

Downtown Grand Haven **FUTURES**

PREPARED FOR



Grand Haven, Michigan

Market Insights and Evolutions

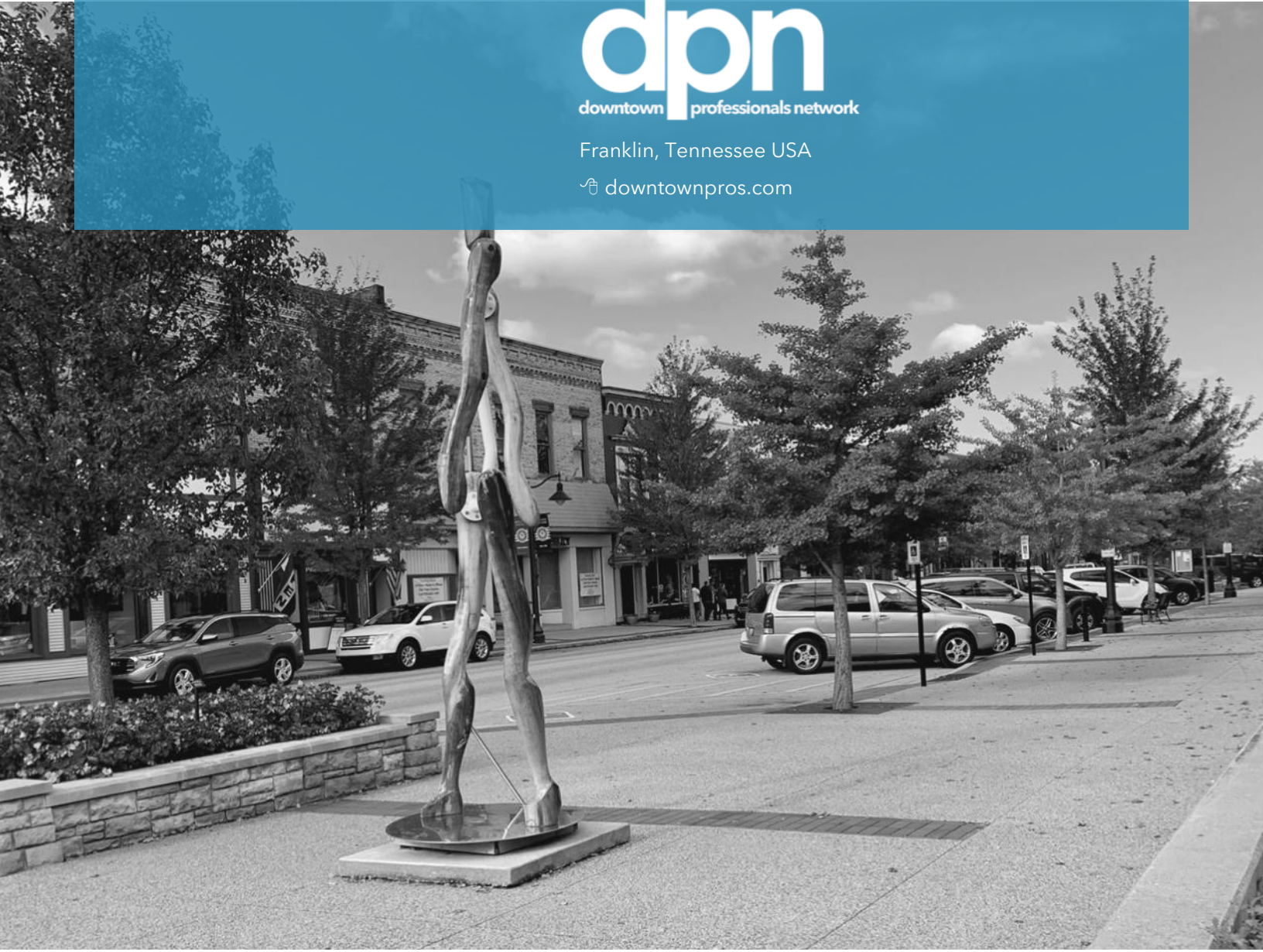
A MEDC Michigan Main Street Program Service

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Downtown Grand Haven FUTURES



Inside

Grand Haven has already achieved a level of success that communities aspire for. A long track record of results and positive changes occurring in the downtown area have positioned the community well. Still, recognizing that change is inevitable and with growth occurring in the community and surrounding region, Grand Haven Main Street DDA, along with community partners and stakeholders, is taking a pro-active planning approach and applying sound market principles, community engagement practices, and creative thinking to guide future development, redevelopment and downtown enhancement initiatives.

The Downtown Futures service is a Michigan Main Street Program at MEDC service designed for communities and organizations that have demonstrated success and are contemplating the scope and nature of future change in their downtown and traditional neighborhood business districts. The process and its resulting products provide a solid foundation upon which to think, plan and act for the future in a way that will preserve, celebrate and leverage the assets and special features that make Grand Haven's downtown a special place.

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Market Study Limitations and Disclaimers

Retail market studies and analyses, their components (such as retail sales gap analyses and surveys interpretation) and derivative business development plans provide important guidance on how a commercial area should, theoretically, be able to perform and on the sales levels businesses should be able to achieve. However, a number of factors affect the actual performance of businesses and commercial areas, including the skills of the business operator, level of business capitalization, the quality of the physical environment, changes in overall economic conditions, the effectiveness of business and district marketing programs, and many other factors. The information in this document is intended to provide a foundation of information for making district enhancement and business development decisions, but it does not and cannot ensure business success.

As is true of all demographic, economic and market studies, our analysis' reliability is limited to the reliability and quality of the data available. Our research assumes that all data made available by and procured from federal, state, county, city, primary and third party sources is accurate and reliable.

Because market conditions change rapidly and sometimes without warning, the information and opinions expressed here represent a snapshot in time and cannot predict or gauge future changes or results.



Market Study Insights and Outcomes

A Stable and Growing Market

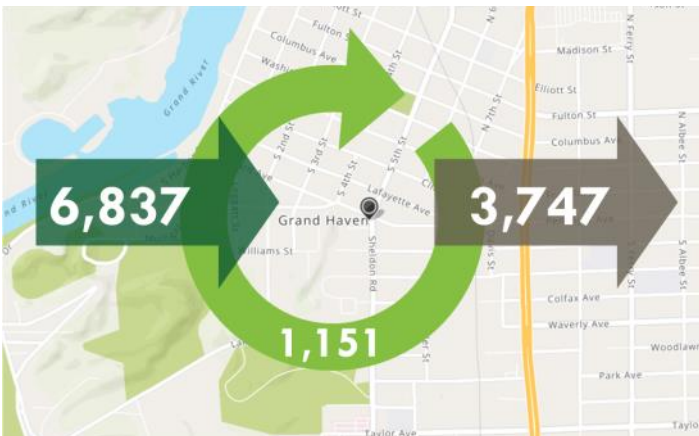
Market data summarized in the Downtown Grand Haven Market Snapshot demonstrates a stable and growing market. Key indicators for the five, ten and twenty-minute drive times anticipate growth in population, households and median household income approaching or exceeding rates projected for the state through 2024. Overall retail sales surplus and leakage estimates for the Grand Haven drive times show the positive impacts of sales likely being captured from visitors and households in the surrounding area.

Tools and References

- Downtown Grand Haven Market Snapshot
- Esri and Environics (Claritas) Data Reports

The Daily Boost

Inflow/Outflow Analysis Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's On The Map application shows a 2017 inflow of 6,837 workers employed in the Grand Haven city limits, resulting in an estimated daytime population net gain of 3,090 persons. The workplace and visitor markets are likely responsible, in part, for sales surplus estimates in certain categories. Moreover, the combination of rooftops and "vehicle tops" in the Grand Haven market could offer opportunities for existing business to grow, and for new retail, service, and eating and drinking establishments to join the mix.



Downtown Trends | Community Perspectives

Thirty-one percent of respondents to the 2020 Downtown Grand Haven Futures survey described pre-COVID-19 trends in Downtown Grand Haven as "Improving or making progress," while 58% said the area is "Steady or holding its own."

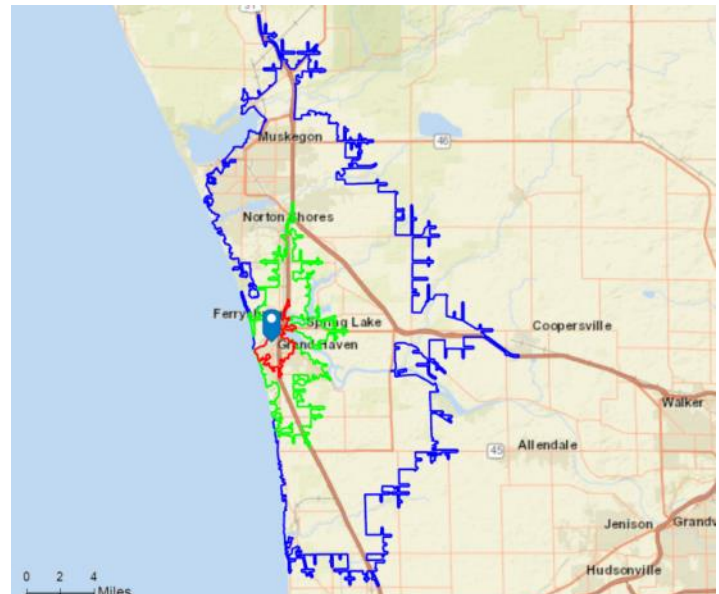
Survey: Pre-COVID-19 trends in Downtown Grand Haven

↑ Improving or making progress	30.8%
↔ Steady or holding its own	57.6%
↓ Declining or losing ground	11.6%

DOWNTOWN GRAND HAVEN DRIVE TIME MARKET

DEMOGRAPHIC FAST FACTS

ESRI 2019



POPULATION

30,694

10 MINUTE DRIVE TIME | 2019
2019—24 GROWTH: 5.8%

Population	5 Min	10 Min	20 Min
2019 Estimate	7,877	30,694	165,280
Growth (2019-24)	5.1%	5.8%	3.2%
Est. State Pop Growth (2019-24)			1.3%



DAYTIME POP

42,948

10 MINUTE DRIVE TIME | 2019
DAYTIME CHANGE: 39.9%

Daytime Population	5 Min	10 Min	20 Min
Total Daytime Pop	17,773	42,948	172,534
Daytime Change	125.6%	39.9%	4.4%



HOUSEHOLDS

13,382

10 MINUTE DRIVE TIME | 2019
2019—24 GROWTH: 6.2%

Households	5 Min	10 Min	20 Min
2019 Estimate	3,463	13,382	64,263
HH Growth (2019-24)	4.4%	6.2%	3.5%
Est. State HH Growth (2019-24)			1.6%



MEDIAN HH INCOME

\$62,786

10 MINUTE DRIVE TIME | 2019
2019—24 GROWTH: 14.2%

Median HH Income	5 Min	10 Min	20 Min
2019 Estimate	\$58,017	\$62,786	\$51,928
Growth (2019-24)	12.5%	14.2%	10.0%

2019 State: \$55,885 | 2019-24 Growth: 13.6%

Source: Esri Market Profile | 06.20

Market Study Insights and Outcomes

Opportunities

Findings from the 2020 Futures Survey, based on responses from more than 1,000 participants, provide insights for eating, drinking and entertainment places and retail establishments that could be candidates – and targeted – for expansion and recruitment in Downtown Grand Haven, as well as specific features, products and services most likely to appeal to targeted consumer groups in the Grand Haven market.

Eating, Drinking & Entertainment | Top Selections

Farm to Table	Ethnic Restaurant	Entertainment Ctr
Top Features:	Top Features:	Top Features:
Locally sourced produce	Middle Eastern cuisine	Full-Service bar
Farm-direct meats/fish	Outdoor dining	Putt-putt golf
Regional beverages	Thai/Chinese cuisine	3-lane bowling alley
Dinner menu	Indian cuisine	Axe throwing
Survey Demo: HH Income	Survey Demo: HH Income	Survey Demo: HH Income
\$50K to \$100K: 29%	\$50K to \$100K: 37%	\$50K to \$100K: 42%
\$100K+: 62%	\$100K+: 52%	\$100K+: 43%

Retail Establishments | Top Selections

Specialty Grocer	Butcher Shop	Outdoor Rec
Top Features:	Top Features:	Top Features:
Locally sourced foods	Cut-to-order meats	Boating/Kayaking
Fresh/Pre-packaged	Organic meats	Hiking gear
Healthy eating items	Deli/Charcuterie items	Camping gear
Meats, cheeses, breads	Jerky and snack sticks	Running gear
Survey Demo: HH Income	Survey Demo: HH Income	Survey Demo: HH Income
\$50K to \$100K: 33%	\$50K to \$100K: 33%	\$50K to \$100K: 31%
\$100K+: 55%	\$100K+: 61%	\$100K+: 56%

Potential Market Traction

Q: How likely would you be to visit the following types of expanding or new Downtown Grand Haven businesses on a consistent basis?

Average Score Ranking Shown | Scale: 5.00 = Definitely Would

1. Farm to Table	4.24	1. Specialty Grocer	4.20
2. Ethnic Restaurant	4.07	2. Butcher Shop	3.81
3. Brick Oven Pizzeria	3.93	3. Outdoor Rec, Sports	3.53
4. Healthy Menu Café	3.84	4. Kitchen & Home Décor	3.44
5. Entertainment Center	3.64	5. Home Furnishings Store	3.24

Tools and References

- 2020 Grand Haven Futures Survey Summary Results
- Grand Haven Futures Survey Results At-a-Glance



Market Study Insights and Outcomes

Are You a Prospect?

More than 100 respondents to the Futures Survey expressed interest in moving or opening a new business in Downtown Grand Haven. The level of interest expressed bodes well for the future and possibilities for the success of local business attraction efforts.



Are you a prospect?

Are you interested in moving your business to, or opening a new business in, Downtown Grand Haven?

Interested in moving	31
Interested in opening new	75
10.4% of Responding Sample	



Live it Up

Fifty-five percent of all survey respondents indicated some level of interest in potential downtown housing opportunities and a mix of housing styles catering to a broad spectrum of age groups and income levels. The benefits of housing as part of the downtown mix are multi-fold and an important ingredient for a vibrant district— and a possible motivator for prospective developers and investors.



64%

Of those surveyed would or might consider living in Downtown Grand Haven.

Preferred housing styles:

2 BR Townhome	55%
2 BR Condo	49%
2 BR Apartment	22%
Loft	19%
Senior Housing	9%

Mortgage or rent payment:

Less than \$1,000	17%
\$1,000 to \$1,399	43%
\$1,400 to \$1,799	22%
\$1,800 to \$2,399	13%
\$2,400 or more	5%

Tools and References

- ▶ At-a-Glance Top Prospects Survey Results
- ▶ Housing Visual Preferences Survey Results



Market Study Insights and Outcomes

Taking it to the Street

Market study information and findings provide a strong foundation for efforts to help businesses grow, to attract new businesses to be part of the downtown mix, and to promote opportunities to prospective businesses, investors, developers and entrepreneurs. The success of these efforts is also likely to hinge on the ability to:

- Demonstrate a solid understanding of the market and market trends.
- Demonstrate strong partnerships among Grand Haven Main Street DDA, the City of Grand Haven, and other economic development partners are in place.
- Provide an outrageous level of personal service and attention to prospects, help prospects navigate the development process or the steps for opening a business, and demonstrate a “can-do” attitude.
- Demonstrate success and positive trends through tracking data, visuals and testimonials.
- Promote a business-friendly and development-ready environment and approach using lessons learned and tools developed through MEDC’s Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program and certification, and including the ability to direct prospects to developers, owners and agents for available sites.
- Target prospects who:
 - Have prior industry experience or who are already operating within the region.
 - Have a connection to Grand Haven.
 - Have concepts or business models that are consistent with “top prospects” identified in the Futures survey or that are complementary to existing businesses and uses.
 - Are most likely to be attracted to the community and the Grand Haven way-of-life.



Moving Ahead

Examples of next steps and implementation activities

- ☐ Follow-up with new and expanding business prospects identified via the Futures Survey.
- ☐ Share information from the Futures survey with existing businesses, especially those who might have opportunities to expand or reposition themselves to capitalize on products, services and features sought by area consumers.
- ☐ Develop a “Starting a Business in Downtown Grand Haven” brochure that outlines the process in a simple and condensed step-by-step format and provides information and contacts for available guidance, technical assistance and resources.
- ☐ Develop a form or system for tracking prospects to collect basic information and to record notes on follow-up communications and activity.
- ☐ Create an “Opportunities” or “Doing Business” tab or section on the Grand Haven Main Street website to serve as a one-stop-shop or portal for information, links and downloads to assist existing and prospective investors, developers, businesses and entrepreneurs.
- ☐ Use on-the-street marketing techniques (posters, sandwich board signs, etc.) to promote opportunities, highlight progress and celebrate successes.
- ☐ Employ appropriate prospecting techniques, such as social media posts, field trips, database mining, business plan competitions, and property tours, to mine leads for new and expanding businesses.
- ☐ Continue to apply a Pre-development Team approach, much like that advanced in the Michigan Economic Development Corporation’s (MEDC) Redevelopment Ready Communities program, that includes all relevant personnel in project preview and walk-through activities designed to troubleshoot development and building rehabilitation projects, to identify possible alternatives to meet the intent of life-safety measures and other development-related codes and ordinances (including parking requirements), and to provide clear direction to investors, developers, businesses, and entrepreneurs.
- ☐ Consider using a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process, and work with MEDC’s Redevelopment Services Team, to market and showcase development sites, including appropriate City- or other publicly-owned sites in the downtown area.

Downtown Evolutions

Introduction

Overview

This report is directed to an assessment of possible enhancements to three areas as defined in Grand Haven planning documents: Downtown, Hilltop, and Centertown — collectively referred to as the “district” or “downtown” in this document. The challenge is significant, not because there’s much to do but because things that have been accomplished have been done well. The method of assessing the district is important: investigations, formal and informal discussions, and the preparation and sharing of design concepts occurred over a period of four days. There’s plenty of room to overlook constraints and limitations in this type of process, but there’s a lot of time to highlight key opportunities. For a downtown like Grand Haven this is important because there isn’t really a lot to correct, but there are some significant opportunities.

The district formed by the Downtown, Hilltop and Centertown areas is an elongated narrow area comprised largely of commercial and institutional uses. The district is about six blocks in length and is generally three blocks wide in its Downtown and Hilltop precincts. Centertown is about the same length but it is far more varied in width and, when compared to the Downtown precinct, its building pattern is quite “gappy,” with holes in the street wall created by vacant and underutilized lots, yards, and egresses to alleys and parking areas intermixed between buildings. In total, the district covers about 24 blocks—a considerably large area. Geographically, the district stretches from Highway 31 nearly to the Grand River, primarily on Washington Avenue and 7th Street. Interestingly, each of the precincts is highly walkable but, in aggregate, the parts that form the district can seem unrelentingly distant from each other because connections between the Downtown, Hilltop, and Centertown precincts are not apparent.

Planning Foundations

Grand Haven is fortunate to have solid planning supporting its downtown. An older but not yet out-of-date vision plan offers good guidance on precincts and infill opportunities. Whether they existed previously or not, that plan defines the various precincts where development is unified in many respects, and this report supports those definitions, grounding design directions in each precinct based on the intrinsic character in building stock and public space.

Similarly, a more recent master plan advocates for placemaking, a process aimed at securing special places for human activities in downtown and elsewhere in the Grand Haven community. Using the master plan as a foundation, this plan advocates for the presence of nearly continuous human activity in downtown, such that a person will nearly always encounter some kind of legitimate people-focused activity. Placemaking results in the reinforcement of precincts based on their underlying character, and can also help to strengthen connectivity between the downtown’s three precincts— processes that this study builds upon.



The “district” or “downtown” area addressed in this study is comprised of three precincts strung along Washington Avenue and 7th Street—Centertown, Hilltop, and Downtown, each being a unique destination.

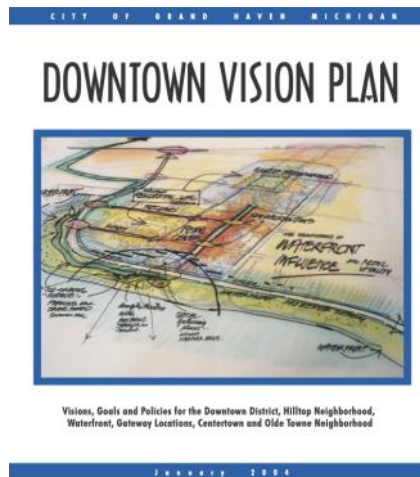
Downtown Evolutions

Introduction

Solid Planning Foundations

The Grand Haven community has strong guidance for its evolution in a Vision Plan, a document that continues to guide development even after more than a decade old.

A Centertown Vision Plan was created in 2014. It advocated for property improvements, landscape and streetscape improvements, and coordinated marketing efforts. Plans for streetscape improvements are advancing now, and it seems several properties have been upgraded since the plan's completion.



This report purposely demonstrates ideas in their very formative stages. During a four-day visit, there's plenty of time to formulate directions but not nearly enough time to fairly vet them. Instead of suggesting these directions are the first step toward implementation—if they're right, and they might be—it is suggested that they offer tools for deeper engagement and assessment as the first step. In this way, they are primarily intended to provoke a community discussion, even more so than to initiate a design. Refinements are needed and they might be best drawn from this work. If it turns out the directions are solid and supported, that's a great thing to have determined, but refinements will still occur as the design of any component is advanced. That means when the ideas incorporated into this report are discussed and assessed, one might squint somewhat at them to obscure detail that may be incorrect, while allowing the core idea to shine through.

A limitation of this study is that it occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which likely limited the amount and degree of engagement that might otherwise happen. Still, the conversation about downtown offered depth if not width, and activity sufficient to understand the patterns of use in downtown was occurring throughout the four-day on-site study period. More important, some things that were happening in downtown Grand Haven were happening during—and in spite of—COVID-19 and being present allowed the report to reflect directions that might not otherwise have been considered.

Precincts are addressed with capital letters in this report, so Downtown is the precinct—the geographic area referred to as Downtown as defined in Grand Haven planning documents (*see map, shown right*). Where the report uses lower case to indicate downtown, it refers to the area or district comprised of the Downtown, Hilltop and Centertown Precincts; or, generically, to an area where, in most communities, historic and centralized commercial activities occur.



Washington Avenue and 7th Street form the spines for a downtown district comprised of three precincts defined in Grand Haven planning documents: Downtown, Hilltop, and Centertown.

Downtown Evolutions

Context

Grand Haven's downtown district is large, consuming more than 24 block areas in three precincts. More importantly, the district is elongated, reaching eight blocks along Washington Avenue, with a portion of that reach designated as the Downtown precinct, and six blocks along 7th Street in a precinct called Centertown. Businesses on each end of Washington Avenue are separated by a three-block stretch of government and institutional uses in a precinct referred to as Hilltop. While each precinct is relatively compact, it's not likely that most downtown users would consider walking that entire distance. Rather, they would land in Downtown or Centertown in a car and then walk within that area.

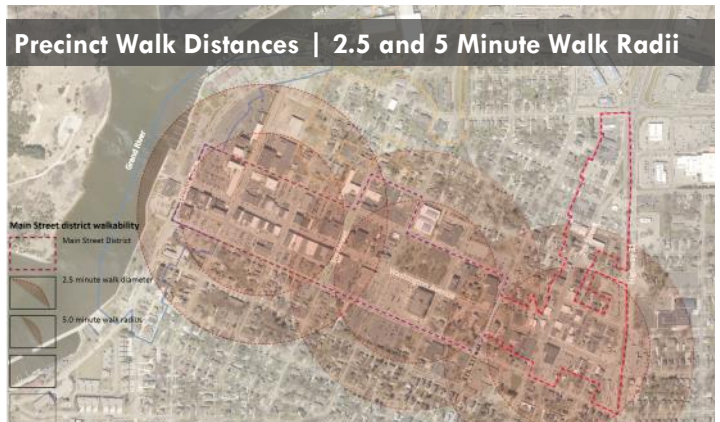
Downtown

The precincts vary in urban character, with Downtown feeling very much like a traditional downtown—with buildings lining sidewalks and a sense of active storefronts. Downtown benefits from the Grand River's riverfront, immediately across Harbor Drive from Downtown destinations, but also has a range of hospitality destinations that lend activity, especially during evenings and weekends.



Downtown is the most obvious form of a Central Business District in Grand Haven, but that use is too limiting for Downtown's current activities.

Parking in Downtown is logically permitted along Washington Avenue, again adding to the sense of street activity. Parking is also located in large lots on the back sides of Washington Avenue blocks or in the next block away—generally allowing for a large supply of parking to meet downtown needs. The exception is a Washington Avenue-facing parking area between 1st Street and Harbor Drive. While reasonably landscaped and probably well located relative to riverfront activities, it's still a parking lot in the heart of Grand Haven's most intense and recognizable traditional downtown area.



While the whole of the district may not be walkable, each of its precincts is readily walkable.



Parking supporting Downtown is prevalent, with spaces along most of Washington Avenue and in parking areas behind buildings. Too much parking—aggregated into large surface lots—breaks apart the experience of a downtown.

Downtown Evolutions

Context

Centertown

Opposite in geography from Downtown is Centertown, which lies along about a two-block portion of Washington Avenue and approximately seven blocks of 7th Street. The character of this district is more mixed than Downtown, with many buildings addressing the sidewalk, but with many also having breaks or gaps between—filled by parking or yards or sometimes with space waiting to be something more. Portions of Centertown are very “highway” oriented, with front facing parking areas surrounding buildings. Still, where Washington Avenue and 7th Street are considered, the precinct is reasonably well held together.

Like Downtown, parking seems to exist in plentiful supply with both street parking and off-street parking areas. Unlike downtown, the off-street areas reach to the main streets, reinforcing gaps within the precinct. However, those parking areas are clearly needed to support the activity of the precinct.

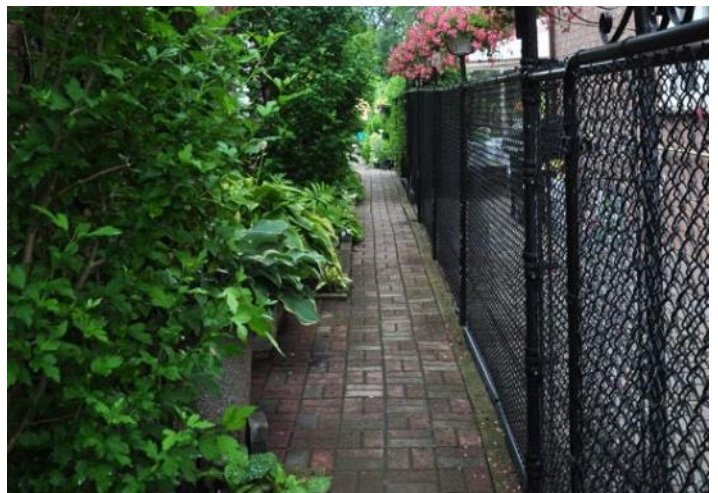
Narrow gaps will not likely see an evolution to an actual building, although additions might be possible. More likely is the idea that these gaps become narrow gardens, swaths of color that anchor the gaps and introduce significant color into the landscape of Centertown.



Gaps between buildings are a notable feature for Centertown.



Several businesses in Centertown are notable as destinations; gaining that sense for all of Centertown is a key goal of this report.



Some of the gaps are narrow and may be better filled with gardens, meant for viewing more than traversing.

Downtown Evolutions

Context

Hilltop

Situated between Downtown and Centertown is Hilltop, a six-block precinct with three Washington Avenue block fronts. As its name suggests, it is at the top of a rise along Washington Avenue, which might seem more of an obstacle than it really is. The nature of street activity changes from business and hospitality to institutional uses, most of which orient themselves to the street. Uncharacteristically, the county courthouse orients itself to a very large parking lot, essentially turning its back (or its side) on Washington Avenue and on Central Park, a two-and-a-half-acre green space situated at the center of downtown. It's not just the courthouse that shuns the park, the library has a side entrance oriented to the park but its main entrance is oriented to a street and a parking lot across the street. If one could imagine the courthouse, likely the area's largest building, lending its activity to Washington Avenue—as the City Hall and Fire Hall do—the break in activity along Washington Avenue created by the shift from commercial to institutional uses might have been largely mitigated, and the sense of a continuous district would be strengthened.

While the precincts are discussed separately, it would seem that few downtown users really experience downtown Grand Haven by precinct. Still there is a streetscape that is continuous along Washington Avenue, and improvements are being contemplated along 7th Street in Centertown, that might extend the sense of continuity. What exists of the streetscape is generally solid, with simple and serviceable sidewalk pavements accented by brick bands along curb lines, a few planters at opportune locations, and some—but not a lot—of seating. Street and sidewalk areas are heated to address snow melting, a significant advantage in perpetuating the streetscape improvement. Where deicing chemicals and mechanical snow removal tear streetscapes apart, the city's investment in snow melting allows a ten-year old streetscape to look very much like new.



The Ottawa County Courthouse, Central Park and Grand Haven's City Hall and Public Safety buildings are the primary attractions in the Hilltop precinct.



A compelling component of Downtown's streetscape is its street and sidewalk snow melting system, keeping the Downtown's experience snow free and perpetuating the community's investment in the streetscape.

Downtown Evolutions

Context

Where downtown's streetscape is high on solidity, it's low on pedestrian comforts and, very importantly, on whimsy. There are very few places to sit, formally or informally, especially for the width of the sidewalk. Some areas have become inhabited by restaurant uses during the COVID-19 pandemic; those might be considered to become permanent additions. But the streetscape offers few landmarks—the noted gathering fountain that occurs in some towns, or the historic clock, or the statue of the notable citizen. And there's nothing that makes it memorable or just fun. Seating opportunities and whimsy need to be introduced to balance the streetscape's solid serviceability, to bring some signature reflective of Grand Haven, and to help connect the precincts and bring cohesiveness to the downtown district as a whole.



Washington Avenue's streetscape is solid and serviceable but lacks signature features.

Issues

- a. Local insights
- b. Outside perspectives

With the on-site portion of this study consuming only four days, it's difficult to suggest that Grand Haven's downtown district has problems. Quite to the contrary, and despite COVID-19, the Downtown and Centertown precincts appear busy: restaurants don't have lines out their doors, but they seemed busy; and there was plenty of pedestrian activity along the streets. The city has responded to COVID-19 by easing restrictions on sidewalk eating and drinking and allowing the temporary closure of one lane of traffic on one block of Washington Avenue, all of which adds to the "street life"—the visible human activity needed for a downtown to thrive.

From the outside, the study team wondered about the number of precincts, but in reality, they seem to work. Outsiders may not get the idea that Downtown, Hilltop, and Centertown are three named precincts out of many. The character and setting—the physical presence that can be felt in each of these places—is correct. The greater problem, perhaps, is that they stand on their own, and topography and distance do little to suggest, in aggregate, they are very much connected. Connection isn't so much an issue, perhaps, for local visitors and residents, but for outside visitors, navigation is key. Simple cues might offer great advantages in expanding the experience for this cohort of downtown's population.

Part of the experience of downtown—a big part—is comfort and safety. On Washington Avenue, other than nicely crafted stone planters, there's really no where to sit. Perhaps benches were never a part of the streetscape, or maybe they were moved to encourage social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Whatever the reason, benches—or seating, in general—are missing from the streetscape and need to be present.

While lighting and trees offer a sense of continuity for Washington Avenue, even across precinct boundaries, lighting is inconsistent. There are dark places along Washington Avenue, and even darker stretches along the cross streets—which are important routes for pedestrians who might park in off-street parking locations. Darker yet are those blocks around Central Park, and while it's not intended as a nighttime destination, there are no contributing storefronts and the general sense of darkness makes for an uncomfortable stroll even along its edges.



Washington Avenue links the three downtown precincts but there's not much suggesting the extents of the downtown district.



Washington Avenue's streetscape lacks basic pedestrian comforts and its lighting doesn't uniformly illuminate sidewalk areas.

Downtown Evolutions

It was also not evident that Grand Haven is the Coast Guard city. Asked about the lack of identifying features, downtown stakeholders suggested they are very proud of this heritage, but they wouldn't want additions that are kitschy. There should be a middle ground—a way of telling a part of that story that isn't cheap, cutesy, or common. And it's not something that is just made up—a designation as a Coast Guard city is directed by Congress, and Grand Haven was the country's first. There's so much more here than a Coast Guard boat and a summer festival. There should be a way of telling this story every day.

Local concerns were more focused on parking and the ability to work with the city in building renovations, especially related to parking needs. Parking as a deficit topic is raised in nearly every small town, where in some places there can never be enough. In fact, and perhaps in contrast to comments suggesting a parking deficit, the downtown area seems to have an abundance of parking, so much so that some of it might be allowed to evolve toward better transitions to neighborhoods adjacent to downtown. The issue is, once street parking is filled, parking is not exactly prominent to many destinations. Reality suggests that parking is abundant and, in some places, very attractive for downtown parking. While this report won't dive deeply into parking, both Downtown and Centertown have plentiful street parking and opportune public off-street parking.

Parking requirements might be a more direct concern of some stakeholders. Creating parking to serve downtown residents is a difficult proposition, as residents desire secure parking in a location proximate to their residence, and creation of those spaces holds the potential of displacing parking needed to serve an active downtown's customers. There seemed a great desire to create living spaces in downtown, especially in the Downtown precinct. Achieving a proper balance is difficult, and when a public parking area has been created through—in whole or in part—assessment of benefitting property owners, the issue becomes even more complex. An investigation into the management of parking might address this issue in a more direct manner and explore opportunities like shared parking (i.e. for residents during the evening and visitors during the day) and other enhanced parking management techniques.

A seemingly greater concern, as borne out in market research and community discussions, was variety in restaurants, an issue that might immediately be beyond the scope of this report. However, by perpetuating many of the same practices currently evidenced in Downtown and Centertown, and by creating space that might afford an interested entrepreneur an opportunity at a reasonable investment threshold, greater variety might be somewhat enhanced. Any improvements that retain or expand downtown's rate of visitors offers that opportunity, and for certain, the converse—making it less attractive for visitors—will diminish the potential for new operators to enter the market.



<<<insert photo Coast Guard boat on the highway: The Coast Guard lifeboat signifies an important theme in the community but the theme lacks supporting features.



Parking is plentiful in downtown, with ample parking along Washington Avenue as well as in parking located behind buildings.

Downtown Evolutions

Issues

Stakeholders noted the lack of things for children in downtown. While this concern was secondary to other discussions, they note a factor that might be important in achieving consistent or more intensive visitor-ship in downtown. For the most part, they are correct: children have little to do in Downtown or Centertown, and Central Park is neither near enough to leave children to play alone nor is it populated with activities—other than space—that would entice a child's play. Having an opportunity for attended play extends the time a person with a child might otherwise spend in downtown. Remembering the mantra of more visible human activity means that the child and their attending adult need not even spend more time shopping or partaking in other downtown activities, because their presence simply induces others to be present.

Finally, while not an extensive or in-depth discussion, the idea of contemporary downtown lodging was noted. While most believed the decision would be made in another process, it's important that the benefits and capacity for a hotel be characterized, if only to make comparisons to a hotel in a nearby, but not downtown, location. Most commonly, this initiative was referred to as a boutique hotel. Concerns were noted for parking and height of the structure, both of which are reasonably discussed relative to the feasibility for a downtown hotel in this report.



Children have little to do in Downtown or Centertown, and Central Park is neither near enough to leave children to play alone nor is it populated with activities—other than space—that would entice a child's play.

Guiding Principles



Even with all of the good things that are happening and have happened in Grand Haven's downtown, there remains opportunities for improvement. This report will frame several, but even with those completed, downtown will not be "done." The nature of downtowns is that they are never done. There will always be one more initiative to be accomplished, made so because, as capacity to accomplish things grows, the desire for the next better thing can be realized. In this way, there's no rush to accomplish the first big move. Instead, a path should be blazed toward incremental enhancements across many areas. Where this report attends to design and development—and the many projects that might fall into this area, there are many organizational and promotional activities that will have a similar trajectory—growing in threshold as capacity for accomplishment increases.

As a guide for the initiatives framed in this report, as well as for those that might eventually follow upon it, a series of principles gives guidance at a very high level.

As a guide for the initiatives framed in this report, as well as for those that might eventually follow upon it, a series of principles gives guidance at a very high level.

- a) Where parking is seen as an issue, too often the fabric of a downtown is lost in pursuit of places to store cars. Evidence of this is Hilltop, where parking predominates the landscape and has turned the county seat into a feature of suburban character. **The parking created is too often an experience lost.**
- b) Related to parking is how it is managed. Where precincts are disparate, it is likely that people will not walk through Hilltop to reach their next downtown destination. But within Grand Haven's precincts, the landscape is walkable, interesting, and convenient, making it entirely possible to **park once, but shop twice.**
- c) Downtowns are places of people, and buildings have aggregated in a smaller geography because of the concentration of people. In contrast, suburban places are most often characterized as places of parking, decentralizing and even hiding people. Downtowns should **strive to create places of visible human activity.** Those places might be inside a building, but expansive windows should be used to reveal that activity, or they might be places on the street, where every passerby—on foot or in a car or watching from a window—is drawn to the activity.
- d) A well-built collection of buildings allows for occupancies that might change dramatically over the life of any particular building. Similarly, the public realm, including a streetscape, plazas, gardens, and other public spaces, might serve any number of generations. But if there is no energy, if the experience of a building or a space isn't compelling, the place can't ever fully be a downtown. Think of downtown Grand Haven as a **place to "stay at" instead of "go to."**
- e) Memories are created by the level of experience one has in a place. Those with few attractions and activities are, simply, boring. Festivals are memorable. So is well-considered public art. **Let downtown be the fun place.**
- f) Walking along a downtown street gets you someplace, but if done well, that walk can **share stories about a place.** There are physical features that play prominently in the process of placemaking, but using features that are so intrinsically linked to the place are the real key.
- g) Downtowns benefit from their compact geography, where many people gather for many purposes, and **downtown is the place where as many human uses as possible consume the smallest amount of space.** The patterns of single use happen in the suburbs but, in a downtown, people live over storefronts, streets can be amazing public plazas, and parking lots can become a festival spot.
- h) With everything that has happened—good or bad—in Grand Haven's downtown, it has to be recognized that none of it happened with a snap of the fingers. Downtowns evolve with time, most often slowly, allowing change to be incorporated at the same pace. It took a long time for Grand Haven's downtown to become what it is today; and it's okay that it might take years to accommodate change anticipated by this report. Most important, **change will be incremental and will happen well when it is planned.**

Demonstrations

Because Grand Haven already has solid plans for its downtown, this report strives to offer direction for more strategic responses to conditions highlighted or revealed during the on-site work session. Importantly, the broad and higher order direction of the Visions plan and master plan remain, particularly because the projects framed in this section should be seen as building upon those foundational planning documents. As a strategic planning effort, each initiative might be best viewed in the way opportunities might spring from reconsideration of the limitation, with key parameters and directions framed, but also recognizing work remains before implementation could really be considered.

This section of the report characterizes a series of limitations and opportunities presented by Grand Haven's downtown district, and then goes on to describe, as a demonstration of a path forward, a project that responds to the limitations and opportunities. As noted, **these are concepts**, worthy of significant discussion but shared for their applicability to the need of downtown.

Demonstration A Limited Parking

It's reasonable to say that parking in Downtown and Centertown is limited, but only as an absolute. For nearly every conceivable regular activity, parking exists in sufficient quantities to serve the commercial and leisure uses of downtown patrons. Where it may become too limited is during large special festivals or events or if a parking area is closed to accommodate a more localized festival or event. Parking may become scarce if new development overly consumes existing parking. Solutions might be simple, like requiring new development to accommodate some parking as a replacement for what might be lost with the development. In this way, existing surface parking may be lost, and new parking demands are created by new development, but at least some parking is created. For example, in the demonstration of a downtown hotel included in this report, at least some parking is created within the "shell" of the hotel. Displaced parking might be recovered through an agreement with a property to the east, where parking is likely to exist for some time due to deed restrictions.



Parking is not only abundant but well placed for anyone wanting to walk only a short distance from a parking space to their destination.



Development along Excelsior Boulevard in Saint Louis Park, Minnesota, is aligned with parking through a registration of land use, a more exacting way of projecting parking demand than through land use alone.

Downtown Evolutions

Demonstration A | Limited Parking

Correlating specific uses (beyond a general land use designation as “commercial”) to parking availability has been used in communities struggling with redevelopment of their commercial districts. By looking at land use in a more definitive way, a community is better able to manage available parking across detailed uses, occupancies, and time of day. The key element is a registration of land use so that a proper assignment of parking needs is achieved. In this way, an owner-proprietor may do business in a way wholly different than a tenant, resulting in the need for fewer or greater parking spaces. The City of Saint Louis Park, Minnesota uses this method in its commercial districts, many of which are very much like Grand Haven’s Downtown and Centertown precincts. For more information, see <https://www.stlouispark.org/home/showdocument?id=15569>.


Demonstration A | Limited Parking

Further study required: Understanding the actual demand for downtown parking is best determined through a parking study; a part of the study will note what is happening today, but it should also pursue options, including addition of parking and consideration of management options.

Implementation timing: As a first step, engaging a firm to conduct (or update) a parking study is logical; conducting inventories during the COVID-19 pandemic is not reasonable as the conditions may not be reflective of downtown’s overall level of activity; implementation depends on the outcomes of a parking study.

Costs: A parking study could be accomplished, depending on scope, typically within a range of \$40,000 to \$75,000.

Demonstrations



Experience LIFE in the Park

Certificate of occupancy and land use registration application

This is as a request for review and/or inspection of a commercial, industrial, public or multi-family building in which the business and/or zoning use will change. Upon submittal, city staff will review this application to determine which of the following will be issued by the city upon compliance:

- Certificate of occupancy** – A certificate will be issued when there is a change of use as defined by the building and zoning codes, and the building is found to be in compliance with current code requirements for the proposed use. The site will be inspected by the inspections department.
- Land use registration** – A letter of land use registration will be issued when there is not a change of use as defined by building and zoning codes and it's determined the proposed business satisfies the zoning code.

General information

In addition to the information below, submit 1) an indoor floor plan showing room sizes and describing how each room was used by the previous use, and will be used by the proposed business, 2) an exterior plan showing number of parking spaces available on the site.

Property address: _____ Year constructed: _____

Name of proposed business: _____ Contact name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ ZIP code: _____

Phone: _____ Cell: _____ Email: _____

Name of property owner/manager: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ ZIP code: _____

Square footage of space: _____ Does the space have fire sprinklers? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Previous business information

Describe the business that last occupied the space. Do not write vacant unless the building is new and you are the first to occupy it. Do not fill in this space with information about your proposed business.

Name of previous business: _____

Describe previous business, list activities conducted: _____

Proposed business information

Use this space to describe your proposed business, list activities you will conduct: _____

Inspections made by the city are part of the city's duty to the general public to further compliance with city codes. Inspections do not constitute any representation, guarantee or warranty, either implied or expressed, to the owner, buyer or any other individual as to the condition of the building or conformance to applicable construction codes. The undersigned acknowledges that they have read this application, that the information is correct, and that the owner agrees to comply with applicable provisions of the St. Louis Park city code.

Applicant name and signature: _____ Date: _____

Office use only

☐ Certificate of occupancy (Fee: _____) ☐ Land use registration (Fee: \$50)

Previous classification: _____ New classification: _____ Zoning district: _____

Permit number: _____ Building approval: _____ Zoning approval: _____

St. Louis Park Building and Energy Department • 5005 Minnetonka Blvd., St. Louis Park, MN 55416

www.stlouispark.org • Phone: 952.924.2588 • Fax: 952.924.2663 • TTY: 952.924.2518

The City of Saint Louis Park, Minnesota uses a method to register land uses in its commercial districts use so that a proper assignment of parking needs is achieved. View or download a copy of the application at <https://www.stlouispark.org/home/showdocument?id=15569>.

Demonstration B

Harsh Transitions

Portions of downtown directly abutting residential neighborhoods have been replaced with parking, mostly with a landscaped buffer along sensitive edges. If we consider these landscaped edges to have no human use, they do not belong in downtown—or, in the case of the demonstration—in Hilltop. Instead, the narrow strips of land might be better consumed by residential uses, intensified to a proper degree so they reflect a downtown, but not to such a degree as they would overwhelm a single-family residence across the street.

Two examples of demonstrations are offered, both of which could work along the northerly side of Clinton Avenue, and both of which would consume no existing parking.

Fashioned as rowhomes in the first example, blocks of four to six units in a single building begin “talking” with the residential side of Clinton Avenue. Styling is important and might be more reflective of homes by using more dramatic roof forms to cap a three-story building, where the top level is, to the degree possible, incorporated into the roof or attic. The main level is slightly elevated to the street, with parking accessed from behind and front stoops facing neighbors (creating visible human activity).



While not unattractive, buffers in downtown areas are contrary to the idea of the greatest number of uses in the smallest possible geography.



Example 1—Rowhome transition, elevation view: Rowhomes, fashioned in blocks of four to six units in a single building, begin “talking” with the residential side of Clinton Avenue.

Demonstration B | Harsh Transitions

Depending on the market, the size of rowhome units might vary—some being three level units while others are two level units with a flat on the third level. As noted, each building might vary in length to accommodate four to six or maybe seven or eight units, but buildings on the smaller end, with well landscaped garden passages between buildings, will present a more comfortably scaled relationship with neighboring homes.



Example 1: Rowhomes replacing parking lot buffers create a use while intensifying activity for a downtown in a structure that aligns in scale with single-family homes.

Demonstration B | Harsh Transitions

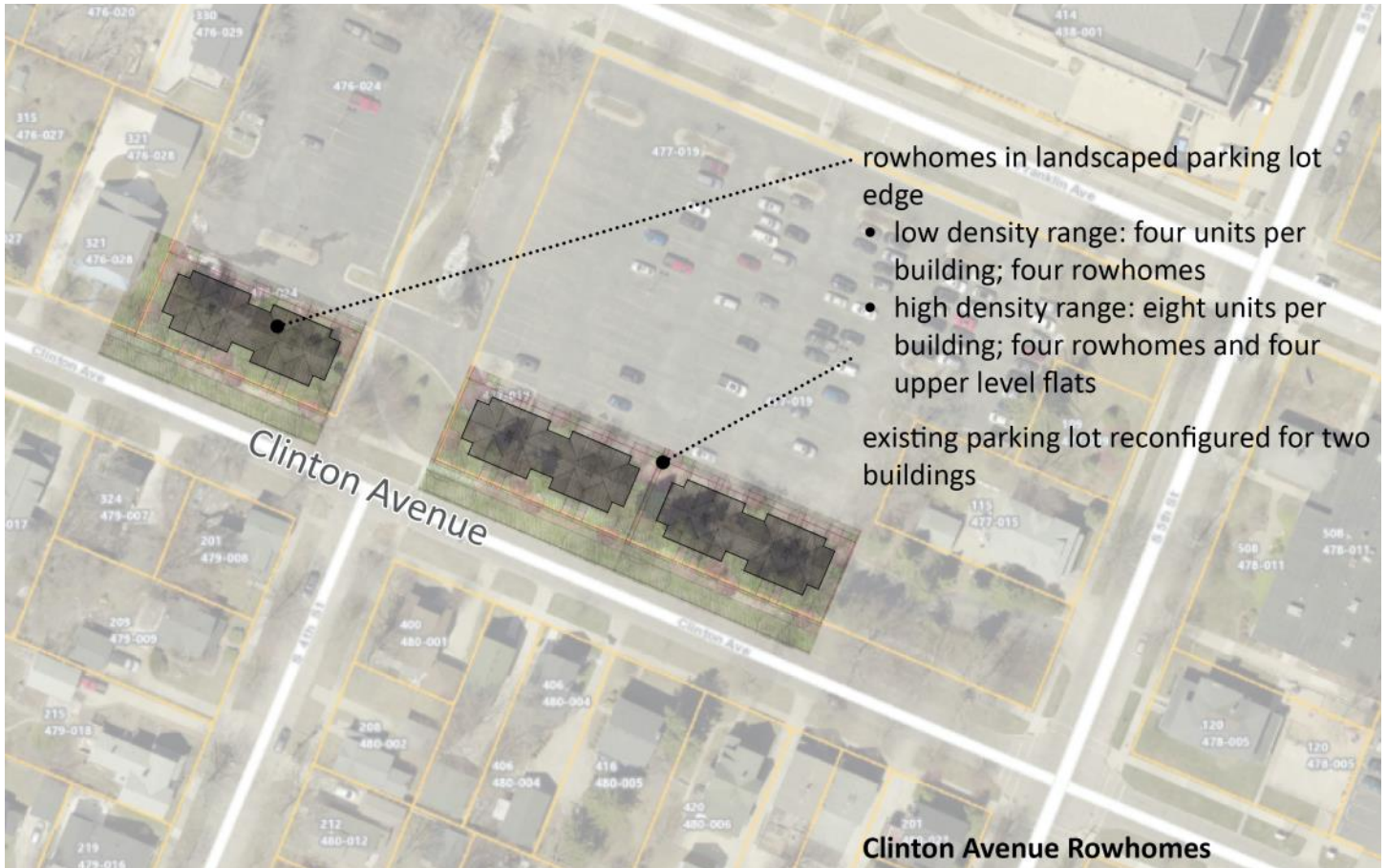
In the second example, a more “downtown” feel might be created through a live/work styled unit, where the first level is consumed by garages and work areas or a studio, and the upper levels would be shaped for living. A flat roof might signify a more downtown aesthetic. A lower end on the demonstration drawing shows how a small office might cap a building, reducing the scale while accommodating a use that might otherwise find it necessary to leave the downtown area.



Like rowhomes, live/work units are scaled to single-family homes across the street but bring even more use to the geography of a downtown.

Demonstration B | Harsh Transitions

Application of this idea isn't limited to edges of the courthouse parking. Any location in the precincts where transitions are sensitive might be best addressed by an active, neighborhood-scaled and visibly human edge.



Demonstration B | Harsh Transitions

Further study required: Defining priority locations and creating architectural guidelines are the key first steps; a market study might also be useful, but a solicitation of developer interest could be a more direct path to implementation and would be required, in any case, to make certain the process of selecting a developer is competitive and transparent.

Implementation timing: The creation of guidelines and assembly of a solicitation could be accomplished in three to five months, including having time available for engaging the public; a solicitation, once released, might be allowed two months or so in order that reasonable responses are gained.

Costs: A development project might be expected to rely, to some degree, on city or county participation, and it may be appropriate to provide incentives to entice the developer to, for example, comply with architectural guidelines. However, that should not be a given for a project of this magnitude; the costs of the project will be largely the responsibility of the developer.

Demonstration C

Disconnected Precincts

Topography and geography separate the district's two primary commercial precincts—Downtown and Centertown. While navigation is easy, better cues would reinforce the connection through Hilltop. A simple change in the color of the pavement of Washington Avenue and 7th Street would suggest a connection, going further than similar streetlights and sidewalk paving. In fact, the process of achieving a color change can be quite easy, with most costs already being addressed in the routine costs of maintaining the driving surface.

Every several years, bituminous paved streets receive a chip seal coating over the base pavement, prolonging the surface. The process is the annoying small rocks that are applied by a Public Works Department, spread over a thin asphalt emulsification (the sticky oily stuff that one shouldn't drive over if they care about their car's look), with traffic driving those stones downward into emulsification until the extras can be swept away.

The process is basically the same in every city across the country. But Grand Haven could choose to use a different color stone. There's no rule that makes gray mandatory. Parkways in Minneapolis use a red stone to highlight for motorists the 55 miles of parkway that stretch through the city. Cities typically choose stones based on what's locally available. But with little additional cost, the chip seal stones could be black, white, red, yellow or gold.

Connecting the downtown district's precincts more clearly adds to navigability and may be a simple way of suggesting there is greater variety in Grand Haven's downtown than what might be found solely in Downtown or Centertown.



Parkways in Minneapolis use a red stone to highlight for motorists the 55 miles of parkway that stretch through the city.



The use of a colored chip seal, a regular maintenance practice for a bituminous paved street, unifies the downtown's main thoroughfare.

Demonstration C | Disconnected Precincts

Further study required: Investigate potential use of colored chip seal with Public Works Department; this is one of the easiest demonstrations to achieve and is completely reversible, if the effect is not as desired, at the time of a subsequent chip seal operation.

Implementation timing: If determined to be reasonable by the Public Works Department, pursue at the next regularly scheduled chip seal operation.

Costs: Costs will be minimal and limited, most likely, to an upcharge in the costs of the aggregate used.

Demonstration D Lack of Whimsy

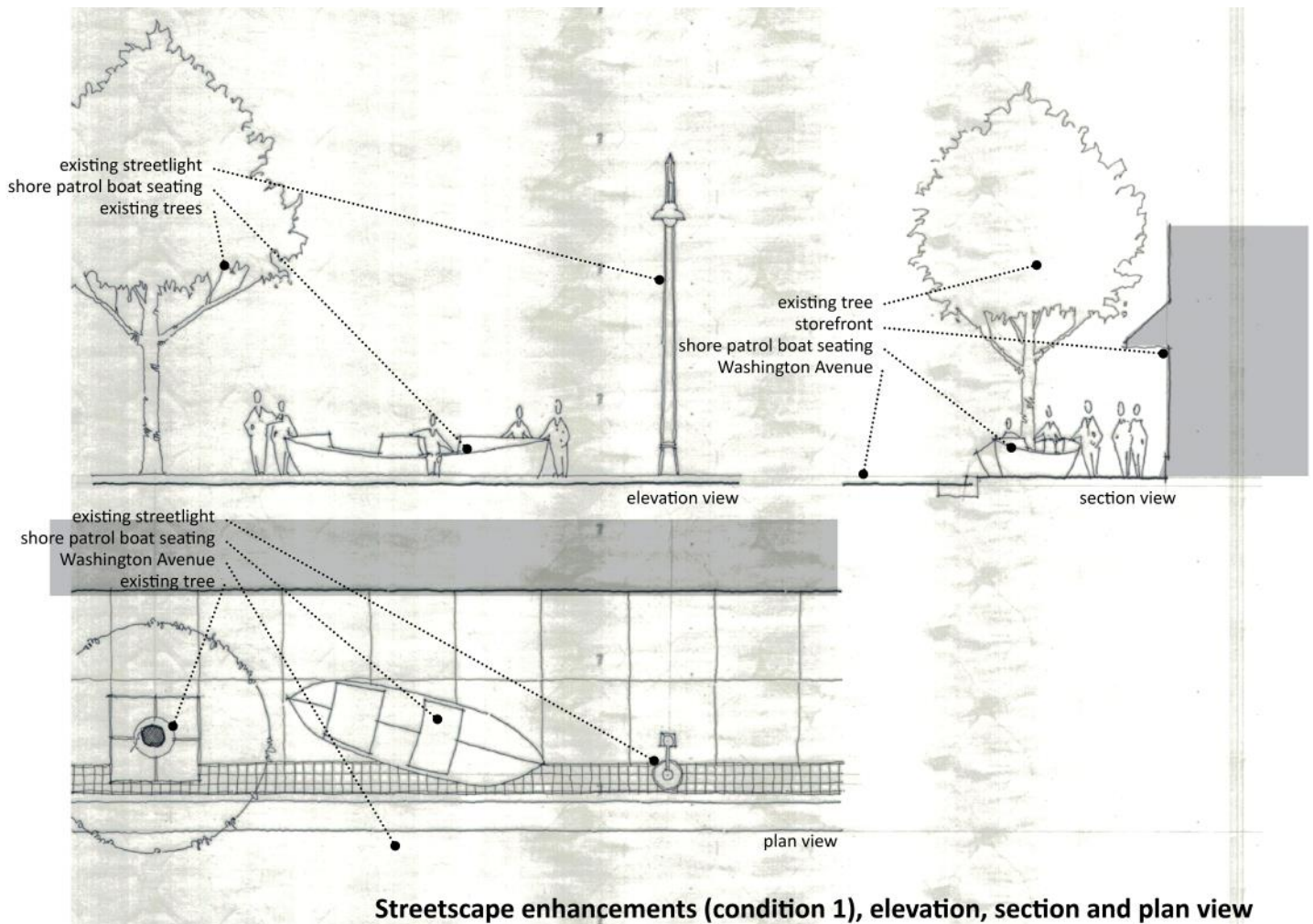
While the Washington Avenue streetscape is mostly solid, well-constructed, and likely to endure for years. The use of sidewalk and street snow melting will perpetuate those improvements, as deicing chemicals and mechanical snow removal will rarely, if ever, be needed—and the damage associated with their use will not occur. It's entirely serviceable—and not very exciting.

Looking at its deficiencies might offer a path to some change. The streetscape offers little seating, with the stone planters being the primary exception. There are dark places along the street; where there should be great uniformity in the intensity of illumination in a downtown, there are places where lights have not been placed, creating a zone of uncomfortable darkness. And the ability to share something special about Grand Haven has been lost... although it could be recovered.

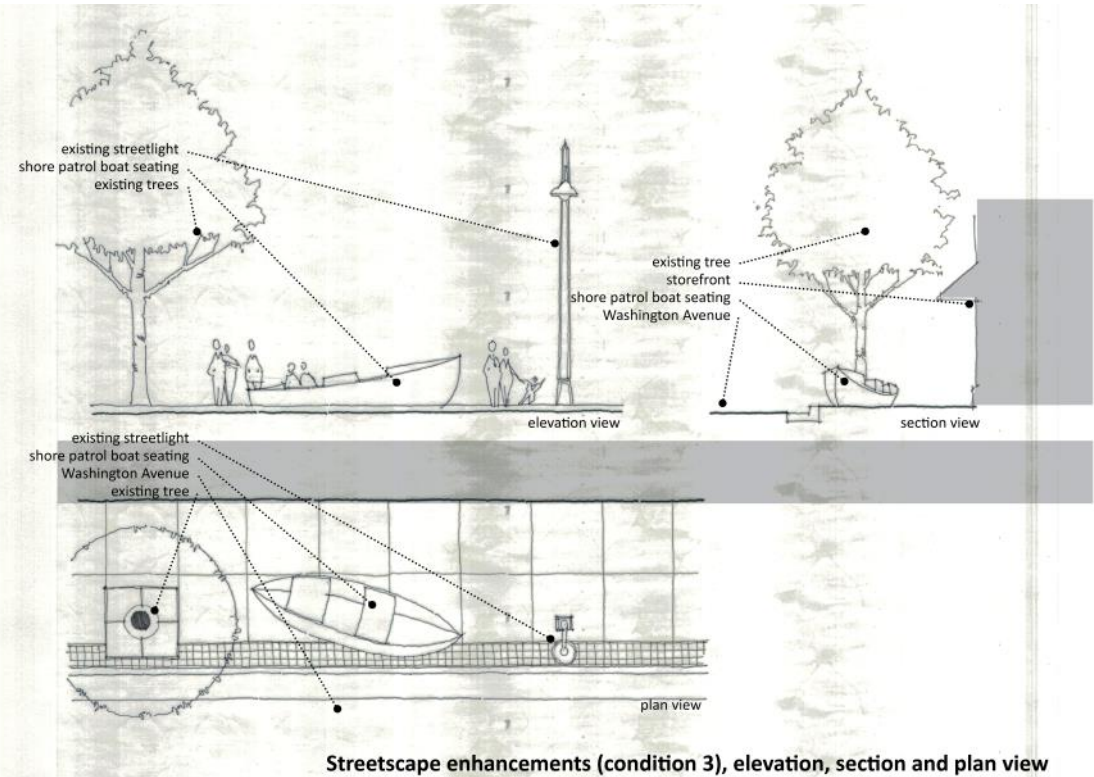
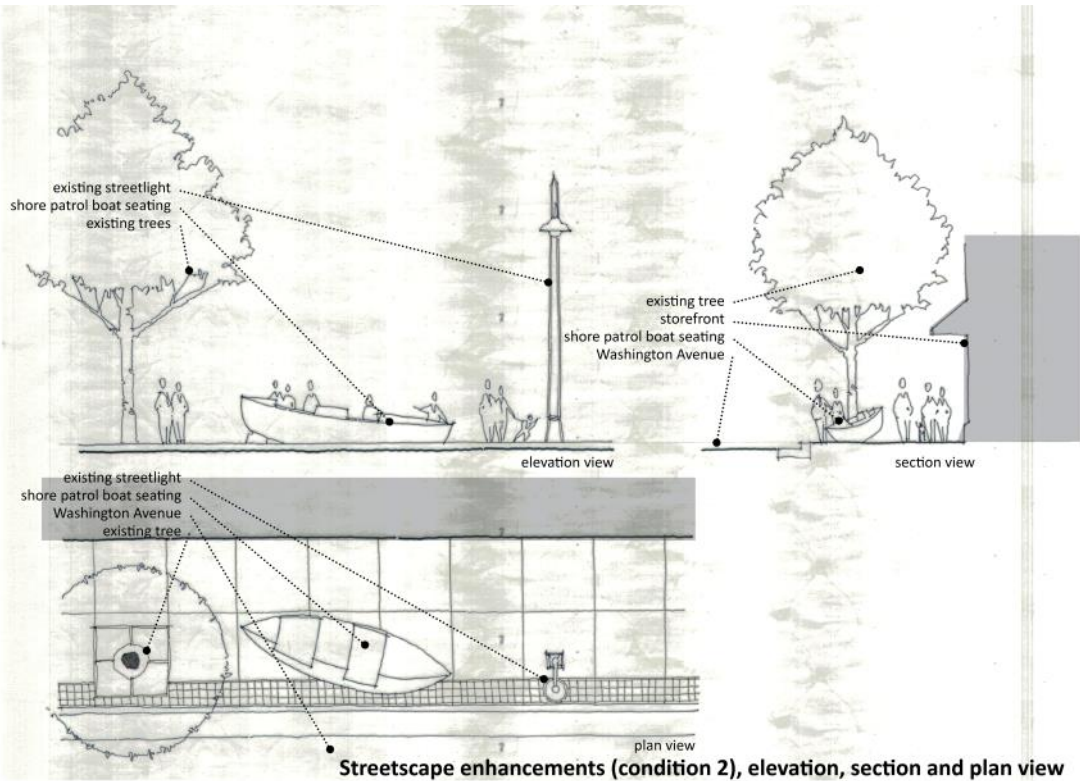
The demonstrations offers two ideas for additions to the street, either of which could be used alone or in combination.

There are likely other ideas that might be considered as this initiative is discussed.

One direction builds on the Coast Guard City theme, using solid cast concrete shapes resembling shore patrol boats as streetscape features, each responding to a different wave condition as might be expected on Lake Michigan. The shapes are sittable, not like a real bench but certainly as much so as the edges of a stone planter. They might be underlit, creating a striking profile at night while casting illumination into some of the darker reaches of the downtown streetscape. They're climbable without being a playground, affording some fun for kids who are being toted through Downtown. And no other city has them—as few would—with Grand Haven being one of only a few cities in the nation to be designated as a Coast Guard City. While they may not be immediately recognizable, once understood, the theme of the community becomes more indelibly etched on residents and visitors.



Demonstration D | Lack of Whimsy

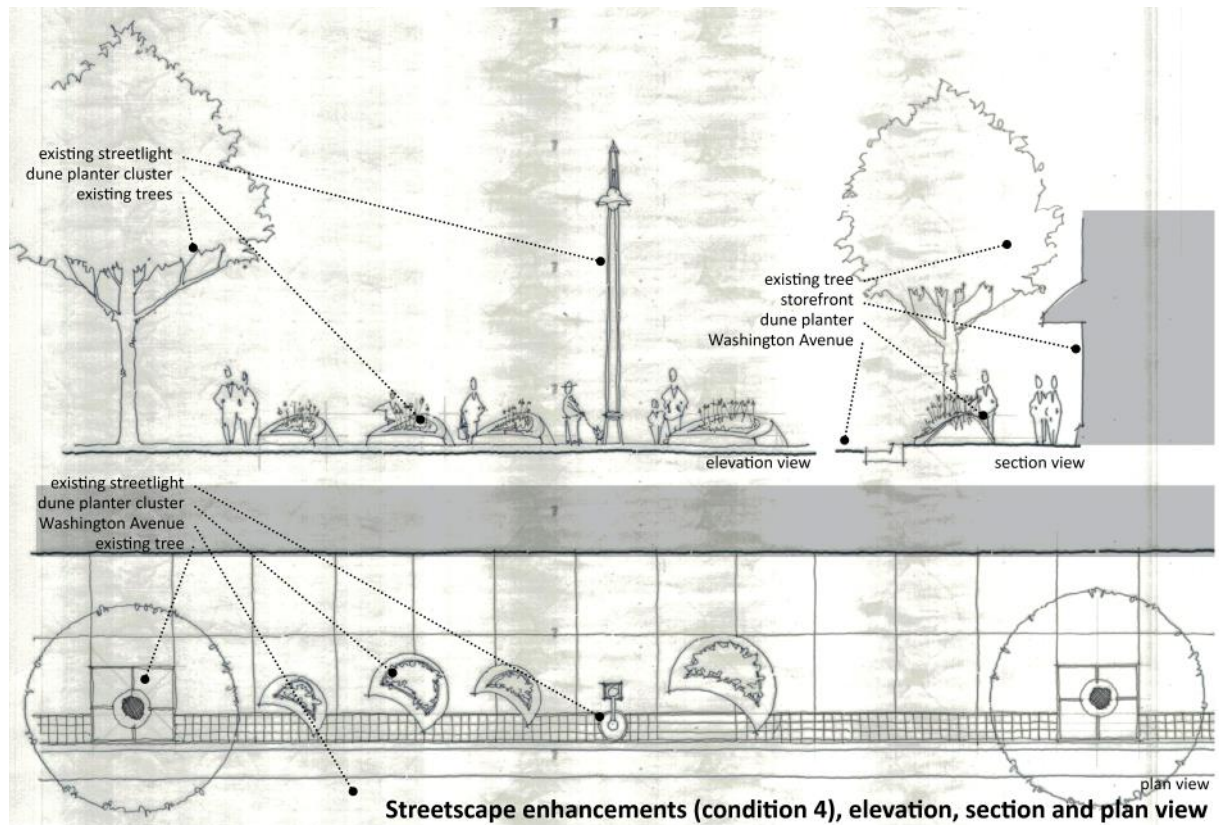


Cast concrete forms of historic shore patrol boats reflects Grand Haven's theme while providing seating, play, and lighting as an addition to the streetscape.

Demonstration D | Lack of Whimsy

Another direction looks to nature, creating pods of similarly shaped planters—with the shape reminiscent of the lakeshore dunes. Where the planters might be created in two or three sizes, it's the plantings in each that give each a signature. Lighting could be added in ways that give each dune cluster a subtle glow, filling in some of the darker areas along Washington Avenue. Just as no dune is the same, the streetscape's dune planters share a story about Grand Haven, creating, like the boat shapes, a sittable and even somewhat playable signature for the street.

Cast concrete planters as stylized dunes in clusters create opportunities for seasonal color, additional lighting, and a unique feature for the streetscape.



Whatever direction is chosen, restraint is key. Having one boat shape per block would seem plenty. Grouping several dune planters into a cluster, one per block face, might also be sufficient. Adding unique features with discretion at every block also unifies precincts across the whole of the downtown district. While these features add some whimsy to the streetscape, they are not intended to overwhelm the downtown Grand Haven experience.

Demonstration D | Lack of Whimsy

Further study required: Explore and agree on forms that relate to Grand Haven themes and that can be used for seating, play, and lighting; explore materials suitable for these elements, most likely being custom cast concrete; investigate locations for electrical connections in the sidewalk (in the demonstrations, all elements reach to the brick paving band as it was assumed electrical service was located under that portion of the pavement).

Implementation timing: Studying forms and agreeing on final elements and their placement, if undertaken in earnest, would likely take about three months; it's most likely a consultant would be engaged to assist in this process, which may also take time before the design begins; a bidding, fabrication, placement/installation process would likely take four to six months.

Costs: As custom-fabricated features, these elements might be quite expensive, but they are limited in number; a shore boat, cast in concrete and delivered to Washington Avenue might be \$6,000 to \$8,000 each; a cluster of three to five dune planters might be about the same cost; extrapolating that cost through the downtown suggests this demonstration would be implemented, assuming 12 block faces, for about \$84,000 to \$108,000, including design and engineering.

Demonstration E

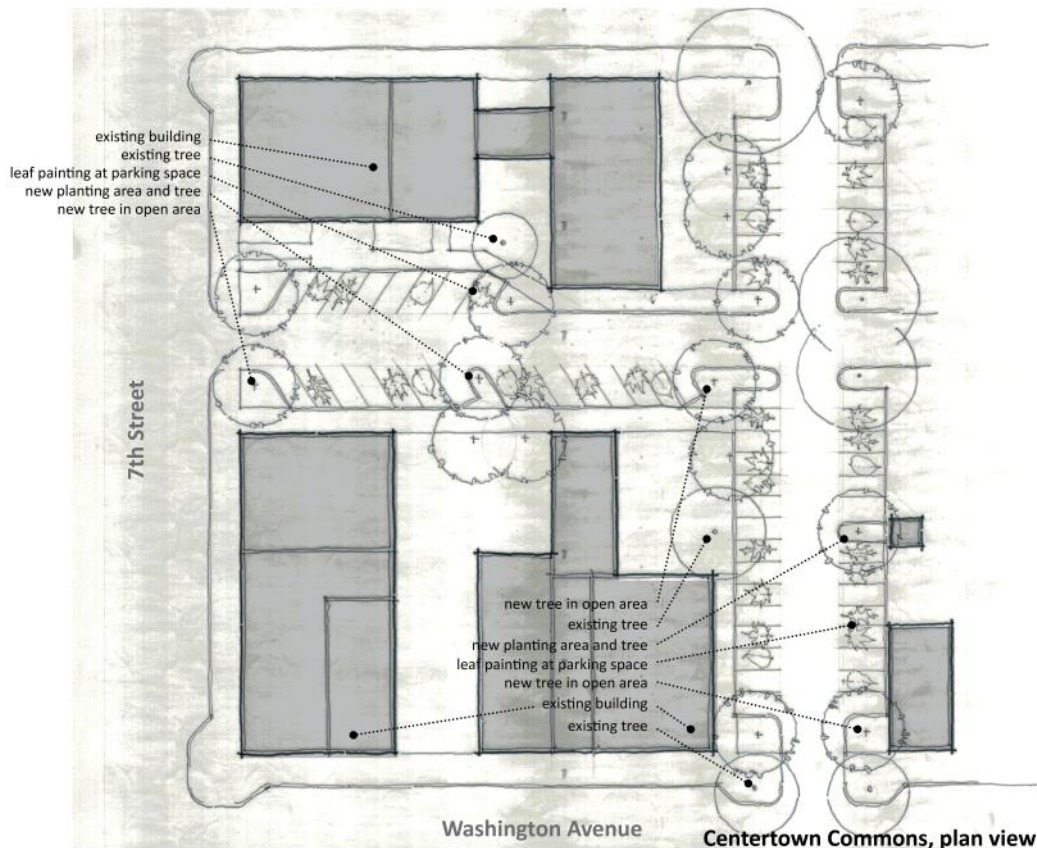
Streets and Parking as Public Spaces

A commonly held opinion from the site visit is that downtown lacks variety. The comment was directed to restaurants, but not every trip needs to focus around eating. Bringing more activities—more things to do, heightens variety simply by offering more reasons to be in the downtown district. Several demonstrations are offered as a way of bringing more human uses into the closely defined geography of downtown.

Centertown offers an interesting collection of shops, stores, restaurants, and other destinations, but in a setting that's clearly not Downtown. The intensity of development is less than in Downtown—buildings are smaller and are as often separated as adjacent. A new streetscape is anticipated, which will surely draw together the more disparate character of development along 7th Street. But the primary demonstration for Centertown in this report is the public parking area—two areas actually. They're perfectly serviceable and convenient—

and uninteresting. Heightening the experience potential of these two parking areas might make a trip to Centertown more memorable, or maybe even better might encourage them to be, at times, something more than a place to store cars.

The demonstration shows simple changes that bring more character and interest. First, the “gappy” nature of Centertown created by holes in the street wall is mitigated somewhat by the introduction of more trees. Trees can help in defining space—imagine trunks as walls and canopies as ceilings, so that space is framed, not simply filled. With a room created by the walls and canopies of trees, the parking lot might become a space used for a small event—using more or less of the parking area depending on the nature of the event. Extending the room to include a floor suggests that ordinary parking lot pavement might become a more interesting tapestry, even by a simple painting of, for example, parking spaces as giant leaves.



With just a few changes, Centertown's public parking lot might begin to take the shape of a town commons, awaiting its next event or festival.

Demonstration E | Streets and Parking as Public Spaces

Further study required:

Agreement on the number of parking spaces to be replaced by trees may be the most difficult aspect of this demonstration, with only three or four spaces being removed in the drawings and using other spaces to squeeze in a few more trees; adding leaves or some other diagram to the pavement requires the creation of a few stencils—or perhaps the guiding hand of an artist who might chalk the patterns for volunteer painters.

Implementation timing: Spring is a good time for planting; removal of a parking space and adding a few protective bollards could be accomplished without difficulty.

Costs: Parking space removal and the addition of trees and bollards might be accomplished for about \$2,000 to \$2,500 per space; painting of leaves or a similar pavement diagram would use pavement marking paint—which is readily available and might cost as little as \$1,000.

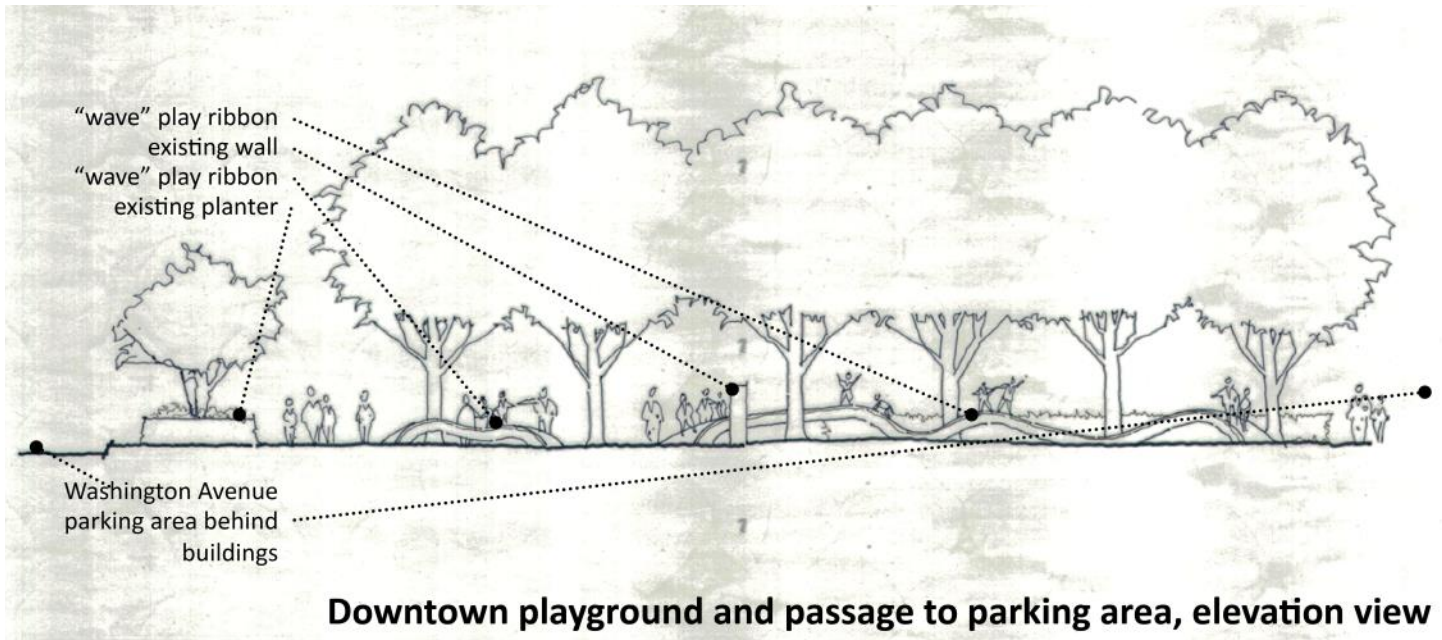
Demonstration F

Playground

It has been said that children are the indicator species of a healthy place. Knowing that a place is safe and inviting enough to engage children suggests there's plenty of safety and comfort for those downtown visitors who are not children. In Grand Haven's downtown, there's little to offer children, but there could be more.

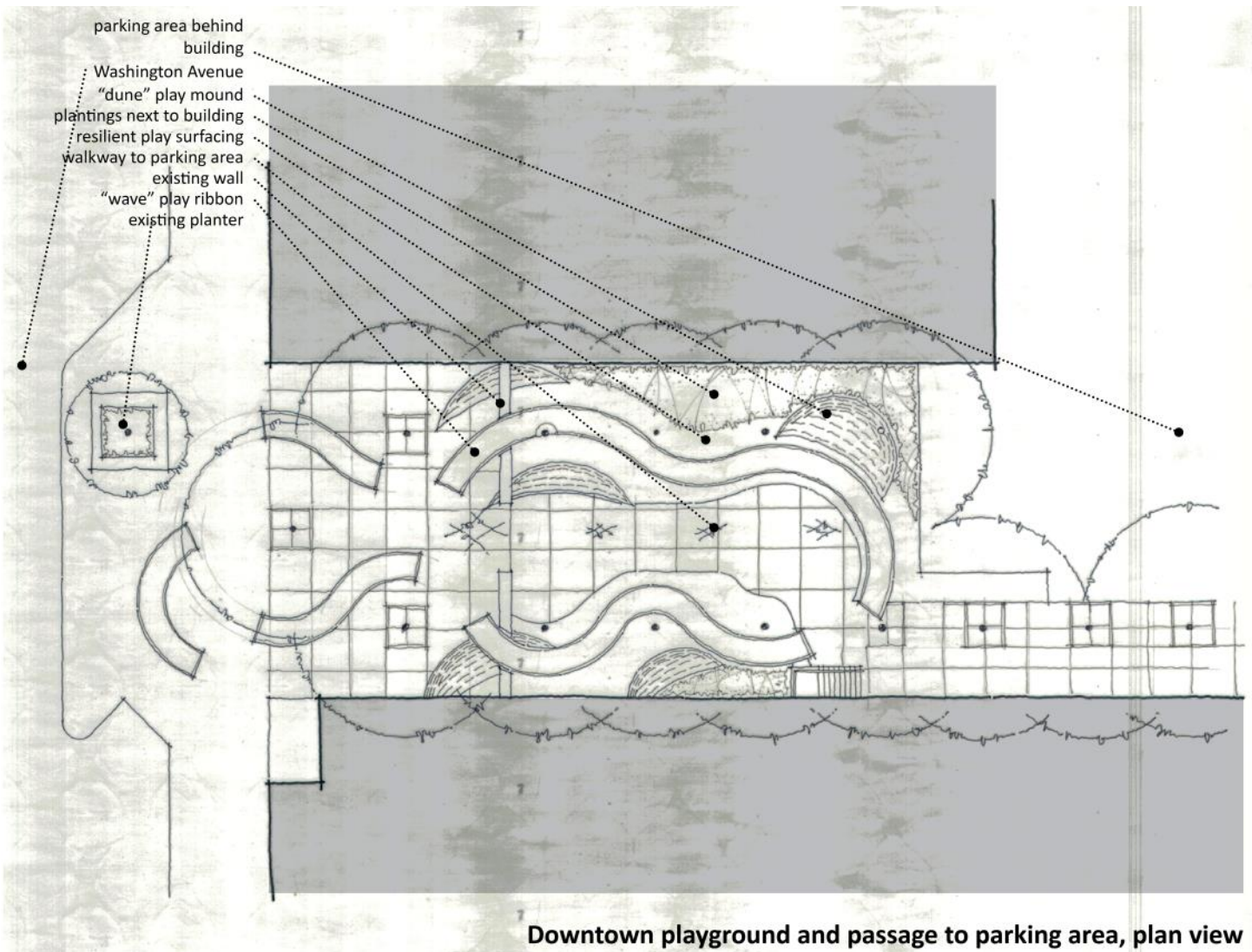
In a gap between buildings along Washington Avenue, the same gap that connects the wide sidewalks of Downtown to a parking area tucked behind buildings, a space exists that might find its best use accommodating a new downtown activity.

Using public art to, as suggested in one of the demonstrations, create a playful link between Washington Avenue and the parking area could result in a locus of activity focused on kids. The feature demonstrated in a wave, essentially a continuous ribbon of some materials that weaves up and down, back and forth, along the walk and between the trees, at times poking through a wall, or wrapping around a tree, or settling to an elevation that encourages sitting, or reaching outward toward the street to become a kind of landmark for downtown.



Expanding on the idea of passage, a play feature enlivens a spot in Downtown where Washington Avenue is connected to parking through a gap in the buildings.

Demonstration F | Playground



Downtown playground and passage to parking area, plan view

The wave, or whatever feature might be considered, should incorporate lighting, as its location happens at a place that is relatively dark along Washington Avenue. The lighting, in combination with the artfully crafted wave, bridges the street and its activity with the parking lot and its service as a place to store cars. It layers play into passage, increasing the ways in which this small piece of Downtown's geography can be expanded in use.

Demonstration F | Playground

Further study required: The play feature needs to be designed and permissions for the use of the space also need to be gained; if those permissions cannot be achieved, another location will need to be pursued; there should be a process underlying this demonstration that explores ideas beyond what is shown in the drawings to make certain what is built is a fair reflection of Grand Haven.

Implementation timing: Engaging a consultant team experienced in both play structure design and art is the first step, and might require a process that would consume about three months to get to an accepted design; gaining agreement on the use of the space could be pursued during the same period; final design and engineering would consult four to six months; bidding, construction, fabrication and installation might take six to eight months.

Costs: As a custom-created play and art piece, the playground might easily cost \$300,000; as a comparison, many off-the-shelf playgrounds used in parks and at schools, could easily be that much or more.

Demonstration G

Prominent Markers for Centertown

It's interesting that most people have an innate sense of arriving in a downtown, perhaps because of the stock of buildings and their side-by-side arrangement, perhaps because of the sense of activity or even the presence of people in greater concentrations. In Grand Haven, Downtown has that sense. Centertown's sense is less certain.

Centertown is marked along Washington Avenue by a sign. A person has to be told they've arrived because the cues of a traditional downtown don't exist. If it's not the sign, it's the Coast Guard boat, which is a good and interesting signal for the community but not much of an indicator of a business district. The Washington Avenue streetscape helps, as will a more elaborated streetscape experience along 7th Street. Still, marking of arrival is lacking. The Washington Avenue sign is undersized and located in a mess of weeds, which aren't even it's biggest problem. It's located away from the highway and next to a site that belies the walkability of the Centertown precinct. In short, it's too short, too ordinary, and too lost in its setting. The demonstration suggests a larger sign marking the district at each entry from the highway, with a smaller "sister" sign at Centertown's boundary with Hilltop. These signs need to stand out from their surrounding somewhat, being prominent without overwhelming signs from adjacent or nearby businesses. Its character should suggest something of the precinct's character—hand crafted, unique, a discovery.

It's really only Centertown that needs this kind of announcement. The other precincts in Grand Haven's downtown district stand on their own, either through the presence of a certain type of use and building in Hilltop or by the clear nature of a downtown setting in Downtown. It's not a matter that one gets one so everyone should. Centertown needs it because its context is different.



Centertown needs a better and more prominent introduction, something that reflects the community and better anchors the entry points to the precinct.

Demonstration G | Prominent Markers for Centertown

Further study required: The demonstration is a single idea about what might work; certainly, Centertown stakeholders will want to study other ideas; it seems reasonable to include the demonstration in the consideration of the streetscape project for 7th Street.

Implementation timing: Implementation concurrent with the streetscape project will offer the best economies of scale, as construction work will already be occurring on the sites if that project proceeds; identifying an agreed upon marker design will require the engagement of a designer, involvement of Centertown stakeholders to review and accept a preferred design, and the development of final design and construction documents—all of which could be accomplished in about six to eight months; implementation with the streetscape suggests a single construction season.

Costs: While the suggestion of a cost will appear surprising, a well-crafted small "marker" for Centertown will likely run to \$10,000 to \$12,000, and a larger version—one visible from the highway and through other distractions might run \$15,000 to \$20,000.

Downtown Evolutions

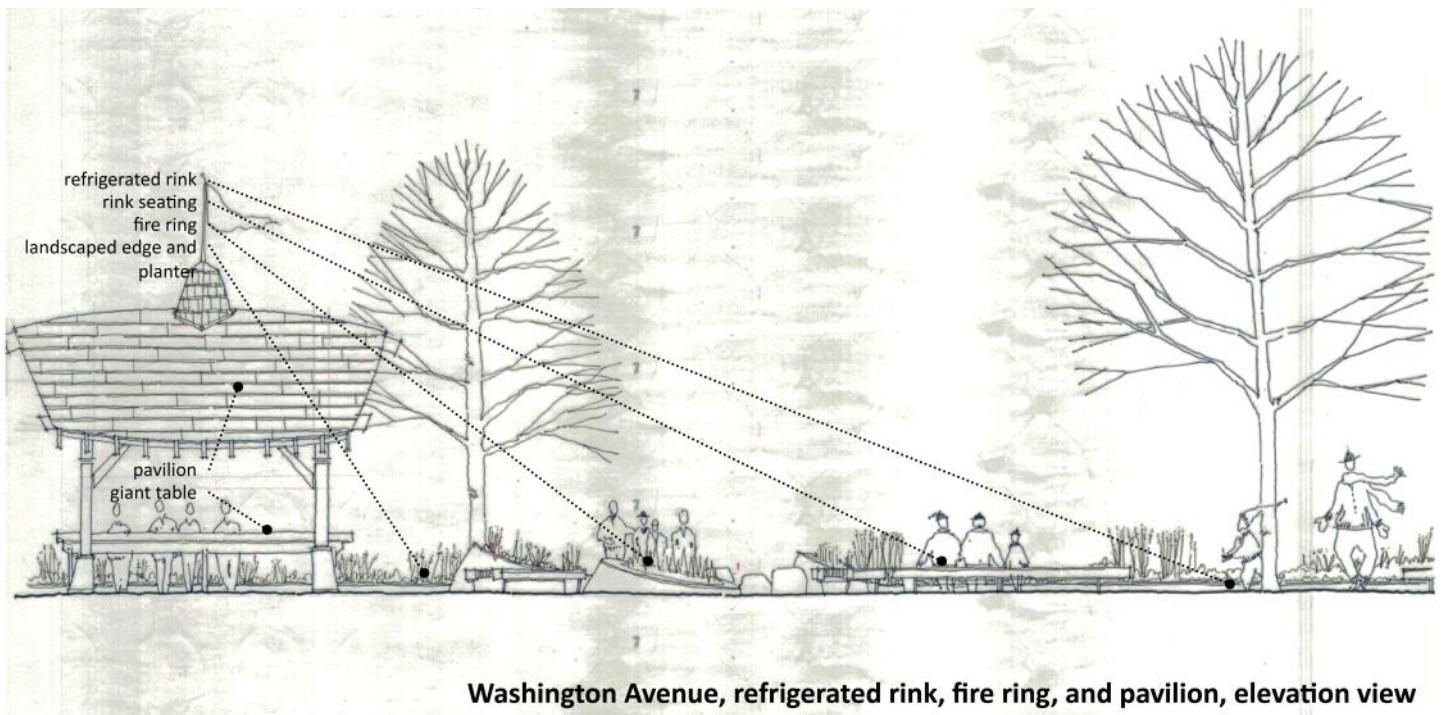
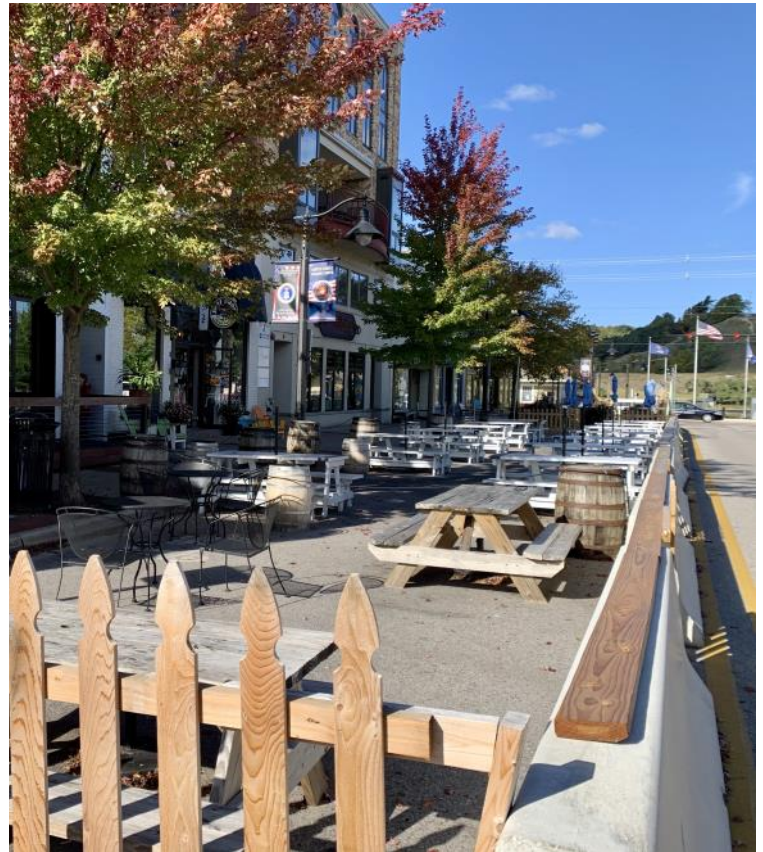
Demonstrations

Demonstration H

Closed Street

One of the great surprises is the half-closed portion of Washington Avenue between Harbor Drive and 1st Street. Created as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it offers significant outdoor space for several adjacent establishments, each perhaps encouraging the other's activity to grow in ways that wouldn't otherwise happen. It's a clear—and the best—suggestion of visible human activity in downtown and it most definitely should be expanded upon and made permanent.

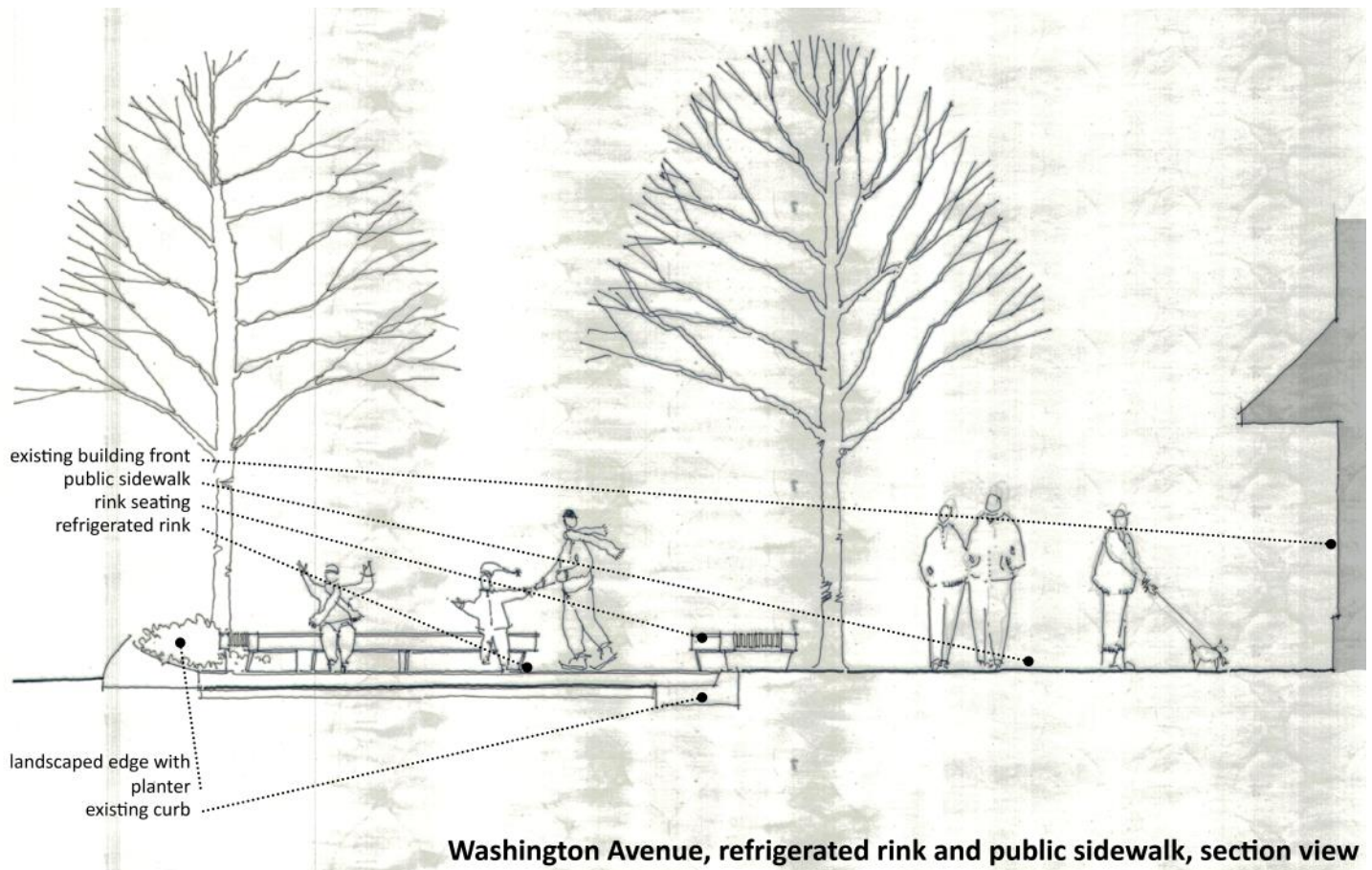
Grand Haven stakeholders reminisced fondly about the temporary skating rink implemented on a partially reconstructed street. The demonstration suggests that a rink should be brought back, but with more intention than the temporary and now lost version. Amenities like fire basins and overhead cover (with infrared heating) will significantly extend the utility of this block through the winter, creating a true year-round destination. Seating—lots of seating—should be provided in forms including high tops, family-sized tables, benches, seating stones, and movable chairs. Plantings, including plantings that are great features in winter and summer, should occur here, which is possible if the idea is made permanent.



Washington Avenue, refrigerated rink, fire ring, and pavilion, elevation view

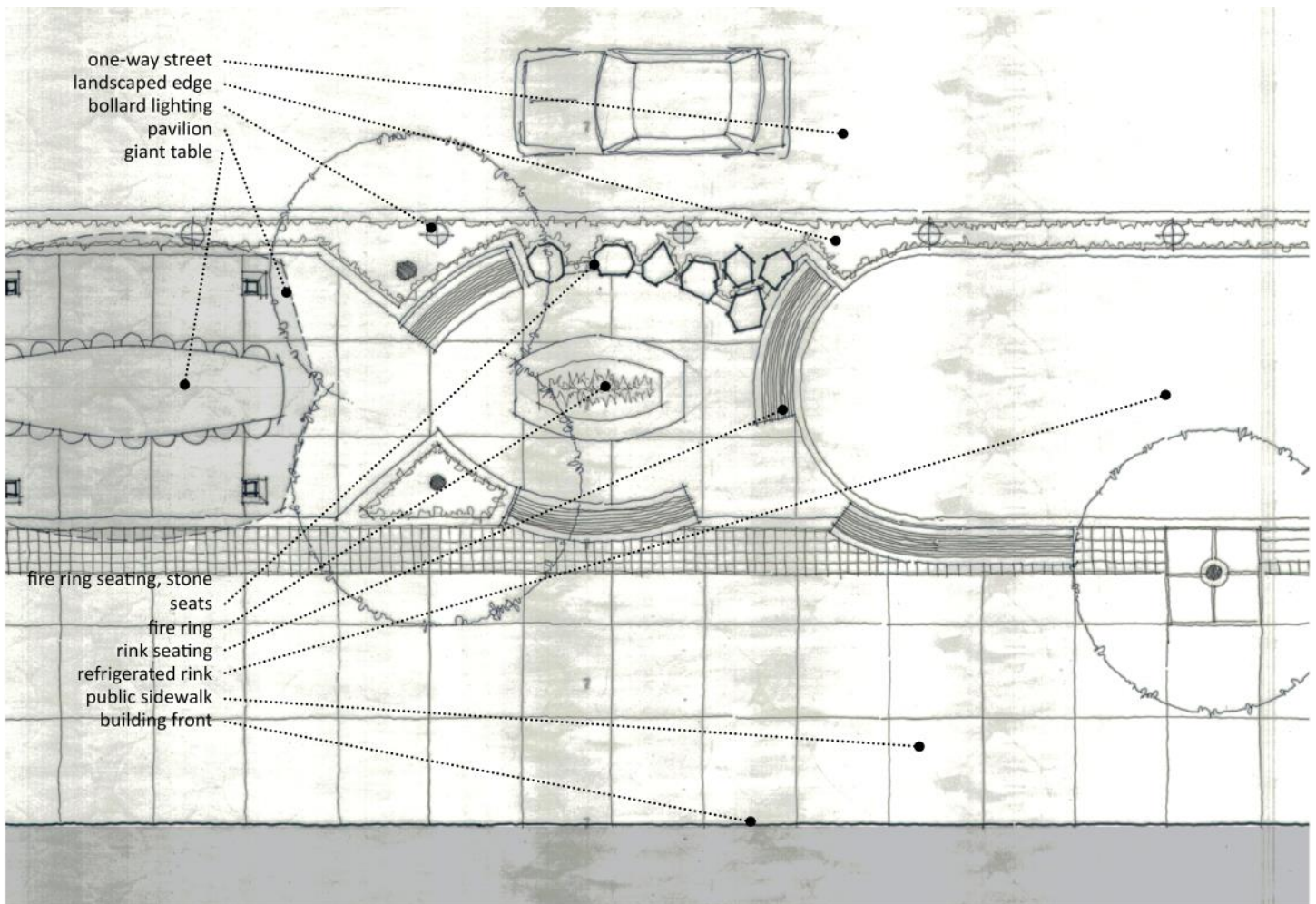
A once-closed street offers memories to the people of Grand Haven, but imagine the memories that might be created by a permanent evolution of half of a street.

Demonstration H | Closed Street



If the city had not already created this space, it might be hard to accomplish. There would be complaints: lost parking, lack to street continuity, activity from inside brought outside, diminished emergency access, no control—all of which seemed to be reasonably established as not problematic through a first summer and fall season of operation. Perpetuating the closure, in this location, builds upon other initiatives yet to be described and follows exactly the theorem that downtowns are the place where the most things happen in the smallest possible geography. Best of all, everyone knows it can work.

Demonstration H | Closed Street



Washington Avenue, refrigerated rink, fire ring, and pavilion, plan view

Demonstration H | Closed Street

Further study required: A true traffic study should be conducted to ensure this move will not present problems for traffic movements, service vehicles or emergency access; a design process that looks closely at activities and the ways this space is designed to ensure activity is always present is key; sponsorships for programs throughout the year might be important in perpetuating the activity as levels needed for downtown.

Implementation timing: Design and engineering, including engagement of downtown stakeholders, should not be rushed and could consume a year, including the time required for local approvals; improvements would be constructed during a single construction season.

Costs: The demonstration comes at significant cost, but also with significant upsides for downtown activity; a project cost must recognize the need to provide a refrigerated surface for the rink, which on its own might be \$1,000,000, and might lead to a project cost that approaches \$2,000,000.

Downtown Evolutions

Demonstrations

Demonstration I

Market

The suggestion that downtown Grand Haven needs greater variety is problematic when variety focuses on eating and drinking establishments. Creating a new restaurant is particularly difficult from both an operational and financial perspective in normal times. During COVID-19 it would seem a near impossibility. The key to expanding variety during and after the pandemic is, quite possibly, the ability to incubate new venues, where operators can learn the business of the hospitality industry and where the floor for financial entry can be lowered to the greatest degree possible.

In many communities, the food incubator is a food truck. In the demonstrations, it's a brick and mortar public market hall, focused on freshly prepared foods and located directly at the interface of Downtown and the riverfront.

The demonstration suggests a location as part of a new Downtown hotel (see the following demonstration), where the activity of the street and the market hall might blend with each other, and even extend life to an even greater degree to the half-closed Washington Avenue, lying just across the street. The market hall is a year-round venue, likely limited to six or eight vendors. It's an adjunct to a seasonal farmers market, which in the demonstration is additive to the market—even creating a few permanent indoor market stalls for vendors who can deliver goods beyond a seasonal basis.

The market hall is a place filled with life, but it's also a learning opportunity for a budding restaurateur. Spaces would typically operate from a space on a percentage of gross sales basis—a good deal because the core costs of the brick and mortar space is carried by another entity. That entity must be one that can foster best practices so that, one day, the now more learned restaurateur might establish their own true brick and mortar venue. And the vacated space in the market hall offers an opportunity for another budding restaurateur.

Gathering new operators in a relatively small space is exciting and dynamic—and it fits the idea that a downtown is a place where the most uses are squeezed into the smallest possible geography. But it's possibly more than that: market halls or food halls in other communities offer opportunities for immigrants to share their culture—bringing variety to the experience of downtown.



Public market halls offer great varieties of fresh food where small independent vendors are purposefully aggregated into a common venue.

Demonstration I | Market



A public market hall might become a feature in Downtown as part of a new hotel on Washington Avenue.

Demonstration I | Market

Further study required: Gaining support from the local farmers market vendors is a likely first step, as without their participation this demonstration might be impossible to accomplish; identifying the few vendors that might occupy more permanent and indoor spaces will also take some time and require, eventually, a commitment to participate at some cost to the vendor (which might be most easily defined as a percentage of gross sales; the location and building for this demonstration is a new hotel, which is the most significant of the suggested directions in this report, which essentially ties many of the public market hall directions to the hotel project).

Implementation timing: Because it is so connected to the hotel in the demonstration, it would seem a reasonable timeline would be three to five years.

Costs: It is difficult to establish firm costs because of the connected nature of the demonstration as a whole; construction costs might be in the neighborhood of \$200 to \$250 per square foot, perhaps more depending on what is included for vendor infrastructure.

Demonstration J

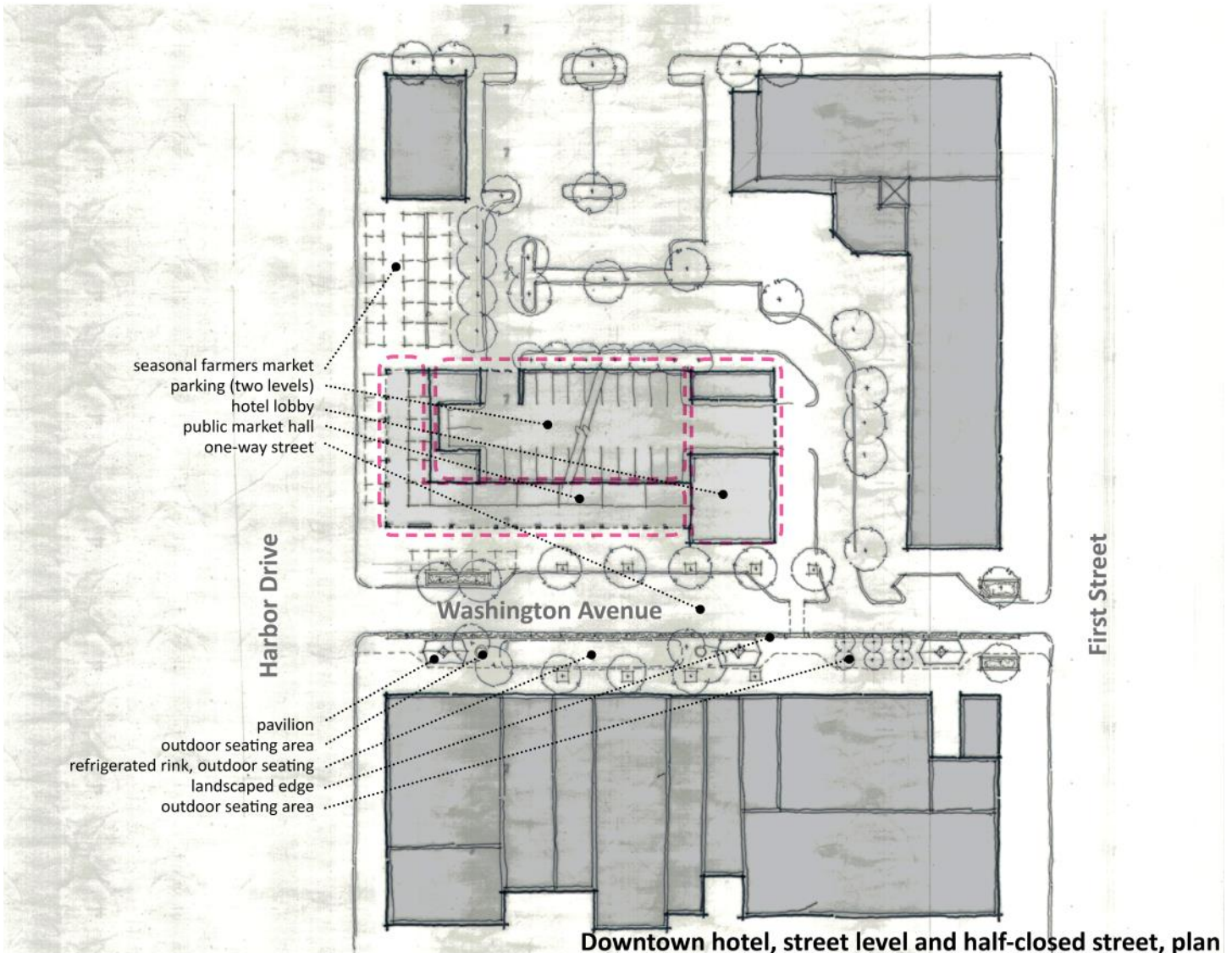
Contemporary Downtown Lodging

The greatest opportunity is also the most difficult to imagine—a new downtown hotel.

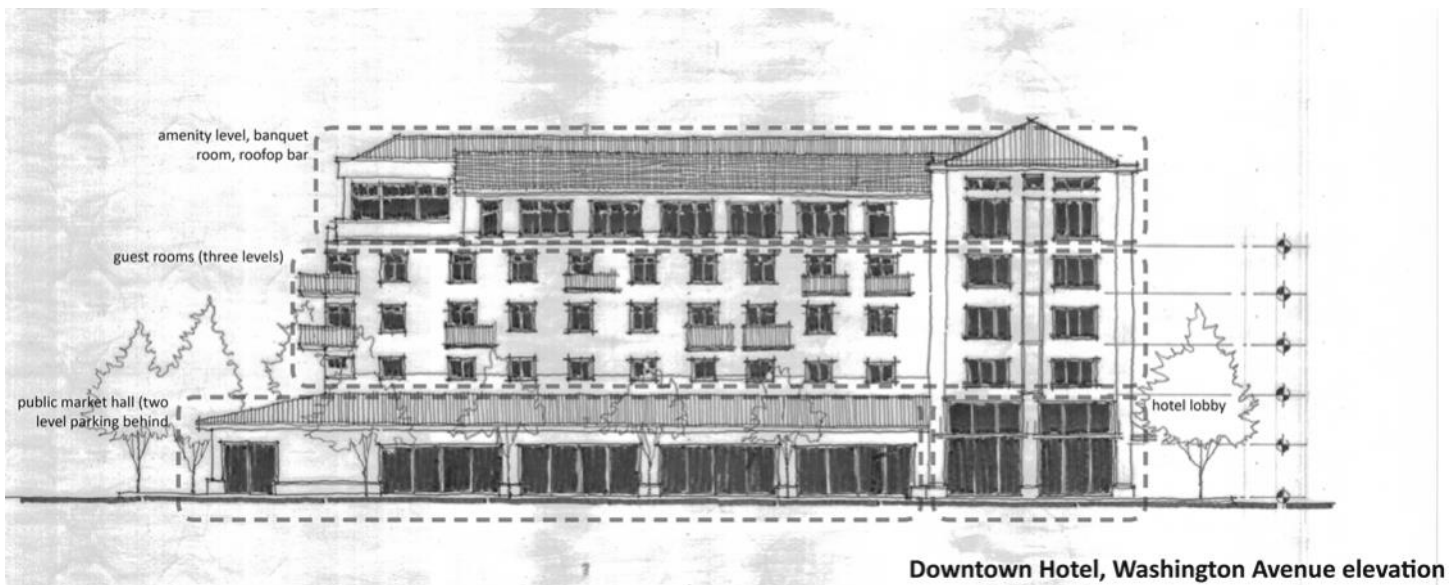
While there are other studies happening concurrent to this one that might include ideas about a hotel, this report advocates for a hotel in Downtown so that its energy might continue to propel the activity of the district. In the demonstration, the hotel is located on Washington Avenue at Harbor Drive, replacing a Downtown parking area that directly abuts the street. What downtown needs is activity along Washington Avenue, not a place to store cars.

While the space is not large, Downtown’s hotel, perhaps referred to as a “boutique” hotel, might have somewhere

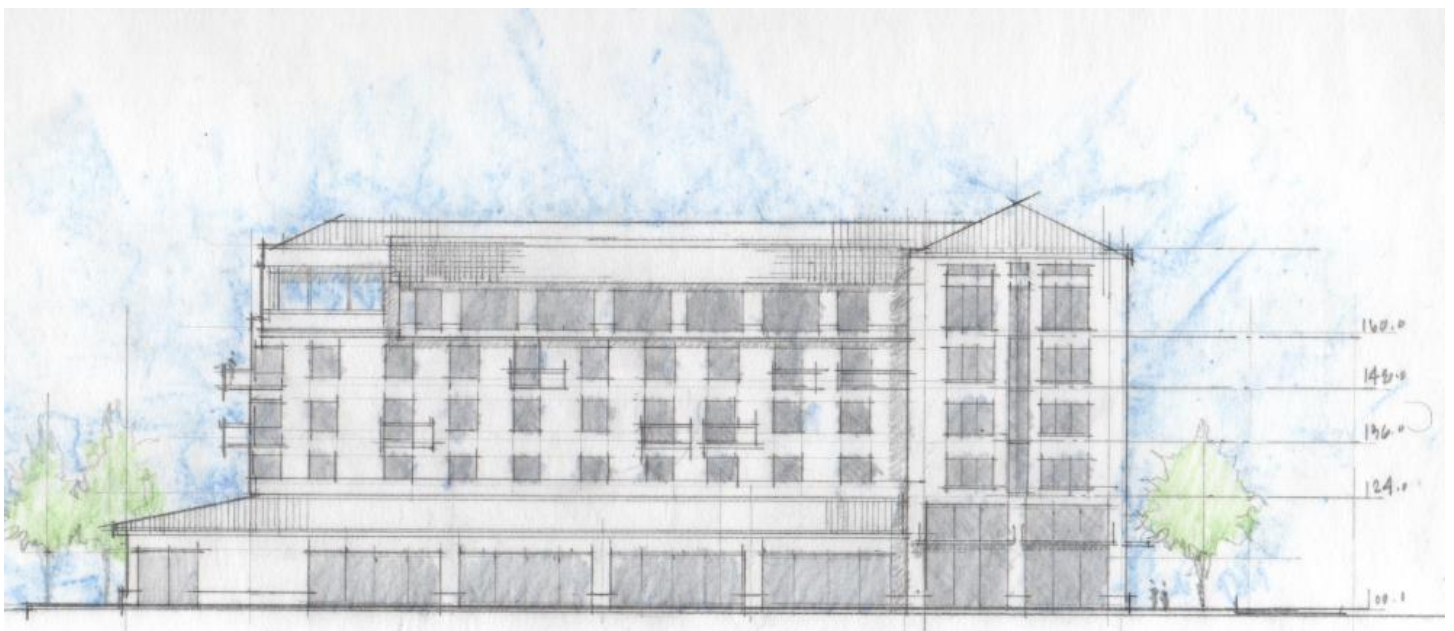
between 60 and 80 rooms. The upper floor—where amazing views of the surrounding landscape might be imagined—offers a location for a banquet/meeting hall and a rooftop bar, both of which are lacking in downtown. Parking is provided in part of the whole demand, in the demonstration within the shell of the building. Additional parking might be gained through a relationship with the large parking area along Harbor Drive where it is understood deed restrictions limit much in the way of development. And on the street level, the aforementioned public market hall opens along most of the building’s façade to bring life that could never be realized while this precious piece of ground stores cars (or worse, sits only partially filled by cars).



Demonstration J | Contemporary Downtown Lodging



A hotel on Washington Avenue might begin combining several features that are important in perpetuating downtown activity while replacing a site where the only current use is storing cars .



The height of this building is worthy of consideration. The market hall and hotel lobby are envisioned as taller than ordinary, made more interesting because of the volume and, with an inside height at 20 to 24 feet, allowing for two levels of parking to be tucked behind.

Demonstration J | Contemporary Downtown Lodging



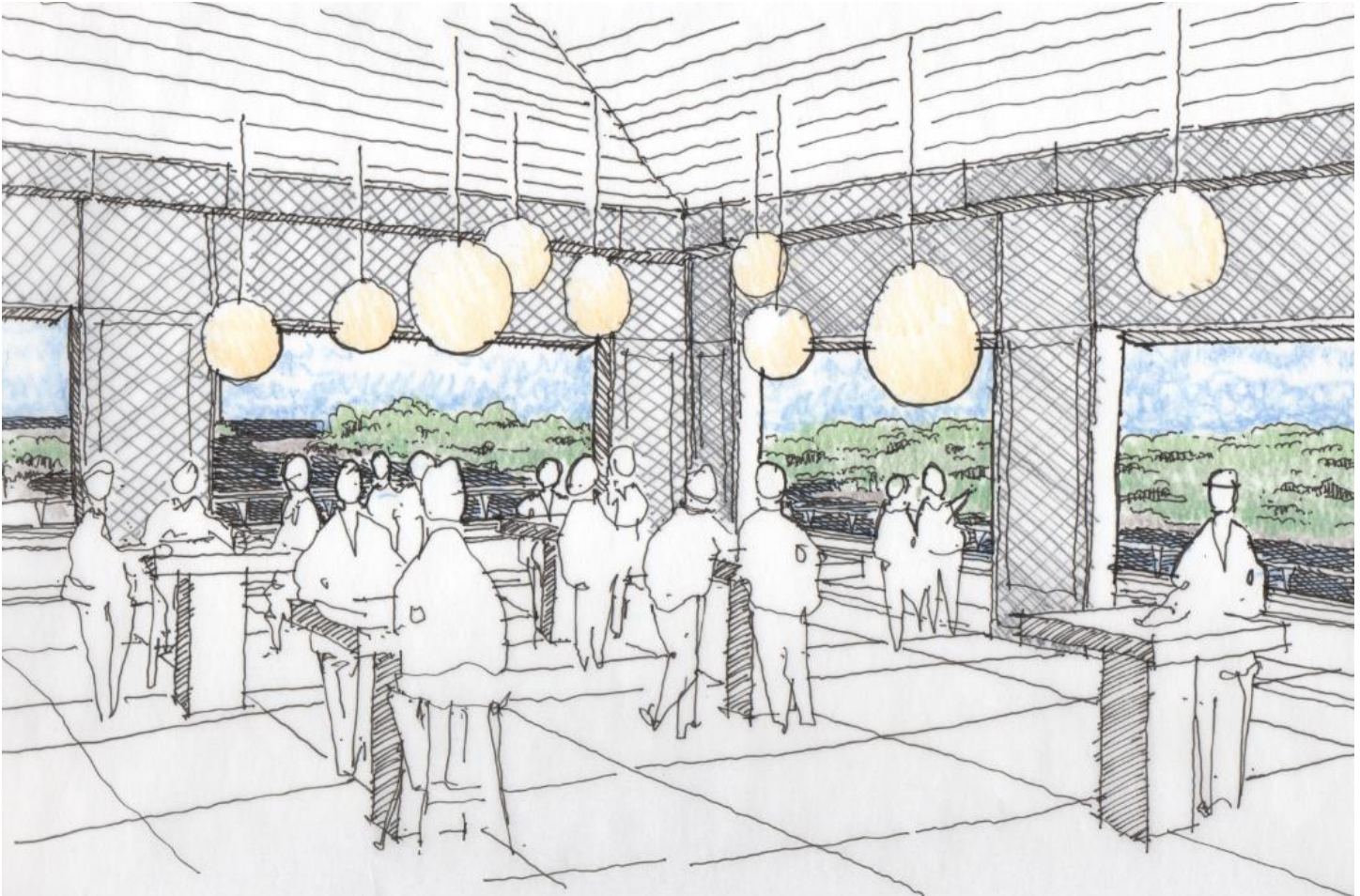
The location selected for the demonstration works in tandem with the Street Closure Demonstration, where the activity of the street and the market hall located on the hotel's ground level and spilling onto the sidewalk might blend with each other, and even extend life to an even greater degree to the half-closed Washington Avenue, lying just across the street.

Demonstration J | Contemporary Downtown Lodging



What downtown needs is activity along Washington Avenue, not a place to store cars. At street level, the aforementioned public market hall opens along most of the building's façade to bring life that could never be realized while this precious piece of ground stores cars (or worse, sits only partially filled by cars).

Demonstration J | Contemporary Downtown Lodging



The height of this building is worthy of consideration because it will certainly exceed that of any other downtown building. The market hall and hotel lobby are taller than ordinary, made more interesting because of the volume and not their footprint, but importantly, their inside height at 20 to 24 feet allows for two levels of parking to be tucked behind.

Above the footprint of the parking and hotel lobby are three levels of rooms, 20 or so per floor. The top floor offers meeting rooms and a limited number of guest facilities, plus the banquet hall and rooftop bar. Any one of those features might be pulled away—the market hall, the parking, the banquet hall and rooftop bar—to make the building shorter. But what is lost in height is also lost in capacity to energize Downtown. Again, the principle of greatest number of uses in the smallest possible geography plays prominently... tall buildings can find a place in a downtown if they're composed of the right combinations of uses.

Demonstration J | Contemporary Downtown Lodging

Further study required: A feasibility study is the first step in understanding how a downtown hotel might happen, and with that the city may begin to outline some architectural guidelines that would become a part of a development agreement with a hotel developer; the agreement might allow for the city to retain some rights, like those related to operation of the public market hall, although some developers may see this addition as both interesting and something they could directly support; the path to a particular development might include a solicitation for developer interest, making the choice of developer somewhat competitive and more transparent than simply granting some permissions to a single entity during a period of exploration.

Implementation timing: A process supporting development of a hotel in downtown will not occur quickly; three to five years would seem a good window, with three years being the shortest reasonable time that allows for some community input to the process and results.

Costs: The variability in the development program makes estimating a cost for the hotel difficult, but there will for certain be a request for participation of some kind from the developer to the city.

Moving Forward

This report is a starting point, not a conclusion. Its core points were crafted in a few short days while working on-site with downtown stakeholders. Their time and attention greatly shaped the ideas that underly the demonstrations, but their contribution of time suggests they're fully prepared to participate in the next steps of Downtown's and Centertown's evolution.

The first step—always the first step—is an honest dialog about the content of this report. It's a known that it cannot be one hundred percent correct; there simply wasn't time on-site to be that sure. But even a hundred days spent in Grand Haven can't ensure a report's complete correctness. The best path is to use this report to engage in deep conversation about what's needed. Other ideas will surface, and they might be put into the same format for consideration as the demonstrations described in this report—Demonstration, Further study required, Implementation timing, and Costs.

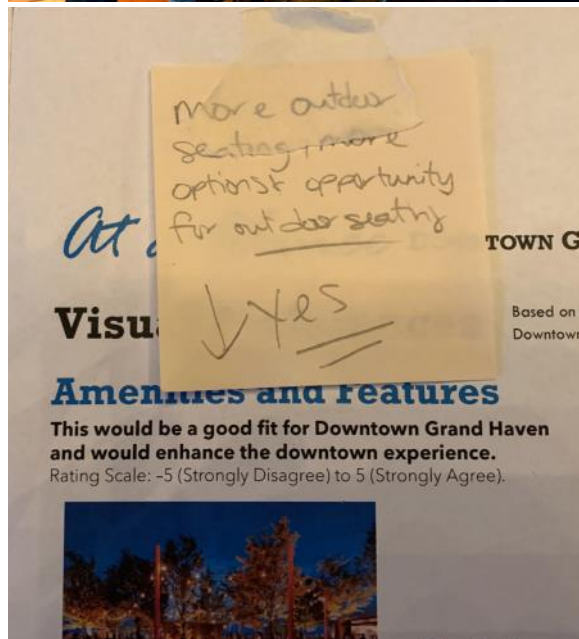
If something has been missed in this report, it's more likely a case of omission than lack of necessity. Essentially, the district's stakeholders have an obligation to use this report, elaborate on its good points, set aside the misguided points, and bring in those other ideas that might be essential in advancing Downtown and Centertown. It doesn't start with consultants, feasibility studies and design explorations; it's the same dialog that's already happening, only now it's guided by a report that suggests a format for ideas.

Eventually there will be a conclusion on the pursuit of a few demonstrations, or maybe all of them have some traction. In fact, they might all happen someday, but it would be a good idea to think about where each might happen along a timeline. This, too, is a conversation because there won't likely be explicit right and wrong answers. The conversation would be about capacity—these things don't happen on their own, and they might have timelines that coincide with other already scheduled activity. Recognize those points of intersection and take advantage of the opportunity it presents.

Always, the circle of the conversation needs to be made larger. In that process, more voices and more ideas will be heard, but if there is commitment around a few solid and compelling ideas, the expanded circle can form a groundswell of support for moving forward. It doesn't have to be the **big** idea that is attacked first; there may be simple things drawn from this report that become nearly immediately actionable. Find those projects, make them happen, and celebrate... and then return to the conversation.

Most important, the timeline established becomes a plan, of sorts, for strategic action. New pieces can be added, but use it as the framework for advancement. Just as important, once established, modify it as needed, but stick to its foundational directions.

Change will happen in Grand Haven's downtown. It's suggested in each of the planning documents used to guide evolution. What's important about this report is that it outlines a strategy for a few projects, each of which is a demonstration of how change is accommodated in ways that make the resulting project a fixture for the Grand Haven community.



☐ Follow-up with new and expanding business prospects

Proposed Action: Follow-up with new and expanding business prospects identified via the Futures Survey.

Priority/Timeline:

GHMS Lead Team Members:

Key Tasks:

☐ Share Futures Survey information and findings with exiting businesses

Proposed Action: Share information from the Futures survey with existing businesses, especially those who might have opportunities to expand or reposition themselves to capitalize on products, services and features sought by area consumers.

Priority/Timeline:

GHMS Lead Team Members:

Key Tasks:

☐ Develop a "Starting a Business in Downtown Grand Haven" brochure

Proposed Action: Develop a "Starting a Business in Downtown Grand Haven" brochure that outlines the process in a simple and condensed step-by-step format and provides information and contacts for available guidance, technical assistance and resources.

Priority/Timeline:

GHMS Lead Team Members:

Key Tasks:

☐ Develop a form or system for tracking prospects

Proposed Action: Develop a form or system for tracking prospects to collect basic information and to record notes on follow-up communications and activity.

Priority/Timeline:

GHMS Lead Team Members:

Key Tasks:

☐ Create an "Opportunities" or "Doing Business" tab or section on the Grand Haven Main Street website

Proposed Action: Create an "Opportunities" or "Doing Business" tab or section on the Grand Haven Main Street website to serve as a one-stop-shop or portal for information, links and downloads to assist existing and prospective investors, developers, businesses and entrepreneurs.

Priority/Timeline:

GHMS Lead Team Members:

Key Tasks:

☐ Use on-the-street marketing techniques to promote opportunities

Proposed Action: Use on-the-street marketing techniques (posters, sandwich board signs, etc.) to promote opportunities, highlight progress and celebrate successes

Priority/Timeline:

GHMS Lead Team Members:

Key Tasks:

☐ Employ appropriate prospecting techniques

Proposed Action: Employ appropriate prospecting techniques, such as social media posts, field trips, database mining, business plan competitions, and property tours, to mine leads for new and expanding businesses.

Priority/Timeline:

GHMS Lead Team Members:

Key Tasks:

☐ Continue to apply a Pre-development Team approach

Proposed Action: Continue to apply a Pre-development Team approach, much like that advanced in the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's (MEDC) Redevelopment Ready Communities program, that includes all relevant personnel in project preview and walk-through activities designed to troubleshoot development and building rehabilitation projects, to identify possible alternatives to meet the intent of life-safety measures and other development-related codes and ordinances (including parking requirements), and to provide clear direction to investors, developers, businesses, and entrepreneurs.

Priority/Timeline:

GHMS Lead Team Members:

Key Tasks:

☐ Consider using a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process to market and showcase development sites

Proposed Action: Consider using a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process, and work with MEDC's Redevelopment Services Team, to market and showcase development sites, including appropriate City- or other publicly-owned sites in the downtown area.

Priority/Timeline:

GHMS Lead Team Members:

Key Tasks:

Demonstration A | Limited Parking

Further study required:

Understanding the actual demand for downtown parking is best determined through a parking study; a part of the study will note what is happening today, but it should also pursue options, including addition of parking and consideration of management options.

Implementation timing:

As a first step, engaging a firm to conduct (or update) a parking study is logical; conducting inventories during the COVID-19 pandemic is not reasonable as the conditions may not be reflective of downtown's overall level of activity; implementation depends on the outcomes of a parking study.

Costs:

A parking study could be accomplished, depending on scope, typically within a range of \$40,000 to \$75,000.

Demonstration B | Harsh Transitions

Further study required:

Defining priority locations and creating architectural guidelines are the key first steps; a market study might also be useful, but a solicitation of developer interest could be a more direct path to implementation and would be required, in any case, to make certain the process of selecting a developer is competitive and transparent.

Implementation timing:

The creation of guidelines and assembly of a solicitation could be accomplished in three to five months, including having time available for engaging the public; a solicitation, once released, might be allowed two months or so in order that reasonable responses are gained.

Costs:

A development project might be expected to rely, to some degree, on city or county participation, and it may be appropriate to provide incentives to entice the developer to, for example, comply with architectural guidelines. However, that should not be a given for a project of this magnitude; the costs of the project will be largely the responsibility of the developer.

Demonstration C | Disconnected Precincts

Further study required:

Investigate potential use of colored chip seal with Public Works Department; this is one of the easiest demonstrations to achieve and is completely reversible, if the effect is not as desired, at the time of a subsequent chip seal operation.

Implementation timing:

If determined to be reasonable by the Public Works Department, pursue at the next regularly scheduled chip seal operation.

Costs:

Costs will be minimal and limited, most likely, to an upcharge in the costs of the aggregate used.

Demonstration D | Lack of Whimsy

Further study required:

Explore and agree on forms that relate to Grand Haven themes and that can be used for seating, play, and lighting; explore materials suitable for these elements, most likely being custom cast concrete; investigate locations for electrical connections in the sidewalk (in the demonstrations, all elements reach to the brick paving band as it was assumed electrical service was located under that portion of the pavement).

Implementation timing:

Studying forms and agreeing on final elements and their placement, if undertaken in earnest, would likely take about three months; it's most likely a consultant would be engaged to assist in this process, which may also take time before the design begins; a bidding, fabrication, placement/installation process would likely take four to six months.

Costs:

As custom-fabricated features, these elements might be quite expensive, but they are limited in number; a shore boat, cast in concrete and delivered to Washington Avenue might be \$6,000 to \$8,000 each; a cluster of three to five dune planters might be about the same cost; extrapolating that cost through the downtown suggests this demonstration would be implemented, assuming 12 block faces, for about \$84,000 to \$108,000, including design and engineering.

Demonstration E | Streets and Parking as Public Spaces

Further study required:

Agreement on the number of parking spaces to be replaced by trees may be the most difficult aspect of this demonstration, with only three or four spaces being removed in the drawings and using other spaces to squeeze in a few more trees; adding leaves or some other diagram to the pavement requires the creation of a few stencils—or perhaps the guiding hand of an artist who might chalk that patterns for volunteer painters.

Implementation timing:

Spring is a good time for planting; removal of a parking space and adding a few protective bollards could be accomplished without difficulty.

Costs:

Parking space removal and the addition of trees and bollards might be accomplished for about \$2,000 to \$2,500 per space; painting of leaves or a similar pavement diagram would use pavement marking paint—which is readily available and might cost as little as \$1,000.

Demonstration F | Playground

Further study required:

The play feature needs to be designed and permissions for the use of the space also need to be gained; if those permissions cannot be achieved, another location will need to be pursued; there should be a process underlying this demonstration that explores ideas beyond what is shown in the drawings to make certain what is built is a fair reflection of Grand Haven.

Implementation timing:

Engaging a consultant team experienced in both play structure design and art is the first step, and might require a process that would consume about three months to get to an accepted design; gaining agreement on the use of the space could be pursued during the same period; final design and engineering would consult four to six months; bidding, construction, fabrication and installation might take six to eight months.

Costs:

A parking study could be accomplished, depending on scope, typically within a range of \$40,000 to \$75,000.

Demonstration G | Prominent Markers for Centertown

Further study required:

The demonstration is a single idea about what might work; certainly, Centertown stakeholders will want to study other ideas; it seems reasonable to include the demonstration in the consideration of the streetscape project for 7th Street.

Implementation timing:

Implementation concurrent with the streetscape project will offer the best economies of scale, as construction work will already be occurring on the sites if that project proceeds; identifying an agreed upon marker design will require the engagement of a designed, involvement of Centertown stakeholders to review and accept a preferred design, and the development of final design and construction documents—all of which could be accomplished in about six to eight months; implementation with the streetscape suggests a single construction season.

Costs:

Costs: While the suggestion of a cost will appear surprising, a well-crafted small “marker” for Centertown will likely run to \$10,000 to \$12,000, and a larger version—one visible from the highway and through other distractions might run \$15,000 to \$20,000.

Demonstration H | Closed Street

Further study required:

A true traffic study should be conducted to ensure this move will not present problems for traffic movements, service vehicles or emergency access; a design process that looks closely at activities and the ways this space is designed to ensure activity is always present is key; sponsorships for programs throughout the year might be important in perpetuating the activity as levels needed for downtown.

Implementation timing:

Design and engineering, including engagement of downtown stakeholders, should not be rushed and could consume a year, including the time required for local approvals; improvements would be constructed during a single construction season.

Costs:

The demonstration comes at significant cost, but also with significant upsides for downtown activity; a project cost must recognize the need to provide a refrigerated surface for the rink, which on its own might be \$1,000,000, and might lead to a project cost that approaches \$2,000,000.

Demonstration I | Market

Further study required:

Gaining support from the local farmers market vendors is a likely first step, as without their participation this demonstration might be impossible to accomplish; identifying the few vendors that might occupy more permanent and indoor spaces will also take some time and require, eventually, a commitment to participate at some cost to the vendor (which might be most easily defined as a percentage of gross sales; the location and building for this demonstration is a new hotel, which is the most significant of the suggested directions in this report, which essentially ties many of the public market hall directions to the hotel project).

Implementation timing:

Because it is so connected to the hotel in the demonstration, it would seem a reasonable timeline would be three to five years.

Costs:

It is difficult to establish firm costs because of the connected nature of the demonstration as a whole; construction costs might be in the neighborhood of \$200 to \$250 per square foot, perhaps more depending on what is included for vendor infrastructure.

Demonstration J | Contemporary Downtown Lodging

Further study required:

A feasibility study is the first step in understanding how a downtown hotel might happen, and with that the city may begin to outline some architectural guidelines that would become a part of a development agreement with a hotel developer; the agreement might allow for the city to retain some rights, like those related to operation of the public market hall, although some developers may see this addition as both interesting and something they could directly support; the path to a particular development might include a solicitation for developer interest, making the choice of developer somewhat competitive and more transparent than simply granting some permissions to a single entity during a period of exploration.

Implementation timing:

A process supporting development of a hotel in downtown will not occur quickly; three to five years would seem a good window, with three years being the shortest reasonable time that allows for some community input to the process and results.

Costs:

The variability in the development program makes estimating a cost for the hotel difficult, but there will for certain be a request for participation of some kind from the developer to the city.

Demonstration K |

Further study required:

Implementation timing:

Costs: