

Milaca Downtown Revitalization Summer 2008

The main goal of this project was to provide the City of Milaca with visions of what their downtown area could look like as they seek to revitalize and reenergize the core of the city. The subsequent drawings, maps, and boards are meant to begin a broader dialog within the community. One that will help form a stronger idea of what can be done in designing the spaces that will form the identity and sense of place within Milaca.

Board 1: Downtown Milaca

The map shows an idea of how the central business core and focus of downtown revitalization efforts in Milaca might be defined spatially. This helps determine where streetscape changes are made and how the city identifies its commercial and community identity. Access routes to downtown along Central Avenue and Second Street are emphasized to show how residents and visitors will enter the city and where signage and other key information could be located. A Pedestrian Promenade that connects the civic buildings and parks to downtown is highlighted in orange and forms a strong pedestrian connection between the many commercial and active use areas of Milaca.

Two reverse figure grounds compare the pattern of open space within the downtown area. The figure ground on the left represents the current distribution of open space with well fronted streets and few large openings. The figure on the right represents downtown after buildings scheduled for removal are taken down. It is important to consider how these larger open spaces will alter perceptions of the vitality of downtown. Redeveloping commercial lands and providing programming for other open spaces is key to building a viable downtown.

Board 2: Downtown Streetscape

The downtown streetscape helps build the identity of Milaca through a consistent use of materials and unified design elements like pedestrian scale lighting and paving patterns. Bump-outs provide safe street crossings and reinforce the pedestrian nature of downtown while giving space for sidewalk cafes and other street furniture. Increasing sidewalk widths along First Street by changing to a parallel parking pattern will allow for the addition of street trees and ease pedestrian movement. Street trees lining the sidewalks provide shade and make the pedestrian experience more enjoyable.

An urban plaza located on Second Street, north of the grocery, allows for light auto traffic associated with the bank drive through while providing outdoor space for community events. The design of this space should raise the street level to that of the sidewalk to create a unified pedestrian area.

Possible configurations of new buildings including an expanded grocery store footprint, redevelopment of the creamery building site, and new buildings along Second Street

where Alfred Olson's stood are shown. These new buildings should continue to address the pedestrian zone to bring active use to downtown sidewalks.

The two perspective drawings provide experiential views of First Street and Main Street and how they could look with the additional streetscape elements.

Board 3: Parks

Trimble and Recreation Parks are extensions of the downtown area and can play a vital role in drawing people into downtown Milaca. These drawings envision Trimble Park as a Town Square and host to a wide range of community activities throughout the year including farmer's markets, art fairs, evening picnics and music, and movies in the park.

The sketches illustrate the addition of a bandstand to the park as a focus of community events. Sidewalks and parking allow easy access to the park and provide spaces for art fair and market stands to be set up during community events. Playgrounds are grouped together and a large open green is created for active use.

To foster a better connection to Recreation Park the sidewalk from downtown is extended and highlighted with signage guiding residents and visitors to the sports fields and river. Creating a tree lined pathway extends the notion of the park connection and pedestrian scale lighting and benches through Trimble Park provide gathering spaces for those using the parks.

Board 4: Pedestrian Promenade

The Promenade is a pedestrian connection that links the parks, civic buildings, and downtown commercial core of Milaca through a centralized walkway. This connection utilizes the existing alleyway that runs through downtown from the public library to Main Street with a connection to an urban plaza on Second Street north of the grocery. Windows and shop access along the Promenade are encouraged to give visual connection between the indoor and outdoor environment and increase safety through additional eyes on the street.

At Main Street the walkway travels along downtown sidewalks to Trimble Park and then continues to Recreation Park and the Rum River. Informational kiosks and signage can be used to guide visitors to downtown while bump-outs at road crossings and the use of pedestrian scale lighting provide a safe and positive experience. Other amenities include access to public restrooms, benches, tree plantings, and areas for bike parking.

Board 5: Street Design Options

The final board presents various options for the development of the downtown pedestrian zone and streetscape. These examine alternative sidewalk configurations and the corresponding parking pattern that would accommodate each option based on the street

corridor width along Main Street. The location of trees, benches, informational signage and bike parking elements is compared at various sidewalk widths and planting bed locations with an example of how these elements could be combined on corner bump-outs.

Three examples of sidewalk space are illustrated and highlight the human scale experience along Main Street.

- Option one leaves the sidewalk width and street parking pattern the same while adding street trees to the sidewalk zone.

- Option two alters the streetscape pattern increasing the sidewalk width to 14 feet and accommodating street trees, benches, and other site furniture such as newspaper stands and signage. Parking changes from angled drive in to parallel parking bays and a bike lane is added.

- Option three leaves the sidewalk and parking dimensions the same and accommodates street trees in planting beds that extend into one or more of the existing angled parking bays. These would create on-street space for bike, moped, or motorcycle parking.

An example of a street corner bump-out is provided and illustrates how sidewalk cafés could be created in a wider pedestrian zone that also includes street trees, informational signage, bike parking, and other pedestrian amenities.

At the far right of the board are examples of how the street edge around the grocery store might be designed to define the street, pedestrian zone, and parking lot area. Placing a planted buffer between the sidewalk and parking lot can define and soften the transition between the two areas. Street trees planted within the sidewalk or in the buffer will also help give the space a pedestrian scale and tie it to the rest of downtown.