

Downtown Louisville Framework Plan

Adopted
2 March 1999

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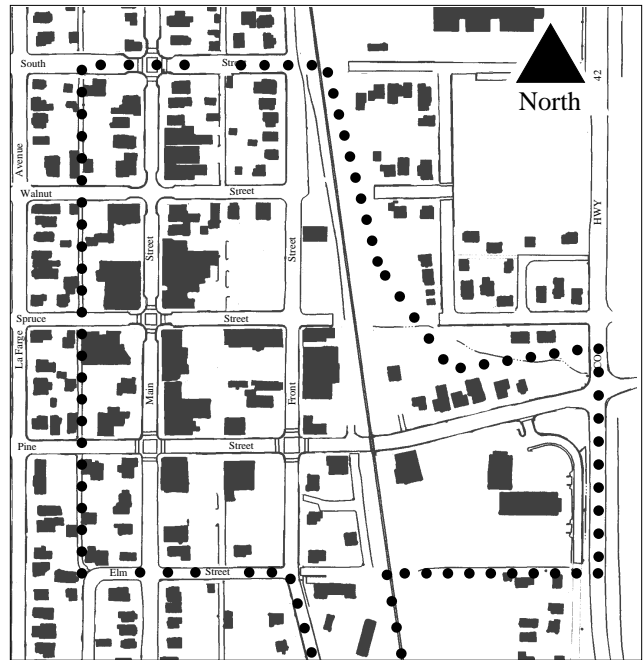
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Introduction

Louisville's historic downtown area is a special asset to the community. As such, it should be preserved, protected and enhanced. Recently, there have been several changes and developments in the downtown and surrounding area. These changes highlight critical planning issues related to quality of life, development, architectural design, parking and traffic in the downtown area. Thus, in addressing these issues, it is important that the City establish a clear vision for the role of downtown in the larger community and region.

Downtown Louisville is situated between several large, developing activity centers. Centennial Valley is a vibrant suburban style office/retail center located at US 36 and McCaslin Boulevard. There is convenient access between downtown and Centennial Valley. The Colorado Technological Center (CTC) is a burgeoning office/industrial center located less than one mile southeast of downtown Louisville. The CTC promises to be a major employment center. In addition, construction of a major regional mall and office park is underway at the new 96th Street/US 36 interchange. The recent opening of this interchange has provided better access to downtown Louisville via US 36 and the Interlocken area. Rapid residential growth continues in neighboring communities, representing expanding markets for retail, office, hotel and other commercial development in the area.

Along with the growth occurring in the surrounding commercial districts, interest in redevelopment of the historic downtown core area has increased. This renewed interest presents great opportunities for downtown to continue as a viable commercial area. It is clear that downtown will have a special role in the community as the population expands. Part of that role will be to accommodate professional offices, specialty retail and some housing.



Downtown Louisville follows the Commercial Community and Commercial Business zoning districts.

The Planning Process

In light of recent local and regional development forces, as well as the community's general desire to maintain and enhance the historic downtown area, City Council initiated a downtown planning study to clarify the mission for downtown.

Downtown is an important asset to the community as a whole. It contributes greatly to the character that makes Louisville a special place. Downtown business and property owners, as well as formal groups such as the Downtown Business Association, Historic Oldtown Louisville Association, Louisville Historical Commission, the Louisville Arts and Humanities and the Louisville Chamber of Commerce all have a special interest in maintaining downtown as a successful and viable commercial district. Residents who live in the areas immediately surrounding downtown also have a significant interest in and concern for the downtown core area.

In the spring of 1997, at an open public workshop held in the Louisville Public Library, participants identified the primary issues of concern and general project goals for the downtown area. Because of the various interest groups and the general desire of the City to have open and inclusive public involvement, the Mayor and City Council appointed a Steering committee to oversee the framework plan and design guidelines process for downtown Louisville. This committee was appointed later in 1997.

Toward the end of January 1998, the Steering Committee members, the urban design and historic preservation consulting firm of Winter & Company and City Staff hosted a two-day public workshop and design charrette at the historic Louisville Center for the Arts in Memory Square Park. Many community members offered their input and ideas over these two days to create a vision for the future of the downtown area. The discussion that took place at this workshop focused on broad planning issues for downtown, with a particular focus on issues related to architectural scale and character. This community visioning process is the basis for many of the recommendations included in this plan and for the development of Downtown Design Guidelines.

Recommendations on the Framework Plan and Design Guidelines were forwarded to the Planning Commission and City Council in mid-1998. Additional public workshops were held to publicly review the guidelines and other policy recommendations for the downtown area. Finally, recommendations made by the Steering Committee were forwarded to the City's Planning Commission, who then forwarded a recommendation to City Council for final action.



In spring 1997, area residents participated in a public workshop where they discussed what the issues facing downtown were.



In early 1998, area residents again participated in a series of public workshops in which strategies were identified for improving the character of downtown.

Project Scope

This document provides a brief description of the key organizational systems influencing downtown. Included in the Framework Plan are strategies for implementing the overall goals for downtown. The Plan also discusses policies for circulation, land use, public and private parking, public facilities and public and private sector design. Specific policies and actions will be articulated to facilitate the implementation of the overall goals. The Framework Plan is organized into the following nine sections:

1. *General Streetscape Proposals*
2. *Gateways, Parks & Public Spaces*
3. *Pedestrian, Bicycle & Transit Systems*
4. *Automobile Circulation*
5. *Parking*
6. *Public Sign System*
7. *Public Art Plan*
8. *Architectural Scale & Character*
9. *Residential-Commercial Mixed Use Component*

Each section addresses a key organizational system component. Within each component is a discussion on goals and policies for downtown with suggested courses of action.

Issues

Several primary issues have been identified through this planning process:

Development Vision

Downtown lacks a defined development vision, the result of which may be a loss of identity and historic character.

Increasing traffic and parking demand places pressure on property owners to demolish existing structures leading to erosion of the pedestrian experience. Downtown Denver, for example, demolished many historic buildings to make room for parking, resulting in a diminished pedestrian experience.

Balancing Traditions With New Development

One broad reaching issue is how the city can maintain historic character and balance livability issues with an enhancement of a viable business environment.

At the forefront of this broad issue is development intensity. How can vitality be encouraged downtown without diminishing what makes downtown so special? Development intensity impacts historic character, parking and pedestrian and automobile traffic.

Preservation of Historic Resources

Renewed enthusiasm for downtown has also raised awareness of the need to ensure that new development, redevelopment and restoration are in keeping with the historic scale and character of the downtown area.

Zoning Restrictions

The lack of comprehensive zoning and design regulations to ensure that downtown character is maintained is of great concern. Furthermore, current zoning has resulted in an absence of residential uses in the downtown commercial district.

Potential Parking Demand

Adequate future parking supply has been identified as a primary issue. Although parking supply is adequate to serve existing development downtown, future development will result in a parking deficit if current parking and transit policies remain unchanged.

Circulation Constraints

Automotive access continues to be a major concern in relation to downtown. Striking the right balance between access and livability concerns is an important issue so as to ensure that the historic character and pedestrian feel of downtown is not negatively impacted.

Increased Regional Traffic

While regional developments have the potential for reducing the commercial viability of downtown, they also represent an expanded market for the downtown area to capitalize upon. The opening of the new 96th Street/StorageTek Drive interchange has provided increased accessibility that can be capitalized on in creating expanded markets for downtown businesses.

Public Information

There is also a need for increased information about downtown. This includes way-finding signs and marketing downtown as a place.

Overall Project Goals

Based on these issues, the following were established as project goals for the Framework Plan:

- ☞ Downtown should develop in a manner that enhances its traditional character.
- ☞ Enhance downtown for all users.
- ☞ Create a positive climate for investment.
- ☞ Be inclusive of the varied community interests and interest groups.
- ☞ Balance livability concerns and economic viability.
- ☞ Balance the interests of public and private groups.

A Framework for Downtown

The Vision

Downtown Louisville is an asset to the community; its attributes are unique to this area. These attributes include its pedestrian friendly nature, small-scale character and colorful history. The community has defined a vision for downtown that seeks to preserve and enhance these attributes.

The vision for downtown Louisville:

THAT IT WILL BE A VITAL COMMUNITY CENTER FOR PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED ACTIVITY, INCLUDING SPECIALTY RETAIL, PROFESSIONAL OFFICES AND HOUSING THAT WILL OCCUR IN A MANNER THAT IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE TRADITIONAL SCALE AND CHARACTER OF THE AREA.

Existing Conditions

Most properties in the downtown core exhibit traditional rectangular building forms with flat roofs. These structures are generally built to the sidewalk edge. On the edges of the core, however, many buildings adjacent to surrounding residential neighborhoods still retain their residential character, while now housing commercial uses. Buildings in these areas that transition to adjacent residential areas are often setback from the sidewalk edge.

Parking is adequate for existing downtown development. Residential uses are not permitted "by right" in the commercial area. The downtown area has been improved recently with several public investments in streetscaping and infrastructure.

Illustrative Plan for Downtown

This sketch plan (appendix A) is a brief introduction to all of the components of the Framework Plan and how it all comes together in an experience called "Downtown Louisville."

Key Recommendations

- ❑ Develop formal urban design and architectural guidelines for the downtown commercial area that can be applied during the City's Planned Unit Development (PUD) review process. These guidelines should ensure that the historic scale and character of the downtown streetscape is maintained.
- ❑ Revise the City's current zoning ordinance for opportunities to develop downtown as a mixed use, specialty center that is active with offices, service business and specialty retail uses in the downtown commercial area.
- ❑ Ensure that there are adequate public spaces that help identify and define the character of downtown. This analysis will include a discussion of possible future park acquisitions that could enhance downtown.
- ❑ Ensure that adequate access to downtown is maintained without allowing traffic to become a detriment to downtown character.
- ❑ Enhance alternative modes of access into downtown, including public transit, trail connections and pedestrian access.
- ❑ Develop a downtown parking strategy that will be in balance with an overall vision for downtown. This strategy will address the following: public versus private parking, automobile and parking demand reduction, appropriate funding mechanisms, customer parking, employee parking, enforcement and design standards.
- ❑ Establish an improvement district to implement key recommendations. Fundamentally, the improvement district should fund construction of parking facilities that will meet the obligations of property owners to provide parking. Creation of this district should precede any further public investments.
- ❑ Ensure that priority is given to historic preservation planning.

1 General Streetscape Proposals

The Streetscape Concept

The pedestrian oriented feel of the streetscape establishes much of the character of downtown. Pedestrian friendly or pedestrian oriented refers to the scale and design of the streetscape. The design, building mass and orientation of the buildings along the street define one component of the streetscape. Another component is the public aspect: the street design, sidewalk design, landscaping, parking design and various furnishings such as light poles, signs, seating areas and bike racks. The design of the public streetscape helps to define the character of downtown and provides design continuity. Streetscaping also helps to identify connections and linkages between components within downtown and surrounding activity areas.

Existing Conditions

In the downtown area, the orientation of buildings to the street varies. In the core commercial area along Main Street, most of the buildings are set at the property line, adjacent to the sidewalk. As one moves further north or south on Main Street and toward Front Street, many of the buildings are set back further from the sidewalk, with a landscaped area between the sidewalk and the building. Many of the structures that are further set back were historically residential, but may now be used commercially.



Historic buildings, modern infills and parking make up much of the current character of downtown Louisville.

Historic light poles and street furniture are currently in place along most core streets. Brick paving and concrete have been incorporated into the street design of several intersections. Sidewalks and the landscaping along these walks have also been improved.



Recently the City of Louisville has undertaken a series of downtown improvements, including street lights, trash receptacles, signs and decorative paving.

Trends

Recognizing the benefits of enhancing the public streetscape, the City is continuing an ongoing investment in downtown streetscape improvements within the public right-of-way. Historic lampposts, street trees within tree grates, brick sidewalk crossings of streets and bench seating are the prime components of such public improvements. Over the past several years, the City has invested over \$3 million in public improvements for the enhancement of downtown. These public improvements include utilities, roadway and sidewalk rehabilitation and reconstruction, streetscaping, parking and the construction of a public plaza at Spruce and Front Streets.

Issues

Current zoning for downtown does not identify a distinction between the historically commercial and residential areas of downtown. There are no required setbacks along the sidewalk or side property lines. This may result in a uniform, commercial streetscape with buildings situated on the sidewalk edge throughout the entirety of downtown. This could significantly alter the presently varied building orientation and setback. Currently, no guidelines exist requiring private property owners to address an overall downtown streetscaping scheme or other public physical improvements. Nor do formal incentives exist for property owners to enhance the streetscape.

Recommendations

The streetscape design improvements currently being used should be continued. The emphasis on streetscape design should be focused on locating the downtown commercial area. The street trees, light posts, benches and brick pavers are appropriate pedestrian friendly designs.

A public art and downtown sign program also should be included as enhancements to the current level of public improvements. Additional efforts should be made to enhance pedestrian seating and to encourage or create areas for outdoor seating along the sidewalk.

The same streetscape elements should be used throughout the downtown commercial and residential area, but in a "hierarchical" nature: the most intense streetscape should be along Main Street from South to Elm Streets. Streetscape elements should "thin out" from this corridor. Special areas, such as the proposed Festival Street, are discussed below.

The Festival Street

A special feature has been identified as part of the streetscaping program. A two block area on Spruce and Front Streets between Main and Front Streets and Spruce and Walnut Streets should be developed as a "Festival Street" that may be closed to traffic on special event days (see appendix A). It would be related to the overall streetscaping program but would serve a highly specialized function.

This area should serve as a primary location for public events such as art festivals, fairs, musical performances and other similar events. The location is ideal in that it is readily accessible to existing primary public parking lots and would connect two main public buildings, City Hall and the Library. The Festival Street would be defined with additional streetscape enhancements. A "mini-park" pedestrian plaza area at its eastern end along Front Street is already under construction. The plaza would serve as the eastern terminus for the Festival Street and as a staging area for certain types of events.

Linkages to Public Parking Areas

Of critical importance in addressing streetscape design is the relationship to possible outlying parking areas. As future parking areas are identified on the perimeter of downtown, it will be important to continue streetscape improvements to these outlying parking lots. Those improvements will provide both physical and visual connections to the core area. These connections should be pedestrian friendly. Landscaping should be extended along these connections to enhance the pedestrian experience and encourage the use of outlying parking facilities.

Linkages to Parks and Trails

Similarly, streetscape improvements should be used to link downtown to nearby trail systems such as the Coal Creek Trail on the south end of downtown. Such linkages will help integrate downtown into the rest of the community and to neighboring communities.

Where there are public parks, such as Memory Square Park, Louisville Center for the Arts and the Louisville Sports Complex, or other public or institutional facilities, such as schools and churches, that are close to the downtown commercial core area, streetscape improvements should be considered to identify those connections and linkages. If gateway parks are acquired and improved, it will be important to provide streetscape improvements to connect those areas with the core downtown area.

Alley Streetscape

Alleys are also part of the pedestrian streetscape environment. They are used for pedestrian access through downtown and often provide primary or secondary access to buildings. Attention should be given to the alley streetscape to ensure that alleys function adequately for service activities and also present a clean and pleasant pedestrian environment. Adequate lighting should be provided to create a safe and comfortable evening environment while not intruding upon residences outside the commercial district.

Outdoor amenities within private developments should be considered to add vitality and interest to alleys. Trash enclosures should be appropriately screened. The mass and scale of buildings and setbacks to alleys should also be closely considered and addressed in the design guidelines.

Goals

- ☞ Create a streetscaping program that encourages the community to identify with downtown as its heart.
- ☞ Implement an overall streetscaping scheme that enhances the downtown experience.
- ☞ Provide a streetscaping scheme that promotes connecting downtown to other activity centers in the City and across the region.
- ☞ Use streetscaping elements to contribute to and define the overall downtown character.
- ☞ Utilize an amended zoning code and downtown design guidelines to promote private sector contributions to the streetscape.
- ☞ Encourage alley use by a variety of users through appropriate streetscaping elements.

Policies

- ☞ Streetscaping elements should invite pedestrian activity.
- ☞ Streetscaping should have a sense of continuity throughout downtown, yet have some variation to identify different areas and different uses.
- ☞ Variety in building orientation is desirable and should be preserved and encouraged through design guidelines and an amended zoning ordinance.
- ☞ Outlying parking lots should be linked to downtown with enhanced pedestrian-friendly streetscaping.
- ☞ The 900 block of Spruce Street and the 800 block of Front Street should be developed as a Festival Street.
- ☞ Private sector contributions to the streetscape adjacent to their property should use materials consistent with existing or proposed public streetscape elements.
- ☞ Streetscaping elements should be designed to provide a clear distinction between the commercial district and surrounding residential areas while still conveying continuity across both areas.
- ☞ Where applicable, streetscaping should be consistent with the *City of Louisville Landscape Beautification Master Plan*.

Tasks

- Continue and complete the current City-sponsored public streetscape program.
- Establish overall streetscaping standards.
- Develop the Festival Street.
- As streets and alleys are improved, bury above ground utilities.
- Specify street furniture concepts.
- Expand streetscaping to provide linkages to downtown gateways and trail connections.
- Pine Street between Highway 42 and Front Street should be improved with streetscape design elements that link this gateway to downtown.
- Provide a streetscape connection to the downtown gateway at South Boulder Road and Main Street. Improvements along the street and at the intersection will help to define this downtown gateway.
- Determine methods of encouraging private contributions to the public streetscape.
- Establish design standards for newspaper dispensers.
- Determine appropriate locations for newspaper dispensers.
- An alley streetscape program should be considered.

2 Gateways, Parks & Public Spaces

Existing Conditions

Four major gateways exist into downtown: the intersection of South Boulder Road and Main Street is the north gateway; the intersection of Pine Street and Highway 42 is the east gateway; the south gateway is located along County Road at the historic grain elevator site; and the west gateway is along Pine Street, generally adjacent to the Treehaven subdivision.

Trends

There is dramatic residential and commercial development in areas surrounding downtown. This creates opportunities to enhance affected gateways. With regional development increasing and the possible construction of a Highway 42/96th Street connection south of downtown, the presentation of the eastern gateway becomes vital. This proposed bypass may alter the physical characteristics of the southern gateway. Increasing development in the Centennial Valley/McCaslin Boulevard area will result in more traffic traveling through the western gateway on Pine Street. Growth in eastern Boulder County is contributing to increased traffic volume on South Boulder Road.



Gateways, such as this one in Silverthorne, CO, help to clearly identify routes into downtown.

Issues

Although the four identified gateways into downtown function as such, they are not clearly identified. As a result, when passing by one of these gateways, one may not realize downtown is nearby.

Recommendations

The eastern gateway should be designed to identify the presence of downtown and should receive high priority, especially if a bypass is constructed. If the proposed bypass includes eliminating County Road/96th Street as a through street into downtown from the south, the eastern gateway will become even more important as a gateway to downtown.

The *City of Louisville Landscape Beautification Master Plan* offers specific proposals for enhancing two downtown gateways: Highway 42 at Pine Street and South Boulder Road at Main Street. The intent of these proposals is to create unique landscape features that identify downtown Louisville as a destination. The design proposes planting a traditional single row of trees along the street edge, with stone walls at the street corners used to retain large displays of colorful planting and/or art and sculpture. Public art and/or sculpture parks could be located at the city-owned parcel at the intersection with South Boulder Road and Main Street as a means of identifying the presence of downtown.

The south gateway at Front Street (where the historic grain elevator is located) should be designed to include a trail link between the Coal Creek Trail and downtown. The western gateway brings traffic from the Centennial Valley area into downtown. With the volume of traffic in this area, it is important to design this gateway so as to identify to motorists that they are entering the downtown area.

The *City of Louisville Landscape Beautification Master Plan* suggests a general design for other downtown gateways and downtown "way-finding" intersections. This design consists of a stone wall with features and landscaping adapted to downtown theme elements.

Parks & Public Spaces

There is only one official City Park in the downtown commercial area. The City owns a small amount of land at the intersection of Highway 42 and Pine Street at both the northwest and southwest corners. This land currently has some downtown identification signs and a historic coal cart but few other physical improvements. Memory Square Park is within walking distance to the downtown area—only 700-feet west of Main and Spruce Streets. Within Memory Square Park is the Louisville Center for the Arts. A sliver of land at the southeast corner of South Boulder Road and Main Street is city-owned. Land at the southwest corner of this intersection is currently unplatted and zoned for low-density residential development.

The downtown commercial area lacks significant public spaces. Public spaces and plazas provided through private developments should be encouraged.

The City has commenced construction of a mini-park pedestrian plaza at the eastern southern termini of the Festival Street at Front and Spruce Streets (see appendix A). This plaza will accentuate the proposed Festival Street and provide a public gathering point downtown. This location works nicely because it links City Hall, the library and Memory Square Park together while being conveniently accessible to major parking areas.



Civic Plaza in Boulder, Colorado, is an excellent example of a "festival street" open to vehicular traffic during the week but closed on weekends for a farmer's market.

Goals

- ☞ Clearly identify entry points into downtown.
- ☞ Provide public parks and public spaces for downtown users.
- ☞ Encourage both the public and private development of public spaces to promote outdoor activities and public assembly.
- ☞ Expand the use of plazas and public spaces in private development.

Policies

- ☞ Gateway improvements should be consistent with the *City of Louisville Landscape Beautification Master Plan*.
- ☞ A small park area should be developed to improve the appearance of the vital eastern downtown gateway.
- ☞ Landscaping should be somewhat differentiated from the rest of the City as a means of identifying downtown.
- ☞ Integrate the Arts Center and Memory Square Park into the overall downtown parks and public spaces plan.
- ☞ Existing and proposed parks and public spaces should be integrated into the downtown pedestrian and streetscape system.
- ☞ Street improvements should be expanded to provide visual linkages from gateways to the downtown area.
- ☞ Bonuses for providing public spaces should be considered in the Downtown Design Guidelines.

Tasks

- ☐ Design downtown gateways that were not specifically addressed in the *City of Louisville Landscape Beautification Master Plan*.
- ☐ Identify possible property acquisitions for the development of gateways and parks.
- ☐ Determine a prioritized plan for the development of all gateways.
- ☐ Develop a landscape master plan for downtown.
- ☐ Identify mechanisms to encourage private sector contributions to the development of public spaces.

3 *Pedestrian, Bicycle & Transit Systems*

Introduction

The City has constructed a network of pedestrian and bicycle trails throughout Louisville; some of which link with downtown. The pedestrian and bicycle systems are vital in achieving the desired character and feel of downtown. This is not only because residents desire a pedestrian-oriented downtown, but also because a downtown of this type should de-emphasize the automobile. Improving these systems will encourage alternative means of arriving downtown and will reduce the impact of the automobile.

Existing Conditions

Pedestrian Use

The majority of residents walking to downtown come from their homes in nearby neighborhoods, primarily from the north and west. Pine, Spruce and Elm Streets are major pedestrian collector routes. Main Street, through the commercial core, experiences the highest level of pedestrian traffic while Walnut and South Streets, as well as southbound on Main Street, are secondary routes. However, during the week, most pedestrians arrive downtown via automobile.

Bicycle Use

The most common bicycle route into downtown is from the west along Pine Street. Primary bike routes exist along Elm Street, coming from the southwest; along Front Street/County Road, coming from the south; and along Empire Road, between Lafayette and Louisville. Coming to downtown from South Boulder Road along Main Street as well as traveling north and south along Jefferson Street are important secondary bicycle routes. Local bicycle trails and the middle school are important contributors to bicycle traffic in downtown.

Transit Use

Important bus routes currently exist along South Boulder Road between Boulder and Lafayette, as well as regional lines along US 36. The Regional Transportation District (RTD) has proposed a transit facility at the 96th Street interchange with US 36. The US 36 Major Investment Study (US 36 MIS) preliminarily contemplates a commuter rail line between Boulder and Downtown Denver that would follow the existing railroad route that traverses downtown.

Issues

Outlying trails and bicycle routes do not clearly connect to downtown and lack directional information. Presently, bicycle parking options downtown are limited. No bus route directly connects downtown to the regional bus routes along US 36.

Recommendations

The pedestrian system should be organized along enhanced sidewalks throughout the core area. This should act as the skeleton on which development occurs. Key pedestrian routes are those that link major civic and parking facilities with buildings in the business community. Strong pedestrian connections should be provided between any outlying parking lot network and the core area. The priority for extending the existing pedestrian system should be along those streets that would link the public parking lots with commercial activity areas.

Trail corridor connections to downtown should be improved with bicycle circulation patterns in mind. Because a significant amount of bicycle traffic occurs on 96th Street, connections to 96th Street and US 36 should be provided and enhanced. A transit facility is planned for the 96th Street interchange with US 36, making this corridor even more important for enhanced bicycle access.

The Coal Creek Trail is a major bicycle and pedestrian route that can link Centennial Valley and the City of Lafayette with Louisville's historic downtown. The trail currently has a missing link south of downtown. On-street connections should be designed to link the Coal Creek Trail with downtown. Similarly, several major trail corridors exist in the neighborhoods west of downtown. These trails should be connected to downtown via existing streets and should be clearly signed. All trail connections downtown should be safe, accessible and comfortable to the user.

Public transit service should be enhanced, especially if development densities increase. More importantly, public transit options should be increased to reduce parking demand and traffic volume.

Workshop participants suggested considering high frequency, small-scale circulator buses that would link downtown to other commercial centers. While this concept is desirable, it may not be feasible due to its cost in a downtown area of this scale. However, as regional development increases, RTD may consider route realignments or add routes that could provide strong linkages to downtown.

A major transit stop, such as an attractive bus shelter, should be included in concepts for downtown. It would act as a focus for some of the transit routes that may converge in the downtown area. The ideal would be to incorporate this facility along the edges of one of the public parking facilities proposed in this framework plan. A transit connection with the proposed transit facility at the 96th interchange also would be important.

If a commuter rail line that would travel through downtown Louisville is implemented, the City should pursue a downtown stop. A rail stop should be incorporated into the downtown framework and be integrated into any comprehensive downtown transit facility.

Goals

- ☞ Create an environment that gives priority to pedestrians and alternative modes of transportation.
- ☞ Strengthen and enhance pedestrian connections throughout downtown.
- ☞ Connect the existing trail system to downtown.
- ☞ Ensure that downtown Louisville is a destination along regional transit routes such as commuter rail.
- ☞ Provide a major public transit stop.
- ☞ Facilitate public transit as a viable option for commuting to and from downtown.

Policies

- 👉 Development should enhance, not diminish pedestrian connections throughout downtown.
 - In making a connection between existing trail systems and downtown, priority should be placed on providing a safe and convenient path between the Coal Creek Trail and downtown.
- 👉 The City should endeavor to encourage alternative means of transportation to and from downtown.
- 👉 Bicycle racks should be aesthetically integrated with downtown street furniture and should be of consistent design.
 - Racks should not impede pedestrian access or building ingress and egress.
- 👉 Any future major transit stop should be located adjacent to a public parking facility.

Tasks

- Provide additional bicycle parking racks.
- Construct the missing link along the Coal Creek Trail.
- Construct a trail link between downtown and the Coal Creek Trail.
- Identify potential locations for a downtown transit stop.
- Continue to work with RTD to promote adequate transit service downtown.
- Pursue a commuter rail stop in conjunction with the US 36 MIS if it is decided that a commuter rail line should traverse downtown Louisville.
- Coordinate with the City Parks and Recreation Department and Boulder County Open Space to improve trail connections to downtown.

4 Automobile Circulation

The Role of Automobile Circulation

The automobile is the primary means of transportation utilized by the customers and employees of a small town downtown. Its effects can have both positive and negative impacts on the downtown environment. Consideration is necessarily given to regional through traffic as well as traffic destined for downtown when dealing with automobile circulation.

Existing Conditions

The City performed traffic counts in the downtown area during 1997. The following volumes indicate number of vehicles per day in both directions:

- Over 16,000 vehicles per day travel along Pine Street at the railroad crossing;
- County Road just south of Elm Street saw about 6,000 vehicles per day traveling through this point;
- Thirty-eight hundred vehicles traveled through Roosevelt Avenue daily;
- On Main Street just south of South Boulder Road, 5,500 vehicles per day were counted.

Workshop participants identified the Pine Street and Front Street intersection as the most deficient downtown intersection in terms of capacity.

Downtown lies between several local focal points of activity: Centennial Valley on the west, the South Boulder Road commercial centers on the north and northeast, the Colorado Tech Center and development surrounding the 96th Street interchange.

Via Appia has been identified as the primary route into downtown through the western gateway. Approximately 10,000 vehicles per day travel along this street with 3,600 entering and exiting Pine Street at Via Appia.

Typical evening automobile trips come from the west, Pine Street to Main Street and from the north, South Boulder Road to downtown. Typical daytime trips proceed down five major routes listed in order of frequency as identified by workshop participants:

- ❶ From the east: Highway 42 to Pine Street either traveling to StorageTek via Front Street or west into downtown;
- ❷ From the south: along Front Street/County Road either to downtown or over to Highway 42;
- ❸ From the west: along Pine Street either to downtown or the post office;
- ❹ From the south: along Elm Street;
- ❺ From the north: along Main Street.

During the latter part of 1998, the City commissioned a traffic study (appendix B) to determine existing level of service (LOS) for downtown roadways and intersections and project future LOS. The study attempted to define that level of floor area ratio that could be absorbed downtown without adversely impacting the LOS of downtown roadways and intersections. Several options that varied either the distribution of floor area across downtown or the type of potential 96th Street/Highway 42 connector were studied. The traffic study discussed traffic mitigation measures that would likely be required at particular downtown development density thresholds. Generally, the study concluded that increasing downtown floor area by greater than 45 percent over what exists today would require various mitigation measures for the downtown roadway network. Furthermore, building all of downtown to the densities seen as desirable in terms of architectural scale and character (see Chapter 8, Architectural Scale & Character) would require mitigation that would alter several existing roadways and intersections.

Trends

As indicated by traffic counts at Pine and Front Street, this intersection will become increasingly congested as local and regional traffic increases. Continued regional development and new traffic patterns may result in increased congestion at Pine and Main Streets. Increased development in surrounding activity focal points, as well as the proposed regional mall south of downtown at US 36 and 96th Street, promise to generate a significant volume of traffic moving in a north-south direction in proximity to downtown.

Issues

A significant concern raised by public workshop participants was that automobile traffic not be detrimental to downtown.

An alternative proposal that has been suggested to alleviate traffic congestion at Front and Pine Streets is to construct a bypass that would directly connect Highway 42 with 96th Street, south of downtown. While this would have the benefit of relieving traffic pressure on the downtown area, it could also reduce the benefit of traffic traveling through downtown that leads to increased exposure for downtown businesses. The advantage of the current north-south circulation pattern is that it is good for business exposure. The disadvantages are that it mixes through traffic with motorists who are seeking to visit downtown and other local traffic and is a detriment to the pedestrian nature of downtown. The proposed Northwest Parkway south of downtown may also impact downtown traffic patterns.

The traffic study in appendix B discusses traffic mitigation measures that would likely be required at particular downtown development density thresholds. Workshop participants generally expressed a desire to preserve downtown traffic levels closely to those experienced today. An overall floor area ratio above 0.52 for new development would likely require mitigation measures such as new turn lanes and traffic signals downtown. These mitigation measures could be contrary to the desires expressed in the public workshops.

Recommendations

Workshop participants desire to discourage "through" traffic while encouraging "to" traffic. Additionally, residents of surrounding downtown neighborhoods sought traffic-calming methods.

The western gateway should be designed to help identify to motorists that they are entering the downtown area and alert them to available services since this gateway has been identified as the primary route into downtown.

Roads and intersections should not generally be expanded downtown, particularly when it would impact the historic and existing pedestrian character and ambiance downtown.

The proposed new bypass presents an opportunity to provide regional identification for downtown at the eastern gateway.

Goals

- ☞ Keep traffic in balance, such that the role and character of downtown is enhanced, not diminished.
 - Further discussion on north-south circulation should occur, especially in regards to the possibility that a bypass may be constructed.
 - ☞ Preserve downtown as a pedestrian-friendly zone and maintain its existing and historic character and ambiance.
- ☞ Traffic should not be unreasonably disruptive to surrounding neighborhoods.
 - ☞ Traffic calming devices, such as medians and raised crosswalks, should be considered in surrounding residential areas.
 - ☞ Reduce traffic impacts by encouraging alternative modes of transportation.

Policies

- ☞ Automobile circulation should serve the functions of downtown and not dictate them.
 - ☞ Permissible overall downtown development density should be consistent with the goal of ensuring that traffic must not diminish the historic and existing character and ambiance of downtown.
 - ☞ An overall downtown traffic management plan should avoid widening streets to accommodate increased automobile traffic.
 - ☞ Any redesign of congested intersections should maintain integrity of urban design concepts, paying particular attention to enhancing and strengthening the pedestrian character of the area.
- ☞ Gateways to downtown should be further defined to improve visibility for automobile travelers.
 - ☞ Automobile access from Centennial Valley and the commercial centers to the north, northeast and south of downtown should be direct and convenient.
 - ☞ Properties adjacent to the eastern gateway at Pine Street and Highway 42 should be subject to the same urban design concepts as the rest of downtown to attract customers from the surrounding region to patronize downtown.
 - ☞ Automobile circulation should promote pedestrian safety.

Tasks

- Consistent with the results of the traffic study provided in appendix B, adopt a zoning code amendment that would set the maximum floor area in the core and transition areas west of the railroad tracks at approximately 354,000 square feet.
- Evaluate the speed limit through downtown.
- Identify methods of mitigating negative traffic impacts in surrounding residential areas.
- Evaluate traffic calming techniques as necessary to reduce vehicle speed through adjoining residential neighborhoods.
- Consider methods for promoting pedestrian safety.
- Work with adjacent jurisdictions and other regional transportation and planning agencies to ensure that automobile traffic does not have negative impacts on the livability and viability of downtown.
- Work with adjacent jurisdictions and other regional transportation and planning agencies to maintain adequate automobile access to downtown and ensure that regional traffic does not become detrimental to downtown.

5 Parking

Existing Conditions

In summer 1997, City Staff conducted a parking space inventory and utilization study (appendix C). From this study, it was determined that there were 853 parking spaces in the study area. The study area included the area east of the railroad tracks. Of this total, 343 spaces were in private parking lots or were private spaces accessed off of alleys and 510 spaces were in public lots or on-street. At the time of this study, peak parking demand was approximately 70 percent of capacity.

In late 1998, City Staff conducted a parking usage survey to determine downtown parking turnover. Thirty-one percent of the public parking supply was devoted to long-term parking. Based on the results from long-term parking in public parking spaces, the survey qualitatively estimated that 57 percent of public and private parking supply downtown was used for long-term parking. Vehicles parking for one hour constituted 8 percent of the public parking supply. Generally, frequent parking turnover occurred on Main and Spruce Streets and the Library parking lot, with more long-term parking occurring on the other east-west streets, Front Street and public parking lots.

The fact that public lots are centrally located is an asset to downtown. Prior to June 1997, City parking code exempted properties in the Central Business District (the area of downtown between South Street, the railroad tracks, Elm Street and the alley west of Main Street) from meeting off-street parking requirements. Loading spaces were required. While there was no formal parking requirement prior to June 1997, many sites did and continue to provide some of their own parking. Prior to implementing parking requirements downtown, existing private parking spaces were vulnerable to elimination as some buildings were expanded. In June 1997, the City adopted the Commercial Development Design Standards and Guidelines (CDDSG). Parking requirements in that document are presently applicable to downtown. However these requirements were adopted as an interim measure, with the intent to allow time to implement parking requirements unique to serving downtown needs.

Projections

Based on the previously referenced parking study, City Staff estimated existing parking demand generation to project future parking demand based on various downtown build-out scenarios. A parking demand generation rate of 2.5 spaces per 1,000 gross square feet of building area was arrived at based upon this study. It is important to note that as development increases, presently available parking supply will inevitably be far exceeded by future parking demand as development increases downtown.

Issues

Participants in the public workshops identified parking as a major issue. One significant concern is the shrinking supply of available parking as downtown development increases. This is caused both by the loss of private parking spaces and the increase in parking demand. Participants indicated that downtown employees are not using lots, rather they are parking in customer-oriented, on-street public parking close to their place of employment. Concern is that employee parking takes away from short-term customer parking. Therefore, parking management is presently as much of an issue as supply. Although providing adequate parking is a major concern, it is clear that participants want parking to be subordinate to the overall downtown vision, which is pedestrian-oriented.

While on-site parking provides for some of the parking demand generated downtown, existing development patterns may cause difficulties for expansion plans in some situations. Present parking requirements do not permit the flexibility that some property and business owners may need in providing parking, such as providing required parking off-site.

Existing parking capacity is significantly below projected demand based on downtown development potential. Projected parking demand was based upon downtown build-out scenarios (see appendix D). These build-out and parking scenarios were evaluated by the Steering Committee. Even in the lowest intensity build-out scenario, and with a conservative parking-to-building ratio, the existing parking supply could be exceeded in the short term. A key issue therefore is where and how to provide additional parking to meet future demand and how to balance development. In providing additional parking, a distinction must be made between customer parking versus employee parking. It has been a long-standing City policy to provide parking for downtown customers but not employees.

The fundamental issues are that, as currently zoned, parking demand will well exceed the City's ability to fund additional parking spaces, and that providing all the necessary parking spaces generated by current zoning would destroy the character of downtown.

The City has, to date, provided 510 public spaces downtown in either public parking lots or on-street parking spaces. It is unusual for a city with a small downtown such as Louisville's to be providing so many parking spaces. The City alone cannot afford to provide the number of parking spaces required as the density of downtown development increases.

Proposals

In general, a 700-foot walking distance is considered reasonable for pedestrians in a downtown commercial area the size of Louisville. The parking lot at Spruce and Front Streets is centrally located, allowing for easy walking access to nearly all of downtown. Parking lots at Spruce and Front Streets, and a future acquisition of property elsewhere within the core area, should be focused for retail-oriented parking catering to shoppers and customers. Employee parking could be located along the eastern side of Front Street and along the railroad tracks as there is presently low intensity development in these areas. Employees should primarily utilize these remote parking lots. Key lots for employee parking could be developed to the east of Front and Elm Streets and potentially on the eastern side of the railroad tracks off Pine Street. The choice of remote parking lot locations may also relate to the results of a traffic study for the area. Private funding mechanisms would be required to develop employee-oriented parking facilities in these proposed areas.

The existing municipal lot at the northwest corner of Spruce and Front Streets could be a suitable location for structured parking. Presently, sixty-six public spaces are provided in this lot. Using a different parking configuration than the existing surface lot, space yield for a structure at Spruce and Front Streets would be approximately 160 for two levels, 240 for three levels and 320 for four levels.

Structured parking, while an option that provides the availability of centralized parking, is only one option of several which require full evaluation. The acceptable option will be the one that best responds to the parking demand based upon the targeted development density for downtown. Adequate land supply and cost of such options are critical to their evaluation.

Unfortunately parking structures are a very expensive solution for a city of Louisville's size. Therefore, parking structures are not a quick and painless solution to solving a parking shortage. Other solutions less costly than parking structures involve expanded surface parking lots, alternative modes of transportation and development limitations. Perhaps a development transitional period would allow sufficient density to support greater bus service.

A remote parking program was suggested as a means to save space in the core area by directing employee parking to outlying areas, freeing close-in parking for customers. One idea was to locate parking at or near downtown gateway points.

There are several public policy options to help address parking in a small town downtown such as Louisville. Encouraging alternative means of transportation helps reduce parking demand. Programs that count parking space equivalents for providing bicycle racks are an alternative that can help to a limited, but cumulative, extent.

Reducing the permitted density of development would have the most significant impact in reducing total demand for additional parking spaces. Creating parking requirements could serve to limit building square footage. Short-term management solutions may involve enforcement of time limits and an Eco-pass program for downtown employees. Long-term solutions may involve defining a parking district, building parking structure(s), developing remote parking lots and/or shuttle(s) for employees and utilizing downtown circulator or shuttle buses. However, in the short-term, steps should be taken to better utilize the existing public and private parking supply.

A key strategy would be to develop additional surface lots, especially for employees, so long as the traditional downtown character was not compromised. Certain surface parking lots should be planned in such a way that they could become multilevel structures in the future if this becomes necessary and desirable. Along with these options is a requirement that a parking district be established to collect and distribute monies in a fair and equitable manner.

Design Standards

From an urban design perspective, downtown parking should be consolidated into a limited number of lots and/or structures. Multiple parking lots disrupt the pedestrian streetscape and are generally a less efficient use of land.

If parking structures are indeed the solution of choice to alleviate future downtown parking problems, the structure or structures should not dominate at the street level. An interesting and lively pedestrian streetscape should be preserved. Parking structures should include street level retail and/or be architecturally designed to fit in with downtown character. Ideally one level would be constructed below grade, one at grade and two levels above grade for a total of four levels. This scale is most compatible from an urban design standpoint and is about the limit of height that most individuals will use in a downtown area of this scale.

Outlying surface parking lots should be designed with sufficient lighting, attractive landscaping and with strong pedestrian connections into the downtown area. All parking lots, whether public or private, should be buffered from the street, either by landscaping or with storefronts. Ideally, parking facilities, lots and structures would be wrapped with retail space so as to enhance the pedestrian experience as well as further animate downtown. In summary, parking should be designed in such a way that it enhances the pedestrian and architectural character of downtown.

Goals

- ☞ Manage the downtown parking supply to maximize use of spaces.
- ☞ Balance development density with a reasonable potential parking supply.
- ☞ Encourage the provision of additional public parking, such as through a cooperative effort between property owners, the business community and the City.
- ☞ Coordinate off-street parking in a manner that promotes maximum efficiency and ease of use.

Policies

A parking management program should balance the objectives of an overall vision for downtown.

- 🏠 Parking lots should be located and designed such that they do not distract from the pedestrian-oriented character of downtown.
- 🏠 Parking lots constructed adjacent to residential neighborhoods should be carefully designed to serve as transitions to these important neighborhoods.
- 🏠 Additional parking lots fronting Main Street should be discouraged.
- 🏠 Existing parking lots fronting Main Street should not be expanded.
- 🏠 Parking lots should be buffered from pedestrian ways.
- 🏠 Public transit, mixed uses that include residential uses and density restrictions should be considered as means of reducing parking demand.
- 🏠 Parking should be planned and distributed such that it serves major facilities.
- 🏠 Long-term employee parking is strongly discouraged in nearby residential areas.
- 🏠 Parking demand should be one of the determinates for establishing development policies.
- 🏠 On-site parking shall be designed consistent with this Framework Plan and Downtown design guidelines.
- 🏠 Employers should be responsible for providing employee parking.

- 🏠 When new development or a change in use triggers a requirement to provide off-street parking, coordinated off-site parking, which would be funded by the private sector, may substitute for providing on-site parking, provided such facilities and their design are consistent with this Framework Plan and Downtown design guidelines.
- 🏠 Coordinated, private off-site and shared parking should be strongly encouraged and where applicable, modifications to the required number of spaces may be considered.
- 🏠 Any off-site parking shall be located within a reasonable and safe walking distance to the use it serves.
- 🏠 Remote parking lots with access to downtown could be considered.
- 🏠 A plan for coordinated off-site parking should be subject to the planned unit development, special review use or other applicable public development review process.

Tasks

- Develop and implement a parking management program.
- Facilitate the development of future funding mechanisms for parking facilities, such as a business improvement district.
- Incorporate strong design guidelines for parking facilities into the Downtown Design Guidelines.
- Identify possible sites for future parking facilities.
- Review downtown parking requirements.

6 Public Sign System

Existing Conditions

There are several existing "Downtown Louisville" directional signs along primary local routes into downtown. The locations of the signs are generally consistent with what have been identified as major gateways or pedestrian or traffic routes into downtown.

Issues

The need for a public sign program to help identify downtown has been identified as a high priority. Downtown Louisville is very close to several major local and regional roadways, but lacks sufficient identification from those roadways. Directional signage for parking facilities is also lacking. There have been concerns raised that existing downtown directional signs are not sufficiently visible.

Recommendations

The current signage program should be expanded and the design and size of the sign should be evaluated as to its effectiveness. Opportunities to provide business identification on the public sign system should also be considered. While it may not be appropriate to identify specific business names, identifying types of business could be of assistance to the downtown area.

Opportunities exist to expand the market for downtown with additional directional signs into downtown. If gateway parks were acquired, those areas would be logical locations for public signs. Directional signage is needed near US 36 to capture some of the expanded market and increased traffic volume in that area. The City should seek to have appropriate signage located on the Northwest Parkway if it is constructed. Public parking areas and public facilities should also be identified through the expanded downtown public sign program.



Downtown signage, gone unchecked, can become an eyesore.

Goal

- ☞ Downtown signage should serve to direct, inform and promote.

Policies

- ☞ To help identify downtown, a public sign system should contribute to overall downtown character.
- ☞ A public sign program should direct people to downtown from surrounding roadways, trails and pedestrian routes.
- ☞ Downtown "way-finding" should be provided along major transportation routes.

Tasks

- Design and establish an effective public sign system.
- Identify opportunities to provide directional signage from nearby activity centers.
- Provide clear directional signs for parking and public facilities.

7 *Public Art Plan*

The Role of Public Art

Public art provides identity and regional flavor. Public art is an excellent means of establishing or enhancing the character of an area. Public art also adds to the pedestrian orientation and streetscape appeal of an area.

Existing Conditions

A sculpture of a miner representing Louisville's heritage is in place in front of City Hall and a historic coal cart is in a flower bed in a city park at Pine Street and Highway 42.

Issue

The lack of public art in the downtown area is a concern.

Recommendations

The colorful history of Old Town Louisville could be told through a public art program. Streetscape improvements should include some public art components. If the City acquires gateway parks, public art should be considered as a means of providing a design link from the gateway to the downtown core area.

Goal

- ☞ Promote public art in downtown Louisville.

Policies

- ☞ A public art program should highlight local culture from the City's past and present.
- ☞ Public art should be included in streetscape elements and downtown gateways.
- ☞ Private redevelopment projects should consider including a public art component and incentives to that end should be considered.

- ☞ Public spaces should include public art.

Tasks

- ☐ Enhance downtown with public art.
- ☐ Identify possible sites for the installation of art such as sculptures.
- ☐ Identify funding sources for a public art program.
- ☐ Coordinate a public art program with the Louisville Arts and Humanities Council.

8 *Architectural Scale & Character*

Historical Character

The Sanborn Company produced maps to establish fire insurance rates around the turn of the century. In an 1893 map, buildings were relatively evenly distributed between Front and Main Streets. The maps show a mix of residences and commercial type buildings in some blocks. The majority of buildings were of a storefront type where the front of the building was placed at the property line. Other buildings are houses and these were set back from the property line to establish front yards. The density of development was relatively low. While most lots had at least one structure on them, a great deal of open space still existed in the downtown area.

By 1900 more buildings had appeared, particularly storefront types. In other cases houses had experienced additions so that the density of building on the lot had increased to some extent. Nonetheless, vacant lots and side yards are still distinctive characteristics of the street. Buildings along Front Street remained essentially the same as they had been when mapped in 1893.

In 1908 the density of building had dramatically increased. Several larger commercial buildings including livery stables, a billiards parlor and a general store had been constructed. This reflected the growing importance of Main Street as the commercial center, although Front Street had also seen additional construction by this time. In rare cases, buildings occupied as much as 50 percent of their lot.

A 1998 map (E-1) illustrates building footprints in present-day downtown Louisville. At this time a significant number of buildings have been removed from Front Street, whereas the density of building along Main Street, particularly between Walnut and Pine Streets, has increased.

Existing Character

In general, the properties in the core area on Main Street exhibit a traditional commercial building character. They are generally rectangular buildings with flat roofs, or false fronts that suggest a flat roof and they are designed with their building fronts set at the sidewalk edge. Though this is the most common building form, there exists a wide variety of building forms and architectural styles downtown. Successful buildings are those with display windows that afford views of interior activities to sidewalk pedestrians.

While many of these buildings in the commercial district have long been commercial in use, they are housed in structures that convey their residential heritage. Being residential in character means that the buildings are set back from the street edge with front yards, have sloping roofs and porches that identify the entries of the buildings and generally are wooden structures.

Existing zoning regulations permit zero lot line development except for a 20-foot rear setback and a 29-foot maximum building height in the Old Town Commercial Community zoning district, while the Commercial Development Design Standards and Guidelines (CDDSG) apply to the Commercial Business zoning district in downtown Louisville.

Architectural Scale Preferences

Several scenarios for downtown development scale were generated during the public workshops. The following group of three scenarios illustrates alternatives for construction of buildings that convey traditional storefront character. The intent of these illustrations or models (see appendix F) is solely to demonstrate the effects of a variety of mass and scale policies on the downtown area but do not address the impacts of density on issues such as parking and pedestrian and automobile traffic. It is important to note that none of the following floor area ratios factors in habitable basement space as these scenarios were an exercise in the perception of building scale.

In these scenarios, the mass of the building is developed to the sidewalk edge, rooflines are flat and there are zero setback side lot lines with a 20-foot rear alley lot line setback.

In figure F-A1, buildings are constructed uniformly to a three-story maximum height. In this sample-modeled block, two existing one-story buildings at the street corners are assumed retained, whereas all the buildings in between are assumed redeveloped. If market conditions continue to support a strong office and retail market and if there continues to be no requirement for on-site parking, it is possible that property owners would seek to build to this scale. This scale of development contrasts sharply with the traditional one and two-story building height historically seen along the street. Calculating the building area as a ratio of the lot size, a floor area ratio of approximately 2.6 results.

Shown in figure F-A2, the second scenario reduces the floor area ratio slightly to a range between 1.8 and 2.0. To accomplish this, buildings would step down in scale as they approach smaller surrounding buildings. Three-story portions are still permitted, but a mix of one, two and three-story buildings occurs along the street. This could be achieved in a variety of manners in which the two-story building height is established as the norm and three-story buildings are permitted as exceptions only when compatibility within the surrounding context is demonstrated and when other zoning objectives are met.

In figure F-A3, the maximum permitted building height is lowered to two stories with no three-story buildings permitted. In this case, the assumption is that the market would support filling that entire potential building envelope. This scenario would result in buildings that are relatively in scale with the neighborhood, but would tend to be relatively uniformly two stories in height. An overall floor area ratio of approximately 1.8 would result at build-out.

Conclusions

Workshop participants indicated that scenario number one is undesirable because the result would be a significant change to the existing downtown character. Scenario number three was also considered undesirable by workshop participants because it would result in uniform building heights where variation in height has been the norm both historically and in the present context. Scenario number two is the preferred scenario. Existing character would be maintained while a variety in building heights would occur thus providing interest to the streetscape. Existing regulations need to be modified to preserve and encourage downtown character.

Development Density Options in Transitional Blocks

The following second group of four scenarios illustrates alternatives for development that might occur in those transitional blocks that today retain a more residential image. These transitional areas include the following and are highlighted in map G-1:

- ◆ the block bounded by South Street, Main Street, Walnut Street and the alley;
- ◆ the block between South Street, Main Street and Front Street north of 908 Main Street;
- ◆ the block bounded by Pine Street, Main Street, Elm Street and the alley;
- ◆ the block bounded by Front Street and the railroad tracks south of the Lighthouse and the Pine Street Junction to Elm Street;
- ◆ the area presently zoned "CB", south of Elm Street and east of County Road;
- ◆ and the southern half of the block bounded by Main Street, Pine Street, Front Street and Elm Street.

These are the areas that retain more of a residential scale and in fact still contain some residential uses. The next four figures illustrate options for character areas within transition blocks in the downtown commercial zone. These areas would be encouraged to develop at a lower density while promoting activities that would help energize the streetscape. This could still be accomplished while retaining residential character. For example, buildings would be set back from the street with yards in the foreground, outdoor displays, signs and activities such as outdoor dining and exhibits, would be encouraged to locate in front yards to provide interest to the pedestrian. Additional building density would be accessed by courtyards on alleys. Those additions could be well suited for offices that could be located to the interior of these lots. Additions to existing houses and new secondary buildings along alleyways would be promoted. These areas are a particularly attractive option for moderately increased density that could include residential uses. The scenarios are as follows:

Figure F-B1 demonstrates how three-story zoning would appear if current development trends continue. In this sample transitional block, it is assumed that two of the existing one-story buildings are retained with the other buildings redeveloping at the three-story scale using the traditional building type with a storefront at the sidewalk edge, zero side lot line setbacks and a 20-foot rear alley setback.

In figure F-B2, the building height is reduced to two stories, but the traditional storefront format is continued. Rooflines and building heights would be uniform. An average floor area ratio of approximately 1.11 would result.

In the third option, illustrated in figure F-B3, new construction and additions to existing buildings are designed in a variety of building types, some of which include sloping roof forms that relate more to the traditional building character. Floor area ratio would be reduced to an average of 0.82 on this illustrative transitional block. The density of new buildings on their sites is about 1.3.

Figure F-B4 is the least dense scenario in which buildings are asked to reflect the residential character of the surroundings resulting in an overall block density average of 0.9.

Conclusions

Workshop participants indicated a preference for option number three. However there was a desire for flexibility. This option was seen as the best for preserving the residential heritage of transitional blocks. It would best establish a scale compatible with traditional buildings compared to the other options that were considered. Option number four was too restrictive. Option number one was too detrimental to the character of these blocks. Option number two was dismissed because traditional storefronts would not result in a varied roofline or varied setbacks that the preferred option encourages. This variation is an important part of the existing character of downtown.

Recommendations

In summary, workshop participants expressed a strong desire to maintain and enhance the historic scale and character of downtown. The existing diversity in architectural design should be maintained and encouraged. Additionally, there was a strong desire to preserve existing historic resources. Within this context, participants were in favor of developing downtown as a mixed use, residential and commercial town center. A strong consensus was reached on the scale of downtown development. Consistent with the existing scale of downtown, one and two-story buildings should be the norm. An incentive program could be created to allow limited three-story buildings in the core commercial area. A transitional scale in building size and height should be maintained in commercial areas adjacent to residential neighborhoods. Third stories should not be permitted in transitional areas.

Setback regulations may need to be revisited as a result of this framework plan to permit sidewalk cafes and promote varied setbacks in transitional commercial areas. Renovation of existing buildings in the core area and compatible infill development should occur throughout the study area with particular emphasis and encouragement placed upon buildings that would help fill in gaps along the streetscape and animate the cross streets.

Goals

- ☞ Maintain and enhance the existing architectural character downtown.
- ☞ Establish policies and criteria that address development scale and architectural character that maintain the traditional scale of development while permitting diversity of architectural design.

neighborhoods to maintain the existing character of downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods.

- ☞ Buildings should be one and two stories on the street and on the alley edges.
- ☞ Only a portion of a building should rise to three stories. In general, no more than 50 percent of the building footprint should be a third story.

Policies

- ☞ Permit development at a two-story scale with third-story buildings permitted when defined goals are achieved. These goals could include providing public spaces such as plazas or significant outdoor dining areas, providing public art and meeting defined historic preservation goals.
- ☞ Buildings shall not exceed a floor area ratio of 2.0 in the core area (notwithstanding policy recommendations in other sections of the Framework Plan).
- ☞ Buildings shall not exceed a floor area ratio of 1.3 in transitional areas (notwithstanding policy recommendations in other sections of the Framework Plan).
- ☞ An appropriate FAR shall consider architectural scale as well as parking and pedestrian and automobile traffic impacts on the downtown environment.
- ☞ For the purpose of determining parking demand, floor area ratios should include habitable basement space.
- ☞ Provide for transitional scale of development on blocks adjacent to residential

- ☞ Buildings shall not exceed two stories in areas defined as transitional.
- ☞ Historic preservation should be strongly encouraged.
- ☞ Site planning and architectural design should address the alley.
- ☞ Pedestrian connections between the alley and the street at mid block should be encouraged as part of an incentive system.

Tasks

- ❑ Develop and implement the Downtown Design Guidelines.
- ❑ Define specifics for an incentive program that will determine when a third story will be permitted in areas other than blocks defined as transitional.
- ❑ Implement a new or revised zoning district for the downtown study area.
- ❑ Survey existing historic resources.
- ❑ Establish a historic preservation plan based on the survey of historic resources.
- ❑ Consider a local landmarking program.
- ❑ Adopt a zoning ordinance that creates an overlay zoning district for downtown that will achieve the following:
 - establish "core" and "transition" areas;
 - establish maximum floor area ratios, building areas, heights and setbacks in both core and transition areas;
 - address parking.
- ❑ Adopt a demolition ordinance.
- ❑ Consider a transfer of development rights program to facilitate the preservation of historic resources and provide for flexibility in development density on individual properties.
- ❑ All PUD applications in the area subject to Downtown Design Guidelines shall be referred to the Louisville Historical Commission for review and comment.

9 Residential-Commercial Mixed Use Component

Existing Conditions

Existing zoning permits multifamily residential use in the central business district when authorized through the special review use process. Otherwise, new residential uses are not permitted Downtown. There are however, many existing residential properties in the commercially zoned areas of downtown. Some of those are used residentially and some have been converted to commercial uses. Downtown properties that are used residentially are considered legally nonconforming or "grandfathered" uses. These nonconforming uses are permitted to continue and can be reasonably maintained, but they may not be structurally altered or expanded. If the residential use of a property is discontinued for a period of one year, the legally nonconforming status of the residential use of the property is forfeited and future use must be for a permitted commercial activity.

Issue

Workshop participants expressed an interest in allowing residential uses downtown.

Recommendation

Retain existing housing and consider mixed-use buildings.

Goal

☞ Maintain downtown as a vibrant, mixed-use activity center.

Policy

🏠 Endeavor to retain existing housing in the downtown commercial area as a component in an overall policy of preserving the existing, historic downtown character.

Task

☐ Explore on-site residential mixed uses downtown.