWNTOWN DISTRICT PLAN

The District Plan attempts to bring together a range of topics and issues from beautification to strategic use of space and functional long-term planning for redevelopment. At the heart of the plan is the need to add safe and accessible connections and amenities for pedestrians and bikers in the downtown area.

The plan also offers a collective approach to how existing businesses can work together to reclaim programmable and profit generating space while improving accessibility and function of shared/public parking in the downtown.

Key Tenets:

• Invest in Civic Spaces at the core of downtown as point-of-pride anticipating Civic Core redevelopment;
• Utilize landscape as primary tool to organize the downtown by reclaiming paved space as open space;
• Reclaim programmable spaces in the downtown by consolidating and organizing shared public parking;
• Focus on key connection routes and safe streets into the neighborhoods surrounding downtown.

District Plan Legend

- Improvement Districts
- District Project Sites
- Bike Safe Zone
- PC Trail Connector
- Parking Improvements
- Streetscape Zones
- Threshold Parks
- Economic Dev. Site
- Youth & Family Dev. Site

CIVIC CORE PLAN

The district is structured by relationship between the variety of civic and faith institutions that define the downtown. With an eye to the future the plan maximizes function of existing spaces while also speculating about the redevelopment potential at the core of downtown. Open spaces offer new gateways to and points-of-interest in the downtown.

Implementation:

• Define a Civic Core with streetscape and open spaces leaving/claiming redevelopment sites for future;
• Identify adaptive reuses for existing sites and structures (#) that define character of downtown;
• Improve character of Civic Connector streets in support of Civic Core and Main St. corridor;
• Incorporate park and open spaces to add to character and function of downtown.

Highland Ave.

Downtown S.I.D.

Sycamore St.

Chestnut St.

Clinton St.

Main St.

Riddle Ave.

Downtown S.I.D.

Legend

Civic Core

Future Sites

Civic Institutions

Civic Parks & Greens

Flex/Shared Parking

Civic Connections
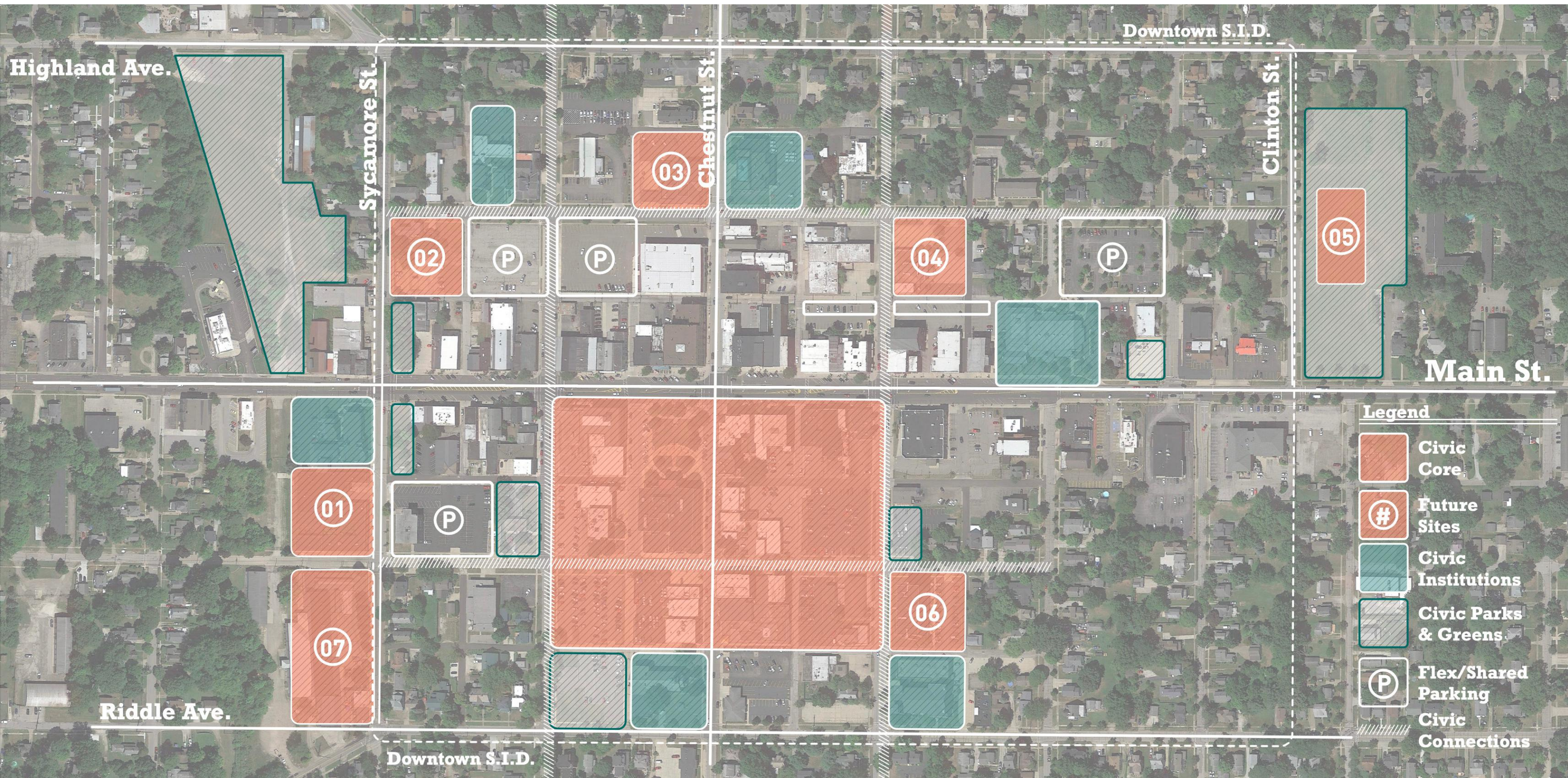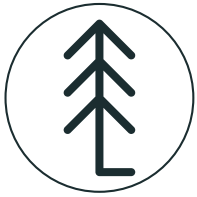
LANDSCAPE PLAN

The plan uses landscape strategically to reduce the visual impact of large parking areas while also allowing these spaces to be seen/understood as shared/public parking. Additionally, the plan creates impact "gardens" that can be dedicated to recognition of local history, service Veterans, and offer attractions.

Implementation:

• Reduce size of large parking lots adding landscape space to improve aesthetic and offer flexible uses;
• Create impactful "garden" spaces at the threshold of downtown and at commercial core;
• Improve alleyway aesthetics and function by using landscape to define shared/public parking;
• Establish variety of downtown park spaces with variety of uses from passive to active recreation.
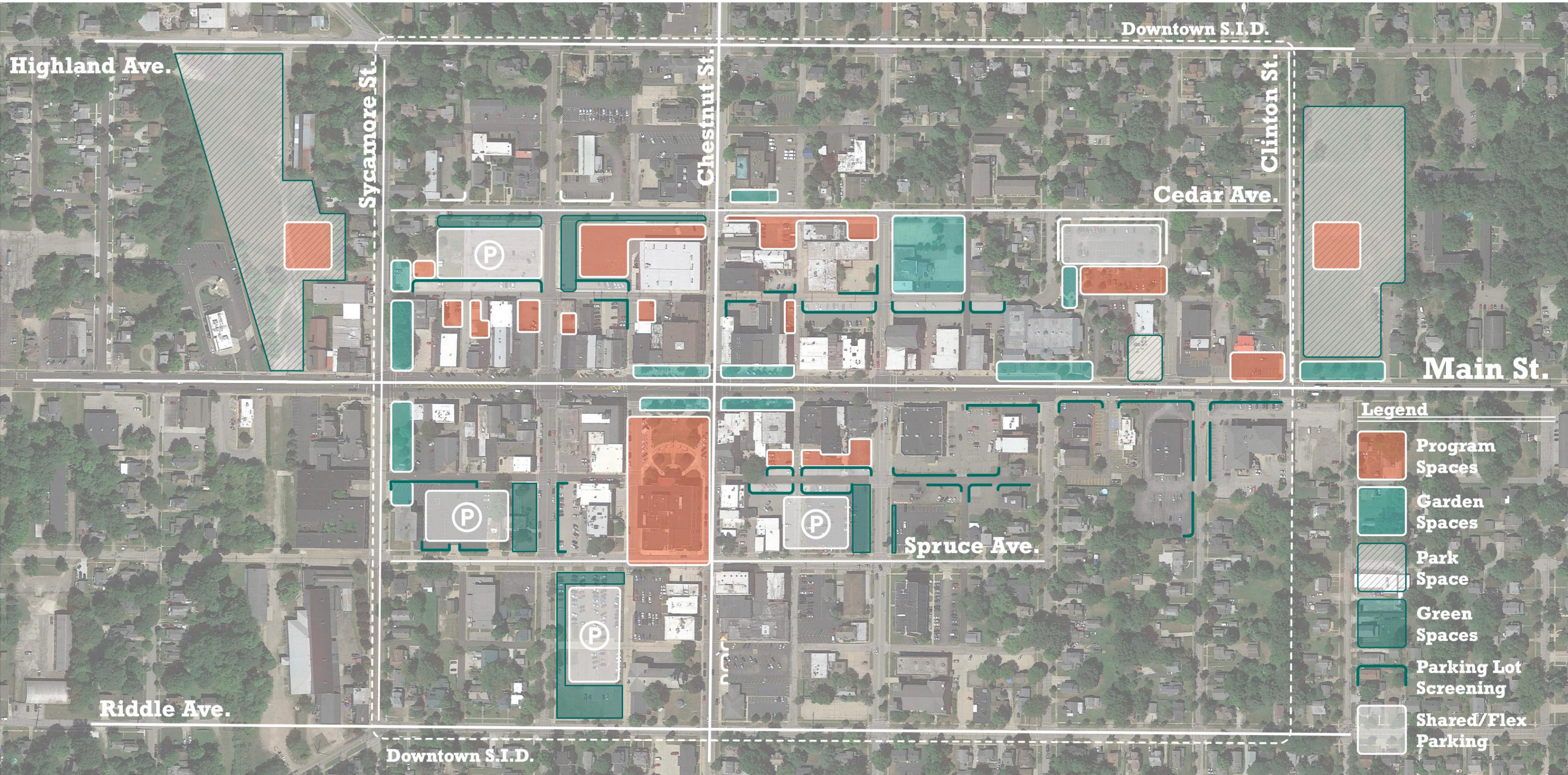
Legend

- Program Spaces
- Garden Spaces
- Park Space
- Green Spaces
- Parking Lot Screening
- Shared/Flex Parking

PLACEMAKING

This plan aims to impact how the downtown functions and is perceived by visitors. Outdoor spaces improve visual character of district while improving pedestrian experience to and from parking destinations. Additionally, the plan encourages businesses to use back-of-house spaces to expand programmable and profitable spaces.

Implementation

• Reclaim programmable space by expanding shared/public parking;
• Reduce "paved" nature of the district by organizing large lots to be more efficient and allow open space;
• Screen parking areas that currently take pavement to the edge of lots;
• Invest in materials, lighting, and landscaping along pedestrian routes to/from and within the downtown.

Highland Ave.

Downtown S.I.D.

Sycamore St.

Chestnut St.

Clinton St.

Cedar Ave.

Main St.

Spruce Ave.

Riddle Ave.

Downtown S.I.D.

Legend

Program Space

Outdoor Space

Shared/Flex Parking

Potential Garage Parking

Parking Lot Screening

Pedestrian Route
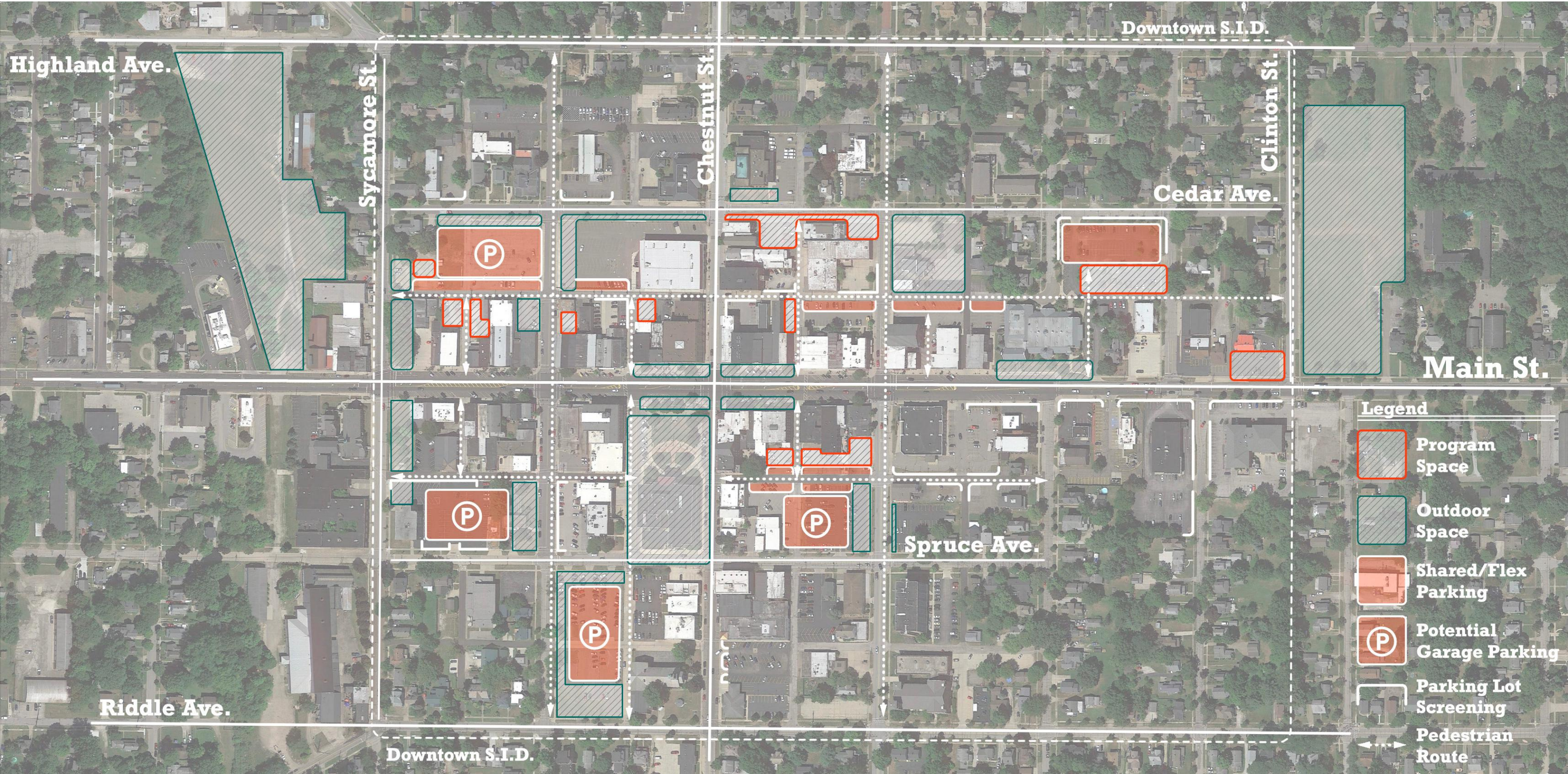
BIKE PLAN

In the Downtown District bike routes are given dedicated lanes on Meridian and Walnut Streets because of their connection to local destinations including PC Administration Building and Reed Memorial Library. Bike Parking is incorporated in discrete but convenient locations often paired with bus stops to maximize regional use.

Implementation

• Develop a dedicated downtown connector trail to/from the PC Multi-Use trail via Highland Ave. park;
• Connect bike routes to anchor destinations like RML, County Courthouse, and Administration building;
• Provide Bike Parking for convenience at points-of-interest and along connector streets;
• Include bike parking and bus stops at large parking lots for economy of effort and to allow bike share;
• Incorporate bike parking along Main St. in the Alleyways for convenience and minimal clutter.

Legend

- Bike Parking
- ○○○○ Bike Route
- Connector St.
- ◄┅┅► Pedestrian Route
- Shared/Flex Parking
- Ⓑ Bus Stop
- Outdoor Space
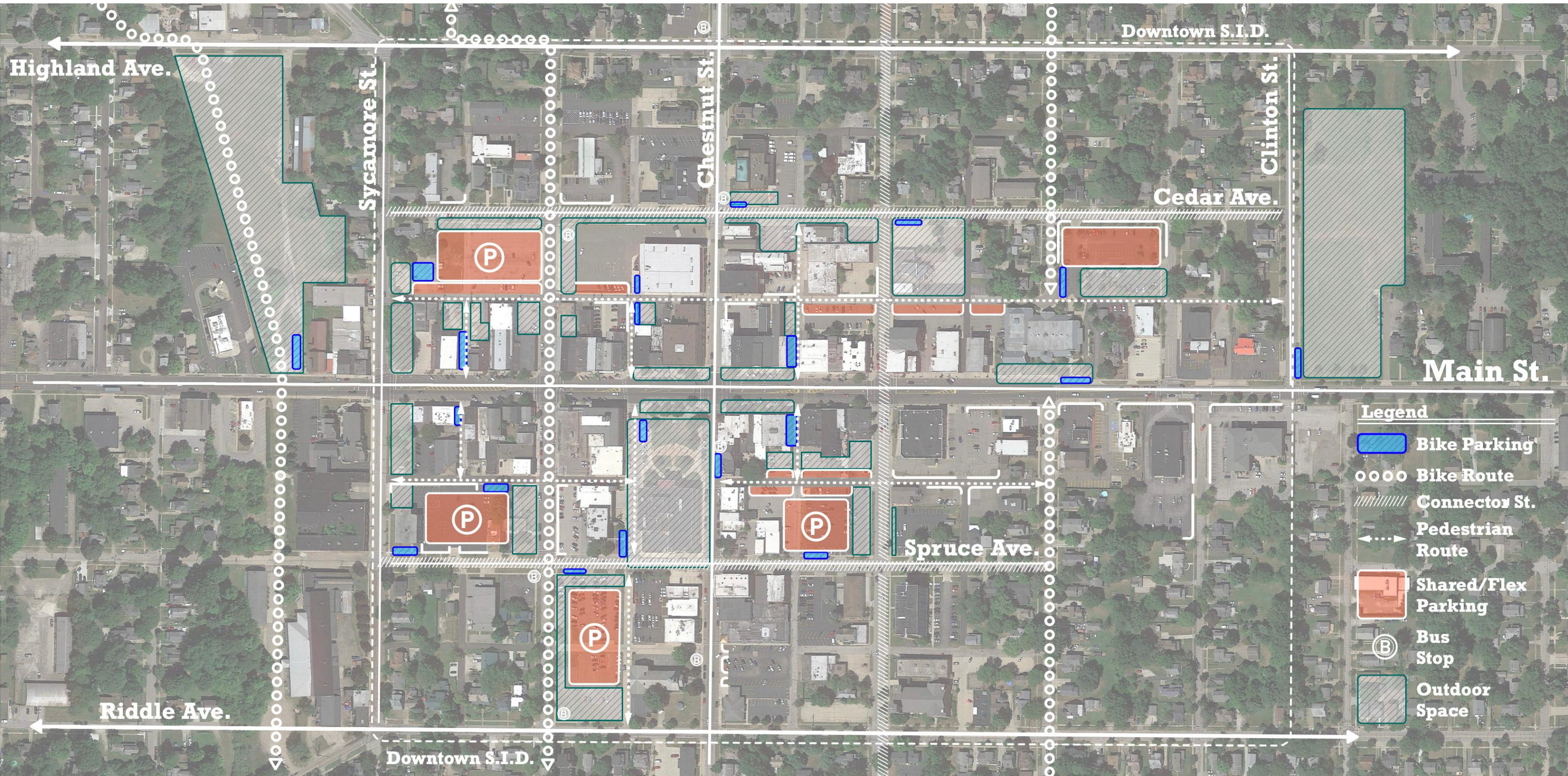
HIGHLAND AVE: BIKE CORRIDOR

PARK: LEISURE

PARK/CORRIDOR: LEISURE/POST-INDUSTRIAL

GATEWAY: BIKE ENTRANCE

CITY PARK

CARLIN

OLD FIELD HOUSE

PARK AND BIKE

KENT 6.5 MILES >>

PLAYGROUND

HIGH SCHOOL

PRESERVE

<< PECK ROAD 1 MILE

CEMETERY

N
↑
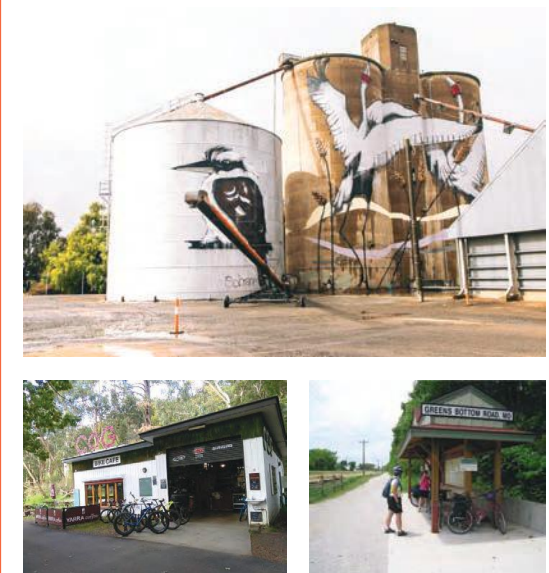
NATURE PRESERVE

SCHOOLS BECOME PLACES FOR COMMUNITY RECREATION

BIKE TRAIL CONNECTION

IMPROVE PLAYGROUNDS

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY: DAY CAMP, COMMUNITY GARDENS

CITY PARK

W. MAIN SCHOOL

KENT 5 MILES

BROWN MIDDLE SCHOOL

TRAIL CONNECTION TO KSU/DIX STADIUM

EMERALD LAKE NATURE PRESERVE

ROMITO PARK

MULTI-USE/BIKE TRAIL

TAPPAN ELEMENTARY

VFW DEVELOPMENT

HAVRE'S WOODS

DIAMOND PARK

PARKS & OPEN SPACE
GREEN SPACES FOR A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES

KEY

- RECOGNIZED OPEN SPACE
- POTENTIAL OPEN SPACE
- DOWNTOWN OPEN SPACE
- GREEN STREET
- BIKEWAY
- SAFE STREETS
- PARTA BUS STOP
- 1/4 MILE WALK TO LARGE PARK

Portage County Coleman Adult Day Services

Ravenna High School

Portage Senior Center

Historic Fairgrounds

Longmeadow Care Center

CAC Youth and Family Center

Carlin Elementary

Ravenna Athletic Center

Ravenna Head Start

West Park School

BIKE

Tots Learning Center

Brown Middle School

West Main Elementary

Tappan Elementary

59

44

5

14

74

N
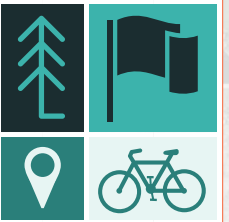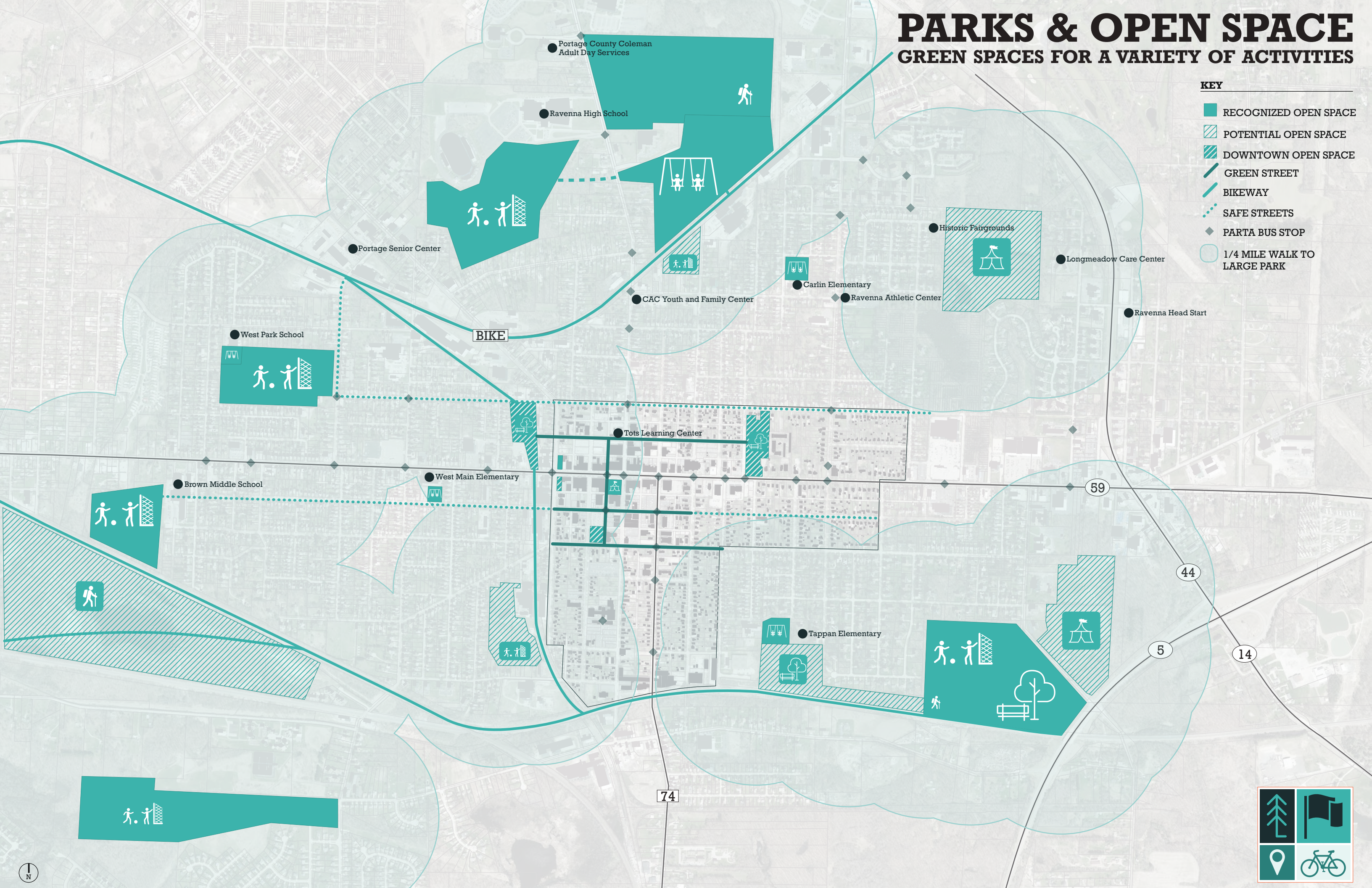
PLACEMAKING
DEFINING RAVENNA'S THRESHOLDS

VISUAL EXPERIENCE KEY

- PUBLIC PARKING
- DOWNTOWN ZONES
- DOWNTOWN
- INDUSTRIAL
- COMMERCIAL
- COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL
- RESIDENTIAL
- OLDER RESIDENTIAL

large open lawn

storage

threshold, bus stop

pond

trail and RR crossing

large open lawn

high school sign

large open lawn

threshold

small Ravenna sign

welcome sign

large vacant lot

trail parking

RR crossing

BIKE

vacant lot

Giant Eagle

threshold

welcome sign

drive thru

vacant

library

vacant lot

funeral home

A&W

community bank

welcome sign

threshold

Brown Middle school

vacant lot

strip mall

59

parking lot

church

44

5

14

bridge, threshold

view to factory

welcome sign

74

N

RAVENNA
DOWNTOWN
DISTRICT
PLAN

>> Goals & Strategies

GOAL: MAKE IT WELCOMING

Weather considering residents, downtown employees, or visitors the downtown area needs to focus on being welcoming. This is a factory of functionality (wayfinding, parking, etc.) as well as character and conditions.

Welcome Visitors
Nothing goes further to making people feel welcome than a friendly Hello and knowledgeable guidance. Beyond signage, establishing a team of downtown ambassadors whom can welcome guests, police litter, and oversee the area would be transformative.
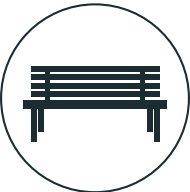
Provide Seating
The majority of downtown visitors are in town for work and/or errands and so they must be encouraged to take time to enjoy the area. This begins with seating. Seating that is comfortable, colorful, and connected to activities rather than left in a corner. Movable seating is a long held approach.

Offer Points of Interest
Features such as public art, historic landmarks, and ornamental structures help to organize how and where people gather but also encourage exploration, what's around the corner or down the street move people beyond their immediate task and allow discovery.

Invite Play
The downtown has a sense of history but it also is dominated by attorney and insurance offices. Where do families spend a moment, teens gather after a game, or seniors take a fun selfie for the grandkids? Lightening the mood will add to positive experience and behavior.

Implementation

• Preserve traditional character of Main St.;
• Define pedestrian space for shared spaces and crossings with materials;
• Increase community and wayfinding signage;
• Add fun and memorable features and spaces!

GOAL: MAKE IT FUNCTIONAL

Ravenna's downtown is largely without spaces for small, medium, and large groups to gather. As a result events like markets and festivals have been pushed to the edges of town where space and parking are seen as more functional.

Provide Shelter
Nothing attracts users or ensures confidence in attending an event as providing shelter. Features like bandstands, gazebos, and pavilions anchor spaces, suggest purpose and invite participation.

Include Small Group Spaces
If the downtown is to be active and attractive for more users it has to invite spontaneous engagements and activities. Having a space to chat with an old neighbor or take a meeting with a few co-workers add countless trips and eyes to downtown streets and storefronts.

Provide for Families
Attracting families to the downtown has a huge and varied impact and is aided by offering sweet treats to coffee but it also needs to consider priority parking, easy/wide walks, shade, group seating, and safe pedestrian and bike environments.

Incorporate Technology
The downtown is a place of work for many daily users and incorporating technology to allow downtown workers to take to the streets for longer lunches and informal meetings would be transformative and allow businesses to connect to visitors.

Implementation

• Simplify the spaces and features of green spaces like the courthouse lawn;
• Create shared street spaces so open spaces can expand/contract easily;
• Consider development of small parking structure(s) for the long-term;
• Consider alteration of existing civic buildings in order to extend useful life;
• Keep it simple!

GOAL: MAKE IT ATTRACTIVE

The Main Street streetscape needs both a face-lift and to be expanded to include secondary streets and alleyways. These efforts need not be the same or necessarily expansive and/or expensive.

Implementation

• Provide uniform commercial-width sidewalks at Main & Chestnut Blocks;
• Unify seasonal landscaping on and beyond Main St.;
• Landscape "exposed" parking areas;
• Improve alleyways as pedestrian connections;
• Establish a Downtown District Ambassador/Maintenance Program;
• Make it a point-of-pride not a chore!

Maintain District
There is nothing more important to establishing a sense of pride and/or appreciation for the downtown than taking care of it. The "adopt-a-bed" program is ready to mature to a coordinated seasonal effort.
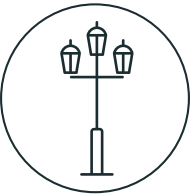
Consider After-hours
Across the board, feedback from residents young and old, male and female commented about how the town operates only from 9-5. This is a factor of too much ground floor office in retail spaces AND a lack of lighting in parking areas and walkways.

Value Materials
Expense will always be a significant factor but it should not be seen as a limiting factor. Putting resources into places where people are going to gather, spend time, and "touch" the downtown will have a broader impact than their implementation.

Increase Services
Private retail developments from Malls to Lifestyle Centers are about visitor experience and a sense/reality that spaces are being watched and cared for. Downtowns have found the same need from clearing litter to policing activities in order to comfort guests.

GOAL: MAKE IT FLEXIBLE

Downtown spaces are largely dedicated to single uses and therefore, at different times of the day or week, spaces are either crowded or underutilized. Spaces from streets to parking lots and even park spaces need to be seen as having multiple potentials and uses.

Implementation

• Share large municipal lots combining private and public parking needs;
• Create wide multi-use sidewalks where spaces can be provided;
• Reduce overall paving area allowing space for large trees to develop;
• Use materials to code public, private, and flex spaces;
• Add lighting to provide security and encourage after-hour use of spaces;
• Use every space twice!

Public & Private Hours
Downtown functions very differently at different times of the day/week. Parking is where this is most obvious and critical. Spaces are RESERVED on workdays only to sit EMPTY/RESTRICTED for the weekend. Maximizing shared and flexible parking is a MUST!

Reclaim Open Space
Downtown has A LOT of space but it is used/organized poorly and thus feels limited. By organizing parking, the dominate use, spaces can be reclaimed. Creating landscape spaces is affordable and attractive way to structure downtown spaces for more than one use.

Include Temporary Uses
Temporary uses keep us alert for the new and unexpected allowing visitors to look for rather than overlook opportunities and events. Additionally, temporary uses are commonly how businesses might test a new concept or how a new venture may get off the ground.

Expand and Contract
Downtown spaces have to be designed to consider how they look, feel and function when groups are large and small and parking is packed or sparse. Spaces also need to be able to be joined when they can function together and divided when needed.

GOAL: MAKE IT EASY

Cherry, Park, and Hickory Ways that connect Main St. to Locust and Maple Lanes offer a lot of utility as pedestrian connections to/from public parking but also have potential to accommodate bike parking, accessible spaces, wayfinding, and historic/artistic murals.

Implementation

• Maximize shared/flex parking in large lots and streets parallel to Main St.;
• Use alleyways as pedestrian connectors and bike parking;
• Increase wayfinding and public parking signage;
• Study/develop plan for structure parking;
• Stop saying we can't... we can!

Focus on Wayfinding
Downtown wayfinding is a sequence that has to start at the limits of the district and continue to the door of business or event. Signage needs to be visible AND minimal, too much an none of it is effective. Think about where information is needed from the seat of car to under foot.

Share Spaces
Downtown is littered with nearly 210 individual parking LOTS, many of these are small and function poorly and most are single user. This will take some effort but IF shared public parking can be established it will prove inviting to users and allow unused space to be reclaimed.

Add Parking Infrastructure
The downtown needs to invest in the infrastructure of parking beyond blacktop. This means adding e-vehicle charging stations AND giving serious study to the development of one or more parking structures that while costly would offer the largest impact.
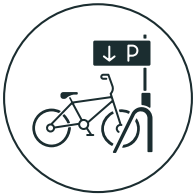
Dedicate Space
Automobiles simply dominate the downtown and IF alternatives (biking, buses, and walking) are to develop we need to facilitate them which means dedicating spaces, lanes, and routes for each. As parking is organized it will be easier to walk and ride in downtown.

GOAL: MAKE IT CONNECT

The Portage County Multi-use Trail is a significant opportunity but until longer regional connections can be made to the North and East, Ravenna will be the "end" of the trail so it MUST create a draw to attract users.

Implementation

• Secure access to existing ROW for dedicated trail connection to downtown;
• Provide directional & safety signage to/from downtown on local streets;
• Add program to unique and unused spaces to attract riders and families;
• Activate the trail with pop-up functions that will draw from surroundings;
• Connect/Finish the Kent & Ravenna LOOP!

Educational Resources
The downtown bike plan begins with the idea of connecting bike routes to libraries, school yards, and other resource centers. Safe streets, that rely on signage, allow riders young and old to ride safely across town.

Recreational Resources
The proposed routes that connect between downtown and the multi-use trail are lined with existing and potential recreational spaces from city parks and youth centers to unused spaces such as the old stadium and High School site in the downtown.

Community Resources
Offering connections to the library, job service locations, grocery stores, and YES even places of work will broaden use of the multi-use trail and downtown routes beyond recreational riders.

Health Resources
Aligning and connecting the Multi-Use trail with health resources such as clinics, gyms, food pantries, and counseling will not only make these resources more broadly accessible but also support the very habits these efforts encourage.

GOAL: MAKE IT ACTIVE

The downtown needs to become a place where people can go without concern IF something is happening and instead go to see WHAT is happening. Also need to put people on the streets by focusing on "park-once" organization.

Implementation

• Encourage businesses to program rear lot and alleyway spaces;
• Establish weekly, monthly, & annual community events;
• Update/develop zoning to limit non-contributing uses in downtown district;
• Establish PARTA loop route to and from flex/event parking;
• Don't leave the downtown even for large events!

Save the Date
Downtown needs to build on the habits that people have by continuing to develop a predictable calendar or weekly, monthly, and annual events or differing sizes and offerings.

Have Attractions & Performers
Even events need to be activated! Street sales and markets are common but people will stay longer and return more frequently if they can be audience. Certainly music but welcome special and family interests like animals (google urban sheep Paris).
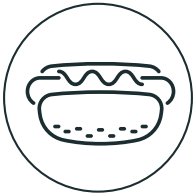
Always have Food
Ravenna has A LOT of pizza but who has the BEST pizza? Food events are a huge draw but ALL events should also have food. Highlighting a local business or having s'mores stations for holiday lights. Food can also be the point, food drives and cooking demonstrations.

Go Big!
When does the downtown draw beyond local/county residents? Events like the classic car show draw huge crowds and downtown should NOT fear these events. Closing streets, offering park & ride, being busy suggest this is an EVENT and a PLACE to be.

GOAL: MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE

The downtown needs to accessible in every sense of the term. Parking needs to be easy, buses need to be frequent, biking needs to be encouraged, and walking needs to be pleasant. Additionally, broad audience (interests, needs, and incomes) need to be included.

Implementation

• Improve pedestrian walks to and from Downtown into neighborhoods;
• Add share-lanes to neighborhood streets for East West connections;
• Develop school yards as neighborhood community spaces;
• Work with PARTA for downtown loop route on 10-20 minute rotation;
• Add points of interest for pedestrians and cyclists!

Pedestrians First
The downtown district needs to consider the pedestrian as the primary audience, how to attract them and how to welcome them. Pedestrians stop in shops, come for work and stay for play, and meet others.

Design for Universal Access
Curbs, cracks, and crossings all limit how pedestrians of varied ages and abilities use the downtown. This is mostly an effort of not overlooking how everything from sidewalk dimensions and materials to light timing and turn lanes impact use and accessibility.

Overlap Uses
The civic and cultural districts are key here, large spaces can offer parking AND flexible program spaces when demand is less. Similarly businesses can partner with pop-up markets or partner with adjoining businesses on event programs and/or common seating.

Connect Locally
The PARTA system is appropriately focused on regional and special-needs services but use is also extremely limited because of the lack of simple local "convenience" routes that could operate for specific hours and/or events to allow broader use by people in the downtown.

RAVENNA
DOWNTOWN
DISTRICT
PLAN

>> Design Proposals

HIGHLAND AVE.
FAMILY PARK

Located on the site of the old concrete plant on Highland Ave. the proposed park helps diversify existing parks by offering special uses targeting families and events.

Features

- Bike route connection to/from multi-use trail;
- Improved/permanent skate park;
- Pavilion for family and small group events;
- Fishing pond (no ponds in existing parks);
- Overlook/climbing tower recalling concrete plant;
- Stage/amphitheater and lawn for festival events and concerts.

Tower becomes a destination and an observation deck

Pond edge conditions vary

Skate park provides youth recreation and gathering spot

Stone benches provide seating and connect to industrial history of site

Boulders provide separation from path as well as places to sit

Stone edging creates separation between bike path and skate park

Industrial character of pavilion reflects site's history as a concrete plant

Multi-use pavilion can be rented for events

Stairs provide access to pond for fishing

Concrete blocks change character of shoreline

Wetland vegetation increases biodiversity

Boardwalk traverses wetland and pond

COURTHOUSE LAWN & PAVILION

The center of the community needs to be the most flexible and functional of spaces. The proposed design integrates the current Veterans' Memorial features while maximizing lawn and plaza spaces for range of uses from movies to markets.
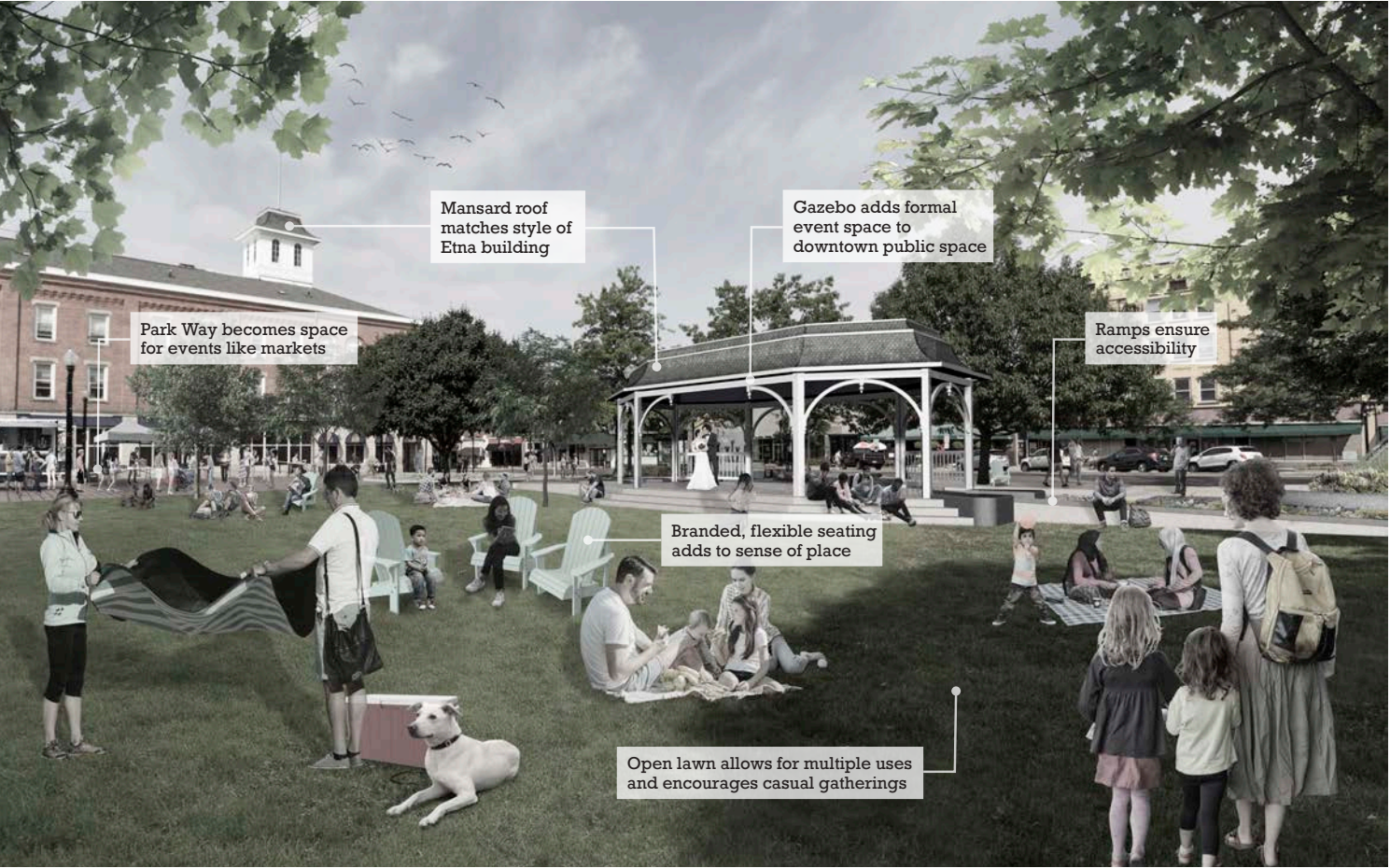

Features

- Expanded Veterans' plaza near the Flag pole;
- Memorial Gazebo for Veterans' and community events;
- Simplified lawn space for casual uses and events;
- Shared/flexible Park Way space for markets and food trucks;

Two-sided bandstand allows for multiple uses

Expanded sidewalk provides room for vendors and cafe seating

Fence is removed to reveal base of flagpole

Memorial fountain honors veterans

Planting reflects formal nature of memorial

Park Way becomes space for events like markets

Mansard roof matches style of Etna building

Gazebo adds formal event space to downtown public space

Ramps ensure accessibility

Branded, flexible seating adds to sense of place

Open lawn allows for multiple uses and encourages casual gatherings
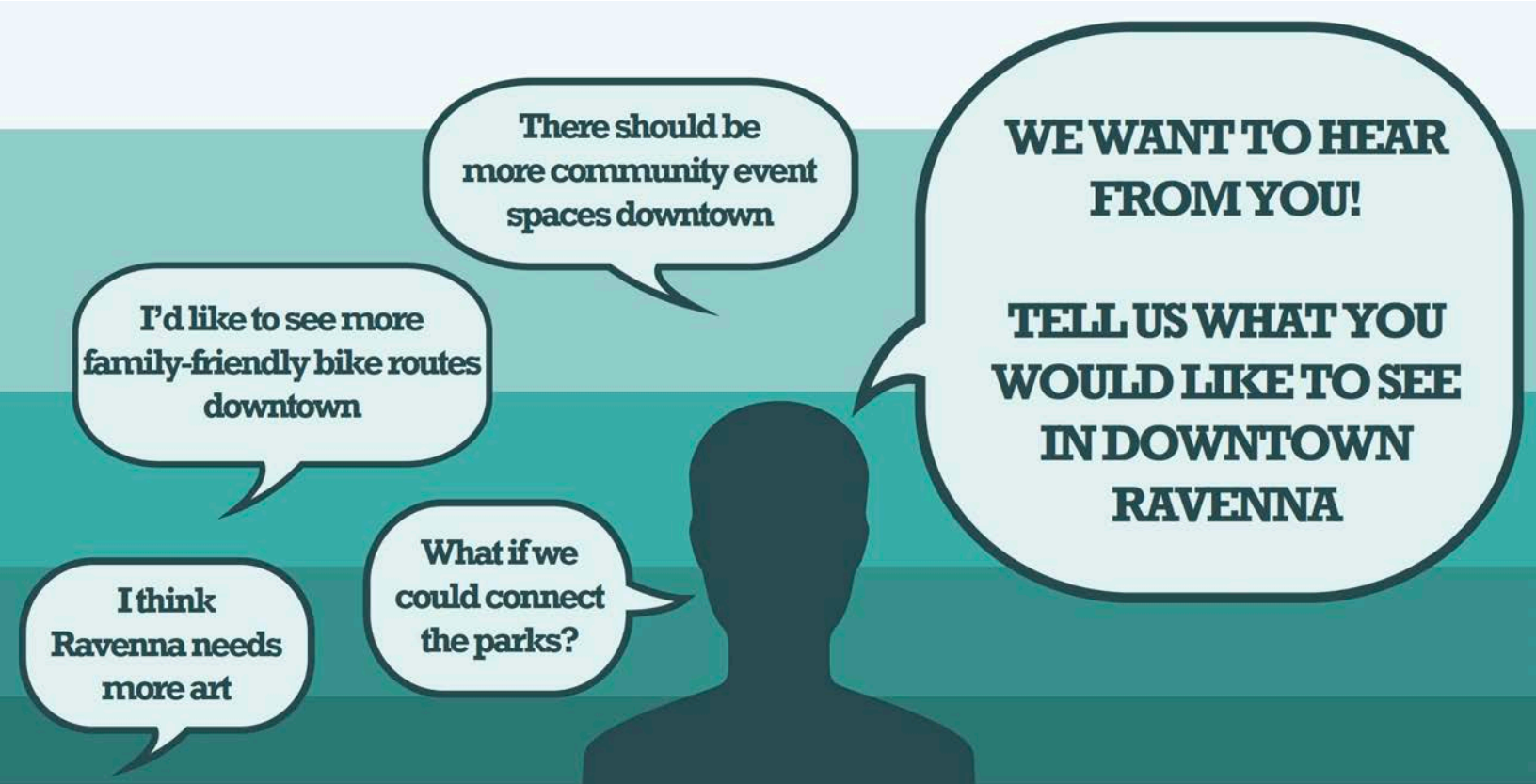
RAVENNA
DOWNTOWN
DISTRICT
PLAN

>> Data & Feedback

SURVEY DATA & FEEDBACK

The following data is presented as a summary of survey responses to the formative questions of our study. Further data and feedback responses is available.

I visit Downtown Ravenna…

	◇	◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇◇
for work/business.	16	13	05	18	**34**
to browse local shops.	**33**	26	13	13	08
for dinner/drinks at local restaurants.	22	**28**	20	19	13
for evening or weekend entertainment.	**30**	19	19	05	06
to spend time relaxing.	**30**	11	06	06	04
I live downtown.	**15**	03	01	01	05

Please rate the overall quality of each of the listed aspects of Downtown Ravenna.

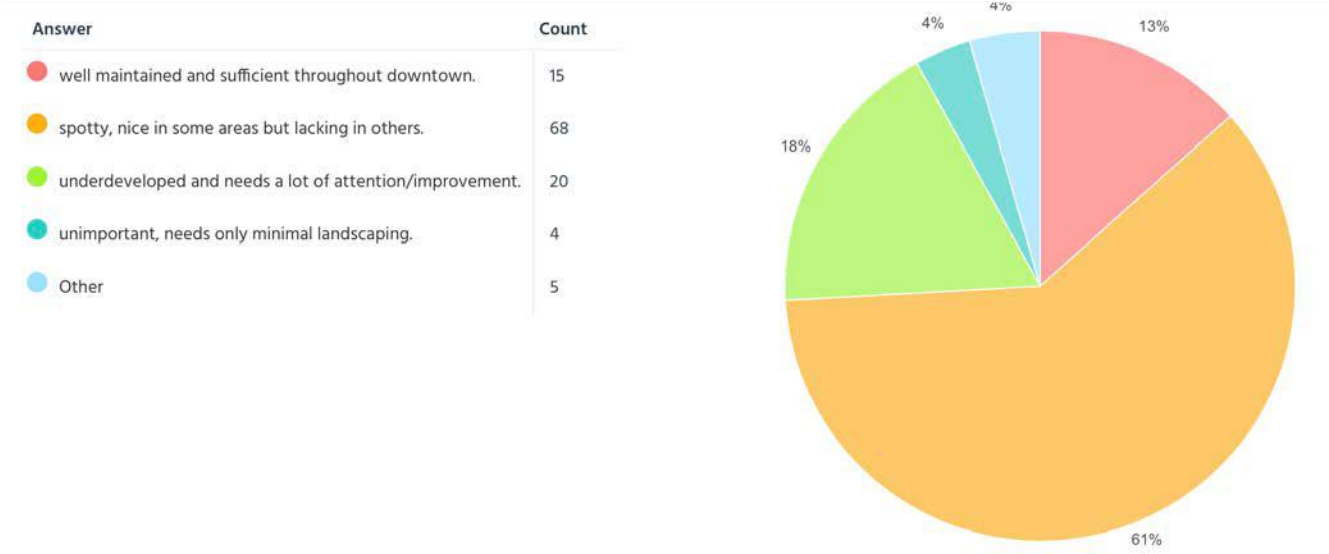|	◇	◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇◇
Buildings & Architecture	02	10	22	**53**	31
Open Space & Landscaping	15	**37**	33	22	09
Sidewalks & Streetscape	07	25	**37**	34	13
General Condition & Cleanliness	10	28	**44**	23	12
Public Art & Murals	17	23	**42**	23	13
Storefront Displays & Signage	16	30	**38**	24	09

When describing Ravenna to someone that has never been, how often would you mention each of the following?

	◇	◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇◇
An interesting building or landmark	11	14	22	**29**	14
A favorite restaurant	13	15	**32**	17	18
A great local shop or store	17	20	**25**	13	08
A fun even or occasion	20	**22**	22	10	10
A park or trail	**36**	21	14	07	02
A cute neighborhood or house	22	21	**24**	09	04

A GREAT place is the result of many factors, how would you rate Downtown Ravenna with respect to each of the following?

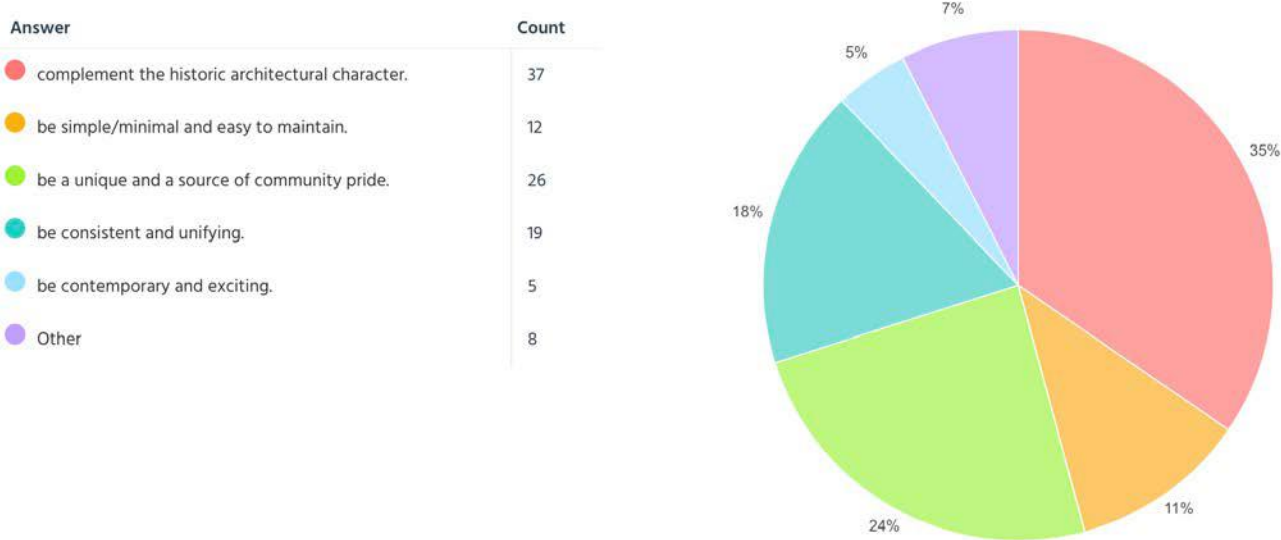|	◇	◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇◇
Sociability (welcoming, active street life, diversity, family-friendly)	12	11	**22**	14	19
Activities (fun, local businesses, restaurants, celebratory)	**18**	14	13	17	17
Image (historic, clean, safe, comfortable)	08	13	14	20	**24**
Access & Connections (Convenient, accessible, walkable, parking)	11	05	19	**23**	20

I think the Downtown Landscape is…

Answer	Count
🔴 well maintained and sufficient throughout downtown.	15
🟠 spotty, nice in some areas but lacking in others.	68
🟢 underdeveloped and needs a lot of attention/improvement.	20
🟦 unimportant, needs only minimal landscaping.	4
🔵 Other	5

Open spaces, like the Courthouse lawn, are meant to be like…

	◇	◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇◇
museums, with historic landmarks.	24	17	**27**	11	09
public square, for markets and gatherings.	04	04	15	37	**39**
front yards, with beautiful landscaping.	08	14	**26**	22	19
back yards, with amenities and attractions.	**28**	21	15	12	04
parks, with room to relax.	13	20	22	20	**25**

The most important quality of the downtown landscape is that it…

Answer	Count
🔴 complement the historic architectural character.	37
🟠 be simple/minimal and easy to maintain.	12
🟢 be a unique and a source of community pride.	26
🟦 be consistent and unifying.	19
🔵 be contemporary and exciting.	5
🟣 Other	8

What the downtown landscape needs most is…

Answer	Count
🔴 street/shade trees	22
🟠 open green/lawn space	23
🟢 flower beds and planters	33
🟦 garden spaces	8
🔵 Other	21
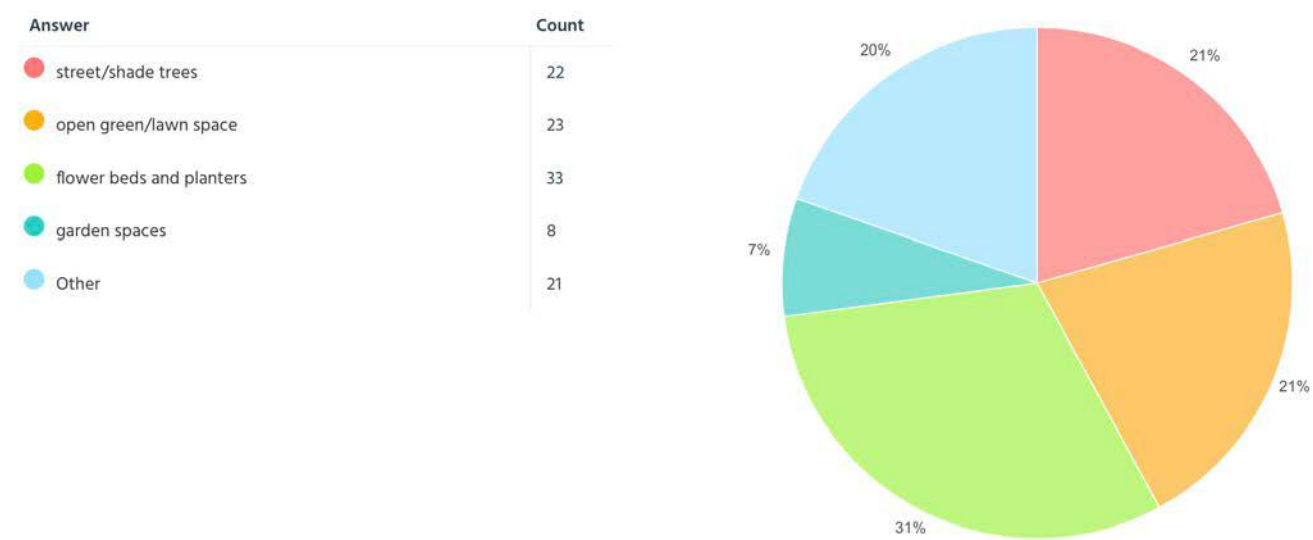
I'd like Ravenna to look like this…

41 % 32 — 1

11 % 9 — 2

5 % 4 — 3

7 % 6 — 4

32 % 25 — 5

2 % 2 — 6

RAVENNA
DOWNTOWN
DISTRICT
PLAN

>> Precedent Projects

DESIGN CONCEPTS - SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING

This is a collection of example signage and some observations and questions to aid in that discussion as it develops as a parallel to the District Plan.
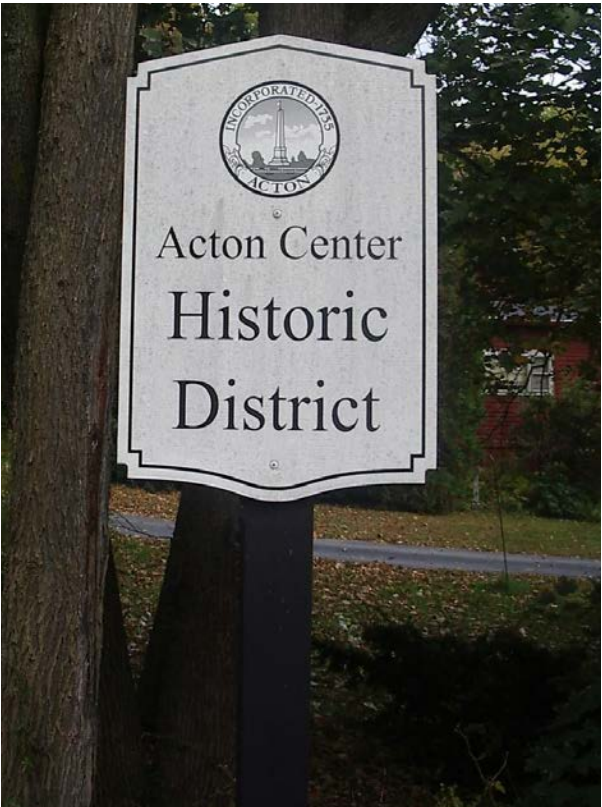

HISTORIC SIZE & SHAPE

Hand-made look is about scale/weight of details

Find a shape/detail that connects to the town like Riddle Block, Etna, or IOOF Bldgs.

TYPEFACE & COLOR

Historic places feel historic because they feel like B&W photos.

Keep the information and graphics simple, give layout space so it is not cluttered and hierarchy of information can be read.
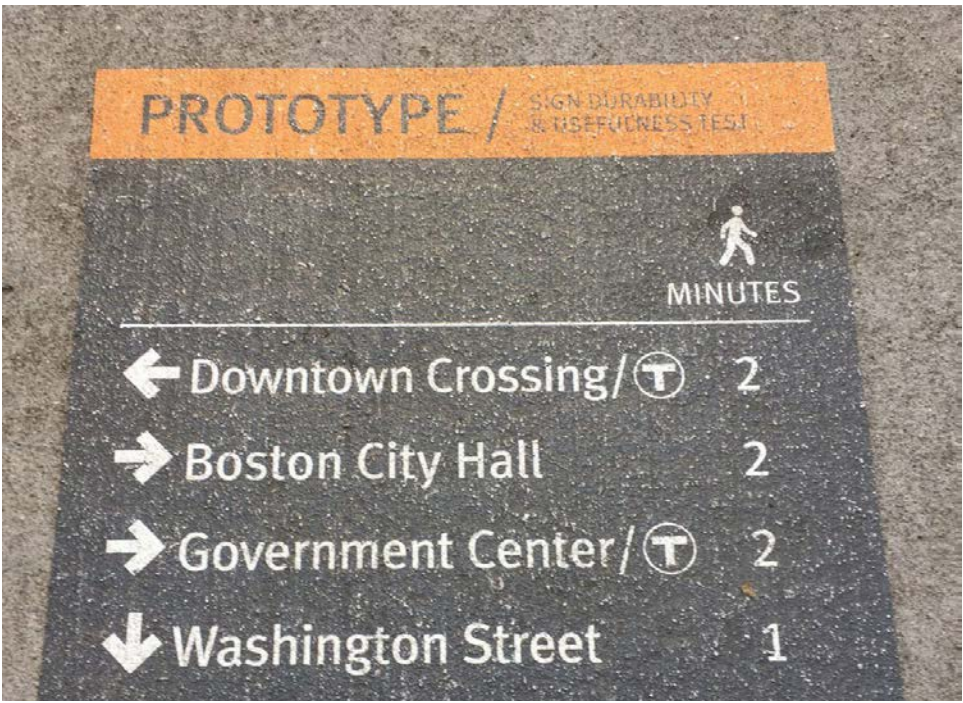
WHAT NOT TO DO

Modern sign production can do ANYTHING... keep it simple and it will look better and age better. Flashy always falls out of fashion quickly and people will note things look dated.

BANNER SIGNAGE

• Already in place
• Affordable
• Event/Seasonal

POST & STRAP SIGNS

• Functional on existing posts
• If adding beware of clutter

SIDEWALK SIGNAGE

• Use for promotions and event specific directions and tours.

CASE STUDY - MEDINA SQ.

This example offers a very comparable context, scale, and aesthetic. Pricing information on this and other projects has been shared with Main Street Ravenna.
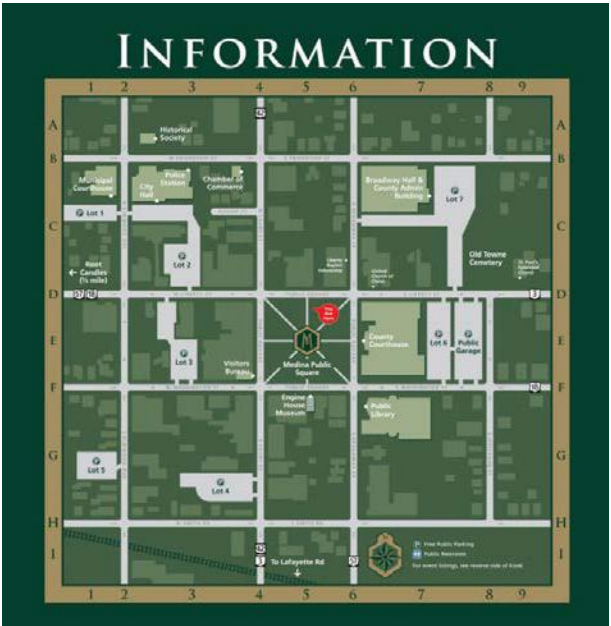

Observations

• Similar given Medina is also a county seat;
• Signage is very traditional although the colors somewhat ornamental;
• Differs because of lack of parking on streets in some of images;
• Most important there is ONE approach and the elements work together.

Parking Signage

• Clear and simple graphics;
• Named Lot for reference;
• Hours/Policy is clear.

Town Map & Site Markers

• Similar scale of district;
• Located for pedestrians;
• Offer means to explore independently;

Vehicular Signage

• High and visible but not oversized;

CASE STUDY - CULTURAL TRAIL

This example is much large and more urban but it does still offer some clear lessons including what is done to include multiple users and overlap with bus system.

Larger Project

• Trail is in dedicated lane throughout;
• Likely tied to large stormwater ROW;
• Pairing efforts saves $$$

Clear Branding Language

• Identifiable from distance;
• Dedicated Friends of Group;
• Fun elements (CARE SIGN)!

Observations

• Trail is on NEW claimed space based on age of trees;
• Uses a dedicated lane but still has parallel parking so suggests road narrowed/reduced lanes;
• Pavement is flush with adjacent walk but is a different color/paver to also reduce bike speed;
• Signage is very intense (too much) at points.

Bicycling DOES Mean Business

Additional Information

https://indyculturaltrail.org

Visit Project Website:
ravennadowntowndistrictplan.com
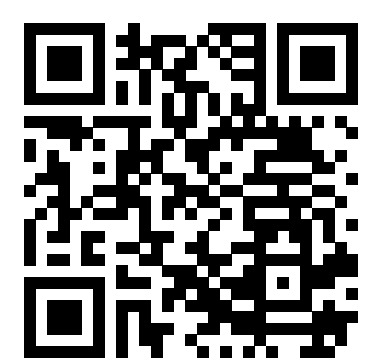
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