



Section 4: Framework

Many communities have designed their revitalization strategies around a theme such as entertainment, housing, sports, meetings and conventions, and others. Although successful in select markets, many failed. The problem was, very few developed their theme around existing community assets. Rather, the same themes were replicated hundreds of times in hundreds of markets, and frequently with little or no impact.

The most prevalent lesson learned by these downtowns was that successful revitalization themes must be a reflection of the unique and historical character of the local market. While downtowns can never be the way they were 40 or 50 years ago, they can evolve into something new which embodies traditional (authentic) values. As one observer put it, “Downtowns represent the old home town in our consciousness and therefore exert an emotional pull.” People are coming back to downtown because of the ambiance and the experience. They want efficiency, but they also want to feel part of a community.

As explained to the project participants, no one initiative will advance the vision for the renaissance of Downtown; rather, a

series of efforts, occurring simultaneously over time which stabilize the environment for investment and define a place in the minds of residents, visitors, businesses and other stakeholders. The information which follows describes those framework elements needed to accomplish this in the Original Square Mile. The recommendations presented herein are intended to provide enough detail to guide future efforts and inform capital budgets, yet flexible enough to allow for future action which cannot be anticipated today.

Design Context

The purpose of establishing a design context in preparation of a master plan is to create a unified theme. In a downtown, definitions should serve to integrate new structures with existing and historic buildings, blending existing materials and patterns with new infill buildings and streetscape amenities in an effort to solidify a “sense of place.”

As evidenced by the Existing Conditions Diagram, the Study Area is comprised of many uses that result in a number of diverse neighborhoods. While some areas within the Original Square Mile



are comprised of one single use, such as residential or business/commercial, there are many areas that include a range of uses, such as R-O zones flanking Grand Avenue. In order to more fully understand specific issues facing the many, diverse neighborhoods contained in the Original Square Mile, the Study Area was divided into three primary sub-areas: Urban Core, Transitional Zone and Residential Character.

Urban Core: Infill and Redevelopment

The Urban Core contains primarily commercial and industrial uses and is located south of Grand Avenue. The Core also contains a significant number of public and civic facilities. While much of the Core is zoned to permit a wide range of uses, there are several new projects that have integrated uses into one cohesive project. Pedestrian accessibility and amenities, public facilities, traffic patterns, building heights and commercial development densities combine to create an urban character that attracts local businesses, employees, residents and visitors to the “heart” of the Original Square Mile.

Transitional Zone: Density / Diversity of Uses

The Transitional Zone contains a mix of commercial, institutional and residential uses as well as a significant amount of off-street surface parking. Development densities and building heights are not as extreme as in the downtown core and residential uses (primarily single family homes adapted to multi-family uses) are prevalent throughout this area. With the exception of Grand Avenue, traffic is less congested and parking is available, both on-street and in publicly- and privately-owned surface parking lots.

Residential Character

A significant amount of the Original Square Mile contains single family residential uses. The large number of older, historic structures results in a definitive architectural character that local residents want preserved. The 7th Avenue Historic District contains 34 historic homes with a high concentration of 1930s architectural styles and construction methods. The area covers five blocks of North 7th Street canvassing the most intact historical residential area in Grand Junction with a variety of Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Mission-style homes.



Framework Plan

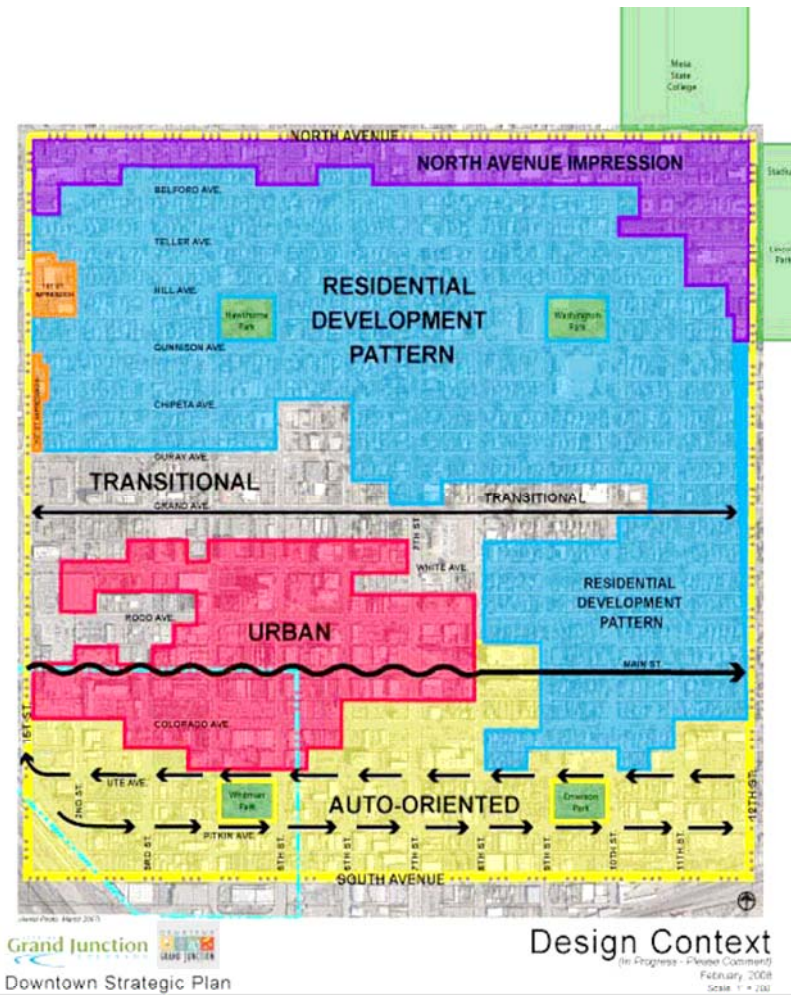
The intent of a framework plan is to build off of existing design palettes while considering the impact of new and expanding uses. Framework elements should serve to maximize economic and social return and understand relationships between individual neighborhoods, blocks and districts and build on opportunities to thread pieces together. It illustrates composite vision.

Downtown as a Destination

The Original Square Mile and the commercial core should retain their role as the City’s center and a regional destination. With a diverse mix of land uses, civic and public amenities, art and cultural facilities, the Area offers a hub of activity that supports and reflects the regional demographics.

Expanded Retail and Services

Expanding the commercial center of the Original Square Mile south, to capture underutilized parcels between Colorado Avenue and South Avenue, will create additional opportunities for pedestrian-oriented retail activity and link Main Street to existing





public amenities that currently do not benefit from strong pedestrian connections. The Museum of the West and Whitman Park would directly benefit from expanded retail opportunities and help to integrate these existing historic and cultural amenities into the commercial heart of Downtown.

Solidified Civic Core: Keeping Civic / Public Uses in Downtown

Downtown Grand Junction is home to many local, state, and federal services and agencies and results in a “Civic Core” that serves as an employment generator and regional destination. The size and magnitude of these facilities contributes to the overall character of Downtown. Buildings are large and create a civic presence along the street edge.

Every effort should be made to keep and maintain existing public amenities and services in Downtown. These uses serve to attract large numbers of residents to Downtown, which in turn contributes to its economic vitality. Currently, the library is seeking to relocate elsewhere. While this creates an opportunity for a potential redevelopment project within the Zone that could link existing residential uses to the Urban Core, the loss of this important civic facility and activity hub within the Original Square

Mile would be unfortunate and should be reconsidered. *Note: One of the catalyst concepts presented here incorporates the library facility into a mixed-use development on the current library site.*

Land Use Strategy: Mixed Use, RO Zoning

Currently, there are several projects in the Urban Core that contain a mix of uses, offering retail and/or commercial services along the street level (where there are high volumes of pedestrian activity and visibility) and either business/office and/or residential uses on the upper floors. The combination of uses is conducive to active, urban areas where local residents want accessibility to urban amenities.

Along the edges of the Original Square Mile, commercial activity is encroaching on established single-family residential neighborhoods. Although existing residents expressed their satisfaction with existing development and uses along the 1st Street and North Avenue corridors, many participants expressed concern over future expansion and potential rezoning along these edges and urged the City to respect existing zone districts and development patterns and prohibit any further rezonings or variances. Conversely, homeowners in the Transitional Zone,



especially along Grand Avenue, expressed concern over the rapidly expanding commercial character of the R-O District. Traffic congestion, parking issues, vehicle accessibility, lighting and signage were each cited as an adverse impact that existing single family residential homeowners were grappling with as more and more homes were converted to business uses.

Pedestrian Connectivity

There are several areas within the Study Area that are conducive to pedestrian activity and offer safe, comfortable connections from one public facility to another. Pedestrian amenities are well established along sections of Main Street and 7th Street, but are limited in other parts of the Study Area. Wide sidewalks, furnishings, a nationally-recognized public arts program and shade trees create a comfortable and pleasant activity zone along the street edge of select sections of the commercial core. However, within one or two blocks of Main Street, streetscape amenities wane and result in a lack of visual continuity along the street and correspondingly decreased pedestrian traffic. These conditions do not encourage pedestrian movement from the Commercial Core to other parts of the Study Area. Discontinuity of clearly defined, safe and accessible sidewalks can be a significant impediment to

infill and redevelopment. Along many blocks in the Study Area, especially south of Colorado Avenue along Ute and Pitkin Avenues, traffic volumes, speeds and expansive curb cuts further jeopardize pedestrian safety. Large expanses of surface parking, vacant lots, and fragmented development patterns are not conducive to pedestrian connectivity. In these areas, ill-defined access and parking create safety issues. Crosswalks and intersections are also inconsistent and the lack of pedestrian crossing signals and crosswalks weaken overall connectivity within the Original Square Mile. Additional pedestrian safety/connectivity issues include:

- Public restrooms
- Streetscape furnishings including benches, pedestrian lighting, bike racks
- Expanded public art display/pedestals

Vehicular Connectivity

High traffic volumes along Ute and Pitkin Avenues create pedestrian circulation issues. Truck traffic and through-traffic are also perceived as an issue that deters pedestrian connectivity to southern portions of the Study Area. Although convenient automobile access to and into the Commercial



Core is important to the economic vitality of Downtown, it should not constrain pedestrian activity or redevelopment.

A special consideration is the use of Ute/Pitkin as a state highway. When conventional highway standards are applied to these streets, the result is a street character that is not conducive to pedestrians and limits development potential of key parcels along these streets. Initial discussions with the Colorado Department of Transportation regarding Ute, Pitkin and South Avenues have resulted in potential changes to traffic flow in this area. Studies, either underway or funded, to investigate traffic patterns include:

- Ute Avenue becomes a two-way City street and is closed in two locations:
 - between 4th and 5th to create synergy between Whitman Park and the Museum of the West, and
 - between 9th and 10th to connect the School District property to Emerson Park
- Pitkin Avenue remains one-way, but shifts to a west-bound route between 12th and 1st Streets; and
- South Avenue becomes one-way, east-bound between 1st and 12th Avenues with potential acquisition of some

parcels to improve turning radii at the edges of the Original Square Mile.

Traffic congestion and speeds, especially through the residential neighborhoods, were cited by process participants as a potential safety hazard and impediment to pedestrian and bicycle access to Hawthorne and Washington Parks. Of particular importance was an expressed need for additional pedestrian safety improvements near Columbine Elementary School. Potential traffic calming options along specific sections of the streets listed above could include:

- Re-striping of traffic lanes on specific sections of 4th and 5th Streets to create one designated bicycle lane, one designated drive lane and one lane of on-street parallel parking on 4th Street;
- Speed bumps prior to street/park intersections; and
- Pedestrian safety improvements at the intersections of 4th and 5th Streets / Hill Avenue and 4th and 5th Streets / Gunnison Avenue.