



MICHIGAN MAIN STREET

Streetscape Visioning Observations and Recommendations – 2/6/12

Michigan Main Street Center
Michigan State Housing Development Authority
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On January 21, 2012, a Streetscape Visioning Session was conducted for the Wayland Main Street program. The purpose of the Streetscape Visioning Session was to determine the community's long-term vision for the downtown (in terms of design features) in order to prioritize projects, volunteer time, and funding in the short-term. A streetscape lighting project is scheduled for the spring/summer of 2012 and the design committee wants to be prepared when design decisions need to be made for this project and any future project.

Below are the results of several different voting opportunities during the session along with observations and recommendations for the design committee as they move forward with design projects.

Design Features Desired in the Future

What are the design features you want to see in the downtown?	What are the three design features that are most important to you? Voter response
Visible & attractive storefronts/big windows	9
Improve parking lots and alleyways	8
Rear entrance accessibility	6
Enforce sign ordinance/sign grant	4
Historic architecture	4
Projected signs	3
Angled parking	3
Public art	3
Slower traffic through downtown	2
Trees	2
Bike lanes & racks/complete streets	1
Color & variety	1
Larger sidewalks	0
Raised planters	0
Holiday decorations	0
Trash receptacles	0
Flowers	0
Banners	0
Sidewalk seating	0

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Observations

- 1) Despite the amount of attention and conversation downtown stakeholders have had on trees, banners, and flowers over the past several years, those items received little to no votes. This can be interpreted to mean that generally people think these items are fine 'as is' and not necessarily a priority for improvements. Although they aren't ideal 'as is' they aren't detracting from the overall appearance of the downtown.
- 2) The most votes went towards creating visible and attractive storefronts and big display windows. This can be interpreted to mean that generally people think one of the biggest detractors from the downtown is the appearance of the businesses. Individual businesses are not doing themselves (or the downtown as a whole) any favors with the current look of their businesses. Improving this aspect will have a big impact on the rest of the downtown's appearance.
- 3) Related to improving storefronts is a combination of votes related to signage. Having votes split between enforcing the sign ordinance, offering sign grants, and allowing projected signs gives even more weight to the need for businesses to improve their overall identity. Identity includes a business's brand and how they market themselves as well as their overall physical appearance.
- 4) In terms of major streetscape projects, improving the parking lots and alleys received more votes than improving the streets or sidewalks. This can be interpreted to mean that generally people think the streets and sidewalks are fine 'as is' and not necessarily a priority for improvements. Again, although they aren't ideal, they aren't a big detractor from the overall appearance of the downtown. Improving the parking lots and alleys will have a much bigger impact than improving the streets and sidewalks.

Preferences When Comparing Specific Design Features in Other Downtowns

Signs			
	Scale 1-10	Voter Response	Range of Responses: 4-10 Average Score: 8.13 MMS Score: 5 Observations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When looking at other downtowns, the community feels signage is a very important component to creating an attractive downtown. • The average score received (8.13) compared to the current score (5) suggests the signs that are currently in the downtown are not as unique, attractive, and creative as the community would like to see in its long-term vision for the downtown. • The average score received is high and reinforces the observation above that business need to improve their overall identity. • In order to move the downtown 'up the scale', the design committee will need to work very closely with business owners to help them understand the importance of signs, provide examples of what the community wants to see for signage, and provide incentives to be a catalyst for new signs.
No sign regulation  Sign regulation	0	0	
	1	0	
	2	0	
	3	0	
	4	3	
	5	0	
	6	0	
	7	1	
	8	2	
	9	3	
10	6		

Trees			
	Scale 1-10	Voter Response	Range of Responses: 3-10 Average Score: 6.55 MMS Score: 10 Observations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When looking at other downtowns, the community tends to like trees because they soften the overall streetscape and provide shade; however, they do not tend to like trees that block buildings and storefronts or overwhelm the overall appearance of the streetscape. The average score received (6.55) compared to the current score (10) suggests the community would like to see fewer trees on the sidewalk and/or blocking buildings. <i>Please note:</i> Fewer trees on the sidewalk doesn't necessarily mean the total number of trees has to be reduced but that trees should be located in more appropriate places (such as parking lots and vacant lots). In order to move the downtown 'down the scale', the design committee will need to identify appropriate/alternate locations for trees
No trees  Lots of trees	0	0	
	1	0	
	2	0	
	3	2	
	4	1	
	5	2	
	6	5	
	7	5	
	8	2	
	9	0	
10	3		

Flowers			
	Scale 1-10	Voter Response	Range of Responses: 3-9 Average Score: 5.64 MMS Score: 6 Observations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When looking at other downtowns, the community tends to like flowers because they add color to the downtown and softens the overall streetscape; however, the community realizes there are high costs and maintenance considerations that must be weighed with other priorities. The average score received (5.64) compared to the current score (6) suggests the community feels the current amount of flowers in the downtown are on target with what they would like to see as part of the long-term vision for the downtown. The average score received is in the mid-range and reinforces the observation above that flowers are fine 'as is' and not necessarily a priority for improvement.
No flowers  Lots of flowers	0	0	
	1	0	
	2	0	
	3	2	
	4	4	
	5	0	
	6	3	
	7	3	
	8	0	
	9	2	
10	0		

Banners			
	Scale 1-10	Voter Response	Range of Responses: 2-6 Average Score: 3.62 MMS Score: 10 Observations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When looking at other downtowns, the community tends to think banners are not overly important to the overall appearance of the downtown and streetscape. • The average score received (3.62) compared to the current score (10) suggests the community feels the number of banners in the downtown can be reduced without having a negative impact on the overall downtown. • The average score received is low and reinforces the observation above that banners are not a high priority for improvement.
No banners  Lots of banners	0	0	
	1	0	
	2	4	
	3	4	
	4	1	
	5	1	
	6	3	
	7	0	
	8	0	
	9	0	
10	0		

Applying the Results to Downtown Wayland

Taking into consideration the priority design features the community would like to see improved in the downtown and their preference on some of those priorities, the MMS makes the following recommendations to the Wayland Main Street program and its design committee:

Improve Business Storefronts, Displays and Signage (Short-Term Priority)

- 1) Work with the planning commission and the city to revise the current sign ordinance to allow for projecting signs along with wall (panel) signs, window signs, and sandwich board signs (except those with changeable letters on tracks, chalkboard is okay). The maximum size requirements for each type of sign will need careful consideration. The ordinance should help the downtown and businesses utilize signs that are appropriate to the architecture of the building. Signs that perpetuate the feeling of cheap, low quality, and are the scale for highway signs should not be allowed.
- 2) Create a sign grant program (possibly utilizing savings from funds budgeted for new banners). Review Howell's sign grant program as an example.
- 3) Create a list of local sign makers who have demonstrated the creativity and experience in constructing downtown appropriate signs. Distribute this list of local sign makers to business owners.
- 4) Organize a sign improvement workshop specifically for business owners. The agenda for the workshop should explain the new sign ordinance, outline the new sign grant program, provide many examples of great looking signs (as an example of what the grant will fund) and examples of inappropriate signs.

Eliminate or Reduce Funding for Banners (Short-Term Priority)

- 1) The community does not see banners as having a big impact on the downtown or being a high priority for improvement. The Wayland Main Street program can allocate this funding towards another project that is considered a high priority and a bigger impact (such as sign and façade grants).
- 2) If some banners are desired, consider purchasing banners for the winter (October-May) when some color is needed in the downtown because there are no leaves on the trees or flowers. Also consider reducing the size of the banners.

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Maintain Existing Flower Baskets and Planters (Mid-Term Priority)

- 1) Continue the existing flower basket and planter project as always. Maintain the existing funding sources and maintenance program. The community seems to be satisfied with the flowers 'as is' and it is not a high priority for improvements.
- 2) In the future, if/when a large scale streetscape project is being planned, consider portable/movable planters and not built-in raised planter beds. The sidewalks are very narrow and raised planters take a considerable amount of space. They are also a permanent improvement so there is little opportunity to 'update' them in the future when they begin to look dated or are damaged. Portable/movable planters allow the maximum amount of flexibility in the future.

Plan for Changes to Reduce/Relocate Trees in the Downtown (Short- and Long-Term Priority)

- 1) Short-term – During the course of the street lighting project, try to keep some trees from being cut down. Losing all (or most) of the trees will have a major impact on the appearance of the downtown. Maintaining some trees will continue to help 'soften' the downtown and not be such a dramatic (and potentially negative) change. This could also ease the minds of some community members that having fewer trees on the sidewalk won't be such a bad idea.
- 2) Short-term – Create talking points for the design committee and board of directors on the future of trees in the downtown so that everyone is 'on the same page' when meeting with other stakeholders. For example if the concern is:
 - Reducing the number of trees in the downtown - explain the goal isn't necessarily to reduce the number of trees but to locate the same number of trees (or perhaps more) in more appropriate locations (such as parking lots, vacant lots, gaps in the streetscape, etc.).
 - Eliminating all trees from the downtown – explain that the community made it clear that trees are an important feature in the downtown (state the score of 6.55 if needed) however the community doesn't want the trees to block buildings and storefront or overwhelm the overall streetscape.
- 3) Long-term – Begin planning for a more extensive streetscape project in the future and appropriate locations for trees. Using photos of the downtown and walking around as a committee, identify locations where trees will frame buildings, fill-in vacant lots, and/or hide negative aspects of the downtown. Record the appropriate location for new trees and maintain a running file that can be updated/adjusted as needed. When a new tree is going to be planted, refer to the file.