Downtown Development Plan

LARAMIE, WYOMING

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A Downtown Development Plan Update for

Laramie, Wyoming

November 10, 2011

Prepared for:

The Laramie Main Street Program
and the
The City of Laramie

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Finally, the team wants to thank the citizens of Laramie for their warm hospitality during our visits, their insight into the future of their community, and their commitment to keeping downtown an integral part of the success of Laramie. We sincerely wish that this plan will serve you well and will contribute to the ongoing success of such a dynamic community.

1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 Community and Downtown Overview

Laramie, Wyoming is a city of just over 30,000 located on the Laramie River of southeastern Wyoming. Laramie is the third largest city in Wyoming and was founded in the 1860's to serve the Transcontinental railroad. The city grew quickly from a tent city to a robust town by the 1880s. The early history of Laramie is marked by both its reputed lawlessness and its progressiveness in women's history by being the first place in America where women served on a jury and voted.

In 1886 Laramie became home to the University of Wyoming. The campus is now home to nearly 14,000 students who come to the City from across Wyoming, the country, and the world. Consequently, Laramie is a place both rooted in its traditional western heritage and its role as Wyoming's college town.

Downtown Laramie grew up around the railroad. In fact, the railroad still plays a very prominent role in downtown Laramie as the rail yards, the historic 1924 train station, and the remarkable iron pedestrian bridge crossing the yards remain as downtown landmarks. Downtown developed through the late 1800s and early 1900s as the city's center of commerce, government, and culture. Much of the early building infrastructure in downtown is intact and represents a remarkable collection of historic yet attractive and viable commercial buildings.

Like many downtowns though, Laramie has experienced the shift in retail to commercial strip development and big box stores built to serve the day-to-day needs of local residents. This has impacted downtown as main-line retailers have decamped to the strip commercial along Grand Avenue and along the northern portion of 3rd Street.

In spite of this shift, downtown has remained a viable specialty retail, dining, and entertainment district catering to both locals and the student population at the University of Wyoming. In fact, downtown has benefitted from several excellent public and private investments in recent years including the 1st Street Plaza and commercial ventures such as the Big Hollow Co-op. Several groups have played a role in this revitalization including the Downtown Laramie Business Association, the City of Laramie, and the Downtown Development Authority. Most recently, Laramie has become an active participant in the state and national Main Street Program and downtown now has a full-time employee dedicated to the health and vibrancy of downtown.

Recognizing the need to further the efforts of revitalization, the City of Laramie and the Laramie Main Street program partnered to create this Downtown Development Plan Update. A team of consultants partnered with these entities to create this plan update that looks at the physical conditions of downtown, the opportunities to better market downtown as a destination, and the tools necessary to entice investment in downtown.

1.2 The Planning Process

The process for the plan began in early June of 2011 with an initial reconnaissance visit to Laramie with a select portion of the project team. This visit included a detailed tour of downtown and the community, meetings with the Laramie Main Street Board, key stakeholders that would emerge as a steering committee for the project, a dozen individual/small group meetings, and an initial public input meeting.

The initial visit provided the project team the opportunity to "hit the ground running" and prepare for a more intensive visit three weeks later over June 27-29. Behind the scenes, the team was reviewing prior plans, coordinating mapping, and synthesizing input from the initial visit. The second trip included six team members working on an intensive schedule. The trip included a branding "roundtable" meeting, nine additional slots for individuals and small groups, a second public input meeting, a briefing for the steering committee, and a final presentation of the design teams work on Thursday the 29th of June.

The team made a final visit to Laramie on August 2nd and 3rd of 2011 to present the final version of the plan, host an implementation workshop, and gather final feedback for refinements to be incorporated into this work.

Over the course of the project well over 100 participants from the Laramie communities contributed their thoughts, ideas, and suggestions to the planning team.

1.3 Background Studies

Understanding the prior planning efforts is an important step in any planning process. Laramie has been the beneficiary of many planning studies. Fortunately, these studies have not been mere academic exercises but rather blueprints for projects that have actually been implemented over the years. To that end, these plans inform us about what has happened, how it happened, and provides us insight into how to carry the success of prior efforts forward into the future.

Downtown Streetscape Master Plan, Project Summary Report

Prepared by Landplan Engineering, P.A., February 1992

This plan was developed in cooperation with many public and private entities with the focus on enhancing downtown appearance, encouraging economic revitalization, creating pleasant shopping and social environments, enhancing the pedestrian and tourist experience, promoting historic downtown, creating a functional traffic and parking pattern and creating a theme/identity for downtown. The master plan focused on a 25 block area, from Sheridan to Clark and 1st to 4th. Detailed designs were developed for the intersection areas with an emphasis on creating bump-outs (neck-downs) with special landscaping, lighting and gathering areas. In addition, the plan included recommendations for and on-street parking areas and façade enhancements. Some bump-outs along 1st Street, angled parking on certain blocks, street trees and ornamental lighting have been implemented. Additional bump-outs have been controversial and have not been implemented.

Laramie Bicycle Facility Master Plan

Prepared by MSE-HKM/Lord Consulting/Joanne Garnett, May 28, 1998

The Laramie City Council initiated this plan to develop and encourage the use of alternative transportation, with the intent to accommodate current bicycle use and to encourage additional use. The plan includes a variety of bicycle facilities including bicycle lanes, paths and routes. The City of Laramie continues to implement recommendations from this plan. In addition to the bicycle paths described in this plan, the City has since expressed an opportunity to create a bicycle path along the east side of the railroad (roughly in alignment with 1st Street) connecting to the path along Curtis Street to the north. While some of the bicycle lanes have been implemented, some, such as the one along Ivinson Street, have been demarcated with a single line rather than on both sides of the 5' bicycle lane as recommended in the plan. The result is a bicycle lane that is not as visibly obvious as it could be.

Laramie Downtown, Revitalization and Development Plan

Prepared by LSA Associates/BHA Design/The Robert Steiner Company, February 28, 2002

This plan was authorized by the Laramie Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to formulate a plan with three primary purposes: generate greater economic vitality for downtown, recommend focused actions to initiate recommendations from the 1992 Streetscape Master Plan, and to evaluate parking conditions and recommend improvements to traffic circulation and pedestrian safety. Particular attention was given to solving problems associated with 3rd Street as a barrier and recommended that 3rd and 4th Streets be developed as "one-way couplets" between Custer and Lewis Streets. The intent would be that between these streets, 3rd Street would circulate one-way southbound and 4th would circulate one-way northbound. This allowed for traffic-calming and streetscape enhancements along 3rd Street. While there are many attractive features about this concept, stakeholders recently identified several concerns and issues related to the couplet concept. They include, additional road length for WYDOT to maintain, 50% reduction of visibility to storefronts facing the one-way pair and visitors traveling northbound would be further removed from the downtown core along 2nd Street.

City of Laramie Comprehensive Plan, 2007

Prepared by Citizens' Project Advisory Team/City of Laramie Staff/Kendig Keast Collaborative/Western Water Consultants Engineering (WWC), adopted by Laramie City Council August 21, 2007

The 2007 Laramie Comprehensive Plan was developed with the assistance of a Citizen's Project Advisory Team, citizen and citizen groups, City and Planning Staff, and consultants. It is an update and expansion of the 1995 Land Use Element. The Plan consists of twelve chapters, and it serves as a policy guide for elected officials, appointed boards, staff and citizens to use when considering the future development of the City. There are many references to downtown Laramie throughout the document. Both assets and issues regarding downtown are identified, with considerable focus given to downtown success and economic sustainability. Chapter 3, Community Character, includes numerous citations of action statements that are directly related to downtown. Specifically, action steps encourage standards for mixed use development, recommend zoning code amendments, outline the development of a Downtown Plan, support the creation of entryways, and discuss transportation studies for traffic calming and rerouting heavy truck traffic on 3rd Street. Other chapters in the Plan also refer to the downtown, such as the promotion of downtown residential growth through regulatory flexibility and the use of low interest revolving loans and increased residential population in downtown by encouraging mixed use buildings and upper floor rental or condominium units. Finally, the Plan calls for downtown economic development by focusing on the attraction of a significant anchor and through the reuse and redevelopment on the northern and southern ends of downtown. Infill development, building reuse, and redevelopment were specifically referenced. In summary, the Comprehensive Plan consistently and clearly supports Laramie's downtown with recommendations for more economic development, redevelopment and infill, mixed uses for commercial and residential space, walkability, and community character.

Unified Development Code

Prepared by City of Laramie, Effective July 1, 2010

The Code lays out the standards, requirements, and procedural expectations of the City of Laramie with regard to land development. Among the Code's zoning districts is the Downtown Commercial (DC) District, which is the most relevant for downtown Laramie. The purpose of the DC district is to 'preserve, enhance, and promote Laramie's historic downtown area as a nucleus of community activity. Additionally, the district is designed to allow for a wide variety of retail, entertainment, finance, and office uses, as well as a mix of uses including multi-family, while maintaining the historic character and scale of the area.' It is critical that there is language in the City's regulations that supports the character and redevelopment of downtown, and the Unified Development Code is a significant step in that direction. Along with that, it is important that the unique aspects of a downtown area be reflected and even encouraged by the regulations. For example, the City's Comprehensive Plan notes repeatedly that mixed use development is strongly encouraged in the downtown. That planning goal needs to be more clearly supported by the standards found in the DC District section. The Code uses illustrations and figures to describe some of the standards, and the table of allowed uses is very clear and easy to understand, as is the table for dimensional requirements. There are also Design Guidelines for Historic Downtown Laramie, which is referenced in the DC section of the Code. An issue with the Guidelines is that some of them are aspirational in tone, and many are presented as recommended actions. A rework of the Guidelines to make them more direct and likely to be achieved is warranted, even if it is done in incremental steps.

Safety and Studies Program (3rd Street Intersections)

Prepared by Wyoming Department of Transportation, February 26-March 4, 2008

This study was prepared in winter/spring 2008 with the intent to study traffic volumes and turning movements at several significant intersections along 3rd Street. The study revealed that there are a significant number of left-turn movements at the intersection of 3rd Street and Grand Avenue during both the morning and afternoon hours, supporting the need for dedicated left turn lanes.

3-D Land Use, Downtown Laramie, WY – Inventory and Sustainability 2009

Prepared by University of Wyoming Planning Program, December 2010

This is a very detailed study, which provides good base data for continued revitalization efforts in downtown Laramie related to first floor land use, parking resources and sustainability, emphasizing the importance of mixed-use development in downtown. The plan will be a valuable resource in documenting parking loss and gain as 3rd Street improvements are implemented and infill development continues to occur within the downtown. A straightforward summary and primary conclusions of the study would be helpful and make the study more user-friendly for those groups referring to it in their revitalization efforts.

3rd Street Project-Land Use, Transportation and Landscape Inventory, Laramie, Wyoming

Prepared by University of Wyoming Planning Program, December 2010

This plan focuses on 3rd Street in terms of its physical and aesthetic layout and explores how to tap the large volumes of its traffic for revitalization efforts. The study contains a significant amount of detail and valuable information for use by revitalization groups. As with the study above, a straightforward summary with primary conclusions would be helpful in making the study more user-friendly.

Laramie Streets: Grand Avenue, 15th Street to 21st Street Section, Revised Preliminary Plans

Prepared by Wyoming Department of Transportation, February 11, 2011

These plans illustrate the Grand Avenue improvements between 15th and 21st Streets that are currently underway. Generally, the plans include widening the road with the addition of a median. Left turn movements will be limited to signalized intersections. Improvements to Grand Avenue between 3rd Street and 15th Street are expected to utilize the same median design.

1.4 Community Input

High levels of stakeholder involvement and participation are the hallmark behind the process behind the development of any successful plan. All told, more than 100 people participated and provided input via individual and small group interviews, focus groups, and public open sessions.

Following is a condensed, topical synopsis of community and stakeholder input collected during the course of the planning effort. The information and ideas shared by participants provide a strong framework for the Downtown Development Plan Update directions, concepts, implementation and related tools.

Downtown Laramie is Viewed as:

- A specialty retail district.
- The historic heart of the community.
- A place with potential for additional investment.
- A "cosmopolitan" part of Laramie.
- Eclectic.
- A railroad downtown.
- Somewhat disconnected from the University of Wyoming.
- Improving.

Competitive/Marketing Advantages include:

- Built-in market with students from the University of Wyoming.
- "Brand recognition" as Wyoming's College Town and a place that Wyomingites gather for events and activities.
- An evocative name that reflects the history of the West.
- Depending on perspective a more "laid back" and "relaxed" atmosphere (viewed from the urban region of the Front Range in Colorado) or a more cosmopolitan atmosphere (viewed from smaller more remote areas of Wyoming).
- A compact/walkable and well-defined district with critical mass of shopping and dining.

Assets include:

- 2nd Street with its strong architecture and pride of ownership.
- 1st Street, which is emerging as a retail/dining destination along with clear relationship with the railroad and the park/depot.
- The Train Depot itself as a renovated landmark in downtown.
- Unique and interesting building cornices.
- Painted buildings a variety of styles and colors.
- A new attitude of pride in our unique characteristics, and the entire community is realizing the importance of the heart and soul of Laramie downtown.
- Unique restaurants offering a variety of fare.

- Street trees.
- Benches and street furniture.
- 1st Street Plaza as a gathering place and park.
- Downtown Laramie is easily defined as a district with its distinct look and feel.
- The rare 1800's railroad pedestrian bridge, one of two left in existance.

Challenges/Disadvantages include:

- Perception of being remote and less "exciting" than nearby Fort Collins (home of Colorado State University).
- 3rd Street is unattractive.
- Downtown is not directly adjacent to the University of Wyoming creating a disconnect between the campus and downtown.
- Laramie and Albany County are at a financial disadvantage as the energy industry is not located within the county and does not fuel the local economy.
- Lack of public transportation.
- Loss of the Fox Theatre.
- Emerging competition from recent development adjacent to the University of Wyoming.

Physical Planning Efforts Should:

- Provide a needed facelift to 3rd Street.
- Improve gateways to downtown.
- Consider public restrooms.
- Improve the "dirty" appearance of downtown.
- Make Grand Street and 3rd Streets more pedestrian friendly.
- Improve the look of the intersection of 3rd and Grand.
- Explore options for the reuse of the Fox Hole.
- Consider the wind, snow, and winter weather.

Marketing Efforts Should:

- Create more critical mass downtown.
- Add more life to downtown after 9 pm.
- Market downtown as a place to live.
- Connect downtown to the University and to the many attractions (natural and historic) in the surrounding area.
- Target students and foster a better connection between the University of Wyoming and Downtown.

Policy Efforts Should:

- Consider reforming permit parking, particularly in neighborhoods near the University to ensure that parking is maintained for residents.
- Strengthen the Tree Overlay, emphasizing diversity of tree species and the importance of street trees.
- Emphasize replacement of deteriorating infrastructure with each streetscape project.
- Consider preservation planning as a component to the success of downtown.
- Explore funding options for public investments and opportunities for public private partnerships.
- Enhance, incent retail on ground floor space.
- Consider strategic community partnerships around a common vision.
- Identify grants to aid building owners.
- Challenge Laramie to think creatively.
- Coordinate efforts of DDA, Main Street, DLBA, and others through common goals, strategies, and partnerships.

2.0 Making Connections: Pedestrian, Bicycle, Vehicular, and Parking

2.1 Issues and Opportunities

- Focused Downtown Core Area: Downtown has a very distinct and focused core area between 1st and 2nd Streets and Garfield and Ivinson Streets. There is an opportunity strengthen this core and to expand it to the north, south, and east. The diagram below illustrates the core area of downtoown and the areas where growth might occur.

- 3rd Street as a Barrier for Downtown: 3rd Street continues to be a barrier to downtown. While it receives a high volume of daily traffic, the core area along 2nd Street is not visible and can be easily bypassed by visitors. The traffic volumes and width continue to create challenges for pedestrians and motorists alike, particularly where left turn movements occur. In addition, the corridor is unattractive with no streetscape. While numerous studies and design alternatives have been developed for the street, many are impractical and none have been enthusiastically embraced.

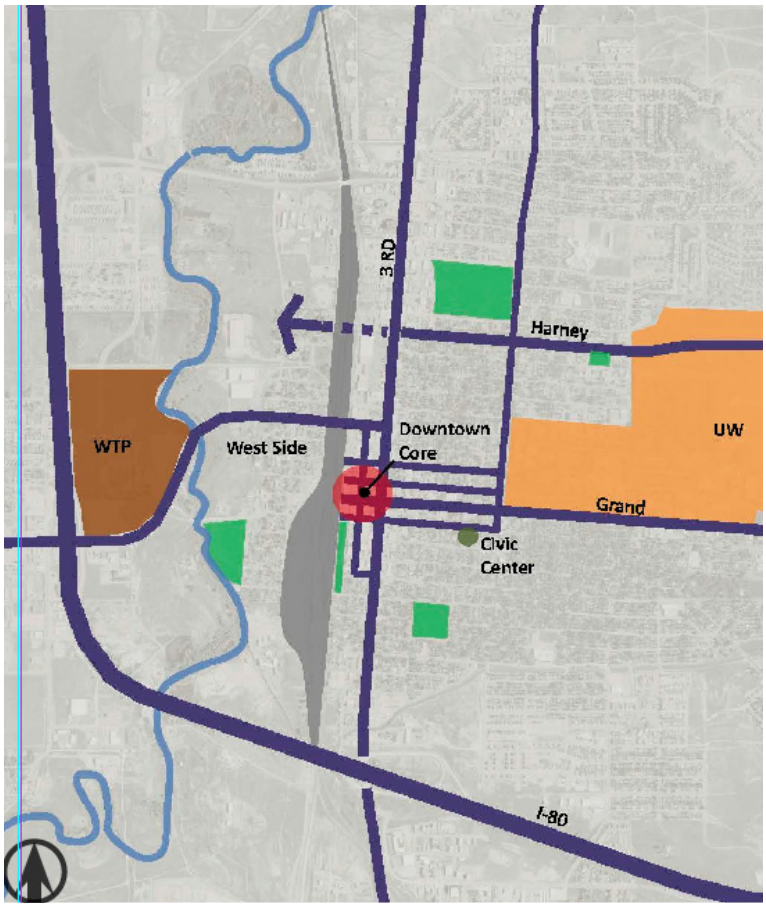


Fig. 2.1: Diagram illustrating context of the downtown core in relation to UW, the West Side and I-80.

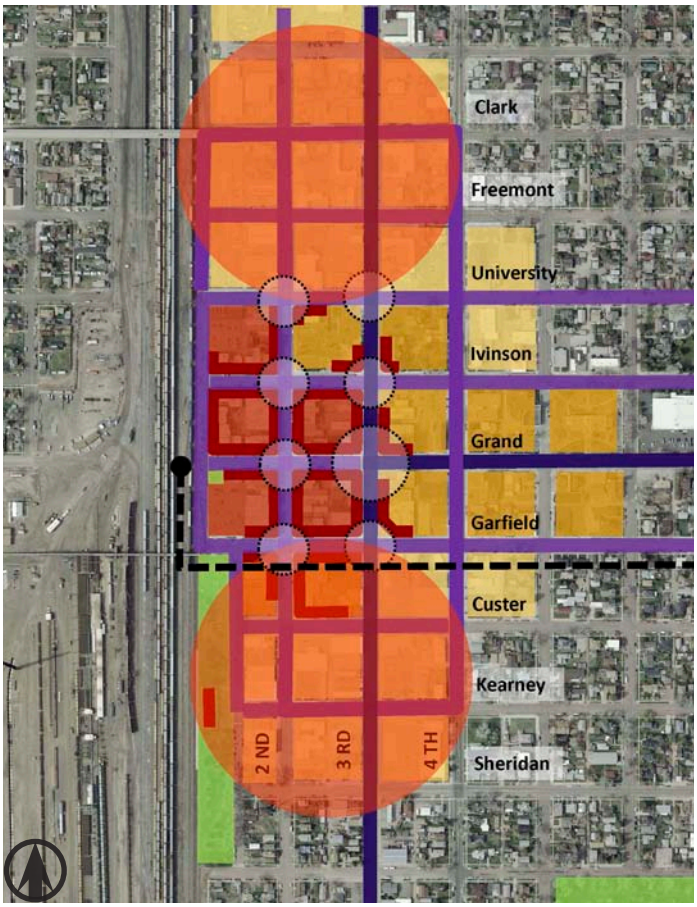


Fig. 2.2 : Diagram illustrating the downtown core area and the logical areas for expansion to the north and south.

• Downtown Gateways: Visitors to downtown do not have a clear sense of gateways directing them to the downtown core. Discussions have been underway to establish gateways at Clark and Sheridan along 3rd Street and at 5th Street along Grand Avenue. These are logical gateway points and additional recommendations are described below. In addition, Russell Mills has been retained to develop concept sketches for the gateway intersections and some additional intersections throughout the downtown core to serve as prototypes.

• Future Bus Connections: A bus pilot project is slated to be underway beginning August 2010, linking downtown with the University of Wyoming. This will be tremendous step forward in creating a stronger connection between the two. The pilot bus route extends from 1st Street Plaza area and generally follows a route along Garfield Street and Grand Avenue, with occasional connections through the campus and adjacent neighborhoods. Once the bus has been in operation, the route should continually be evaluated to determine if any changes need to be made to encourage a broader catchment of riders.

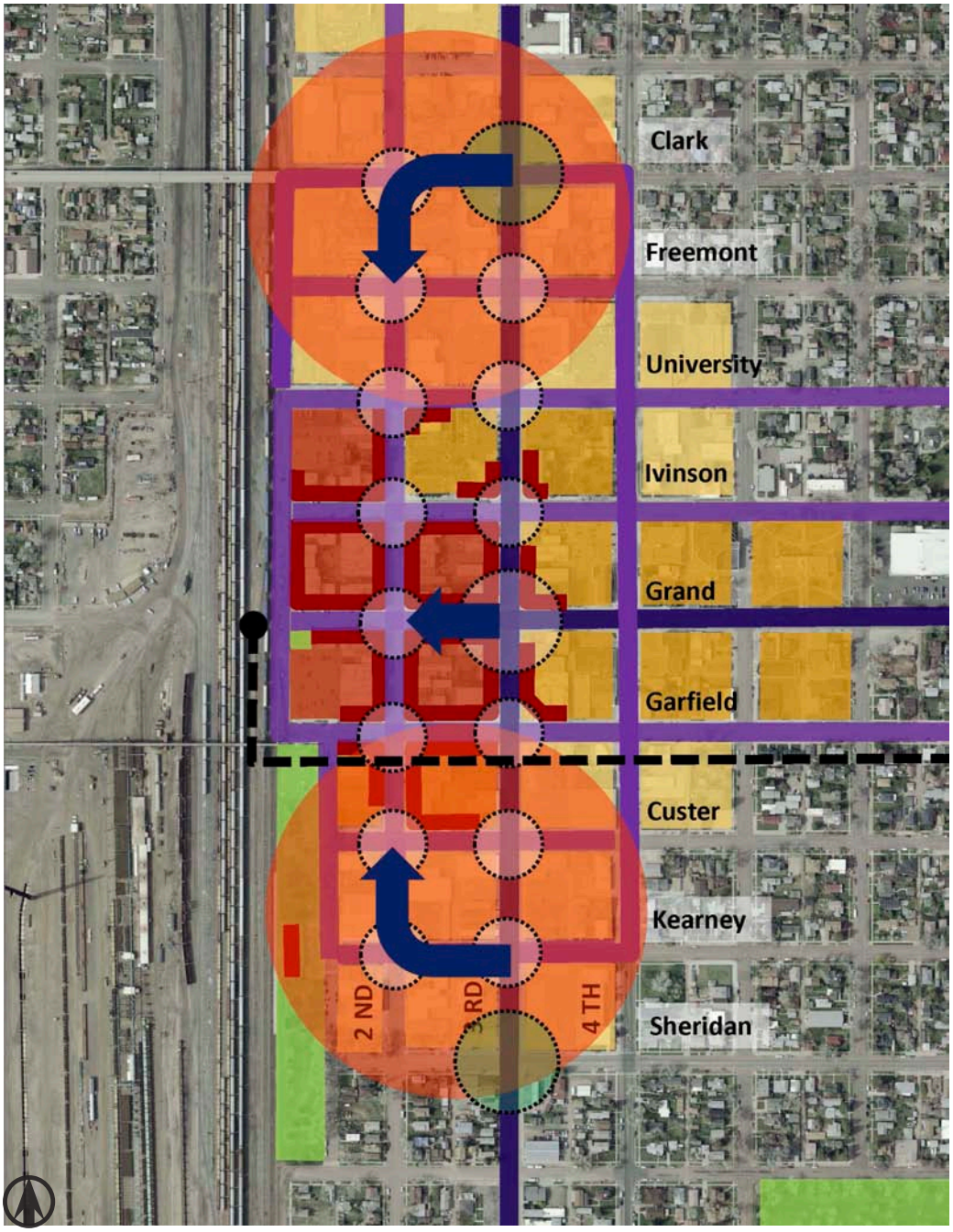


Fig. 2.3: Diagram illustrating downtown. The blue arrows indicate gateway opportunities to direct visitors to 2nd Street.

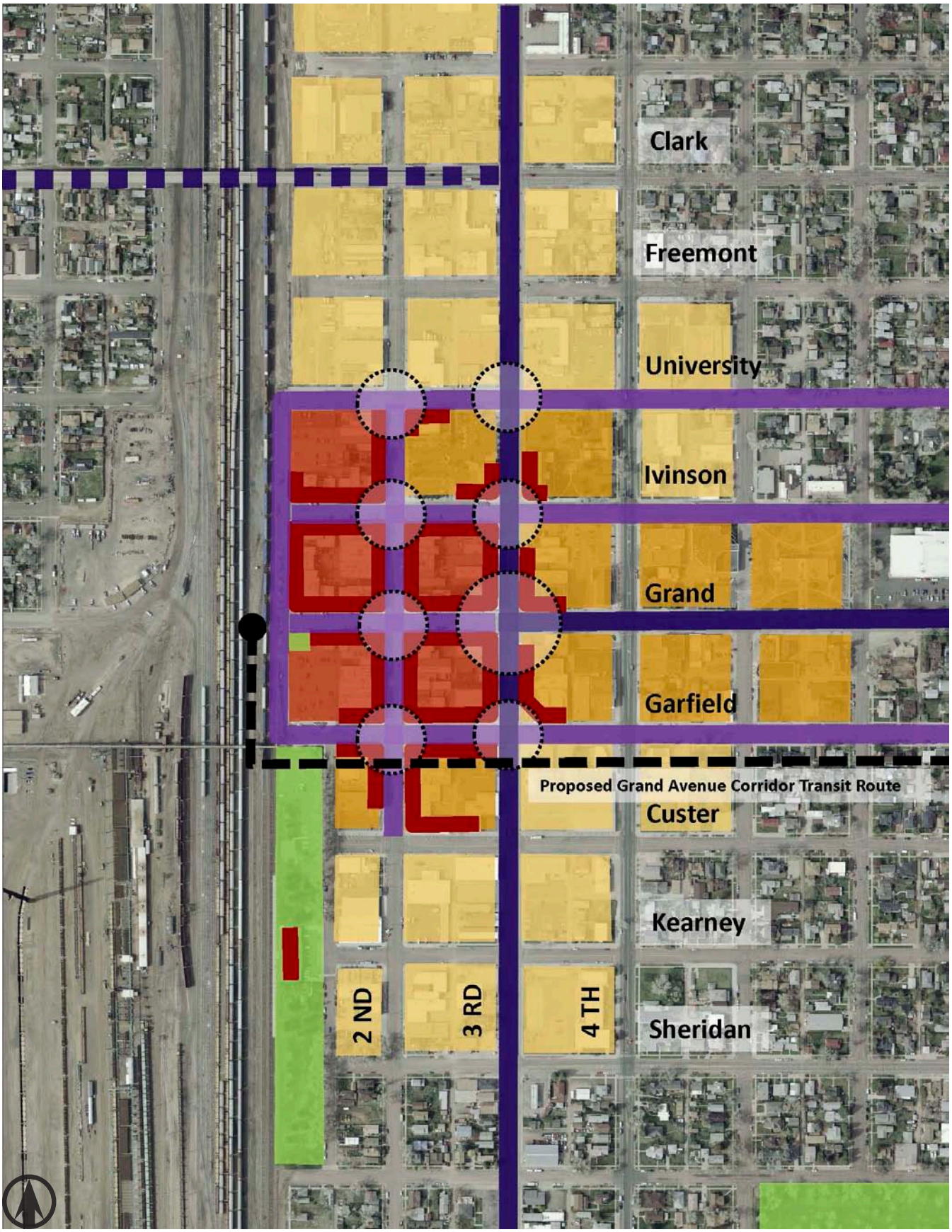


Fig. 2.4: Diagram illustrating the proposed transit loop as provided by the City of Laramie.

• Bicycle Connections: The City continues to implement bicycle paths, lanes and routes per the Laramie Bicycle Facility Master Plan. A critical connection between downtown and the bicycle lane along Ivinson Street is still missing and should be a priority as the plan is continues to be implemented.

• The University of Wyoming/Downtown Connection: While relatively close to each other, the University and downtown still seem to be disconnected. Improvements to the bicycle facilities and the implementation of the new bus as described above will help to improve the connection tremendously. From a street standpoint, stakeholders indicated that the primary streets that should be considered links between the University and Downtown include University Avenue, Ivinson and Garfield Streets (primary pedestrian routes) and Grand Avenue (primary vehicular route). Consideration should be given to focusing attention on streetscape improvements along these streets, particularly between 3rd and 5th Streets. In particular the south side of Ivinson between 3rd and 5th Streets where there is little shade and the street edge is undefined.

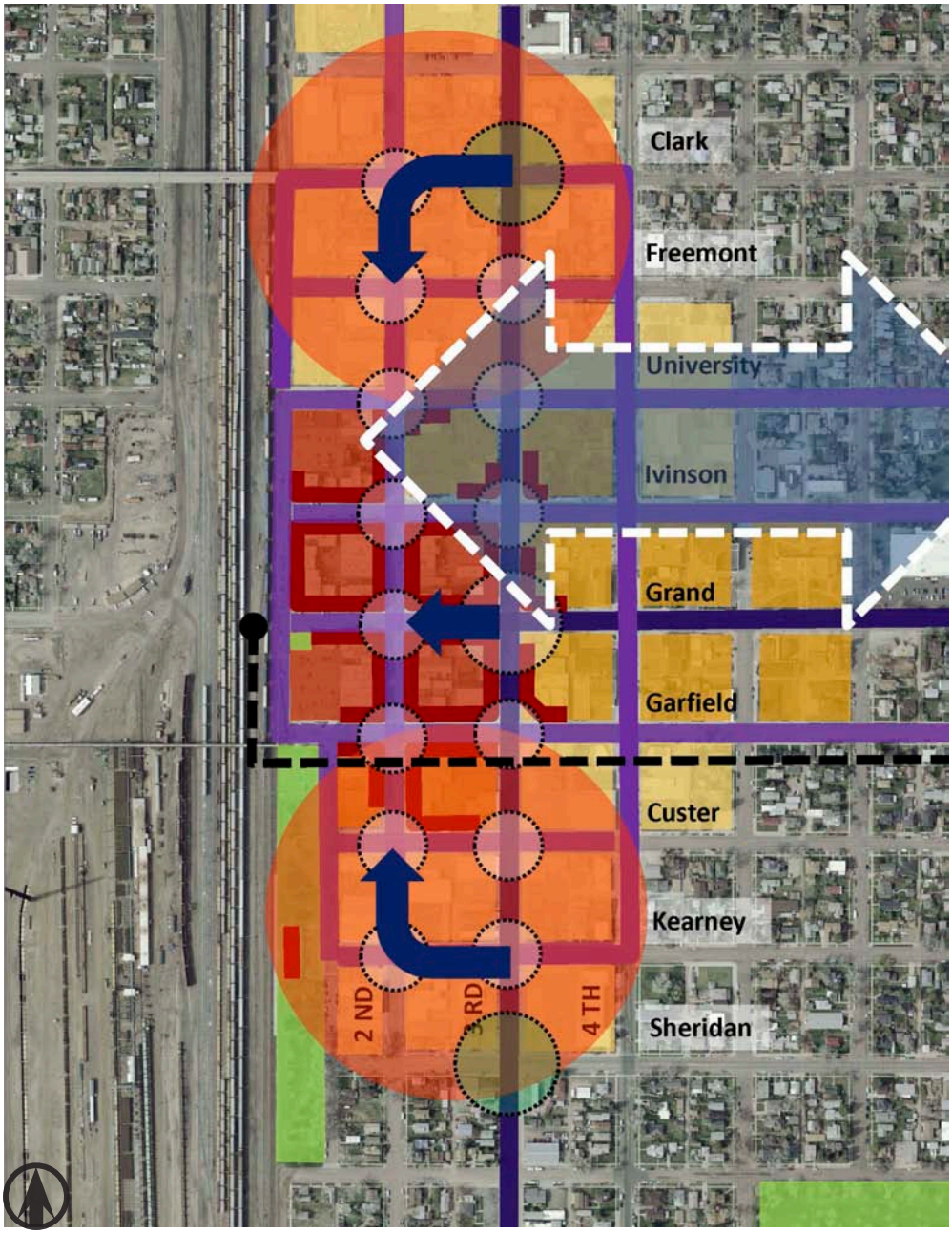


Fig. 2.5: Diagram illustrating that the greatest potential for a pedestrian friendly connection between UW and downtown is along Ivinson Street and University Avenue.

2.2 Recommendations

2.2.1 Continue to Improve the Streetscape

Continue to implement streetscape enhancements to complement the existing enhancements. Consider the following:

- Utilize larger tree wells (4' x 8' minimum) to allow more un-compacted soil area.
- Continue using the existing ornamental light fixtures.
- Accommodate the climate by utilizing boulders, river rock, and public art to provide visual interest when plant materials are not in bloom or leaf.
- Utilize drought tolerant and native plant materials, emphasizing color.

Fig. 2.6: Illustration showing a segment of the potential streetscape enhancements along Ivinson Street between 3rd and 5th Streets. These could be done in partnership between the City and private property owners.

2.2.2 Strengthen Primary East/West Connections between Downtown and the University of Wyoming

Various enhancements should be considered for the primary streets connecting downtown to UW make each destination more accessible to the other. Recommendations for key streets include:

- Ivinson Street: This is the primary east-west street where pedestrian circulation should be encouraged as it connects directly to the existing core of downtown and forms the southern boundary of the campus. In addition, Ivinson has lower volumes of vehicular traffic than Grand Avenue. Specific recommendations include;
  - o Create strong street edge between 3rd Street and 5th Street by extending streetscape treatment (canopy street trees, ornamental lighting and sidewalk paving if needed) along each side.
  - o Provide way-finding signage directing pedestrians to downtown and UW (see 5.0).
  - o Work with St. Laurence to coordinate potential enhancements to their property in conjunction with streetscape improvements. In particular, consider a hedge and/or decorative fence along the surface parking lot frontage on Ivinson and 4th Street. It will be important to coordinate this effort with the re development of the Connor Block as described later in this section of the report, as it may determine the

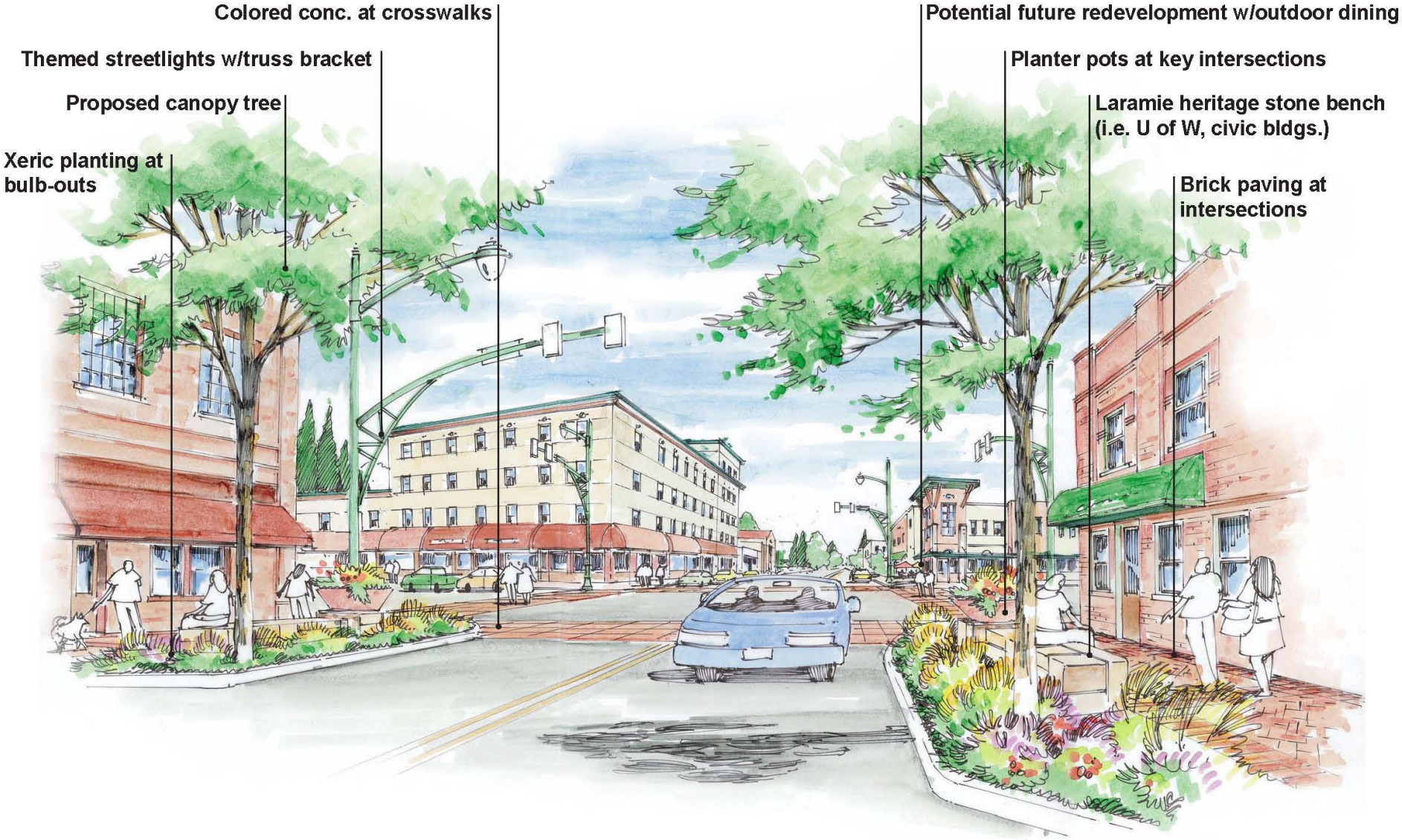
level of investment made.
o Work with St. Mathews to coordinate streetscape improvements as they develop plans for a new laby rnth and park space along the north side of Ivinson.
o Continue to work with the Masonic Temple and their frontage along the north side of Ivinson between 4th and 5th Streets. In particular, encourage them to provide an easement for large shade trees to he provide overhead canopy and shade along the sidewalk.
o Enhance bicycle path as described below.

• University Avenue: This street represents another opportunity to create a strong pedestrian link between UW and downtown, particularly as downtown expands to the north as described under Strategy 4.0: Growing Downtown-Redevelopment and Downtown Expansion. Specific enhancements include:
o Provide canopy street trees and ornamental lighting to match downtown standards, particularly in the blocks between 2nd and 5th Streets, focusing on minimally landscaped areas such as parking lots.
o Incorporate way-finding signage directing pedestrians to downtown and UW (see section 4.0 for way-finding design concepts), library and civic center.
o Examine converting angled parking to parallel parking to accommodate bike lanes as described below. This should also be coordinated with the expansion of the University Street Parking Lot (described in section 3.0).

• Garfield Street: This street is an important pedestrian linkage between downtown and the Civic Center. Specific enhancements include:
o Provide canopy street trees and ornamental lighting to match downtown standards, particularly in the blocks between 3rd and 5th Streets.
o Incorporate way-finding signage directing pedestrians to downtown and UW (see Section 5.0).

• Grand Avenue: Grand Avenue will serve as a primary truck and vehicular route into downtown Laramie from the east. Plans are being developed to reconstruct Grand Avenue, between 15th Street and 3rd Street, utilizing a similar design approach as is being developed for the section of Grand between 15th and 21st Streets. As these plans are being developed, attention should be given to the following:
o Coordinate Grand Avenue plans with 3rd Street enhancements described below.
o Establish downtown gateways at 5th Street and 3rd Street, incorporating branding described in 5.0.
o Evaluate cross section design being used between 15th and 21st Streets and modify as necessary to adapt to more urban conditions and to maximize pedestrian-friendly environment.
o Consider converting the section of Grand between 2nd and 3rd Street to one-way westbound to mini mize vehicular conflicts turning on to 3rd Street from Grand Avenue and to allow for the conversion of parallel parking to angled parking. This additional parking will help off-set losses associated with the addition of dedicated left-turn lanes on 3rd Street as described below.

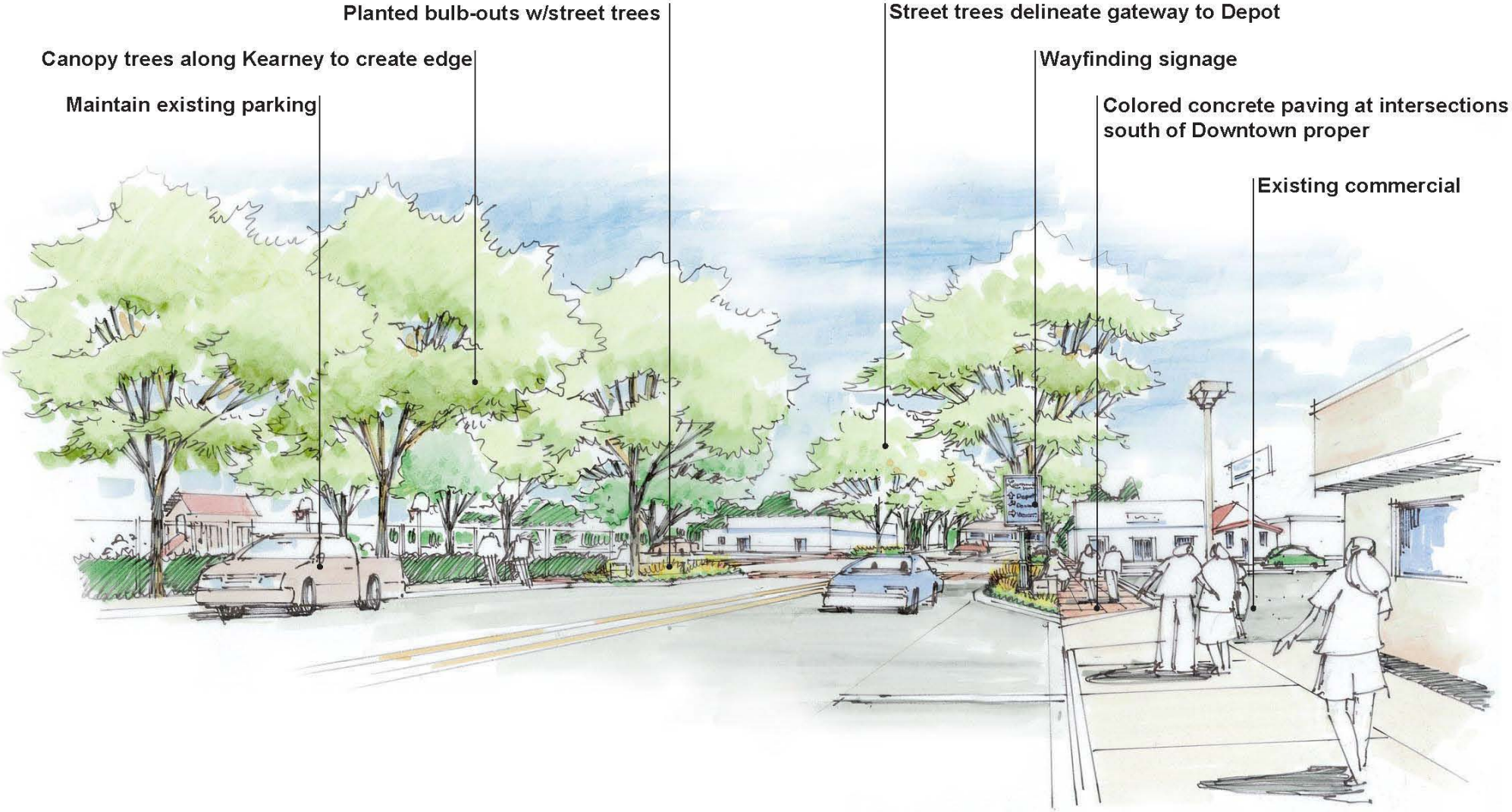
Fig. 2.7: Photograph illustrating how a low hedge is effective at establishing a streetscape edge adjacent to surface parking.



View from Grand and 3rd Looking East

View from Fremont and 2nd looking west

View from Clark and 3rd looking west



View from Kearney and 3rd looking west

2.2.3 Focus on Intersection Enhancements

The City of Laramie is currently exploring investment in streetscape enhancements within the downtown core area. The focus for these enhancements should be where the most positive impact can be made in both the short and long terms, which include the intersections located along 3rd and 2nd Streets. The enhancements should accommodate pedestrian gathering areas while enhancing pedestrian safety and may include curb extensions (bump outs) where possible, crosswalks, special accent planting, public art, seating and wayfinding and/or gateway signage (examples of which will be shown in Section 4.0). Special attention should be given to providing visual interest throughout the year with the use of stone, river rock and evergreen plantings.

- 3rd Street Intersections: Initial focus should be on Garfield, Grand, Ivinson and University in the core and Sheridan and Clark as gateway intersections. Future enhancements (or if funding allows in the early phases) should consider Kearney, Custer and Fremont to unify all of the intersections between the north and south gateways.
- 2nd Street Intersections: Initial focus should be on Garfield, Grand, Ivinson and University in the core and Kearney and Clark as gateway intersections. Future enhancements can be extended to include Custer and Fremont.

- Temporary Pavement Markings: Before making significant investment in curb extensions or bump-outs at intersections, consideration should be given to using white paint to mark the new curb locations at each intersection. With very little cost, this is a good way to demonstrate that curb extensions will not interfere with traffic flow and to make adjustments before construction the permanent enhancements.

Fig. 2.8 : Before (left) and after (right) photographs illustrating how marking tape can be used to show new road and sidewalk configurations prior to making significant investment in permanent changes.

Fig. 2.9 : Example of a proposed vision (left) for a landscaped curb extension and how paint was used for temporary pavement markings prior to making significant investment in permanent changes.

2.2.4 Establish Primary Gateway Streets Linking 2nd Street Commercial Core to 3rd Street

As 3rd Street is improved, it will be important to limit left-turn movements during peak traffic hours to a few intersections where dedicated left turn lanes can be implemented. These include Clark, and Kearney Streets and Grand Avenue. Downtown visitors should be directed to the 2nd Street commercial core along these streets.

- Clark Street: Once the viaduct is removed, Clark Street will be the gateway to downtown from the north.

- Kearney Street: With gateway signage located at Sheridan Street, visitors will be directed to 2nd Street via Kearney Street.

- Grand Avenue: Grand Avenue is the gateway intersection to downtown from the east. While a dedicated left turn lane will allow visitors to enter downtown as they travel from the south, consideration should also be given to providing gateway signage at 5th Street for downtown visitors traveling form the east.

2.2.5 Create an Expanded Transit Loop for Bus Service

A transit connection linking the University of Wyoming to downtown was launched in August, 2011. The initial route will extend from First Street Plaza area along Garfield Street to the east and will return along Grand Avenue via Garfield street and 3rd Street.

- Downtown Loop: Once the initial route is in operation, an assessment should be made to evaluate the route and location of stops. Consideration should be given to expanding to a larger loop within the downtown core. An expanded loop might include 1st, Garfield, Grand and Ivinson, however, the exact route should be evaluated once the bus has been in operation for a number of months.

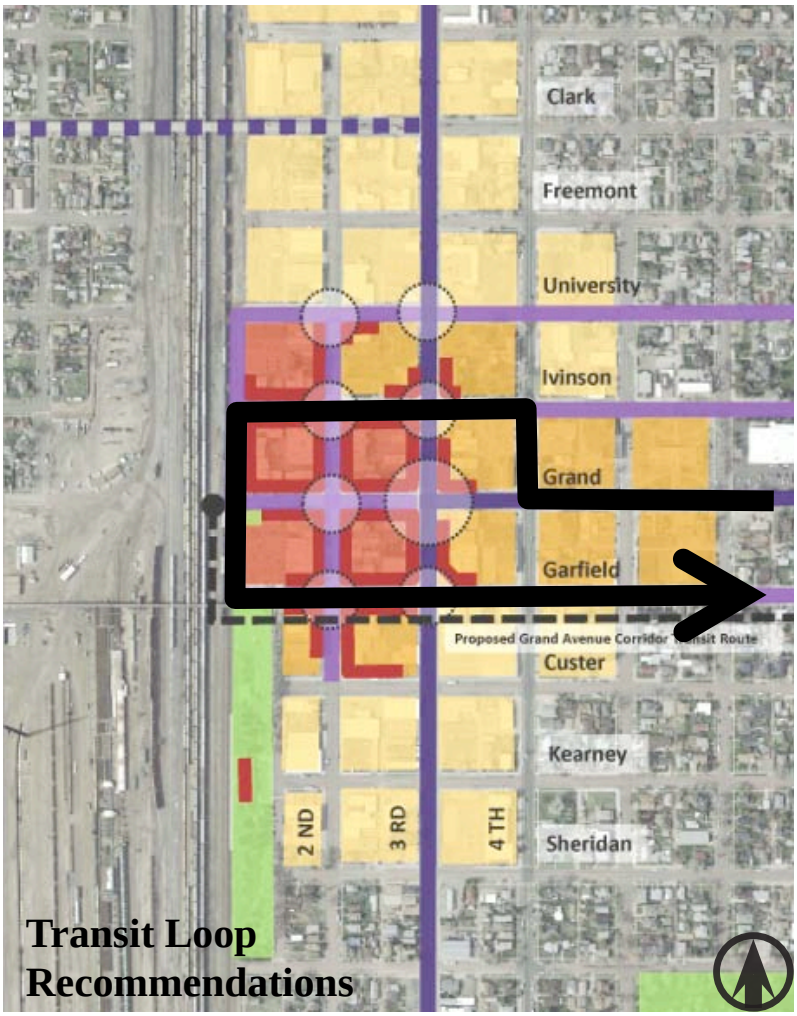


Fig. 2.10 : Diagram illustrating how transit route could be expanded within the downtown core.

• Bus Shelters: Bus shelters are important components of a transit system, not only in terms of providing shelter, but also in terms of placemaking and promoting destinations along the route. A shelter is currently being designed for the downtown stop near First Street Plaza and is being modeled after the rail depot. As other shelters are added to the system, whether custom-made or part of a standardized "off -the-shelf" system, consideration should be given to the following:

- o Providing some consistent design components that unify the entire system, while still allowing unique shelters at specific locations.
- o Utilizing the shelters for advertisement to promote downtown businesses and to events at University of Wyoming.
- o Utilizing shelters to highlight unique attractions nearby.
- o Use color to distinguish stations from one another and to reinforce the colors in the Laramie brand (refer to the branding section of this report).

• Branding: Utilize the advertisement display zone inside the bus to promote the downtown, downtown events and events at the University of Wyoming (section 4.0 will show concepts for ads to be displayed).

2.2.6 Complete Bicycle Link Between University of Wyoming and Downtown and Expand Network

Continue to expand the bicycle network within Laramie, with particular emphasis on creating stronger links to downtown.

• Full striping: The existing bicycle route along Ivinson Street is only striped on the outside of the bicycle lane, separating it from the vehicular travel lane. As a result, it is not necessarily apparent that it is a bicycle lane. Consideration should be given to striping the inside edge of the bicycle lane (adjacent to the parking lane) as detailed in the Bicycle Master Plan to make the lane more visible.

• 5th to 1st Link: The Long Range Development Plan for the University of Wyoming designates Ivinson Street as the designated bicycle link between the University and other bicycle paths in the community. Furthermore, the University intends to vacate Ivinson Street within the campus and convert to a transit, pedestrian and bicycle corridor. This reinforces the importance of Ivinson as a major bicycle route into downtown. However, the section of Ivinson between 5th and 1st Streets does not have enough room to allow for bicycle lanes because of dedicated left turn lanes at 4th and 3rd Streets. There are two options to consider to make the continue the bike lane to 1st Street:

- o Explore the feasibility of removing the dedicated left turn lanes along Ivinson so that the bike lane can be extended through to 1st Street. Depending upon traffic volumes, this may or may not be possible.
- o If extending the bicycle route along Ivinson between 5th and 1st Streets is not possible, consider strip ing a bicycle route along 5th Street, from Ivinson to University, then along University to 1st Street. This will require angled parking along University to be converted to parallel parking (between 3rd and 1st Streets) but would provide a continuous dedicated bicycle lane between the downtown and campus. Ex perienced bicyclists will likely continue along Ivinson into downtown, however, the striped route along University will give less experienced bicyclists a greater comfort level.

• University Avenue Bike Median: In addition to the enhancements described above, explore a bicycle lane along University Avenue between downtown and the campus at 9th Street. This would require a partnership between the City and the University to explore traffic signals at 9th and University and a clear bicycle link through the campus from the University Street gateway to the future Ivinson Street transit/bicycle/pedestiran corridor through the campus. There has also been interest within the community of developing a "bike median" pilot project. Because of low traffic volumes, University Avenue would be a logical candidate for this.

• Bike/Pedestrian Path: The Bicycle Master Plan identifies a dedicated bike path along the rail right-of-way from 1st Street north to 1st Street northward. As plans for expanding downtown to the north are explored (described below), consideration must be given to providing for this bike connection.

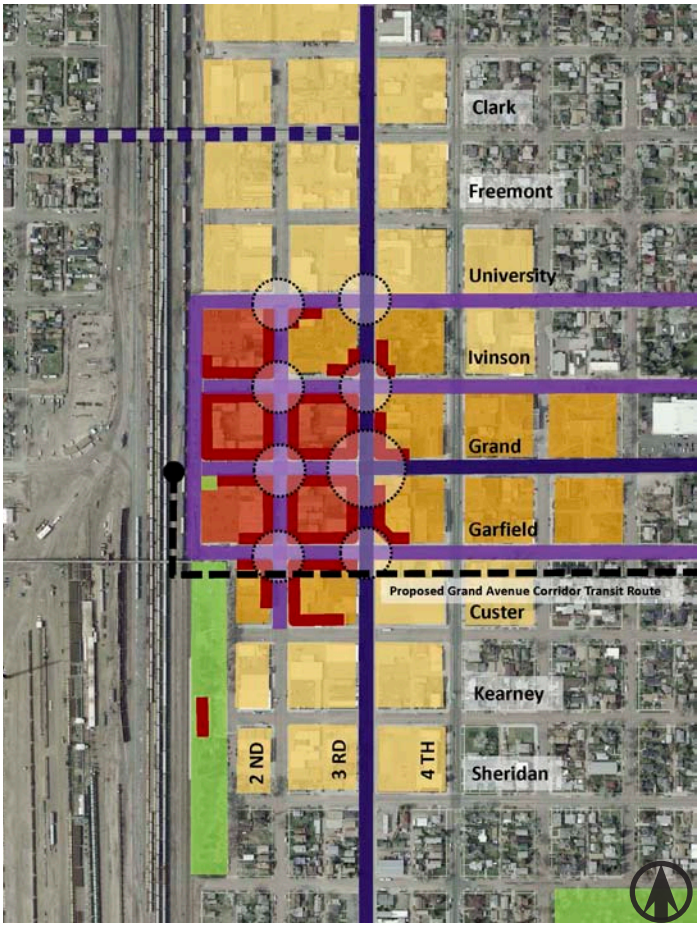


Fig. 2.11: Diagram illustrating recommended bike route to connect the existing bike route (at Ivinson and 5th Streets) to 1st Street, along 5th Street and University Avenue.

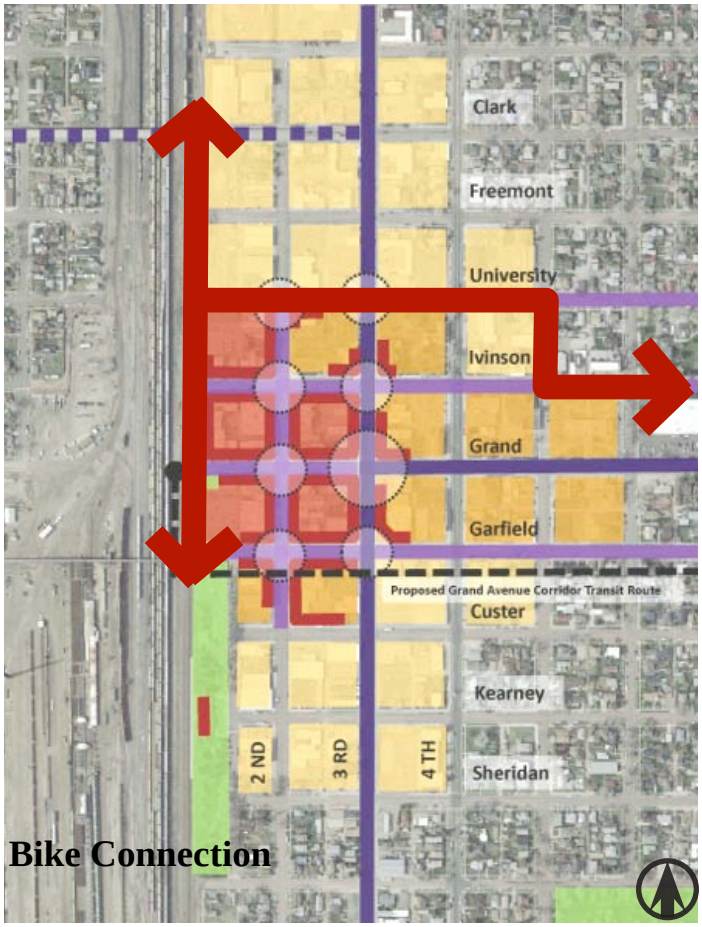


Fig. 2.12

2.2.7 Improve 3rd Street Streetscape

Numerous studies have looked at improving 3rd Street within the downtown core to make more pedestrian-friendly. The difficulty with 3rd Street, however, is that parking and travel lanes are inadequate and conflicts with left-turning vehicles present hazards for both drivers and pedestrians. As a result, the following recommendations recognize that dedicated left turn lanes will be required at some intersections, resulting in fewer opportunities to expand the sidewalk areas. The following recommendations result in a compromise that will enhance the corridor for both drivers and pedestrians.

- Dedicated Left Turn Lanes: As described above in 3.3.4, provide dedicated left turn lanes at Kearney, Grand and Clark to direct visitors from 3rd Street into the 2nd Street commercial core. During peak-traffic times, left turns at other intersections along 3rd should be restricted. Signage alerting motorists to the streets where left turns are allowed should minimize inconvenience. In addition, motorists could utilize a series of right-turn movements around a block to get them to where they need to be when left turns are prohibited. In order to accommodate dedicated left turn movements, the existing parallel parking would need to be eliminated in the blocks leading up to the intersection accommodating the left turn movement. Therefore, parallel parking would be eliminated between Sheridan and Kearney, between Kearney and Custer, between Garfield and Grand, between Ivinson and Grand and between Clark and Fremont.

• Option 1-Maintain Parking Both Sides: Two options for 3rd Street were explored. The first is to maintain the existing travel and parking lane widths on blocks not impacted by dedicated left turn lanes.

• Option 2-Parking One Side: The second option is to maintain parking only on one side on the blocks not impacted by dedicated left turn lanes, with an expanded landscape strip/street tree zone provided on the opposite side. This is the preferred option by the community as it allows for some streetscape treatment and beautification and also because it allows for appropriately dimensioned travel and parking lanes, providing a safer environment for motorists and pedestrians. Parallel parking should be maintained on the west side of the street with the landscape strip/tree zone provided on the east side where pedestrians could be shaded from the afternoon sun.

• Curb Extensions (Bump-Outs) and Landscape Treatment: Except for the intersections with left turn movements, provide modest curb extensions or bump-outs at 3rd Street intersections to accommodate expanded pedestrian and landscape zones and to provide shorter crossing distances. Consider bulbouts on the west side of 3rd and Grand if Grand west of 3rd is made permanently one-way.

• South Gateway: As described above in 3.3.4, the south gateway to downtown should occur at Sheridan Street, with wayfinding signage directing visitors to turn left at Kearney Street. A bump-out with landscaping and new signage would help to reinforce this gateway. In the long-term, there is an opportunity to coordinate with St. Laurence should they expand their school at the northeast corner of Sheridan and 3rd. The new building, if well designed, could reinforce the downtown gateway image for Laramie.

Fig. 2.13: Option 1 concept drawing illustrating an option for accommodating left turn lanes at Grand Avenue and existing lane widths and parallel parking south of Garfield and north of Ivinson.

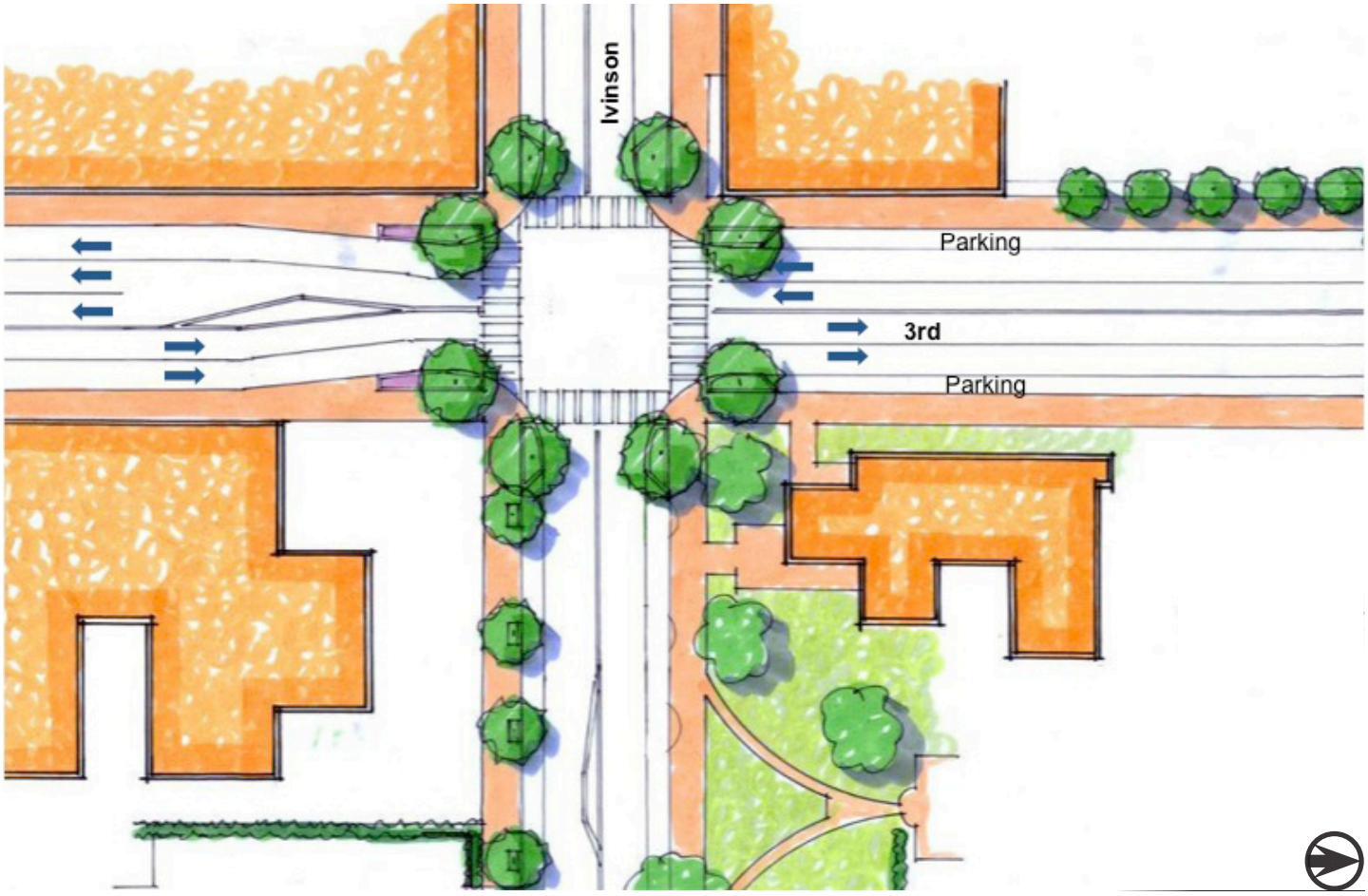


Fig. 2.14: Detail of Option 1 concept drawing showing the lane configuration north of Ivinson (existing lane widths, curb extensions and parking both sides).

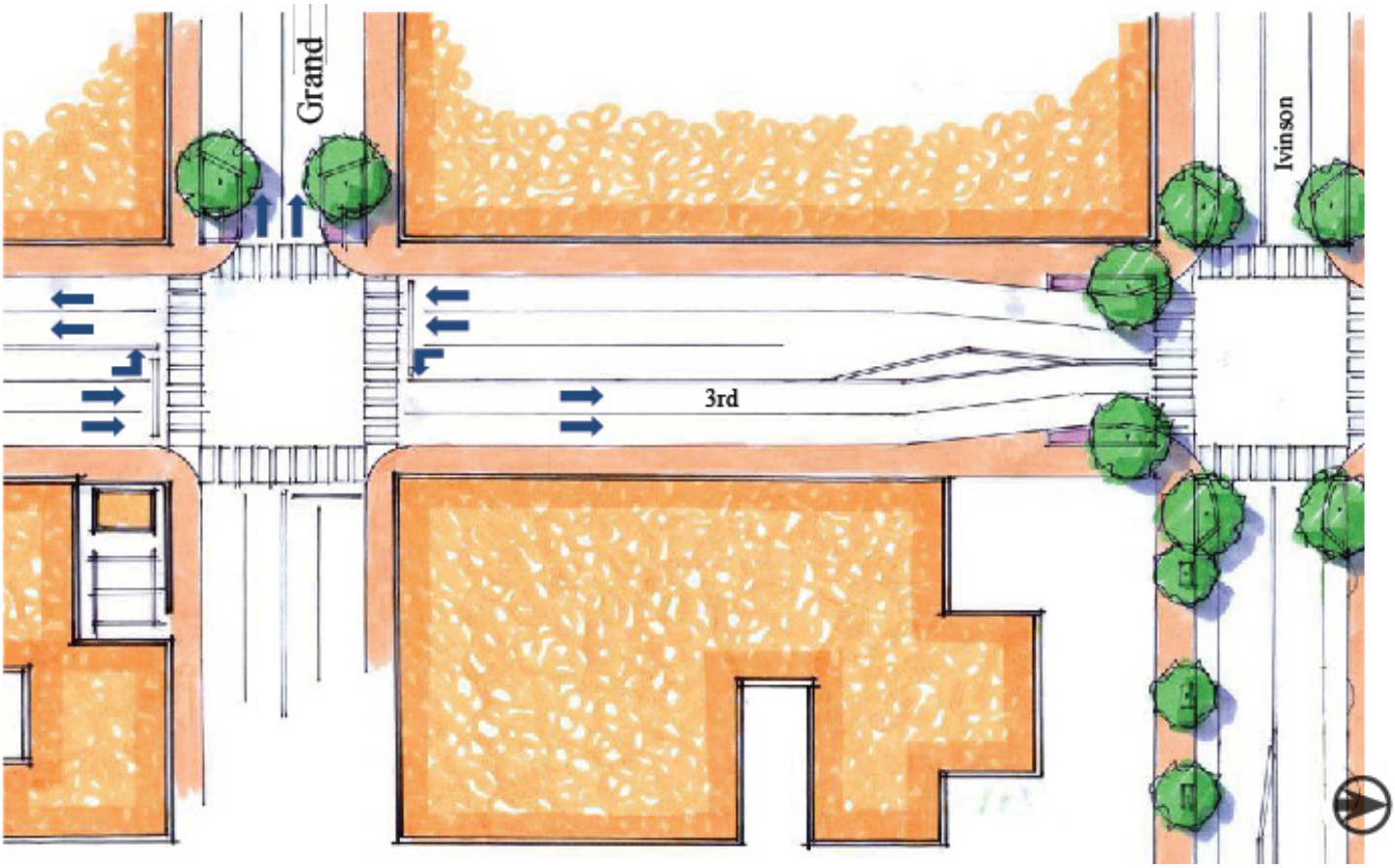


Fig. 2.15: Detail of Option 1 concept drawing showing the lane configuration between Ivinson and Grand.

Fig. 2.16: Option 2 concept drawing illustrating an option for accommodating left turn lanes at Grand Avenue and wider lane widths, parallel parking on one side, and landscape strip south of Garfield and north of Ivinson.

Fig. 2.17: Model view looking north from Garfield at existing 3rd Street configuration.

Fig. 2.18: Model view looking north from Garfield at proposed 3rd Street configuration (Option 1). The lane configuration between Garfield and Ivinson is the same for both Options 1 and 2.

Fig. 2.19: Photo renderings illustrating view looking north of phased streetscape improvements along 3rd Street at Sheridan Street.

1. Existing Streetscape, at corner of 3rd and Sheridan

2. Proposed crosswalk and curb extension at 3rd and Sheridan

3. Proposed street trees and

3.0 Growing Downtown: Redevelopment and Downtown Expansion

3.1 Issues and Opportunities

• Downtown's "Railyard": In many communities, the rail yards and railroad tracks represent the "back door" for downtown. In Laramie, however, the Union Pacific rail yard functions almost as a riverfront would. Businesses along 1st Street front onto the tracks, the footbridge is a unique and functional resource for the community and is, in fact, an attraction for train enthusiasts to watch rail traffic from above. In addition, Depot Park provides a green edge to much of the frontage and is a focal point for events and 1st Street Plaza offers a new venue for day-to-day downtown gathering. Frequent train traffic throughout the day helps to animate the downtown and, compared to other rail communities, the trains are relatively quiet.

• Opportunities to Preserve Key Downtown Development Parcels: Several blocks within the downtown core are comprised of large surface parking lots or are vacant. These present long-term infill opportunities to help strengthen the downtown. While infill within these parcels may not be feasible in the short-term, opportunities should be preserved to allow for appropriate infill in the future, rather than allowing short-sighted suburban style development which has occurred in several parcels north of downtown. Some of these parcels are presented in greater detail in the issues below.

• Connor Block: This block is located at the core of downtown and contains the former Connor Hotel – now a fully leased apartment building with ground floor businesses, St. Laurence O'Toole Catholic Church and it's associated parking, and an automotive service station. The Connor Hotel building remains a visual icon in downtown yet its condition over the years has declined from its "glory days" as Laramie's most luxurious hotel.

• In 2010 the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) commissioned a technical assistance report of the Connor Hotel by Myers and Anderson. The upper facade remains in very good condition needing minor attention. The lower facades on the other hand typically have been remodeled to a "modern look" or a "western theme". Materials such as T1-11 wood siding, plywood, roman brick, metal siding or other inappropriate materials have been utilized and conceal the historic fabric of the building. The two primary challenges with the Connor facade renovation is its size or scale relative to the remedial work of the upper facade and the destruction of the lower facade on both the west and south sides. Some of the openings exist in their original configuration, especially on the south facade. A majority of the lower facade has simply been covered with T1-11 wood siding or other materials, which are non-historic and in most cases in poor condition, but easily removed. The original entrance canopies have been removed and should be restored. The original corner sign should be replicated as shown in either the Myers and Anderson report or the photo-rendering produced by this project team.

• In addition, the gravel parking lot for St. Laurence O'Toole Catholic Church presents an unattractive edge along Ivinson Street, although St. Laurence is exploring adding landscaping along the sidewalk to enhance the perimeter of the property. The automotive use is located on an important corner of Ivinson and 3rd. Together, the automotive use and the gravel parking lot create a noticeable gap in the pedestrian environment linking downtown with the University. Plans for any properties within this block should be looked at comprehensively for the entire block and coordinated with adjacent properties to realize the full potential for this centrally located block.

• First Interstate Bank Block: First Interstate Bank is an important business within the community and is located opposite the Connor Block at Ivinson and 3rd. Fortunately, the building anchors the street corner, however, the remainder of the block (with the exception of the Elks Club which anchors the corner of University and 2nd) is in surface parking and drive-thru banking lanes. Although attractively landscaped, this large expanse of parking presents a gap between the downtown core and blocks to the north representing an opportunity for more dense development.

• Public Parking Lots: Several surface public parking lots exist within the downtown, including locations at 1st and University, 4th and University, and 2nd and Custer. The lot located at 1st and University must remain as a surface lot because of its location within Union Pacific right-of-way, however, the other lots could be considered for long-term uses.

• North of University Street: With the public parking lot at 4th and University, the remainder of this block should also be considered for long-term uses.

• Fox Hole Block: The Fox Hole block contains the vacant lot associated with the old Fox Theater and the surface parking lots facing 1st Street. The Fox Hole is a logical infill development site, however, plans for the Fox Hole should coordinate with other properties within the block to maximize utilization of the entire block. In particular, the Big Hollow Food Co-Op has expressed a desire to expand.

• Northeast Corner 3rd and Sheridan: The northeast corner of 3rd and Sheridan is part of the St. Laurence School property. Representatives of St. Laurence indicated a desire to expand the school building on this site, rather than expand on the church property. The City and St. Laurence should coordinate on any expansion, as a new building on this corner could dramatically enhance the southern downtown gateway at Sheridan.

• Downtown Expansion Opportunities: In addition to the specific infill opportunities described above, there are several underutilized blocks between University Avenue and the Safeway Shopping Center, which could allow for the northward expansion of the downtown core. These blocks currently contain a mix of uses - many of which are viable -and several vacant buildings or properties. In some cases, new infill development has occurred in the form of suburban strip commercial with buildings set back from the street with surface parking located on multiple sides of the buildings. While many of these infill uses are well maintained and well landscaped, their form is inappropriate for a downtown setting where buildings abut the sidewalk area and define the street edge. While downtown expansion is a long-term opportunity, the blocks between University Avenue and Clark Street offer the potential for more immediate expansion, particularly with the removal of the Clark Street Viaduct described below.

• Clark Street Viaduct Removal: The Clark Street Viaduct is in poor condition and will be removed in the near future, once a replacement viaduct is constructed at Harney Street, approximately 5 blocks to the north. While this pushes the connection between downtown and the West Side further away from the downtown core, it presents a tremendous opportunity to extend 1st Street to Clark Street and create a new entrance identity from the north. In addition, with the extension of 1st Street, provides additional opportunities for uses and activities along the rail frontage.

• Opportunities to Enhance Existing Downtown Buildings: One of the chief assets that downtown Laramie possesses is a remarkable array of distinct architectural styles that represent almost every major style introduced in recent American history. With such diversity comes a delicate responsibility: to honor and preserve as many good examples of each of these styles as possible. The reason this is delicate is because some of the styles represented by certain buildings probably do not garner the same warm emotions or eye appeal as certain others. By way of example, virtually everyone can and does appreciate the Victorian-era Johnson Hotel and Connor Hotel. However, of equal value is the near-perfect mid-century alteration to the Alexander Jeweler's Building. At first glance these two styles appear to be in conflict with each other yet in reality represent near perfect examples of two distinct periods of America's architectural history. Similarly, there is likely affection for some of Laramie's Art Deco period structures such as, but not limited to, its City Hall and the Moose and Elks Lodge. But of equal importance are its roadside architectural examples from the 50's-60's such as the Thunderbird Lodge. In conclusion, Laramie is a virtual repository for most every dominant American architectural style and each should be valued and preserved whenever possible.

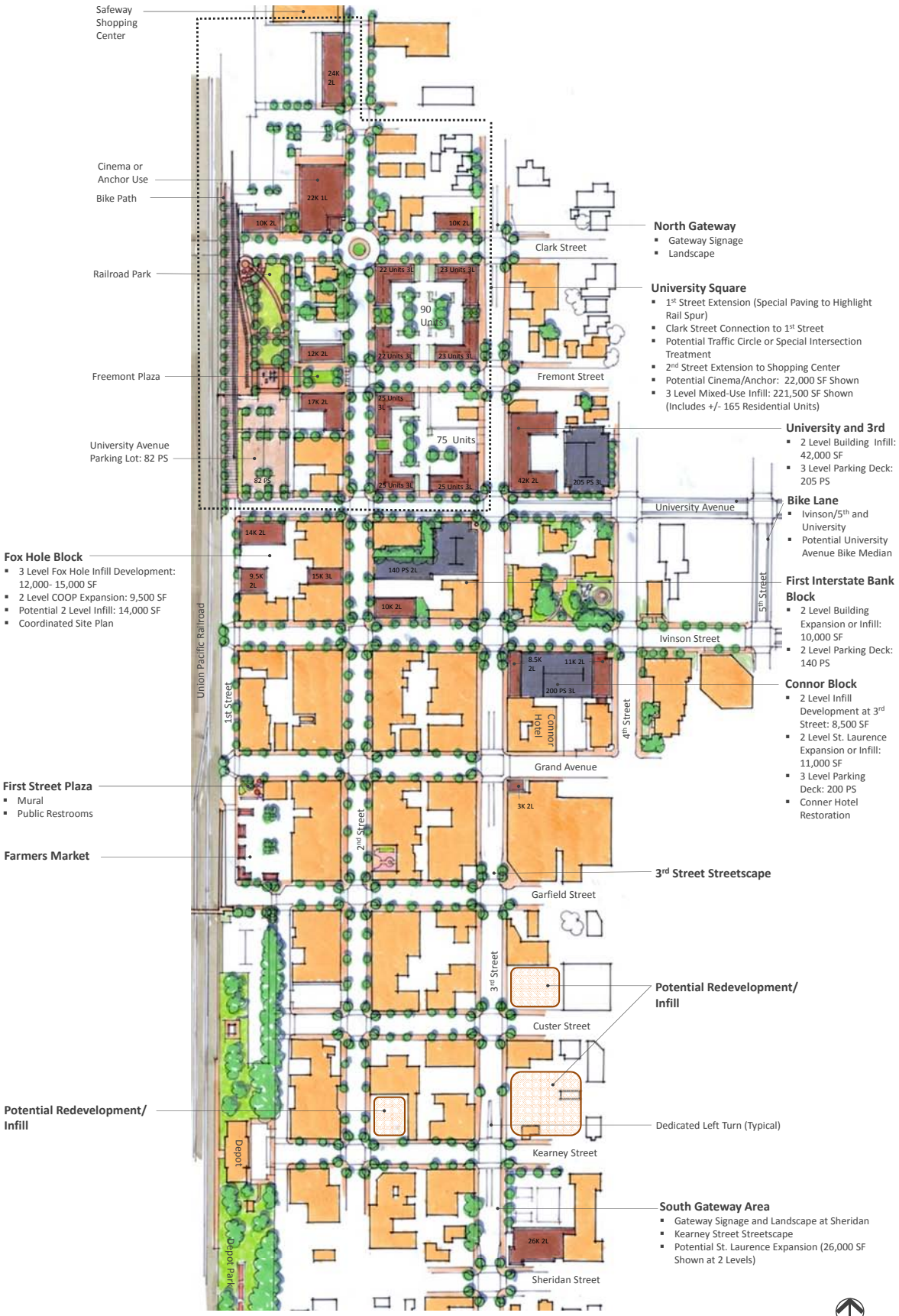


Fig. 3.1: Overall Downtown Development Plan illustrating potential redevelopment and expansion opportunities as they relate to each other.

• Railroad Depot: The existing depot is a tremendous asset to downtown, however, it is located well south of the downtown core and is not visible to many downtown visitors.

• Gathering Places: Downtown Laramie has been adding gathering areas within the downtown core, most noticeably at 1st Street Plaza. Additional gathering areas are located near the base of the footbridge stairs on Garfield and within Depot Park. stakeholders, however, have expressed a desire for more downtown gathering areas. In addition, there is an interest in providing public restrooms convenient to downtown visitors.

• Farmers Market: The weekly farmers market that occurs along the streets in downtown is very successful and well known. Because the market is so well-known and has a dedicated customer base, there has been interest expressed by stakeholders to consider moving it to an off-street location so as to no longer disrupt the operations of businesses located along the streets that are closed for the market.

3.2 Recommendations

3.2.1 Redevelop the Connor Block

The Connor block represents one of the most important redevelopment sites in all of downtown Laramie. This block is at a pivotal location of downtown where Grand Avenue intersects 3rd Street. The Connor Hotel building itself is a prominent symbol of downtown's once glorious heyday, and St. Laurence O'Toole Catholic Church is a strong anchor to downtown. The following recommendations detail the design aspects of redeveloping the Connor Block. The financial aspects of this redevelopment will be addressed in Section 5.0 of this report.

• St. Laurence O'Toole Church Parking Lot: In the short-term, coordinate with St. Laurence O'Toole to enhance their parking lot edge with an evergreen hedge and/or ornamental fence. Work with the City to install street trees and ornamental lights along the section of Ivinson between 3rd and 4th Streets. These improvements will help to reinforce the linkage between downtown and the University. In addition, they will also complement the improvements that St. Mark's is making along the north side of Ivinson, including the addition of a labrynth that will be open to the public. Intersection improvements with 4th and Ivinson should also be completed in compliance the reccomendations of 3.3.2

o In the long-term, coordinate with the City, St. Laurence and the property owner on the corner of 3rd and Ivinson to explore how this lot could be developed as a parking deck.
o Set the deck back from both 3rd Street and 4th Street to allow for infill development to occur at each of these ends and front onto the street and help activate the street edge. While St. Laurence expressed that they will likely not expand on this site, this would preserve the option for them to expand should they ever desire or to lease/sell to another business which could expand on this corner. Infill development is particularly important at the end of the deck that faces 3rd Street. It should be coordinated with the renovations of the Connor Hotel described below.
o Articulate the deck façade that faces Ivinson Street and enhance with public art and attractive signage to help animate the street edge.

• Southeast Corner 3rd/Ivinson: This property should be included in the development of the parking deck and new infill development as described in this section. The current automotive repair/service shop is not the highest and best use for the site.

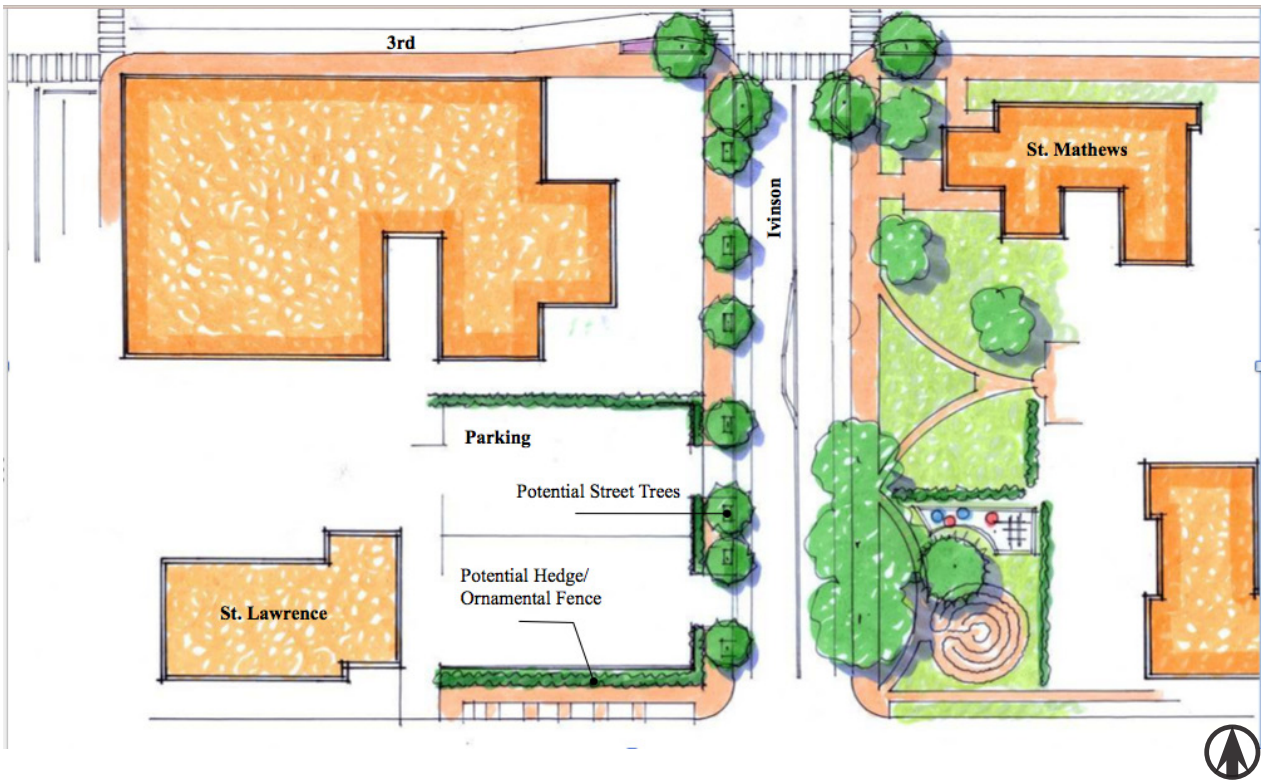


Fig. 3.2: Plan illustrating short-term improvements to the St. Laurence parking lot in conjunction with adjacent streetscape improvements.

Fig. 3.3: Detail area showing the Connor Block and associated infill development opportunities.

• Connor Hotel: The Connor Hotel should be restored to a mixed-use residential/retail project that might also include a hotel/inn component or even office space. While a restoration of this magnitude would certainly be expensive, due to the historic nature of this property, it would most assuredly qualify for Federal Tax Credits from the National Park Service if the enhancements adhered to the Secretary of Interiors Standards. Key enhancements shown on the accompanying photo-rendering include, but are not limited to: the restoration of the circa 1930's marquee sign at the corner; the restoration of the cornice at the four and two-story sections of the structure; the removal of the metal slip cover and vinyl awnings to reveal the brick spandrel; the insertion of historically appropriate storefront systems into the existing bays; the installation of retractable awnings; and the removal of the corner construction to reveal the exposed corner and column at 3rd and Grand. See the accompanying photo-rendering for visual illustration of the rehabilitation enhancements described above.

Fig. 3.4: Existing photograph of Connor Hotel.

Fig. 3.5: Photo rendering illustrating potential enhancements to the Connor Hotel.

Fig. 3.6 : Myers and Anderson drawing illustrating potential enhancements to the Connor Hotel.

• Southeast Corner 3rd and Grand: While not located in the Connor Block, the Cowboy Bar property at the southeast corner of 3rd and Grand greatly impacts the image and viability of the Connor Hotel redevelopment. Both short and long-term improvements should be considered for this property and coordinated with the property owner. In the short-term, the concrete barriers should be removed and replaced with an attractive fence, low wall and overhead canopy to define the outdoor seating area. Attractive lighting could also be added to enhance this space. In the long-term, this corner should be considered for infill redevelopment.

Fig. 3.7: Photograph illustrating the Cowboy Bar's unattractive outdoor dining area at the highly visible intersection of Grand Avenue and 3rd Street.

Fig. 3.8: Precedent examples of potential short-term enhancements that could be made to the outdoor dining area until and infill building could be developed.

Fig. 3.9: Precedent examples of potential short-term enhancements that could be made to the outdoor dining area until and infill building could be developed.

3.2.2 First Interstate Block

This block also represents a significant opportunity to enhance downtown while providing First Interstate Bank a long-term growth strategy on site while also enhancing downtown.

- Building Expansion: Consideration should be given to expanding the existing building with a 2 story addition/new structure along the Ivininson Street frontage. The expansion could serve as an expansion to First Interstate Bank, should they need additional space, and the second floor could connect over the drive-thru lanes to connect to the existing building. Alternatively, an independent building could be developed between the drive thru lanes and 2nd Street.

- Parking Deck: The balance of the property is "L" shaped and could accommodate a two-level parking deck to make up for the lost parking associated with the building infill along Ivinson Street and could provide an increase in parking spaces. The size and configuration of the lot would likely make internal ramping difficult, however, a ramp with parking could extend from 2nd Street along the long dimension of the property. This deck would make up for any lost spaces consumed by the construction of new buildings on the site.

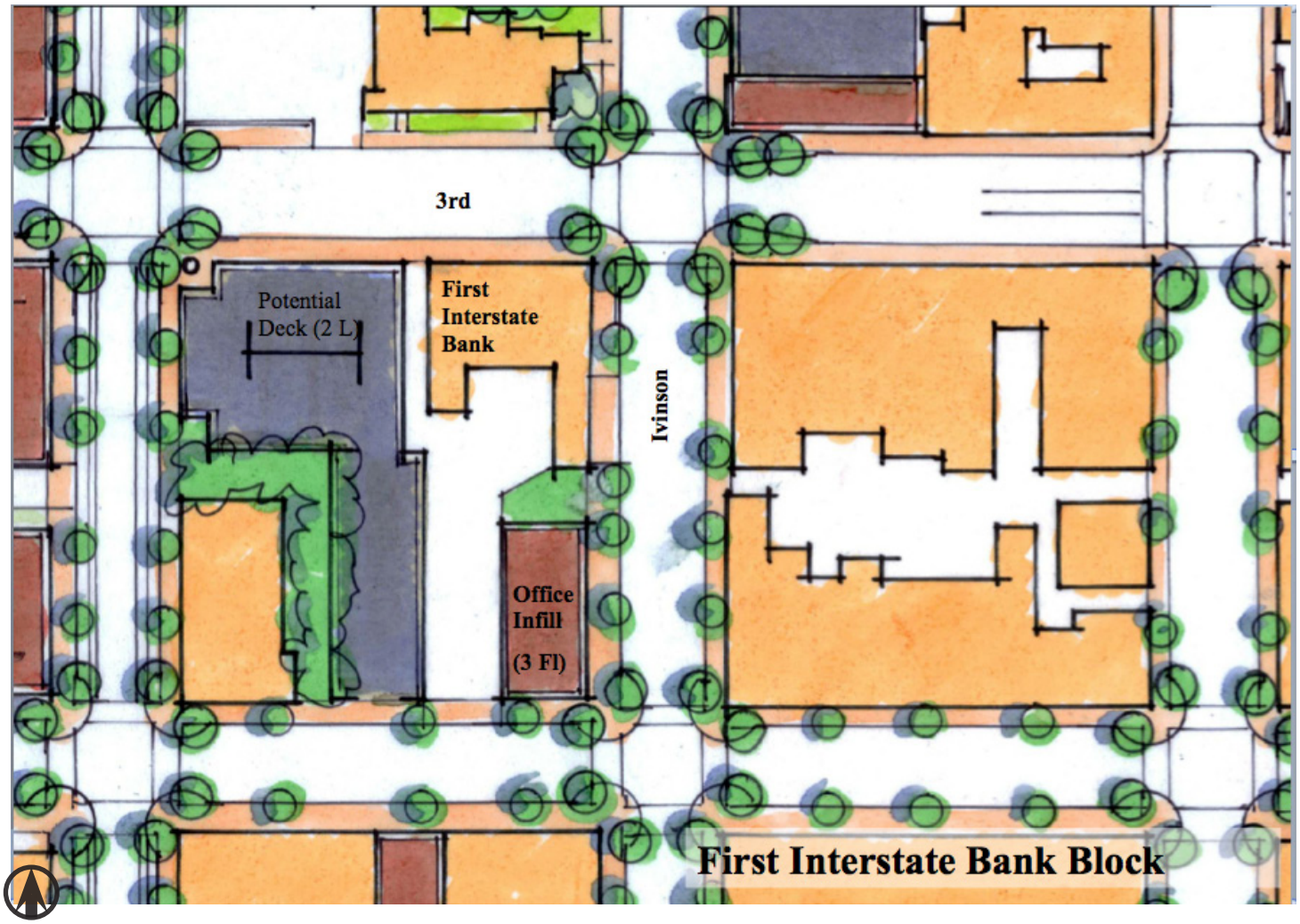


Fig. 3.10: Detail plan illustrating potential expansion /infill development and a parking deck on the First Interstate Bank Block.

3.2.3 Fox Hole Block

The Fox Hole is one of downtown's very important sites both for the memories that the site represents and for the future opportunities it presents. This strategy outlines a phased approach the redevelopment of this block.

- Temporary Uses: If infill development for the Fox Hole is not likely in the short-term, consideration should be given to using this site as a temporary gathering space with an emphasis on the arts and urban agriculture. There is also mural initiative underway in the downtown area. This site is ideally suited to receive murals due to the plethora of blank walls. Moreover, the inclusion of murals sets the tone for a temporary "Art Park." In the foreground, the sidewalk was widened to create opportunities for sidewalk chalk art installations while the lower walls and rear fence become sites to display artwork. In the accompanying photo-rendered illustrations it is suggested that a local "Student Art Space" feature high school and University of Wyoming student works that are not weather-sensitive. The rear fence not only serves as a hanging mechanism for the art but also serves to block the high winds that accompany winter. Finally, the large blank wall preserved on the right serves as the backdrop for "Friday Night Movies at the Fox(hole)" to activate the space and pay homage to this site's former use. In the medium-term, the inclusion of a raised-planter-based community garden could animate the space and provide a viable temporary use at this site until such time it is recaptured for infill building development. The addition of vintage lights and banners would introduce color during the day and the element of safety in the evening. Trees would provide scale, color and shade. It is important to consider that any improvements to the site could be short-term in nature and that the site could be redeveloped with an infill building. It is also important to provide additional garbage recepticles to discourage littering.

- Fox Hole Infill Development: At some point, development pressure might warrant new construction on the site. A mixed-use development is ideal and this building suggests a combination of shopping, dining, and living. In terms of scale, the site could support either a one or two-story infill development. In a two-story approach running trims and other devices should be utilized so that the structure would relate to the one-story building to the right.

- Co-Op Expansion: The Big Hollow Co-Op has proved to be very successful for downtown Laramie and has expressed a desire to expand. While there is potential to relocate to a larger space elsewhere downtown, the current location is well located, particularly when considering that the blocks to the north offer great potential for residential development and an expanded customer base for the Co-Op. If the timing is right for both projects, the Co-Op and the Fox Hole infill development should be coordinated to maximize site plan efficiencies and potential funding sources.

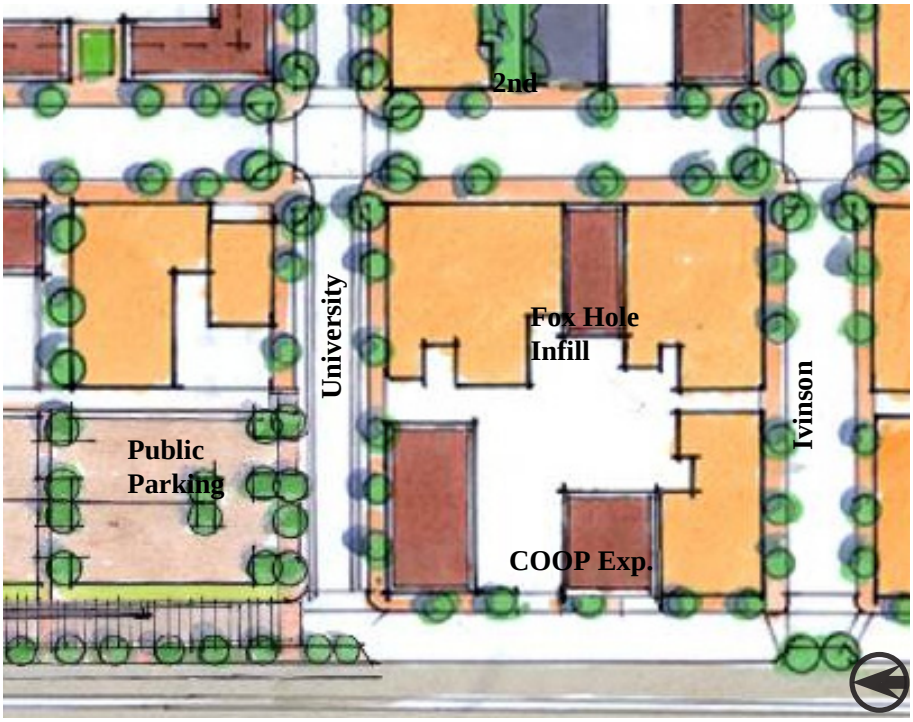


Fig. 3.11: Detail plan illustrating potential expansion of the COOP and infill development for the Fox Hole. Ideally, these projects would be coordinated to maximize the site potential.

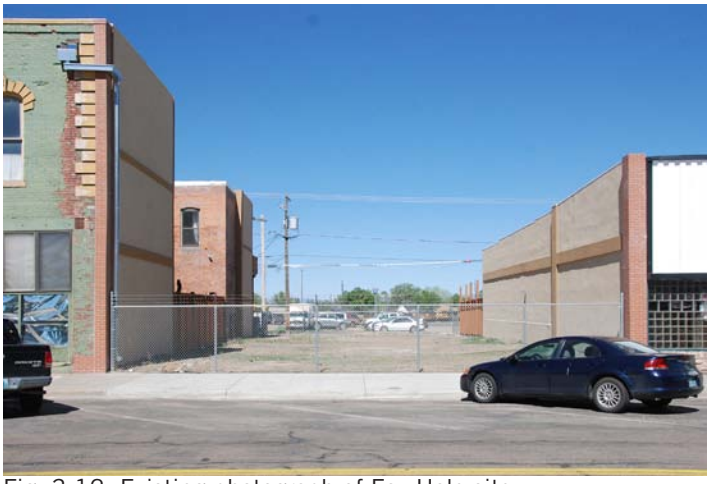


Fig. 3.12: Existing photograph of Fox Hole site.

Fig. 3.13: Photo rendering showing the potential for temporary murals, lawn and decorative fencing for use as an event space.

Fig. 3.14: Photo rendering showing the addition of temporary trees and community gardens.

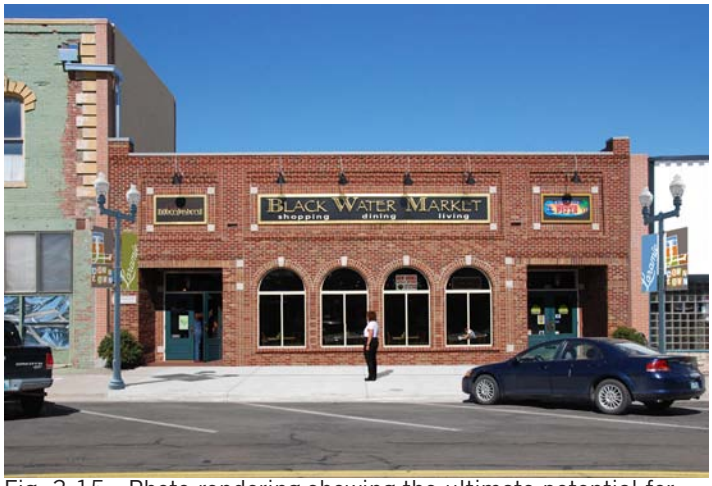


Fig. 3.15: Photo rendering showing the ultimate potential for infill development. While the rendering shows a one story building, a two –three story building would also be appropriate.

Fig. 3.16: Model view looking west over downtown showing existing conditions.

Fig. 3.17: Model view looking west over downtown showing potential infill development.

3.2.4 University Square

With the long-term redevelopment of the blocks north of University Avenue, there is an opportunity to rebrand this part of downtown as "University Square". The redevelopment will include infill mixed-use and residential development, expanded parking areas, street connections and public open space.

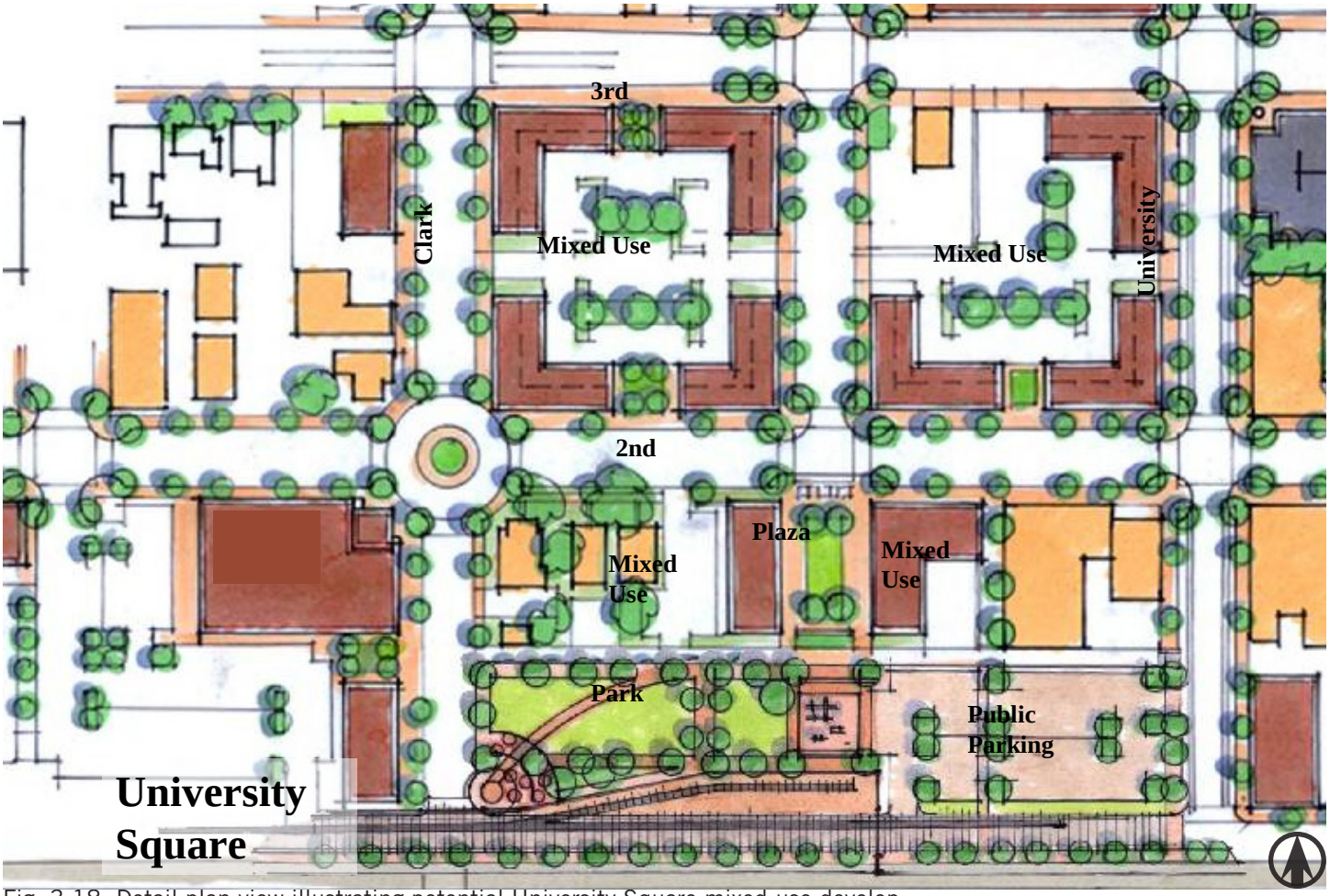


Fig. 3.18: Detail plan view illustrating potential University Square mixed-use development and expansion of downtown to the north.

- University Avenue Parking Lot: Coordinate with Union Pacific to expand the existing parking lot to include two "bays" of parking. This expansion and existing lot will accommodate up to 82 cars total. The existing parking bay is wider than the 60' required. In order to accommodate expansion, restriping will need to be done to reduce the existing bay to 60' width in order to allow for a 60' by width in the expanded section. In the short-term, consider losing a parking space along the University Avenue frontage to provide additional landscape and to make the parking lot more attractive.

- Clark Street: Once the viaduct is removed, extend Clark Street through to an extended 1st Street. Explore the potential for a traffic circle at the intersection of 2nd Street and Clark to create a significant gateway feature for downtown. If a traffic circle is not feasible, an expanded pedestrian area and building setback may be considered on each corner to establish this as a significant gateway intersection.

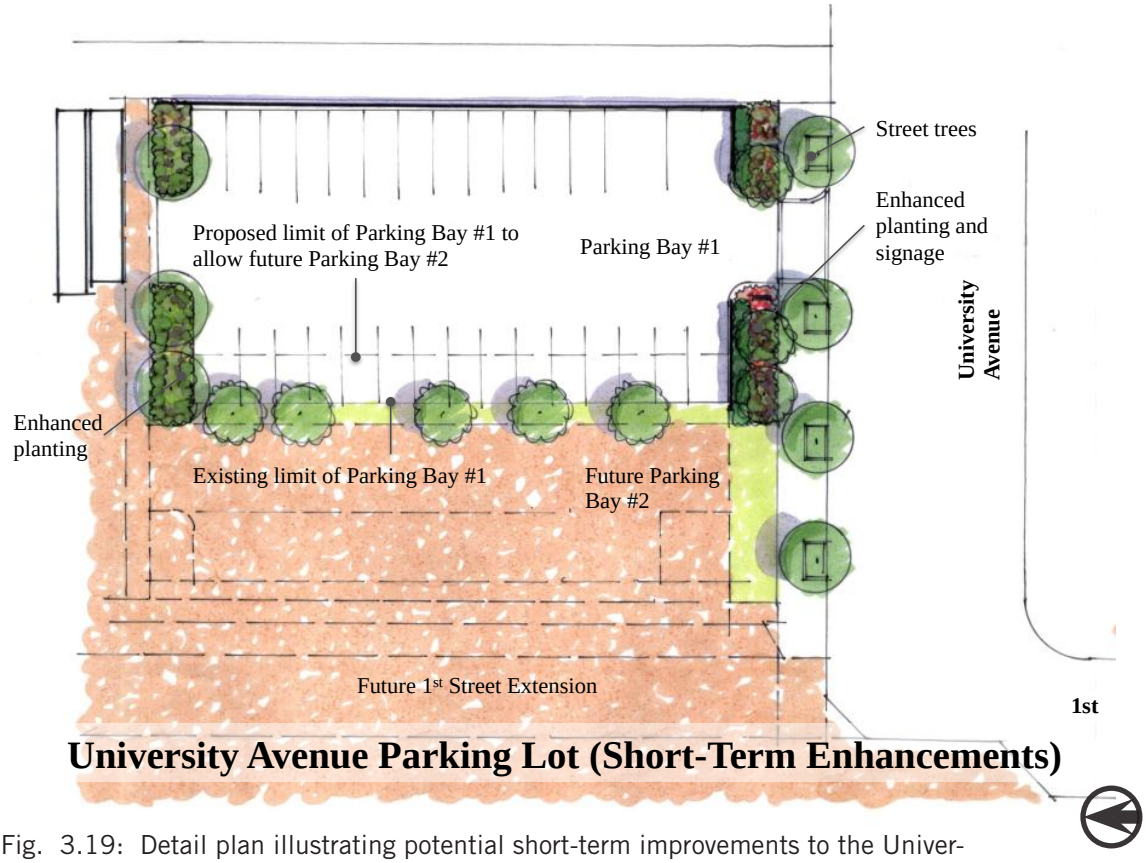


Fig. 3.19: Detail plan illustrating potential short-term improvements to the University Avenue parking lot.

Fig. 3.20: Photographs illustrating potential parking lot landscape treatments including the use of stone, drought tolerant plant material, minimal sections of irrigated lawn and ornamental fencing.

• 1st Street Extension: Coordinate with Union Pacific and extend 1st Street to Clark Street, utilizing the existing right-of-way. This connection will provide improved connectivity and provide street frontage for the parcels facing the rail yard. The existing rail spur currently coincides with the street right-of-way. As indicated by stakeholders, this is an important spur as it reinforces Laramie's rail history by accommodating unique rail equipment a few times of year. This could be incorporated into an attraction for downtown. Therefore, the street design should be coordinated to incorporate the rail spur and to allow for the street to be closed periodically when rail equipment needs to utilize the spur. The spur could also be a feature space for unique rolling stock that might be interesting to the public. The street design could consider special paving such as cobble or stamped concrete to distinguish this as a special feature.

• 2nd Street Extension: Explore a long-term extension of 2nd Street to the Safeway Shopping Center. The alignment of 2nd Street nearly matches the alignment of the drive in front of the shopping center. The extension of 2nd Street and its streetscape could provide an important link between the shopping center and downtown, particularly if residential development will occur within University Square.

• Railroad Park at University Square: Although the Union Pacific Railroad has completed a fencing project that may make this recommendation a long-term goal, Laramie should have ongoing discussions with the railroad to allow for the eventual development of a park space. Coordinate with Union Pacific to allow for the development of a park space between Fremont and Clark Streets within the railroad right-of-way. This park would serve the surrounding mixed-use and residential development described below as well as provide additional space for community events. The park space should be designed to include the existing rail spur as a feature within the park where unique rail equipment can be displayed.

• Fremont Plaza: Consideration should be given to providing an outdoor plaza space on the west side of 2nd Street at Fremont Street. This space could be designed with paving and areas for outdoor dining and public art. The intention would be to face new development onto it to help activate the space. The portion of Railroad Park to the west of Fremont Plaza could be considered for a playground space.

• Bike Path: The design of Railroad Park should accommodate connections to the proposed bike path that will run along 1st Street and connect to points north.

Fig. 3.21: Detail Plan illustrating the potential for Railroad Park and Fremont Plaza as part of University Square.

Fig. 3.22: Precedent photograph showing rail tracks being set in special paving to highlight rail history in a Baltimore park.

Fig. 3.23: Precedent photograph showing completed Baltimore park, with rail spur and special paving added for historic interest.

Fig. 3.24: Precedent photograph showing park space adjacent to active rail line in Simpsonville, SC.

Fig. 3.25: Precedent photograph showing new park adjacent to rail line and former rail station in York, PA.

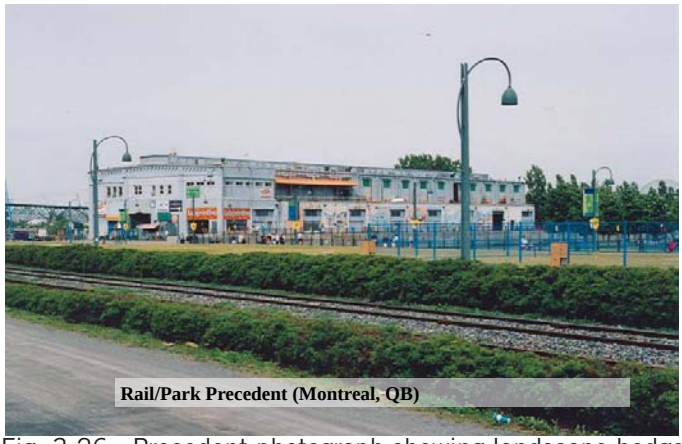


Fig. 3.26: Precedent photograph showing landscape hedge as a deterrant to pedestrians crossing the rail spur in a Montreal park.

Fig. 3.27: Precedent photograph showing how Fremont Plaza could be an active gathering place, similar to Oak Street Plaza in Fort Collins.

• "Anchor" Site: The area at the northwest corner of the proposed Clark/2nd intersection should be considered for a destination use as an anchor to that area.

• Mixed-Use Development: With the infrastructure improvements described above, there is the potential for significant new private investment in the form of mixed-use development in these blocks. In particular, the large parcels that could be created provide an opportunity for significantly sized residential projects, making them attractive to potential developers. The multiple blocks also make it feasible to phase development over time. The block faces along 2nd Street should consider ground level retail or restaurant uses, particularly adjacent to Fremont Plaza. The master plan illustrates the potential for 243,000 SF of mixed use, including approximately 165 residential units.

Fig. 3.28: Model view looking northwest over downtown showing existing conditions.

Fig. 3.29: Model view looking northwest over downtown showing potential infill development.

Fig. 3.30: Model view looking southeast over downtown showing existing conditions.

Fig. 3.31: Model view looking southeast over downtown showing potential infill development.

3.2.5 South Gateway

The south gateway along 3rd street is a very important entrance to downtown. Unfortunately, it is one of the least attractive entryways to the community. Several improvements stand to greatly enhance this "first impression" corridor to downtown Laramie.

- St. Laurence Expansion: If St. Laurence does expand their existing school building at Sheridan and 3rd Street, the City should coordinate with them to encourage a building that presents a positive architectural face to the intersection of 3rd and Sheridan. This is the southern gateway to downtown and a strong architectural statement would complement gateway signage and landscaping.

- Kearney Street Streetscape: As described in section 2.3 above, visitors will be directed to the downtown core via Kearney Street to bring more visibility to the Depot. Therefore, streetscape enhancements should be considered for Kearney Street to enhance this gateway. Streetscape enhancements should include street trees where possible and ornamental lighting. In addition, building owners should be encouraged to allow murals on blank walls. The city should also consider dedicated left turn lanes at 3rd and Kearney.

3.2.6 Farmers Market

Fig. 3.32: Photo rendering looking north showing corner of 3rd and Sheridan Streets. View shows potential streetscape improvements described earlier in this report.

Fig. 3.33: Photo rendering looking north showing corner of 3rd and Sheridan Streets. View shows how potential expansion by St. Laurence School could anchor the corner and reinforce the gateway.

The farmers market has proven to be a success in downtown Laramie. Across the country, Farmers Markets are re-emerging as both social gathering places and suppliers of regional food.

- Market Location: The existing surface lot at 1st Street, between Garfield and Grand, is an ideal location for the farmers market. It is centrally located and with it's adjacency to the footbridge and 1st Street plaza create the opportunity to further activate these spaces. A market location here would also allow for the streets and associated parking to remain open.

- Market Sheds: Consideration should be given to providing permanent market sheds along the 1st Street frontage to provide an architectural edge to the space and shade during the market. The sheds could be designed so that they provide covered parking spaces when not in use by the market. It is likely that these covered parking spaces would be coveted during inclement weather.

Fig. 3.34: Model view looking southeast at 1st Street and Grand Avenue showing existing parking lot and 1st Street Plaza.

Fig. 3.35: Model view showing potential development of market sheds along 1st Street.

Fig. 3.36: Precedent photograph showing potential market shed structure. This example is from Blacksburg, Virginia.

Fig. 3.37: Precedent photograph showing potential covering that could be used for market sheds on some days and protection for parking on others.

3.2.7 First Street Plaza Enhancements

The 1st Street Plaza is a remarkable downtown asset. Its scale and detailing are perfect for Laramie and represent the standard of care for future infrastructure enhancements in the downtown area. Standards set here such as permanent fixtures for vendors, electric outlets, and poles for banners and signs should be part of any public gathering places in this plan. Several specific suggestions that might improve the plaza would include overhead carnival lights, a mural, and a public restroom.

- Mural: The blank brick wall facing west is painted a light off-white color and regrettably produces a significant amount of glare at certain times of the day. A recommendation is that this wall be slated for a mural as a part of the Art Council's downtown mural program. One suggested approach is to feature a replication of the many historic postcards produced for Laramie in the past. The accompanying photo-rendering offers such an approach featuring the 3rd Street streetscape view from just such an historic postcard.

- Public Restrooms: Public restrooms are desired for downtown. The most appropriate solution is to incorporate these into a building use, such as the new Main Street offices, provided they are centrally located. Another option is to consider a permant dedicated restroom structure adjacent to 1st Street Plaza. This structure would be centrally located and could define a southern edge to the plaza. Public art should be incorporated into the overall design. Another, less expensive option is to consider a well-designed architectural structure that could accommodate and screen portable toilet units.

Fig. 3.38: Photograph of existing 1st Street Plaza.

Fig. 3.40: Photo rendering showing potential for a mural along the blank wall to help enliven the plaza.

Fig. 3.39: Precedent photographs showing the potential for architectural structures that can be used to hold portable toilets.

Fig. 3.41: Precedent photographs showing the potential for architectural structures that can be used to hold portable toilets.

3.2.8 Other Property Enhancements

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) should survey downtown for additional infill opportunities and building improvements and use the premises discussed in the prior sections when discussing redevelopment of these sites. Strong consideration should be given to any redevelopment facing the street to reinforce the "downtown feel," using quality materials, using shared parking with minimal street frontage, and working on mixed uses. The project team was fortunate to meet with several property owners and explore some practical approaches to enhancing some of Laramie's buildings. Other suggestions offer simple changes that would enhance the arcthitectural character of downtown. The Laramie Main Street Alliance should use these examples and continue to offer "redesign" options for local building owners as they are desired by these property owners. The Alliance could also offer suggestions for easy fixes and more extensive façade remodels that are tailored to the budget of property owners. Of course, continuing these services is dependent on the budget of the Laramie Main Street Alliance.

- Mizu Sushi: This restaurant serves fabulous food and has done a tremendous job at decorating the interior space. On the exterior, however, the paint scheme fundamentally cuts the building in half vertically and as a result gives mixed messages about the architectural style, and by extension, the use. Since the lower brick is clearly not original to the structure and utilizes "utility brick" it is recommended that the lower façade be painted to match the upper façade. Now the façade is unified through color and provides a neutral backdrop for the signage and logo to announce use without distraction. The key point to emphasize here is that sometimes, significant aesthetic can be achieved with very nominal investment…in this case, just a few cans of paint.

• Music Box: The Music Box is an amazing downtown business providing a quality of product and service normally reserved for a much larger market. Unfortunately the building itself was covered in stucco at some point in the past covering all of the original architectural material. It would be very expensive to remove all the stucco and restore the substrate beneath. In cases such as this, sometimes an appropriate approach is to simply paint the stucco in a scheme that minimizes the glare created by painting with a light color on such a large, monolithic wall. To this end, borrowing upon the color scheme provided by their new signage and Verizon franchise relationship, a burgundy wainscot anchors the building to the ground. The same burgundy is introduced at the height of the awning of the Bakery on the left and the gray awning of the Music Box. It is recommended that the gray awning be stained to match the burgundy. This also serves to tie in the burgundy vinyl bubble awnings at the corner. A dark charcoal stripe tops the burgundy wainscot and provides a unified band beneath the newly installed LED signage. Finally, a medium gray is painted at the lower façade up to the sign and at the top cornice to give the building a sense of scale in keeping with a water table or running trim that normally demarcates the location of the second floor.

• The Salvation Army Thrift Store: This humble building features an interesting metal structure and canopy. Moreover, it is sited at a critical location along 2nd Avenue, fundamentally terminating the "Main Street" vista when looking north. By simply affixing colorful, translucent fabric panels to the metal structure, the entire façade is brought to life and the metal structure that heretofore was largely ignored is recognized as integral to the form of the building. Moreover, 2nd Avenue receives a very colorful terminus. The key point to emphasize here is that sometimes, significant aesthetic can be achieved with very nominal investment…in this case, just a few yards of fabric and some eyelets.

4.0 Building the Message: Branding & Marketing Recommendations

4.1 Issues and Opportunities

- A Downtown Identity: Laramie's downtown is an interesting mix of classic American downtown, Western downtown, and College downtown. Depending on where you look and what you are looking for elements of each can be found in downtown. Downtown is definitely a distinct and unique district in Laramie. Unfortunately, it has not had its own distinct and consistent image over time.
- Regional and Tourism Branding: The Albany County Tourism Board has been at the forefront of marketing Laramie and its surroundings for many years. The ACTB has wisely used the Laramie name (an immediately recognizable name brand) and trademarked the tagline "Live the West" which successfully markets the many attributes of the County.
- A Unified Approach: Downtown Laramie and the City of Laramie could pursue a wholly unified approach to brand identity without sacrificing the existing imagery used by the Albany County Tourism Board. Though this is not essential at this time, a unified image would reinforce the work that both the City and Laramie Main Street are doing.
- A Fresh Look: The City of Laramie and downtown have the opportunity for an identity system that creates a fresh look without sacrificing the authenticity and tradition of the community. This fresh look acknowledges that Laramie is more than a western town: it is a college town, a successful downtown, and has a taste of cosmopolitan sophistication not found in every western town. The key to a successful community and downtown brand is to have a message that plays well to all potential audiences: local residents, visitors, investors, students, and alumni.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 Adopt the Brand Statement and Tagline

A brand statement is different from a mission statement. A brand statement is an explanation of a place that should resonate with local residents (most importantly), visitors, and investors. The brand statement for Laramie explains its history, its present, and its outlook on the future. We recommend that the boards of the various partner organizations "adopt" the Laramie brand statement which is as follows:

We are Laramie, Wyoming:

We are a railroad town. It was here, in the 1860's, the Transcontinental Railroad put us on the map. Nearly overnight we grew from a tent town to a city of over 2000. Today, the Union Pacific is our link to the world and we watch the trains that pass through our downtown with the awe of knowing the role we play in connecting this great nation.

We are a western town. We are proud of our Cowboy culture where we do what has to be done, we live each day with courage, and we always finish what we start. We look to our surroundings with the respect and wonder that inspired the first settlers: our clear blue skies, our snow capped mountains, and the sweeping plains that surround us. .

We are a progressive town. It was here that Louisa Ann Swain became the first woman to cast a legal vote in the United States decades before it became a right throughout the country. It is here that people from all cultures and backgrounds still gather to learn, to explore, and to work.

We are a college town. We are the home to Wyoming's institutions of higher learning where the young people of the Equality State and places from across the country and the world gather to learn. We are Poke Pride and the welcoming host to the UW family that returns here each year to celebrate the teams in brown and gold.

We are all of these things and more. We are a vibrant downtown where sophisticated shops and restaurants mesh comfortably with relaxed places and down home dives. We are an authentic place with a deep appreciation of our past and the role we play to this day.

We are Laramie, Wyoming: Spirit of the Bold West.

4.2.2 Adopt the Brand Identity System

The brand system for Laramie is truly unique to the community. A brand system typically has four components: typeface, color scheme, tagline, and logo. The identity system is explained in greater detail in the brand style guide for Laramie – an additional document that accompanies this study.

- Typefaces: One primary and three supporting typefaces are used for the Laramie brand system. The primary typeface is "Blessed Day." It is a stylized script that still has a western look with a hint of hip and retro look. Each of the supporting typefaces: "Let Me Ride," "Shadowed Serif," and "Bell Gothic Standard Black" are very solid and aggressive. The former two are very western in feel while the latter is more contemporary.

Laramie
WYOMING

• Colors: The University of Wyoming has a color system that includes 27 distinct colors. The brand system deliberately steers clear of some of the more well-known University of Wyoming colors (Brown and Gold) but selects five colors from the system to form a color palette unique to downtown and Laramie. The colors selected are common in the downtown and in the local environment. They include big sky (blue), golden sunset (orange), spring leaves (sage green), cowboy boot (light brown), and slate (grey).

Big Sky	Golden Sunset	Spring Leaves	Cowboy Boot	Slate
543 C	1595 C	391 C	724 C	444 C
C62, M28, Y2, K3	C0, M59, Y100, K5	C13, M0, Y100, K33	C0, M51, Y100, K36	C17, M25, Y25, K49

• Tagline: In addition to the tagline "Spirit of the Bold West" presented in the brand statement, another tagline for use in downtown marketing is "Cowboy Culture, Western Style." This tagline allows the businesses downtown to relate to both the real cowboy heritage of the area and the athletic cowboy mascot of University of Wyoming while asserting that "culture" and "style" are part of the merchandise mix as well.

SPIRIT -OF THE- BOLD WEST Laramie

DOWNTOWN Laramie COWBOY CULTURE. WESTERN STYLE.

• Logo: There are several logo alternatives for Laramie, each can be used according to preference. First there is the simple Laramie, Wyoming logo, which is simply a typeface. Similarly, the City of Laramie has a matching logo. The next logo uses a stamped "Downtown" block behind the same Laramie typeface. Finally, the Laramie Main Street Alliance (to be explained below) uses a stylized L with the different typefaces arranged into four blocks emblematic of the four point Main Street approach to downtown revitalization.

Laramie WYOMING DOWNTOWN Laramie Laramie WYOMING

Laramie WYOMING DOWNTOWN Laramie Laramie WYOMING

Laramie WYOMING DOWNTOWN Laramie Laramie WYOMING

Laramie WYOMING DOWNTOWN Laramie Laramie WYOMING

4.2.3 Rename Laramie Main Street to Laramie Main Street Alliance

Laramie Main Street is the "new kid on the block" in downtown revitalization in the community. The organization follows the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street four-point approach. Downtown Laramie also has two other partner organizations whose sole purpose is promoting, developing and enhancing downtown: The Downtown Laramie Business Association and the Downtown Development Authority. Each of these organizations is currently a separate entity though they all work very closely with one another. The Downtown Laramie Business Association functions in many ways like a Promotions Committee for the Main Street Program while the Downtown Development Authority functions as its Economic Restructuring committee. The Laramie Main Street Alliance moniker allows both organizations to maintain their identity but be a part of the alliance that supports the overall Main Street effort. Over time, these organizations may wish to fully integrate into the organization in some fashion.

4.2.4 Convene a Committee to Explore Deploying the Brand

The Laramie Main Street Alliance should convene a committee comprised of partner groups including the aforementioned downtown partners, the Albany County Tourism Board, the Chamber of Commerce and others to explore creative ways to deploy the brand identity for Laramie. This group could ensure that all efforts are coordinated, explore funding options, and strategize on roles and responsibilities for each group.

4.2.5 Host a Brand Launch Event

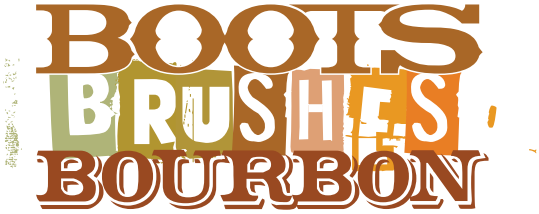
The Laramie Main Street Alliance should host an event to celebrate the new Laramie brand identity for the community and more importantly downtown. This event can take many forms including a specific party/reception, coordination with an existing event, cooperation to showcase merchant offerings, or even a community-wide celebration.

4.2.6 Complete a Redesign of Downtown's Web Page

Currently, downtown Laramie has a webpage that provides a wealth of information about the community. Its identity, however, is dated. It should be redesigned with the new brand identity and clearly delineate between visitor, resident, and investor resources in downtown. An example of how this website might look incorporating the brand system is shown below.

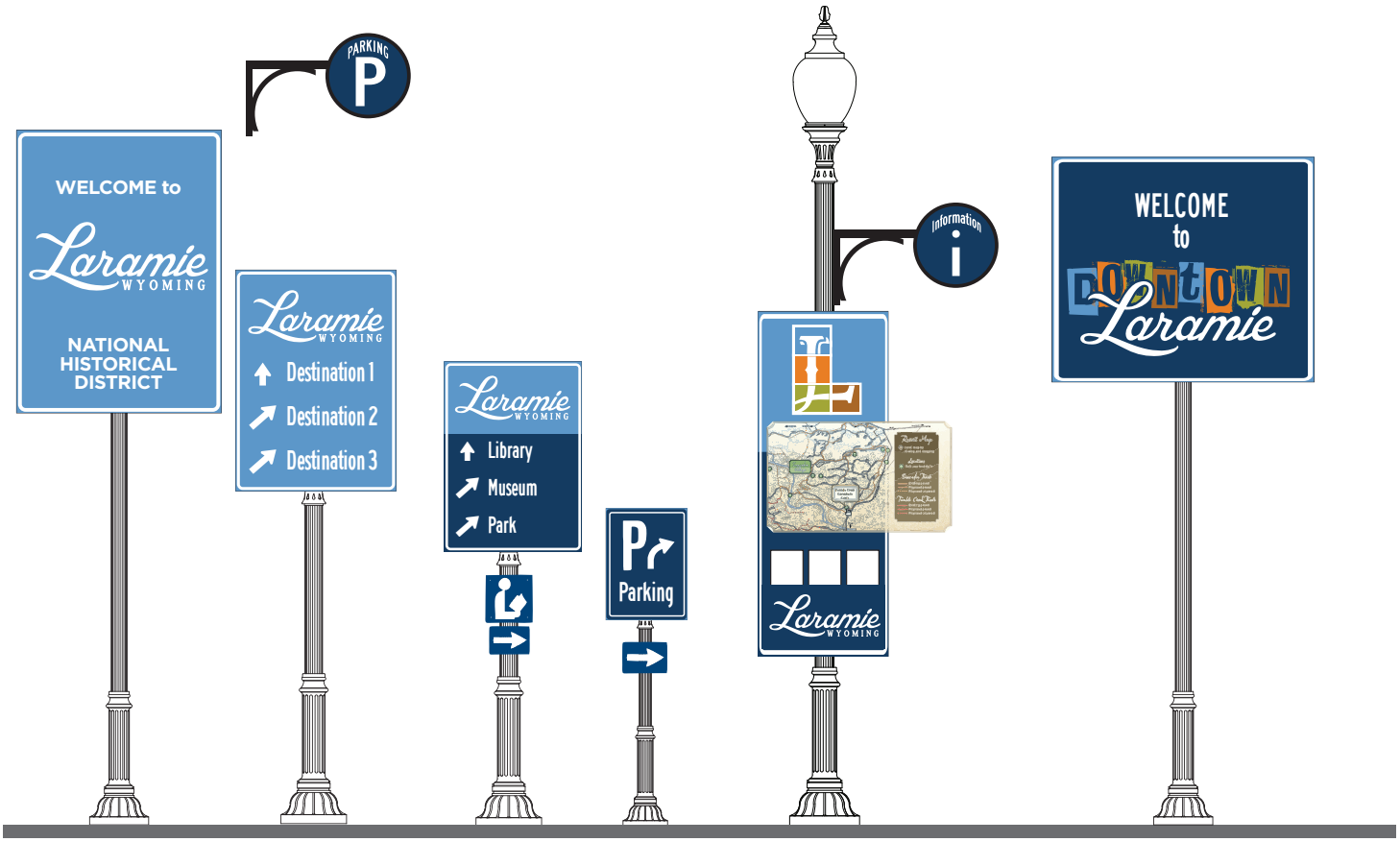
4.2.7 Develop Brand Extension

Another step in the branding process is "brand extension" to events and activities, such as farmers markets or annual festivals. The brand extension uses certain elements of the brand (color, font, etc.) to create a consistent image among different groups. In addition to brand extensions for events, the City of Laramie itself should consider using the brand typeface in revised stationary and business cards. All facets of the brand extension could also be phased in over time as existing materials run low and budgets allow.



4.2.8 Begin Work on Community-Wide Wayfinding Initiative

Wayfinding signs are one of the key ways that visitors can locate major amenities in a community and downtown. This is particularly important in a community such as Laramie where the University and its attractions are in a separate and distinct district from downtown, and where multiple interchanges on the interstate allow approaches to the community from a variety of directions. While there are a few existing signs directing visitors into downtown, these are small and are not complemented with signs directing visitors to amenities such as public parking, cultural and historic sites such, and major shopping and dining areas. These signs could include post mounted welcome signs, trailblazer signs directing visitors to amenities, parking signs, building markers, and kiosks that can be placed in parking lots to direct visitors to shopping and dining destinations. Laramie could pursue several grant opportunities for wayfinding sign funding. Both the federal Preserve America program and some state enhancement programs offer funding for wayfinding signs.



4.2.9 Purchase and Install New Banners Downtown

Laramie currently has a wide variety of banners in its downtown, some of these are "custom" banners and others are "off the rack" banners. Laramie should invest in custom rebranded banners to promote the community. While some communities have deliberately decided to spend less money on vinyl or even paper product banners (such as Tyvek) rather than reuse canvas banners every year, Laramie will need to carefully consider its options since wind is a factor in downtown. Laramie might consider special banners that change throughout most of the year (since wind and winter weather put a strain on banners, they should be removed and replaced with new Christmas lights downtown) or use banners that complement activities that are happening at UW. Likewise, Laramie should consider downtown banner placement "visit downtown" in other locations of the city to remind visitors that downtown is a unique and pleasant alternative. Examples of a custom banner program for Laramie are shown below.

4.2.10 Continue rolling out brand with collateral material such as shopping bags, shirts, house flags and related items

It isn't necessary to roll out all new brand designs right away. However, new products might be explored for a 2012 roll out such as window signs for stores, shopping bags, community pride items like houseflags, and other related collateral material. An important component of the brand implementation is to encourage local businesses to develop their own merchandise with the brand. The Laramie Main Street Alliance might consider a simple one page licensing agreement that will allow local businesses to use the brand in merchandise such as tee shirts, mugs, pens, etc.

4.2.11 Deploy the Brand in an Aggressive Marketing Program for Downtown

The following exhibits illustrate a variety of potential advertising concepts for the brand identity system. Early ads might focus on the overall character of downtown while later ads might begin to focus on businesses, services and products available in downtown. The secondary tagline geared specifically for downtown: "Cowboy Culture, Western Style" allows downtown Laramie to portray (or contrast) rugged western roots with sophisticated college town attributes. Several ad concepts present this contrast. Other ads begin to link what happens downtown with attributes in the surrounding natural environment and at the University of Wyoming. These ads concepts should serve as templates for ongoing creative deployment of a consistent marketing strategy. The brand might also be a part of promoting downtown at the new bus stations, particularly those on campus and also in the advertisement panels inside the bus.

The Bird is the Word.

In downtown Laramie Wyoming you can still belly up to a 100-year old bar filled with Taxidermy and a gunshot in the mirror and order a whiskey served straight. After that you can go around the corner for a Mojito on the rocks garnished with a fresh sprig of mint. You can order a t-bone steak with a heaping helping of potatoes or you can opt for sushi served up in a zen like setting. The choice is yours and it is all downtown. We invite you to experience downtown Laramie and see what we mean by Cowboy Culture, Western Style.

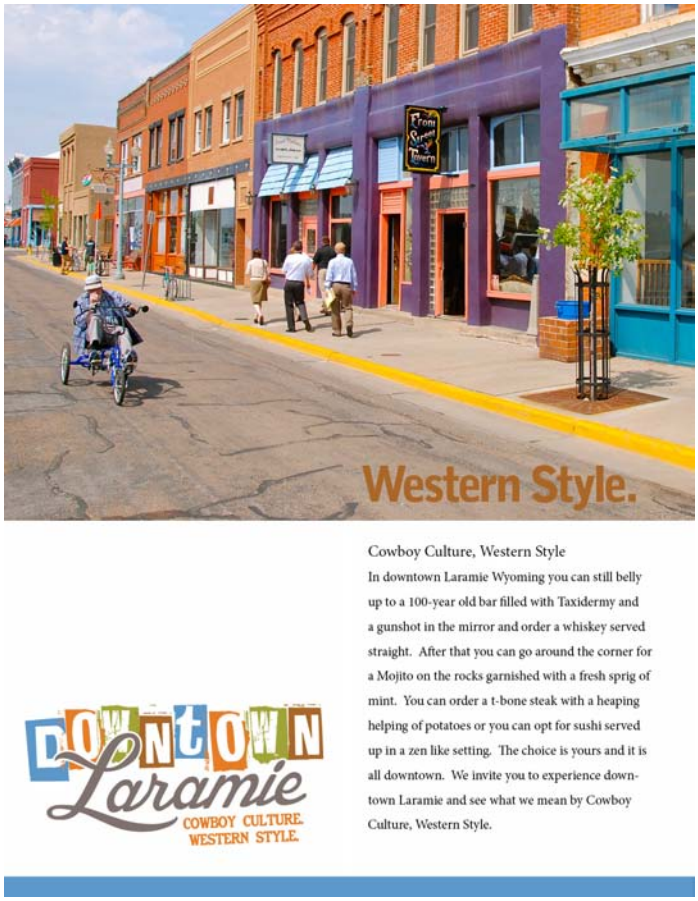
DOWNTOWN Laramie
COWBOY CULTURE.
WESTERN STYLE.

Cowboy. Culture.

In downtown Laramie Wyoming you can still belly up to a 100-year old bar filled with Taxidermy and a gunshot in the mirror and order a whiskey served straight. After that you can go around the corner for a Mojito on the rocks garnished with a fresh sprig of mint. You can order a t-bone steak with a heaping helping of potatoes or you can opt for sushi served up in a zen like setting. The choice is yours and it is all downtown. We invite you to experience downtown Laramie and see what we mean by Cowboy Culture, Western Style.

DOWNTOWN Laramie
COWBOY CULTURE.
WESTERN STYLE.

Our Cowboy's Don't
Just Wear Boots
DOWNTOWN
Laramie
COWBOY CULTURE.
WESTERN STYLE.
Cowboy Culture, Western Style
In downtown Laramie Wyoming you can still belly up to a 100-year old bar filled with Taxidermy and a gunshot in the mirror and order a whiskey served straight. After that you can go around the corner for a Mojito on the rocks garnished with a fresh sprig of mint. You can order a t-bone steak with a heaping helping of potatoes or you can opt for sushi served up in a zen like setting. The choice is yours and it is all downtown. We invite you to experience downtown Laramie and see what we mean by Cowboy Culture, Western Style.


Western Style.
Cowboy Culture, Western Style
In downtown Laramie Wyoming you can still belly up to a 100-year old bar filled with Taxidermy and a gunshot in the mirror and order a whiskey served straight. After that you can go around the corner for a Mojito on the rocks garnished with a fresh sprig of mint. You can order a t-bone steak with a heaping helping of potatoes or you can opt for sushi served up in a zen like setting. The choice is yours and it is all downtown. We invite you to experience downtown Laramie and see what we mean by Cowboy Culture, Western Style.
DOWNTOWN
Laramie
COWBOY CULTURE.
WESTERN STYLE.

4.2.12 Develop a History Paver Project.

Using the brand identity, create a history signage paver project to mount in the sidewalks of downtown. These pavers would be similar in nature to the pavers in the First Street Plaza, but placed in front of buildings downtown with text explaining the prior uses and the history of the structure.

5.0 Organizing for Action: Policy, Partners, and People

5.1 Issues and Opportunities

- Partners in Enhancing Downtown and the City: As already mentioned Laramie benefits from a wealth of partners that each play a role in the enhancement of the community and downtown. The Laramie Main Street Alliance, the Downtown Development Authority, the Downtown Laramie Business Association, the City of Laramie, the Albany County Tourism Board, the Laramie Area Chamber of Commerce, and many others form a key set of allies each responsible in their own way for promoting, developing, and enhancing the City.
- Clarity for Stakeholders: While having many partners is beneficial, the number of groups can create confusion for stakeholders and citizens who might not understand the unique roles of each group. This is particularly true with regard to downtown where three groups each share responsibility for promoting downtown and enhancing its economic success. The Main Street program is the newest of the groups and has an excellent partnership with its peer groups the Downtown Development Authority and the Downtown Laramie Business Association. The process in Laramie is evolving and over time there may be changes to how each group works with one another. This is an evolutionary process and all groups are currently progressing in a positive direction.
- University, Downtown, and City Relationships: While many interviewees and stakeholders cited cool or irregular relationships between the University of Wyoming and downtown and a handful of others worried about the City of Laramie having the resources to commit to downtown; many agreed that relationships among all three groups has been heading in a very positive direction and eagerly looked forward to ongoing partnerships to tackle more complex issues related to public/private partnership development downtown, downtown's relationship both physically and programmatically with the University, and with regard to public infrastructure improvements.
- Funding for Improvements: One of the most often cited challenges was the lack of a regular and reliable revenue stream for downtown development. Finding funding for infrastructure improvements, fostering development, and providing incentives for investments in downtown is a consistent challenge for many communities.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Continue to build a stronger relationship between downtown and the University of Wyoming: This relationship can build on many levels. One step might be to invite student government representatives to serve on the Main Street Board, other steps would involve ongoing "town/gown/downtown" summit meetings to discuss issues, opportunities, and cross marketing plans. Another partnership might involve programming of events and activities downtown that specifically target alumni visiting for events or students. Many Universities and Cities have partnered on downtown projects ranging from simple ongoing meetings to complex public/private/university partnerships.

5.2.2 Develop a Private Sector Investment Fund: Laramie benefits from many community minded citizens with an interest in seeing downtown continue to successfully develop. Some communities have created private sector investment funds (or clubs) to invest in downtown buildings, restore them, and either resell them for reinvestment or maintain them for ongoing revenue generation. Such clubs should not expect a huge return on investment but can be richly rewarding from a social standpoint while providing a reliable if small return on investments. Many funds simply revolve and provide a "dividend" for investors.

5.2.3 Explore Potential Revenue Streams for Downtown Investment: As already mentioned, downtown Laramie

does not benefit from a regular revenue stream to foster improvement or maintain ongoing capital or programmatic costs. There are several options that could be considered for this either in the short term or over time. These include:

- Downtown Levy: Downtown Laramie did once have a tax levy designed to foster investment in the district. This was removed several years ago. This plan provides a clear and direct set of recommendations and goals that could be implemented over time through a levy on the district. Under the current fiscal situation facing the nation and the community, this may not be an immediately palatable idea for some, but the investment in such a program would enable the community to be well positioned to enhance downtown over many years.
- Tax Increment Financing: Wyoming law limits the benefit of Tax Increment Financing Districts for downtowns as it typically requires an rather large investment to generate enough "increment" to float a bond in the district. However, Laramie and other communities in Wyoming might consider proposing some amendments to the legislation that would make it more feasible to foster downtown development.
- Capital Campaign: Several communities have eschewed a public source of revenue to fund major downtown projects in exchange for a capital campaign for downtown investment. Such a campaign would need to be highly focused and the revenues generated could leverage additional grants and private investment.

5.2.4 Continue Strengthening Downtown/City Relationship: Both the Main Street program and the City should designate a responsible party for ongoing communications to strengthen partnerships for downtown events, proposed activities, and developments. This is already happening in an informal manner. Over time, the partnership between Main Street program and the City can explore creative solutions for snow removal, placement of new trash receptacles and benches, clean-up in alleys, public restrooms and other items.

5.2.5 Consider a Façade Master Plan Process: Several communities across America have pursued grant funding that has helped underwrite a "facade master plan." Unlike a traditional facade grant program, this is a comprehensive rehabilitation of many downtown buildings at once. The property owner gives the City a temporary easement (usually five years) on the facade of their building allowing the local government to spend funds on its improvement. In exchange for this temporary easement, the grant funds will pay for the facade improvements. The advantages of this type of program are that it allows for a single source of project management, a single source of design, and a single source for construction. However, the biggest advantage to this approach is the ability for a downtown district to receive an overall appearance facelift in a remarkably short amount of time. Moreover, when used in conjunction with a grant source like USDA or CDBG, the facade enhancements are often realized with no costs to the building owner or tenant.

- Benefits of the Façade Master Plan approach: The single source of project management streamlines the project and removes the burden of façade enhancement from each individual property owner. The single source of design, used in conjunction with the Main Street Program's Design Committee, ensures that all façade enhancements are sympathetic to the historic architectural heritage of their place. The single source of construction allows for dramatic cost savings since the contractor purchases all construction supplies for the entire enhancement project, rather than each property owner having to buy their own sign, door, windows, paint, awnings, etc. However, the biggest advantage to this approach is the ability for a downtown district to receive an overall appearance facelift in a remarkably short amount of time. Moreover, when used in conjunction with a grant source like federal CDBG funds, an individual state's department of commerce grants, or other federal, state, or local funding sources, the facade enhancements are realized with no costs to the building owner or tenant. If the funding and/or grant source requires a match from the property owner, the enhancements are still realized with nominal investment on their part that is far less than if they improved their façade on their own using solely private sector funds.

- Implementation
  - o Apply for and receive grant funding for design and construction.
  - o Develop guidelines for the administration of the grant funds.
  - o Solicit RFQ for design professionals to develop the facade en¬hancement designs.
  - o Negotiate and hire design professional.

o Design professional photographs subject properties and interview each property owner/tenant to ascertain appropriate enhancement approach.
o Design professional develops renderings and technical recom¬mendations for each facade.
o Administrative party and design professional develop specifica¬tions and bid documents.
o Prospective contractors pre-qualified.
o Bid package submitted to pre-qualified contractors.
o Negotiate with and hire low bidder.
o Construction commences with oversight by administrative party and design professional.
o Punch list and project close out.

- Budgetary Considerations:
  o Design & Project Management: $1,000 - $1,500/facade
  o Construction Allowance: $5,000 - 10,000/facade
  o Scope: To be determined by the local government. Generally speaking, include at least 20 facades, but consider executing 40-80 so that the improvements can affect entire blocks of downtown structures.
  o Total: As determined/multiplied by the number of facades being considered against the budget esti mates noted above
  o Schedule: Begin phase one immediately upon receipt of grant or private funding.
  o Responsible Party: Local government or downtown revitalization agency, ideally Main Street.
  o Funding Source Design: TIF Funds, CDBG Grants, Department of Commerce grants, local bank con sortium funds/low-interest loans, fund raising, private sector investment, local government budget.
  o Funding Source Construction: TIF Funds, CDBG Grants, Department of Commerce grants, local bank consortium funds/low-interest loans, fund raising, private sector investment, local government budget, foundation grant funding.

5.2.6 Strengthen Design Guidelines for Historic Downtown Laramie: The Guidelines were spearheaded by the Laramie Main Street's Design Committee in the mid-2000's. Adopted by the Laramie Planning Commission and the City Council in 2007, the Guidelines provide a mix of history about downtown, suggestions for how to use the guidelines, and descriptions of standards for the renovation and new construction of buildings in downtown. The problem is they may attempt to do too much. On the one hand, recommendations are given regarding building materials that are appropriate for the district and criteria are listed for the design of signs. On the other hand, the Guidelines include language about window displays, including suggestions that probably have more to do with marketing and economic development than design.

The main concern with the Guidelines is that they are inspirational in tone and are not requirements. There is no review board that uses them in making land use decisions for downtown development. City staff does require that applicants with downtown projects meet with the City to discuss their project in association with the Guidelines. This action does make the Guidelines known to the applicants; however, the applicant is not required to adhere to them.

- Streamline the Guidelines to remove extraneous language and keep the focus strictly on the design features sought for downtown.
- Include incentives that stimulate quality development by offering trade-offs. For example, offer density bonuses if the Design Guidelines are met in full, or prorate the density bonuses based on the level of compliance with the Guidelines. The point is to create and use incentives to accomplish the desired end results as much as is feasible.
- Amend the Guidelines to create stronger links to the Unified Development Code.
- Shoulds and Shalls: As is acceptable and appropriate, incrementally amend the Guidelines to delete the many 'shoulds' and replace them with 'shalls'. This can occur after decisions are made as to which guidelines are truly critical to maintaining the character of the downtown and which ones are not as essential to supporting the look and feel of historic downtown development.

5.2.7 Apply Code Requirements Consistently: In the course of conducting the on-site interviews, it was noted several times that development standards are not applied uniformly. This may or may not be accurate, but per-

ception often becomes reality for the general public.

Implement development standards consistently. Nothing jeopardizes a governing body's reputation for fairness as quickly as a perception that local rules and regulations are not applied consistently, regardless of the individual appearing before the commission or council.

5.2.8 Amend Unified Development Code: The 2010 Code dedicates an entire zoning category for downtown, the Downtown Commercial (DC) District. It includes district-specific standards and is listed in Table 15.10-1, Table of Allowed Uses. Recommendations related to the Code are:

- Expand language supporting mixed-use development. By doing so, a number of action statements and goals of the Laramie Comprehensive Plan will be addressed, including support for development that increases walkability, offering a variety of housing types, promoting infill options, and increasing population and employment in the downtown area.
- Allow More Uses: Consider amending the uses found in the DC District to allow more uses that generate foot traffic and activity. Examples include community centers, child care facilities, and community gardens, all of which are currently permitted as conditional uses.
- Sign Section: Refine the sign section for downtown signs to address issues that have been identified by the City.
- Adjust Parkig Standards. Investigate and where necessary adjust parking standards that will encourage downtown residential uses, particularly housing that is incorporated into mixed use developments.

6.0 Implementation Strategy and Action Plan

The attached "Strategy Board" summarizes all of the projects and recommendations included in the Downtown Development Plan Update. The board is designed as working document for benchmarking and ongoing evaluation of the implementation process. Each recommendation that is presented in brief on the strategy board is supported in this report documentation.

The projects are divided into three time frames. The first series of projects are demonstration projects that should begin immediately. For the most part, these are simple projects that will be highly visible, have significant impact and should be completed within the first year after the plan is adopted. The second set of projects is labeled "next steps." Some of these are more advanced projects while others are continuations of projects that began during the demonstration period. The next step projects should be completed within the second year of the plan. The final series of projects are long-term or plan completion projects. While this category remains largely empty, many of the projects begun in the next steps phase will not be completed until later. Over time this category will continue to fill up as priorities evolve. Each timeframe for the strategy board might also represent the ongoing fulfillment of steps taken in earlier time frames.

The strategy board and its recommendations represent a "living document." As time goes by and implementation proceeds, some priorities will shift while other ones will arise. The implementation strategy board should be evaluated periodically, no less than annually. This evaluation process will allow for finished tasks to be indicated on the board, for responsibilities to be shifted between parties, and for time frames to be adjusted for individual projects.

Each of the plan strategies and visions are outlined in the strategy board. It is important to remember the ultimate planning, development, and marketing strategies that each project supports. Of course, each of these strategies is linked with one another, but failure to achieve any one goal does not negate the ability to achieve others.

- Increases walkability, offering a variety of housing types, promoting infill options, and increasing population and employment in the downtown area.
- Consider amending the uses found in the DC District to allow more uses that generate foot traffic and activity. Examples include community centers, child care facilities, and community gardens, all of which are currently permitted as conditional uses.
- Refine the sign section for downtown signs to address issues that have been identified by the City.
- Investigate and where necessary adjust parking standards that will encourage downtown residential uses, particularly housing that is incorporated into mixed use developments.

Implementation Strategy Board for Downtown Laramie

DRAFT April 2012

Strategies	First Steps 2011-12	Next Steps 2012-13	Long Term '14-'18	Visions
Building the Message: Branding and Marketing Recommendations	• Adopt the brand statement and tagline. • Adopt the brand identity system. • Establish committee of partners to explore using the brand (w ORG Merchandise sub committee) • Host launch event. • Complete website redesign.	• Implement banners • Continue to develop brand extension. • Develop a plan and funding for wayfinding. • Implement branded collateral. • Deploy aggressive downtown marketing strategy.	• Implement wayfinding signage system. • Identify partners to develop a "Preserving History" program to educate the public about the unique history found downtown.	Downtown Laramie will aggressively market itself as both a traditional western community with an eclectic mix of shops, restaurants, services and events.

DDA DESIGN CITY of Laramie DLBA WYDOT LMSA Board/Director **ORG**

Implementation Strategy Board for Downtown Laramie

Updated April 2012

Strategies	First Steps 2011-12	Next Steps 2012-13	Long Term '14-'18	Visions
Growing Downtown: Redevelopment & Downtown Expansion Opportunities	• Inventory underutilized property & review the DDA boundaries • Continue dialogue and/or create public/private partnerships to redeveloping underutilized properties like the Connor Hotel, Cowboy Bar, Fox Hole, Wyo Theater, etc. • Work on Farmers Market location. • Mural at 1st Street Plaza (w UW Art Museum) • Work with private sector properties on improvements.	• Package a public/ private partnership for underutilized properties like the Connor, Cowboy Bar, etc. • Explore expansion opportunities for First Interstate Bank and infill development on this block. • Implement redevelopment of the Fox Hole as infill project. • Work with St. Laurence on expansion to 3rd Street.*	• Implement redevelopment of the Connor Block into a mixed use development. • Explore the development of the University Square project.	Downtown Laramie will benefit from a resurgence of private sector investment in major mixed use projects adding residential, shopping, dining, accommodation and office uses to the core of the City.

DDA DESIGN CITY of Laramie DLBA WYDOT

Implementation Strategy Board for Downtown Laramie

Updated APRIL 2012

Strategies	First Steps 2011-12	Next Steps 2012-13	Long Term '14-'18	Visions
Making Connections: Pedestrian, Bicycle, Vehicular, and Parking	• Conduct detailed traffic study and design for Third Street improvements. • Explore Bikeway connection options.* • Implement short term improvements to 1st street lot. • Implement first transit route downtown. • Design, Construct & Install Bus Shelter downtown	• Explore expanded transit loop downtown. • Complete detailed design of Third Street improvements.* • Implement bikeway connections from UW to downtown.* • Complete design of Second/Clark intersection.* • Direct southern visitors to downtown using Kearney (wayfinding).*	• Implement Third Street improvements.* • Implement other intersection improvements. • Implement expansion of 1st Street lot.	Downtown Laramie will improve its connection to the rest of the City, the University of Wyoming, and its access by visitors.

DESIGN CITY of Laramie WYDOT ACTA Bike Rack sub committee