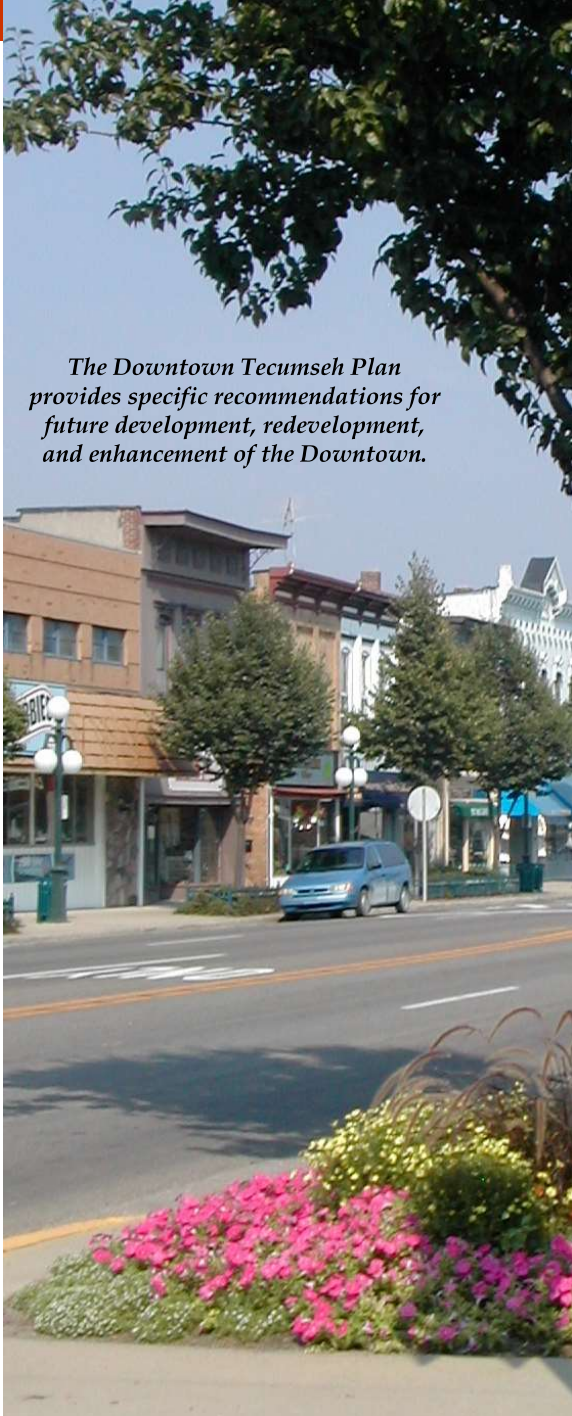


9

DOWNTOWN TECUMSEH PLAN



The Downtown Tecumseh Plan provides specific recommendations for future development, redevelopment, and enhancement of the Downtown.

The City of Tecumseh's Downtown is perhaps the City's most visible asset. With its historic architecture and traditional downtown character, it is truly the heart of the City. Because the Downtown plays such a key role in defining the City's overall character and identity, this area deserves careful consideration within the context of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Downtown Tecumseh Plan component of the Comprehensive Plan provides an analysis of Downtown Tecumseh's urban pattern, parking locations, circulation, facades, signage, streetscape, land uses, and entry features. This Plan provides specific recommendations for future development, redevelopment, and enhancement of the Downtown.

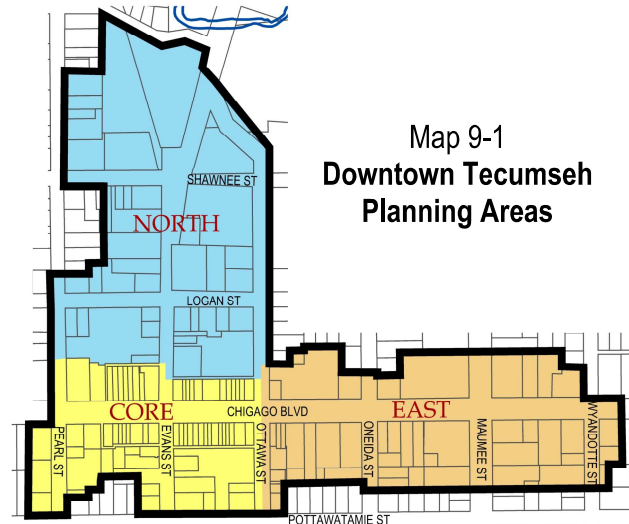
OVERVIEW

Downtown Tecumseh encompasses the City's main commercial center located along Chicago Boulevard and Evans Street. With approximately five blocks of frontage along Chicago Boulevard and four blocks along Evans Street, the Downtown includes a mix of retail, office, service, residential, and public uses. While the Downtown is faced with many challenges including increased commercial development at the western and northern boundaries of the City and significant truck traffic along Chicago Boulevard, its many assets and opportunities for improvement continue to make it the focal point of the City.

For the purposes of this chapter, Downtown Tecumseh has been divided into the following three planning areas (illustrated on Map9-1):

- ❖ **Core Downtown** – Chicago Boulevard from Pearl Street to Ottawa Street.
- ❖ **East Downtown** – Chicago Boulevard from Ottawa Street to Wyandotte Street.
- ❖ **North Downtown** – Evans Street from Chicago Boulevard to Bidwell Street.

An analysis of issues and recommendations for improvement are provided for each of the above planning areas.



CORE DOWNTOWN

The Core Downtown planning area encompasses Tecumseh's historic "Main Street" area. It is comprised primarily of two and three-story buildings built up to the sidewalk to form a continuous building wall. While much of the area's historic character has been retained over the years, the Core has experienced change – some of which has detracted from the Downtown's overall character and pedestrian atmosphere. The Core Downtown Façade and Signage Assessment on pages 9-8 through 9-13 highlights many of the assets, challenges, and opportunities for improvement found within the Core Downtown planning area. The following is a summary of the main issues facing the Core Downtown with recommendations for improvement.

BUILDING FACADES

- ❖ **Issue:** Many buildings have experienced façade and roof additions that detract from the appearance of the building and the overall character of the downtown.

Recommendation: Updates and renovations to existing buildings are encouraged but should be compatible with and complimentary toward the traditional architectural style of the Core Downtown. Quality materials, complimentary colors, and classic design should be incorporated into building facades. Consideration should be given toward the individual building style as well as the overall character of the Core Downtown. Specific design guidelines assist in giving property owners guidance in this area. The DDA should evaluate the feasibility of a grant program in addition to its low-interest loan program for façade changes that are consistent with DDA guidelines.

- ❖ **Issue:** Building height varies from one story to three stories within the Core Downtown.

Recommendation: Buildings within the Core Downtown should be at least two stories and similar in height to surrounding buildings. Greater building height is appropriate and encouraged at the Downtown's main intersection of Chicago Boulevard and Evans Street. One-story buildings should be avoided.

- ❖ **Issue:** Interruptions in the building wall exist in several locations.

Recommendation: Whenever possible, breaks in the continuous building wall should be avoided. Infill and/or redevelopment of these areas with appropriately designed buildings is encouraged.

- ❖ **Issue:** The style, size, and placement of many second-story replacement windows is inconsistent with surrounding buildings and out of character with the overall Core Downtown. In addition, many upper-story windows have been covered over or shuttered.

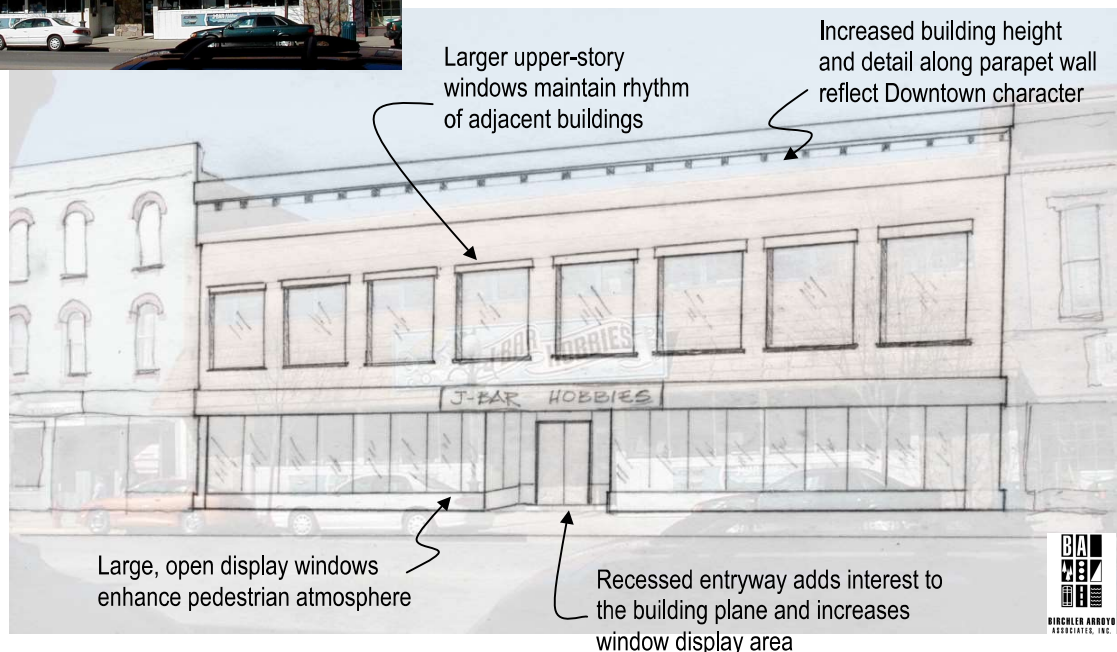
Recommendation: Upper-story windows should be consistent throughout the Core Downtown in style, size, and rhythm. Replacement windows should be in keeping with the building's original character, should be of similar size as the originals, and should maintain the overall rhythm found in the Core Downtown.

- ❖ **Issue:** Some buildings in the Core Downtown lack key features of well-designed, attractive, and pedestrian-friendly storefronts.

Recommendation: Storefronts should be open to the street and sidewalk and inviting to pedestrians. To achieve this, storefronts should be designed with large display windows that extend low to the ground and recessed or covered entryways that encourage window-shopping and enhance the overall pedestrian character of the Downtown. In addition, awnings should be limited to above windows and entryways only rather than extending across entire building facades.



Example of façade renovation in keeping with surrounding buildings and Downtown character.



- ❖ **Issue:** Some buildings in the Core Downtown lack attractive rear facades, signage, and customer entrances.

Recommendation: Rear building facades should be attractive and well-maintained to provide secondary customer entrances in proximity to public parking areas. Signage should be limited to identifying customer entrances and should not be utilized for advertising. Loading areas and trash receptacles should be appropriately screened, and these areas should be kept clear of refuse. Outdoor storage should not be permitted. Streetscape design should be continued to reinforce the Downtown character.



Appropriate signage and awnings can be incorporated into rear facades to enhance secondary entrances.



Attractive masonry enclosures effectively screen dumpsters in rear parking areas (left). Unscreened dumpsters have a negative appearance and clutter rear facades (right).

SIGNAGE

- ❖ **Issue:** Signage within the Core Downtown does not always reflect the area's traditional character and often lacks quality in both design and materials.

Recommendation: Signs on building facades should be integrated into the architectural design of the building in a manner that will compliment rather than detract from the overall character of the Core Downtown. Through the use of appropriate design, material, color, and texture, signage should enhance the primary and architectural significant features of the building. Signage should not cover, obscure, or overshadow building features and design. A DDA-sponsored sign grant program could provide seed money to encourage new signs consistent with DDA guidelines.

- ❖ **Issue:** There is inadequate and ineffective pedestrian-oriented signage within the Core Downtown.

Recommendation: Signs with a pedestrian orientation,



Examples of attractive, pedestrian-oriented projecting signs in the Downtown.



such as projecting signs and attractive window signs, are strongly encouraged. Menu boards are also encouraged near sidewalk entrances to restaurants. All pedestrian-oriented signage should be of high quality materials and design that are complimentary to the character of the building and Downtown.

STREETSCAPE

- ❖ Issue: Interruptions in the building wall exist in several locations.

Recommendation: Whenever possible, use open spaces between buildings in a manner that will continue the pedestrian streetscape. For example, such spaces could be transformed into pedestrian plazas or attractive outdoor display areas. Appropriate nighttime lighting of these spaces is important to create a sense of security among pedestrians, as well as to maintain pedestrians' interest.



Examples of open spaces that maintain pedestrian atmosphere.

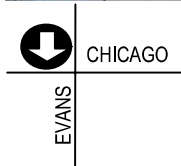


- ❖ Issue: Some buildings in the Core Downtown lack key features of well-designed, attractive, and pedestrian-friendly storefronts.

Recommendation: In addition to façade improvements discussed above, storefronts and the overall pedestrian atmosphere should be enhanced with amenities such as planters, A-frame signs, menu boards, sidewalk furniture, outdoor eating areas, pedestrian-scaled signage and lighting, etc.



Examples of amenities and details that enhance the Downtown streetscape and pedestrian experience.



Example of streetscape improvements that enhance the pedestrian atmosphere.



- ❖ **Issue:** The intersection of Chicago Boulevard and Evans Street is at the heart of the Downtown and lacks any significant streetscape treatment.

Recommendation: A special streetscape treatment for this important intersection should be developed in order to enhance its visual appearance and signify its central position within the Downtown. Key design elements could include mast arm traffic signals, planters, directional signage, decorative sidewalk pavers, etc.



Example of mast arm traffic signal at Chicago Boulevard and Evans Street.

- ❖ **Issue:** The City lacks any features that announces the South entrance into the Downtown.

Recommendation: Evans Street south of Chicago Boulevard should be enhanced through streetscape improvements including decorative, pedestrian-scaled lighting, sidewalk furniture, planters, decorative pavers, on-street parking, etc. Streetscape improvements should achieve the goal of announcing the entrance into the Downtown.

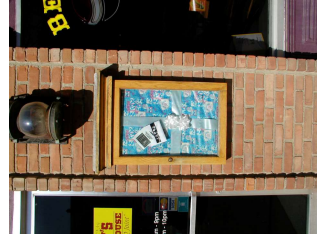
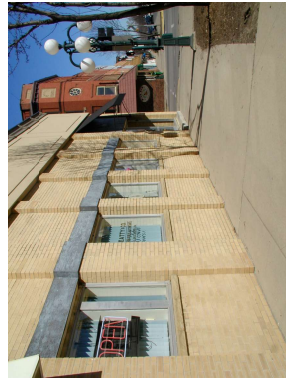


Existing streetscape looking north along Evans Street toward Chicago Boulevard.

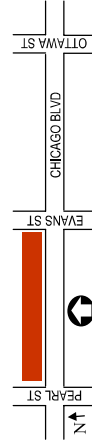
CORE DOWNTOWN PLAN ACTION ITEMS

The following key recommendations were derived from the examination of existing conditions and the Goals and Objectives:

- ☐ Develop and encourage participation in business assistance programs through the Downtown Development Authority, such as Façade Enhancement, Sign Enhancement, and Market Assistance.
- ☐ Review design guidelines and criteria to address building façade and signage issues (e.g. window style and rhythm, building materials, storefronts and display windows, rear entrances and signage, etc.)
- ☐ Amend the Zoning Ordinance to address building placement and height issues (i.e. establish a minimum building height and zero side and front setbacks).
- ☐ Adopt one common color for street furniture, light posts, trash receptacles, etc. to be carried through the entire Downtown streetscape.



CORE DOWNTOWN FAÇADE AND SIGNAGE ASSESSMENT



- ♦ Assets
- ♦ Opportunities for improvement



Significant corner building with architectural details including date.

Upper-story replacement windows are too small and lack architectural detail of original windows.

Well-maintained building.

Building style, height, and façade is incompatible with surrounding buildings and overall Downtown character.

Boarded and shuttered upper-story windows.

Inappropriate roof addition overwhelms the façade and detracts from building's historic character.



EVANS ST

OTTAWA ST

Signage does not reflect character of building.

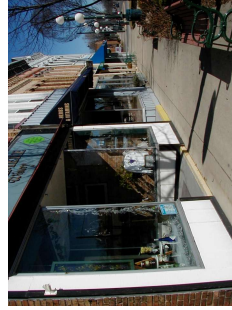
Awning is appropriately located above individual storefront.

Awning is appropriately located above windows and entryway, rather than extended across entire building façade.

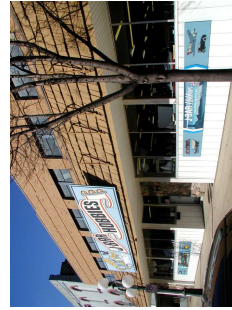
Attractive display window and signage.



Appropriately sized display windows and recessed entries.



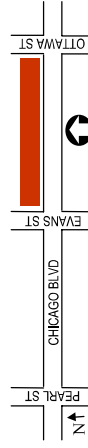
Small display windows and excessive signage close storefront to the street and sidewalk and interrupt the pedestrian experience.



Significant corner building with increased height and attractive details such as date block and decorative window.



CORE DOWNTOWN FAÇADE AND SIGNAGE ASSESSMENT



♦ Assets

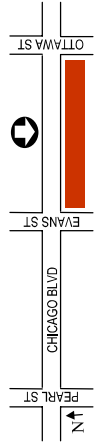
♦ Opportunities for improvement

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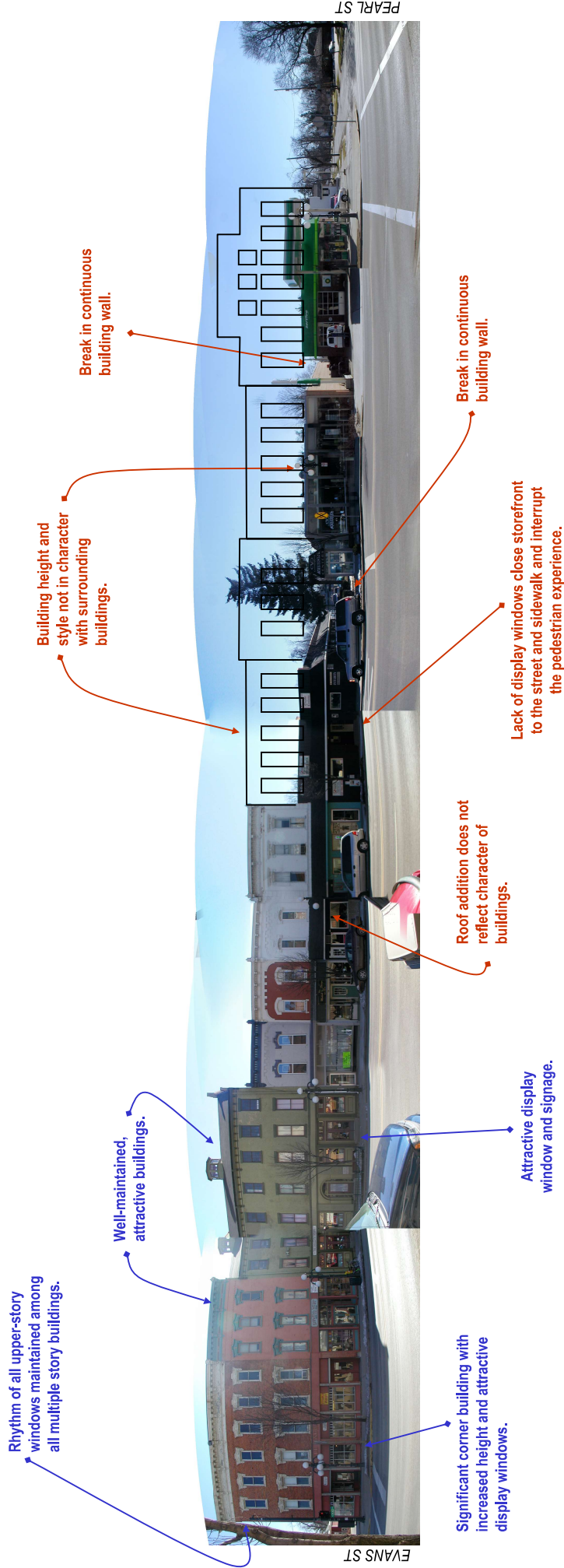


CORE DOWNTOWN FACADE AND SIGNAGE ASSESSMENT

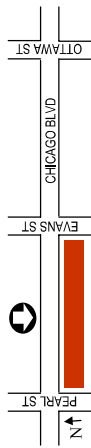


- Assets
- Opportunities for improvement





CORE DOWNTOWN FAÇADE AND SIGNAGE ASSESSMENT



- ♦ Assets
- ♦ Opportunities for improvement

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NORTH DOWNTOWN

LAND USE

- ❖ **Issue:** A significant amount of land within the North Downtown is under developed and/or utilized for uses that would be more appropriate at other locations in the community.

Recommendation: Encourage relocation of light industrial and general commercial businesses to more appropriate locations in the City. Redevelopment of properties along Evans and Logan Streets should include multi-story retail buildings set close to the street with off-street parking limited to shared lots located in the rear. All new development and redevelopment should achieve the goal of creating a natural extension of the Core Downtown. The property located north of Shawnee between Evans and Ottawa should be redeveloped for office use in order to provide a transition between the Downtown retail area and the residential area to the north. Office development at this location should consist of one or more two-story buildings that are compatible with and complimentary toward the traditional architectural style of the overall Downtown. Building placement and design should achieve the goal of announcing the entrance into the Downtown.



Examples of light industrial activity along Evans Street.



- ❖ **Issue:** The City lacks any significant entry feature that announces the North entrance into the Downtown.

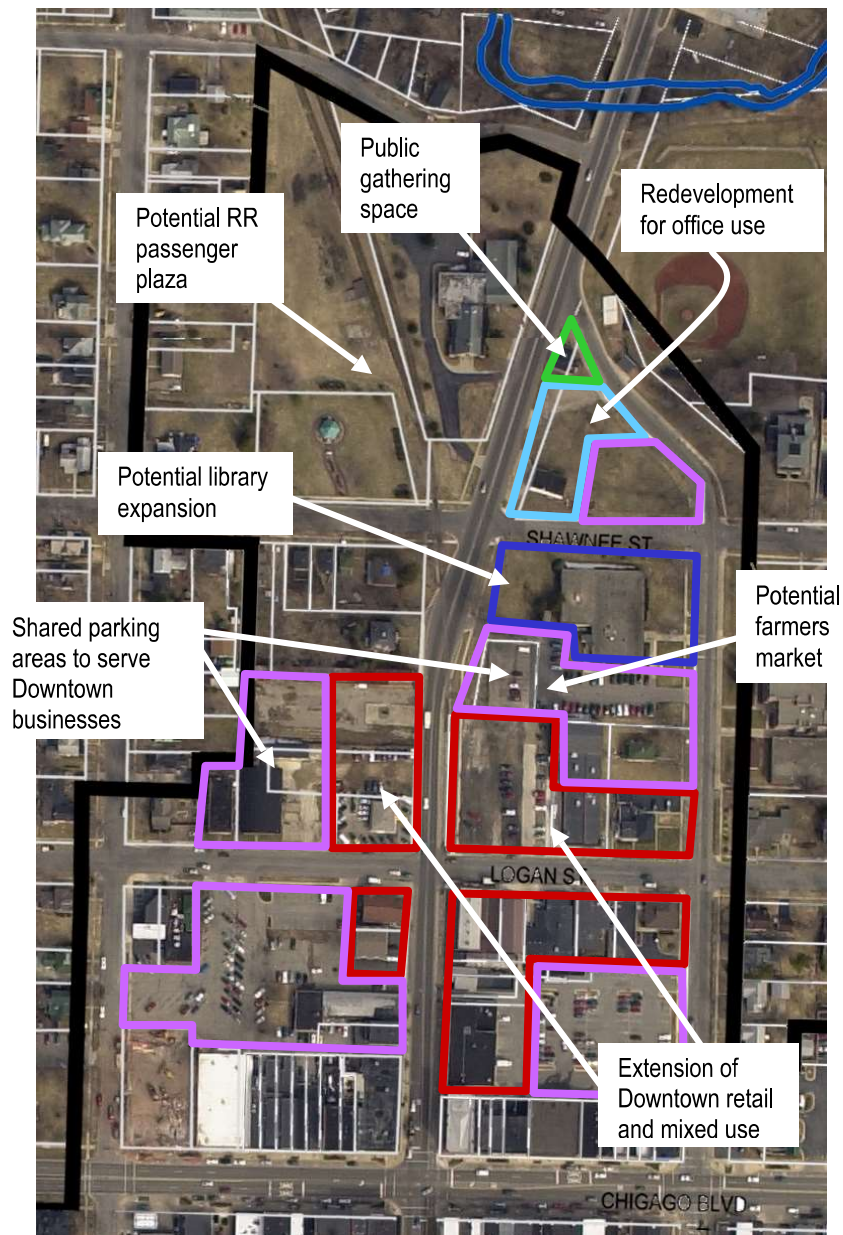
Recommendation: Enhancement and redevelopment of the properties located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Evans and Ottawa is strongly encouraged to provide a focal point and attractive entrance into the Downtown. Along with special signage and landscaping, this key intersection should be developed to include a small public plaza with pedestrian furniture and space for public art.

- ❖ **Issue:** The library is located in a prominent location at the entrance to the Downtown but lacks any visual presence in the Evans Street corridor.

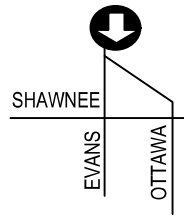
Recommendation: Any future expansion of the library facility should be designed to increase its visual presence along Evans Street. Potential for the addition of a second story and/or new main entrance off Evans Street should be explored.

- ❖ Issue: The City lacks a significant public gathering space within the Downtown.

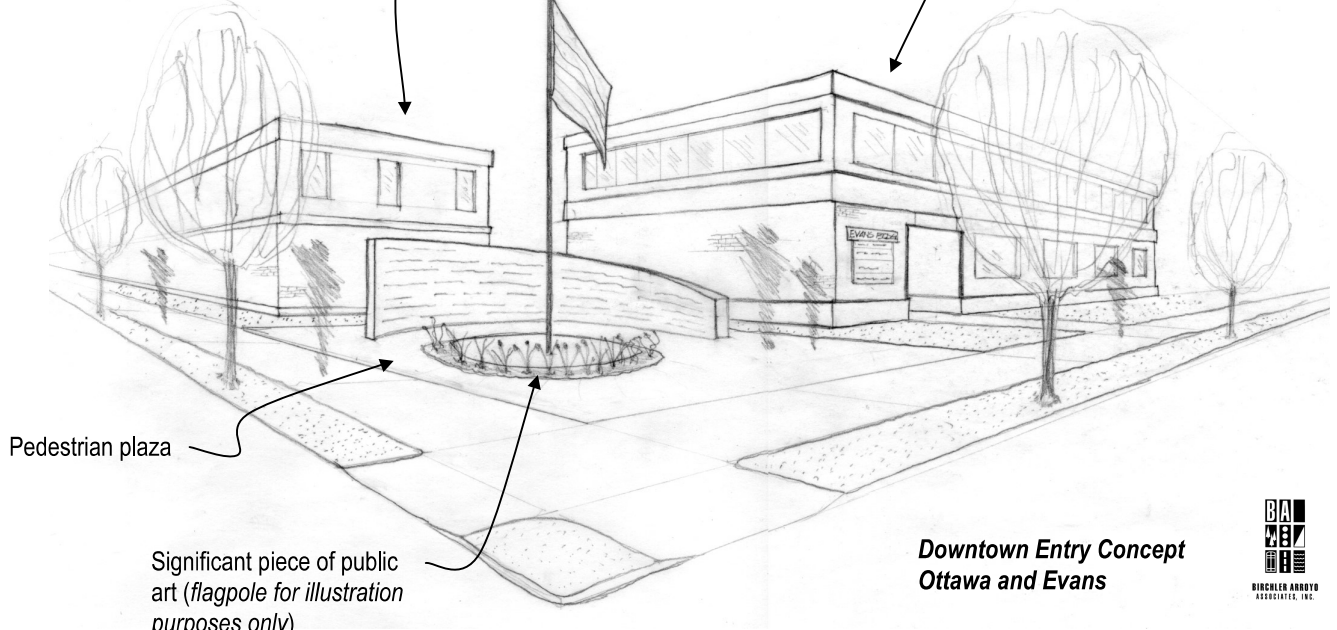
Recommendation: The City should explore the development of an open-air farmers market south of the library. Such a facility could also provide additional parking for the Downtown when events are not taking place.



Downtown Tecumseh Plan



Two-story office buildings with parking behind



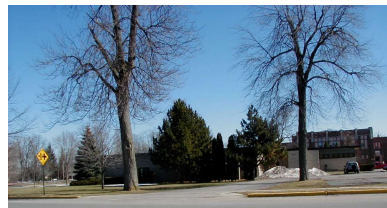
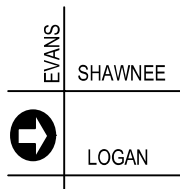
Pedestrian plaza

Significant piece of public art (flagpole for illustration purposes only)

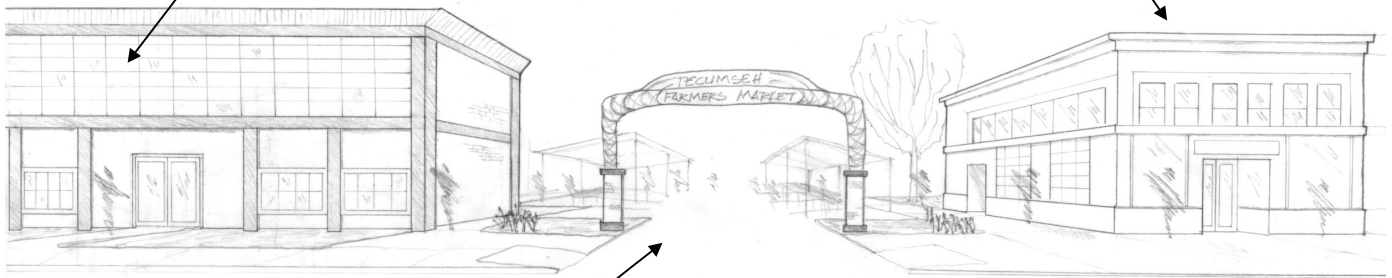
**Downtown Entry Concept
Ottawa and Evans**



Library expansion



New retail building



Farmers Market entrance

**Evans Street Redevelopment
Concept**



BUILDING FACADES AND SIGNAGE

- ❖ **Issue:** The existing character of retail buildings in the North Downtown planning area is inconsistent with the historic and architectural character of the Core Downtown.

Recommendation: Building styles, materials, and facades should be compatible with and complimentary toward the traditional architectural style of the Core Downtown. Retail buildings should be at least two stories in height, set close to the sidewalk, and contain pedestrian-friendly storefronts with features such as awnings, large display windows, and recessed entries. The use of features such as date markers, corner stones, and parapet wall and window details is encouraged to give newer buildings a character similar to that found in the Core. Building design should achieve the goal of creating a natural extension of the Core Downtown.

- ❖ **Issue:** Signage within the North Downtown area often lacks quality in both design and materials.

Recommendation: Signs on building facades should be integrated into the architectural design of the building in a manner that will compliment rather than detract from the overall character of the Downtown. Through the use of appropriate design, material, color, and texture, signage should enhance the primary and architectural significant features of the building and achieve the goal of creating a natural extension of the Core Downtown. Signs with a pedestrian orientation, such as projecting signs and attractive window signs, are strongly encouraged to enhance the North Downtown's pedestrian atmosphere.

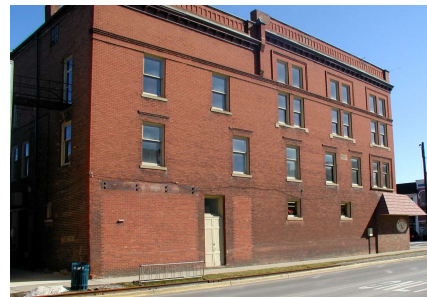
STREETSCAPE

- ❖ **Issue:** The North Downtown planning area lacks a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.

Recommendation: In addition to the façade and signage recommendations above, the Evans Street pedestrian atmosphere should be enhanced through streetscape improvements including decorative, pedestrian-scaled lighting, sidewalk furniture, planters, decorative pavers, on-street parking, etc. Off-street parking should be limited to shared lots located behind commercial buildings and should be appropriately separated from the sidewalk by decorative screen walls and landscaping. Streetscape improvements should achieve the goal of creating a natural extension of the Core Downtown.



Example of window and parapet details on historic building in Downtown (above). Example of quality materials and date marker on newly constructed building in another community (below).



Example of Evans Street building facades that lack appropriate design elements needed to continue the Downtown streetscape and pedestrian atmosphere.

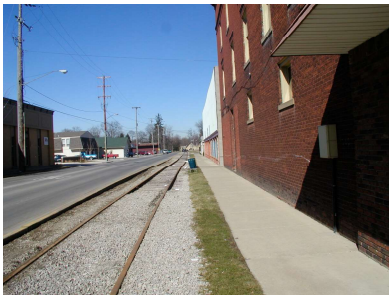


- ❖ **Issue:** While an asset to tourism in the City, the existing railroad tracks located along Evans Street are a challenge to the corridor's visual character and pedestrian atmosphere.

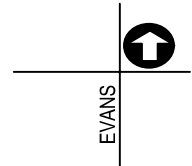
Recommendation: If use of the tracks ceases in the future, removal of the railroad tracks in the Downtown south of Shawnee Street would be encouraged. This would provide an opportunity for reconstruction of the roadway and right-of-way to include on-street parking, enhance the overall pedestrian atmosphere, and strengthen the corridor's connection to the Core Downtown. In the short-term, the City should work with the Railroad to evaluate the potential for construction of a passenger plaza near the Downtown's north entrance which would allow for removal of the tracks south of Shawnee (in the event that the tracks are not extended south of Tecumseh).

- ❖ **Issue:** The City lacks any significant entry feature that announces the North entrance into the Downtown.

Recommendation: Enhancement and redevelopment of the properties located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Evans and Ottawa is strongly encouraged to provide a focal point and attractive entrance into the Downtown. Along with consistent streetscape amenities and appropriately designed retail and office buildings along Evans Street, a special treatment, including signage and landscaping, for this key intersection is recommended.



Example of streetscape improvements that enhance the pedestrian atmosphere and extend the Downtown character (in the event that the railroad tracks are removed from the Downtown).



Street trees, areas for plantings, and pedestrian lighting enhance the pedestrian atmosphere

On-street parking serves retail uses and separates the sidewalk from the street

Additional storefronts extend the Downtown along Evans Street



NORTH DOWNTOWN PLAN ACTION ITEMS

The following key recommendations were derived from the examination of existing conditions and the Goals and Objectives:

- ❑ Monitor the long-range plans of the Southern Michigan Railroad with regard to railroad tracks in the Evans Street corridor.
- ❑ Consider purchase of key properties to be developed through a preferred Development Agreement with a private company.
- ❑ Develop and encourage participation in business assistance programs through the Downtown Development Authority, such as Façade Enhancement, Sign Enhancement, and Market Assistance.
- ❑ Review design guidelines and criteria to address building façade and signage issues (e.g. window style and rhythm, building materials, storefronts and display windows, rear entrances and signage, etc.)
- ❑ Amend the Zoning Ordinance to address building placement and height issues (i.e. establish a minimum building height and zero side and front setbacks).

EAST DOWNTOWN

LAND USE

- ❖ Issue: The character of the Core Downtown appears to “unravel” as the existing development east of Ottawa Street creates less of the traditional downtown atmosphere due to more interruptions in the building wall and more visible off-street parking.

Recommendation: If infill development is not possible, gaps in the building wall should be designed to continue the pedestrian streetscape. For example, open spaces could be used for pedestrian plazas and outdoor display areas. When parking areas exist between buildings, they should be appropriately screened. Curb cuts onto Chicago Boulevard should be limited in order to preserve the pedestrian atmosphere and continue the Downtown streetscape.

- ❖ Issue: A significant amount of land east of Maumee Street is under developed considering its proximity to Downtown businesses.

Recommendation: Development and redevelopment of properties east of Maumee Street for residential use at a



Example of existing building with driveway onto Chicago Boulevard east of Ottawa Street.



Existing view of Chicago Boulevard looking west from Wyandotte Street

higher density than what currently exists would provide for increased housing opportunities close to the Downtown. Development such as townhouses fronting on Chicago Boulevard would enhance the streetscape as well as provide a transitional entry into the Downtown retail area. Building placement and design should achieve the goal of announcing the entrance into the Downtown. Attached single family housing in this area may also provide additional housing options for empty nesters and seniors in proximity to the hospital and surrounding medical offices, as well as local shopping and services. In addition, well-designed residential development rather than commercial development in this area may better preserve significant trees that exist along Chicago Boulevard.

BUILDING FACADES AND SIGNAGE

- ❖ **Issue:** The character of the Core Downtown appears to “unravel” as the type and style of existing development changes east of Ottawa Street.



Example of existing development east of Ottawa Street.

Recommendation: Updates and renovations to existing buildings are encouraged to achieve facades and signage that are compatible with and complimentary toward the traditional architectural style of the Core Downtown. Quality materials, complimentary colors, and classic design should be incorporated into building facades. All new development and redevelopment should achieve the goal of creating a natural extension of the Core Downtown.

STREETSCAPE

- ❖ **Issue:** The character of the Core Downtown appears to “unravel” as the streetscape is increasingly interrupted by driveways and parking lots.



Example of street trees, lighting, and planters that maintain and enhance the pedestrian atmosphere east of Ottawa Street (left and right). Example of screen wall and plantings that separate the sidewalk from adjacent parking area (left).

Recommendation: Key streetscape elements should be maintained along Chicago Boulevard in the East Downtown planning area.

Features such as pedestrian-scaled lighting, planters, street trees, benches and other street furniture should be consistent with those found in the Core Downtown. Mast arm traffic signals at the Chicago Boulevard intersections with Ottawa and Maumee Streets are also recommended to enhance the overall streetscape appearance and create a unified Downtown character. Parking areas should be appropriately separated from the sidewalk

by decorative screen walls and landscaping. Streetscape improvements should achieve the goal of creating a natural extension of the Core Downtown.

Chicago Boulevard Townhouse Concept



EAST DOWNTOWN PLAN ACTION ITEMS

The following key recommendations were derived from the examination of existing conditions and the Goals and Objectives:

- ☐ Develop and encourage participation in business assistance programs through the Downtown Development Authority, such as Façade Enhancement, Sign Enhancement, and Market Assistance.
- ☐ Review design guidelines and criteria to address building façade and signage issues (e.g. window style and rhythm, building materials, storefronts and display windows, rear entrances and signage, etc.)
- ☐ Amend the Zoning Ordinance to permit the type of attached residential development desired along Chicago Boulevard.
- ☐ Consider rezoning areas targeted for townhouse residential to a new zoning district that incorporates appropriate design standards.