

CHAPTER 14. COMMUNITY DESIGN

“An analysis of needs for governing landscaping, building design, tree planting, signs, and suggested patterns for community design, development and beautification.”

I. Summary of present conditions:

A community’s visual appearance is the generally the first indication to an outsider of how the residents feel about their community. Just as a shabby, run down house can indicate a lack of concern by the property owner, a poorly designed, shabby or run down city can indicate a lack of involvement by the residents. Good design can help improve property values, provide a focus for community pride, and be a spur to economic growth.

Good design can accomplish the following:

- *Towns and cities are more livable, enjoyable and economically stable;*
- *Communities and neighborhoods are easier to navigate and identify;*
- *Transportation is more efficient;*
- *Parks and recreational areas are more pleasurable;*
- *Downtowns are more lively and economically stable;*
- *The everyday life of residents is improved.*

Lewiston is one of the oldest cities in the region as was the territorial capital of Idaho in the late 1800’s. As such, many of the factors influencing its development pattern are more indicative of an age dominated by water and natural landforms. Lewiston is characterized by a variety of residential and commercial land use patterns and was influenced by a number of constraints and opportunities in the past. The city is generally shaped like a ‘shoe’ with the top of the shoe being the historic downtown and Normal Hill areas, the body of the shoe the Orchards, and the heel of the shoe the Country Club area. As development continues, the City will lose this shape and become more rectangular in appearance.

The downtown area was first developed in the 1860’s as Lewiston was being settled by merchants seeking to provide goods and services to the miners seeking gold in the Oro Fino Creek area. What is now 3rd and “C” Street was the hub of the community and the central market area for the surrounding lands which extended as far east as Orofino and beyond to the gold fields. Lewiston was settled many years before communities on the Palouse and thus has retained its historic character as the central market place of North Central Idaho. The street and railroad alignments, as well as platted lots in the downtown and Flats follow the curve of the river, a typical configuration in river front cities.

The Lewiston Orchards area was annexed to the City in 1969, increasing the population of the City of Lewiston from 12,691 in 1960 to 26,068 in 1970. With an elevation nearly

700 feet higher than the original city and separated by a series of benches rising from the downtown area, the Orchards is a broad, generally flat expanse of land originally subdivided into five acre parcels. This original platting and the grid pattern of wide streets and narrow alleyways has been the most significant cause of the development pattern existing today in the Orchards.

Commercial Development – Downtown Core

Until the 1970's, the downtown was the main shopping area for the City with national retailers and local service businesses, as well as the Lewiston Elks Club. With the construction of the Lewiston Center and the loss of the Elks building due to fire, the downtown core changed from a regional marketplace to an area of office and specialty shops seeking advantage of the designation of the downtown core as an historic district. Strip commercial development along 21st Street and Thain Road further contributed to the downtown's decline as the central shopping destination in Lewiston.

Downtown Core – Community Design

Downtown Lewiston is an integral part of the City's economy and the entry gate to the City and State of Idaho from the State of Washington. As such, the traditional downtown form must be preserved and enhanced especially in the district from the Interstate Bridge to 9th Street. The most successful design strategy is to keep ground floor retail spaces full. Within this district, new construction should be built to the front property line with parking on rear portions of property or on back streets with building form sympathetic to those already built as to height, massing and window size and spacing. Street level spaces should be focused toward retail and other pedestrian activities with upper floor used for professional offices and residential uses. Use of street trees and pedestrian furniture should be pursued along "D" Street. The Fifth Street Corridor from the Clearwater River to the base of Normal Hill should be upgraded to recognize its importance as an entry to both downtown and Normal Hill through a variety of design methods. Pedestrian connectivity to the river must be strengthened, especially at 5th Street and the Confluence. Lands between the River and the downtown need to be converted over time to uses more conducive to pedestrian activities and on tourist related destinations and could include such uses as a conference center, resort hotel and visitor center.

The entry commercial area from 9th Street eastward to the is an early version of a commercial strip with a mixture of motels, restaurants and auto oriented businesses.

This entry commercial strip could easily be upgraded by adding street trees and improving pedestrian facilities to enhance the visitor experience at the local motels. Design standards could be developed to move new construction to the setback line with parking along the side or at the rear of businesses. This action would help reduce the parking strip image of this entry while encouraging accessibility by both auto and walking.

Following are suggestions for improving the downtown streetscape:

- *Bump out curbs to allow room for street trees and benches;*
- *Clearly mark crosswalks with striping and through the use of distinctive material;*
- *Bury overhead utility lines;*
- *Install street lights that utilize a human scale providing light to pedestrians;*
- *On-street parking is well defined and contained;*
- *Benches and trash receptacles cater to human need along the street;*
- *Business signage is directed to the pedestrian;*
- *Off street parking areas are clearly identified and in proximity to the businesses they serve.*

Commercial Development – 21st Street

21st Street has developed into a classic commercial strip, with commercial development oriented toward the driving public. Now almost completely built out, it is a mixture of fast food restaurants, auto dealerships, and other businesses reliant upon a large volume of traffic passing by their place of business. The shopping strip extends approximately one block or less on each side of the main shopping street, with notable exceptions. Major commercial nodes are located along 21st Street from Main Street to 8th Avenue, at the intersection of 16th Avenue and 21st Street, and at the intersection of 19th Avenue and 21st Street.

At 19th Avenue, 21st Street becomes Thain Grade which leads into Thain Road. At this time, property along Thain Grade is experiencing significant development pressure. In the past few years, major national and regional retailers have built stores along Thain Grade. The “big box” retailers require large expanses of land and parking and generally will request a traffic signal to serve their development. Terrain limits the location of access points to development in this area, thus leading to commercial nodes served by new public streets. This is the case at the intersection of Thain Grade and Nez Perce Drive.

Improving the design and appearance along 21st Street is somewhat problematic as the City has limited right of way and major portions of the street are built out however areas of opportunity will occur through natural redevelopment of parcels.

Following are suggestions for the improvement of the commercial corridor:

- *Utilize access control to reduce the number of curb cuts along this arterial;*
- *Promote or require the use of shared driveways;*
- *Promote or require interconnecting parking lots; this will allow drivers to drive between businesses without having to turn onto the arterial;*
- *Create additional parking behind buildings;*

- *Utilize landscaping and planting of trees to soften the visual impact of the buildings and improve the visual quality of the parking lots;*
- *Place new construction along the roadway – not set deeply back on the lots – and space them so the view of original commercial structures is not lost;*
- *Moving the business buildings closer to the street increases visibility of the business to drivers, controls access into the lot and hides the parking behind the building.*

Commercial Development – Thain Road

Thain Road is the major shopping street for the Lewiston Orchards and has developed over the years into another commercial strip. The product mix is targeted more toward the day to day needs of the public as well as products serving the agricultural needs of the region. A number of private homes remain along the street as well. Thain Road is a diagonal street crossing the platted grid and thus has created many oddly shaped parcels, especially at intersections, thus forcing larger retailers to acquire multiple parcels in order to obtain sufficient land for development. This form of development also tends to place commercial development in close proximity to residential development and forces commercial traffic onto local streets.

Following are suggestions for the improvement of this commercial corridor:

- *The oddly shaped parcels remaining at intersections along Thain Road could be put to a more beneficial purpose. These areas could be landscaped to provide a visual amenity to businesses and residents alike and could be designed to remind drivers they are entering a residential area.*
- *Sidewalks should be installed the full length of Thain Road with safe pedestrian crossings at strategic locations, especially near schools.*
- *Where sufficient right of way exists, street trees should be planted to help provide a consistent visual image of this major corridor.*
- *Over time, high pole signs should be replaced with ground mounted monument signs.*
- *Throughout the full length of Thain Road, overhead utilities should be moved underground to eliminate unnecessary clutter.*

There should be a clear terminus of commercial activity on Thain Road, most likely at the 14th and Powers location. This remaining undeveloped fifteen acre parcel should be developed under a planned unit development with a strong cluster commercial statement along the street side and limited access from 14th Street into the cluster commercial area. Vehicular access into the adjoining residential areas can be controlled by means of chicanes and other traffic calming means. In general, the site should be developed with commercial structures built to the set back line along 14th Street with parking located in the middle of the site. Land abutting residential areas should be included within the PUD as medium to high density residential, again with limited access parking located within the development.

Commercial Development – Bryden Avenue

Commercial development on Bryden Avenue is generally limited to three locations. The Lewiston Nez Perce County Regional Airport is located at 4th and Bryden and is a major destination for travelers. The South Gate Shopping Center is a community shopping center with smaller service businesses targeted toward the needs of nearby residents. This center has undergone significant changes in the recent past with the loss of the grocery store and hardware store. Major commercial development on Bryden Avenue is located at and near its intersection with Thain Road. Rosauer's Supermarket, located at 10th Street and Bryden Avenue is a major commercial draw in the Orchards. No significant commercial development is located on Bryden Avenue east of 11th Street.

Participants in the Bryden Avenue neighborhood meeting were polled on the desired future for this corridor. Commercial activity was desired by the majority of the respondents – whether owners of property on Bryden or community residents. The expressed desire was a high quality area that did not become another commercial strip.

Following are suggestions for the development of this important area:

- *Limit commercial development to the area from 4th Street to the intersection at 7th Street as depicted on the land use map and from Linden Avenue to Airway Avenue. No commercial development will be allowed on Bryden Avenue between 7th Street intersection and 10th Street intersection, as depicted on the land use map.*
- *Promote the development of a Conference Hotel at the Lewiston Nez Perce County Regional Airport near the intersection of 4th Street and Bryden Avenue.*
- *Enhance and intensify commercial development of South Gate Shopping Center – This shopping center is ripe for intensified commercial development to provide a community shopping center to residents of this neighborhood. Additional building pads could be developed along Bryden Avenue, with interior landscaping and other visitor amenities provided the shopper.*
- *The minimum area for a commercial zone must be at least ten (10) acres to accommodate the large scale commercial operations envisioned for this area.*
- *A special Bryden Avenue zoning district will be created to implement the goals of this Plan and will conform to the “town center” guidelines contained within this plan. These standards will be adopted prior to any commercial zone change on Bryden Avenue from 4th Street to 10th Street.*
- *As commercial development progresses, Bryden Avenue will be transformed from its current configuration to that of a boulevard, with a planted center median and street trees throughout the length of the commercial area. Overhead utilities will be buried and curb, gutter and sidewalk installed the full length of Bryden Avenue. To accomplish this will require developers to dedicate additional right of way to increase the street width.*
- *Signage within this special commercial district will be strongly controlled. No pole signs or portable signs will be allowed; ground mounted monument signs will be permitted.*

- *Buffering the impacts of commercial operations on nearby residential uses shall be consistent with the guidelines contained within this plan under “Relationships Between Commercial and Residential Uses;”*
- *Parking should be located in the side or rear yard, never in the front yard adjacent to the street. Parking must be designed with landscaping as an integral part, including perimeter and interior landscaping. Landscaping should be used to help guide pedestrians to the building entrance and to protect them from vehicular traffic. Landscaping is intended to reduce heat build up in the parking lot and to provide an area for storm water runoff storage.*
- *Outside of these commercial nodes, residential uses should be maintained as much as possible with work to improve secondary access to property fronting on Bryden Avenue*

Commercial Development – 16th Avenue and South Way

16th Avenue is a mixed-use street with discrete residential and commercial areas coexisting. A small commercial area located at the intersection of South Way and Snake River Avenue was approved in 1988 and generated significant controversy. The approval was a contributing cause of the recall of five City Council members. This area now contains a convenience food store and gas station. South Way has developed into a mixture of professional offices, public uses and multi-family uses.

The busy South Way corridor is one of the most visually unappealing drives in the City and is unfriendly to the resident, the driver and the pedestrian. Much could be done to improve the streetscape visually.

Following are suggestions for the improvement of this busy corridor:

- *When the intersection of South Way with Snake River Avenue is rebuilt, the constructed project should include at a minimum curb, gutter and sidewalk.*
- *More significantly, the pedestrian connectivity to the Levee Greenbelt System must be improved. The view westward from South Way to the Snake River could be enhanced to take advantage of this scene without disrupting traffic.*
- *Overhead power lines should be buried and street trees and other landscaping be placed where right of way width permits.*
- *In those oddly shaped parcels of right of way caused by the curving nature of South Way, enhanced landscaping and pedestrian improvement should be installed.*
- *Pedestrian level street lighting should be installed the entire length of this corridor.*
- *The residential portion of 16th Avenue retains a large number of attractive trees in individual yards, but street trees are missing. Reconstruction of this street to include curb, gutter and sidewalk should place a planting strip between the street and the walk to allow for planting of street trees.*

- *Pedestrian level street lighting should be installed and overhead power lines placed underground.*
- *Intersections of local streets with 16th Avenue or South Way should be designed and constructed with traffic calming measures at their intersections with the arterial.*
- *In commercial areas along this corridor where signage is allowed, only ground mounted monument signs should be permitted.*

Commercial Development – East Main Street

East Main Street commercial area serves the needs of Potlatch employees and residents of the neighborhood with a mixture of gas stations, taverns, and food service establishments intermixed with construction offices and wholesale operations. Though a highly traveled street, the commercial function is secondary to the use of the street as access to Potlatch Corp.

The reconstruction of this street in 1997 included installation of curb, gutter and sidewalks.

Following are suggestions for the improvement of this street:

- *Bury power lines and add landscaping although placement of street trees must be coordinated with the overhead clearance needs of trucks serving Potlatch Corp.*
- *As commercial and industrial uses related to industry serving Potlatch Corp. replace non-conforming residential uses along East Main Street, access control to the parcels must be implemented to combine driveways and improve access from and to the street.*

Industrial Development – Snake River Avenue

Snake River Avenue from downtown south to South Way functions as a strip industrial development. Small manufacturers, distributors and warehouses are along the east side with the Lewiston Levee Greenbelt; a concrete batch plant and Lewiston Grain Growers located on the west side.

A street with a split personality - industrial uses separating residential from park and river lands is difficult at best to deal with in a design strategy. Over time, the industrial uses should be phased out to accommodate those uses that can take good advantage of the proximity to the river and parks.

Following are suggestions for the improvement of this corridor:

- *Curb, gutter and sidewalk are generally in place along the east side of Snake River Avenue while none is located on the west or park side; installation of curb, gutter and sidewalk should be completed as part of the reconstruction of this street.*

- *A minor amount of landscaping exists in the industrial portion of this street while the park is heavily used throughout the year. Future development or redevelopment of the commercial land must include landscaping.*
- *Snake River Avenue is slated for reconstruction in the near future. Plans must include improving pedestrian safety along the park side of the street and providing safe crossings from Normal Hill to the parks.*
- *Fencing as a means of pedestrian control should be avoided wherever possible.*
- *Pedestrian level street lighting should be installed on both sides of this street and overhead utilities buried whenever possible. Excessive high levels of lighting in the industrial areas should be eliminated;*
- *Pole signs should be removed and replaced with ground mounted monument signs.*
- *Street trees and other landscaping should be installed along the east side of the street to buffer the view of the industrial uses from the park.*

Industrial Development – North Lewiston

Originally the site of truck farms and a rodeo area, North Lewiston has developed into a mixed-use area dominated by the Port of Lewiston. The Port lands are targeted toward major industrial uses while the remainder of North Lewiston is focused on goods and services for the trucking industry. There are large areas of undeveloped land that could be developed for manufacturing uses. There are also a number of residences intermixed with these uses.

- *This major entry corridor must be landscaped along its length with other visitor amenities provided. The landscaping should be designed for low maintenance while providing shade along the corridor. Species should be representative of the area and, if possible, reflect the nature of species first encountered by the Lewis and Clark expedition.*
- *Signage must be clear and easily understandable without distracting the driver. This signage could also include directions and information about regional features as well as community destinations.*
- *This area has potential for visitor services such as motels and recreational vehicle parks to be developed by private businesses. There is also great potential for larger scale commercial uses of a regional nature. The area east of US12 to 24th Street North from 3rd Avenue North to 7th Avenue North should be assembled from the smaller parcels and utilized for this purpose.*
- *Public art is a key component of any visual enhancements of this area and should feature elements of the Lewis and Clark expedition as well as from the Nez Perce Tribe.*
- *Parking for access to the Levee Path System should be upgraded and improved pedestrian linkages provided to the Path System and the Memorial Rose Garden.*

- *Develop recreational access points along Steelhead Way to promote walking, bicycling, fishing and other recreational uses of the river.*
- *Provide short term moorage at selected points on the north shore of the Clearwater River.*
- *Install street trees on the north (non-river) side of the new Steelhead Way boulevard.*

The Port of Lewiston maintains a large landholding in North Lewiston, both on the flats and along Down River Road. The majority of the Down River Road property is undeveloped at this time and will require the installation of infrastructure before it is ready for occupancy. The remainder of the Port property on the flats is kept for businesses needing access to water traffic or the railroad.

While the Port of Lewiston has a separate planning process, they must make efforts to improve the appearance of their lands and reduce dust generation.

Residential Development – Normal Hill and Downtown Areas

The Normal Hill and Bengal Field areas are residential lands first settled in the late 19th Century as an alternative to living on the “Flats” and consists of streets and alleys in a traditionally dense urban residential pattern. The area is made up of a variety of housing types including large single family residences, smaller bungalow residences, apartment buildings, and senior housing projects. Many of the larger homes have been subdivided into apartments. The smaller lot sizes (generally fifty foot frontages) contribute to the higher densities of the area. The area around the College and Hospital is home to a large number of lower income households, single parent households, and student housing. Major institutional uses also contribute to the mixed nature of the area. Lewis Clark State College, St Joseph Regional Medical Center and Lewiston High School are all located on Normal Hill and add to the traffic and population pressures on the neighborhoods.

There are a number of structures listed in the National Register of Historic Places located on Normal Hill. A portion of this area was considered for listing as an Historic District in 1977 but the application was dropped.

- *Large parts of Normal Hill may be ripe for establishment of “conservation districts” if property owners agree. A conservation district establishes design standards for major remodeling and new construction to maintain size, shape, massing or other design features considered important to preserve the integrity of the neighborhood.*
- *Design review could eliminate oversized accessory buildings or inappropriate and unsympathetic new construction.*
- *Overhead utility lines need to be buried and a replacement program for street trees instituted.*
- *Zoning standards need to be evaluated for consistency with established development patterns of the neighborhood especially as they relate to lot width and coverage.*
- *Traffic calming measures including roundabouts need to be installed at key intersections to promote the pedestrian neighborhood concept.*

- *The impacts of Lewis Clark State College and St. Joseph Regional Medical Center will be addressed in a separate Plan element.*

Residential Development – Orchards

The Lewiston Orchards was annexed to the City in 1969 and more than doubled the population. The land is flat and easy to develop with limited views; distant views are limited to the property on the extreme north and south sides of the developed area. This area was originally platted in five acre parcels fronting on sixty foot wide streets, with interior alleys being twenty feet wide. As the community grew, the five-acre parcels were subdivided, first along the streets and alleys, which had become public streets with annexation. This created a pattern of dense development along the rights of way and open expanses of pasture or orchards in the interior parcels. As Lewiston continued to grow, these large interior have been subdivided into residential lots accessible by public streets and into “flag” lots. The most dense area in the Orchards is located west of 10th Street and north of the Airport, an area generally known as the West Orchards and included in the Comprehensive Plan Neighborhood No. _____. The area around the South Gate Shopping Center is the highest density area in the Orchards and is comprised of a large number of apartment complexes. Higher density residential development along the 20 foot wide streets or secondary commercial access utilizing those narrow streets has become an issue before the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council wherein the neighbors cite concerns about the increasing traffic on substandard streets.

The Orchards has a very unusual development pattern but one that appears attractive to a significant percentage of our population. Design features can be implemented to enhance those positive features and address the negative ones.

- *The twenty foot wide streets are a deterrent for high speed traffic through a neighborhood. Some communities have been experimenting with “pedestrian streets” where, through design, vehicular traffic and pedestrians can peacefully coexist; this may be an opportunity to promote pedestrian safety within this area.*

The Orchards is bisected by Thain Road, a diagonal local shopping street designated as an arterial and serving as the main route from the Orchards to downtown and employment centers. The street provides direct access to commercial uses and acts as a strip commercial development. Higher density residential zoning is generally located as a buffer between the commercial uses on Thain Road and the lower density residential uses on either side. The diagonal alignment of Thain Road created oddly shaped parcels of land at and near intersections and results in the need for one way streets at poorly aligned intersections to improve traffic flows. Thain Road will continue to be a problem for access and development for the foreseeable future.

The lowest density residential areas in the City are located north of Burrell Avenue and east of 13th Street and also the land generally located east of 20th Street. This is due primarily to terrain and the difficulty in accessing the property.

Residential Development – the Bench Areas

Located between the downtown area and the Orchards, the bench is fairly steep land more difficult to develop because of the terrain, but is desirable for residential uses for the views to the rivers and hills. For many years, this property had been relatively sparsely settled, considering its central location, with the flatter and more easily developed sites built upon first. As land values in Lewiston rose and easily developed land became more expensive, the land has been subjected to substantial development. Some of the more expensive homes in Lewiston are located in these neighborhoods which are in the Mayfair area and the Valley Vista PUD.

Residential Development – the Country Club Area

The Country Club, located at the extreme southwest corner of the City is one of the newer residential areas. Located on sloping land oriented toward views of the river or golf course, the property was developed into a traditional subdivision pattern with higher end homes located on curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs. No commercial services are located in or near this neighborhood. Until recently, this area had limited access with Country Club Drive being the only route into the neighborhood. Over concern about the limited access to this area, the City Council placed a development moratorium on the southern most property which was lifted with the opening of Duthie Boulevard. Since that time, substantial development has taken place. Lots in the area served by Duthie Boulevard are on the market for more than \$60,000.

(Ordinance 4625, February 23, 2015)

Design of transportation corridors – access control – traffic calming

- We are a mobile society. Western cities especially rely almost exclusively on the automobile for daily life, but this reliance can have a negative influence on the quality of life in a neighborhood. Traffic on designated arteries and collectors needs to be free flowing and higher speed, but local traffic in residential areas needs to respect the different nature of land uses abutting the street. There are a variety of design mechanisms available to promote good traffic patterns which will enhance the usability of land and the quality of life.
- Proper design of arterial and collector streets can enhance both the driving experience and improve safety. Where new arterial and collector streets are built, boulevards and street trees should become an integral part of the design along with sidewalks and shared curb cuts and access control. Land use strategies designed to control commercial development to compact centers in existing commercial areas and the downtown core will help reduce or eliminate strip commercial development while still promoting quality commercial activity. The zoning map must be amended to inhibit strip commercial development while at the same time allowing commercial clustering to take place at desired locations.
- Traffic calming is a design means intended to slow traffic on local and pedestrian streets through physical means. It permits high volumes of traffic to move through a town at the speed limit, employing road design features that encourage such behavior.

Traffic calming uses curves, hills, trees, and narrowing techniques to make the roadway less comfortable at higher speeds, thereby causing motorists to drive more slowly and with increased caution. Traffic calming strategies can include measures such as roundabouts, chicanes, speed humps and tables, meandering streets and intersection constrictions. Such mechanisms discourage random through traffic while not impeding legitimate local or emergency traffic. Traffic calming should be required in all new residential developments and implemented in existing residential areas throughout the city on an incremental basis.

- Access management is a tool to ensure the safe and efficient movement of vehicles by striking a balance between property access and mobility. Access management attempts to limit the number of places where vehicles are turning and entering the roadway, to reduce the deceleration of vehicles in travel lanes and to remove turning vehicles from travel lanes.
- Street trees – can be a significant design element in a community. Lewiston is a “Tree City USA” recipient and is fortunate to have a large number of outstanding street trees, but an ongoing program of addition and replacement of such trees must be implemented. Street trees help reduce air pollution, reduce heat island effects and global warming through temperature reduction, support economic development and improve the quality of life.