

# WESTERN AVENUE

A FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE URBAN LIFE



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# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT IS PLACEMAKING?

Placemaking is a way of designing and programming the built environment. Placemaking focuses on public spaces, including streets, to promote a sense of place, identity, and community. Placemaking enhances the branding and economic development potential of an urban commercial district.

The practice of placemaking can involve the design of a physical environment or the management of a neighborhood or public space. Architects, landscape architects, engineers, planners, urban designers, Main Street Program managers, elected officials, and community organizers are all important contributors to placemaking efforts.

Most importantly, community members must be actively engaged in placemaking so that the efforts are relevant and useful to achieve the local vision of a quality place for the neighborhood.

“Placemaking capitalizes on a local community’s assets, inspiration, and potential, ultimately creating good public spaces that promote people’s health, happiness, and well-being.”  
– Project for Public Spaces

### The Study

The 2007 General Obligation Bond provided funds to improve Western Avenue along a two-mile corridor from NW 36<sup>th</sup> Street to NW 63<sup>rd</sup> Street. After years of discussion, the plan was ready to begin construction in the summer of 2013. In 2012, some stakeholders began to raise concerns that the project was not doing enough to enhance the potential of a particular part of the corridor as an urban commercial district.

The team was asked to consider the streetscape proposal and create an alternative proposal that represents best practices in placemaking for urban commercial streets. This “Part I” of the study is called the Placemaking Blueprint, from NW 41<sup>st</sup> Street to NW 46<sup>th</sup> Street.

Additionally, as development continues along the corridor, the team was asked to consider the status of the existing land use controls and make recommendations about land use policy. This “Part II” of the study is called the Urban Design Framework, from NW 36<sup>th</sup> Street to NW 48<sup>th</sup> Street.

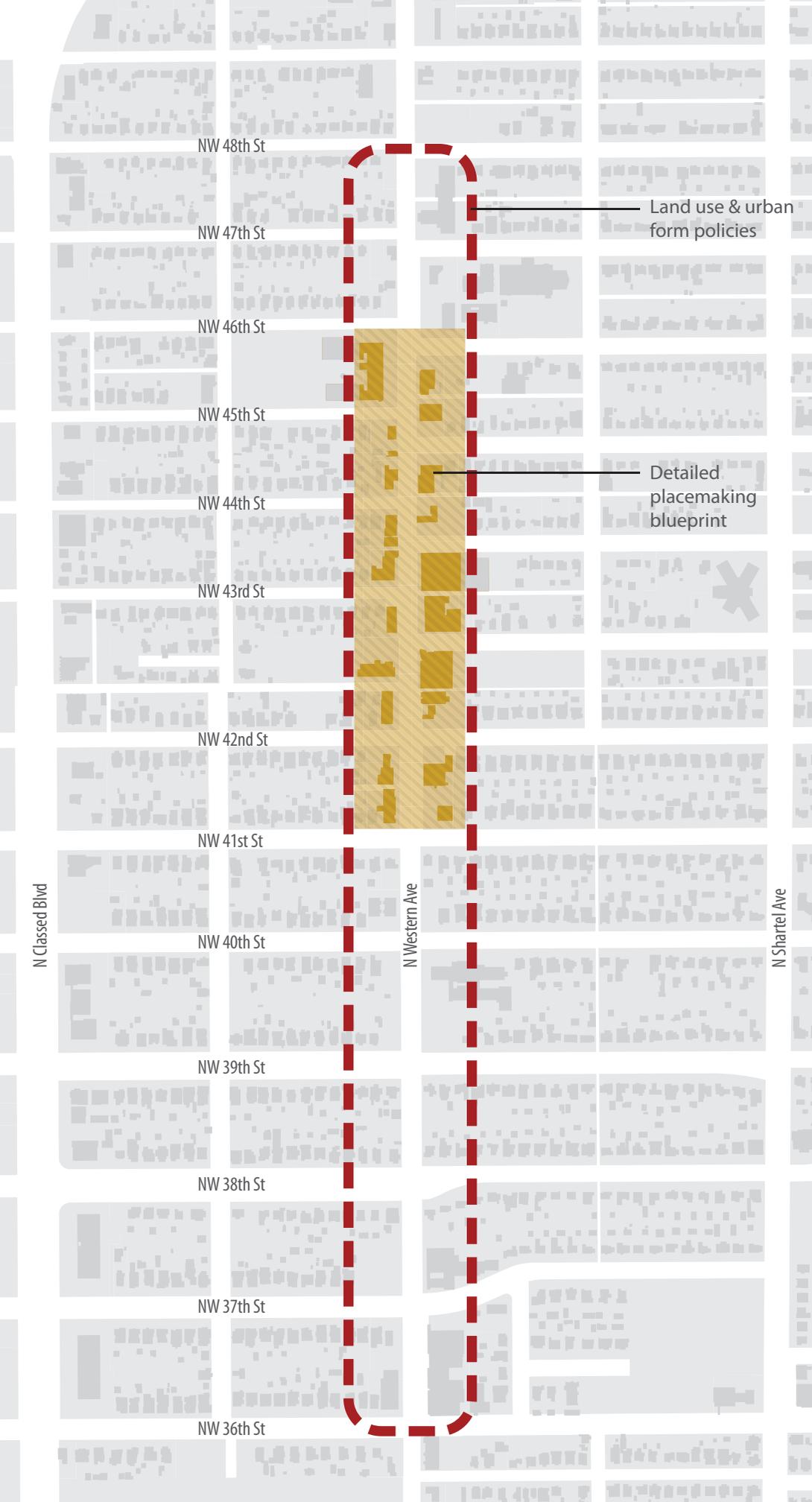
### Summary

In the core commercial district, the business and residential community generally wants to see a more cohesive district identity achieved through consistent walkability and street design. A unified street design for the commercial district could enhance both walkability and economic vitality. While this stretch of Western Avenue is already known as an upscale dining and shopping destination, improved street design will ensure that Western remains a top urban district in Oklahoma City.

In the greater corridor area between NW 36<sup>th</sup> Street and NW 48<sup>th</sup> Street, current land use controls are falling short of addressing the development needs in the area. The existing zoning codes are not consistent with the character of Western Avenue and are contributing to tensions between residential and commercial areas. Because the codes offer very little design guidance, it is difficult for residents to predict what the development of the neighborhood will look like in the future. New types of development regulations could serve the neighborhood more effectively.

**Part 1 is a detailed placemaking blueprint between NW 41st and NW 46th Streets.**

**Part 2 is a study of the land use and urban form policies between NW 36th and NW 48th Streets.**



# RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

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## STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

The findings of this study are based heavily on input received from the community and stakeholders. Through public meetings and workshops, online surveys, and personal interviews, the team gained an understanding of the neighborhood's issues and preferences. The team maintained an online presence including a website and blog, social media, and an e-mail update list.

### Neighborhood Associations

The team attended a meeting of the Helm Farm Neighborhood Association that also included representatives from the Zachary Taylor, Douglas Heights, Meadowbrook Acres, and Brookhaven neighborhoods. The local traffic commissioner was also present.

The attendees commented on the heavy traffic on Western Avenue and expressed a desire for a more consistent sidewalk and pedestrian experience. They were enthusiastic about ideas that would slow down traffic and make the area more walkable.

Some attendees noted that parking from Western Avenue sometimes overflows into the Helm Farm neighborhood.

Several cyclists at the meeting noted that they generally avoid Western when biking. They prefer to use nearby residential streets with slower traffic, such as Military or Shartel. Additionally, they expressed the need for better bike parking in prime locations on the corridor.

### Public Meeting

The project's main public meeting was held on Thursday, April 25, including a walk-in period throughout the afternoon and a presentation and discussion in the evening. Approximately thirty people attended over the course of the day. Members of city staff, the local councilman, and the local planning commissioner were also present.

The presentation covered all aspects of the project, including the preliminary plans for the placemaking blueprint and an explanation of the proposed streetscape. Following the presentation, attendees gathered around several copies of the streetscape plan for discussion. Attendees had a favorable reaction to concepts that would improve walkability, calm traffic, and provide additional sidewalk space for businesses.

Attendees helped point out additional refinements for the plan including opportunities for new street parking.

Few attendees had concerns about the plan, but the most common concern was the removal of the buffer space that allows parked cars to back out of their parking space. To address these concerns, it is possible that temporary curbs could be installed to test the effects of this suggested change on the driving behaviors and street safety.



Participants in a walking audit with Dan Burden

## WALKABILITY WORKSHOP

The City of Oklahoma City Office of Sustainability partnered with the Institute for Quality Communities to bring walkability expert Dan Burden to lead a workshop focusing on Western Avenue.

About thirty participants learned about walkability and urban design concepts on a walking tour of the area. Burden pointed out ways to reduce traffic speed, including narrowing lanes and removing excess space between parked cars and the edge of the travel lane.

Burden also emphasized the importance of creating transitions, suggesting the consideration of median gateways at either end of the commercial district. Burden discussed the transition between commercial and single-family residential neighborhoods. He stressed the importance of good design on the back of commercial buildings and offered suggestions for land uses like a cottage court that could soften the transition.

At the end of the workshop day, the participants broke into groups and worked on large maps of the study area to sketch their own ideas for the street's design. Many of these ideas and discussions were incorporated into this study's recommendations.

# WALKABILITY ANALYSIS



Pedestrians walking in the large space between the travel lane and parked cars are at greater risk of being injured by vehicles that are passing by, parking, or back out of a space.



Sidewalks often run into dead-ends that are aligned with neighboring parking lots. Looking down the sidewalk and seeing a parked car blocking the path sends the wrong signal to pedestrians.

The placemaking blueprint focuses on the core commercial district between NW 41<sup>st</sup> Street and NW 46<sup>th</sup> Street. The design of the street is the most important part of placemaking and economic development on Western Avenue, establishing the neighborhood as a walkable neighborhood center.

This stretch of Western Avenue has a complementary mix of commercial uses including entertainment, shopping, and offices. Some portions of the corridor have sidewalks built to urban standards, such as in front of VZDs or Will Rogers Theater, but connectivity between blocks is hindered by inconsistencies in the streetscape and an uncomfortable walking environment.

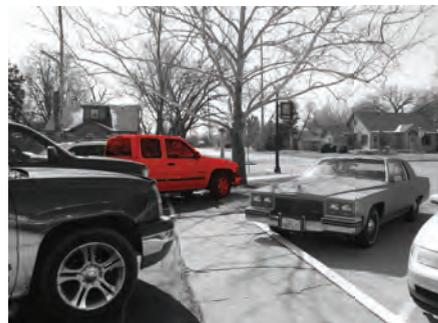
The online survey revealed many concerns about walking or participating in outdoor activities such as sidewalk dining. Poor sidewalks, perceived danger from fast traffic, and noise from traffic were among the concerns shared by neighborhood residents and business owners. The generally shared vision for the street includes consistent sidewalks with ample space for café tables or merchandise displays, clearly defined crosswalk markings, street trees and lighting, and an emphasis on reducing the speed of traffic.

Business owners are interested in creating a destination where customers are able to visit many shops or restaurants in each visit to the area. A unified streetscape can achieve this identity for the district and enable comfortable strolling between businesses.



There are cases where there is a dangerous mismatch between the location of the crosswalk and where cars will actually stop to look both ways.

“I can walk to work from where I live and love the area, but it needs sidewalk improvements and crosswalks.”



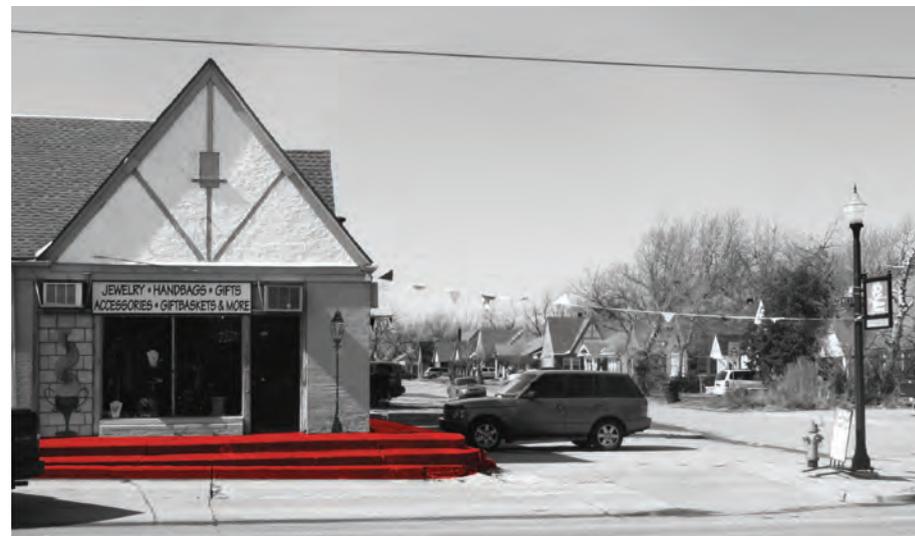
The lack of spatial definition doesn't provide drivers with clear direction, often resulting in blurred boundaries of where vehicular and pedestrian zones meet.



Dirt paths and worn-down grass show where people are really walking, also known as “desire lines.”



Large curb cuts create unpredictable vehicular activity into pedestrian zones.



Steps and elevation changes are difficult for disabled and elderly people to navigate. Even a very small change of a few inches can make it impossible for some people to access a business.

# PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

One-on-one interviews were held with business representatives and property owners in the placemaking blueprint study area. Several key concepts and issues came up.

The most common stakeholder concern during the interviews was parking. Parking is perceived to be a significant issue, particularly nights and weekends in the core of the district near NW 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and NW 43<sup>rd</sup> Street. A parking analysis is included in this study.

The team discussed various parking management options with business owners, including timed parking, metered parking, and paid private parking. Most business owners were hesitant about the idea of metered parking, but understood the value of parking management and were open to considering metering in the future. Business owners were more likely to support metered parking if meter revenues could be earmarked for further improvements in the district.

Many business owners have a vision for a walkable street where window-shopping and strolling are possible. Related visions include making the street well-known for a romantic atmosphere, or a destination for food and food retail. One business owner disagreed and noted that he does not consider pedestrian traffic to be important to his business.

Almost all of the business owners expressed concerns about noise level and safety related to the traffic on Western Avenue. They are generally supportive of traffic calming efforts as a way to improve safety and the atmosphere of the street for customers.

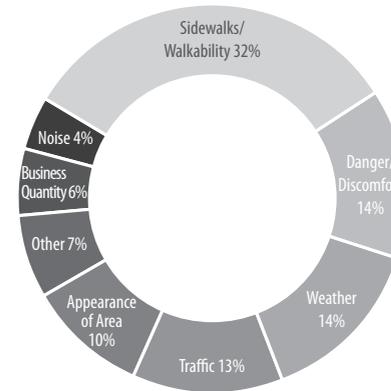
Business and property owners are tired of the long process that has occurred throughout the Western Avenue streetscape project. While they are supportive of streetscape improvements, they are concerned about the impact of construction on their sales. The time period from late fall (November) to early spring (March) is an important part of the success of the local businesses and a construction schedule should work with those constraints.

“I moved to this area because I was looking for a pedestrian friendly area to live... I felt like this area had the most potential in OKC with respect to that.”

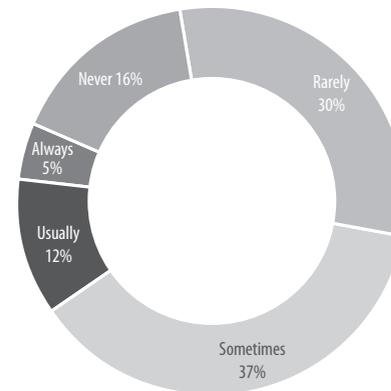
“It’s important to maintain what makes Western Ave unique: an eclectic mix of independently owned restaurants, shops, and pubs.”

“This area has so much potential, but really falls short. It’s nice to see an interest being taken in improving it.”

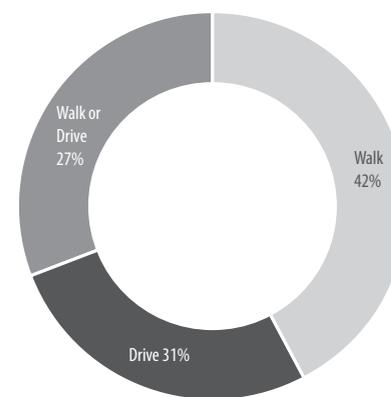
Limiting factors to walk or outdoor activities



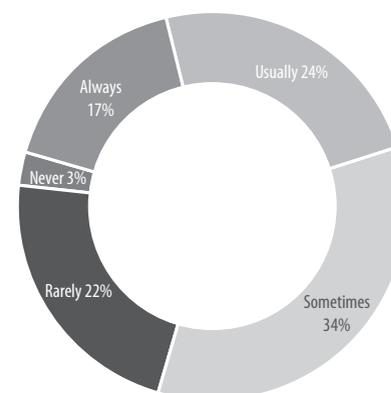
How often do you have trouble parking?



How do you travel between businesses?



How often do you visit more than one business?



# ONLINE SURVEYS

**122 responses**  
**50% live near study area**  
**11% work in study area**  
**7% own business in study area**

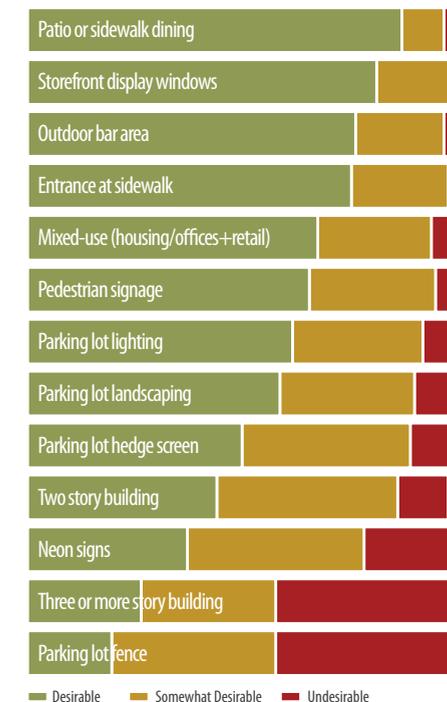
An online survey was opened for one month, publicized through social media and e-mail. The survey received 122 responses. About 50% of respondents reported that they live in the neighborhoods adjacent to the study area including Helm Farm, Crown Heights-Edgemere Heights, and Douglas Park.

Which streets or districts should Western look to for inspiration?

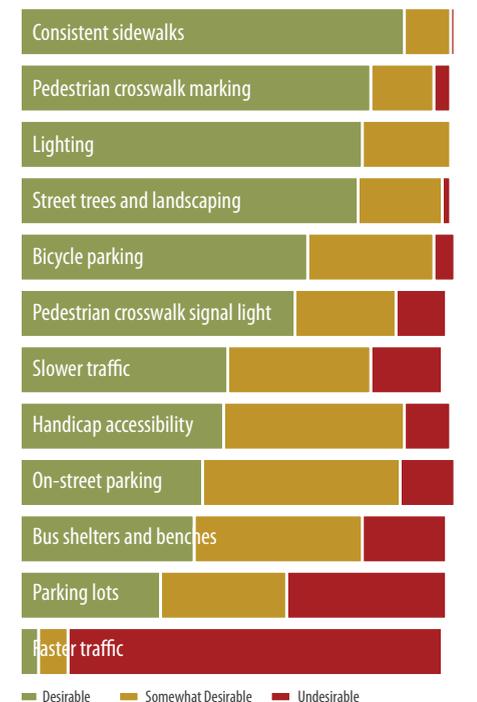
1. Oklahoma City - Plaza District (36%)
2. Austin - South Congress/6th Street (13%)
3. Denver - 16th Street/Pearl (13%)
4. Tulsa - Cherry Street (11%)
5. Oklahoma City - Paseo (11%)
6. Oklahoma City - Midtown/Auto Alley (10%)
7. Dallas - Greenville (9%)
8. Norman - Campus Corner (7%)
9. Dallas - Bishop Arts District (6%)
10. Tulsa - Brookside (6%)

The survey focused on three main parts: gathering information about the community's behavior and influences when they visit Western Avenue, understanding the community's preferences for the design of the public space on the street, and understanding the community's preferences for the design of private development.

What building characteristics are desirable on Western Avenue?



What street characteristics are desirable on Western Avenue?



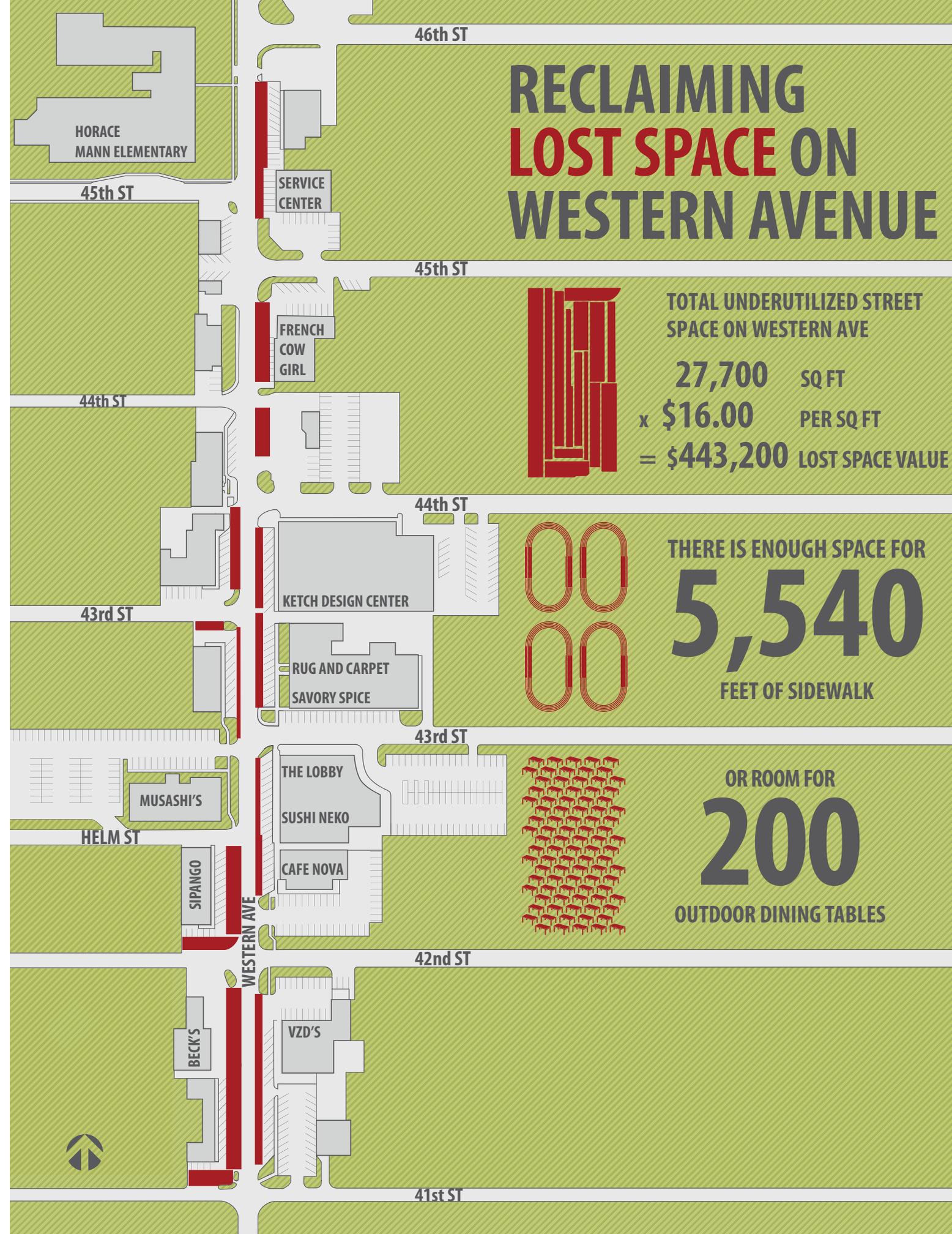
# LOST SPACE

The team identified “lost space” as the space between the outside of the travel lane and the edge of the angled on-street parking spaces. This space is currently utilized as a way for cars to back out of a parking space without slowing the flow of traffic.

However, the space also effectively widens the lane to produce greater traffic speeds and is used for dangerous driving behaviors such as U-turns and swerving around cars that are waiting to turn left. These dangerous driving behaviors are especially concerning because the lost space is frequently used by pedestrians as a more consistent walking surface than the sidewalks on the corridor. While some community members expressed safety concerns about eliminating this space, the presence of the space is also creating major safety issues.

Returning the lost space to the pedestrian area of the street could allow an enhanced streetscape that is safer for all users of Western Avenue. A similar strategy was used by the City of Oklahoma City for the Plaza District streetscape on NW 16<sup>th</sup> Street.

“A lot of people I know in this neighborhood want to walk, but it is so hard to do safely with kids.”



# PROPOSED GENERAL OBLIGATION BOND STREET PROJECT

“The sidewalks are too small and too close to busy, noisy Western... not quite a calm atmosphere for relaxing.”

The currently proposed street project stretches along Western Avenue from NW 36<sup>th</sup> Street to NW 63<sup>rd</sup> Street. The primary walkability goal of the project was to provide an ADA-accessible path on one side of the street along the entire two-mile corridor. The proposed project achieves this goal and improves several pedestrian crossings with ramps and markings. Some streetscape elements such as covered bus stops and benches are included.

Due to budget constraints, the provisions for pedestrian facilities are minimal. ADA-accessibility is typically achieved on the east side of the street in the 41st to 46th Street area. The west side of the street has greater elevation changes and ADA challenges. If not addressed concurrently in a public project, these ADA challenges will fall on private property owners and potentially make redevelopment impossible for some buildings.

**Current streetscape plan achieves:**

Meets ADA requirements (along 2-mile corridor)  
Improves pedestrian crossings

**Current streetscape plan does NOT achieve:**

Traffic calming  
Cohesive district identity  
Economic value for businesses  
Spaces for public life

Traffic calming can be achieved primarily through narrowed lanes. The proposed changes retain the street’s excessively wide lane widths of approximately 15’. According to on-site comments by expert Dan Burden, an ideal travel speed for a walkable commercial district would be 19 miles per hour, but 15’ lanes would likely keep the street’s typical speed above 30 miles per hour.

A district identity can be achieved through defined thresholds at the corridor’s gateway and consistent street treatment throughout the corridor. District identity will become increasingly important for this commercial district as other urban neighborhoods such as the Plaza District and Midtown offer the cohesive pedestrian experiences desired by consumers.

The proposed changes do not expand economic opportunity for property and business owners along the corridor. The primary goal of a streetscape is to create economic value for businesses and the city. Businesses can use enhanced space in the public realm to expand the footprint of their business into sidewalk patios and outdoor merchandise displays. A quality streetscape will increase property values and sales tax revenues for all properties within walking distance.

Finally, the proposed changes provide a path for pedestrian through-movement on one side of the street, but they do not provide a place for public life to occur. Public life is stimulated by outdoor dining, places to gather groups of people, or places to sit and watch other people pass by.

The changes that are currently proposed for Western Avenue do not adequately address the community’s vision to become a walkable, vibrant community center. They would not provide the significant economic benefits that can be achieved through a quality streetscape.

“It would be really wonderful to slow traffic down in the area.”

“There are not enough businesses to walk between. Part of strolling past shops is opportunistic, but you need a solid string of businesses to create the experience.”

“I enjoy patio dining, but there is limited space and what is there takes up part of the sidewalk in some areas.”

# PARKING ANALYSIS

The team conducted five occupancy counts including times of peak parking demand in the district.

Off-street parking: 564  
On-street parking: 181  
Total parking: 745

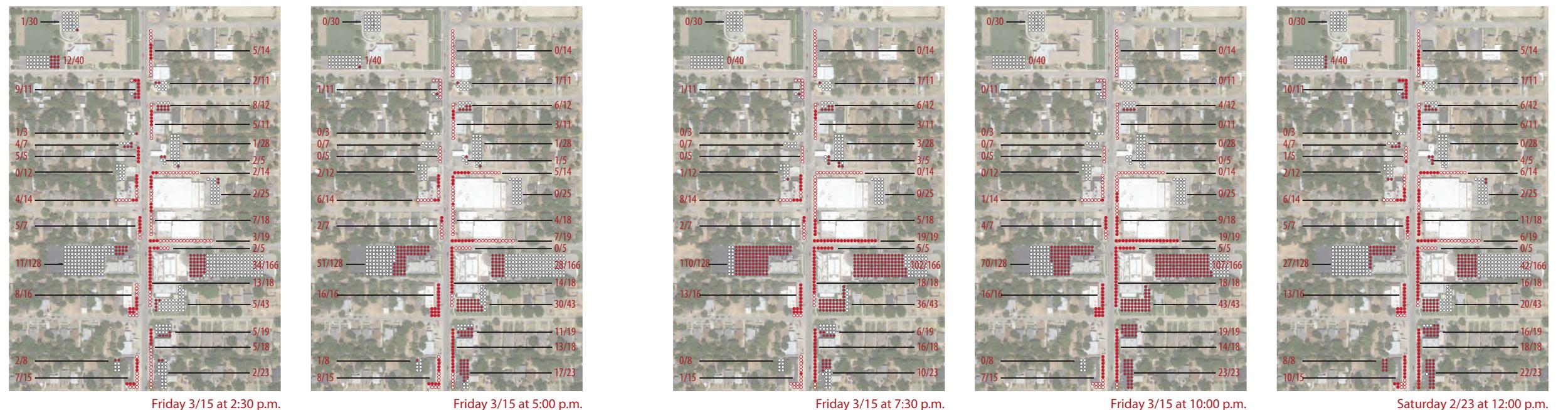
Parking was a major concern for business and property owners along Western Avenue. Parking is a much greater concern for business owners and residents than for visitors to the district. The online survey showed that only 17% of people report that they 'Always' or 'Usually' have trouble parking in the area, while 46% of people 'Never' or 'Rarely' have trouble parking.

Our study includes an analysis of the status of parking in the area. While the data supports the online survey's indication that there is no pressing shortage of parking in the district, there are inefficiencies that could be resolved through a variety of parking management strategies.

Observed Parking Occupancy Rates (District-wide)					
	Friday 3/15 2:30 p.m.	Friday 3/15 5:00 p.m.	Friday 3/15 7:30 p.m.	Friday 3/15 10:00 p.m.	Saturday 2/23 12:00 p.m.
On-Street	40%	43%	50%	51%	63%
Off-Street	18%	27%	49%	47%	29%

Peak district-wide parking occupancy is generally about 50%. The parking analysis maps show how parking occupancy is usually skewed toward the southern part of the district where there is a cluster of restaurants and bars. This is apparent when the occupancy rates north and south of NW 43<sup>rd</sup> Street are examined individually.

- Private Parking Space
- Public Parking Space



Observed Parking Occupancy Rates (South of 43 <sup>rd</sup> )					
	Friday 3/15 2:30 p.m.	Friday 3/15 5:00 p.m.	Friday 3/15 7:30 p.m.	Friday 3/15 10:00 p.m.	Saturday 2/23 12:00 p.m.
On-Street	47%	67%	70%	81%	78%
Off-Street	15%	36%	68%	68%	35%

Observed Parking Occupancy Rates (North of 43 <sup>rd</sup> )					
	Friday 3/15 2:30 p.m.	Friday 3/15 5:00 p.m.	Friday 3/15 7:30 p.m.	Friday 3/15 10:00 p.m.	Saturday 2/23 12:00 p.m.
On-Street	34%	25%	34%	28%	51%
Off-Street	23%	7%	8%	2%	16%

The distance from plentiful vacant parking north of 43<sup>rd</sup> Street to the center of the district near Will Rogers Theater is often a shorter walk than some off-street parking spaces in the large parking lots at 43<sup>rd</sup> Street. However, the lack of walkability and poor lighting north of 43<sup>rd</sup> Street prevent customers from seeking parking there.

On-street parking is present throughout the district, but with no time limits or pricing it is frequently full in front of key locations despite overall high parking vacancy. The fact that on-street parking fills before off-street parking means that travelers passing through looking for a quick, convenient stop are unable to find a parking space. Visitors who may be staying all day are free to park in valuable on-street spaces rather than seeking out the off-street parking that is more appropriate for a long-term stay in the district.

Despite signage that indicates parking is privately controlled, it appears that in reality parking is being shared throughout the district. Particularly during busy evenings, visitors may park in the lot for one business, eat dinner, and then walk to spend the rest of the evening visiting nearby bars or event spaces.

# PARKING OPTIONS

This report does not recommend an effort to expand the availability of off-street parking in the corridor. Instead, it presents a menu of parking management options that would help bring equity and efficiency.

### Shared Parking Agreement

A shared parking agreement could be negotiated through the business association that would allow parking owners to be adequately compensated on an annual or monthly basis.

### Private Parking Management

Parking lot owners want to ensure that their parking is available for their own customers. There is not currently a system to adequately compensate parking lot owners when customers of other businesses use their lots. In the absence of a district-wide parking agreement, parking owners may choose to introduce a private parking management system. Parking could be validated by a receipt or token from a participating business. Customers who do not visit a participating business to receive validation could then be charged for parking when they exit the parking lot.

### Timed Parking

Introducing time limits to on-street parking could help ensure better parking turnover in the most convenient parking spaces. Long-term visitors will seek out parking with no time limits in off-street parking areas. Timed parking may offer a similar but less pronounced effect as metered parking, discussed below.

### Metered Parking

Because on-street parking in key blocks is often completely full, the district may consider metered parking priced to achieve 85% occupancy (one or two available spaces per block) at any given time. Short-term visitors or visitors who are willing to pay for a convenient parking space would be more likely to have access to a parking space. All-day visitors or visitors who are not willing to pay would seek out free parking in existing off-street parking lots.

Most business owners were receptive to the idea of metered parking as a way to increase customer turnover and improve the perception of parking availability for people traveling along the Western corridor. However, the district would not support metered parking if revenues were not earmarked to be reinvested along Western Avenue.

Several meter scenarios explore the question of how much revenue could be generated by a metered parking system. The tables show estimated annual revenue scenarios based on how many spaces are metered, two different price points, and a variety of conservative occupancy rates. These scenarios assume peak hour metering at lunch, dinner, and late evening hours.

These revenues could be returned to a fund that could be used to pay for the district's parking operations, place management services, or bond for physical improvements.

See also "The High Cost of Free Parking" by Donald Shoup.

METER SCENARIOS: 41<sup>st</sup> to 45<sup>th</sup>  
(148 Spaces, 11am - 1pm & 5pm - 10pm)

Price Per Hour	Average Occupancy Rate	Annual Revenue
\$0.50	30%	\$56,721.00
	40%	\$75,628.00
	50%	\$94,535.00
	60%	\$113,442.00
\$1.00	30%	\$113,442.00
	40%	\$151,256.00
	50%	\$189,070.00
	60%	\$226,884.00
\$1.50	30%	\$170,163.00
	40%	\$226,884.00
	50%	\$283,605.00
	60%	\$340,326.00

METER SCENARIOS: 41<sup>st</sup> to 43<sup>rd</sup>  
(71 Spaces, 11am - 1pm & 5pm - 10pm)

Price Per Hour	Average Occupancy Rate	Annual Revenue
\$0.50	30%	\$27,210.75
	40%	\$36,281.00
	50%	\$45,351.25
	60%	\$54,421.50
\$1.00	30%	\$54,421.50
	40%	\$72,562.00
	50%	\$90,702.50
	60%	\$108,843.00
\$1.50	30%	\$81,632.25
	40%	\$108,843.00
	50%	\$136,053.75
	60%	\$163,264.50

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Every inch of right-of-way and every dollar in the streetscape budget should contribute to safety, accessibility, economic development, and place identity.

The major placemaking recommendation is a new, enhanced streetscape plan for the core commercial district. The new streetscape would have several priorities:

1. Calm traffic to promote safety and reduce noise
2. Maximize sidewalk space for economic prosperity and public life
3. Increase on-street parking
4. Deliver accessibility solutions for challenging buildings

A driver's cone of vision dramatically increases as speed falls under 35 miles per hour. An ideal speed for safety in a pedestrian environment is under 20 miles per hour.

Vision Cone Diagram



# PLACEMAKING BLUEPRINT

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Western Avenue  
Iron Skewer Urban Barbecue

Western Avenue  
Iron Skewer Urban Barbecue

WESTERN AVENUE

**Gateways**

Gateways provide a threshold to the district that communicates a sense of arrival at a special place. The placement of the gateway as a median allows it to serve as a traffic calming feature and refuge to break up a street crossing for a pedestrian.

**ADA Solutions**

ADA solutions on the challenging west side of the street include ramps from the corners coupled with steps that provide continuous access to parking spaces. Similar solutions are used in parts of Project 180.

**Travel Lanes**

Travel lanes are reduced to 11'. This width calms traffic while accommodating the bus route on the street. The ideal speed for this five-block section of Western is 25 miles per hour or less. This speed allows for pedestrian safety and safe vehicular access in and out of on-street parking spaces.

**Angled Parking**

60-degree angled parking has standard dimensions including a depth of 19'8" from the face of the curb. This depth includes the 2' gutter zone that functions for drainage and a buffer for re-entering the travel lane.

**Near-side Bus Stop**

Near-side bus stops allow buses to unload onto the curb bumpout at the intersection. This positions the bus shelter on a street corner where it is less likely to block visibility to a storefront or block the sidewalk path.

**Bio-retention Basin**

Vegetated swales provide run-off water retention before routing to storm water catch basins. Bioswales naturally filter storm water and are located at all existing storm drains and wherever else necessary.

**Drainage Channel**

A 2' drainage channel is incorporated into the streetscape to accommodate a buffer for parked vehicles and extra travel lane width.

**Level Sidewalks at Curb Cut**

Curb cuts are designed with the sidewalk crossing through as the flat surface, much like a speed table. This decision maintains ADA accessibility without ramps and helps communicate that the car is crossing the pedestrian realm.

**Curb Bumpouts**

Bumpouts shorten crossing distances and have an additional traffic calming effect. Bumpouts provide additional space for landscaping or street furniture such as bus stops or bike parking.

**Access Management**

Parking access is relocated to side streets to minimize disruptions on the sidewalk and to maximize on-street parking.

**Narrow Planters**

Where necessary, a 3'x12' planter is used to conserve space in the streetscape. Similar planters have recently been installed on Robinson at NW 10th Street.

**Limit Lines Before Crosswalks**

Limit lines and stop signs on cross streets should be placed before the crosswalk. Cars must stop at the limit line before the crosswalk. At this location, the bumpout and parking lane may hinder visibility for the vehicle. The vehicle will then creep forward through the crosswalk to gain a position with visibility to turn onto Western.

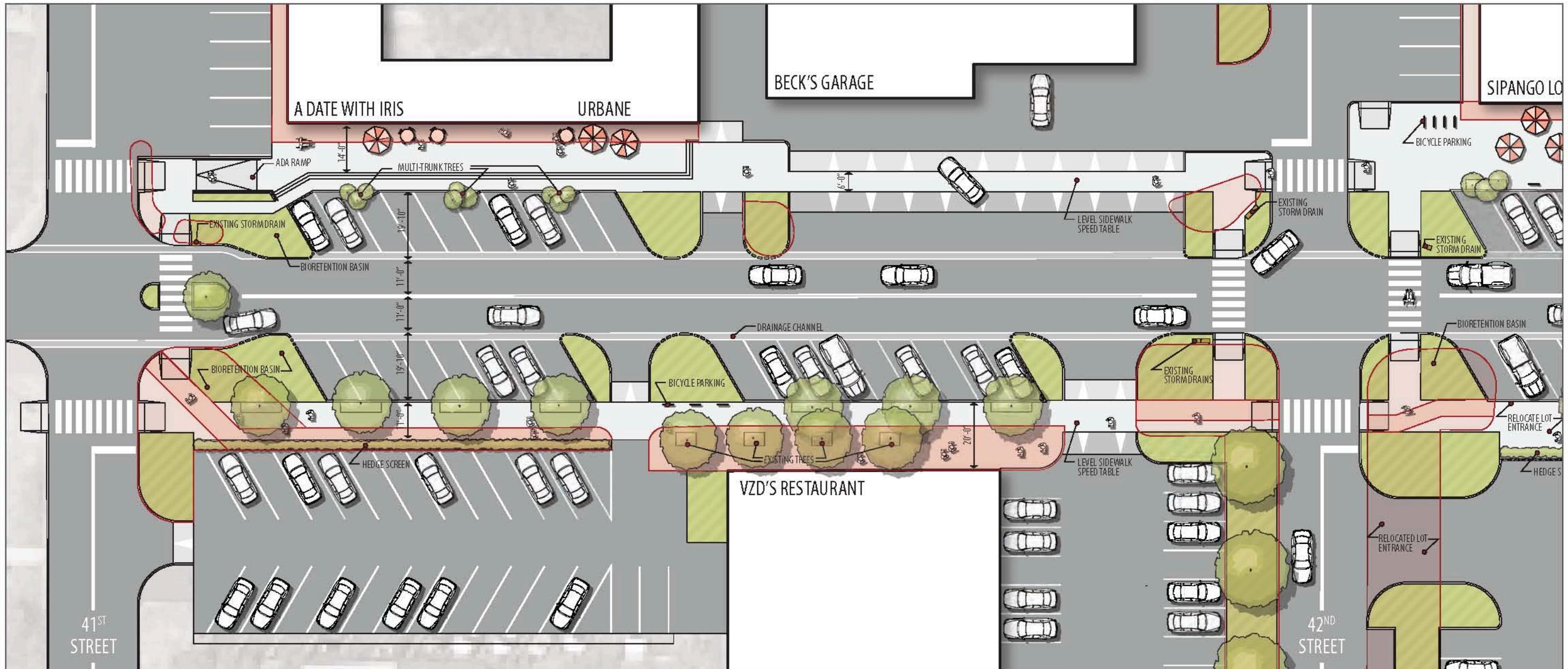


**Western Avenue**  
NW 41<sup>st</sup> - NW 42<sup>nd</sup> Street

- existing raised curb
- existing sidewalk
- existing drain

**Parking Count**

Businesses	Parking Type	Existing	Proposed
A Date with Iris	On-street	33	33
Urbane	Off-street	50	50
Beck's Garage	Total	83	83
VZD's Restaurant			

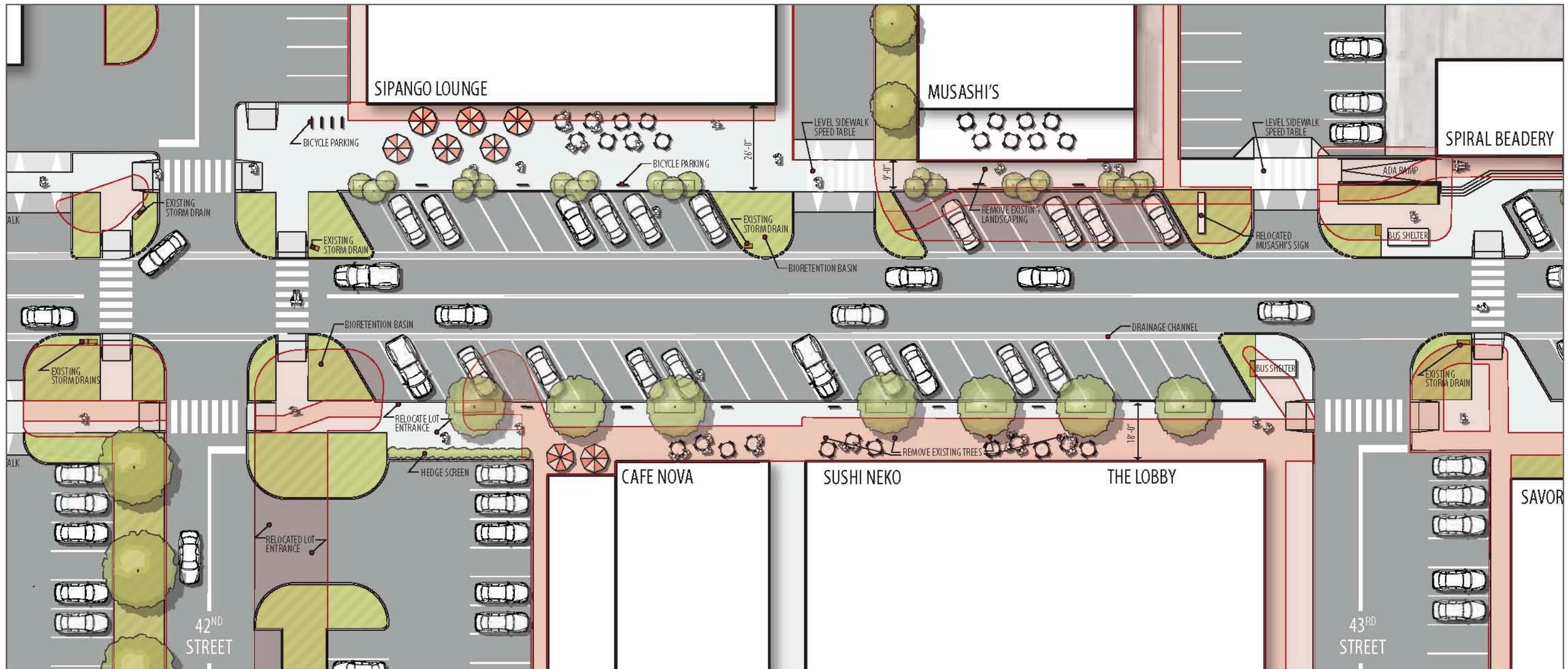


**Western Avenue**  
NW 42<sup>nd</sup> - NW 43<sup>rd</sup> Street

- existing raised curb
- existing sidewalk
- existing drain

**Parking Count**

Businesses	Parking Type	Existing	Proposed
Sipango Lounge	On-street	46	75
Musashi's	Off-street	337	331
Cafe Nova			
Sushi Neko			
The Lobby			
<b>Total</b>		<b>383</b>	<b>406</b>

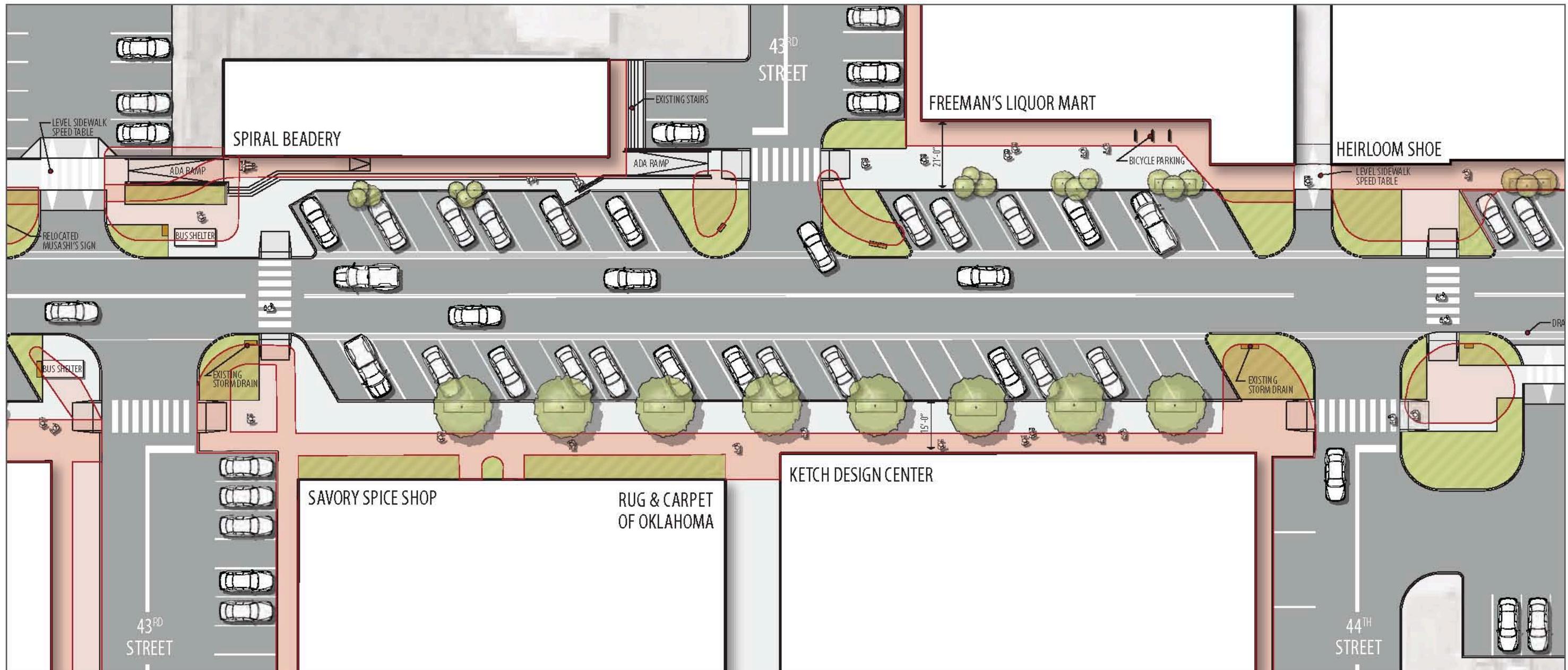


**Western Avenue**  
NW 43<sup>rd</sup> - NW 44<sup>th</sup> Street

- existing raised curb
- existing sidewalk
- existing drain

Parking Count

Businesses	Parking Type	Existing	Proposed
Spiral Beadery	On-street	72	90
Freeman Liquor	Off-street	37	37
Savory Spice Shop			
Rug & Carpet			
Ketch Design Center			
	Total	109	127

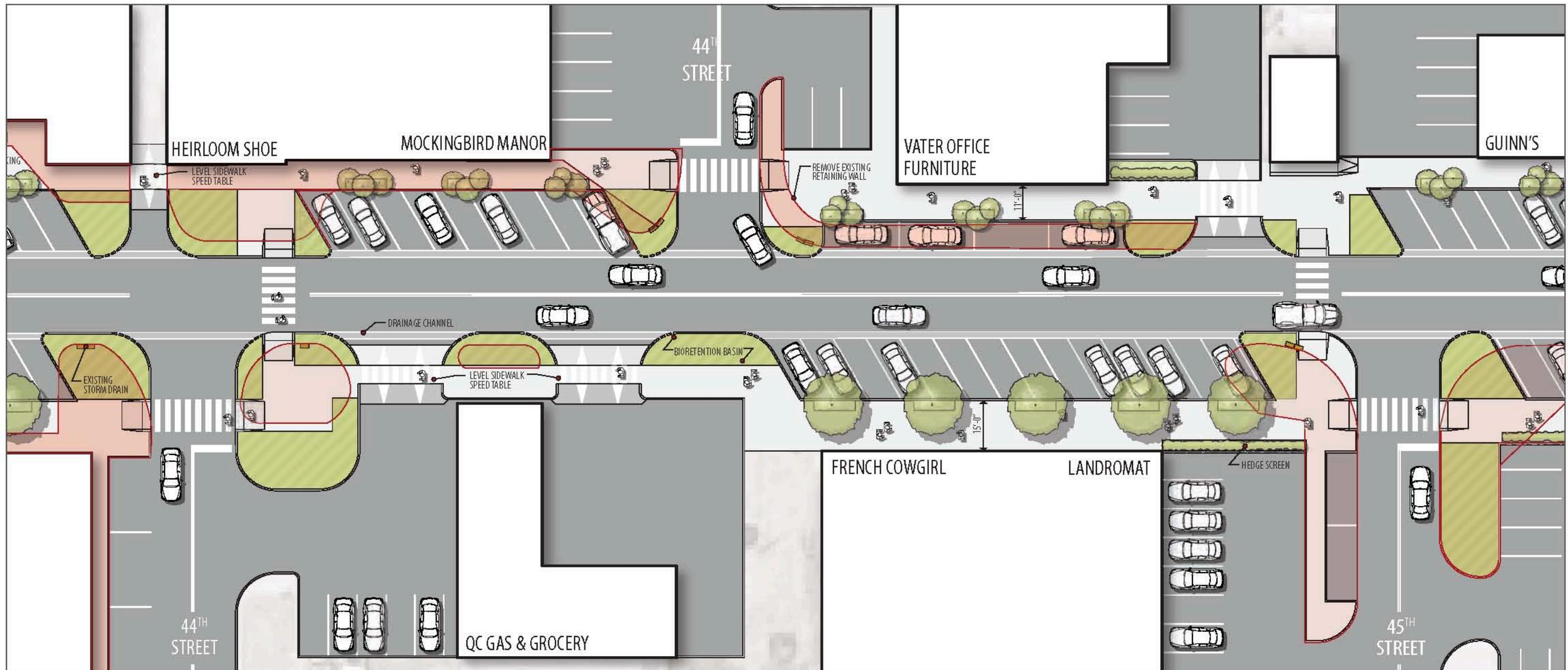


**Western Avenue**  
NW 44<sup>th</sup> - NW 45<sup>th</sup> Street

- existing raised curb
- existing sidewalk
- existing drain

Parking Count

Businesses	Parking Type	Existing	Proposed
Heirloom Shoe	On-street	38	49
Mockingbird	Off-street	74	71
Vater Office			
QC Gas			
French Cowgirl			
Laundromat			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>120</b>

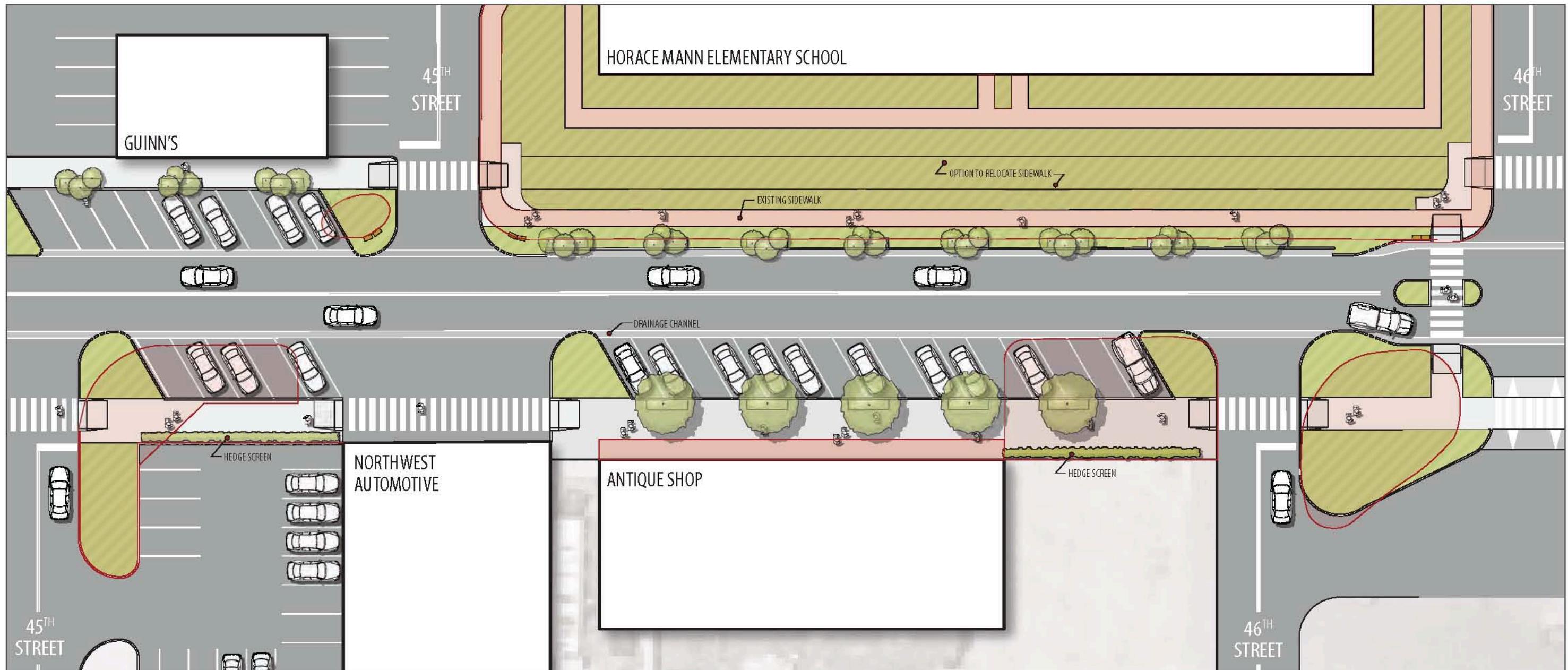


**Western Avenue**  
NW 45<sup>th</sup> - NW 46<sup>th</sup> Street

- existing raised curb
- existing sidewalk
- existing drain

**Parking Count**

Businesses	Parking Type	Existing	Proposed
Guinn's	On-street	22	34
Northwest Auto	Off-street	14	19
Antique Shop	Total	36	53
Horace Mann School			



South Gateway  
NW 41<sup>st</sup> and Western Avenue

existing



proposed

screening hedge

bioretention basin

wheelchair accessible ramp

gateway median



Sipango Lounge  
NW 42<sup>nd</sup> and Western Avenue

existing



proposed

low-growing multi-trunk trees under power lines

outdoor cafe seating

bike parking

widened sidewalk



Cafe Nova  
NW 42<sup>nd</sup> and Western Avenue

existing



proposed



remove or relocate existing trees

outdoor cafe seating

widened sidewalk

tree planter

Spiral Beadery  
NW 43<sup>rd</sup> and Western Avenue

existing



proposed



wheelchair accessible ramp

stairs

additional sidewalk at street level

flower bed

# PLACEMAKING PRIORITY

Placemaking Priority for the district can be assigned based on how well the existing buildings in the private realm will support an improved public streetscape.

The study identifies several levels of priority for sub-areas within the Western Avenue urban commercial district. The entire district is in need of consistent, walkable streetscape. However, if the complete project is not feasible right away due to funding constraints it could be broken down into smaller parts.

Priority is assigned based on economic potential and the presence of an urban fabric that would already support the placemaking blueprint's streetscape recommendations.

**Area A** consists of the blocks that have a strong urban fabric which are in need of an equally strong streetscape. These blocks are the heart of the district and the greatest concentration of all-day activity. Area A also includes the strong gateway markers that would define the district.

**Area B** also has strong urban fabric, but experiences less all-day activity. Streetscape improvements to this area could be prioritized after Area A.

**Area C** has a weaker urban fabric that would not be immediately supportive to the streetscape. However, introducing the quality urban streetscape to the area could provide incentive for infill redevelopment.

# NEXT STEPS

The streetscape concept presented in this plan is consistent with the best survey data available that was also used by the contracted engineer. Approximately four to eight weeks of additional study will be necessary for the contracted engineer to consider how the proposed streetscape will interact with existing utilities and drainage systems. The selected streetscape priority area recommendations can be bid as an alternative within the existing bond project.

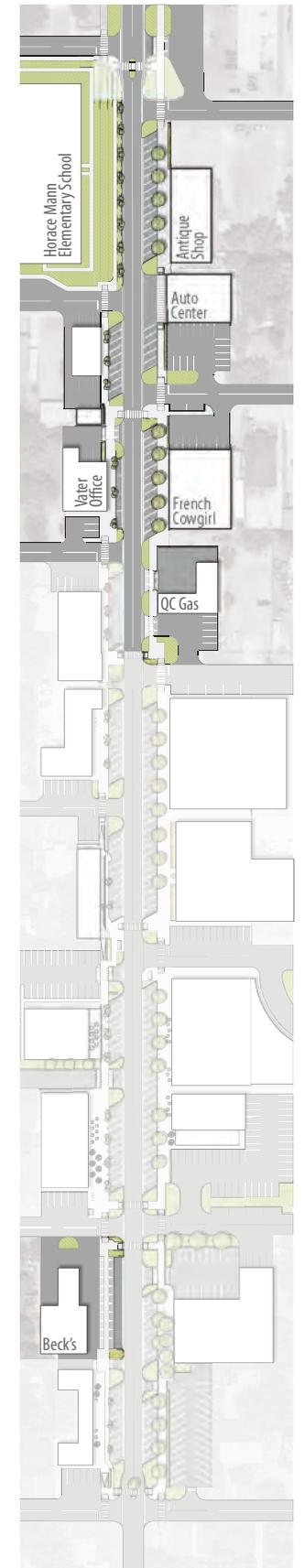
The proposed streetscape includes changes that will take place beyond the right-of-way line on private property. The city must ask private property owners in the corridor to donate easements where improvements will be constructed. Property owners should be willing to donate easements in exchange for public improvements that will increase property values and bring their structures into ADA compliance.



Area A



Area B



Area C

# URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

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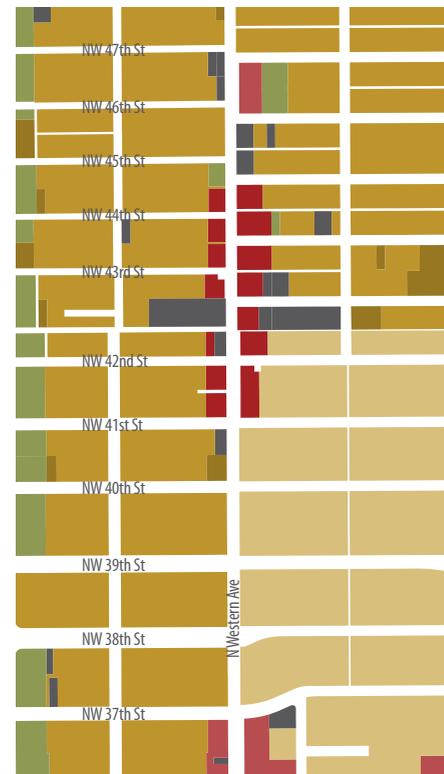
# EXISTING ZONING CODE

Development controls should provide predictability for neighborhood residents while also providing opportunity for development. Currently, straight zoning with no design or form overlay is not serving these purposes for Western Avenue. The existing zoning throughout the corridor bears little relationship to the actual conditions on Western Avenue and does not provide adequate support to promote the local vision for a walkable retail street.

For example, most of the core commercial district is zoned C-4 General Commercial District. Despite the corridor's position as a commercial node within an established residential neighborhood, the purpose statement for the C-4 zone states that its regulations are "very much incompatible with residential development." Some parcels are zoned C-3 Community Commercial District, which states that C-3 parcels should be separated "as much as possible, both visually and physically, from any nearby residential areas." Appropriate development controls could create commercial and mixed-use development that would be sensitive and beneficial to the residential areas.

The table on the following page shows the specific commercial zoning policies currently in place in the district and regulations that cause concern. Concerns include:

- Allowing inappropriate land uses by right
- Limiting development opportunity
- Discouraging the urban character of neighborhood
- Exerting minimal control over the commercial-residential edge



**Current Zoning**

- HP (Historic Preservation)
- R-1 (Single-Family Residential)
- R-2 / R-4 (Medium-Low Density/General Residential)
- O-2 (General Office)
- C-3 (Community Commercial)
- C-4 (General Commercial)
- PUD / SPUD (Planned Unit Development)

## Existing Zoning Code Evaluation

Zoning	Purpose Statement	Regulation	Concerns	Resolution
<b>C-3 (\$ 59-6200) Community Commercial District</b>	The C-3 District is intended for business activity that is located at the edge of residential areas but serves a larger trade area than the immediately surrounding residential neighborhoods. Business uses will most often be found in a wide variety of commercial structures, normally on individual sites with separate ingress, egress and parking. Because of the varied uses permitted, it is important to separate them as much as possible, both visually and physically, from any nearby residential areas and to limit the harmful effects of increased traffic, noise and general non-residential activity generated.	§ 59-6200.2 Uses Permitted by Right 8300.12 Automotive: Parking Lots, as a Principal Use	Allows uses by right that may disrupt the consistent walkability of the district, with no additional design requirements.	Adopt additional design requirements for parking lots that screen them from the sidewalk and hold an urban edge.
		Maximum Height: Where abutting or within 75 feet of R-1 or HP: 20 ft and 1 story; Between 35 ft and 150 ft of said district: 35 ft and 2 stories; More than 150 ft from said district: 6 stories	Limits development opportunity on the corridor.	Allow opportunities to build taller, subject to appropriate transition requirements adjacent to single-family residences.
		§ 59-6200.3 District Bulk Standards Front Yard: 25 ft	Required setback prevents buildings with an urban character matching the district.	Adopt urban build-to lines that are consistent with the existing buildings.
		Rear Yard: Where abutting R-1: landscaped buffer of 5 ft and building line setback of 15 ft	Minimal control of the commercial-residential edge.	Adopt more specific design requirements for transitional lots.
<b>C-4 (\$ 59-6200) General Commercial District</b>	The C-4 District is intended for the conduct of wholesale, retail and office business activities that serve the needs of citizens from anywhere in the metropolitan area, rather than being oriented only to surrounding residential areas. Because the permitted uses may serve and employ a large number of people from a large part of the metropolitan area, the activities conducted, and the traffic generated, make this district very much incompatible with residential development. The Comprehensive Plan policy does not support further expansion of the C-4 District.	§ 59-6200.2 Uses Permitted by Right 8300.12 Automotive: Parking Lots, as a Principal Use	Allows uses by right that may disrupt the consistent walkability of the district, with no additional design requirements.	Limit auto-oriented uses and adopt additional design requirements for allowable auto-oriented uses.
		8300.15 Automotive and Equipment: Heavy Repairs, Heavy Equipment		
		8300.45 Gasoline Sales, Large		
		8300.47 Gasoline Sales: Truck Stop		
		§ 59-6200.3 District Bulk Standards Maximum Height: 35 ft and 2 stories within 75 feet of R-1, Otherwise 6 Stories	Limits development opportunity on the corridor.	Allow opportunities to build taller, subject to appropriate transition requirements adjacent to single-family residences.
		Front Yard: 25 ft	Required setback prevents buildings with an urban character matching the district.	Adopt urban build-to lines that are consistent with the existing buildings.
		Rear Yard: None, Except where rear lot line abuts a residential district: 15 ft	Minimal control of the commercial-residential edge.	Adopt more specific design requirements for transitional lots.
<b>O-2 (\$ 59-6200) General Office District</b>	The O-2 District is intended to provide a place for those office and institutional activities that require separate buildings, or building groups, and whose employees and clientele may come from a wide geographic area. Land, space and aesthetic requirements of these uses make either a central location or a location on large sites between more intense retail commercial areas and established residential neighborhoods desirable, so as to act as a buffer.	§ 59-6200.2 Uses Permitted by Right 8300.12 Automotive: Parking Lots, as a Principal Use	Allows uses by right that may disrupt the consistent walkability of the district, with no additional design requirements.	Adopt additional design requirements for parking lots that screen them from the sidewalk and hold an urban edge.
		§ 59-6200.3 District Bulk Standards Maximum Height: Where abutting or within 75 feet of R-1 or HP: 20 ft and 1 story; Between 35 ft and 150 ft of said district: 35 ft and 2 stories; More than 150 ft from said district: 6 stories. For the remainder of the parcel height may be increased from 6 stories within a diagonal line representing 1 ft of additional building setback for every 2 ft of additional height.	Limits development opportunity on the corridor.	Allow opportunities to build taller, subject to appropriate transition requirements adjacent to single-family residences.
		Front Yard: 25 ft	Required setback prevents buildings with an urban character matching the district.	Adopt urban build-to lines that are consistent with the existing buildings.
		Side Yard: Where abutting R-1 or HP: landscaped buffer strip of 5 ft and building setback of 15 ft	Minimal control of the commercial-residential edge.	Adopt more specific design requirements for transitional lots.
Rear Yard: 15 ft; Where abutting R-1 or HP landscaped buffer strip of 5 ft and building line setback of 15 ft				

# COMMERCIAL-RESIDENTIAL EDGE

A significant source of land development tension in this neighborhood is the edge between the commercial district and the residential neighborhoods located behind commercial properties.

Parking is one source of tension. Businesses have expanded surface parking lots into single-family neighborhoods. Surface parking lots can be an eyesore and create noise and light pollution in the neighborhood. Additionally, neighborhood residents near nightlife businesses have complained about customers parking in residential on-street parking. As a result, most side streets have now banned on-street parking.

The R-1 zoning only allows single-family residential buildings to be built in the neighborhoods behind the commercial zones. Therefore, residential typologies that might provide a gradual density transition and buffer between commercial and single-family neighborhoods are not allowed.

Another tension is the appearance of the back of a commercial property, which is often the location of loading or service functions that can be undesirable for adjacent residences in the absence of design or form requirements.

Building height in the commercial zone is currently limited without exception based on the adjacent R-1 and HP zoning. The addition of form requirements could give developers the opportunity for slight height increases in exchange for enhanced sensitivity to the neighborhoods.

The commercial-residential edge could be regulated differently to provide additional protection to the neighborhood as well as additional development opportunity in the commercial corridor.

## Neighborhood Transition Building Types



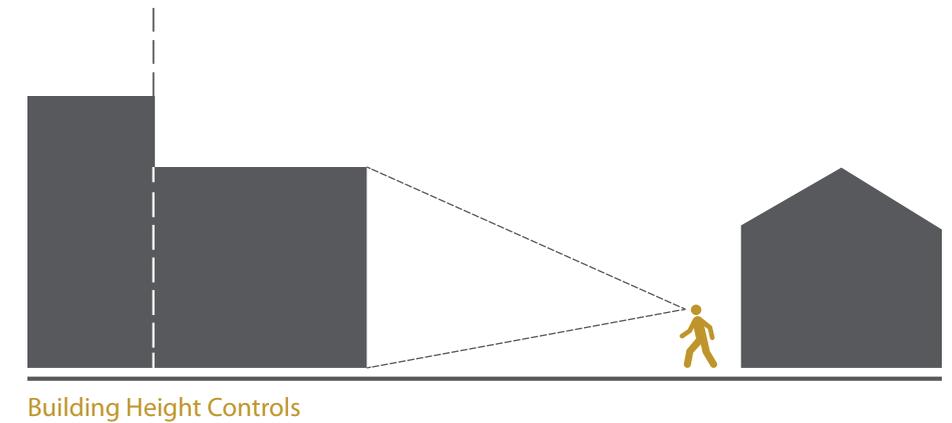
# RECOMMENDATIONS

The neighborhood and city should pursue development regulations that offer greater predictability and opportunity for residential and commercial property owners. One option to achieve this goal is through a code or overlay that includes form-based elements.

Recommendations for form-based elements to consider are shown in the urban design framework matrix. The matrix includes general suggestions that are based on survey results and interactions with stakeholders. A more intensive process than this study will be necessary to explore the willingness of the community to participate in a form-based code option.

A code for the Western Avenue neighborhood would likely include two character zones: Neighborhood Center and Neighborhood Transition. The Neighborhood Center character zone would shape the form of commercial and mixed-use development directly on Western Avenue, while the Neighborhood Transition zone would define the shape of developments that could occur on infill lots located directly behind the commercial development area.

A form-based code would create a policy environment to allow the commercial and residential districts to grow together in a mutually respectful and beneficial way.



# URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Element Regulated	Character Zone	
	Western Avenue Neighborhood Center	Neighborhood Transition
Intent	Maintain the character of Western Avenue while strengthening development opportunity for restaurants, shops, offices, and multifamily residential.	Create an appropriate transition between the higher-intensity Western corridor and adjacent single-family neighborhoods.
	Ensure that future development contributes to the district's identity as a local commercial center that respects and contributes to the adjacent neighborhoods.	Provide opportunities for office or small scale residential development that bridge the commercial edge to the neighborhood.
<b>Use Mix</b>		
Permitted Uses	Mix of commercial (retail, entertainment, office) and urban residential (apartments, condos, live-work).	Mainly small scale residential (duplex, bungalow court, small apartments, townhomes) with some office and service uses.
Interim or Phased Uses	Allow existing buildings and uses to remain with triggers for phasing them out based on investment level and market conditions	Allow existing buildings and uses to remain.
Special Standards for Auto-Oriented Elements	Design standards mitigate auto-oriented elements.	NA
<b>Building Form and Development Standards</b>		
Setbacks and Build-to Zones	45'-50' from the centerline of Western Avenue	Exceptions are allowed to align with a neighboring existing building.
	Exceptions are allowed to align with an adjacent building that falls within 40'-50' of the centerline of Western Avenue	
Building Heights	Generally 2-3 stories	2 ½ stories (35 ft.)
	The Regulating Plan will establish areas of the site where an additional floor could be allowed subject to specific form standards and with appropriate transitions from adjoining uses and consideration of residential neighborhoods.	
Impervious Cover Requirements	70% maximum; area of building footprint is exempt from calculations	
Residential Density (max/min)	De facto density maximum provided by form standards	Building type standards will establish the density standards.
Parking Strategy (on and off-street)	Allow on-street parallel or angled parking	
	Allow off-street parking in parking structures or surface parking with design standards that include screening elements such as a fence, wall, or hedge.	Allow off-street parking in locations determined by the building type standards.
	Establish a single parking ratio for all non-residential uses.	
	Establish a single parking ratio for all residential uses.	
Block Standards	Keep existing block structure.	
Transition Requirements (if any)	Appropriate transition provided by the transition character area.	Building type standards determine transition standards.
	Screening and buffering for any parking, service, loading, unloading areas if they front along any Transition area	

Frontage and Street Design Standards	Character Zone	
	Western Avenue Neighborhood Center	Neighborhood Transition
Relationship to the Regulating Plan	The Regulating Plan will establish street types and ideal cross sections for Western Avenue and side streets.	
Frontage Standards	Building frontage standards are based on the street type designation, with buildings on Western Avenue being held to higher standards of pedestrian-oriented design.	
Streetscape Standards	Western Avenue has pedestrian-oriented streetscape standards for street trees, sidewalk width, etc.	Side Streets have standards for where on-street parking is allowed and sidewalk provision.
Landscape Standards	Focuses on street trees, parking lot screening, and buffering at the commercial-residential edge.	
Street Cross Sections	Cross sections specify number of travel lanes, on-street parking accommodation, and pedestrian accommodation.	
Driveway Standards	Provides standards for driveways and limits driveways on Western Avenue.	
<b>Functional Urban Design Standards</b>		
Building Scale and Massing	Building massing that clearly distinguishes a base.	Building type standards will establish the building scale and massing.
Design of Auto-Related Elements and Service Areas	Establish street screen requirements for service, loading, and parking areas	
Building orientation and articulation	Primary entrances must be from the sidewalk; secondary entrances may be used to access parking areas	
	Ground floor treatments (doors, windows, building rhythm, etc.) based on street types and building types.	
Materials	Allow long-lasting materials that project a sense of permanence.	
	A range of building materials should be allowed to reflect the varied style found in the Western Avenue corridor and adjacent neighborhoods.	
Other	Provisions for rehab/maintenance of existing buildings	
Building Types	NA	Identify appropriate building types (duplex, small apartment, bungalow court, etc.).
<b>Signage Standards</b>		
Monument Signs	Establish standards for appropriately scaled monument signs.	NA
Building or attached signs	Establish standards to allow building or attached signs for facades.	
Pedestrian oriented signs	Allow pedestrian-oriented signs (such as blade signs and sandwich boards).	
Temporary signs	Establish standards for temporary signs.	
Master Sign Plans	Allow flexibility for developers/applicants to create unique sign plans for specific projects or locations	
<b>Administration and Development Phasing</b>		
Approval authority	Administrative approval for development that meets the standards established in the code.	
Minor modifications	Establish a matrix for minor modifications of certain standards in the code based on specific criteria to provide for some flexibility within the parameters of the code under certain conditions.	
	Minor modifications to be approved by the Planning Director or his/her designee.	
Non-conforming uses and buildings	May establish appropriate standards for non-conforming building triggers that are based on level of investment proposed and market conditions.	
<b>Relationship to Existing Ordinances</b>		
Site Development Standards (Chapter 59 Article 12)	The code's alternative design standards are established in lieu of site development standards.	

## CONCLUSION

The City of Oklahoma City has the opportunity to expand the economic potential of Western Avenue by bringing together high quality public space and specific development regulations.

Western Avenue has been one of Oklahoma City's favorite local urban retail and dining districts for decades. Business owners, residents, and visitors to the area are united in a vision of the neighborhood as an attractive, walkable district with a unique local character.

The corridor is set to receive improvements from the 2007 General Obligation Bond, but the proposed improvements are not fully realizing the opportunity to increase economic vitality and a sense of place for the center of the commercial district. Refining the streetscape proposal according to the recommendations in this plan will ensure that Western Avenue continues to be a favorite destination in the Oklahoma City area.

Like many neighborhoods in Oklahoma City, the area along Western Avenue is impacted by a zoning code that is not relevant to established urban neighborhoods. To allow the area to grow and prosper without negative impacts to the residential neighborhoods, new development regulations will be needed.

A form-based code approach to land development regulations could be the appropriate solution for the Western Avenue neighborhoods. Form-based regulations would help by providing additional design guidance, development opportunity, and predictability. This approach will require a separate study by a form-based code consultant with extensive communication with individual property owners.

The City of Oklahoma City has the opportunity to expand the economic potential of Western Avenue by bringing together high quality public space and specific development regulations.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Western Avenue Community Members

42<sup>nd</sup> Street Candy Company, Chase Kerby  
 A Date With Iris, Kris Balaban  
 Brookhaven Neighborhood  
 Café Nova, Shannon Self  
 Crown Heights-Edgemere Heights Neighborhood  
 Douglas Heights Neighborhood  
 First National Bank of Oklahoma, Mel Martin  
 Freeman's Liquor, Chris Hancock  
 Helm Farm Neighborhood  
 Ketch Design Center, Ronnie Ketch  
 Meadowbrook Acres Neighborhood  
 Rug & Carpet of Oklahoma, Steve Street  
 Savory Spice Shop, Able Blakely  
 Western Avenue Association, Heather Griswold  
 Westminster Presbyterian Church  
 Will Rogers Theater, Sushi Neko, Musashi's, Carl Milam  
 Zachary Taylor Neighborhood

### Public Officials

Dr. Ed Shadid, Ward 2 Councilman  
 Janis Powers, Ward 2 Planning Commissioner  
 Rob Littlefield, Ward 2 Traffic Commissioner

### City of Oklahoma City Planning Department

Russell Claus, Director of Planning  
 Kim Cooper-Hart  
 Jennifer Gates  
 Chris Varga

### City of Oklahoma City Public Works

Eric Wenger, Director of Public Works  
 Patty Butenhoff  
 Ed Degraffenried

### City of Oklahoma City Office of Sustainability

Jennifer Gooden  
 T.O. Bowman  
 Madeleine Wiens

### Huitt-Zollars, Inc.

Bryan Coon  
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