

Renaissance Ashland City Master Plan

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Prepared for

The Town of Ashland City, Tennessee

July 2003

Renaissance Ashland City Master Plan

Acknowledgements

In developing the Renaissance Ashland City Master Plan the consultants worked closely with the Ashland City mayor, council members, manager and the Renaissance Committee. The voluntary contribution of time and effort made by the following individuals and organizations is making this plan possible:

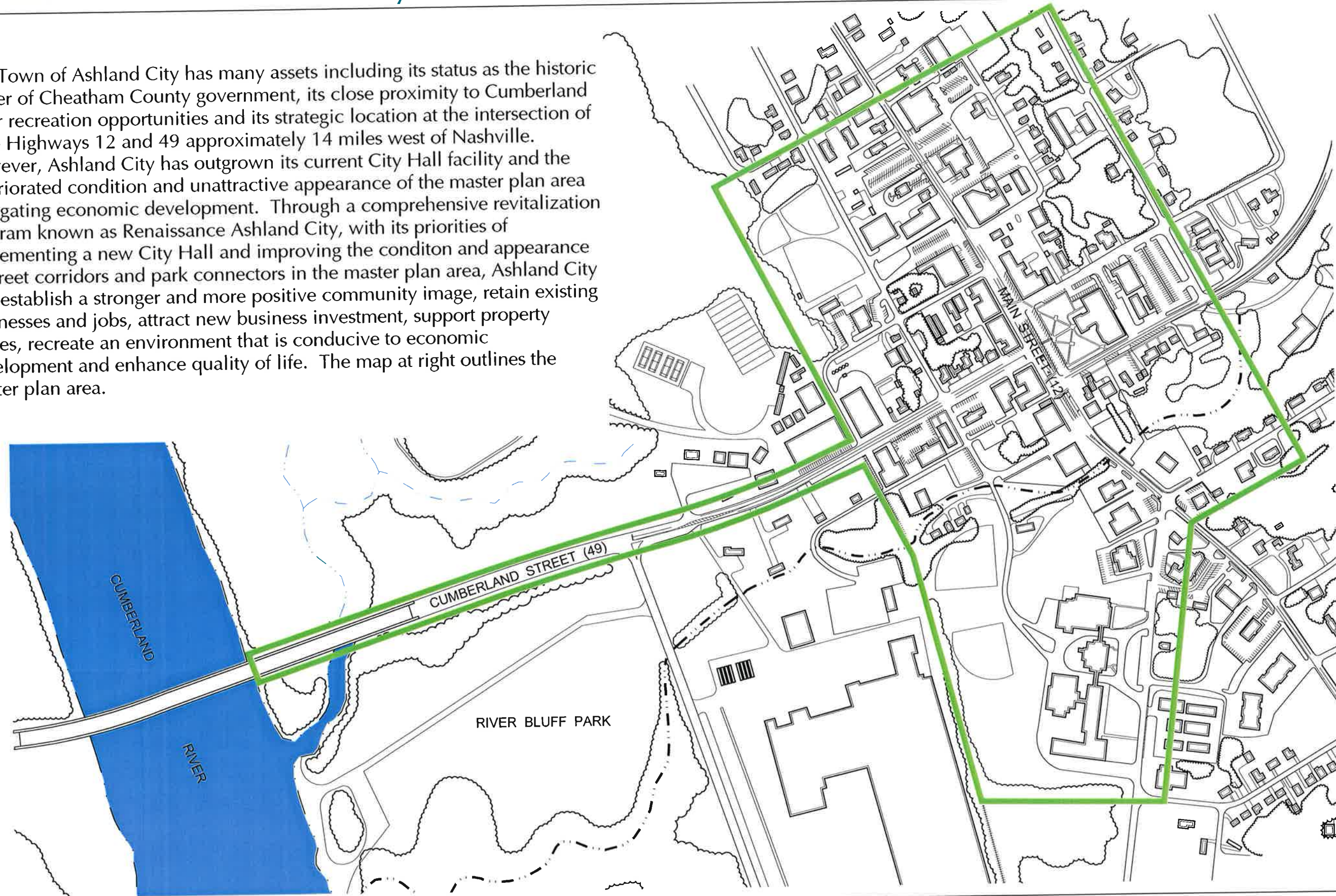
- ♦ Mayor Gary Norwood
- ♦ Vice Mayor Steve Allen
- ♦ Council Member Penny Brooks
- ♦ Council Member Richard Johnson
- ♦ Council Member Carol Macha
- ♦ Council Member Lori Pezzi
- ♦ Council Member Patrick Smith
- ♦ City Manager Murray Hawkins
- ♦ The Ashland City Renaissance Committee

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Renaissance Ashland City Master Plan

The Town of Ashland City has many assets including its status as the historic center of Cheatham County government, its close proximity to Cumberland River recreation opportunities and its strategic location at the intersection of State Highways 12 and 49 approximately 14 miles west of Nashville. However, Ashland City has outgrown its current City Hall facility and the deteriorated condition and unattractive appearance of the master plan area is negating economic development. Through a comprehensive revitalization program known as Renaissance Ashland City, with its priorities of implementing a new City Hall and improving the condition and appearance of street corridors and park connectors in the master plan area, Ashland City will establish a stronger and more positive community image, retain existing businesses and jobs, attract new business investment, support property values, recreate an environment that is conducive to economic development and enhance quality of life. The map at right outlines the master plan area.



Renaissance Ashland City Master Plan

Summary of Existing Conditions

Sidewalks

Street corridors in the project area lack continuous sidewalk and those sidewalk sections that exist are in poor condition due to age and deterioration. A new unified system of sidewalks, crosswalks and handicap access ramps should be installed throughout the project area. New sidewalks, crosswalks and ramps will help to establish safe, attractive and pedestrian-friendly street corridors. Decorative paving materials and scoring patterns should be considered to provide a unique and historically appropriate appearance.



Street Pavements and Curbs

Street pavements in the project area have expanded over many years beyond the limits of the right-of-way. Additionally, the overall lack of curb, sidewalk and landscaping has resulted in the downtown core area having an unattractive “sea-of-asphalt” appearance, poor storm drainage and decreased traffic safety for vehicles and pedestrians. Pavement and curb improvements should be installed throughout the project area to restore proper storm drainage and control traffic movements, as well as to establish safer and more attractive street corridors.

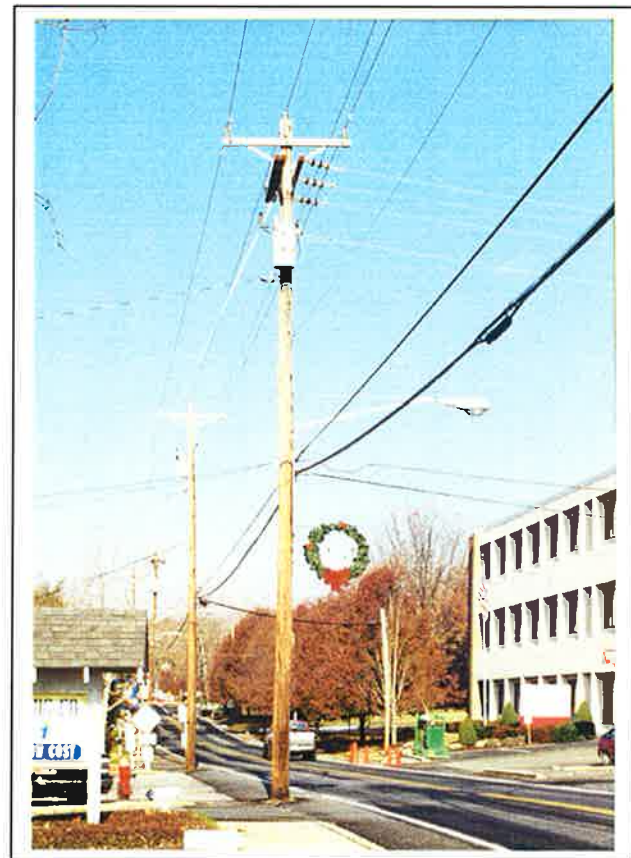


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Existing Conditions

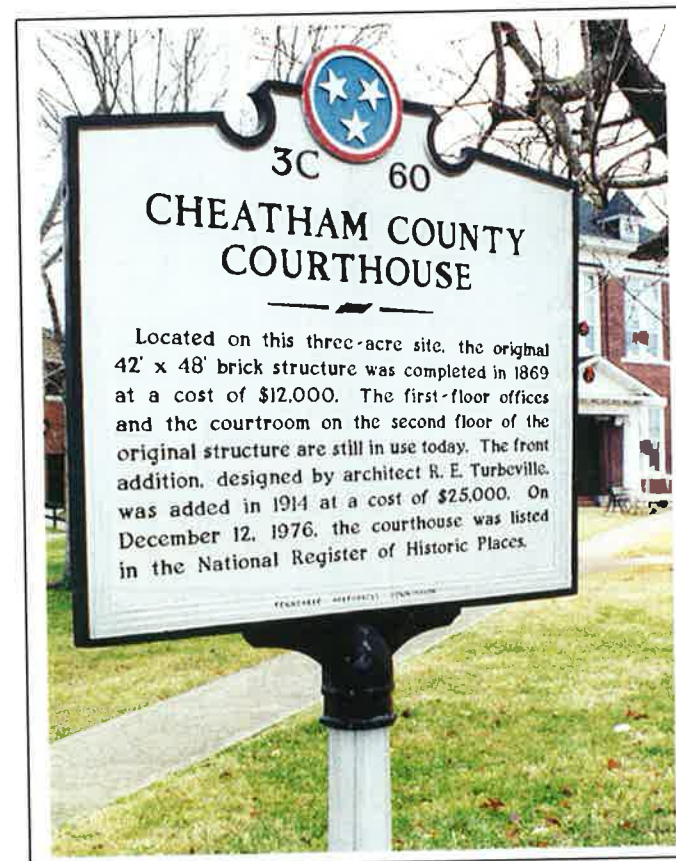
Street Lighting

Street corridors in the project area are lit by “cobra-head” style highway lights mounted on wooden utility poles. The system is deteriorating, does not provide optimum illumination for sidewalk areas, and its appearance is not in keeping with the traditional architectural character of historic Cheatham Courthouse. A new unified system of street lights with modern optics and underground electric service should be installed. New street lights will provide proper light levels on sidewalks and streets and help to establish safe and attractive street corridors. A pedestrian-scale, historic-style design should be considered in order to provide a historically appropriate appearance and to enhance pedestrian nighttime safety.



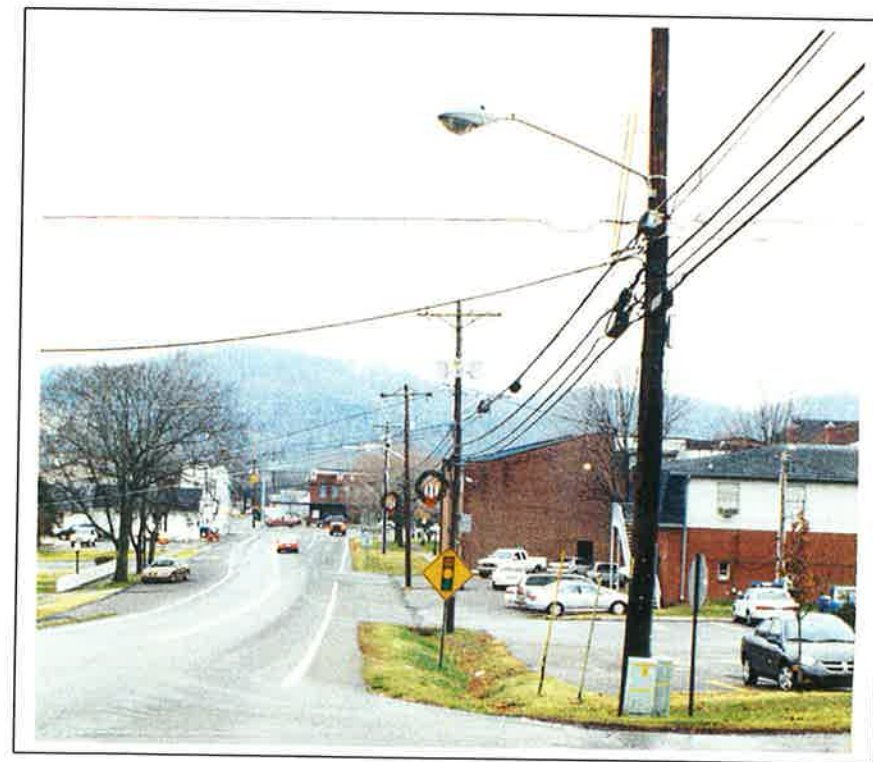
Landscaping and Furnishings

Public Square, the block containing historic Cheatham County Courthouse, is the only significant green space in the downtown district. This attractive and well-maintained park includes shade trees, seasonal plantings, lawn areas, historic-style benches and receptacles, a bandstand and special lighting. However, street corridors in the project area lack landscaping, furnishings and pedestrian amenities. A unified program of new trees, landscaping, and furnishings (benches and receptacles), as well as small pocket-parks and courtyards at key locations, should be installed in street corridors in conjunction with sidewalk, curb and utility improvements. New landscaping and furnishings along street corridors will help to expand the attractive, park-like and pedestrian-friendly character of Public Square throughout the project area.



Overhead Utilities

Street corridors in the project area are cluttered with pole-mounted overhead wires including primary and secondary electric, telephone, cable TV, street light and traffic signal service. A new system of underground conduit for distribution and service lines should be installed in conjunction with street improvements. An underground system will upgrade utility infrastructure, reduce maintenance and improve the appearance of street corridors in the project area.



Underground Utilities

Water and storm sewer lines in the project area are among the city's oldest utilities. A recent evaluation of downtown water infrastructure identified that most water and storm sewer lines are deteriorated. Street projects in the downtown area should include water and storm sewer line replacement in conjunction with sidewalk, curb and lighting improvements.

Sanitary sewer mains in the project area have been rehabilitated and are considered to be in good working order.



Parking

Parking in the project area is available at curbside on most streets and in parking lots. The local perception is that additional parking is needed in the core downtown area to serve existing businesses and to facilitate business expansion, especially on those days when court is in session. The availability of customer parking in the downtown core area should be increased by adopting and enforcing time limits on curbside parking, acquiring and developing property for new public parking lots, and by designating areas for employee parking. The overall appearance of parking in the downtown core area should also be improved. The installation of new pavements, curbs, lighting, landscaping and signage, as well as fence enclosures for rubbish areas will make downtown parking more attractive and user-friendly.



Traffic

According to Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), 2001 average daily traffic volumes in the project area are as follows:

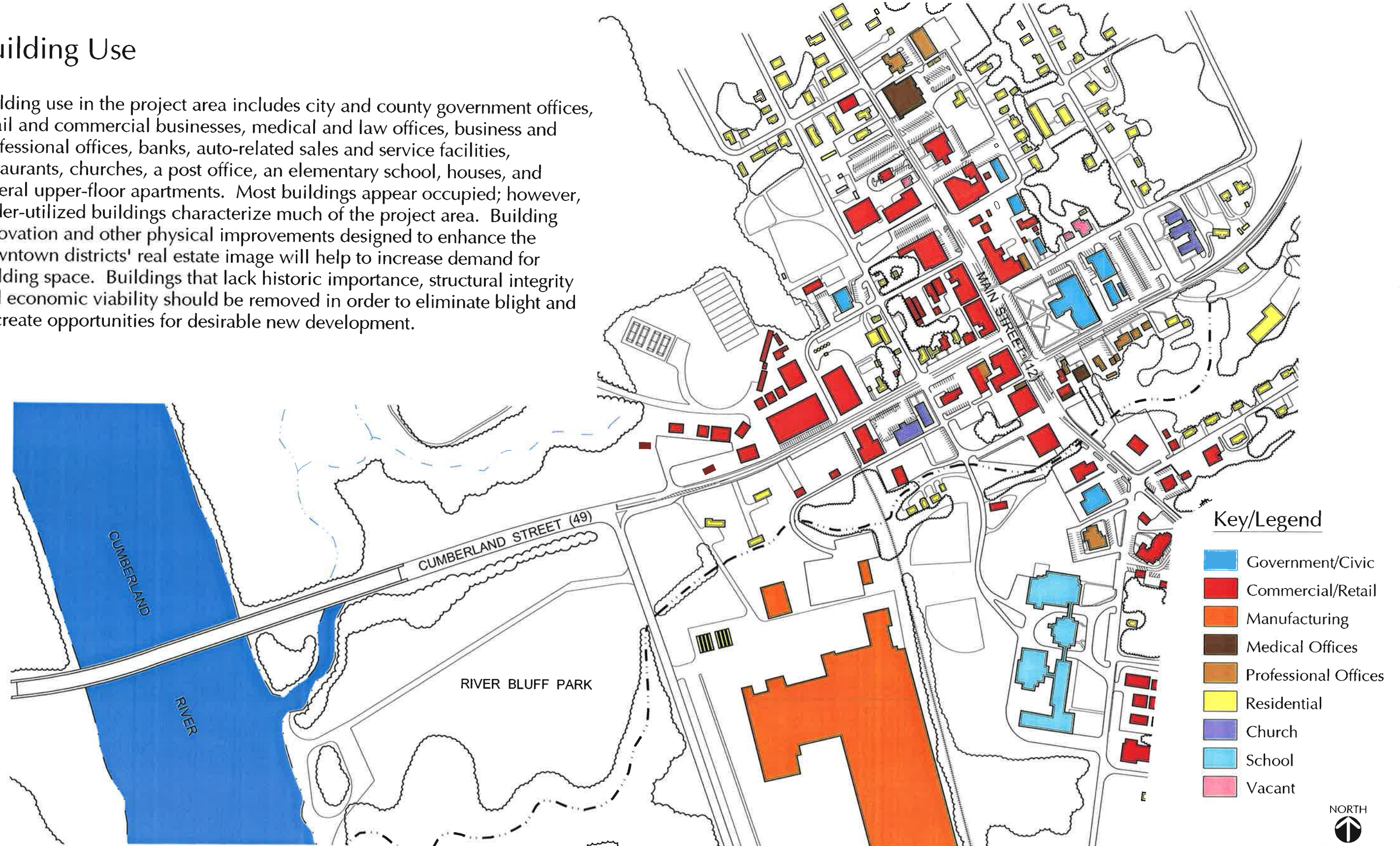
- Main Street (Hwy. 12) south of Frey 12,600
- Frey Street (Hwy. 49) east of Main 8,910
- Main Street (Hwy. 12) north of Cumberland 7,760
- Cumberland Street (Hwy. 49) west of Main 4,790

The high volume of commuter and truck traffic during peak morning and afternoon periods results in congestion and delays at the intersection of Main, Cumberland and Frey Street. This condition is expected to improve with completion of the by-pass extension from Cumberland Street to North Main Street. Additional improvements will be derived from the installation of new signage that identifies the by-pass as a truck route. However, the long-term solution to the problem of downtown traffic congestion is eliminating the offset intersection of State Highways 49 and 12.



Building Use

Building use in the project area includes city and county government offices, retail and commercial businesses, medical and law offices, business and professional offices, banks, auto-related sales and service facilities, restaurants, churches, a post office, an elementary school, houses, and several upper-floor apartments. Most buildings appear occupied; however, under-utilized buildings characterize much of the project area. Building renovation and other physical improvements designed to enhance the downtown districts' real estate image will help to increase demand for building space. Buildings that lack historic importance, structural integrity and economic viability should be removed in order to eliminate blight and to create opportunities for desirable new development.

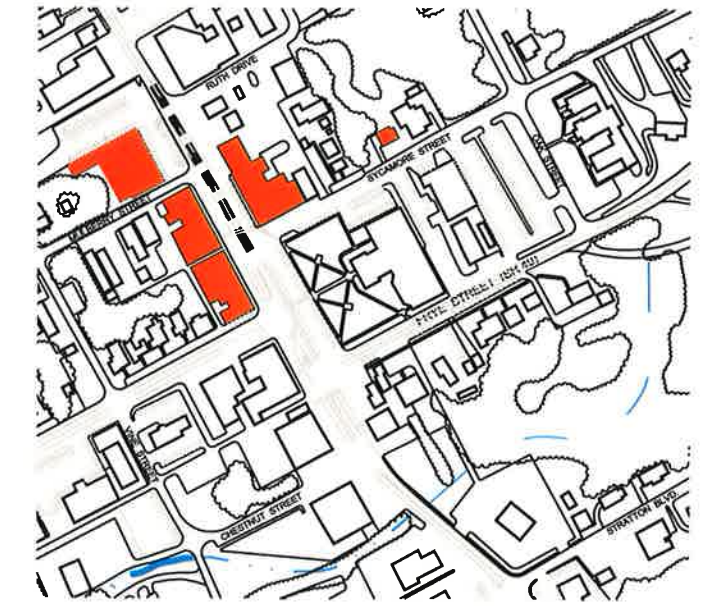


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Existing Conditions

North Main Street

The historic and central business district of downtown Ashland City encompasses the buildings two blocks north and south of the intersection of Hwy 49 and Main Street. The buildings along Main Street, north of Hwy 49, are a mixture of one- and two-story commercial structures, featuring a variety of architectural styles, building materials and details.



Downtown Ashland City, TN



SCALE: 1"=200'

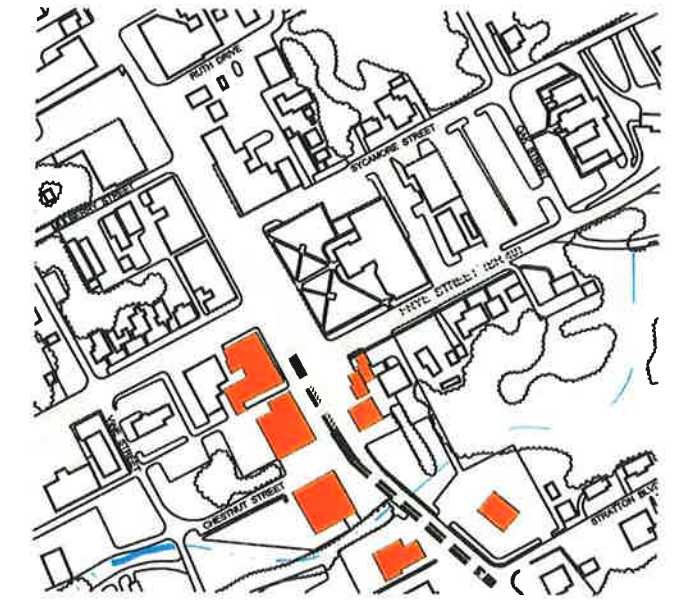
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Existing Conditions

South Main Street

The first block along the west side of Main Street, south of Hwy 49, continues the central business district. Structures south of this point and along the east side of Main Street transition to individual, one story commercial buildings with parking lots and open areas fronting Main Street used for the sale of cars.



Downtown Ashland City, TN



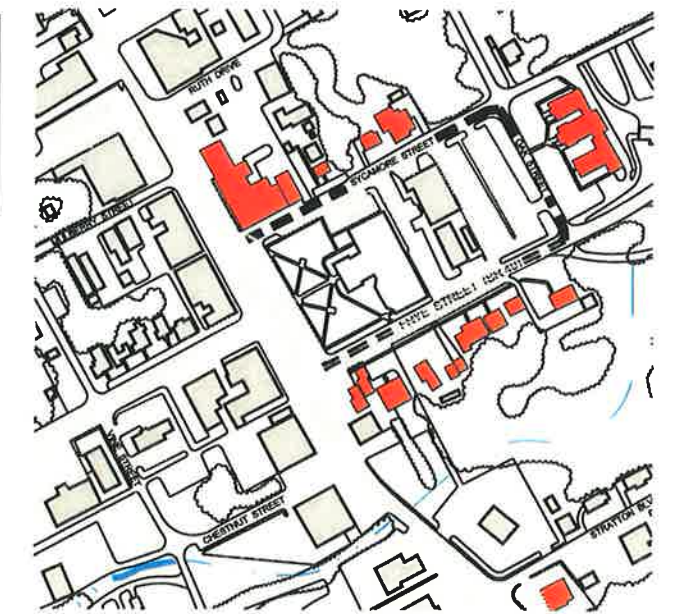
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Existing Conditions

Building Facades

Hwy 49 East

Small businesses have located within the residential-style buildings along the south side of Hwy 49 East. These structures are set back from the front property line, and their front yard landscape areas serve as buffer areas to the highway.



Downtown Ashland City, TN



Sycamore Street

Office and municipal functions are located in the buildings along the north side of Sycamore Street. These structures transition from two-story, brick commercial style buildings near the corner of Sycamore and Main to one-story residential structures that have been converted to office use near the corner of Sycamore and Oak.



Oak Street

Oak Street borders the east end of the municipal parking lot serving the City Hall complex. The traditionally styled United Methodist Church is located along the east side of Oak, at a higher elevation overlooking the City Hall complex below.



NORTH



SCALE: 1"=200'

0 200 400

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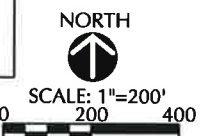
Existing Conditions

Hwy 49 West

Hwy 49 West extends the commercial center towards the river from Main Street to the Co-op building several blocks away. The north side of the street transitions from a two-story brick office building to one- and two-story wood residences that have been converted to commercial use. The south side of Hwy 49 extends the brick / stone commercial style buildings from Main Street for two blocks, leading to large lots for a bank and church.



Downtown Ashland City, TN

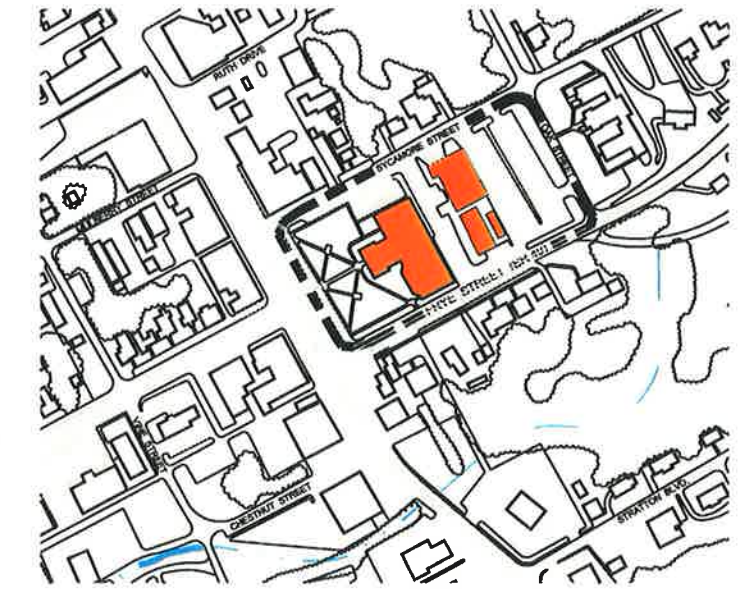


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Existing Conditions

County Courthouse / Jail Complex

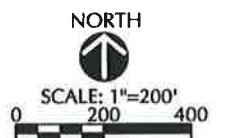
The Federal style, Cheatham County Courthouse was originally constructed in 1869 with a two-story, brick addition added to the front in 1914. The contrasting County Jail, a two-story, modern structure in brick, was later added to the back of the Courthouse.



Downtown Ashland City, TN

City Hall Complex

The one-story, brick Ashland City Hall building and the two-story, brick County Jail Annex are located behind the County Courthouse / Jail complex.



Municipal Ordinances

Buildings, parking and signs in the project area are regulated by municipal zoning ordinances. These ordinances address issues such as use, quantity and placement of physical improvements. There is not a municipal ordinance in place, however, that addresses issues related to the design, appearance and appropriateness of physical improvements. Design standards should be adopted for physical improvements such as new buildings, parking lots, storefront renovations and signs in order to establish a consistently attractive and historically appropriate downtown district appearance. Such design standards can be adopted as an overlay on existing zoning. In addition, the city should consider adopting legislation that targets the downtown district for tax abatement and other economic development incentives in order to facilitate physical improvements and to attract desirable new investment.

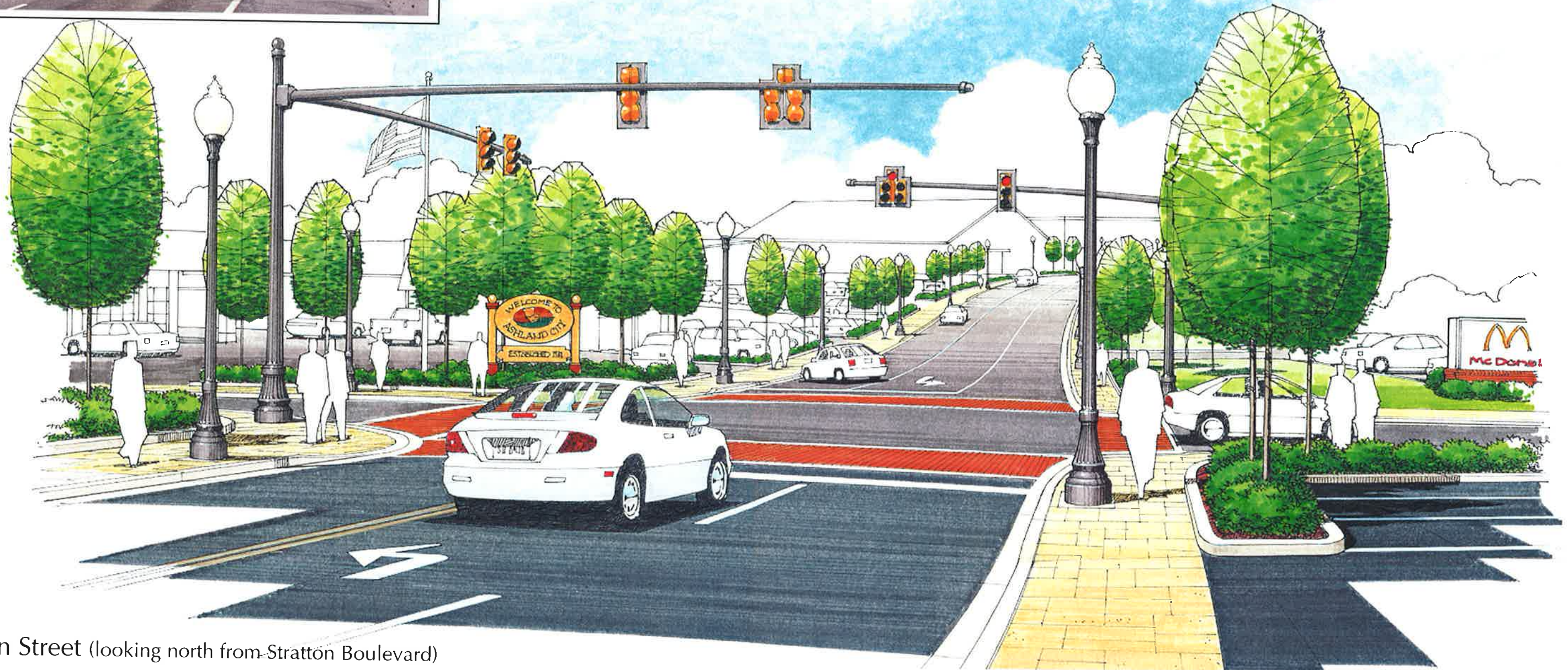


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Recommendations for Street Corridor Improvements

Street corridor improvements should include the following:

- Concrete sidewalks with decorative scoring pattern
- Handicap ramps, driveway aprons, curbs, gutters and catch basins
- Historical-style street lighting and traffic signal poles including electrical receptacles for holiday light displays
- Street trees and landscape plantings including setbacks along parking lots
- Street furnishings including benches and trash receptacles
- Brick crosswalks at major street intersections
- Special entrance signage at downtown district gateways
- Traffic improvements including new signs, signals and reconfiguration of the State Highway 49 and 12 intersection
- Parking improvements including additional street spaces and opportunities for parking lots
- Underground conduits for electric, telephone, CATV, street lighting and traffic signal service
- Utility improvements including water and storm sewer lines
- Disposition of voids under sidewalks including basements and vaults
- Street resurfacing, pavement markings and traffic signage
- Courthouse Square enhancements including sidewalks, lighting and furnishings per streetscape design standards



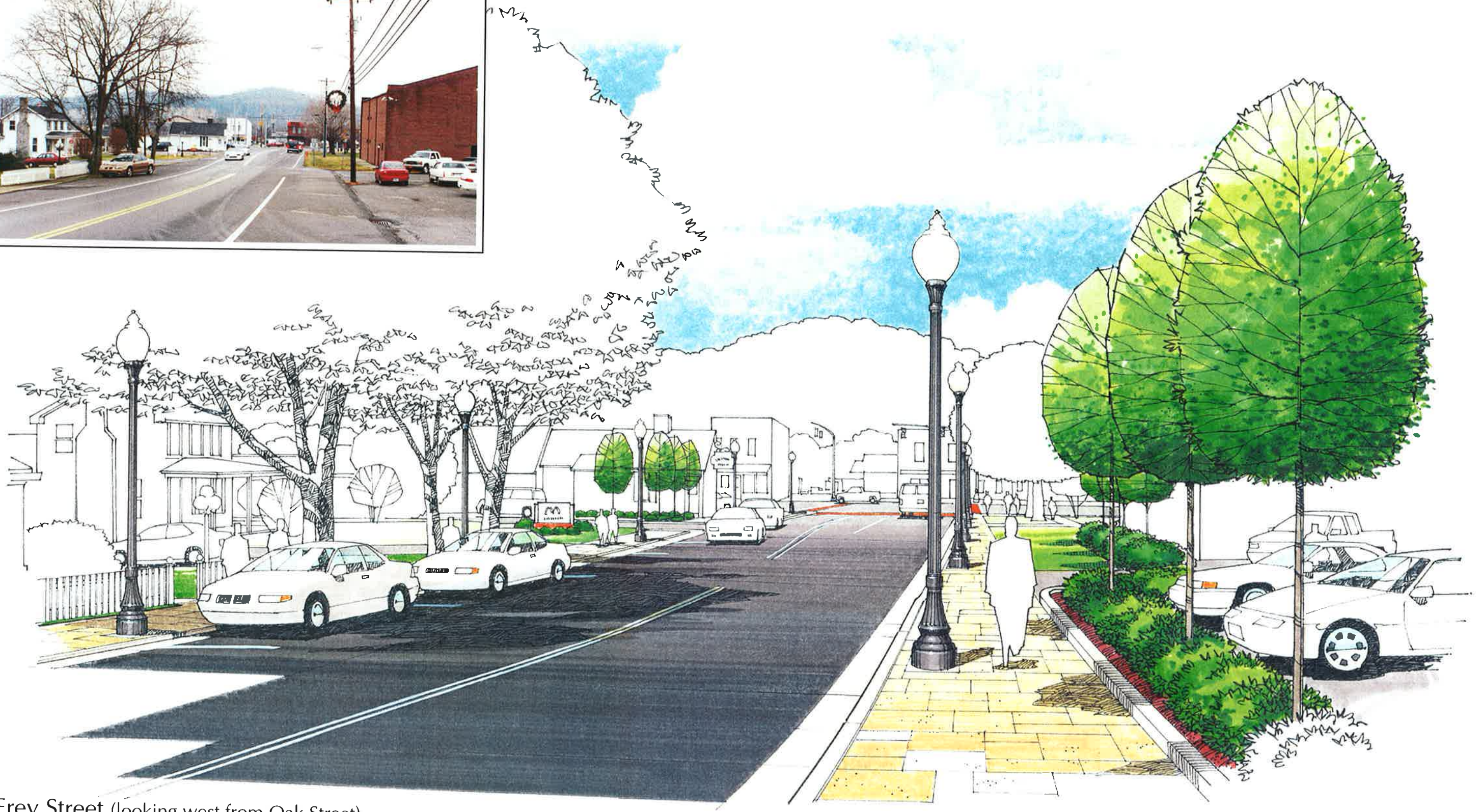
Main Street (looking north from Stratton Boulevard)



Cumberland Street (looking east from Vine)



Main Street (looking south from Jefferson Street)



Frey Street (looking west from Oak Street)









Main Street (looking south from Mulberry Street)

State Highway Intersection

Improve traffic flow in the downtown district by eliminating the off-set intersection of State Highways 49 and 12. This can be accomplished by relocating a portion of Cumberland Street to intersect Main Street opposite Frey Street. In this solution, three (3) businesses must be relocated and buildings removed in order to relocate Cumberland Street. The portion of Cumberland Street not utilized in this concept could be removed from the State Highway System and improved as additional greenspace or parking for the downtown district.



Key/Legend

- | | |
|--|---|
|  Street Tree |  Concrete Sidewalk |
|  Traffic Signal |  Lawn |
|  Street Light |  Asphalt Paving |

NORTH

 SCALE: 1"=100'

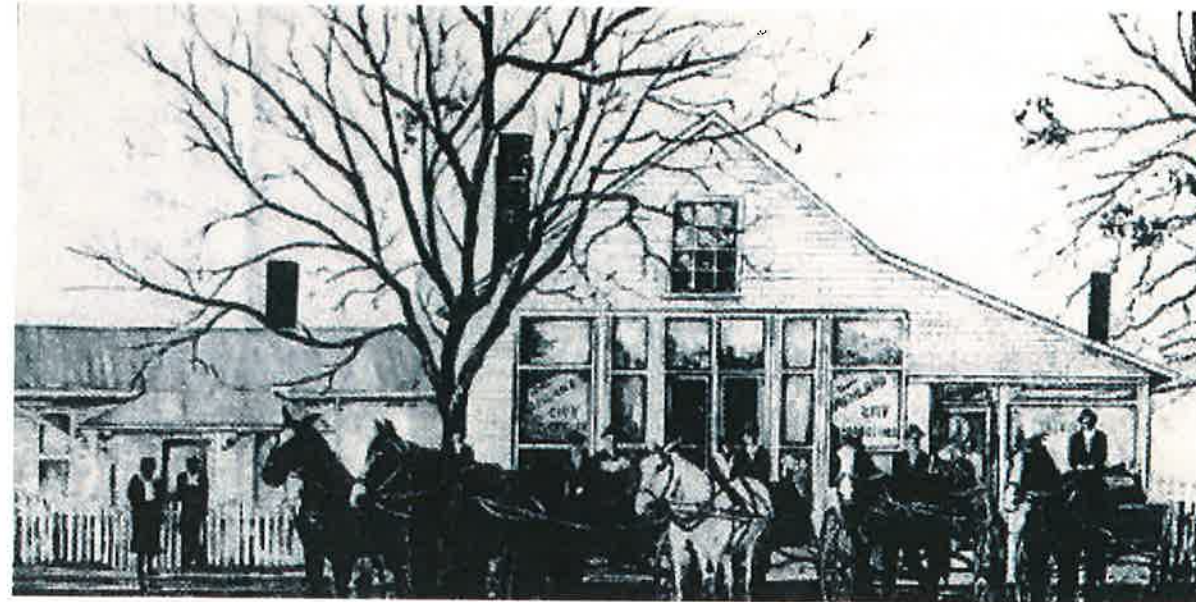
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Recommendations for Building Improvements

Traditional Architectural Style

Ashland City has many buildings in the downtown that are of notable value. There are various architectural styles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century which exhibit strong architectural character. Examples include Cheatham County Courthouse, Cook Law Building and others. The balance of the project area is a mix of traditional style, modern and franchise-type buildings. While some downtown area buildings have been nicely restored, improved and maintained, many require professional design services to reverse the affects of neglect and inappropriate remodeling efforts.

The Ashland City downtown would benefit greatly from exterior building improvements to existing buildings. New building construction should be required to establish an overall architectural character and contribute to an attractive downtown district appearance based upon approved guidelines.



Exterior Material Palette

Brick, cut stone, decorative plaster, painted wood, canvas awnings and wrought iron are a traditional palette of crafts that the traditional environment set forth to the streetscape.

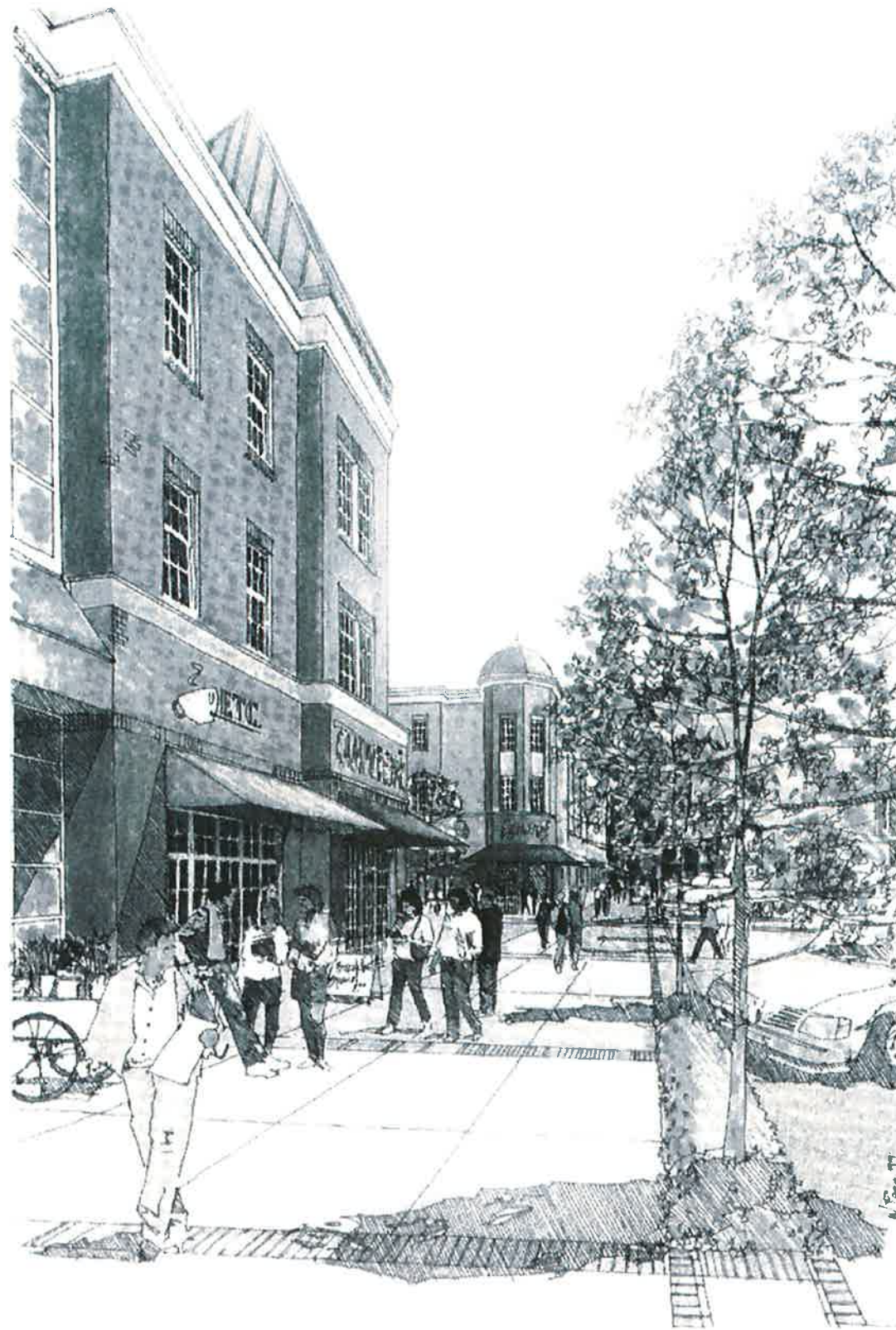
Such materials recall a time when artisans shaped building materials in small quantities by hand. Any town can approve the construction of a metal building or aluminum storefront. It is the unique environment that deliberately avoids such modern treatments.

The opportunity exists for the Ashland City downtown to return to the hand-crafted materials of our traditional past.

This attention to material selection and use will accomplish much to bring the desired feeling to the architecture of this area of the town.

The careful control of color and texture should also be appropriately considered with the use of such materials.

It is recommended that construction in the city downtown area conform to a specific set of building materials based on approved guidelines.



- Brick
- Cut Stone
- Painted Wood
- Canvas Awnings
- Wrought Iron

Exterior Building Details

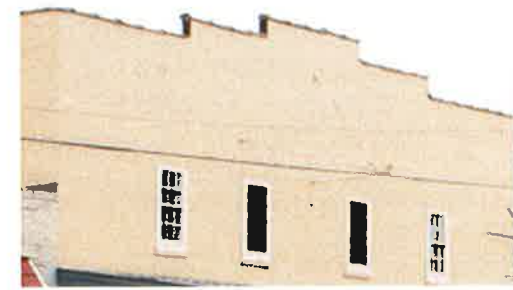
The smallest details work together to make the passerby aware that there is a special atmosphere in a place.

An extra turn in a piece of wrought iron or a subtle curve in a window glass draw the eye and challenge the mind.

Details represent the amount of thought and care that were given to an idea. Even if not outwardly noticed the details that surround a place add to its qualities.



Cupola



Stepped Parapet



Brick Corbeling



Stone Accent Banding

Building Scale

The scale of two-story buildings add visual interest to a streetscape. A balcony, a decorative cornice or a corbelled brick parapet enhance the streetscape and excite the emotions.

The two-story heights of neighboring buildings may vary among themselves but as a group should add interest to the edge against the sky.

The existing details in downtown Ashland City would be enhanced by repeating them above street level through second floor redevelopment based on approved guidelines.



Second Story Elements



Second Story Elements

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Recommendations for Municipal Ordinances

Design Guidelines/Standards

The quality and consistency of buildings and signs along downtown street corridors is an important factor affecting economic well-being. Attractive architecture, signage, site design and landscape treatments help to encourage investment and establish prime real estate location. Implementing a comprehensive program of design guidelines and standards for building renovation and new development will, like streetscape improvements, serve to support existing businesses, stimulate new business, establish a positive community identity and create an environment that is conducive to economic development.



New Development



Exterior Renovation



Signs and Site Elements

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Recommendations for Park and Greenspace Connectors

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Park & Greenspace Connectors

1: Connect to School via old rail corridor



2: Connect parks across old rail corridor



3: Connect parks under Hwy 49 bridge



4: Provide tunnel connection under future bypass

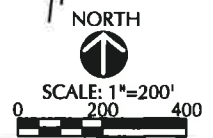
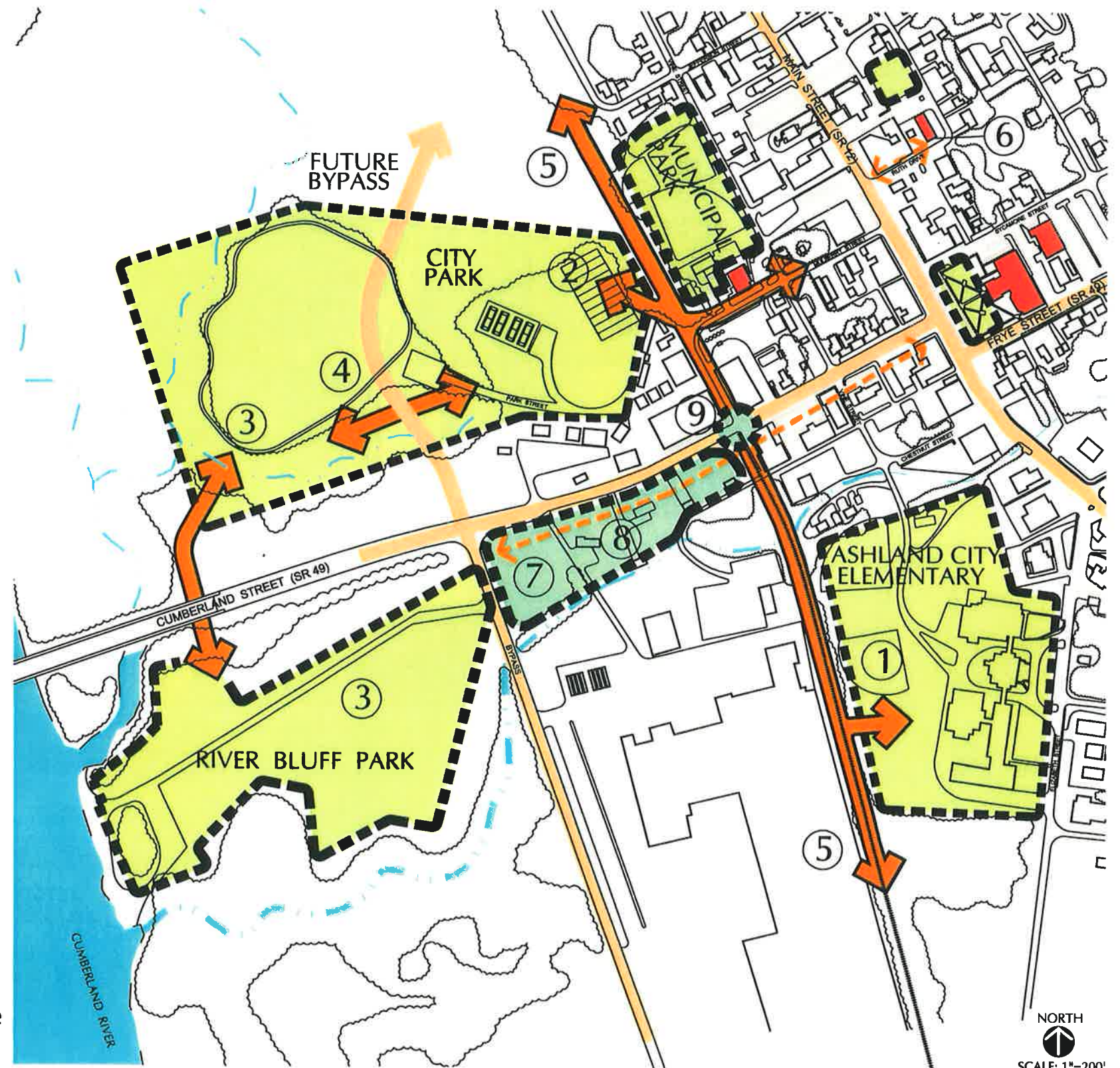
5: Convert old rail corridor into greenway & park connection.

6: Connect to senior center

7: Provide connection from downtown to park

8: Consider acquiring properties to create green connection from Ashland City Elementary to Riverbluff Park along Cumberland St.

9: Create green traffic calming circle at Cumberland St greenway crossing. Central section of greenway to have urban streetscape character (brick paving, trees, site furnishings, etc.)



Renaissance Ashland City Master Plan

City Hall Complex

SITE 1: LOCKERT PROPERTY



SITE 2: VICK'S HARDWARE



SITE 3: MIDWAY SUPPLY



SITE 4: GIBBS LUMBER



SITE 5: MAIN ST. PROPERTIES



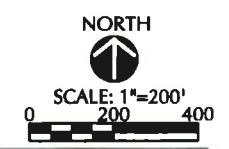
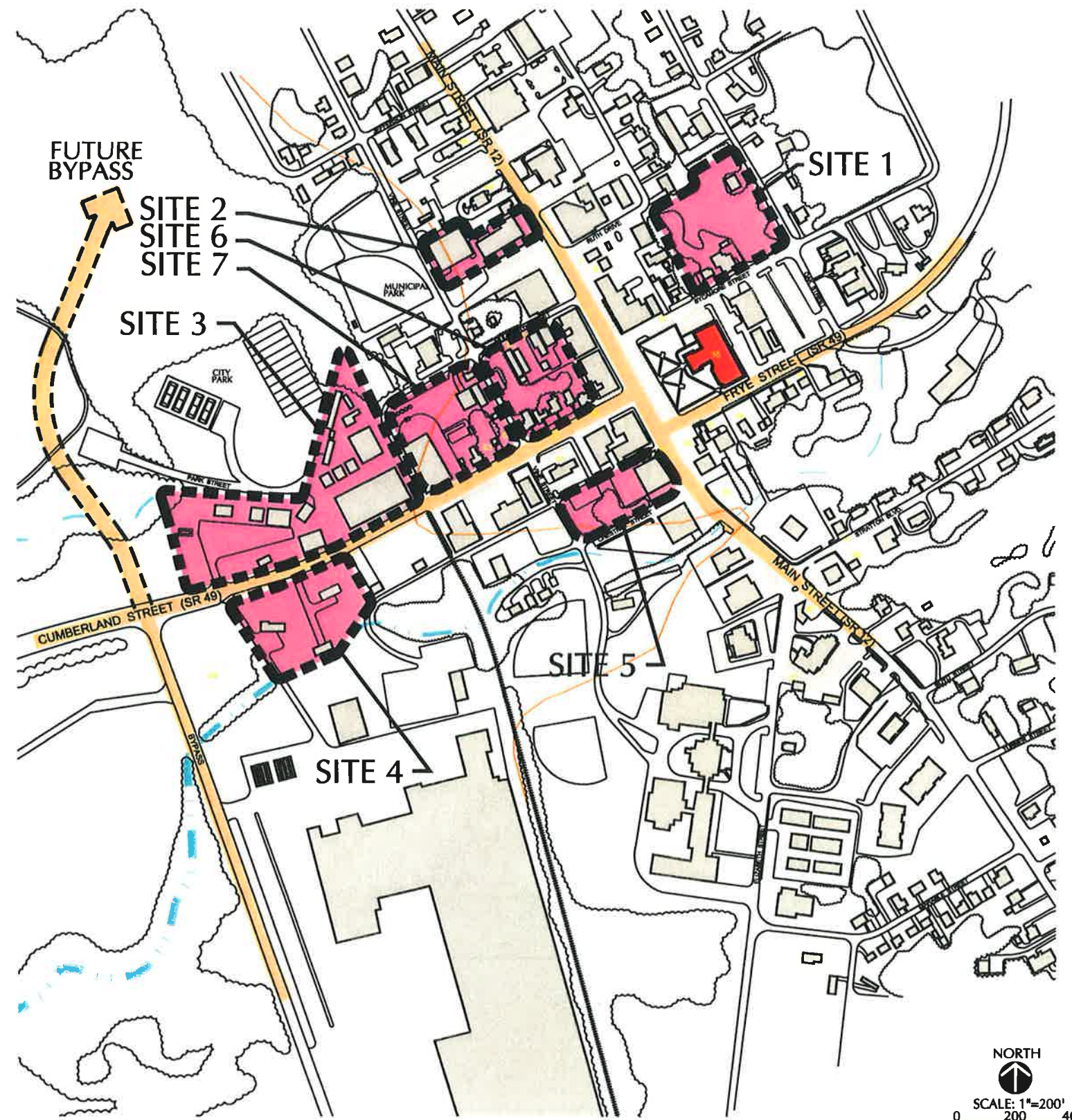
SITE 6: CUMBERLAND ST. PROPERTIES-A



SITE 7: CUMBERLAND ST. PROPERTIES-B



Potential Municipal
Complex Locations



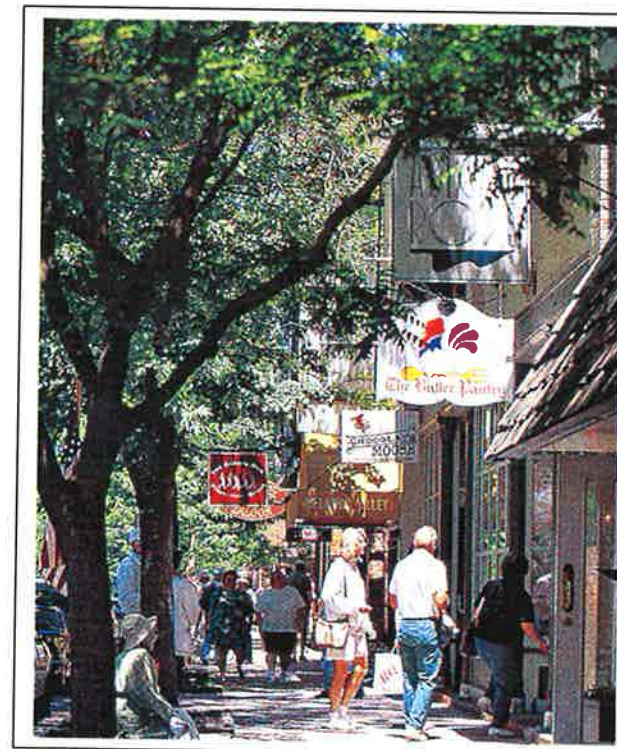
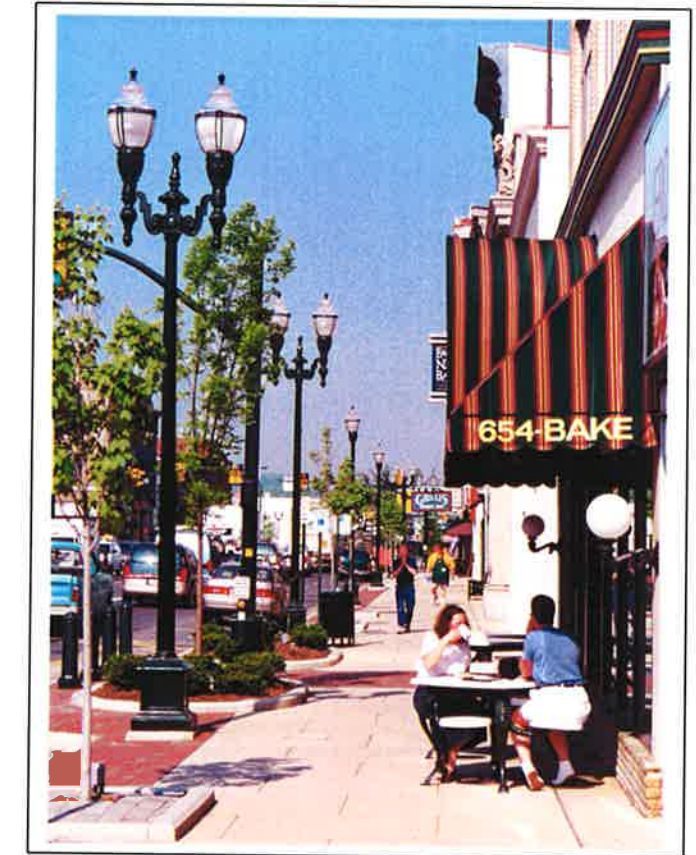
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Economic Development

Strategies and Initiatives

As the Town of Ashland City reinvests in street corridor infrastructure and improves its real estate location image, local businesses and entrepreneurs as well as national chains will take greater interest in development opportunities including the following:

- ◆ Restaurants and coffee shops
- ◆ Inns and Bed & Breakfasts
- ◆ Upscale housing for your professionals and empty nesters
- ◆ Heritage tourism / Farmers Market
- ◆ Specialty retail stores
- ◆ Sports and recreation outfitters
- ◆ Home furnishings and improvements
- ◆ Galleries and antiques
- ◆ Institutional and community services
- ◆ Office development
- ◆ Existing business expansion



Strategies and Initiatives (cont.)

Office Expansion / Development

The Ashland City regional economy, like the national economy, is shifting to a service / office base. Downtown Ashland City is well suited to benefit from this trend as more and more small and mid-size companies that generally do not fit the standard corporate office park lease agreement eye traditional downtown districts for affordable locations that offer charm, character and convenience. As with government and community services facilities, downtown office workers increase pedestrian activity and provide reliable clientele for ancillary establishments such as downtown shops and restaurants.

Housing Expansion / Development

Recent surveys show that the number of people choosing to live in or near a traditional downtown district increased steadily during the 1990's and the trend is projected to continue. As with downtown office development, housing helps to increase round-the-clock pedestrian activity and support downtown retail businesses. Downtown housing (i.e., upper floor apartments) can be marketed to young professionals, empty-nesters (couples without children), seniors and others who appreciate the convenience of living and working within walking distance of downtown shops, services and restaurants.

Retail Expansion / Development

Downtown's dominance as a general merchandise retail center will diminish somewhat with the opening of Walmart. However, the downtown district remains an attractive location for locally owned and operated specialty merchandise / personal service businesses. As Ashland City reinvests in downtown's public infrastructure and rediscovers its strength as a mixed-use community center (i.e., retail combined with office and housing), local merchants and entrepreneurs, as well as national chains, will take greater interest. As a matter of fact, recent surveys indicate that several national retail and restaurant chains, adapting their standard format to "fit" local design standards, are eyeing traditional downtown districts for expansion potential.

City / County Partnerships

The economic wellbeing and appearance of downtown has an impact on both Ashland City and Cheatham County. The partnering of City and County can help to address many issues relative to downtown economic development. Examples include implementation of physical improvements such as a regional bikeway connection, and collaboration on potential new developments such as shared parking areas.

Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism involves the marketing and promotion of local products, personalities, heritage festivals, and historic events. In Ashland City, examples of potential heritage tourism are the Cumberland River recreation corridor and the regional bikeway, both located within one-half mile of the downtown district. Promoting these features would serve as an effective means of attracting first-time visitors and tour buses to the downtown district, and supporting local business development.

Institutional and Community Services Retention / Expansion

Downtown Ashland City has always been the traditional location of City and County government, as well as social, educational and religious institutions. As new and/or expanded facilities are required, the selection of downtown locations for these institutions and community service organizations will reaffirm the district's traditional role and sense of place.

Maintenance, Marketing and Promotional Programs

Special Services Districts (aka Special Improvement Districts and Business Improvement Districts) are an effective means of delivering much needed downtown management, maintenance, marketing and promotional services. Directed by property owners elected from within the district, Special Service Districts, in conjunction with comprehensive physical improvement projects, help to establish first-class real estate location image, recruit desirable new businesses, and enhance the long-term economic viability of the downtown district.

Renaissance Ashland City Master Plan

Appendix

Town Meeting Comments (December 5, 2002)

- ◆ establish a downtown mini-mall with specialty shops
 - ◆ enhance historic Courthouse Square
 - ◆ create more parks and trails
 - ◆ install banners on all the street lights
 - ◆ promote our rural, park-like character
 - ◆ solve the traffic problems at the intersection of Main and Cumberland Streets
 - ◆ straighten out the bypass
 - ◆ double the size of the senior center and install a pool for aerobics
 - ◆ create more downtown shops and stores
 - ◆ provide a pedestrian-friendly environment
 - ◆ encourage downtown living with condos/apartments over shops
 - ◆ consider a traffic square or a round-about at the Main/Cumberland intersection
 - ◆ install a boulevard on Cumberland Street from Courthouse Square to the river
 - ◆ enhance the appearance of Courthouse Square
 - ◆ consider a traffic square at the Main/Cumberland intersection
 - ◆ establish a "downtown" way-of-life
 - ◆ enhance the traditional architectural character of the downtown district
 - ◆ provide family-oriented activities and shops
 - ◆ create a downtown sidewalk system that encourages walking
 - ◆ establish an hospitable atmosphere that encourages shopping
 - ◆ construct a community activity center
 - ◆ solve the traffic problems at the Main/Cumberland intersection
 - ◆ provide more downtown parking
 - ◆ create a nice city park
 - ◆ make downtown pedestrian-friendly
 - ◆ relieve traffic congestion by completing the bypass
 - ◆ install new sewers
 - ◆ underground all the overhead wires
 - ◆ establish A. C. as a destination for government, shopping and recreation
 - ◆ consider the possibility of passenger rail
 - ◆ improve street lighting
 - ◆ enforce existing codes and ordinances
 - ◆ link Courthouse Square to the river with Cumberland Street improvements
 - ◆ consider construction of a downtown parking deck
 - ◆ enforce ordinances and codes to remove/renovate blighted buildings
 - ◆ discourage littering
 - ◆ enforce no parking in the handicap spaces
 - ◆ enforce codes
 - ◆ whatever we decide to do let's get it done
- ◆ clean up the area by removing/renovating deteriorated buildings
 - ◆ establish design standards for signs and storefront renovations
 - ◆ consider other means than raising taxes to pay for the improvements
 - ◆ provide a quaint/charming/historic shopping environment as alternative to Wal-Mart
 - ◆ consider granting liquor licenses for restaurants
 - ◆ provide sidewalks to/from school for the children
 - ◆ enforce codes regulating signs, trash, junk cars, building maintenance
 - ◆ resolve issues regarding property maintenance, trash control and signs for house sales
 - ◆ provide city trash pickup
 - ◆ install street trees
 - ◆ remove the large utility poles from Courthouse Square
 - ◆ make the area more attractive and walkable
 - ◆ connect downtown to the river with streetscape treatments including sidewalks, trees and lights
 - ◆ provide trees, trees, and more trees
 - ◆ create a location on the Courthouse lawn for music performances, art shows and food festivals
 - ◆ install a comprehensive sidewalk system
 - ◆ create attractive gateways to the community and the downtown district
 - ◆ clean up the litter
 - ◆ provide areas that are grassy and green
 - ◆ consider installing a bypass on the east side of Main Street to reduce traffic congestion
 - ◆ remove the jail and restore the historic green space around the Courthouse
 - ◆ promote downtown living by installing market-rate apartments and condos
 - ◆ install a center turn lane on South Main
 - ◆ make downtown clean and beautiful restore the area
 - ◆ create a downtown identity based on the beauty of the river
 - ◆ solve the problem of the Main/Cumberland intersection
 - ◆ install trees on Main Street
 - ◆ install new sidewalks
 - ◆ remove all utility poles and overhead wires
 - ◆ be affordable to construct and maintain
 - ◆ consider ways to reduce traffic congestion at the Main/Cumberland intersection
 - ◆ consider the importance of downtown rental property to owner's livelihood
 - ◆ solve downtown traffic congestion
 - ◆ designate employee parking areas outside the prime business district
 - ◆ underground the overhead wires
 - ◆ establish a uniform sidewalk design standard for the downtown district
 - ◆ provide more greenery
 - ◆ promote daily litter clean-up
 - ◆ install a boulevard treatment on Cumberland Street from Courthouse Square to the River bridge
 - ◆ connect the planned railroad trail network with downtown
 - ◆ use lowland areas adjacent to the river for more park and recreation facilities
 - ◆ improve sidewalks to make the area pedestrian-friendly