

**SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY
INTEGRATING BIG-BOX RETAIL WITH EXISTING COMMUNITIES**

**by
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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of**

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**Ron Nash
April 2007**

DEDICATION

**This is dedicated to
my loving wife, Holly
and to my amazing son,
Kai ...
you are the reasons I made it ...
Thanks for your love and patience.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1	Chapter 11
Introduction8	Safety and Security.....66
Chapter 2	Chapter 12
The History of Sprawl in America12	Sharing the Streets.....70
Chapter 3	Chapter 13
The Suburban Retail Explosion.....20	A Road to Nowhere74
Chapter 4	Chapter 14
The Philosophy of a Big Box26	Build it (Well) and They Will Come78
Chapter 5	Chapter 15
The Effects of ‘Typical’	Balancing Supply With Demand82
Big Box Retail on a Community38	Chapter 16
Chapter 6	A Quick Look at Aesthetics.....86
What About Tommorrow?.....42	Chapter 17
Chapter 7	Conclusion.....90
...and the Saints Come Marching In44	Chapter 18
Chapter 8	Site Analysis92
But What Makes a Community Great?48	Program.....103
Precedent Study 1 - Squares of Savannah50	Cody Study.....105
Precedent Study 2 - Hastings Park52	Chapter 19
Precedent Study 3 - Pioneer Square54	Practical.....106
Precedent Study 4 - Northampton, Mass55	Appendix A
Chapter 9	Bibliography.....
But Haven’t I Read This All Before?56	Appendix B
Chapter 10	Livingston Vision Statement
This Ain’t No Country Club.....60	

Abstract

The intent of my thesis is to find a way to integrate a large big-box retailer into a community in such a way that it benefits the community as a whole. This must be accomplished within the parameters that mark the store as a viable option for the parent company as well.

This ideal must be approached from the philosophy that box stores are a large part of the current American way of life and to let them grow unchecked will signal the inevitable death of downtown retail districts as more and more business gets sucked to the super-stores and the areas immediately surrounding them.

To do this we will need to find what benefits a box-store can add to a community and further research and rethink the typically negative aspects of these retail giants to find a way to incorporate them into our downtown shopping districts, without destroying their original feel.

With this thesis, it is my intent to create a viable model that allows box stores to act as anchors and catalysts for a downtown area (either existing or built) rather than its death knell. To do this I will be rethinking a number of design strategies with the seamless integration of community and big-box retail in mind.

To this end, I will not be acting to simply find a

way to add a box-store and its typical trappings to the end of historic downtown street, but rather to find away to integrate a set of large box stores into a downtown community in such a way that benefits the citizens of that community on every designable level. I will be challenging not only the typical design strategies of a box store, but those of a typical downtown community as well.

Seven major design strategies will be looked at during this project, they are:

1. Design for a diversity of use and users
2. Design a safe and secure streetscape that will encourage use.
3. Design a streetscape that accommodates pedestrians as equals with vehicle traffic.
4. Design a destination, not just a path.
5. Design it well.
6. Balance supply with demand.
7. Use aesthetics as an integration tool.

With these design strategies, a box store can become an integral part of a downtown community ... or at least a much better alternative to the rampant sprawl that occurs with their current implementation strategy.

“Discontent is the first step in the progress of man or nation.”

- Oscar Wilde



Figure 1-1
The distinctly American idiom of 'Shop 'til you drop' has never been easier to accomplish since the arrival of the box store and its wholesale philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

It is obvious that the allure of the box store and its one-stop convenience and low prices will not be going away anytime soon ... so as architects, it is our responsibility to help shape the new American landscape with these buildings in mind. Since their start in the late 80s and early 90s, American designers have attempted to minimize their impact on local communities by pushing them as far away as possible from our historic urban cores. History has proven this was done to our own peril, or at least to that of the historic districts that were attempting to be saved.

If we are going to save the community-based way of life, we need to find a way to allow these types of structures to coexist with smaller community-based retailers and with high, medium and low density housing to create an environment that promotes interaction and community instead of seclusion and sprawl.

To do this we will need to find what benefits a box-store can add to a community and further research and rethink the typically negative aspects of these retail giants to find a way to incorporate them into our downtown shopping districts, without destroying their original feel.

With this thesis, it is my intent to create a viable model that allows box stores to act as anchors and catalysts for a downtown area (either existing or built) rather than its death knell. To do this I will be rethinking a number of design strategies with the seamless integration of community and big-box retail in mind.

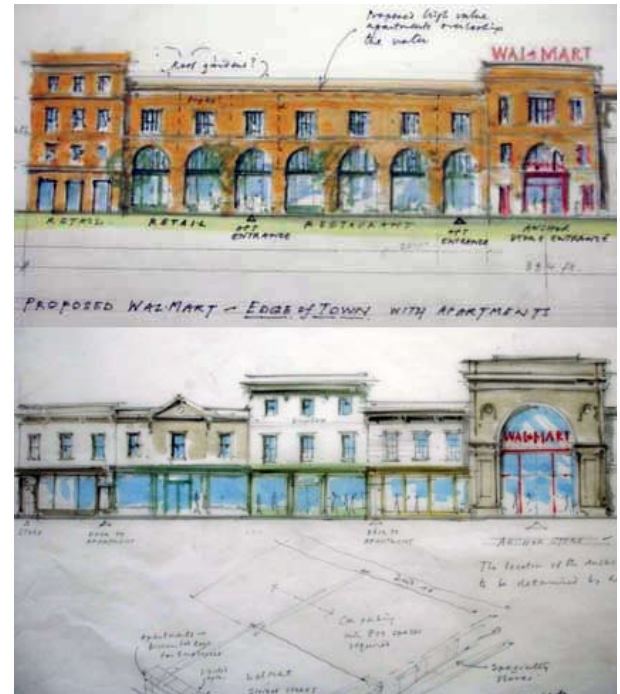


Figure 1-2: During the rebuilding of Louisiana, after the massive 2005 hurricane and resulting flooding, this design was offered as a redesign for the Pass Christian Wal-Mart. The designs looked at a possible downtown integration with second-story housing and a facade that mimics that of the surrounding area. The elevations also show large ground-level windows, but made no mention of whether these would be for additional shops or a new philosophy for the retailer where views into the store would be more prevalent, either way the options were not accepted.



Figure 1-3: The Avon Colorado Wal-Mart and Home Depot are some of the most well integrated stores into a small downtown community ... at least from an aesthetic standpoint. The development, which was designed by Nick Milkovich architects out of Vancouver, B.C., uses large screening devices to minimize the visual problems typically associated with these types of stores. This was only an aesthetic solution, however.

Figure 1-4 (facing page): A closer look at the Avon Co. box stores and their screening device.

To this end, I will not be acting to simply find a way to add a box-store and its typical trappings to the end of historic downtown street, but rather to find away to integrate a set of large box stores into a downtown community in such a way that benefits the citizens of that community on every designable level. I will be challenging not only the typical design strategies of a box store, but those of a typical downtown community as well.



“Many employees find the office more pleasant than home – there are more opportunities for conversation and interaction – the workplace offers a substitute for community.”

– Peter Calthorpe

“The United State’s low density building philosophy is fueled by the idea of a country of endless horizons with landscape to spare, a belief in technology, mass production, the abundance of natural resources and the right of home ownership.”

-Renee Chow – Suburban Space, The Fabric of Dwelling

Figure 2-1
This 1950s piece of Americana shows an advertisement for one of the many suburban villages which were sprouting up at the time.



THE HISTORY OF SPRAWL IN AMERICA

Before we can look at the current situation of sprawl and with it the rise of retail box store design (or lack thereof) in the United States, we must first understand the distinctly American philosophies that allowed it gain a foothold in our lives. No one ever woke up one day and decided that endless congested vehicular arteries and faceless seas of non-descript housing tracts was the direction in which we should shape our urban landscape, but shape it – it has, and now, as the first American Age of Sprawl reaches its crescendo, American architects are left with the aftermath of a good architectural idea gone horribly wrong and the two lingering questions of how do we fix what is currently broken and how do we keep it from happening again?

Ever since the dawn of recorded history, a centralized area for trading goods and services has been the cornerstone for civilized societies; the Egyptians and Mesopotamians, earth's earliest known civilizations, both had thriving public markets that acted as cultural hubs. As civilizations throughout history rose and fell, each developed and furthered the idea of a civic and retail oriented public space to allow for its citizens to come together in a centralized arena to embark in a multitude of tasks for business and socially related.

Until the dawn of the industrial revolution, only 10 percent of the world's population lived in its urban centers, so these public spaces acted as focal points for all outlying areas. With the invention of the steam engine, the automated factory and other 19th century



Figure 2-2: This copy of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics show an ancient marketplace from the beginning of recorded history.



Figure 2-3: This rendering shows what an ancient Greek market place might have been like.



Figure 2-4: A newspaper advertisement for homes in the Levittown suburban model, which gives four home types to choose from.

technological marvels; jobs became much more prevalent in the city cores and people began to move into metropolitan areas in droves. But with the new industry came inevitable growing pains, and by the turn of the century, the city centers had become dirty, unhealthy pits from which everyone strove to escape.

The early 20th century saw the emergence of the City Beautiful movement, which strove to beautify the deteriorated city cores as well as move the under-classed and middle-classed into 'ruralized' housing districts (the first suburbs).

As the City Beautiful movement prepped the eastern seaboard for what would eventually develop into the modernist rural design that we see running rampant throughout America, another major piece of the puzzle would be added in America's move west: the Great American Land Grab, which promised anyone his or her own piece of land if they homesteaded on it and improved it, instilled in every American since, the idea that the American Dream centers around the idea of owning land.

This philosophy gained steam at the close of World War II, when the Veteran's Housing Act was penned, guaranteeing assistance to returning vets and their families which made housing loan payments more affordable than rent. This housing boon required a housing increase of previously unheard-of proportions.

It goes without saying that the current urban centers which the bevy of America's population nucleated around could not cope with the exponential growth curve that was being required with this influx of new housing. But never fear, another government program was coming



Figure 2-5: An aerial view of the Levittown area.



Figure 2-6: A typical 1950s family in front of their new Levittown breadbox.



Figure 2-7: A tongue-in-cheek artist's rendition of the issue of sprawl in America.

up along side the VHA – Federal roads were also being built at a record pace. The roads program allowed for easier access to outlying areas as well as excellent land prices for the areas near the major road arteries. Finally, it allowed for the realization of the modernist dream of clean country living outside the urban core.

This brings us to another American technology that allowed for our unprecedented expansion into the outburbs – the automobile – and while I am choosing not to go into a lot of history of exactly how the automobile came to be a central aspect of American culture. It is an absolute fact that it is the prime facilitator of the “sprawling” of America.

Another interesting by-product of this new expansion was the cookie-nature of the homes in each housing development. With the Veteran’s Housing Act, buildings had to qualify by conforming to FHA standards – this favored new construction over renovation and further favored model-home construction since once the approval went through for one, it counted for all the carbon copies. This ideal really speaks more to problems in the residential portion of the sprawl mentality than in the retail districts that I am focusing on, but I felt it was worth mentioning to allow a better picture of the efficient nature of planning that was adopted after World War II. This philosophy of gridding off and occupying territory gets its start from the manner in which American forced deployed themselves across Europe during the war effort.¹

For a time, “the suburbs” remained a housing-only philosophy. People would commute from their tract homes to their jobs, schools or shopping district



Figure 2-8: Large arterial roadways which are depended upon for all vehicular transportation in suburban areas can easily become grid locked with no alternatives for commuters.



Figure 2-9: Another look at a typical suburban explosion from anywhere in America.



Figure 2-10: The suburbs have become an object of ridicule in cinema as of late, above is a scene from Edward Scissorhands, where all the houses are the same shape with only varying technicolor paint jobs to discern them... soon after this frame all the garage doors open at once and color-matched cars concurrently depart for their jobs in the business centers of this town.

-
- * **The mass production of the automobile and its broad appeal and availability allowed for the mass exodus of people out of the cities and into the outlying areas previously used for farming.**
 - * **City planners and developers adopted the American army's philosophy for efficiently gridding off and deploying into an area.**
 - * **Retail and Business interests soon followed the residential exodus to the out edge of the city to be closer to its clientele and work base, causing a drastic decline in the viability of downtown business communities.**

in the city or town center. This, of course, was short lived, as retailers realized that the same land residential developers coveted would work just as well for them. If shops were willing to move out to the urban “edge,” not only would the land they were building on be much cheaper than a comparable plot in town, but they would be in much closer proximity to the exponentially expanding suburban client base.



Figure 2-11: The large network of major arterial roads form a wall against pedestrian traffic, even though the retail and residential districts are within walking distance there is no way anyone would brave the jaunt.

“The majority of the sprawl in this country is produced by those who are fleeing from sprawl.”

-Alex Krieger

“For the current American way of life is founded not just on motor transportation, but on the religion of the motorcar, and the sacrifices that people are prepared to make for this religion stand outside the realm of rational criticism.”

- Lewis Mumford



Figure 3-1: A dustbowl era five-and-dime general store was the precursor to F.W. Woolworths (Figure 3-2, facing page) and the beginning of the chain store mentality in America.

THE SUBURBAN RETAIL EXPLOSION

The paradigm shift of retail moving out of the town center started in earnest just as the last chapter left off ... with retailers chasing their clientele into the suburban fringe surrounding urban centers. But the seeds of dissension between 19th century “mom and pop” shops and their patrons began in the dustbowl era with the growth to prominence of chain stores such as Woolworths, which offered its shoppers a one-stop shopping experience for sundry items and complimented that with a clone-stamp mentality toward the items each store carried, so consumers could have the added comfort of knowing that no matter which store they went into they could find their favorite toothpaste or hair treatment.

Flash forward again to the time just after World War II ... Suburban housing developments now dot the urban edge of our urban cores and new retail development is making way for a new archetype called the strip mall. This new building style positions itself along busy commuter arteries allowing for shoppers to pop off the road and into their parking lots, grabbing needed items and then quickly get back to their commute. It is during this time that America develops a lasting love affair with the automobile. Print and television commercials herald the freedom and bravado that supposedly comes with owning a vehicle and Hollywood uses the automobile as an instrument to attribute power and freedom to the old and rebellion and sex appeal to the young. Everyone is driving and retailers are ensuring that the American



Figure 3-3
Victor Gruen's
Northland Mall in
the early 1960s.



Figure 3-4
Another view of
Gruen's mall, this
time from the
70s and includ-
ing a new design
requirement... the
sea of parking.



consumer will have a destination to drive their shiny new cars.

The next evolutionary step of the suburban retail jungle is the indoor shopping mall, which is a consumer zoo of sorts, it is an engineered environment that people travel too that mimics their natural ecosystem, but on a smaller scale and with filtered fresh air. Victor Gruen, who is credited with being the father of shopping malls, designed his first cathedral to consumerism to be an indoor version of the downtown shopping experience. The Northland Mall opened in 1954, just outside Grosse Pointe, the city of Detroit's wealthiest suburb.

Gruen's cathedrals to consumerism were not the first malls ever created, but his model is the one which spread like wildfire across America.

With the affluence of America over the next 30+ years, building a mall was, for all intents and purposes, planting a money tree. They were virtually guaranteed to be successful both as an economic boon for its owner as well as an attractor for area residents as a place to come and spend their free time. Of course, in a real community environment, much more goes on that just shopping and that is where malls really began to fall down as a replacement for the neighborhood communities they looked to replace. It is put best by a quote from Richard Ingersoll in his book, *Sprawltown*, where he stated, "Those who go to shopping centers become as passive as tourists; they yield their rights of self determination to a single objective – shopping."²

The end of the 80s brought with it the end of our country's opulence. Overspending was catching up with the American capitalist machine and with a skyrocketing



Figure 3-5: This aerial shows the huge footprint required for a suburban shopping mall.



Figure 3-6: You can almost smell the filter-fresh air in this cathedral to consumerism.



Figure 3-7: The next iteration of the suburban retail experience ... the mega box store. This entity gives patrons the same one-stop shopping convenience of the shopping mall with a lower pricepoint. Note the same monstrous footprint and the same sea of parking.

-
- * The evolution of the American retail phenomena started in the historic downtowns, moved to the suburbs with roadside strip malls, then to giant shopping malls and finally to the mega-box stores of today.**
 - * America's need for consumerism couldn't be quenched when the 80's opulence ended, so rather than curbing purchasing habits, consumers simply looked for a lower price-point.**

level of unemployment and deficit spending; the broad cross-section of consumers began to trade Macy's shopping bags for those from K-Mart.

While America's recession caused consumers of the 90s was more thrifty than their 80s counterparts, it wasn't the amount of stuff that changed, but rather the price-point of the items that took the hit. Out of this need for items at a lower quality/cost came the current shopping Mecca ... the mega-store.³



Figure 3-8: Attempts have been made to tame the footprint required for big box stores ... this retail development, located just north of Seattle, Washington, stacks a number of box stores and category killer stores, significantly reducing the required square footage of ground.

“Sprawl is an artificial idealized system, penned in boardrooms and offices by engineers, architects and planners – whereas historic neighborhoods evolved organically out of need.”

- Andres Duany, Suburban Nation

“My dear brothers, never forget, when you hear the progress of enlightenment vaunted, that the devil’s best trick is to persuade you that he doesn’t exist!”

— Baudelaire

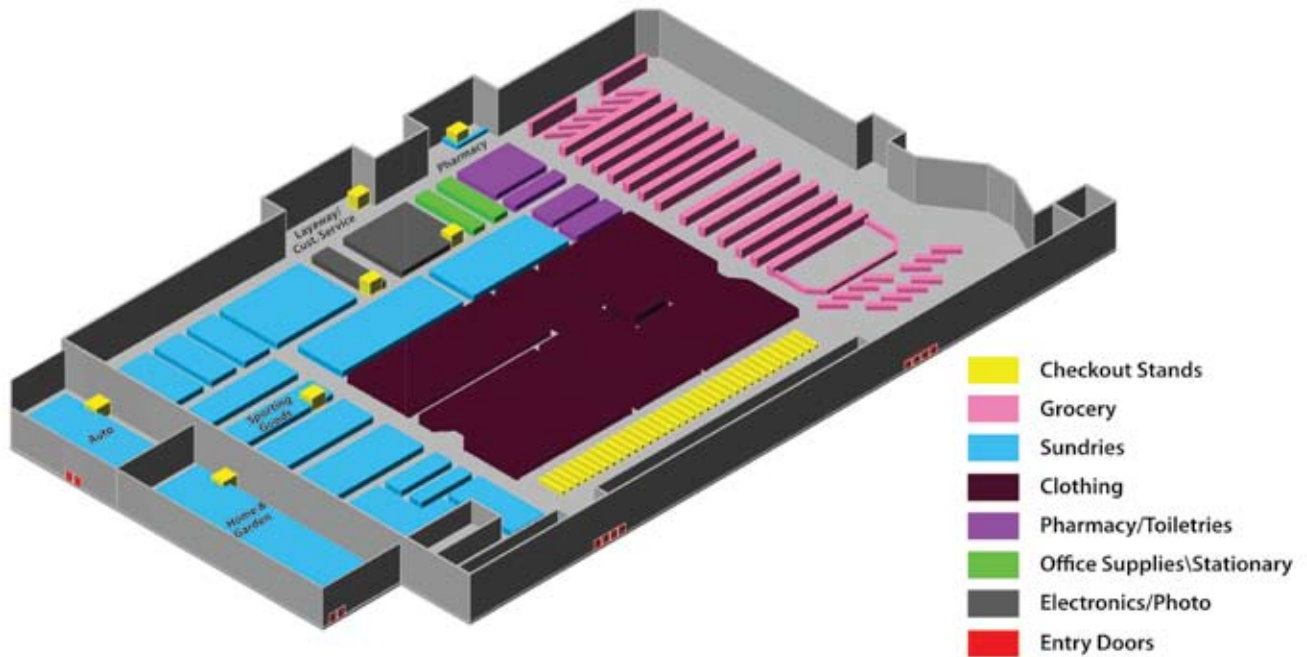


Figure 4-1: The typical layout for a Super Wal-Mart. Take special note of the location of checkout stands which shows that there is some opportunity for a splitting up of these large retailers; although a large fragmentation of the store would result in a failure to provide patrons with one of this store-type’s biggest draws -- multiple purchase opportunities with minimal trips through waiting lines.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF A BIG-BOX

Big-box retail, especially Wal-Mart has been demonized for the effect they have on the communities they enter, and maybe these allegations have merit, but we must always remember that these stores are providing a service that the general public is clamoring for, and that is convenience of shopping with low prices.

To drive this point home we only need to look at the numbers of successful box stores in America and the number of patrons that frequent their doorsteps every year. According to numbers gathered by Sam Lubell; Wal-Mart, alone, has more than 4,800 stores (mid 2005) with new stores opening with a frequency of almost one per day and an estimated 270-million patrons walking through their aisles every year. Target, the U.S.'s second largest sundries supplier has just over 1,400 stores (August, 2005), with 600 more stores opening by 2010.⁴

The experts for these retail giants have produced an effective formula for meeting their customers needs/ desires by: 1) high-volume purchasing; 2) aggressive marketing; 3) efficient building design; and 4) well-thought-out store placement/signage. For my thesis I will be focusing on the distinctly architectural aspects of this strategy namely, the efficient building design and store placement/signage.

It is no secret how big-box retail gets its name. It is also no secret that the reason for these large retailers design strategy is not an aesthetic one. The design, of course, is a model of efficiency; a large, open and flexible space that allows for a maximum amount of



Figure 4-2: Interestingly, while most of a patron's time is spent perusing the aisles of a super store, it is the time spent in the checkout lanes that consumers find most inconvenient (Figure 4-3, below).

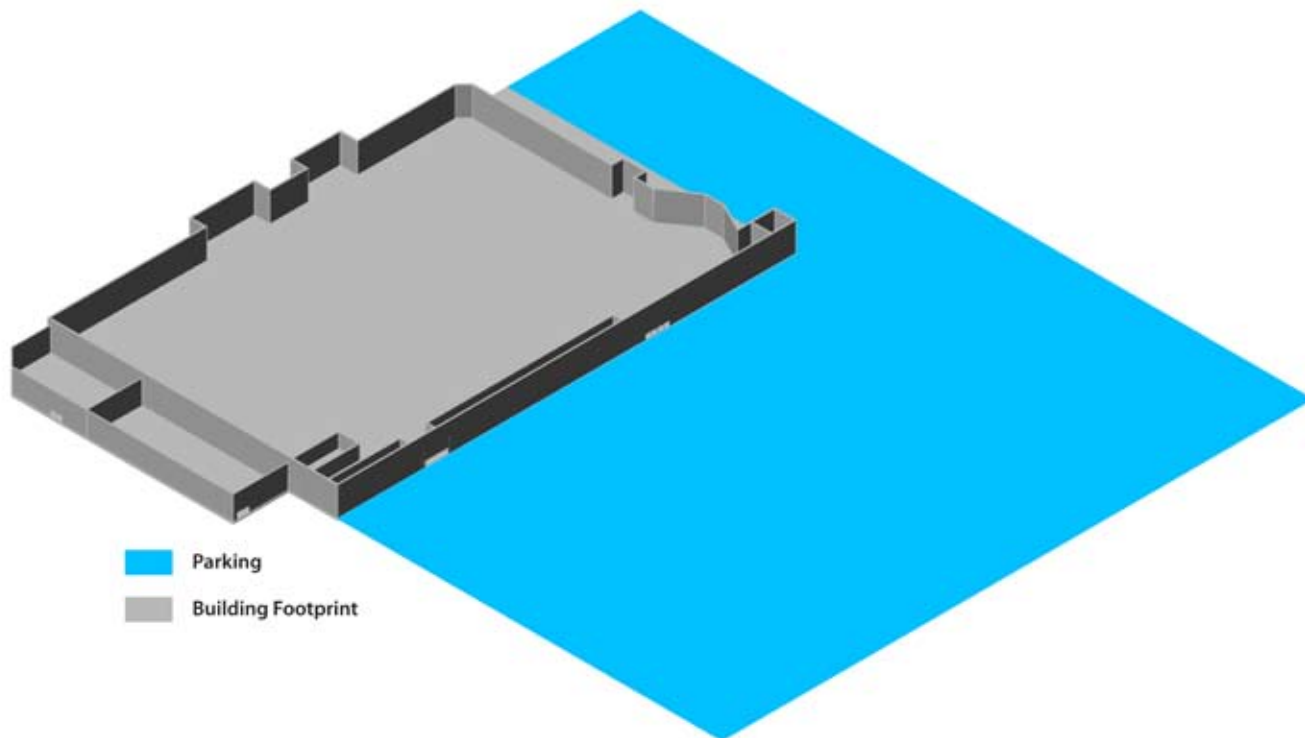


Figure 4-4: Parking for a big-box retailer often totals in at 200% of the store's footprint, that means for a Super Wal-Mart of approx. 220,000 sq. ft., the parking lot will add another 440,000 sq. ft (between 800 and 900 parking spaces) to the equation.

product to be on display and within easy reach of the consumer. These stores have extremely high ceilings which allow their back stock to be stored in the same aisle with the shelved merchandise.

The international Council of Shopping Centers' (ICSC) gives the label of 'big-box store' to any single-use store, typically between 10,000 and 100,000 sq. ft. or more. According to Dodge Analytics, box-store construction constitutes one-third of all retail structure going up in America today. Almost 100 million square feet of our total retail construction is taken up with just Wal-Mart, Target, Kohl's, Home Depot and Lowe's.⁵

The interior layout of these stores, for all intents and purposes, is a large open square, with moveable shelving systems that can be easily adjusted to fit a wide array of uses. This allows for certain spaces to be used for a larger amount of, say, toys during the Christmas shopping rush and then switched holding extra lawn mowers and barbecues in the spring.

A Box store's large area of floor space necessitates a larger influx of sellable items at any one time. This means goods no longer come in cargo vans and (small) delivery trucks – rather, they require (multiple) semi-truckloads to have access to the store on a weekly basis. This is problematic to the point that many historic downtowns will find it difficult to accommodate heavy truck traffic of this magnitude.

Another product of the box-store's philosophy towards ultra efficiency is the limited entry/exit points each store has. A typical number of access points for a Super Wal-Mart are four: one for sundries, one for food, one for automotive and one for lawn/garden; and that is



Figure 4-5: Superstores keep most of their backstock on the floor above the shopping aisles, this maximizes retail space as well as restocking efficiencies.



Figure 4-6 & 4.7 (facing page, top): Most Wal-Marts have between 30 and forty checkout stands in the front of the store, usually, with less than 30% open at any given time. The reason for the high number of stands it evidenced above with the high volume traffic of the Christmas season.

Figure 4.8 (facing page, bottom): A more typical look at the percentage of open lanes at a big-box retailer. The reason for so many lanes is that the cost of building in the lanes is minimal to the return the store sees in a year.

for a store of over 200,000 square feet.⁶ This allows for a huge area and a large number of patrons to be serviced with a small number of employees.

An average Super Wal-Mart will have between thirty-two and forty checkout lanes that service the store's main façade's entry points. Most of the service lanes are currently a standard fare with conveyor belts and cashiers, but Wal-Mart has upgraded most of its stores with between six and ten self checkout lanes and two to six express lanes. In addition to these service lanes, a typical store will have specialty cashiers placed in key locations throughout the store. For example, a typical store might have a checkout register in its pharmacy area; between two and four counters in its home and garden department; from one to four cashier stations in automotive; one or two in sporting goods; between two and four in electronics; and possible an additional one or two cashiers working its one-hour photo lab. This seeming plethora of easy access to customer service is a bit of a misnomer as, with the exception of the heaviest shopping days around Christmas, you will only find half of these open at any one time. Regardless, this allows us a little latitude when figuring out an exiting strategy for a store of this magnitude. It seems that these stores are not completely averse to having somewhat specialized shopping areas with customer service representatives and cashiers designated to that department.

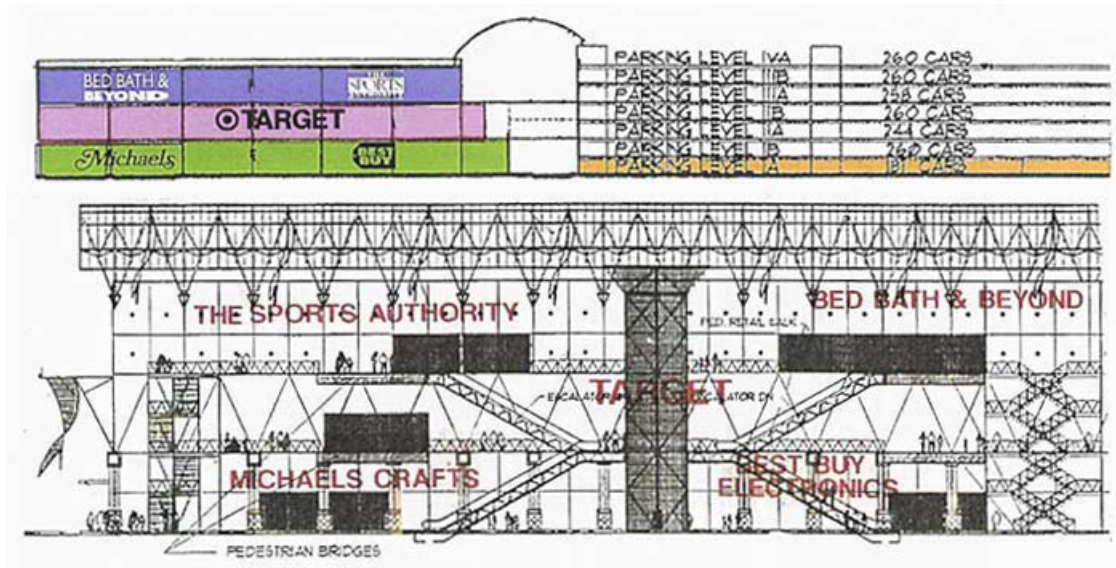
Store placement and signage are also highly thought out aspects of a box store's retail strategy. Box stores have historically located themselves next to high-traffic arterial roads, buffered from the dense traffic



Figure 4-9
The Dadeland Station Shopping complex in Miami, Florida proves that box stores do not have to be a standard box to be successful. This complex houses five major retailers with an attached seven level parking garage.



Figure 4-10 (below)
A sectional view of the Dadeland Station complex.



only by an inviting open parking lot that, even on the busiest shopping days of the year, shows open spaces which gives would-be patrons a feeling of single-stop efficiency for all their needs.

I feel strongly that a huge omniscient presence is no longer required to attract patrons to the box store. Rather, in much the same way that iconic advertising uses name recognition and a catchy jingle or mascot to increase their usage, I believe that the mega stores name and the shopping experience that said name implies is enough to bring people to that store. This will allow for the huge expanses of blank wall that usually define the exterior cladding of box stores to be used for smaller businesses or even housing that can help elevate the downtown feel.

This parking philosophy is signage for the store every bit as much as the huge banner splayed across the front of their facade. Typically, parking requirements for big-box retail measures in at 4.5 parking spaces for every 1,000 square feet of commercial (occupiable) space. This, along with beautification requirements imposed by the city, usually results in a sea of asphalt even larger than the mega-store it is enveloping.

It seems that parking will be the trickiest issue with integrating big box retail into an appropriately scaled downtown community. Curbside parking is an important piece of the puzzle as it creates a safety barrier between pedestrians and vehicle traffic. Also, urban parking principles have shown us that finding parking spaces in downtown shopping district allows for impulse shopping in the shops that are between the parking space and the shop which brought the patron downtown in the first place, thereby benefiting the downtown as a whole. This



Figure 4-11: Another Miami Mega-store complex. While it is not applicable to a small town such as Livingston, which is the site for my project, it does prove that large retail chains can be coaxed into atypical designs that could benefit the community.



Figure 4-12 (above);
4-13 (above, right)
& 4-14 (right)
One of a big-box retailers largest draws is the patron's knowledge that no matter what they are looking for, if they have found it in one Wal-Mart, they will find it in any Wal-Mart, that even goes when someone is travelling abroad, in say, Asia.



style of parking will not be enough to placate the big-box retailers on its own, so additional parking options will have to be explored, whether in a parking structure, underground or in some sort of well-designed street level lot.

Another problem with a big-box retailer's design strategy is in its philosophy to get people in and out as quickly and efficiently as possible. As a commercial entity, said philosophy is flawless, but for a space to be good from a community's point of view it needs to allow for enjoyable areas of respite -- areas to sit and people-watch or read a paper or eat lunch – and these types of things are activities that box stores would rather you do somewhere else. After all, someone else whose wallet is still full is looking for your parking space.

For all the negatives that big-box retail there are a number of positives it can bring as well, especially if instituted correctly: 1) box stores offer the convenience of knowing that one stop will yield the items you are looking for no matter where in the country you stop. Whether in Ft. Worth, Texas, or Bozeman, Montana, if you walk into a Target store, you will be able to find Crest toothpaste, Charmin toilet-paper and Bic pens – and there is a distinct possibility that you will know exactly which aisle to head toward; 2) with their amazing drawing power, box stores have the ability to pull together economically diverse groups to energize a region, if instituted correctly; 3) the stores are open late which allows for the possibility of purchasers being out later, which benefits community businesses and adds to community safety; and 4) these huge chain stores have deep pocketbooks which can be dug into for civic



Figure 4-15 & 4-16: One thing conspicuously missing from the front of most big-box retailers is a comfortable place to sit and relax either before or after your shopping experience.

- * **Big-box formula for meeting their customers needs/desires:**
 - 1) **high-volume purchasing**
 - 2) **aggressive marketing**
 - 3) **efficient building design**
 - 4) **well-thought-out store placement/signage**
- * **The typical box-store design is a large, open and flexible space that allows for a maximum amount of product to be on display and within easy reach of the consumer. These stores have extremely high ceilings which allow their back stock to be stored in the same aisle with the shelved merchandise.**
- * **Typically, box stores are between 100,000 and 225,000 sq. ft.**
- * **Parking for big-box stores (typically 4.5 spaces per 1,000 sq. ft) often exceeds the building's footprint.**
- * **Box stores desire controlled entry and exiting strategies, so that a maximum number of patrons can be serviced by a minimum number of employees.**
- * **Positives associated with the inclusion of a box store if instituted correctly:**
 - 1) **box stores offer the convenience of knowing that one stop will yield the items you are looking for no matter where in the country you stop.**
 - 2) **box stores have the ability to pull together economically diverse groups to energize a region.**
 - 3) **box stores are open late which allows for the possibility of purchasers being out later, which adds to community safety.**
 - 4) **chain stores have deep pocketbooks which can be dug into for civic projects.**

projects – especially if they are required to do so by local governments.

These philosophies are the cornerstone that big-box retail has built its success on and cannot be broken for the sake of aesthetics ... but, with some forethought, maybe we can find a way they can be bent into a new, more community-friendly shape.

“Complaining about something without taking any action to correct it is irresponsible. If a condition deserves criticism, it deserves an honest attempt to change it.”

- John Renesch

“The superior man seeks what is right; the inferior one, what is profitable.”

- Confucius

Figure 5-1

This cartoon shows a general feeling toward big-box retail's forcible entry into communities

Figures 5-2 & 5-3
(facing page)

The arrival of a big-box retailer is often followed by an increased number of these vacant storefronts in a downtown community.



THE EFFECTS OF 'TYPICAL' BIG-BOX RETAIL ON A COMMUNITY

If we have learned one thing in the years since the inception of the mall and box-store retail philosophy it is that, if left unchecked, it will cause a severe decline, if not an all out death to the historic downtown community.

In the first 25 years after their arrival, suburban malls and box stores had siphoned off more than 50% of downtown business and that number does not seem to be slowing down as quickly as it should.⁷ Sure, in vibrant downtown shopping districts, other kitsch businesses have sprung up to replace the ones that have left for greener pastures or just plain gone out of business, but more often, downtown districts have become vacant ghost towns, a monument to the sprawl machine that has sucked the community's life blood to its edge. This is where we begin to see the failing of this current iteration of the modernist philosophy. Sprawl acts like a strip mining of the urban fabric which houses it – an area is built up and thrives until a newer more vibrant area springs up and businesses and residents leave for the proverbial greener pastures leaving another dead patch.

In the Andres Duany quote which ended Chapter 3, he states that, “Sprawl is an artificial idealized system, penned in boardrooms and offices by engineers, architects and planners – whereas historic neighborhoods evolved organically out of need.” This quote lends itself extremely well to the condition which occurs when box stores open in a community.⁸ Communities have always regulated their own level of retail to meet the current demand and when a store with the magnitude of a Wal-



Figure 5-4

Adam's Morgan is considered one of the most livable neighborhoods in the Washington D.C. area, its public life, parks and retail spaces work together to make an extremely 'livable' experience for its patrons and its residents. It has been able to stay viable because of the unique experiences it offers, despite box stores that are less than ten miles away.



-
- * Box stores are not going away anytime soon, so must be designed into our communities if we want our neighborhoods to survive.**
 - * The major issue with big-box retail is that it exponentially increases the retail offerings of a community overnight; and the demand for goods cannot keep up. So, small scale downtown businesses are the inevitable losers.**

Mart or Target comes to town, the current consumer demand cannot meet the new supply and almost without exception, it is the community-based business structure that suffers.

It is not hard to ascertain the allure of big box retail, especially with a huge percentage of Americans living every facet of their lives in one region of sprawl or another. More and more of America now lives far enough from town center that a drive is required for purchase of all goods and services; Box stores provide for one-stop convenience and a greater likelihood of finding desired items and finding them at a lower price. To make this a viable option for a savior of the downtown community, we must find a way to increase the customer base along with the increase in retail offerings or soon after the box store's completion we will experience the inevitable demise of the historic business community.

The realization that must be faced by design professionals is that box stores are not going away – at least not anytime soon. Whether we like it or not we must face the truth that the box stores are coming to our town or at least to an area close enough to our town to affect it. We can either prepare a design strategy that will allow them to coexist as much as possible with our neighborhood communities or we can do nothing and watch the inevitable strangling of our historic downtown centers.

As good designers, we must embrace the tools we are given in an ever-changing society to build a better community. We cannot select which pieces we are going to keep and which we are going to discard. The last two decades have taught us the folly of doing this.



Figure 5-5: So far, Target has been the most willing to try and integrate itself into a downtown setting. Simply blending in to its surroundings is not enough, however, we must find a way to grow the community, since each consumer only has a finite number of dollars to spend.

“Historically, amateurs have always played an important part in planning and they usually made great places. It is the professionals of recent decades that have ruined our cities and our landscapes. Planning is simpler than they will allow.”

-Andrés Duany

“Whole-building reuse is the most efficient form of recycling.”

- Michael Cockram



WHAT ABOUT
TOMORROW?

When talking about the arrival of a box store one fear always comes immediately to mind... What do we do when they move?

This issue of greyfields and ghostboxes (these are the current archetypal terms for vacant box stores and shopping malls) becomes all the more of an issue when we consider placing one in the midst of an existing downtown community.

Creative reuse strategies, from libraries or museums to affordable housing, have been initiated on a number of occasions, but it almost always seems designers are trying to push a square peg into a round hole. This comes from the fact that the efficient nature by which the stores are initially constructed makes a remodeling of the space into something different extremely problematic.

This means adaptive reuse strategies, which require design for a second life of the building, should be set into place as new stores are being built. This would allow for a more seamless entry and an incredible upside for the community.



Figure 6-1 (facing page): Ghost boxes or vacant big-box stores are an ever increasing issue on the American landscape. This former Wal-Mart was attempted to be converted into a shopping mall, which failed and now stand empty again.

Figure 6-2 (above): A former Kmart in Austin, Minnesota is now home to the city's Spam museum.

“The main problem facing deconstruction today is that the architects and builders of the past visualized their creations as permanent and did not make provisions for their future disassembly.”

- Charles J. Kibert

But seek the welfare of the City and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

- Jeremiah 29:7



... AND THE SAINTS
COME MARCHING IN

Perhaps I was a little too broad in my judgment of the architectural and city planning professions. There is, in fact, a new plan that has taken the country by storm and has actually been incorporated as a design philosophy by most major urban centers. It has been enlisted in varying breadths depending upon their location as well as their physical makeup. Regardless, a change is on the wind and everyone from architects to city/streets planners to developers are realizing that the unlimited growth strategy that has been the norm for the last 60 years is not self sustaining and must be completely retooled.

The largest contingent of these designers have labeled themselves the New Urbanist Congress and are lead by Peter Calthorpe and his philosophy of Regionalism; and the team of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk who have penned and put into practice the Traditional Neighborhood Development. There are a number of other iterations that make up New Urbanist thought, but, more or less, they are all variations on one of these two themes.

Both have been quick to point out the problems they have with the modernist philosophies that were taken as gospel since the end of World War II. They call it ugly, gluttonous and isolationist and they are right, although aesthetics are not the prime problem. An excellent point that Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk points out in the book *Suburban Nation – The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream* is that the main problem with all



Figure 7-1 (facing page) & 7-2 (above): One of Peter Calthorpe's most recent New Urbanist projects is the retooling of the Stapleton Airport in the Denver, Colorado area. While the retail areas have the typical overpowering big-box mentality, important steps have been taken to make the area more community friendly. Multiple roads pierce the project allowing for multiple paths to and through the retail district; pedestrian paths are available as are bus stops for public transit users; finally a large residential neighborhood has been added to support the increase in retail offerings.



Figure 7-3: A main issue with the Stapleton design is the fact that many of the pedestrian walkways and all of the public transit stops are located across the vast sea of asphalt which makes up the required parking for the retail development. Attempting to cross it with your arms free, let alone full of parcels seems daunting at best.

-
- * The New Urbanist Congress is led by Peter Calthorpe and his philosophy of Regionalism; and the team of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk who have penned and put into practice the Traditional Neighborhood Development. There are a number of other iterations that make up New Urbanist thought, but, more or less, they are all variations on one of these two themes.**
 - * Current suburban design requires residents to spend a great deal of time and money moving between activities that are segregated into one of its individual pieces. Since they are so far removed from one another, automobiles are required as are the huge strips of highway that intersect them.**

sprawl is that it cannot sustain itself because it does not contain all the parts needed for a vibrant community⁹. They state that the current zoning laws exacerbate the situation in an attempt to regulate use they have removed any opportunity for diversity.

“Sprawl is seductive because of its simplicity. It really only consists of five components that can be arranged in almost any way, with only one stalwart rule – they must be strictly segregated from each other, says Plater-Zyberk. “The five components are: housing subdivisions, shopping centers, office parks, civic institutions and roadways. -- Current suburban design requires its residents to spend a great deal of time and money moving between activities that are segregated into one of its individual pieces. Since they are so far removed from one another, automobiles are required as are the huge strips of highway that intersect them.”¹⁰

Peter Calthorpe further states that the divisive nature of sprawl has gone so far as to give us a new means to segregate ourselves. Now, not only do we have race, religion and sexual orientation, but we divide ourselves by minute gradations of economy¹¹

The Congress of New Urbanism was founded as a means to combat the current development trend. Both schools of thought share a number of commonalities: most notably are the issues of human (pedestrian) scale; mixed use; diversity on all levels; and access to a centralized public transportation network. The two camps have their share of disparities as well, but I am choosing to glaze over the specific ways these two groups disagree for what I feel is the more important information, which is what works and what don't.

“The American people can be counted on to do the right thing ... after they have exhausted all the alternatives.”

- Winston Churchill

Chapter 8

The American city should be a collection of communities where every member has a right to belong. It should be a place where every man feels safe on his streets and in the house of his friends. It should be a place where each individual's dignity and self-respect is strengthened by the respect and affection of his neighbors. It should be a place where each of us can find the satisfaction and warmth which comes from being a member of the community of man. This is what man sought at the dawn of civilization. It is what we seek today.

- Lyndon B. Johnson



BUT WHAT MAKES A COMMUNITY GREAT?

A question that inevitably comes to mind is: What makes a community situation worth all this effort? Isn't there a chance that this sort of living arrangement has outlived its usefulness and the new 'sprawltowns' that are popping up everywhere are just the next evolutionary step of our culture? Our rush to visit these sorts of communities as a way to escape from our regular life pushes our answer emphatically to the no column. But that does pose another question: Since it is obvious that we find community living situations desirable, what exactly is it about them that make them so?

First, the inherent history of most of our developed urban areas, in and of itself, makes them worthy of our admiration. These places give us a visual timeline of the area in which we reside, because they developed slowly, over time. If you walk down a typical downtown community street you can ascertain when a community developed and the growing pains in experienced along the way.

Next, we should look at how a successful community is sized. The pedestrian should be the measuring stick used to develop any community. That means when spaces, from sidewalks to stores to parks, are designed they should be built to make the individual or small group of individuals feel comfortable. This is accomplished by sizing spaces to not be claustrophobic, but be snug enough to force spontaneous interactions between people and the buildings they walk past.

Another important aspect of community is specific



Figures 8-1 & 8-2 (facing page) & 8-3 (above): Boulder Colorado is one of the nation's most livable cities. It has a rich diversity of users and residents, walkable streets, a vibrant public domain (namely Pearl Street, shown in all three pictures here), and an excellent mix of pedestrian, bike and automobile traffic. Pearl Street is partially a pedestrian-only mall with vehicle traffic slicing through at each block and partially a shared street as shown above.

Precedent 1



Figure 8-3



Figure 8-4



Figure 8-5

Access - Each square can be approached from all directions, and by different means ... by car, bike, trolley or by foot.

Comfort - The squares are covered with large oak trees which provide shade as well as protection from inclement weather.

- The squares have well-designed benches to allow for interactions. Many also have gazebos, and fountains or monuments at their centers.

Safety - The squares receive heavy use from locals and tourists alike; it also receives heavy patrols from law enforcement to ensure the safety of its patrons.

Use - Every day the squares receive heavy use from walkers, inline-skaters and bicyclists

- The squares are also used for public gatherings such as farmer's markets, carnivals, parades and other neighborhood gatherings.

- The squares can also be rented for private functions such as weddings or block parties.

SQUARES OF SAVANNAH

design intent. A popular design ideal, today, is multiple-use and designing for it is a great idea to lengthen the usability of a space; but, too often, multi-use spaces end up being no-use spaces because in a rush to design for the most uses, what ends up getting designed is a space that is so generic no activity fits well enough to justify its use. We see this problem in both building and open spaces which are designed today. Renee Chow wrote in her book, *Suburban Space, The Fabric of Being* that “Too often, the design of flexible spaces removes character and intensity from the form; leaving a neutral, empty shell – although many activities seem to fit, none fit well.”¹²

Successful downtown communities are also just that ... successful. The most beautiful facades and pocket parks in the world cannot keep patrons on the streets and sidewalks if the shops are all vacant or of a variety that offers little to the broad cross-section of users. Luckily, well designed facades, pocket-parks and civic centers will help keep the downtown community thriving, but they cannot do it by themselves. It is also important to grow the downtown business community in a healthy way that looks closely at what business-types are needed and work to lure those in. It is also important to ensure that the amount of demand (consumers) is equal to the amount of supply (shops). Five of the most amazing restaurants in the world are not going to survive if there is only enough traffic for three.

An opportunity to commune with nature is another important ingredient for a successful community. If an area still has natural features such as streams, rivers or patches of old-growth trees, they should be viewed as



Figures 8-6 & 8-7 (above): More pictures from the squares of Savannah.

Precedent 2



Figure 8-8



Figure 8-9



Figure 8-10

- Access** - The park connects some ethnically diverse communities and a business district
- Comfort** - The fountain area in the Italian gardens is often populated with people of all ages and backgrounds, sitting on available benches and built-in design features, supervising children playing around the fountains and water channels.
- Use** - Mixes natural and man-made public spaces.
 - Twenty-five-foot-long picnic tables, surrounded by blocks of plantings are used for group events such as family reunions and outdoor receptions.
 - Contemporary plantings and design details make the park a destination worthy of citizen and tourist traffic.
 - The skateboard rink is a hit with teenagers who otherwise would have nowhere to go in this area of town.
 - Amenities range from ethnic gardens to playgrounds to sports fields.

HASTINGS PARK

sacred and designed as a place for public interactions and icons for the town that will draw people down and through its streets.

Finally, we should look at who benefits from a good community, because the ‘who’ is what truly makes up a neighborhood. The ‘what’ only brings them together: the wealthy businessperson can benefit from rubbing shoulders with the artists he/she reveres and the client he/she serves; kids thrive in neighborhoods where they can get around on their own, this allows for more beneficial relationships and the possibility of a more well-rounded set of activities to help them flourish; working parents profit from a less secluded lifestyle, they also have more time for personal pursuits because less time is needed to ferry children between destinations; downtown communities are an excellent for the elderly because they are within easy reach of the businesses they need – from doctor’s offices to pharmacies to grocery stores; finally, singles have always enjoyed the vibrant nightlife and resulting relationships that downtown communities have to offer.



Figure 8-11 & 8-12 (above): Additional pictures of Hastings Park in Vancouver, B.C.

“This is the duty of our generation as we enter the twenty-first century -- solidarity with the weak, the persecuted, the lonely, the sick, and those in despair. It is expressed by the desire to give a noble and humanizing meaning to a community in which all members will define themselves not by their own identity but by that of others.”

- Elie Wiesel

Precedent 3



Figure 8-13



Figure 8-15



Figure 8-14

- Access** - The square sits on a central downtown location and allows tourists and residents access from all side. in addition to street traffic, the square is attached to several civic and retail buildings.
- Comfort** - Its design includes public art, amenities, flowers, trees, walls and stairs designed for sitting on.
- Ownership** - The square has become a place of pride and a focal point for all kinds of community activities.
- Use** - Has been labelled “Portland’s living room,” because of its extensive use by area residents
 - It is the scene of frequent city-sponsored and civic events. Also acts as a venue for a plethora of street performers as well as civic orations.

PIONEER SQUARE

Precedent 4



Figure 8-16



Figure 8-17



Figure 8-18



Figure 8-19

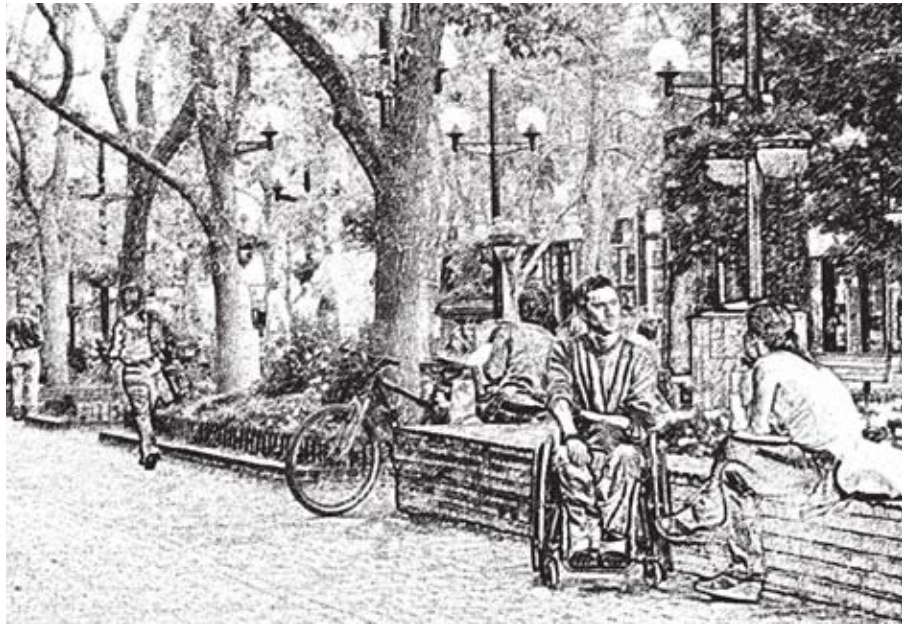
- Access** - This downtown shopping district is an area where pedestrians and vehicles co-exist peacefully, with neither element dominating the other.
- The streets are four lanes wide plus diagonal parking. Despite this, the speed of vehicular traffic tends to be rather slow.
 - There seems to be an unspoken agreement that pedestrians have the right-of-way, so, even though crosswalks are not abundant, people can cross the street at will without fear of being run over.
- Comfort** - Wide sidewalks, walkpaths and steps made for sitting as well as grade change offer excellent areas for spontaneous interaction.
- Surprisingly, motorists don't seem to mind the jaywalkers. You can spend an entire afternoon here without hearing a single honk.
- Use** - A human-scaled environment, historic buildings, and inviting storefronts, makes people want to stick around and explore.

NORTHAMPTON, MASS.

“The great advantage in those machine-made places lies with those who are just passing through, who don’t have time to establish a more complex set of connections to a building or space. This may be helpful to a population on the move, but for those who spend time in these places, there is a quick decline in possibilities.”

- Ralph Knowles

Figure 9-1
A rendering of Pearl
Street, at the heart of
downtown Boulder.



BUT HAVEN'T
I READ THIS
ALL BEFORE?

For my thesis, I am going to attempt to integrate big-box retail into a downtown community while improving the community as a whole. I consider the likes of Calthorpe, Duany, Plater-Zyberk and the other prime movers in the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) an excellent source for information and rely on their years of research and implementation to provide a framework for my thesis. The basic tenants of good community design that I will be relying on can be summed up in the following main categories: 1) there should be diversity in both building use and population; 2) pedestrian safety must be a focus to ensure use of the public areas; 3) walkways should begin and end somewhere meaningful; 4) the community should have enjoyable public spaces that promote use and interaction; 5) major commodities should be within a five-minute walk of each other; 6) a community must be grown in a way that balances its commercial supply with residential demand. In addition to these tenets, I will also be taking a serious look at how and what makes a place comfortable and desirable for occupation and incorporating that into my design strategy as well.

I know what you are thinking – We’ve read this all before, tell us something new, something interesting, something that can get us excited or angry or at least something to discuss.

Beginning with the next chapter I will do just that – I will be looking at a radical new take on our current trend: namely, building the box store into a downtown



Figures 9-2 & 9-3 (above): Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk designed the Kentland, Maryland downtown district for a broad diversity of use. It balances regional needs with draws for outsiders and then rewards them with safe and enjoyable experiences like those shown here.



Figure 9-4, 9-5 (above) & 9-6 (facing page) : Devon Street in Chicago is an amazing boiling pot of cultural diversity with people coming from all over Chicago to eat here, despite its lackluster appearance, the design of the streets and sidewalks and the usability of the shops and restaurants makes this a place for locals to gather on the street corners and visitors to come from great distances to help keep the economy alive.

* The basic tenants of good community design:

- 1) there should be diversity in both building use and population
- 2) pedestrian safety must be a focus to ensure use of the public areas
- 3) walkways should begin and end somewhere meaningful
- 4) the community should have enjoyable public spaces that promote use and interaction
- 5) major commodities should be within a five-minute walk of each other
- 6) a community must be grown in a way that balances its commercial supply with residential demand.

community in such a way that allows the community, as a whole, to grow and prosper along with it. The following chapters will look at each of the New Urbanist tenants listed above from the point of view of how they can accommodate and benefit from the inclusion of big box retail.



“The word ‘dwelling’ here means something more than having a roof over our head and a certain number of square meters at our disposal. First it means to meet others for exchange of products, ideas and feelings, that is, to experience life as a multitude of possibilities. Second, it means to come to an agreement with others, that is, to accept a set of common values. Finally, it means to be oneself, in the sense of having a small chosen world of our own.”

- Christian Norberg-Schulz

“People say they do not want to live near where they work, but that they would like to work near where they live.”

- Zev Cohen

Figure 10-1

In Georgetown today, artists and architects live right next door to congressmen, businessmen and teachers, showing that a diverse population can make a safe and enjoyable living experience.



THIS AIN'T NO COUNTRY CLUB

The first strategy of good urban design that we are going to deal with is that of diversity – both in building use and user. Successful historic communities such as San Francisco and Georgetown prove that segregation is not needed to create a livable community. Instead a broad range of usage allows for complete saturation at a level unreachable in the segregated communities they are seeking to replace.

Political correctness has taught us that diversity is a precept that we should prescribe too – at least between people, so the real question is, how can we use big-box retail to promote this diversity?

Let's start by taking a look at diversity of population. Typically, as a result of the mass migration of retail away from the historic town centers and into the sprawl complexes at the edge of a township; if an urban shopping district is to survive it must morph into a 'kitsch' marketplace of eclectic shops, bars, and trendy restaurants. These types of shops survive because the box stores and chain retailers pose no direct competition to them. Unfortunately this means that the rich go uptown, while the poor drive to Wal-Mart and McDonalds. So what do we do to bring these economically diverse groups together – I contend we put Wal-Mart next to the antique dealer, next to McDonalds, next to the dance studio, next to Spago's. Of course, this is easy to write on paper and much more difficult to build, but what if it were possible? People walking out of Wal-Mart would be brushing shoulders with



Figure 10-2: M Street in Georgetown is a vibrant place to be well into the night. This not only gives the area its charm, but adds to the safety of the area through continuous public use.



Figure 10-3: Pearl Street in Boulder shows how a diversity of shops can pull in a large range of social, economic and cultural diversities. Here, an ice cream shop sits next to an upper-middle level clothing chain, which in turns rubs shoulders with an alternative (hemp) clothing store.

people just finishing a \$120 sushi dinner and, if designed correctly, it would be difficult to surmise the first storefront from the latter.

The simple fact is that box-stores and the chains that seem to follow them wherever they go, brings with them a cross section of the population which has been designed out of most historic downtowns. Rules for the inclusion of low income housing is usually being required for all new development, couldn't a similar set of requirements be imposed on the retail sector? Currently, even if people from lower income brackets are allowed to live in a walkable downtown area, they have no place to shop close by. A community is not truly a success if the ones who would benefit most from being able to walk to and from a bevy of their retail/business outings are the ones who have to commute the furthest for said amenities.

As a nation we have forgotten that we all having something to offer each other: the rich banker; the struggling single-parent; the street artist; the teacher; and the politician. Walling ourselves off from each other only allows for a continual path of narrow-mindedness centering around our career or area of interest. David Denby said. "There is a specific kind of American dimness: the cult of expertise, which, by its very nature, blinds the person who practices it to every form of knowledge save the one that he understands." I see that happening in every suburb and gated community that exists today. Don't we spend enough time around people that share the same boring aspects of our lives such as career? Walking past an artist's studio with the shades open can help the banker remember that there is a world



Figure 10-4: In the Netherlands, even McDonalds has found a way to integrate itself into the downtown fabric, here we see it nestled between a money exchange service and a trendy bistro.



Figure 10-5: The east village area of New York allows for a rich social-economic diversity with its mix of gardens, shops, restaurants and pubs.

- * A community is not truly a success if the ones who would benefit most from being able to walk to and from a bevy of their retail/business outings are the ones who have to commute the furthest for said amenities.
- * Box-stores bring with them a cross section of the population which has been designed out of most historic downtowns. Rules for the inclusion of low income housing is usually required for all new development... a similar set of requirements could be imposed on the retail sector.

outside his ledgers and financial reports; and the teacher coming into contact with the troubled student who is now on a path to political greatness can remind them why they stand in front of their classrooms each and every day.

“In a neighborhood setting, people buy community first and their residence second – and one major part of a good community is diversity ... on all levels.”

- Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk

“Crime does not follow poverty, it follows concentrations of poverty.”

- Reuben Greenberg, Police chief, Charleston SC



Figure 11-1 & 11-2: Lit storefronts give the perception of a safe environment and a vigilant watchdog for the community whether or not they are inhabited.

SAFETY & SECURITY

Over the next two chapters we are going to look at the importance of safety and security in a community setting and how the addition of a box store could help. I am going to break pedestrian safety into two categories: 1) a feeling of safety from criminal activity, and 2) a feeling of safety from the traffic going by. We will focus on a perception of safety from crime in this chapter and move on to traffic safety in the next.

To make a pedestrian center and its pathways viable for use, these areas must purvey a sense of (and reality of) safety. Historically, downtowns were able to provide this umbrella of safety to its users by offering a diversity of people on its streets who were constantly coming and going at all hours of the day and night. Beyond the people who inhabit the streets, a traditional streetscape itself can act as a watchdog for the community with its large windows that face out onto the street. “Streets should be lined with window-filled buildings because windows imply that people could be watching ... in essence the buildings are watching,” said Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk. “It isn’t important if anyone is home.” Safety and social control was usually maintained by the constant presence of citizens in an urban environment that was inhabited 24/7 by a variety of classes.¹³

It is an interesting investigation that Duany and Plater-Zyberk embarked upon showing that in typical edge conditions where segregation reigns, downtowns are deserted after 6 pm, where most residential areas show little life from 9am – 5 pm. This type of

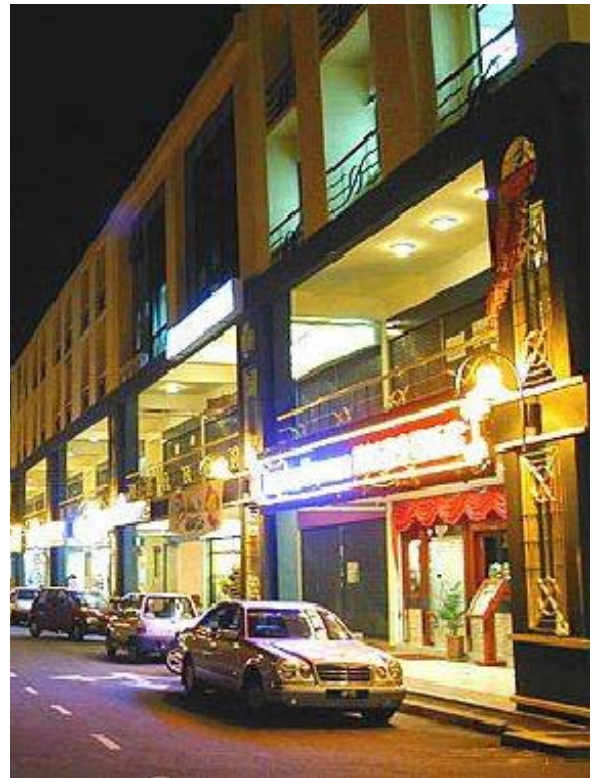




Figure 11 -3: A quick visit to the Bozeman Wal-Mart on a Wednesday morning around 1 AM still shows a high level of use, which would benefit a downtown community with a higher level of pedestrian traffic and with that, a heightened sense of safety.

-
- * To make a pedestrian center and its pathways viable for use, these areas must purvey a sense of (and reality of) safety.
 - * A vibrant downtown district offers two articles of safety to its citizens:
 - 1) the diverse set of people coming and going at all times of day act as a constant patrol.
 - 2) a traditional streetscape can act as a watchdog for the community with its large windows that face out onto the street.

segregation promotes a feeling of insecurity for a pedestrian if they are attempting to brave these areas during off-peak times

The fact that major “box” retailers are open quite late allows them to integrate nicely into a downtown community from the philosophy that it will provide for a broad range of people coming and going from these large stores at all hours of the day (and night), making wrongdoing a public event. The second ideal of providing glass storefronts for implied safety is a change that box stores will have to make if they are wanting to become a part of the downtown community, since the modus-operandi for these types of stores are long blank walls with extremely limited punctures for access, and the huge blank walls that this style provides gives pedestrians walking next to it a sense of isolation from the downtown city experience and any sort of safety network.



Figure 11-4: An interior look of late night box store traffic.

“The choice of living away from the central city is often a flight from perceived urban threats, dangers that increased the moment the city was segregated by function, class and race”

- Richard Ingersol

“The Virgin Sidewalk [is] the physical embodiment of sprawl’s guilty conscience.”

- Andres Duany

Figure 12-1
Laying down a strip of concrete with the proportions of a sidewalk does not mean you are making a walkable path. If there is no destination and nothing but big blank walls of concrete to look at, sidewalks will remain as empty as this one.



SHARING THE STREETS

The virgin sidewalk spoken of on the prior page is the same blank ribbon of concrete that winds its way through each and every suburban sprawl neighborhood and retail center. These specific sidewalks are immediately identifiable from their downtown counterparts because they are vacant – save for a few avid exercisers. The reasons for their lack of use is twofold: 1) when designers began building for the car rather than the individual, they created an environment that moves with such speed and abandon that even the most stalwart would find being out in it without the protection of a vehicle's steel cage unsettling (most would find it downright terrifying); and 2) it is really hard to motivate yourself to walk on a street that leads to nowhere.

The desire for narrow, walkable streets where a pedestrian can feel safe boils down to one main issue – the speed of the traffic going by. There are a number of ways to regulate traffic that will allow for the car and the pedestrian to coexist: stop signs and traffic lights are a natural of course, as is narrowing the streets. Another excellent way to control the speed of traffic is to line the streets with parallel or angled parking. This works as a result of a perception by drivers that the parked cars could attempt to dart back into traffic at any time. While this philosophy gives people a heightened sense of worry about a perceived danger, the reality is that there are a lot fewer traffic-related accidents in the narrow-street model.



Figure 12-2 & 12-3: The speed of the traffic and width of the streets contributes directly to the feeling of safety and security a potential pedestrian zone conveys.



Figure 12-4: Here is an example of a pedestrian zone that feels much more safe and friendly -- wide, tree-lined sidewalks with a buffer of angled parking lines a narrow street where pedestrians definitely take the lead.

-
- * The desire for narrow, walkable streets where a pedestrian can feel safe boils down to one main issue – the speed of the traffic going by.
 - * There are a number of ways to regulate traffic that will allow for the car and the pedestrian to coexist: stop signs and traffic lights are a natural of course, as is narrowing the streets. Another excellent way to control the speed of traffic is to line the streets with parallel or angled parking.

It is important to note that controlling traffic does not mean banning it from pedestrian areas. On the contrary, studies have shown that streets that are shared between pedestrian and vehicular traffic are safer than segregated streets. This speaks more to criminal-based offenses rather than with pedestrian-vehicle altercations, but it does speak directly to the need for a constant connection between the two parties. For a successful community, commutation paths must be shared to be successful.



Figure 12-5: O'Connell Street in Dublin is another example of a streetscape where pedestrians and bike traffic coexist with vehicular traffic.

“Separating the pedestrian onto ‘greenways’ and carless paths was a flawed strategy from the Radburn experiment of the 1930s – a neighborhood design which, in attempting to control the car, sacrificed the street to it.”

- Peter Calthorpe

“If you have brains in your head and feet in your shoes, if the street isn’t nice, you’ll go where you choose”

- Dr. Suess

Figure 13-1 (right), and 13-2 & 13-3 (facing page) Vondelpark in Amsterdam is a perfect example of what a destination could and should be. It has well designed spaces with a multitude of uses for a diverse group of users.



A ROAD TO NOWHERE

It seems to be a simple stating of the obvious to say that, for paths to be effective, they must lead somewhere meaningful. But as simplistic as it seems, this ideal has been lost over the years since sprawl has inundated itself into our society. Our countryside is covered with unused sidewalks that lead nowhere but to other streets.

The main issue we have to remember is that we, as architects, have to design those interesting ‘somewheres.’ Renee Chow said it best when she wrote, “Access is the space of moving – between, into and through other spaces. It is a spatial connection between activities. Too often, access is seen solely as a route of travel between two activities, a path to get from here to there.” She further states that most successful community models are based on excellent infrastructure rather than memorable architecture.¹⁴

When designing a downtown community, these destination nodes can range from public areas to civic structures to major retail draws. In fact, the most significant amenity designers can offer the populace of a city or town is a ‘public realm’ with a public street life that the phrase implies.¹⁵

We have ample data that proves that box stores are tremendous attractors. In almost every town in America we see the repercussions of a box store coming in and becoming the black hole nexus that attracts all future development to its doorstep. This philosophy can and should be exploited in the downtown model as well,





Figure 13-4, 13-5 & 13-6
Abenteuerspielplatz is a park in Berlin specifically designed to house functions for groups of all ages. There are large play areas for children and benches for parents and others to watch them, as well as areas for group meals and other medium sized functions, finally, the central area where the various paths meet is often used for larger city sponsored events.

-
- * For paths to be effective, they must lead somewhere meaningful.
 - * We must design the interesting ‘somewheres’. Too often, we leave public spaces open, with no real designed use which dooms them to no use whatsoever.
 - * The most significant amenity designers can offer the populace of a city or town is a ‘public realm’ with a public street life that the phrase implies.
 - * Box stores are tremendous attractors and can be a destination for walkable paths

since a destination is imperative to making a walking community successful. If done correctly, the box store can be the anchor that small community in-roads and walk paths terminate at.

But a shopping Mecca cannot be the only draw; public areas where spontaneous positive interactions can occur must be built into the urban fabric as nodes that pull people through the town. Pocket parks, sheltered benches and visual hotspots such as fountains, ponds or playgrounds must be placed in key areas around an urban center to ensure its success. Box stores can help facilitate the inclusion of these types of public spaces as part of its requirements for beautification, which is a boilerplate requirement from almost every city planning department.



Figure 13-7: Well-designed shopping districts can be the destination that paths lead to, but retail, on its own, is not enough to make a community successful.

“The tragedy of life does not lie in not reaching your goal, the tragedy lies in having no goal to reach.”

- Benjamin Mays, Engineer

“Many employees find the office more pleasant than home – there are more opportunities for conversation and interaction – the workplace offers a substitute for community.”

– Peter Calthorpe



Figure 14-1
To find true community these days it is almost necessary for us to look outside the U.S. for a place where people from diverse backgrounds can come together for a shared purpose.

BUILD IT (WELL) AND THEY WILL COME ...

Let's take a closer look at these public areas for enjoyment and interaction and what makes them eminently inhabitable.

The strongest argument for a downtown community is just that ... *community*. Webster defines community as an interacting population of various kinds of individuals (as species) in a common location, but I like Jake McKee's definition from his *Community Guy* web log even better: "A community is a [diverse] group of people who form relationships over time by interacting regularly around shared experiences, which are of interest to all of them for varying individual reasons."

If we look deeper at its root, *commune*, it means (according to Webster) to communicate intimately. This gets down to the crux of why we began living in groups in the first place – for intimacy, a sense of camaraderie, and for protection. Unfortunately, we have given up all these things with the isolationistic philosophy of sprawl.

So as architects, we need to design spaces that promote these feelings: comfortable places where we can have intimate conversations like park benches, naturalistic walking paths or pocket parks with small tables protected from a lion's share of the weather; places that promote interaction at a somewhat larger scale, like duck ponds or skating rinks or playgrounds; and finally, with all designed spaces should come a feeling of ease and safety; somewhere you would let your child play while you are in a store that is close by or that you would feel comfortable walking through in



Figure 14-2: Parks and playgrounds are often where children first get a feel for public interactions.



-
- * The crux of why we began living in groups in the first place is for intimacy, a sense of camaraderie, and for protection.
 - * As architects, we need to design spaces that promote these feelings: comfortable places where we can have intimate conversations; places that promote interaction at a somewhat larger scale; and finally, with all designed spaces should come a feeling of ease and safety.
 - * The cost for a box store's build phase is considered negligible, so in return for allowing them into a community, the addition of well-designed public spaces at the store's expense would not be considered prohibitive.

the evening.

But how can the inclusion of a box store, an entity that typically wants to move people through its doors and aisles as quickly as possible, add something positive to a communities ‘public realm’? This can be answered in the way city ordinances and urban design committees push a box store into the shape it wants for its community.

A typical requirement placed on major retailers when they arrive at a new venue is some sort of beautification project. Often times they are given a dismal piece of land and asked to add a few trees and patches of grass in some proximity to their concrete fortress, but what if, instead, they were required to take an interesting or precious piece of land and improve it for the benefit of the community? In addition, they could be required to integrate the sort of public areas listed above into their streetside facade to help move people along the store’s façade and on through the community. The simple truth is the land and building that conglomerates like Target, Costco or Wal-Mart use have a relative cost that is extremely negligible compared to the profit potential, so these sorts of community spaces can be added without being cost prohibitive.



Figure 14-3 (facing page) & 14-4 (above): This beautification project is part of the Wal-Mart, Home Depot development in Avon, Colorado and shows that these conglomerates can add something worthwhile, if prodded.

“Too often, the design of flexible spaces removes character and intensity from the form; leaving a neutral, empty shell – although many activities seem to fit, none fit well.”

- Renee Chow

“Crime does not follow poverty, it follows concentrations of poverty.”

- Reuben Greenberg, Police chief, Charleston SC



Figure 15-1
This proposed Miami mega-store complex has added two high-rise residential towers to help add to the clientele base of the area.

BALANCING SUPPLY WITH DEMAND

The real issue with bringing giant box stores into any community is how it damages what can only be termed as a natural ecosystem that has evolved over time according to the needs of its inhabitants. It isn't the 'what' that is so damaging to the way of life of these downtown communities but rather the 'how much'. When a major retailer arrives in a medium-sized or smaller community it will usually (at least) double the retail offerings of the community over night – and since no community can grow its population that quickly, a purchaser-to-seller ratio that was in balance is now grotesquely out of whack.

Andres Duany labels sprawl as an artificial system, designed by engineers, architects and planners. On the opposite side of the coin, historic neighborhoods evolved organically out of need.¹⁶ And there is the keyword we need for developing a successful plan for the addition of any sized retailer into a community. – How do we also design in the additional need? Of course, this problem becomes exponentially more difficult with stores of a mega-stores dimension.

So, now we are caught at an impasse. The box stores are coming and when they do, no matter where they go, the community they service will feel a negative impact because, a thousand residential units cannot be built as quickly as its retail counterpart; and even if it could, there is no guarantee that the thousand families could be found to move in right away.

Having said that, I am quick to add that it would be



Figure 15-2: If left unchecked, this is the inevitable course of many historic downtown businesses after the arrival of a big-box retailer.



Figure 15-3 & 15-4
This north-Seattle mega-store complex has left the main level open for smaller businesses to occupy, giving the development a much more welcoming feel.

-
- * The ‘what’ box stores bring to a community is not what is so damaging to the way of life of these downtown communities but rather the ‘how much’.
 - * When a major retailer arrives in a medium-sized or smaller community it usually doubles the retail offerings over night – since no community can grow its population that quickly, the purchaser-to-seller ratio that was in knocked out of balance.
 - * Since box stores do not desire elaborate facades, the blank walls can be used for the inclusion of community-friendly additions such as medium-to-high density housing.

a gross dereliction of duty if we didn't, at least, make the attempt to equalize the mega-retailers arrival with a large influx of residential square-footage; and what is more, a bevy of that expense should be shouldered by the huge conglomerates, as they have the deepest pockets and a huge benefit to gain with the addition of more potential buyers for their wares.

Once again, the massive, (typically) blank walls that make up at least 80% of a box-store's façade seems to be screaming for the inclusion of community-friendly additions such as medium-to-high density housing. Apartments located above street-level businesses are a very inexpensive housing alternative since all costs of building structure are absorbed by the retail portion; only the apartment's construction costs remain for the residential portion.

Of course, the number of units that could be gained from the square-footage of the box stores will not nearly offset the business lost due to its arrival so additional plots will need to be designed as well, but it definitely is a push in the right direction in both growing the community and in the public's perception of the retailer.

It is also important to realize that initially, there will be a need for a community to create a draw that will bring people from surrounding areas to add to its clientele base. Specialty restaurants, a vibrant nightlife or standout community spaces are major attractors that could aid in this. It is important to remember that self-sufficient communities don't spring up overnight ... they must be grown and nurtured over time.¹⁷.

*It is the first obligation of all building
to place itself in relationship to the city.*

- Voltaire 1827

“What is wanted is not to restore a vanished, or revise a vanishing culture under modern conditions, but to grow a contemporary culture from the old roots.”

-T.S. Eliot



A QUICK LOOK AT AESTHETICS

The main issue I want to address in this chapter is the tendency for designers to base their design decisions on the nostalgia of an area rather than its traditions. Peter Calthorpe listed the differences between the two with the following statement. “Traditions are rooted in timeless impulses while being constantly modified by circumstance. Tradition evolves with time and place while holding strong to certain formal, cultural, and personal principles. Nostalgia seeks the security of past forms without the inherent principles.”¹⁸

That is to say we should learn from the triumphs of the past and design in a way that integrates with the historic buildings that surrounds a site, but we cannot simply imitate past successes – doing so only cheapens the new structure as well as the historic building it seeks to replicate.

On the flip side of that coin, we have another seeming paradox in that a well-designed city does not need to be one full of Frank Gehry museums and Rem Koolhaas libraries. Iconic buildings can only keep that stature if they have a strong background of well designed ‘regular’ buildings to set themselves off against. Sergio Frau said, “Architects should favor the norm more often than the exception.”

In the case of the typical downtown situation where elite architectural pieces are few and far between Renee Chow’s statement seems even more poignant. “Architecture is often more about how and where you place a building than its aesthetic design,” she said.



Figure 16-1 (facing page) & 16-2: New buildings can and should be integrated into a community in such a way that pays tribute to the history that is already there without cheapening it through direct imitation. New buildings and historic monuments can stand side by side as illustrated here.

- * “Traditions are rooted in timeless impulses while being constantly modified by circumstance. Tradition evolves with time and place while holding strong to certain formal, cultural, and personal principles. Nostalgia seeks the security of past forms without the inherent principles.”**
- * We cannot simply imitate past successes – doing so only cheapens the new structure as well as the historic building it seeks to replicate.**
- * Iconic buildings can only keep that stature if they have a strong background of well designed ‘regular’ buildings to set themselves off against.**
- * Design decisions should be based on the betterment of the community as an ecosystem rather than on a iconic philosophy whose only function is to be photographed and critiqued.**

I agree with this philosophy and will strive to make my design decisions based on the betterment of the community as an ecosystem rather than a museum whose only function is to be photographed and critiqued.

I will be approaching the structures I design as building blocks for a larger architectural entity. Just like a brick, a single piece of stone or steel, even a CMU block – alone these items are plain and possibly ugly, but designed in a meaningful way, by a master craftsman, they can become something amazing. Calthorpe stated buildings can be ordinary if they are part of a beautiful street or square. He further stated that it, in fact, may be necessary to facilitate the beauty of the entity.

This is the tack I will be taking when attempting to integrate box stores into a downtown community. We have seen them sitting alone out on the landscape and we know full well how unpleasing that sight can be. But, with the right implementation and the addition of other materials, it is possible to create something that is greater than the sum of the parts. I believe that the solution for this design problem lies in rethinking not only the design of the box store, but in the design of the community it is attaching itself to.



Figure 16-4: This building in Havana, Cuba not only integrates itself into a historic community but celebrates its surroundings by reflecting it.

“There are three forms of visual art: Painting is art to look at, sculpture is art you can walk around, and architecture is art you can walk through”

-Dan Rice

“Slow down and enjoy life. It’s not only the scenery you miss by going too fast - you also miss the sense of where you are going and why.”

- Eddie Cantor

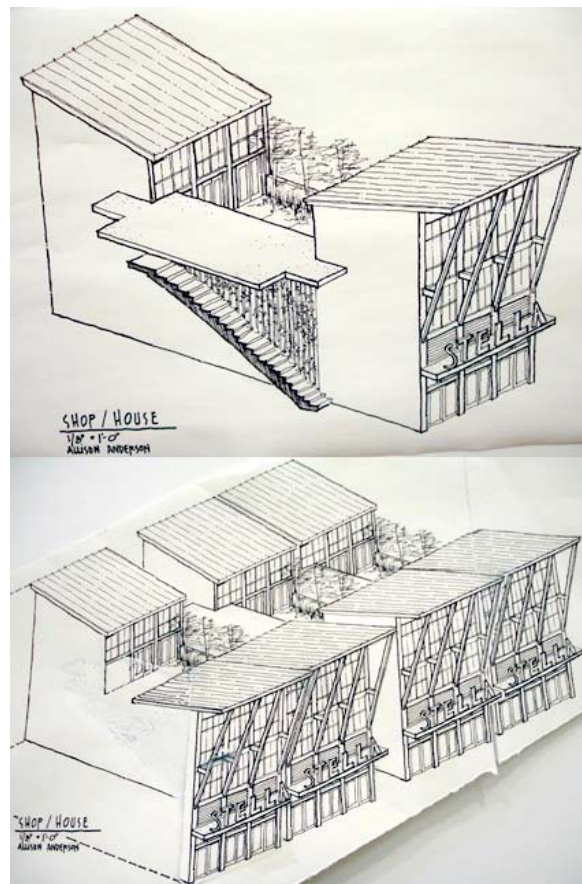


CONCLUSION

It is an easy thing to live in the past, holding tight to old philosophies we hold dear; or to bury our heads in the sand and hope that problems that have arisen around us will somehow, magically, right themselves again without any input from us. Reality, however, isn't so tidy. There is a new face on the American landscape, and it is one of our own making. And along with the creation of the monster named big-box retail comes the inherent responsibility of maintaining it, or at least maintaining the area in which it lives, because where and how it lives effects a much older and more dear aspect of our existence – namely, how we commune with each other.

Up to this point, we have only succeeded in giving over the top rung of the food-chain to these incarnations and, therefore, are remanded to cleaning up the carnage that is left in their wake. We can no longer sit idly by and allow this to happen. We must take the reigns of this beast and tame it ... since a willingness to destroy it seems unlikely. To tame it, we must find ways to integrate these retail giants into our ideas of an eminently livable urban environment. No more, allowing them to dictate how we shop, how we live and how we think.

We have a vision of what we want our communities to be and we have the knowledge of the good and bad aspects of big-box retail. It is now our duty to tailor this entity in such a way that glorifies its strengths and rethinks its weaknesses for the betterment of the neighborhood community.



Figures 17-1 (facing page) & 17-2: It is easy to recognize perfect spaces, what we must do if find a way to make all spaces (and structures) part of something beautiful.

“The significant problems we face cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them.”

- Albert Einstein

Livingston Saturday Night

By: Jimmy Buffett

*You got your Tony Lama's on your jeans pressed tight.
You take a few tokes make you feel alright,
rockin' and a rollin' on a Livingston Saturday night*

*Pickup's washed and you just got paid.
With any luck at all you might even get laid,
'cause they're pickin' and a kickin' on a Livingston Saturday night*

*So won't you listen to the sound of the hot country band
Boot heels a 'shufflin' on the dance floor sound
Sing a song, play some pong, shoot a little pool
Hittin' on the honeys right outta high school
Fifteen may get ya twenty, that's all right
'cause they'll be rockin' and a rollin' on a Livingston Saturday night*

*Whoa listen to the sound of the hot country band
Boot heels a shufflin' on the dance floor sound
Hum a song, play some pong, eat a deviled egg
Temperature is risin' better pop another keg
Fifteen may get ya twenty, that's all right
'cause they'll be rockin' and a rollin' on a Livingston Saturday night*

*Whoa ya gotta listen to the sound of the hot country band
Boot heels a shufflin' on the dance floor sound
Sing some songs, play some pong, eat a deviled egg
Temperature is risin' better pop another keg
Fifteen may get ya twenty, that's all right
'cause they'll be rockin' and a rollin' on a Livingston Saturday night
Yeah I say they'll be rockin' and a rollin' on a Livingston Saturday night
One more time they'll be rockin' and a rollin' on a Livingston Saturday night*

SITE ANALYSIS



Figure 18-1
An overall view of the
Livingston downtown area.
For more information please
see map insert.

For my site, I have chosen the four underdeveloped blocks that make up the end of Main Street proper in Livingston, Montana. The site will include the four blocks between South Second Street (south) and South B Street (north); and East Clark Street (west) and River Drive (east). I will be developing this site with a mix of retail, business and medium density housing. I also will carve out a general plan for the improvement of Fleshman Creek as a public park space and the redesign of the View Vista low-income housing project (trailer court) for additional housing in a more diverse setting.

Location

Livingston resides in the south-central portion of Montana along I-90. It covers an area of 2.6 square miles, 25 miles east of Bozeman and 115 miles west of Billings. It sits at an elevation of 4,656 ft. and is situated on the Great Bend of the Yellowstone River and acts as one of the Montana entrances to Yellowstone National Park

The actual site proposed for my project is at the southeast end of Main Street and includes the four blocks between South Second Street and South B Street; and East Clark Street and River Drive. The

Figure 18-2

Most views out of downtown Livingston go off toward the south and east, other views of note are along Fleshman Creek and Sacajewea Park which will both be integral parts of the project.

- Views out of downtown Livingston
- Views in to downtown Livingston



Figure 18-3

Two roadways serve as the major vehicular arteries for Livingston. In addition to these the Yellowstone River could bring goods and services into the area as well. A large number of tractor trailers use Park St. to move goods through the area, but this does not resolve getting them to the other side of Main St.

- I-90
- Hwy. 89/Park St.
- Yellowstone River



site includes a significant portion of Fleshman Creek and the surrounding wooded areas and also borders or is within easy walking distance of other public amenities such as tennis courts and a public outdoor swimming pool. The site is bordered on the northwest by a medium-to-high density commercial/retail district; to the southeast by the Livingston High School and a rundown low-income housing district; to the northeast by medium density neighborhood housing; and the same to the southwest, with the inclusion of the public outdoor swimming facility listed above.

Population Info

Livingston, Montana is a community of approx. 7,500 people and is becoming a bedroom community for Bozeman, a small city about 25 miles away.

The mix of age groups in Livingston is interesting, because it comes in above the U.S. average in both median resident age (40.3 years) and number of residents under the age of 18 (26.7%). The average household size is 2.16 members per house and the average family size is 2.86 members per house. This mixed with the high number of children in town tells us that there are an unusually high number of single parents as well. The huge disparity comes when looking at the percentage of Livingston residents between the ages of 18 and 24 years of age which is only 7.5%. This trend is alarming because a large number of young residents are leaving town for better work or educational opportunities and, since the percentage of Livingston residents with a four-year college degree is well below the state and federal

averages, it means there is a greater likelihood they won't be moving back.

Another important piece of census data is that of average income for the town of Livingston, which is \$16,637 per person; this number comes in below the Montana average of \$17,151 and well below the national average of \$21,587. This is in spite of the fact that Livingston schools score a percentage point higher than the national average in high school graduates.

So now we know our target audience. What we have is a large population of families (either dual or single parent situations) with children trying to make a go of it in Livingston; a huge hole in the young adult population; and a significant elderly population as well. We also know that a significant portion of the community resides in the lower-middle income bracket. This is very important information when trying to accent and revitalize the downtown district in Livingston as it is the beginning of a framework for discerning what is in place that is of benefit to the broad cross-section of residents and what is lacking.

Climate Data

Montana is the fifth windiest state in the nation and Livingston is the town that gives it that distinction. The town of Livingston boasts an average yearly wind speed of 15.6 miles per hour which are typically blowing out of the west. These winds bolster themselves up to a 21 mph average during the winter months, which as a town, is the third strongest recorded in the Western United States.

Livingston sits in a semi-arid portion of the

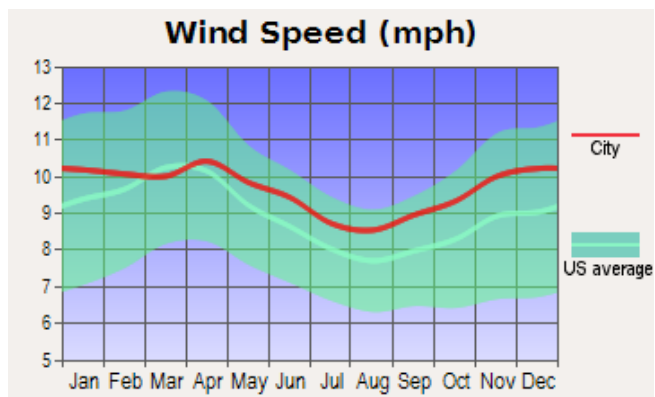
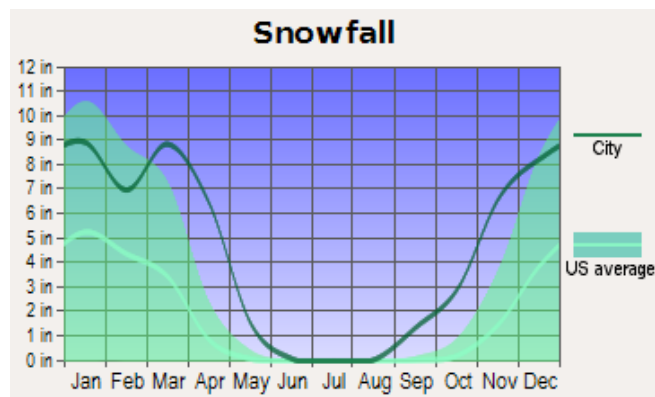
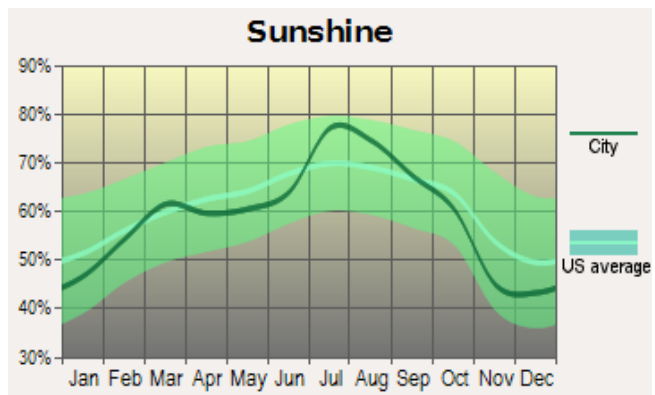
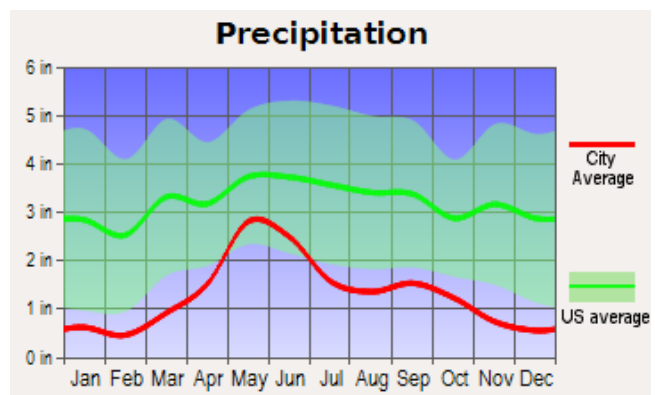
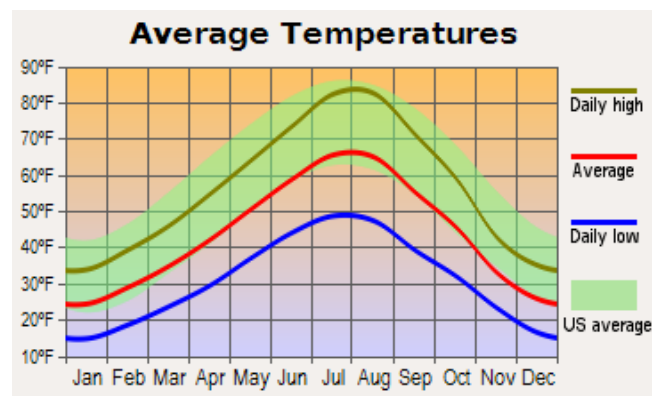
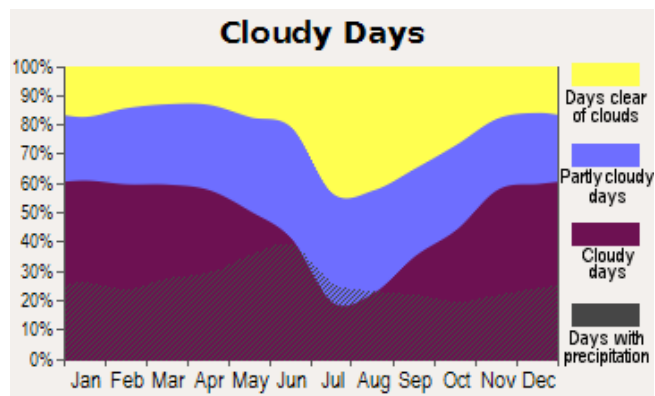


Figure 18-4

northwest United States, with a humidity level of only 12 to 14 inches per year. Most of this precipitation comes in the spring and early summer months, so snowfall is relatively minimal in the area. Temperatures are also fairly moderate, at least in comparison to other Montana towns, with January temperatures averaging around 25 degrees and July averages only hitting about 66 degrees. It should be noted, however, that the extreme winds experienced in the winter can cause the temperature to appear much less bearable.

Because of the weather anomalies experienced in Livingston I am going to be amending the five-minute walk rule for services to that of two minutes. The

people of Livingston are a hearty bunch and I have seen a fair amount of pedestrian traffic on the sidewalks even in windstorms gusting past 60 mph, but they are very efficient about where they are going and are definitely not strolling about window shopping.

Other than for the wind and a slightly higher-than-average snowfall, the climate would be considered fairly moderate by U.S. standards. Temperatures for Livingston sit at the lower end of the nation's average and has excellent marks in sunshine vs. cloudy days and average precipitation. This means than the wind is the main issue we will have when designing our public spaces, since the volume of wind in the winter

Long before south-central Montana was acquired in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803; it was regarded as sacred, neutral territory by the native Bannock, Blackfoot, Crow, Flathead and Shoshone tribes. Called "The Valley of Flowers," it was their hunting ground.

Reports by Lewis and Clark after their historic trek across the Montana Territory attracted the adventurous to the area's resources. Trappers, traders and prospectors were the first to arrive. After the discovery of gold in the 1880's came the settlers.

The founding of Livingston at the great bend of the Yellowstone River was the direct result of building the Northern Pacific Railroad. Benson's Landing, a ferry and trading post three miles below the bend, was to be the original site where a supply store would be established. But on July 14, 1882, Joseph J. McBride arrived to survey a site for the supply store of Bruns and Kruntz, contractors. He chose a place nearer the great bend and called it Clark City in honor of Herman Clark, the principal contractor for the Northern Pacific in the region west of the Missouri River.

When the Northern Pacific builders reached this point, Clark City boasted a population of 500 with six general stores, two hotels and 44 other businesses, 30 of which were saloons. Railroad officials, however, surveyed the area and decided the city should be located a short distance to the north. People and businesses moved, and the Livingston Post Office was established on November 13, 1882, with the plat of the new town recorded in Gallatin County on December 21, 1882. The city of Livingston, named after pioneer director of the Northern Pacific Johnston Livingston, was official.

The railroad, mining and agriculture played important roles in establishing the Livingston area as a sturdy economic base. The Northern Pacific built a machine and repair shop in the summer of 1883. Today it is owned and operated by Livingston Rebuild Center, specializing in locomotive and freight car repair, remanufacturing



- Major Vehicle Artery
- Secondary Streets
- Tertiary Streets & Alleys

Figure 18-4: The existing grid in Livingston will allow for multiple routes to destinations

and painting.

In 1864, after the discovery of gold, mines at Emigrant Gulch, Bear Gulch (later known as Jardine) and Cooke City went into production. Coal was also discovered on the west side of the Yellowstone River above Livingston. After the establishment of the railroad, mines at Horr, Trail Creek and Cokedale were developed.

Stock raising and agriculture began in the early 1880's. Wool shipment was big business and sheep-raising grew. Cattle soon followed as large herds were driven in from the south. Shortly after the turn of the century grain crops followed, and a major economic force in Park County was firmly established.

In 1872, Congress established Yellowstone as the first National Park. The completion of the Park Branch of the Northern Pacific Railroad brought to Livingston the trade business of tourists and suppliers. Livingston was the original entrance to Yellowstone National Park and today is the only road to the Park that remains open year-around.

seems to keep the streets fairly clear of any major snow accumulations.

History

Livingston has had a long and storied career. In my research I found the most succinct and informative compilation of historic information of the Livingston Area Chamber of Commerce's website. The following is an excerpt from the site concerning the town's past:

Retail/Business Offerings

The Livingston downtown shopping district is home to a litany of goods and services vendors, but after an investigation of the community and what it has to offer, I found that there are only a handful of downtown businesses that would be directly affected by the arrival of a large big-box retailer. I assume this is a result of Livingston's proximity to Bozeman and its retail centers. A complete listing of the businesses in the downtown area is available on the included map. The area of Livingston's retail market that will

be most affected by the inclusion of a big-box retailer will most likely be its large number of consignment and used goods shops. The inclusion of new items at a much lower price-point will, most likely, make a need for used things a lower priority. Other than these shops, however, only eight businesses in the downtown area would see direct competition from the inclusion of a store such as Target, Home Depot or even Wal-Mart; and of these eight, only two are within walking distance of the site.

Civic Offerings

The Livingston downtown is home to a number of its civic buildings as well, two schools, a post office and a library. It is also home to a number of civic organizations and churches, which you always find in a well-rounded community. No civic entities are going to be lost, which is a positive. It should also be noted that only the schools and an old rundown community center are within the 2.5 minute walk window. Revitalizing the community center and making connections to the schools will be a focal point of my design.



- Yellow Downtown Retail Sidewalks
- Orange Narrower Residential Sidewalks
- Purple Exercise/Park Paths

Figure 18-5: Well used sidewalks are already in place on Main Street, so an extension of these for my project is a natural. The park paths will need to be extended through the site along Fleshman Creek and possibly all the way to the Junior High

Public Spaces

The town of Livingston has a beautiful park which surrounds its lagoon and is just a block to the south from the site. In addition to the park, this area is home to a number of outdoor sports fields (baseball/softball, basketball and tennis), a skate park and a community center building. The Community center is in disrepair and should be revitalized as part of my project. Another major issue with the public spaces mentioned above, is that there is no real connection to the downtown business district. I believe this should be rectified in my project as well. I also see an easy connection with the implementation of a public walking path along Fleshman Creek which lines the northeastern edge of my site and continues to the park.

Livingston also has a few pocket parks littered throughout, which is of benefit to the community. I feel that an additional pocket park on the western edge of my site would be of great benefit. The park would not need to be large, but designed with a specific purpose to help facilitate pedestrian movement through the area.

Site Specific Info

It is important to take a look at the site I have chosen for my project and the entities (both business and residential) that will be displaced as a result of my new proposed development.

First, it has been alluded to before, but Fleshman Creek and the wooded area immediately surrounding it should be considered sacred and reserved for development only as naturalistic walking park which connects the Main Street business district with

Sacajawea Park (Livingston Lagoon)

The only business that might have trouble relocating to other, currently vacant downtown storefronts or those created with the new development is the Livingston Enterprise, which is the town's newspaper. I will attempt to integrate a new locale for the paper into my design strategy. Other than the Enterprise, sixteen businesses will be temporarily displaced during construction, but could choose to either move into vacant buildings, of which Livingston has enough square footage to accommodate their need, or move into aspects of the new development upon its completion. A fairly large number of residential properties will also be affected by the development, including thirty-five single family residences and three apartment complexes. These residences will need to be reinstituted into the project, whether on site or nearby.

Design Parameters

The city of Livingston has recently adopted a new set of guidelines for its downtown community based closely on the parameters set up in my thesis, which is what made it such an excellent choice for a site.

My project will seek to follow the guidelines set up by the city of Livingston as much as possible. If it becomes necessary to stray from the design ordinances they have set in place, a specific reason will be given as to what required the change.

A copy of the City of Livingston's Vision Statement is available in Appendix B of this book. The vision statement is an excerpt of Livingston's Urban Design Framework Master Plan.



Figure 18-6: A closer look at the features of my actual site.

Program

The project will contain one or two large box stores with a total minimum area of 200,000 sq. ft.

These stores must have a completely redeveloped strategy designed to integrate and improve a downtown business community

Facades must have a character that integrates the building into the community; those that face main roads should be broken up in a way that promoted pedestrian movement past them and through the rest of town.

Building designs should be steeped in tradition, not nostalgia. That is to say we should realize that each historic building in the Livingston downtown was built in the tradition of its time – late 1800s buildings look like late 1800s buildings and 1950s buildings are easily recognizable as from that era. With that in mind, we should design buildings from the early 21st century that allows the historic buildings to stand on their own merit and not attempt to devalue them by pure imitation.

The project will have appropriately designed public areas (sidewalks and public spaces which take into

consideration Livingston's atypical climate (weather and wind).

The project will create a continuous pedestrian business district along Main Street, from East Clark Street to wherever the new construction ends for the inclusion of the Fleshman Creek Walking Park

The project will develop a design philosophy for the streetscape and for pedestrian walking paths that could be adopted by the entire downtown district.

The project will include a minimum of three parking spaces per 1,000 sq. ft. of big-box retail space.

The project will include a replacement strategy for all residential units removed as a result of the new construction as well as a residential development strategy to help equalize the new supply with the requisite amount of demand.

The project will promote a controlled amount of interaction between pedestrians and vehicle traffic. Integration of these two transportation types will be key to the downtown area's success as a pedestrian village.

Public transportation stops must be designed into each block on Main Street.





Code Study

The downtown Livingston Retail District will be a mixed use development. It will be made up of Group M (mercantile); Group R2/R3 (residential); and Group S (storage, for parking structure).

Fire separations between the M and R portions will need to be two hour; those between the M and S portions will need to be a three-hour separation.

The box-store portion of the project will be required to be Type I construction, as will any non-ground-level parking structures. Other tertiary structures will need to be reviewed on a per-case basis.

With sprinklers, the walls and ceilings of the main structures will need to have at least a two-hour fire rating; and the roof and floor will require at least a one hour rating.

Occupancy for the Group M portions will be 30 sq. ft. per person/gross ... the approximate square footage for each of the two main box-stores will be 100,000 sq. ft., meaning the max occupancy for each will be 3,300 people. The buildings will be sprinkled, so the required amount of exit egress width will be 41' 3" for each of the two main units. Stair width will dependant upon the elevated square footage... if any.

Exiting will be required on each wall of the structure, do to its size and open floor plan.

One water closet per 500 occupants is required for both males and females in each of the Group M portions of the project, which equals out to approx. seven stalls and five sinks in each restroom. Three drinking fountains will also be required, as will a utility sink.

“We require from buildings, as from men, two kinds of goodness: first, their doing their practical duty well: then that they be graceful and pleasing in doing it.”

- John Ruskin



Figure 19-1: This shows the initial view that will greet people as they reach the Livingston box-store site from Main St.

PRACTICAL



Figure 19-2 (above): This shows the view from Fleshman Creek.



Figure 19-3 (left): The site plan shows the integration of the new building with the surrounding built environment.



Figure 19-4 (above): A view out of the Home and Garden area of the store onto the outdoor amphitheater space which doubles as extra selling space during the warm weather seasons.

Figure 19-5 (right): A view from the sidewalk into the entry corridors from all below-grade levels of the store. This allows for visual communication between shoppers and passers-by.

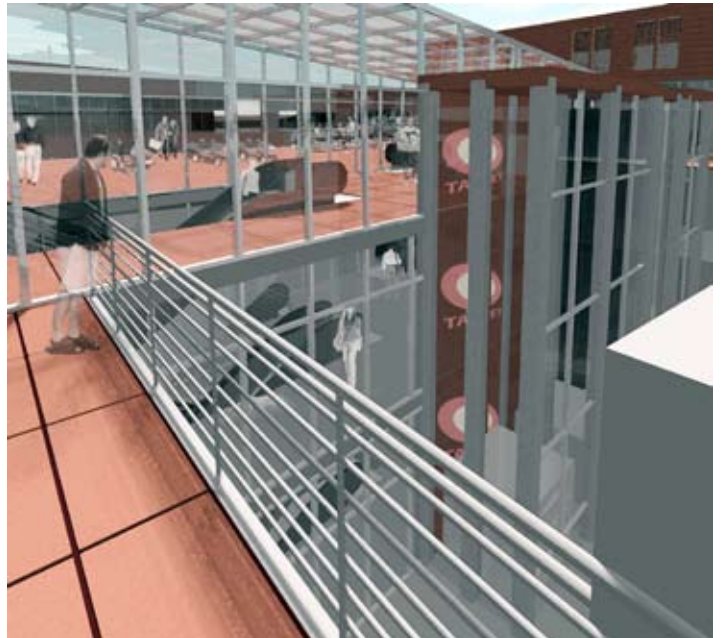


Figure 19-6 & 19-7 (opposite page): Views from the elevated garden area down into the store - again, showing the connection between store and park users.





Figure 19-8: North Elevation of entire Main St.



Figure 19-9: North Elevation of entire project.



Figure 19-10: North Elevation of project's east block



Figure 19-11: North Elevation of project's west block



Figure 19-12: East elevation of project.



Figure 19-13: West elevation of project.



OFFICE LEVELS 1 & 2 FLOOR PLAN
1/32" = 1'

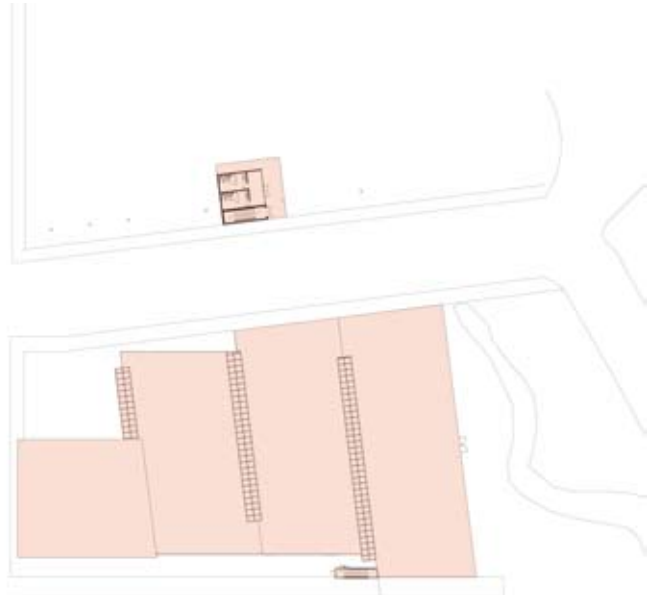


Figure 19-14: Ground floor and upper floor plans

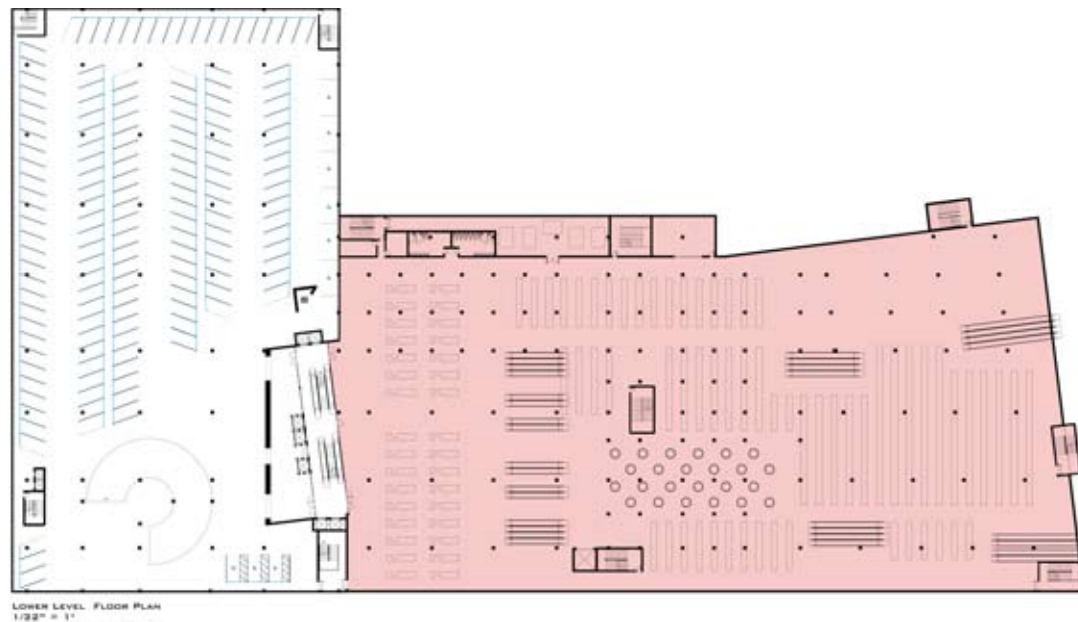
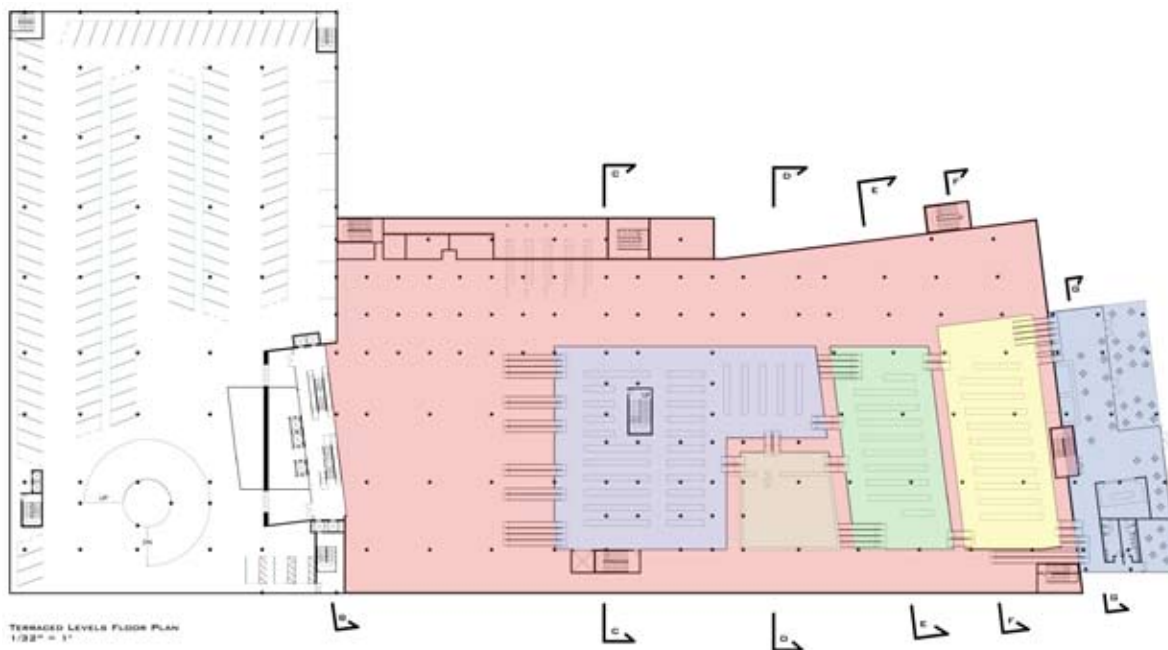


Figure 19-15 (facing page, top): Ter-
raced levels floor plan.

Figure 19-16 (facing page, bottom):
Lower level floor plan.

Figure 19-17 (this page): cross-sec-
tional views through main area of
store.

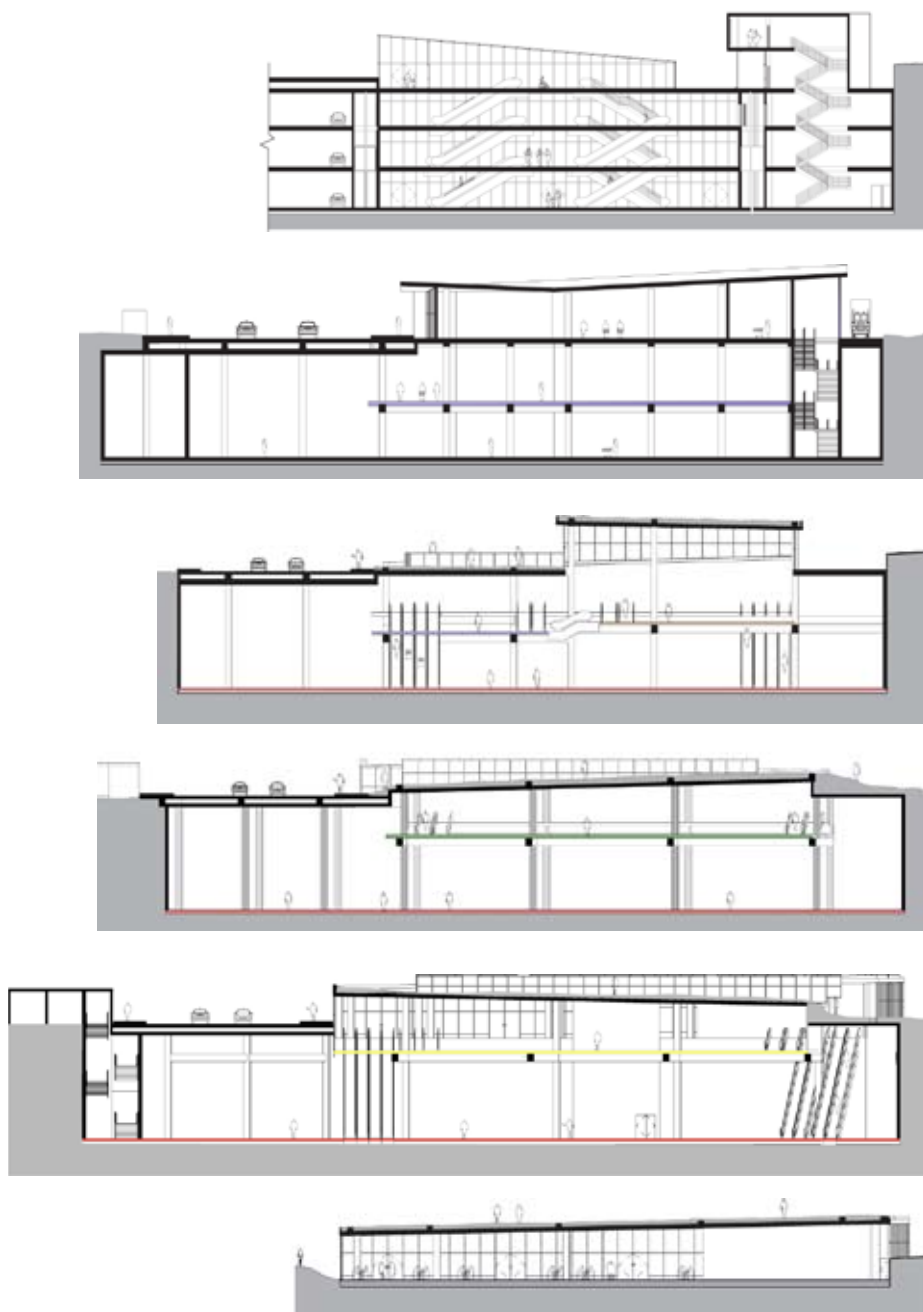




Figure 19-18: Long section through entire project.

Reflection

After spending the better part of a year researching and designing a building archetype that I myself have always loathed, I can honestly say that I do believe that aspects of a store like this can be beneficial to a historic downtown community.

I would not be so bold as to say that the good outweighs the bad, so I can understand the purists statements that no box store at all will always be more beneficial to a community's retail district than the most masterfully planned one. Unfortunately, we are not faced with the decision of whether or not to have a box store, but rather we are faced with how to cope with their inevitable coming and that is where this thesis really gains merit.

After exhaustively researching the subject, developing, then testing my theory; I can definitely say that the integration of stores, even of the magnitude of a super-center, into a downtown community can benefit the community (if designed correctly) and can be shown to be a benefit to the corporate store as well - both from a marketing standpoint and as a way to reach out to an new audience.

My design tested here shows how this is possible, and while a design of this caliber probably would not 'pencil' in a small town such as Livingston, Montana; it definitely has possibilities in an more urban environment or in select "high-end" towns, such as Jacksonville, Whyoming.

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LIVINGSTON VISION STATEMENT

III. Community Vision, Goals and Aspirations

With the input gathered from community participants during the planning process, a basis for developing a set of design standards for Park Street and the downtown was established. Through the articulation of shared community values, a vision for downtown and Park Street was formulated, which in turn helped establish a set of goals and aspirations that, once achieved, would ensure the regeneration of the downtown and Park Street into a vibrant, sustainable and economically viable urban place.

The values described in the vision statement define broad concepts for the future Livingston. More specific goals and aspirations for downtown Livingston and Park Street follow the community vision statement

Vision Statement

Livingston, Montana, is nestled along the banks of the Yellowstone River surrounded by beautiful mountain vistas and upland grassland foothills. The community is comprised of an authentic architectural form reflective of a past territorial period founded by commerce, trade and tourism. The cultural identity and railroad heritage that defined early Livingston as a modern community continues to influence the unique character of the place.

The community represents a broad range of diverse interests centered on a human scale pedestrian design combining natural images, civic and open spaces, buildings, streets and alleyways. Each element is designed by a principal belief of protecting and preserving the unique character of Livingston, Montana. Preservation of important landscapes and the rehabilitation of existing buildings to reflect and enhance regional architecture and building traditions are important community values.

Downtown Livingston — defined as the community commons — reflects an individual expression and a unique sense of place. The commons is a comfortable and attractive place where people feel safe and secure. The downtown commons is the heart and soul of the community – the living room of the community, open to all to experience and enjoy. Town residents, business people and even those who choose to live on the community's fringe and mountain surroundings together take pride in caring and preserving the unique

qualities of this community.

The predominant gateway and entry corridor to the downtown commons is Park Street. Park Street is a tree-lined, pedestrian-friendly boulevard defined by linear green spaces and interesting building forms. The green spaces provide a buffer from the railroad corridor and enhance the pedestrian circulation areas in town. Clean bike paths and walkways, pedestrian-level lighting and safe pedestrian crosswalks create an attractive entry gateway feature for the town. Entry and way-finding signage is located at each end of the corridor to help direct visitors to the downtown commons and assist in welcoming people to the community. The quality and character of development along

Park Street provides interest and invites people to come and visit and stay in the downtown.

The community is defined by a collective and understood ethic and sensitivity toward preserving and enhancing the character-defining elements that are distinctive to

Livingston, recognizing architecture of its time and place, and responding to the unique qualities that places Livingston apart from other communities. A mix of downtown land uses is integrated with existing neighborhoods where people are able to walk and bicycle to work, shopping and recreation.

Goals and Aspirations

The following goals and aspirations were derived from the shared community values and hold a complex and direct relationship with them, where the lines between goals and values frequently overlap. Each goal is stated and its major point briefly explained. Italicized are the specific shared values that the goal helps promote.

A. Promote an intuitive understanding of the layout of downtown Livingston.

The use associated with city centers may be enhanced if the physical layout can be easily understood. Understanding requires that we form a mental map of the area. The logic of the place needs to be understood sufficiently to orient pedestrians and visitors to the downtown community.

B. Reinforce the sense of historical continuity.

This goal speaks to the preservation of historical buildings, landscapes and other facilities of historical layout but, equally important, speaks to the relationship among buildings built over time — including those built in the present time.

C. Foster physical continuity for Park Street and the downtown.

Physical continuity speaks to the freedom of movement in pedestrian and automobile environments, but is most important in the pedestrian circumstance.

Encouraging movement within the downtown and along Park Street provides a sense of comfort and invites people to come to town, shop and do a variety of activities.

D. Develop the public nature of downtown and reinforce the sense that downtown belongs to everyone.

The public nature of downtown is most apparent in public open space — plazas, sidewalks, street and parks. The design of the ground levels of buildings is also vital in promoting inclusion in the place that is downtown.

Park Street should also address public spaces with the inclusion of a continuous, multi-use path system along the railroad corridor, pocket parks with seating areas, and way-finding and signage.

E. Encourage a diversity of uses, activities and sizes of development.

Achieving this goal will require balancing the existing uses downtown with additional uses that it lacks, such as residential and destination retail-clothing stores and specialty shops to attract new visitors. Diversity of uses, activities and sizes of development will foster a needed urban character and economic viability.

The Park Street corridor should also strive for a diverse range of land uses and activities. The preservation of interesting building types and linear open spaces will contribute to the character of the corridor. Preservation of the unique agricultural and railroad service industry along Park Street should be considered as long-term redevelopment is pursued.

F. Encourage public and private investment in the future of downtown and for Park Street.

Perhaps no other goal provides more opportunity to demonstrate the value we place on civic behavior than this one.

Where those who have gone before us have been willing to invest in the future — to regard the value of their investment over a long period — we generally have bridges, buildings and other structures that have endured and that we now regard as important to our history. This principle should be encouraged as new development is considered for the downtown and for Park Street.

G. Reinforce the unique and authentic character of Livingston.

To better promote a sense of connection to and membership with Livingston, downtown and Park Street should be a signal for a unique place. Developing a unique character for downtown — unlike any other downtown — should start with what is already unique about Livingston. Likewise, the Park Street corridor offers interesting defining character elements and opportunities to enhance positive perceptions rather than potential negative responses by visitors and residents.

H. Create a safe downtown for Livingston.

All the users of downtown and Park Street — men, women, children, young and old, those with physical challenges, natives and visitors, customers and service people — should be considered when designing public spaces in the downtown and Park Street. A safe downtown and Park Street will encourage economic activity and foster community.

I. Create a comfortable downtown for Livingston.

Comfort includes shelter from the harsh wind and cold conditions in the Yellowstone River valley, a reorientation of downtown away from an automobile-oriented place to a slower-moving, pedestrian-oriented place and an understanding of intuitive way-finding. Outdoor spaces can

be designed to better accommodate people as they move from place to place within the community. As a pedestrian, the experience of movement should be enjoyable and inviting.

J. Create a hierarchy of circulation that begins with pedestrians.

The hierarchy of order for circulation for the downtown and for parts of Park Street should be:

Pedestrians,
Ride share or future public transit
Bicycles
Vehicles

K. Actively promote civic art in the downtown.

Civic art promotes economic development, cultural tourism, downtown and neighborhood revitalization, national prestige and recognition, and an improved quality of life for a community. Art in a city's downtown describes the way in which the city honors spirit and soul, expresses humor and responds to its surrounding environmental context. Public art can create a civic awareness and expressions of community identity, myth and culture.

L. Encourage a vibrant cultural atmosphere.

Arts, entertainment and other cultural activities add richness and viability to our everyday lives. Such activity is an advantage to Livingston because it promotes economic development, cultural tourism, downtown and neighborhood revitalization, national prestige and recognition, social service opportunities, and an improved quality of life for the community.

M. Encourage interesting street level activity.

The street is a place for extra activities —sidewalk seating, vendors, waiting for a ride or friends, social gatherings outside the post office. Activities that do not require enclosed spaces or are enhanced by design outside should be added to the activities already occurring outside to create street level activity. This is particularly important during peak tourism season's to add interest and variety in the community.

N. Maintain a sense of connection to the natural environment.

Livingston's natural environment is a primary attribute. Every economically feasible effort to preserve, maintain and enhance Livingston's natural environment should be pursued.

The urban design of Livingston should respond and celebrate to the surrounding environment and the region.

O. Encourage an architectural design that responds to functional needs and reinforces downtown activities and Park Street character.

Innovative building design intended as a sculptural effect is not discouraged. However, formalist aspirations should not be attained at the expense of functional requirements and positive relationships with other buildings and uses downtown.

Architecture should respond to the entire array of human needs for the downtown and along Park Street.

Broad-based architectural design principles — as opposed to specific guidelines for the community — may provide guidance and a visual understanding of appropriate architectural design values for the community.

P. Encourage quality building.

Downtown and Park Street should represent a sense of permanence to it where some other areas of the city may not require. Quality building development adds to the overall value of downtown and will enhance the perceptions of the Park Street corridor as a significant part of the urban form.

Q. Promote downtown residential uses.

Regardless of the size of the city, a downtown residential component provides for 24-hour activity, a consumer base for retail activity, advocates for downtown, eyes and ears on the street, and encourages a pedestrian scale movement with minimal need for vehicle transportation for downtown workers.

R. Create an economically vibrant downtown.

None of the values defined previously can be promoted without the economic engine to drive downtown and Park Street redevelopment. Both the downtown and Park Street have specific market potentials. A range of economic development strategies should be defined for future sustained economic growth.

“A good sustainability and quality of life indicator: The average amount of time spent in a car.” - Paul Bedford

