



A CITY THAT WORKS

Belle Plaine Design Manual

City of Belle Plaine Community Vision for Commercial Development

Commissioned by the City of Belle Plaine

**Final Report September 2008
Revision March 2016**

*Prepared by the Center for Rural Design
University of Minnesota*

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Belle Plaine Design Manual

City of Belle Plaine Community Vision for Commercial Development

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This project could not have been accomplished without the cooperation and knowledge of the Belle Plaine Urban Design Review Committee.

July 2008

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Pictures on cover provided by the City of Belle Plaine

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Executive Summary

The Belle Plaine Design Manual is a set of Design Guidelines that provide the framework for the physical expression of the community's values for new commercial / industrial development and renovations in downtown Belle Plaine and the US Highway 169 Corridor Commercial areas. The Design Manual seeks to unify and distinguish the downtown and the US Highway 169 Corridor businesses to enhance economic development. The intent of the Belle Plaine Design Manual is to guide developers, owners and the Urban Design Review Committee towards a building and landscape character that is complimentary to the community's vision for the 21st century. The community's vision strives to shape the physical identity of Belle Plaine by drawing from the City's sense of place, which includes the Minnesota River, prairie and bluffslands, small town heritage, significant location on the rural/urban edge, agriculture traditions and technologies, and local economic development.

This Design Manual includes objectives, policy statements and design guidelines for the Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard, the Downtown District, the US Highway 169 Corridor District and City gateways. The Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard District is intended to distinguish, connect and provide legible access to the Downtown District and the US Highway 169 Corridor District. The boulevard features a bike path, consistent street trees, lighting and signage. The Downtown District focuses on the urban core of the City and focuses on architectural elements and streetscape applications. The US Highway 169 Corridor District includes the commercial and industrial businesses along the highway and features guidelines on building orientation, architectural elements and streetscape applications. The City gateways announce and celebrate the City. Each gateway monument will have a similar character and highlight the location and prominence of the sign's specific location.

The Belle Plaine Design Manual is an update to the Belle Plaine Design and Sign Guidelines and the product of the City of Belle Plaine's Community Vision for Commercial Development Project effort. The Community Vision for Commercial Development project was commissioned by the City of Belle Plaine, guided by the Steering Committee and prepared by the Center for Rural Design (CRD) at the University of Minnesota.

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Introduction

- Project Vision and Purpose**
- Overview of Belle Plaine**
- Overview of Issues**
- Planning Context**

Project Vision and Purpose

The Belle Plaine Design Manual (Design Manual) is an update to the Belle Plaine Design and Sign Guidelines (See Appendix A) and the product of the City of Belle Plaine's Community Vision for Commercial Development Project effort. The Design Manual seeks to unify and distinguish Belle Plaine's downtown and the US Highway 169 Corridor businesses to enhance economic development. The intent of the Belle Plaine Design Manual is to guide developers, owners and the Urban Design Review Committee (UDRC) towards a building and landscape character that is complimentary to the community's vision for the 21st century. The community's vision strives to shape the physical identity of Belle Plaine by drawing from the City's sense of place which includes the Minnesota River, prairie and blufflands, small town heritage, significant location on the rural/urban edge, agriculture traditions and technologies, and local economic development.

The name of the Guidelines have changed from the Belle Plaine Design and Sign Guidelines to the Belle Plaine Design Manual because the content of the document has expanded to include a community-based vision and design guidelines for the new commercial and industrial development along US Highway 169 and improvement and restoration of buildings in the historic downtown. The Design Manual also includes recommendations for legal implementation and as such is intended to be a part of, or an addition to, the City Code.

The Community Vision for Commercial Development project was commissioned by the City of Belle Plaine, guided by the Belle Plaine Urban Design Review Committee (UDRC) and prepared by the Center for Rural Design (CRD) at the University of Minnesota. The Belle Plaine City Council approved the contract with CRD in December 2007 and the project concluded with the Design Manual in July 2008.

The Community Vision for Commercial Development Project was based on the community's values about Belle Plaine's current and future image. Community values were obtained from the project's Steering Committee and a Community Design Workshop. The Community Design Workshop took place on April 8th, 2008 and included close to 30 community members, plus Steering Committee members. The Steering Committee was comprised of the UDRC and a broad base of additional community members. The UDRC was reappointed to prepare recommendations for design components, potential funding sources for community-wide improvements and administer the design standards for properties in all commercial zoning districts.

The Design Manual is the product of Steering Committee guidance and the Community Design Workshop results.

Overview of Belle Plaine

The City of Belle Plaine is located in Scott County and is approximately forty miles from the Twin Cities (Figure 1). US Highway 169 is the major highway that connects the City to the metro area. The City's location is significant because it is on the urban / rural edge of development and land use, which suggests that Belle Plaine is the southwest gateway into the seven-county metro area.



Figure 1. Belle Plaine Region, CRD, February, 2008.

Belle Plaine, as shown in Figure 2 (located at the end of the section), is home to more than 6,744 people (Metropolitan Council, 2007) and a hub for manufacturing, education and agriculture. The City resides within the glacial floodplain of the Minnesota River and the surrounding landscape is characterized by rolling prairie and bluff lands. The City is serviced by State Highway 25 and US Highway 169. State Highway 25 majestically crosses the Minnesota River and provides access to the City of Green Isle. US Highway 169 connects Belle Plaine to the Twin Cities to the north and Mankato to the south and serves the northern and southern portions of the City. Recently, the Minnesota Department of Transportation modified the access of US Highway 169 to the local roads of the City resulting in one interchange finished in 2007 located in the northeast and one proposed interchange in the southwest of the City. As a result, two areas of commercial and industrial development were defined: the area of development around the US Highway 169 Corridor and the historic downtown district.

Overview of Issues

Regional Development Pressures

The City of Belle Plaine, located along the Minnesota River in the southwest corner of Scott County, is in one of the fastest growing counties in Minnesota, yet it has a strong relationship to the rural agricultural landscape surrounding the City. Like many rural communities at the urban/rural edge, it is experiencing many changes today and will experience even more in the future, and with change comes a new identity that may or may not reflect community values. Historically the city was built on the north side of US Highway 169, but with the upgrading of highway interchanges, future residential growth is expected to be primarily on the south side and future commercial growth is expected along both sides of the highway.

Downtown

Downtown Belle Plaine, located at the intersection of Main Street and Meridian Street, is the center of community life and commercial business on the north side of US Highway 169. Historically, the town was designed to accommodate horse and buggy transportation and today the downtown roads reflect that heritage. The roads are approximately sixty-five feet wide with perpendicular parking and traffic speed is posted at thirty miles an hour.

The streets have a huge presence in the downtown, suggesting that it is heavily auto-oriented rather than pedestrian-oriented. The urban design elements also complement an auto-oriented environment with minimal pedestrian-oriented city way-finding signage, little vegetation and sporadic street lighting.

The buildings also play a significant role in shaping the public pedestrian environment. Some of the downtown building types are historic and all of the buildings maintain a narrow facade at the sidewalk and are two to three stories high. The buildings have a small footprint, with rectilinear and narrow geometry and all face the street grid with a uniform setback flush with the sidewalk. The buildings help to enhance the pedestrian environment by reducing the urban scale with elements such as human-scale windows and facade detail improvements, non-fixed awnings, and perpendicular signage oriented towards the sidewalk.

Connections to the Minnesota River, the regional trails, and the City Parks and Recreation system are developing. Consistent signage, bike paths and enhanced roadside landscaping could help pedestrians and bikers connect to the recreational systems and local natural amenities.

US Highway 169 Corridor

The US Highway 169 Corridor, planned and maintained by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), connects the City of Belle Plaine with the Twin Cities to the north and Mankato to the south. US Highway 169 is located on a northeast to southwest angle in relation to the Belle Plaine city grid and is designated as a “High Priority Interregional Corridor” to the State by MnDOT. The Corridor Management Plan, published by MnDOT in 2002 addresses concerns about increased traffic, decreased highway speeds and safety concerns. MnDOT identifies US Highway 169 as essential to the mobility of those in Southwestern Minnesota. Highway performance and safety between the Twin Cities and Mankato is expected to significantly decrease over the next 20 years.

The plan addresses these concerns by controlling and limiting access to the highway in the corridor to achieve a balance between the needs and visions of individual communities and the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. This includes minimizing adverse community effects while maintaining or improving both highway and local traffic by striving for the following performance goals:

- An average travel run target speed of 65 mph for the entire US Highway 169 corridor (2001 average was 61 mph, and 61 mph through the Belle Plaine section).
- Improved safety and crash rates lower than the state average. Traffic volumes are predicted to increase 38 percent from 2000 to 2025 between Main Street and Meridian Street.

MnDOT published the TH 169 Corridor Belle Plaine Area Plan in 2003 that established a plan for the transition of TH 169 from a highway to a freeway in the city. The plan involves eliminating at-grade intersections and providing access to area businesses through frontage roads, including the following elements:

- Interchanges at Main Street and Meridian Street
- A south frontage road between Meridian Street and South Street, and a north frontage road between Meridian and Main Street.
- An extension of Enterprise Drive to Main Street/CR 64.
- Grade-separated pedestrian crossings
- An over/underpass in the vicinity of the western terminus of Belle Plaine Trail
- Essentially, all roads crossing the highway will be converted to an interchange, an over/underpass, or will be closed.

The interchange at MN 25/CR 64 was completed in the Spring of 2007, and provides primary access from the highway to the City of Belle Plaine. Construction has not begun on the Meridian Street interchange, and the current at-grade intersection remains open and protected by a two-way stop sign. Vehicles wishing to access or cross the highway must either use the Main Street interchange or use the at-grade crossing at Meridian

Street. In the fall of 2008, MnDOT will start construction on a 3/4 access crossing at US Highway 169 and Meridian Street. Cross traffic will not be allowed from South Meridian Street to North Meridian Street. This poses a connectivity problem.

The US Highway 169 Belle Plaine Corridor is a four lane highway with traffic speeds of upwards of fifty-five miles an hour. The highway corridor currently divides the town due to the barrier of the highway itself and the difficulty of accessing the businesses and communities on either side. Access between north and south Belle Plaine is limited to the Main Street overpass and the proposed Meridian Street interchange.

The buildings on the highway are either generic strip mall, pole barn or big box structures one to two stories high. The buildings have large footprints, large parking lots, and are mostly rectilinear. The buildings front both the highway and the city grid and have large setbacks. The businesses are commercial and industrial. The commercial signage is tall, highway scale and oriented to the automobile. The landscaping in the US Highway 169 Belle Plaine Corridor is limited to low shrubs and grass with no overall landscape concept. The highway is oriented towards automobile traffic with few pedestrian elements. The north and south gateways of Belle Plaine are small signs with a small City logo or a small, standard MnDOT sign. There is no context signage alerting people using the highway about the Minnesota River or the Minnesota River Scenic Byway.

Community Entry Points

The Belle Plaine entry points are located at the interchange of Main Street, the Meridian intersection, south of the Minnesota River bridge on County Road 25, County Road 3 approaching from the south and County Road 64 approaching from the east. Currently, there is some small City logo signage and some standard MnDOT City signage. All of the entrances could benefit from highway scale signage that is appropriate to the road usage hierarchy.

Planning Context

Planning documents directly applicable to the Design Manual are the guiding principals and economic development goals of the proposed 2008 City of Belle Plaine Comprehensive Plan, the Belle Plaine Main Street Program and the 2005 Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan.

2008 City of Belle Plaine Comprehensive Plan

The guiding principles and the economic development goals of the proposed 2008 City of Belle Plaine Comprehensive Plan have portions which support the efforts of the Design Manual. Portions of these sections of the Comprehensive Plan are excerpted and discussed below.

Guiding Principals

Based on the Mission Statement, community input and Planning Commission and staff guidance, the 2008 Comprehensive Plan is being developed with the following guiding principals:

Belle Plaine strives to provide:

- An atmosphere that encourages active involvement of its citizenry
- A safe and wholesome environment
- An attitude that encourages a vibrant business community
- A safe and efficient transportation system
- A well planned community with adequate infrastructure
- An atmosphere that promotes quality of life with functioning parks, trails and other recreational opportunities
- Fiscally responsible decisions
- An atmosphere which captures the spirit of a small town
- Housing that reflects a full range of choices
- Downtown ~A place for people to gather and preserve as the city's central core
- A well balanced tax base
- A proactive position on future growth
- An identity that reflects the place
- A caring, learning environment

Belle Plaine's Comprehensive Plan supports a vibrant business community. The Design Manual seeks to unify and distinguish the downtown and the US Highway 169 Corridor businesses to enhance economic development.

Belle Plaine's Comprehensive Plan supports its small town character. The Design

Planning Context

Manual seeks to enhance the City's small town character by providing for new development and restoration standards in keeping with the architectural style and scale of downtown Belle Plaine.

Belle Plaine's Comprehensive Plan supports the City's central core as a place for people to gather. The Design Manual provides for pedestrian-oriented urban design elements such as landscaping, lighting, intersection treatments and building façade upgrades to enhance the walkability and livability of the downtown and US Highway 169 Commercial districts.

Belle Plaine's Comprehensive Plan supports an identity that reflects place. The Design Manual draws on the community's sense of place to connect and distinguish the downtown and US Highway 169 Commercial districts with the Belle Plaine Boulevard.

Economic Development Agency's Mission Statement and Goals

EDA's mission statement is as follows,

"The mission of the Belle Plaine Economic Development Authority is to improve the economic well being of Belle Plaine as measured by job creation, increase in the tax base and expansion of business concerns; and instill a commitment to excellence, integrity, pride and respect in the community by working independently and cooperatively with other organizations and individuals, both public and private, for the purpose of promoting and advancing industrial, commercial, residential and agricultural development and redevelopment."

The EDA has adopted the following for their five year goals:

- *Implement an ongoing community beautification and enrichment program, including assistance to businesses to aesthetically improve their buildings and properties.*
- *Expand infrastructure to meet projected industrial, commercial and residential growth as well as improve existing infrastructure to better serve existing industrial, commercial and residential properties.*
- *Maintain and utilize an organizational focus, coordinated by the Executive Director of the EDA, for the purposes of promoting economic development efforts and enhancing community awareness and participation in economic development/redevelopment.*
- *Recruit, encourage and assist new and existing business and industry to locate and expand within the City through the development and implementation of a marketing plan.*
- *Maximize opportunities to access appropriate public and private sources of*

- technical and financial assistance to achieve community goals and objectives.*
- *Implement specific guidelines for promoting and utilizing the revolving loan fund.*
- *Investigate and actively participate in obtaining grant monies for community development activities.*
- *Address removal of blighted conditions in commercial and industrial areas.*
- *Promote a continued high quality of life within the Belle Plaine Community.*
- *Conduct an annual meeting with Community Officials and the public to receive input on economic development issues.*

The EDA's mission statement supports the improvement of Belle Plaine's economic well-being and the enhancement of commercial and industrial development and redevelopment. The Design Manual seeks to provide a unified and unique aesthetic for the Downtown and US Highway 169 Districts to retain and attract businesses and clients. By visually connecting and distinguishing these two districts, the city's and business' images will be more noticeable and marketable. Increased marketability will enhance efforts for commercial and industrial development and redevelopment.

The EDA's five-year goals include an ongoing beautification and enrichment program and promotion of high quality of life within the Belle Plaine Community. The Design Manual seeks to provide the tools to enhance the architecture, landscape architecture and urban design of the Downtown District, US Highway 169 District, Belle Plane Boulevard and City Gateways. The enhancement of the Districts and City Gateways will increase efforts to beautify the City. City beautification supports the efforts to enhance the quality of life. A high quality of life tends to attract new residents and businesses.

One of the EDA's five-year goals is to address blighted conditions in commercial and industrial areas. The Design Manual will provide the framework from which blight is identified. The Design Manual will guide business owners toward acceptable architecture, landscape architecture and urban design within the City.

Belle Plaine Design and Sign Guidelines, Belle Plaine Main Street Program

Developed by the Design Committee of the Belle Plaine Main Street Program, this set of guidelines outline the requirements for rehabilitation of historic building facades. This document provides detailed recommendations in regards to storefronts, upper stories and sign standards. Compliance with these guidelines is required for consideration in the low interest loan pool provided by the City. These guidelines were developed with concern for the appearance of the town, for the economic abilities of the building owner, and for general compliance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Please see Appendix A for a complete copy of both the Main Street Program Design guidelines and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

The Belle Plaine Design and Sign Guidelines developed through the Main Street Program is the precursory document to the Design Manual. The detailed design

guidelines in this document are the basis for the Downtown District design guidelines in the Design Manual. Compliance with the Design Manual will supersede the Belle Plaine Main Street Design and Sign Guidelines for the consideration of the City Low Interest Loan Program.

The Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan Goals

The 2005 Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan highlights the assets and amenities of the Parks, Trails and Recreation Section of the 1999 City of Belle Plaine Comprehensive Plan and plans for the City's green infrastructure¹. The Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan is important to the Design Manual because the Design Manual seeks to link to local and regional natural and recreational amenities. The Design Manual also includes urban design guidelines. Urban design is the design of the pedestrian friendly environment. A pedestrian friendly environment provides ease of access by foot, bike or other non-motorized transportation and as such incorporates bike paths, park space and wayfinding signage. The following is an excerpt of the goals from the 2005 Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan. The highlighted goals support the efforts of the Design Manual:

1. *Natural resource protection and management.*
2. *Cooperation with other governments and communities. The City of Belle Plaine will enhance its green infrastructure by cooperating with other governments, agencies, and communities with land use interest or authority around Belle Plaine. The City adopts the following goals to guide green infrastructure decisions:*
 - A. *Open and maintain dialogue with neighboring communities, the school district, county and state agencies, and other planning and regulatory authorities to conduct cooperative planning and programmatic initiatives.*
 - B. *Create long-term park, recreation, and open space goals in cooperation with other communities, units of government, and agencies.*
 - C. *Create links between Belle Plaine's park, trail, and open space system and the regional systems administered by surrounding counties and the State.*
3. *Systematic expansion of the park, trail, and natural open space system. The City of Belle Plaine will carefully and efficiently expand its park and open space system to meet the needs of its growing population base. The City adopts the following systematic expansion goals:*
 - A. *Maintain or improve its residents' access to parks and park facilities, both*

1. "Green infrastructure, also called 'natural infrastructure', is a planning term used to refer collectively to parks, trails, open space, surface water and shoreland, and natural systems" Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan, CR Planning, 2005.

in terms of an even distribution of parks across the City and in providing a variety of recreation opportunities to meet the needs of the City's growing population.

- B. Encourage pedestrian and bicycle paths throughout the community.*
 - C. Promote the creation of new green space, native plant landscaping, and expansions of the urban forest on both private and public lands.*
 - D. Provide for new park, open space, or other green infrastructure in growth corridors and annexations.*
- 4. Ensuring sustainability of green infrastructure*
 - 5. Offering a range of recreation areas and sport facilities to serve people of all ages*
 - 6. Management and system expansion that enhances private property values and property rights.*

The Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan supports the creation of links between Belle Plaine's park, trail, and open space system and the regional systems administered by surrounding counties and the State. The Design Manual seeks to connect Belle Plaine's commercial areas to the parks, trails and recreational areas to enhance people's sense of place, provide a variety of entertainment options and promote the rural and natural resource heritage of the City.

The Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan supports pedestrian and bicycle paths throughout the community. The Design Manual seeks to enhance the pedestrian-oriented urban design elements to enhance the small town quality of life of Belle Plaine. Incorporating pedestrian and bicycle paths are important to connect the commercial areas and green infrastructure. The paths physically slow people down to allow for contemplation of place which helps to promote the rural heritage of the City. And, the paths provide for a connection and extension of the regional bike system.

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Design Guidelines

Design Elements

Design Districts

General Objectives and Principles

Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard Guidelines

Downtown District Guidelines

US Highway 169 District Guidelines

Gateways Guidelines

Design Elements

Connecting and differentiating the US Highway 169 Corridor District and the Downtown District is of high priority to the Community Vision for Commercial Development effort. Through natural and physical inventory research, discussion with the Steering Committee and the Community Design Workshop, certain features surfaced as being driving elements in connecting the two districts. As illustrated in Figure 3 (located at the end of the section), the landscape and urban grid form are prominent features influencing Belle Plaine's unique place in Minnesota.

The Landscape

The Minnesota River, bluffs and prairie landscape are significant features in Belle Plaine because the landscape helped shape the economy and culture of Belle Plaine. The City is located between the Minnesota River to the northwest and the bluffs to the southeast. The Minnesota River is significant as a design element for the Design Manual because of its historical and cultural importance and its regional connections to the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway and the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad Line. The Minnesota River has a wide valley with wetlands on either side. The bridge over the River provides access to Belle Plaine from the northwest and is a key gateway into the City. The bluffs, which are remnants from the ancient glacial Minnesota River Valley, reside on the southeast of Belle Plaine. The bluffs are important because they create a valley and the undulating topography with in which Belle Plaine is located. The presettlement landcover is prairie grasses. Belle Plaine's prairie landcover is significant because of the open views the grasses afford.

The Urban Grid Form

Belle Plaine's urban form is organized in a grid with land uses concentrically located in relationship to the historical Central Business District. Main Street and Meridian Street form the main downtown intersection and lead to the interchanges with US Highway 169. The urban grid is north-south and US Highway 169 intersects the grid at an angle. The grid form of the City is significant because it was the historic design of the City and the grid is well maintained today. As such, it is more dominant than the new US Highway 169.

Design Districts

The Design Districts, shown in Figures 5 and 5a, include the Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard, the Downtown District, the US Highway 169 District and the City Gateways. The Downtown District and the US Highway 169 Districts correlate respectively to the City's 2008 Land Use and Proposed Land Use Map. The Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard District connects the Downtown and US Highway Districts with a series of urban design features. The City Gateways feature new signage and landscape treatments that embrace the proposed entry locations and the Belle Plaine community vision for the future.

Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard

The intent of the Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard is to connect, distinguish and provide legible access to the Downtown District and the US 169 Corridor District through urban design elements. The Boulevard will be distinguished with consistent street trees, lighting and a bike path. The major intersections of the Boulevard, illustrated in Figure 6 (located at the end of the section), will feature prominent context-sensitive monuments or signage.

Downtown District

The intent of the Downtown District is to provide architecture, landscape architecture and urban design guidelines that maintain a vibrant historic, pedestrian-oriented urban center. (Figure 7- located at the end of the section)

US Highway 169 Corridor District

The intent of the US Highway 169 Corridor District is to provide architecture, landscape architecture and urban design guidelines that provide a complementary aesthetic to the Downtown District and embrace the large-scale nature of highway development.

Gateways

The gateways to the City, as illustrated in Figure 5, are important because they are the first and last image that a visitor sees. As such, the gateways should be significant and complement the roadway's scale and daily usage. Gateway signage that has the most impact incorporates images and materials that have meaning to the community, are designed with the surrounding landscape in mind and are complementary in size to the scale of the roadway.

Planning Principles

The Design Manual is an update to the Belle Plaine Design and Sign Guidelines produced from the Belle Plaine Main Street Program. The Design Manual includes Belle Plaine's updated Design Guidelines and a summary of the Belle Plaine Community Vision for Commercial Development Project. The goal of the Design Manual is to provide a flexible framework for making architecture, landscape architecture and urban design decisions. Essential to the Design Manual are Planning Principles. The Planning Principles outline and guide the character and quality of the general and area-specific design guidelines.

General Principles

1. The Downtown Belle Plaine and US Highway 169 Districts will be united by the Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard. The Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard will include consistent landscape, signage, lighting and banners.
2. The City of Belle Plaine will designate downtown Belle Plaine, the US Highway 169 Corridor and the Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard as Design Districts.
3. The City of Belle Plaine will continue to maintain the appointment of the Urban Design Review Committee to review the application for new construction, remodeling and renovation using the Design Manual.
4. All of the Design Districts will embrace Belle Plaine's:
 - sense of place, which includes the Minnesota River, prairie and bluffslands.
 - small town heritage and significant location on the urban and rural edge.
 - agricultural history and future economic pursuits.
5. The Downtown and US Highway 169 Districts will be complementary and appropriate for the scale of land use.
6. The Downtown and US Highway 169 Districts will encourage sustainable design techniques and methods. Sustainable design techniques and methods include but are not limited to pedestrian-oriented design, the improvement of heat islands¹, emphasize energy and water conservation, and increase biodiversity² with the utilization of native planting.

1. *Heat Island: An urban area having higher average temperature than its rural surroundings owing to the greater absorption, retention, and generation of heat by its buildings, pavements, and human activities. Based on the Random House Unabridged Dictionary, © Random House, Inc. 2006.*

2. *Biodiversity: 1. The number and variety of organisms found within a specified geographic region. 2. The variability among living organisms on the earth, including the variability within and between species and within and between ecosystems. The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition. Copyright © 2006*

General Objectives and Policies

The General Objectives and Policies apply to all of the Design Districts.

Objective

- To develop and encourage the application of a set of design guidelines that maintains the heritage and character of Belle Plaine as a rural community in both the public and private realm.

Policy

- The City of Belle Plaine recognizes the value in maintaining its heritage as a small rural community. As the City expands it has become necessary to identify mechanisms that maintain a unified rural character throughout the City while allowing divergent but complimentary development patterns and architectural styles to be utilized. Therefore, the City will abide by the design guidelines in the Design Manual intended to maintain a unified and recognizable identity throughout the community.
- As needs change and new areas are annexed into the city, additional portions of the community may be assigned as expansions of the Design Districts described in this document. The objectives, policies, and guidelines outlined for each District will apply to any new expansion of the Districts.

Additional Notes

- Recognizing that each project is unique in its relationship to the site and surroundings, the Urban Design Review Committee will endeavor to interpret the guidelines within the Design Manual for the most appropriate application.

Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard District Guidelines

The Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard District connects the Downtown District with the US Highway 169 Corridor District by a series of urban design features. The intent of the Boulevard is embrace the two commercial areas and to provide easy access locally and from US Highway 169.

Objectives

- To link the spatially separated commercial districts of Belle Plaine through a common identity imparted by a designated connecting loop with unique signage and other wayfinding techniques.

Policies

- The City of Belle Plaine will designate a Commercial Boulevard District that connects key commercial districts within the City. The designated loop will serve as a wayfinding mechanism that guides local residents and visitors to and between these spatially separated commercial districts. The loop will be identified in the public realm through unique signage and streetscape treatments at key intersections and appropriate intervals along the route.

Additional Notes

- Recognizing that each project is unique in it's relationship to the site and surroundings, the Urban Design Review Committee will endeavor to interpret the guidelines within the Design Manual for the most appropriate application.

Guidelines

- The Commercial Boulevard District will be identified in the public and private realm with complimentary design elements.

Signage - Signage plays an important part in the creation of “pedestrian friendly” streets by establishing a visual guide and orientational tool for pedestrians and vehicular users of the downtown. Lack of wayfinding tools such as signs and graphics can cause confusion, and most importantly discourage walking. Specific images and recommendations for street signage would be developed further in a future detailed signage study. Generally however, signage for the Commercial Boulevard District should meet the following criteria:

- In developing the signage system, Identification Signs (naming signs to identify areas within the Commercial Boulevard District, important buildings etc.), Directional Signs (used to guide the motorist or pedestrian in and

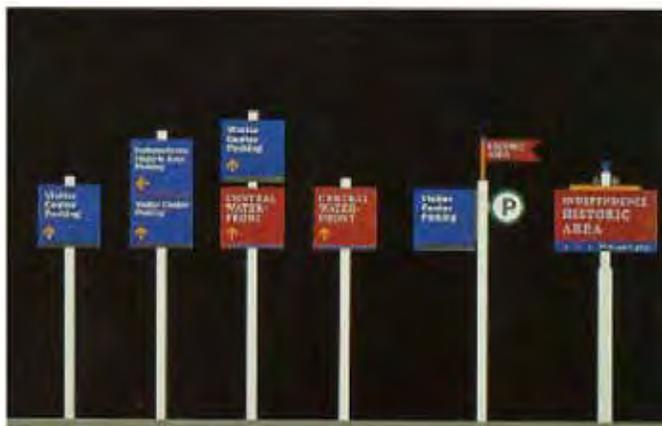
around the district) and Regulatory Signs (signs that set the rules for travel and parking within the district) should be included.

- Signs should communicate required information effectively. Information should be presented in a visually comprehensive manner. The sequence in which information is communicated should be logical and should correspond to user needs.
- Signs should reinforce the overall visual image and character of the Commercial Boulevard District. The design of the signage system should be consistent throughout the Commercial Boulevard District. It should be coordinated with the design of any site furniture and lighting.
- The signage system should provide flexibility. It should be adaptable to changes and additions over time. Consideration might be given to a modular system to facilitate this requirement.
- Signage should include consistent and usable mapping that is coordinated with Identification and Directional Signs.



Figure 8. Example Signage, St. Louis Downtown Streetscape Design Guidelines, 2000.

The sign system for New York City is consistent through a wide variety of sign types. The clearly defined hierarchy communicates a sense of security. The pedestrian intuitively knows where to look for information.



Philadelphia's signage system is clear and graphically simple in design

Figure 9. Example Signage, Philadelphia Downtown Streetscape Design Guidelines, 2000.

Street Lighting - Street lighting performs a number of important functions and may have additional impacts on the visual environment. Due to these factors and the prevalence of lighting fixtures on all streets, lighting should be used as a unifying streetscape element. Although levels of illumination are important for safety and security, other aesthetic aspects of lighting design including color rendition, luminaire design and lighting patterns should be given equal consideration in the overall lighting system. Additionally, consideration for energy conservation must be included in the site lighting design process. LED street lamps should be pursued when the technology becomes available, both to improve lighting levels and save operation and maintenance costs. LED technology also offers the opportunity to achieve a “friendlier” roadway lighting that could better coexist with new, pedestrian-scale lighting on the sidewalks. Cobra head light fixtures and sidewalk lighting should be considered jointly in determining the optimum lighting quality for the Commercial Boulevard District. One feature to consider in creating an optimum lighting quality is the addition of cut-off shields on the roadway lights. Such shields would diminish the glare from the cobra head fixtures, allowing the eye to better focus on storefronts and other sidewalk amenities.

- Lights should consist of a coordinated family of luminaires and poles with regard to design, materials and color.
- Lighting should define and reinforce the hierarchy of street systems to promote a sense of site orientation and organization.
- Use light fixtures of durable materials to discourage vandalism.
- Use lighting sources that provide good color recognition appropriate for the use.
- Provide illumination levels and lighting sources that minimize areas or points of glare while providing adequate levels of light for safety and security.
- Construction should be of steel or aluminum.
- Use a partial lens over the luminaire (as opposed to fully exposed globe) to reduce glare and light pollution.
- Luminaire design should provide a vandal resistant lens.
- Luminaire design should provide easy serviceability.
- Light source mounting height shall not exceed 12 feet.
- In some locations pedestrian lighting may be strictly supplemental and spacing will depend on the specific situation. In all cases, however, lighting design will focus on pedestrian usability and safety.

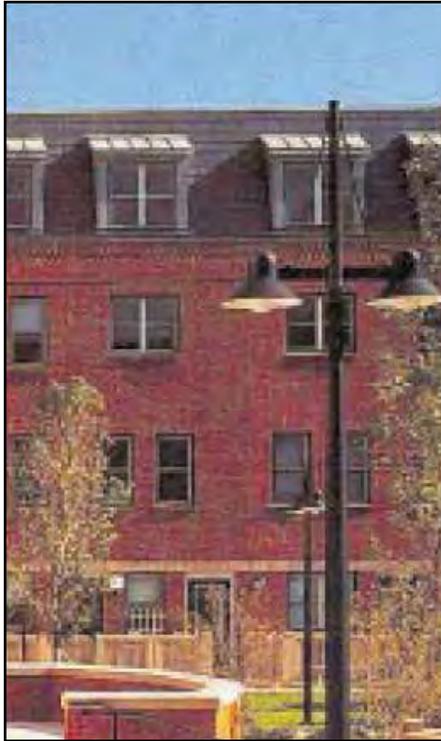


Figure 10. Examples of pedestrian lighting, St. Louis Downtown Streetscape Design Guidelines, 2000.

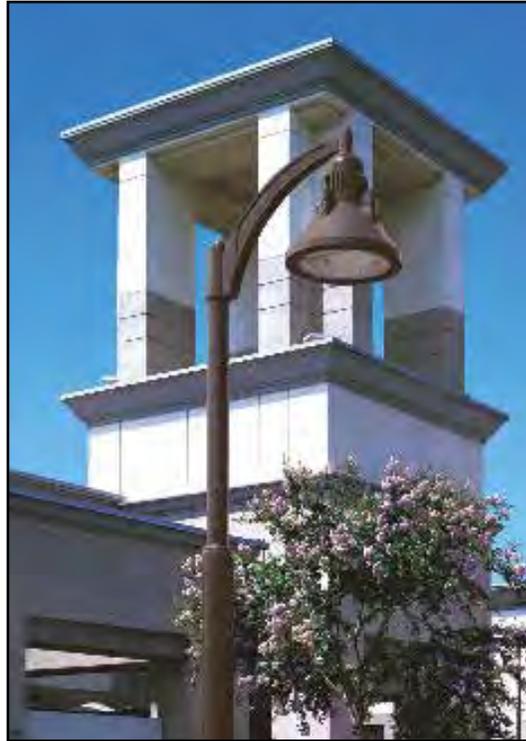


Figure 11. Examples of pedestrian lighting, Wamco Electric Online Resource.



Figure 12. Example of pedestrian lighting, International Dark-Sky Association Online Resource.

Street Trees

- Provide a minimum 6'x4' by 3.5' deep tree pits in existing or new sidewalks.
- Consider the use of continuous street tree pits to provide maximum soil area for roots to spread, and water and air to penetrate.
- Allow sufficient room for tree canopies to grow and develop without conflict with other building or sidewalk elements.
- Install tree grates to protect soil compaction over the root ball.
- Install tree guards to protect tree trunks from damage in high pedestrian use areas.
- Street trees should be spaced 20 to 40 feet apart depending on underground vaults and utilities.



Figure 13. Boulevard tree planting, Wilsonville, Oregon

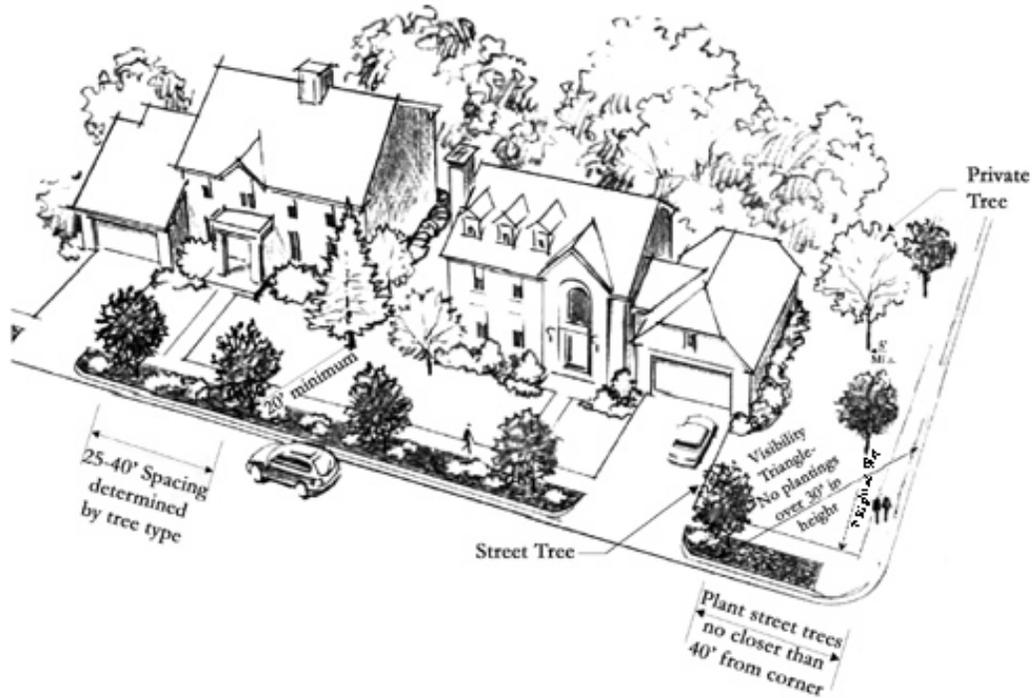


Figure 14. Conceptual street tree planting, Colorado Springs

Recommended Plant List

Native species:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| Acer saccharum | Tilia americanus |
| Betula (Varieties) | Sugar Maple |
| Celtis occidentalis | Birch |
| Fraxinus pennsylvancia lanceolata | Hackberry |
| Gleditsia triacanthos | Honeylocust |
| (Imperial, Majestic, Skyline,
Sunburst and Thornless) | Kentucky Coffee Tree |
| Gymnocladus dioicus | Oak |
| Quercus (Varieties) | Basswood (American Linden) |

Non-native species:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Acer platanoides (and varieties) | Ginkgo |
| Ginkgo biloba (male tree only) | Little Leaf Linden |
| Tilia cordata (and varieties) | (Redmond Greenspire, etc.) |
| Norway Maple | |
| (Schwedler, Emerald Queen, etc.) | |

And all other varieties as approved by the City Council.

Above list extracted from Belle Plaine City Code, 1107.03 Subd 6.

Multiple Use Path - The Commercial Boulevard District will incorporate a multiple use path that connects to local and regional trail systems. This multiple use path may include both on-road bicycle lanes and off-road shared use paths.

- **Bicycle Lane (Bike Lane):** A bike lane is a portion of the roadway or shoulder designated for exclusive or preferential use by people using bicycles. Bicycle lanes are distinguished from the portion of the roadway or shoulder used for motor vehicle traffic by striping, marking, or other similar techniques.
- Shared use paths, greenways, and state trails must be designed for users other than bicyclists. The design should take into account others on shared use paths such as inline skaters, adult tricycles, bicycle trailers, recumbent bicyclists, and wheelchair users. The dimensions and operational characteristics of bicyclists are important, other user types that are allowed to share the same space as bicyclists should be integrated into the initial planning stages and the design and selection of a bikeway type.
- All multiple use paths will follow the design standards outlined in the MN/DOT Bicycle Facility Manual, March 2007.



Figure 15. Bicycle lane, MN/DOT Bicycle Facility Manual, 2008.



Figure 16. Shared use path, MN/DOT Bicycle Facility Manual, 2008.

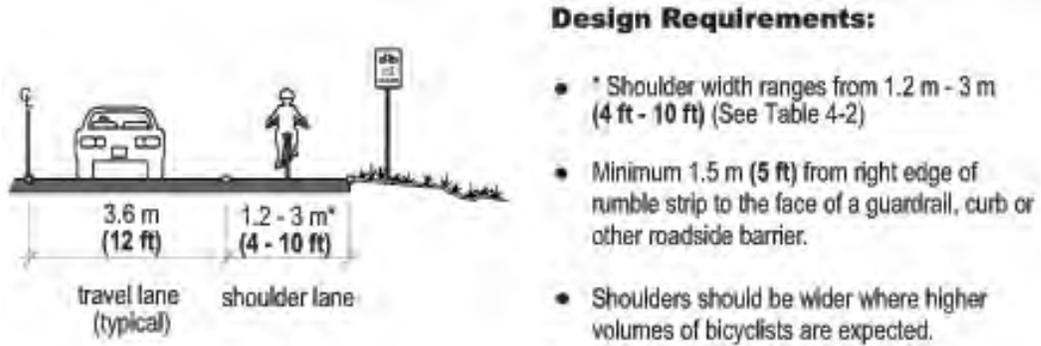


Figure 17. Example bike lane design criteria, MN/DOT Bicycle Facility Manual, 2008.

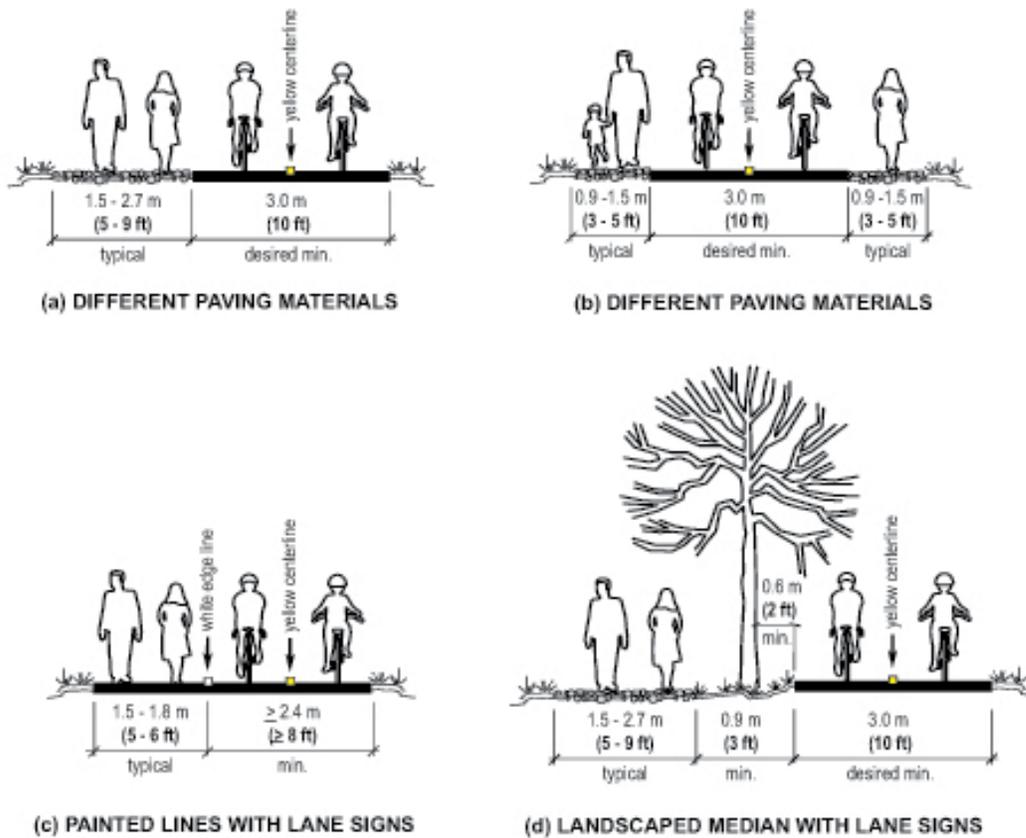


Figure 18. Example shared use path design criteria MN/DOT Bicycle Facility Manual, 2008.

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Downtown District Guidelines

The northwest corner of the Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard is to be developed with an emphasis on maintaining the historic and cultural significance of Belle Plaine. Meridian and Main Streets should meet at a four way stop that heralds entry to the historic downtown. Signage along Meridian and Main Streets should indicate significant historic and cultural places in downtown. The northwest corner of the Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard should maintain the same grid pattern as the rest of the town. A pedestrian and bike trail should follow Meridian and Main Streets and lead into the historic downtown.

Objectives

- To preserve the historic character, pedestrian orientation and architectural commonality amongst buildings of downtown Belle Plaine through the application of design standards in the public realm and suggested design guidelines in the private realm.

Policies

- The City of Belle Plaine finds that the historical, architectural, business, and cultural heritage of the Downtown District is among the City's most important assets. Therefore, the City will engage in a program that encourages the preservation of historic properties and architecture through sensitive renovation following design guidelines.
- The City of Belle Plaine will maintain and enhance the pedestrian-friendly character of the Downtown District by adhering to design standards that provide features such as pedestrian-safe sidewalk and street crossings, attractive streetscaping, and context sensitive signage, among others.

Additional Notes

- Recognizing that each project is unique in its relationship to the site and surroundings, the Urban Design Review Committee will endeavor to interpret the guidelines within the Design Manual for the most appropriate application.

Guidelines

Pedestrian Oriented Streetscape - The streetscape should be uniform so that it acts to provide continuity throughout the downtown. Maintaining a minimum sidewalk width of 12 feet should be considered on both Main Street and Meridian Street in the Downtown District. This width allows for a minimum six feet for pedestrian passage and six feet for boulevard tree planting. Where this width does not currently exist every attempt will be made to provide it during city infrastructure upgrades. (Figure 20 - located at the end of the section.)

- Approved boulevard trees shall be located as feasible and appropriate to soften

Downtown District Guidelines

the character of the building massing and to provide shade for pedestrians.

- Painted crosswalks, where feasible, should be considered at intersections to enhance the visibility and safety of pedestrians crossing the streets.
- Diagonal parking will be maintained to provide adequate parking for visitors to the Downtown District, to minimize the visual impact of the wide street surfaces, and to calm traffic.



Figure 21. Intersection of Main and Meridian Streets Aerial, Color Ortho Photo, Farm Services Administration, 2003.

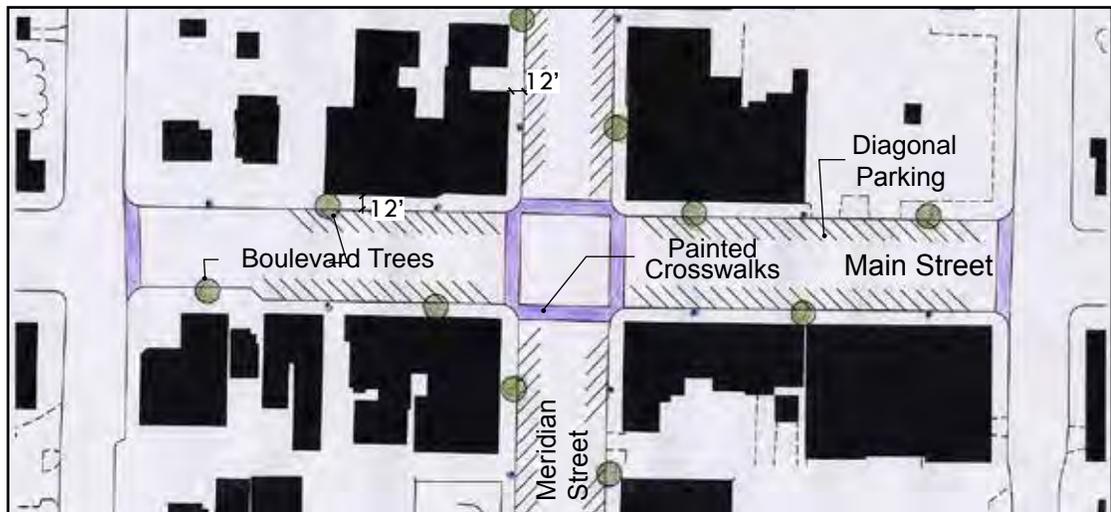


Figure 22. Intersection of Main and Meridian Streets Guidelines Plan, CRD, 2008.

Private Sector Landscape Elements - Benches, planting containers, flower boxes, fencing, trash receptacles or trash enclosures, should be compatible to historic character of the district.



Good example of operable awning that are compatible with the historic character of the architecture.

Figure 23. Urban Landscape Elements, Wayzata Design Standards, 2004.

Awnings – Awnings should enhance the historic feel of downtown, while providing sun protection for display windows, shelter for pedestrians, and a sign panel for businesses.

- Retractable or operable awnings are encouraged.
- Long expanses of awning should be broken into segments that reflect the door or window openings beneath them.
- Backlit awnings are discouraged
- Awnings with graphic material must be within the sign guide lines below.



Good example of operable awning that are compatible with the historic character of the architecture.

Figure 24. Awning Example, Wayzata Design Standards, 2004.

Signage - Signs should be architecturally compatible with the style, composition, materials, colors and details of the building and with other signs on nearby buildings, while providing for adequate identification of the business.

- Symbolic and historic three-dimensional signs such as barber shop poles and appropriately-sized projecting signs are encouraged.
- Projecting signs must be no greater than 12 square feet and have a maximum width of three feet and cannot extend beyond the first floor of the building.
- No less than 10 feet of clearance shall be provided between the sidewalk elevation and the lowest point of the projecting sign.
- Maximum distance between sign and building face is one foot.
- Building and signage lighting must be indirect, with the light source(s) hidden from direct pedestrian and motorist view.
- Lighting and signage must be a separate and distinct. Combined lighting and signage is not encouraged.

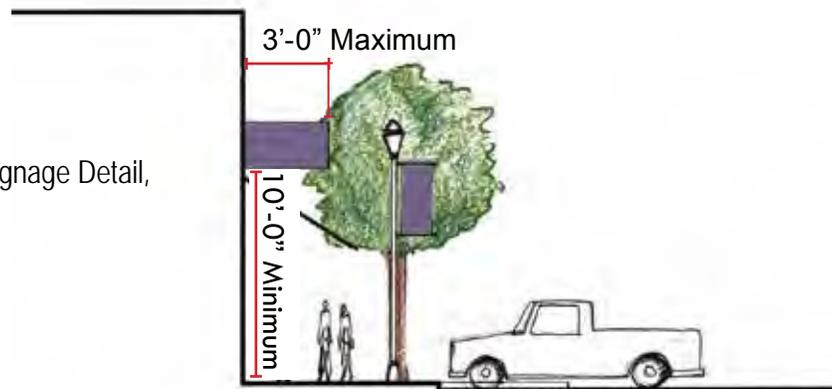
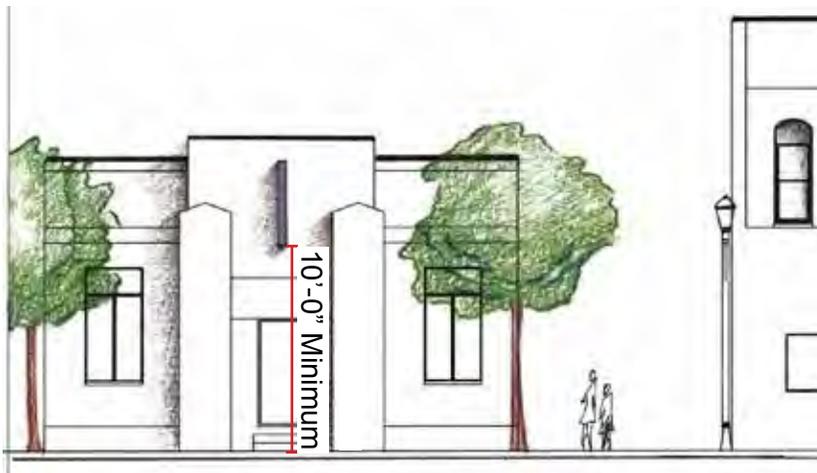


Figure 25A and B. Signage Detail, CRD, 2008.



Figure 27. Signage Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.



Figure 26. Signage Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.



Figure 28. Signage Example, Stillwater Design Manual, 2006.



Figure 29. Signage Example, Rhinebeck, NY, Project for Public Spaces.

Roofs and Parapets¹ - Rooflines should mimic the separate yet complementary rhythm of historic downtown buildings.

- Flat roofs (slightly sloped to drain) are preferred with parapets that articulate the rhythm of the buildings.
- Parapets should be embellished with brick detailing and stepped or sloped to achieve a visually interesting yet harmonious sequence along the building façade.
- Difference in buildings heights should not exceed 1/2 a story.



Figure 30. Roof Articulation Example, Stillwater Design Manual, 2006.



Figure 31. Parapet Embellishment Example, Stillwater Design Manual, 2006.

1 Parapet: Decorative top of a building. Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004. Any low protective wall or barrier at the edge of a balcony, roof, bridge, or the like. Dictionary.com

Building Width – Building widths should be designed to break up the monotonous appearance of long facades. A building more than 45 feet in width should be divided into increments of no more than 45 feet through articulation of the façade. This can be achieved through combinations of the following techniques:

- Divisions or breaks in materials
- Window bays
- Separate entrances and entry treatments
- Variation in roof lines (within guidelines)
- Building setbacks (within guidelines)

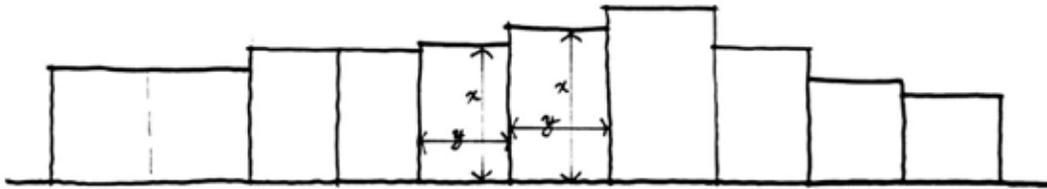


Figure 32. Building Width Articulation Example, Stillwater Design Manual, 2006.

Windows – Windows should encourage large, open views into the commercial space enhancing the pedestrian experience by providing a visual connection to the use inside the building.

- The restoration or renovation of a storefront should attempt to return the façade to its original character. Preserve original materials or details and the shape and size of original window openings.
- On upper levels, windows should provide privacy while aesthetically and functionally serving the building.



Figure 33. Large Windows Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.



Figure 34. Functional Windows Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.

Downtown District Guidelines

Color – The varied but complimentary use of color is encouraged.

- The color of buildings should complement the adjacent buildings' colors
- The color of brick or other natural building materials should dictate the color family choice.
- Buildings should use primarily earth tones with light and bright colors used only as minor accents.
- The accent colors should complement the primary color.



Figure 35. Color and accent Example, Main Street Iowa 20 Year Report, 2005.

Materials and Details - Rehabilitation or redevelopment projects should be constructed to be long lasting and use materials and detailing that maintains the distinct character and harmony of the downtown.

- Traditional materials including brick, stone (including cast stone) and stucco should be used as the primary building materials.
- Tile, stone, glass block, copper flashing, metal and wood should be considered for accent materials.
- Building renovation and alterations should restore architectural details of cornices, brickwork, transom, display windows and bulkheads.
- Infill construction should reflect some of the detailing of surrounding buildings in window shape, cornice lines and brick work.

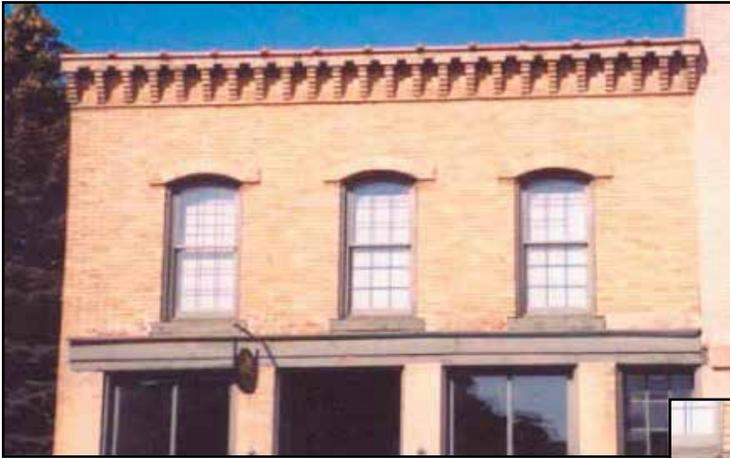


Figure 36. Good Detail Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.



Figure 37. Good Detail Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.

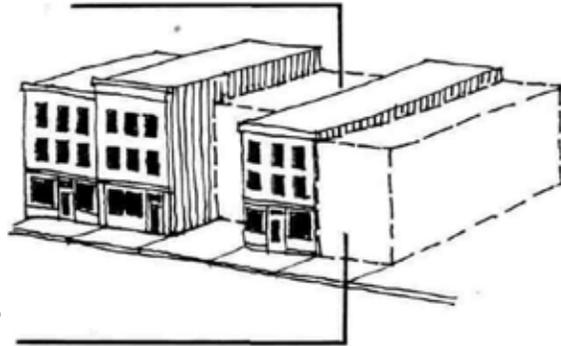


Figure 38. More Detail Needed Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.

Setbacks - Buildings in the historic downtown district should work together to give the effect of a traditional “Main Street” area.

- New construction and infill buildings must maintain the alignment of facades along the sidewalk edge.
- Exceptions may be granted if the setback is pedestrian-oriented and contributes to the quality and character of the streetscape.

AVOID SETBACK FROM
ADJACENT BUILDINGS



BUILD IN LINE WITH
ADJACENT BUILDINGS

Figure 39. Building Setback Example, Stillwater Design Manual, 2006.

Lighting - Lighting in the downtown should serve to illuminate façades, entrances and signage and provide an adequate level of personal safety while enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the buildings.

- Street lighting will be pedestrian scale and provide for safe pedestrian travel at night.
- Building and signage lighting must be indirect, with the light source(s) hidden from direct pedestrian and motorist view.
- Lighting and signage must be a separate and distinct. Combined lighting and signage is not encouraged.

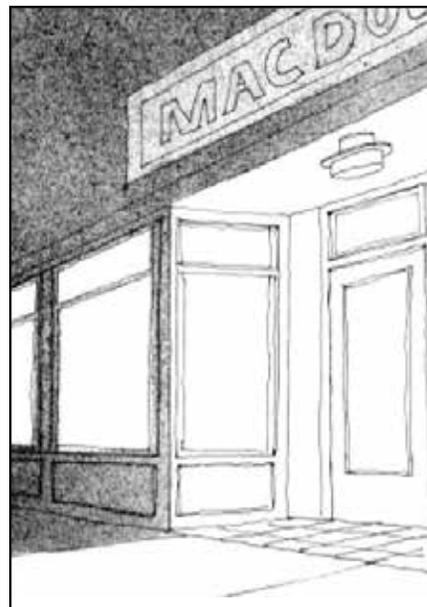


Figure 40. Indirect Light Example, City of Minneapolis, Facade Design Guide.

Fencing - Fences, walls, and gates serve aesthetic and functional roles and define the character of residential and commercial areas within Belle Plaine's Central Business District. In the B-3 Central Business District, proposals for new fences to enhance the site, improve security, or increase privacy are reviewed in terms of their siting and their design. The compatibility of proposed materials, height, configuration, scale, detail, and finish with other structures in the district shall be reviewed as is the proposed configuration for the specific site.

- New fences and gates shall avoid compromising the authenticity of the Downtown and adjacent properties.
- Fences and gates in front yards and street side yards (corner lots) shall be:
 - Of an open design such as picket;
 - Non-opaque meaning passersby can easily see through the fence and a visual connection between the sidewalk and area behind the fence can easily be maintained;
 - Composed of painted wood, traditional iron, or aluminum reminiscent of wrought or cast iron if pertaining to a residential use;
 - Composed of traditional iron or aluminum reminiscent of wrought or cast iron if pertaining to a non-residential use;
 - In horizontal alignment with existing fences and/or the sidewalk edge, unless the City finds a further setback contributes to the pedestrian experience and quality/character of the streetscape;
 - Harmonious with and reflective of the color palette employed in the immediate vicinity and the principal structure;
 - Designed with colors and elements which blend in with existing features as opposed to drawing attention to the fence or gate as a design element of the site;
 - Generally be of modest design detail similar to those historically found within the City as opposed to elaborate ornamental detailing; and,
 - Generally no greater than three and a half (3 ½) to four (4) feet in height.
- The following are not permitted within the B-3 Central Business District:
 - Fences, gates, or walls composed of non-traditional iron, post and rail or split rail type, chicken wire, barbed wire, concertina wire, round tubing, and similar materials, and above-ground electric fences.
 - Chain link fences or privacy fences in front yards and street side yards of corner lots.
 - Retaining walls within the 100 block of Main Street, the 100 block of Church Street, the 100 block of Meridian Street South, or the 100 or 200 block of Meridian Street North.
 - Fences which are more opaque may be used to screen service areas, mechanical equipment, and dumpsters for commercial uses in the B-3

Central Business District. Said service areas, mechanical equipment, and dumpsters shall be located out of view from public streets and sidewalks.

- Chain Link:
 - Chain link fences are not appropriate for front yards or side yards that face streets.
 - Chain link fences may be acceptable in rear yards or side yards where not visible from the street.
 - The painting of visible sections of chain link fences in dark green, dark brown, or black colors is encouraged.
 - The screening of chain link fences with hedge, ivy, or other vining cover is encouraged.
- Privacy Fencing:
 - Privacy fencing is not allowed in a front yard or a side yard facing a public street.
 - Privacy fencing may be appropriate for interior side and rear yards not facing a public street.
 - Privacy fencing consisting of vertical uprights are considered appropriate choices.
 - Privacy fencing materials and color should work in harmony with and be reflective of adjacent structures.
 - Privacy fencing materials considered appropriate choices are wood, vinyl, and composite.

US Highway 169 District Guidelines

Objectives

To create a unique and attractive commercial district along the US Highway 169 corridor that enhances economic development within Belle Plaine while maintaining a common identity with the rest of the city through the application of design standards in the public realm and suggested design guidelines in the private realm.

Policies

The City of Belle Plaine recognizes the significance of commercial development in the US Highway 169 District to the present and future economic health of the community. Therefore, the city will engage in a program in the public realm that enhances the character of the corridor to create a “destination shopping district” that attracts people regionally and services the needs of residents.

Additional Notes

Recognizing that each project is unique in its relationship to the site and surroundings, the Urban Design Review Committee will endeavor to interpret the guidelines within the Design Manual for the most appropriate application.

Guidelines

Landscaping – Landscape treatments should emphasize the form of the City of Belle Plaine’s urban street grid. Landscaping treatments should be used to enhance the pedestrian experience, complement architectural features and/or screen utility areas.

- **Plant Material** – Landscaping should reinforce the indigenous plant communities found in the Minnesota River Valley and the existing woodlands. Massing of native prairie, trees and shrubs should be sensitively utilized and should not restrict visibility of business signage.

Screening – Screening of all service areas, parking, loading and outdoor storage areas, mechanical and rooftop equipment, refuse storage containers and utility components are required.



Figure 41. Example of Landscape Treatments Plan, Center for Rural Design, 2008.



Figure 42A and B. Screening Examples, Stillwater Design Manual, 2006.



Signage: Commercial districts, with their many businesses vying for attention, can become cluttered with signs. This is particularly true in auto-oriented commercial areas, but can also be the case in pedestrian-centered urban cores. Signs in pedestrian areas should address the scale of the pedestrian, should be simple in materials and message, and enhance the overall street environment. This is not to say that signs cannot be colorful, unusual, or noticeable – in fact, interesting signs can add a memorable dimension to a commercial area. In essence, commercial district signs should:

- Be organized in a hierarchical order (shopping center, business, wayfinding) to avoid clutter and confusion.
- Incorporate similar design characteristics or materials to enhance both the district's identity and Belle Plaine's community identity.
- Effectively communicate the character of the business they advertise.
- Not overwhelm the pedestrian streetscape.

While not strictly commercial, signs in residential areas that identify neighborhood entry points contribute to the visual impact of the streetscape. They should be of the appropriate scale and constructed of the same high quality materials as the commercial signage.

Building - Mounted Roof Signs: Roof Signs are those signs erected in whole or in part upon or over the roof or parapet of a building.

- Number and Location:
 - Roof signs shall be limited to one sign per street frontage up to three signs total.
 - Roof signs will be allowed in place of a wall sign.
- Total Sign Area is limited:
 - A roof sign shall not exceed 1 sq. ft. for each linear foot of street frontage not to exceed a maximum of 100 sq. ft.
- Sign height is limited:
 - No roof sign will be permitted which extends beyond the highest point of a pitched roof, a mansard roof or a parapet line of a building.

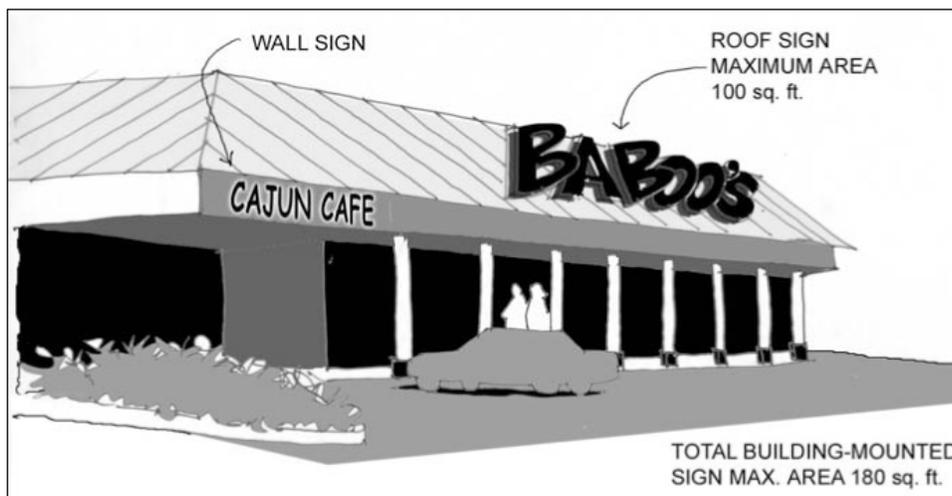


Figure 43. Roof Sign Example, Sign Design Guidelines, City of Leon, 2002.

Free-standing Signs: Pylon signs are a free-standing sign with visible support structures or with a support structure with a pole cover or pylon cover. Monument Signs are a ground-mounted sign with a low overall height. Pole signs are a free-standing sign with a visible support structure. Typically a pole supports a sign cabinet aloft. A pole sign can also be defined as a free-standing sign with two or more poles provided the poles and structure of the sign support is not encased or enclosed by a cover. Pole signs are discouraged. Pylon Signs and Monument Signs are preferred over Pole signs.

- Number and Location:
 - No free standing on-premise sign shall be constructed within 100 feet of any existing free-standing on-premise sign on the same site, or within 40 feet of a free-standing sign on a neighboring site.
 - No free-standing sign, other than a multi-tenant sign shall occupy the same frontage as a projecting sign.
 - One free-standing sign shall be permitted on each frontage, as follows:
 - » Less than 250 ft. of frontage: One sign
 - » 250 ft. or more of frontage: One sign per 250 ft. of frontage when approved by the UDRC
 - Total Sign Area is limited:
 - » Each face of a free standing sign may not exceeding 100 sq ft in sign area if mounted back-to-back.
 - » In the case of irregularly shaped signs, refer to Zoning Code calculations of sign area.

Free-Standing Sign Height

Sign height shall be restricted to:

- 35 feet on arterial roadways.
- 25 feet on collector roadways, and
- 50 feet on expressway frontage roads.

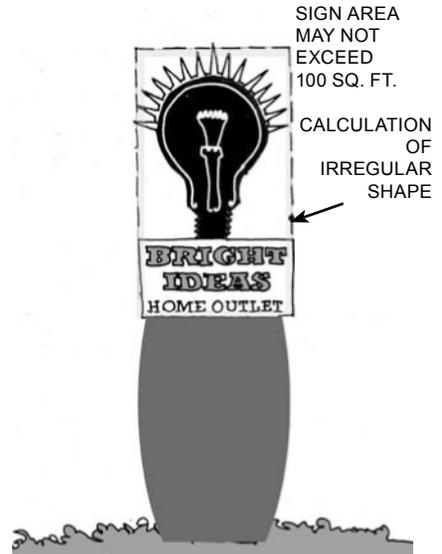


Figure 44. Free Standing Sign Example, Sign Design Guidelines, City of Leon, 2002.

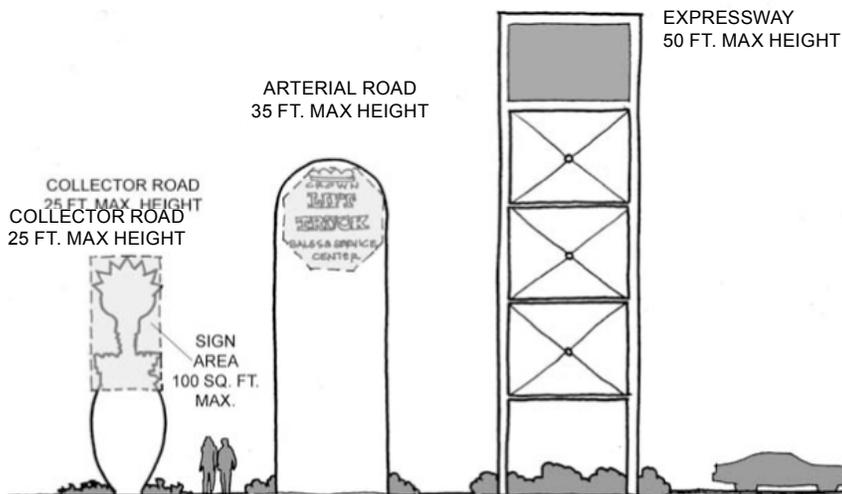


Figure 45. Sign Height Example, Sign Design Guidelines, City of Leon, 2002.

Free-standing multi-tenant signs: Multi-tenant signs shall be required as part of a Master Sign Plan for properties with 4 or more tenants.

- Number and Location:
 - No free standing multi-tenant sign shall be constructed within 100 feet of any existing free-standing on-premise sign on the same site, or within 40 feet of a free-standing sign on a neighboring site.
 - Other limitations of free-standing signs, and of the Guidelines in general shall apply, within the following limitations:

In the case of shopping centers for example:

- A business within the shopping center may have one projecting sign and/ or one other building-mounted sign (such as a wall sign, awning sign or roof sign), and
- Each tenant shall be allowed one identification sign on a directory signpost or multi-tenant sign.
- Tenant sign area is limited:
 - The area of each tenant's building-mounted sign shall not exceed 1 sq. ft. for each linear foot of store frontage for the business on which it is mounted not to exceed a maximum of 100 sq. ft
- Total Sign Area is limited:
 - Multi-tenant signs shall be limited to 250 feet of sign area.

Sign height is limited

Multi-tenant Signs height shall be restricted to:

- 35 feet on arterial roadways.
- 25 feet on collector roadways, and
- 50 feet on expressway frontage roads.

Landscape Buffer for Free-Standing Signs: Unless an alternate method of providing traffic and pedestrian safety is approved through a Master Sign Plan, each free-standing sign shall be placed within a landscaped area.

- Planting shall be in accordance with the City's Landscape Ordinance.
- Landscape buffers for free-standing signs shall extend a minimum of 4 feet from the sign in each direction.
- Such measurements shall begin at the sign base or at the edge of any overhang within 20 feet of the ground, whichever requires the greater barrier.

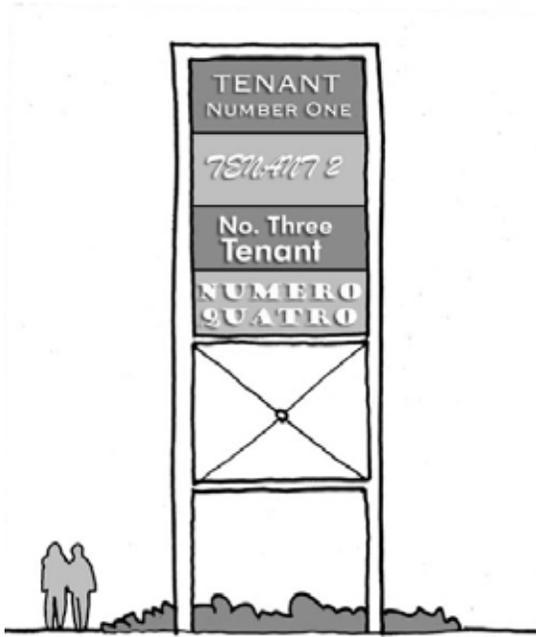


Figure 46. Multi-Tenant Sign Example, Sign Design Guidelines, City of Leon, 2002.

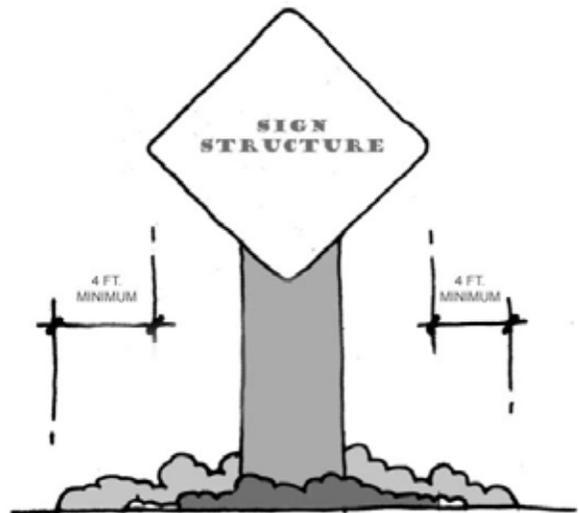


Figure 47. Multi-Tenant Sign Example, Sign Design Guidelines, City of Leon, 2002.

Parking and Circulation

- Driveway Location - The location and spacing of a driveway should insure proper and efficient circulation into and around a development, reduce conflicting movements internal and external to the site and promote the smooth flow of traffic on the abutting street.
- A landscaped buffer strip at least 6 feet wide shall be provided between all parking areas and the sidewalk or street. The buffer strip shall consist of shade trees at maximum intervals of 30 feet and a decorative fence, masonry wall or hedge. A solid wall or dense hedge shall be no less than three feet and no more than 4 feet in height.

The Parking and Circulation Design Guidelines are based from the 2004 Wazata Design Guidelines.



Figure 48A and B. Landscape Buffer Strip Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.



It is very important that these parking lot arrangements provide adequate sight lines for the pedestrians and the drivers to clearly see each other as vehicles cross the sidewalk existing in the parking lot.



Figure 49. Off Street Parking Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.

Architecture: This corridor is the northern “entrance” from the Twin Cities and the southern entrance to Mankato thus, development should be designed to reflect this important location in the City of Belle Plaine.

- **Orientation of Building** – The orientation of the commercial and industrial buildings within the US Highway 169 Corridor is of high priority. The buildings should front the highway corridor and align with the City of Belle Plaine’s urban street grid.
- **Building Facades** – Since the buildings will be perceived and utilized from all four directions, it is of high priority that the US Highway 169 District architecture must be developed and designed 360 degrees around the building.
- **Building Type and Materiality** - It is a high priority that no pole-barn type buildings will be allowed to be developed in the US Highway 169 District. All new buildings should be constructed of high-quality materials and utilize green, sustainable building practices through the demolition site preparation, construction, operation and maintenance phases of the building cycle.
 - Traditional materials including brick, stone (including cast stone) and stucco should be used as the primary building materials.
 - Tile, stone, glass block, copper flashing, metal and wood should be considered for accent materials.
- **Market Visibility** - Market visibility from the street is critical to the successful development efforts and as such, buildings, landscaping, and features should be easily visible from the roadway.
- **Development Design** - The development design should be compatible with surrounding buildings and improve upon the architecture in height, massing, style, composition, color and materials.
- **Green Building Design and Materials:** Consideration should be given to using green building design and meeting Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. Green building design elements such as green roofs will help limit energy demands and establish a healthier environment by reducing the heat island effect and storm water runoff from roofs and other impervious structures. (Design Guidelines for the Cook County Highway Department Property)



Figure 50. Example of an unacceptable pole barn building, Atlantic Insulated Panels Website.



Figure 51. Brick building designed 360 degrees around building, Building Green Website.



Figure 52. Brick building designed 360 degrees around building, Building Green Website.

Lighting - Lighting in the US Highway 169 District should serve to illuminate façades, entrances, signage and provide an adequate level of personal safety while enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the buildings.

- Exterior lighting shall be the minimum necessary for safety and security. Overall light levels should be consistent with the character and intensity of the surrounding areas. Lighting should be designed to relate to building architecture and landscaping. Pedestrian scaled lighting, not exceeding 15 feet in height, should be located adjacent to walkways and entrances to commercial buildings. Parking lot lighting should consist of cutoff fixtures and located below the mature height of trees located in parking lot islands.

Gateway District Guidelines

Objectives

To introduce travelers to the unique identity of Belle Plaine at key entry points to the City through commonly themed signage and landscape plantings.

To identify additional locations for the gateways to Belle Plaine with consideration to the sense of entry or vista to the City.

While it is important that all gateways identify the distinct character of Belle Plaine, each gateway will occupy a unique setting and the design must respond to the characteristics of its surroundings.

Policies

The City of Belle Plaine will identify key entry points to the City and apply a set of signage and landscaping standards to create gateways to the city that convey the unique character of Belle Plaine.

Additional Notes

Recognizing that each project is unique in its relationship to the site and surroundings, the Urban Design Review Committee will endeavor to interpret the guidelines within the Design Manual for the most appropriate application.

Guidelines

Belle Plaine's Community Logo: draws from the city's agricultural heritage and its intimate physical relationship with the Minnesota River and surrounding prairie landscape.

- The Belle Plaine logo will be incorporated into all community gateway designs.

Sign Height: Sign height should be appropriate for the scale and use-intensity of the roadway. The following sign heights should be considered:

- 35 feet on arterial roadways.
- 25 feet on collector roadways, and
- 50 feet on expressway frontage roads.



Figure 53. Belle Plaine's city logo, City of Belle Plaine, 2015.

Materials: for gateway signs, supporting structures and other landscape structures will be high-quality and durable, preferably natural, and consistent with the specific characteristics of its location.

- Traditional materials including brick, stone (including cast stone) and stucco should be used as the primary building materials.
- Tile, stone, glass block, copper flashing, metal and wood should be considered for accent materials.



Figure 54. Gateway Material Example, City of Fairfax.



Figure 55. Gateway Material Example, Dubuque, Iowa.



Figure 56. Gateway Material Example, Pineville, Louisiana.

Landscaping Around Signage: will be native and in keeping with the specific characteristics of the gateway's location. Plant material and planting designs that reflects the agricultural or horticultural heritage of Belle Plaine (e.g., orchard-like) may be acceptable.

- Planting shall be in accordance with the City's Landscape Ordinance.
- Landscape Buffers for free-standing signs shall extend a minimum of 4 feet from the sign in each direction.
- Such measurements shall begin at the sign base or at the edge of any overhang within 20 feet of the ground whichever requires the greater barrier.

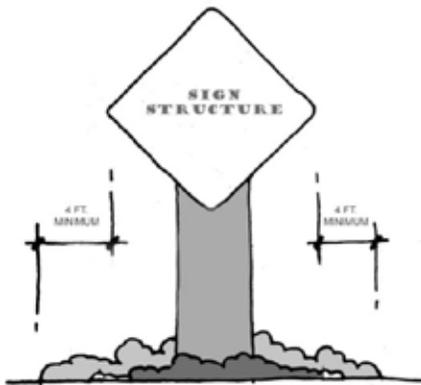


Figure 57. Sign Landscape Buffer Example, Sign Design Guidelines, City of Leon, 2002.



Figure 58. Sign with Vegetation Example, River's Edge, Online Resource.



Figure 59. Sign with Vegetation Example, Coventry Hills Community, Online Resource.

Lighting: Where feasible, lighting may be incorporated in the gateway designs to enhance the entry experience at night. Any lighting will be the minimum needed and sensitively placed to avoid light pollution and adding to visual clutter.

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Implementation

Implementation Strategies

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Introduction

Design guidelines function to guide construction, expansion, and renovation of new and existing structures. They assist the city in reviewing development proposals. They allow development to occur in a way that is consistent with the community vision. In general, design guidelines serve three primary functions:

- They serve to preserve, protect, and enhance the physical character of a community, or sections of a community, in the public realm.
- They serve to guide owners, developers, and designers who undertake to redevelop and renovate existing properties or to develop new properties.
- They serve to assist communities in reviewing development or redevelopment proposals.

In order for design guidelines to function in the capacity outlined above some approach to implementation needs to be adopted. This section will explore various approaches to implementation. First, however, it will be useful to explore some concepts.

Administration

Design standards and guidelines contained in the Belle Plaine Design Manual shall be administered primarily by the Design Committee in support of the City Council, Economic Development Authority, and Planning and Zoning Commission.

Under City Code the Design Committee reviews all development projects within commercial and industrial districts. The Design Committee also reviews certain signs, loan/grant requests, and public projects. The Council, EDA, or PZ Commission may request input from the Design Committee on any manner of projects.

When Design Committee review is specifically required under Code, the entity proposing a development project shall submit an application on a form approved by the City for Design Committee review.

Substantial projects shall address the following design principles:

1. **REGIONALISM:**

The Design Committee expects architecture (a) will be regionally appropriate, (b) will make sense for Minnesota's climate, (c) will be considerate of available local and sustainable materials; and (d) will respect local history.

- Applicants will consider and communicate to the Committee how historic building materials traditionally used in the Belle Plaine area influenced the design (brick, wood, stone) and how significant or historic building types in Belle Plaine should and did influence the design.

2. **CONTEXT:**

The Design Committee expects the architect will look beyond the building site and take in the larger picture, including: adjacent buildings, pedestrian access, roads, regional issues, and environmental effects to building sustainability and how the building will age over time.

- Applicants will consider and communicate to the Committee how traffic affected the design – noise, car lights, access, pollution, congestion.
- Applicants will consider and communicate to the Committee if/how topography and/or water influences the site and design; tell us how those factors are accommodated in the design.
- Applicants will identify what positive features/clues are being borrowed from neighboring buildings and why those are important. Applicants will inform the Committee of what, if any, surrounding features can be ignored and why.
- Applicants will consider and communicate to the Committee any significant views from the site and how the design acknowledges those views. Applicants will identify whether or not the proposed building is blocking views from other buildings.

3. **SCALE & MASS:**

The Design Committee expects the architect will consider the physical relationship of the proposed structure(s) to pedestrians and nearby buildings. The Design Committee expects the architect will consider how the proposed building scale compares with the surrounding buildings (higher, longer, shorter). The Design Committee expects architects proposing scales substantially different from surrounding buildings will employ strategies to reduce the impact (color, massing, composition). The Design Committee expects architects designing isolated object buildings (big box, high rise, etc) will employ massing strategies (carving) to affect scale at the pedestrian level and the distant view.

- Applicants will consider, illustrate visually, and communicate to the Commission how/why the proposed design scale and mass works in respect to adjacent buildings, pedestrians at the street level, and the distant panoramic view.

4. **COMPOSITION:**

The Design Committee expects the architect will thoughtfully consider arrangement of surfaces and shapes. The Design Committee expects sensible and clear, confident composition of the building's base, middle, and top. The Design Committee values simplicity and common sense in building elements (columns, arches, canopies, roof forms, dormers, banding, striping, brick patterns, windows, awnings, balconies, etc). Alignment of elements should be logical (not random) and proportionally correct.

- If the building is abstract, the Applicant will inform the Committee of what

Implementation Strategies

informed the decision to create an abstract building design. The Applicant will share with the Committee why certain forms and materials (description and number) were chosen.

- If the building is symmetrical the Applicant will share with the Committee what steps have been taken to ensure the design doesn't appear too rigid or massive.

5. **HIERARCHY:**

The Design Committee expects the architect will purposefully place appropriate visual emphasis on specific building elements. The Design Committee expects the architect will consider what elements are intended to dominate and why. The Design Committee expects main entries to be carefully designed. The Design Committee expects sign sizing to be appropriate. The Design Committee expects large blank surfaces to recede rather than dominate the design.

- The Applicant will tell the Design Committee why/how elements that dominate the design were chosen and why those dominant elements are appropriate.
- The Applicant will tell the Committee how sign sizing decisions were made and why the proposed signage is appropriate and not too small or too dominant.

6. **COLOR:**

The Design Committee expects colors will be carefully chosen based on regional characteristics, how colors affect adjacent buildings, Belle Plaine's historic building palettes, and the fact dark colors recede and bright colors dominate. The Design Committee highly values classic or traditional color palettes to trendy palettes. The Design Committee expects the paint scheme will compliment and not confuse the design.

- The Applicant will tell the Design Committee why a particular palette of colors was chosen for the project.
- Consideration of using bright colors as accents versus dominating the design is expected. If the color palette is aggressive or multi colored the Applicant is expected to inform the Committee of why that is appropriate.

7. **TRANSFORMATION:**

The Design Committee expects the architect will consider the building's next life including how well the building will adapt to changing tenants, how durable building materials will be, and if it is a 'brand' building what impact the brand design will have on its intended lifespan.

- Applicants are to share with the Design Committee measures taken to ensure the building will be sustainable and timeless in occupancy.

8. **SIMPLICITY:**

The Design Committee highly values clear, confident, and calm design. The Design

Committee highly discourages multiple shapes and forms resulting in a chaotic visual presentation. The Design Committee discourages random decorations and faux elements.

- Applicants shall inform the Design Committee of ideas and/or concepts on which the design is based. The Applicant shall inform the Committee of how the architecture reinforces said concepts and/or ideas.
- If proposed designs employ random decorations or faux elements the Applicant will tell the Committee why/how the building will suffer without random decorations or faux features.
- If proposed designs employ multiple shapes or forms the Applicant will explain how clarity in the complexity has been provided and how visual chaos has been discouraged.

Implementation Strategies

The City of Belle Plaine desires to maintain and enhance its rural small town character while, at the same time, fostering opportunities for redevelopment in the City's core and opportunities for economic development and commercial expansion along the US Highway 169 corridor. To accomplish these goals it is recommended that the City:

- Adopt the Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard as a mechanism to integrate a common, cohesive identity for all commercial districts in the city.
- Adopt a 'district' approach to planning, public sector investment, and application of design guidelines to recognize unique character, capitalize on divergent opportunities, and prioritize public sector investments.
- Adopt design guidelines that provide opportunity for flexibility and creativity in the design of redevelopment and new development.
- Formalize the design guidelines in regulations that encourages adherence for both redevelopment and new development.
- Formalize a design review process, through a design review committee, that supports a collaborative and iterative approach to review to maximize communication and minimize misunderstanding between the development team and the design review committee.
- Formalize an incentive program to encourage and reward compliance with the design guidelines.
- Amend the Belle Plaine City Code Section 1103.07 Site Plan Review, 1107.17 Highway and Industrial Design Standards and Section 1107.22 Preservation of Belle Plaine's Character Design Standards to reference the Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard, Downtown, US Highway 169 Corridor, and Gateways Design Districts as areas where these sections of the City Code directly apply in addition to the other areas identified.
- Amend the Belle Plaine City Code Section 1103.07 Site Plan Review, 1107.17 Highway and Industrial Design Standards and Section 1107.22 Preservation of

Implementation Strategies

Belle Plaine's Character Design Standards to reference the Belle Plaine Design Manual as an additional recommended reference for design guidelines within the identified Design Districts.

- Include Section 1103.07 Site Plan Review, 1107.17 Highway and Industrial Design Standards and Section 1107.22 Preservation of Belle Plaine's Character Design Standards of the Belle Plaine City Code within the Belle Plaine Design Manual, as edited below, to identify the site plan review process and pre-existing design standards.

Proposed edits to Section 1103.07 Site Plan Review, 1107.17 Highway and Industrial Design Standards and Section 1107.22 Preservation of Belle Plaine's Character Design Standards of the Belle Plaine City Code are indicated at the end of the section. Words that are bold and strike-through are proposed deletions. Words that are bold and underline are proposed additions.

Design Guidelines vs. Design Standards

The terms 'guidelines' and 'standards' are frequently used interchangeably. For instance, in their Smart Growth program, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency offers this definition of design guidelines:

Design Guidelines — a set of standards that aims to maintain a certain level of quality and architectural or historic character, addressing features such as building facades, public spaces, or landscaping.

However, there is a significant functional difference in the meaning of the terms and their application.

Guideline: "a principle by which to determine a course of action" (Webster); and in this case, "principle" means a law explaining a thing's action. For purposes of this document, principle refers to and is defined as design intent.

Standard: "something established for use as a rule or basis of comparison in measuring quantity, quality, value, etc." (Webster)

Standards can be specific, detailed, and prescriptive rules for development actions. An advantage of their specificity is that they can be clearly interpreted by the owner, developer, or designer and their application clearly evaluated by the design review committee. However, due to their specificity, standards often discourage design creativity and impose serious, sometimes unintended constraints on development form or function.

On the other hand, guidelines can set forth an overall design intent which may have numerous and varied means of accomplishing the intent, and therefore may be less prescriptive and specific than standards. Fundamentally, design guidelines are performance-based. Some significant advantages of performance-based guidelines

are that they allow creativity and innovation in the design of development and tend to avoid unintended constraints while still outlining the intended outcome. However, since they lack specificity, they are more difficult to interpret and evaluate by the development team and the design review committee. Successful implementation of design guidelines requires a collaborative and, often, an iterative design review process. (Adopted from Silverdale Design Guidelines: Design Workshop 1, March 2005)

Mandatory vs. Interpretive Guidelines/ Standards

Mandatory refers to obligatory application of design standards/guidelines. This approach involves formalizing the guidelines/standards in regulations that control development. Many cities in Minnesota establish design guidelines/standards for areas of interest through their zoning ordinances. These design standards are generally rooted in the city's authority to protect the general welfare and safety of the public.

Interpretive refers to an explanation or translation of a design intent, where a variety of conceptualizations is possible and may require more flexibility in implementation. This approach does not formalize the guidelines/standards in regulations that control development. While adherence to the guidelines/standards may be encouraged through incentive programs, this approach is fundamentally voluntary.

(Adopted from Silverdale Design Guidelines: Design Workshop 1, March 2005)

The concepts of 'guideline vs. standard's and 'mandatory vs. interpretive' are key to this document. They imply a set of trade-offs in implementation that must be considered:

- Flexibility vs. predictability: Is the guideline/standard intended as a rule of law or a rule of individuals? Should the area for negotiation be wide or narrow? To what extent should this be determined by the Code or by practice?
- Flexibility vs. administrative cost: What are the costs to the applicant, to opponents, and to the City's tolerance for hearings?
- Development cost vs. quality: Guidelines/standards should be written with an understanding of their effect on developers' and consumers' costs and on the quality of the environment for both user and community at large.
- Preservation vs. development: Will a particular regulation stimulate or dampen change in uses, users, or appearance?
- Under regulation vs. over-regulation: How does the community find the least number of rules that will do the job?

Incentive Programs

Communities can utilize a number of incentive programs to encourage compliance with the objectives embodied in the design guidelines/standards:

- To a certain degree, public sector spending, through a community's Capital Improvement Program, for example, can be directed toward public realm improvement projects in priority areas where development or redevelopment

Implementation Strategies

projects that comply with the community's adopted design guidelines have been proposed.

- Proposed projects that comply with the community's adopted design guidelines can receive special consideration on other issues requiring a variance such as density, bulk, parking, etc.
- The community's fee structure for applications, permits, and reviews can be reduced on a sliding scale based on compliance with the design guidelines/ standards.
- The community can collaborate to seek funding for, and/or directly invest in, programs to support private sector development/redevelopment that enhances the public realm.

Example Approaches to Design Guideline Implementation

Two example approaches to implementing design guidance as a mechanism to maintain a certain preferred physical character are outlined below. The communities, Wayzata and Stillwater, are local but the approaches represent the wide variation discussed above.

The City of Wayzata wanted to direct the physical character of development in several portions of the city and chose to accomplish this goal by implementing a set of prescriptive design standards tailored to each area of concern. The design standards are intended to influence architectural character specifically. Master planning, spatial relationships, and connections to the public realm are guided by the City's comprehensive plan. The City outlines a specific design review process that is separate from review of the technical/engineering requirements. The standards are embedded within the City's code and zoning ordinances and, therefore, enforceable as law. Violation is a misdemeanor.

The City of Stillwater had a more focused area of concern and developed a design manual intended specifically for its commercial historic district. The core of the design manual is a set of design guidelines that represent recommendations for appropriate character of new development or redevelopment within the district. The guidelines were intentionally meant to be flexible, allowing a greater range of design creativity, accommodating unique solutions for unique situations, and avoiding the danger of 'sameness'. The City enacted an ordinance establishing a Design Review Committee and Design Permit Requirements. The review process integrates architectural design with site and off-site spatial relationships. Recommendation for approval is based on the perception of the design review committee that the proposed design meets the intent of the guidelines. The Committee's report is reviewed by the Planning Commission which makes final recommendations to the City Council which, in turn, grants final approval. The design guidelines are separate from the City's zoning ordinance and represent an additional consideration to the project approval process in the commercial historic district.

The approach that the City of Belle Plaine implements, as recommended in this document, falls in between the approaches of Wayzata and Stillwater. The design guidelines identify the character the City wishes to maintain and enhance while providing flexibility to owners, developers, and designers in achieving that character. Although not prescriptive in nature, they are embedded within the City Code and therefore enforceable. Finally, the design review process, also embedded in City Code, supports a collaborative approach between the private sector and the City.

Wayzata, Minnesota

The City of Wayzata, Minnesota, has created design standards that allow the city to grow while maintaining its unique small town character. The standards guide the architectural character and scale for new buildings in certain areas of the city. The primary functions of Wayzata’s design standards, as quoted from the city’s 2004 Design Standards are as follows:

- To guide applicants wishing to expand, renovate existing structures or construct new buildings or parking within the commercial districts of the City;
- To assist the City and the public in reviewing development proposals;
- To improve the City’s public realm — its streets, sidewalks, walkways, and its streetscape and landscape treatments.

Wayzata established three design districts that have their own respective design standards. The Lake Street District embodies design standards that foster a “Main Street” character. The Bluff District addresses an area with diverse issues, and is designed to protect the aesthetics of the bluff slope and ridge. The Wayzata Boulevard District addresses a commercial strip leading into the town.

Wayzata’s design standards are embedded into the zoning ordinance of the city. “For the purpose of protecting the general welfare, the public, and safety of the City and also to ensure the physical, aesthetic, and economic viability for the city of Wayzata, the Design Standards have been created and are hereby established” –Wayzata Zoning Ordinance

The ordinance directs all non-residential and multi-family residential developments that occur in the established design districts consult and comply with the design standards for that district.

The design standards work in a method similar to the site plan review process. A party interested in substantial exterior renovating or constructing a new building within a design district would consult the design standards to create a design that conforms to the standards. The party then submits their designs to city staff for review. City staff makes recommendations for approval or denial to the planning commission, who then decides whether to issue a building permit for the project. Plans that do not conform to design standards can be approved through a process similar to variance procedures. The city can issue a “stop work” order if construction does not follow the approved plans.

Implementation Strategies

Wayzata's design standards are effective because they are embedded in the zoning ordinance. The city established a clear link between design standards and the need to protect the general welfare, the public, and safety of the city. This makes design standards legally enforceable because cities have a right to regulate for the general welfare, the public, and safety.

Stillwater, Minnesota

The City of Stillwater, Minnesota, has developed a design manual composed of an accumulation of design guidelines that apply in two specific situations:

- For site or building alteration permits issued by the heritage preservation commission.
- For specific types of projects within the downtown plan district and the west business park plan district.

Quoting from the Design Manual, the design guidelines are intended as “recommendations created to direct and lead Stillwater in its endeavor to conserve and enhance its appearance, preserve its historical and/or architectural assets, protect and encourage areas of existing or potential scenic value, and assist its property owners. They encourage the community to effectively work together as new construction, renovation, and restoration is proposed.”

“The design criteria and associated guidelines form the core of the design manual. Each guideline or criteria will contain a background paragraph that describes the history of that criterion. Hopefully this will help to explain why this criterion is important in preserving the character of Stillwater. The guidelines are not formulas or specific solutions, but are meant to be flexible recommendations to develop compatibility within the building, its neighbors, and the area. The guidelines are intentionally flexible, thus avoiding the danger of sameness. They are meant to encourage rather than insist, and discourage rather than prohibit. They guide, but they cannot design. Hopefully, the inherent flexibility of the process will allow for creative, imaginative design while preserving the historic attributes and maintaining the pedestrian character of downtown Stillwater.”

While the design guidelines themselves are not embedded in the City Code, the existence of the Design Review Committee and the design permit and review process is. Upon application by an owner, the design review committee reviews the design plans for both architectural character and site/off-site spatial relationships. The committee then recommends to the planning commission which may impose conditions for approval. The planning commission makes recommendation to the city council which makes final decision for approval.

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Appendix A

Belle Plaine Design and Sign Guidelines

List of Figures

Figure A1. Belle Plaine Design and Sign Guidelines Brochure, Belle Plaine Main Street Program.

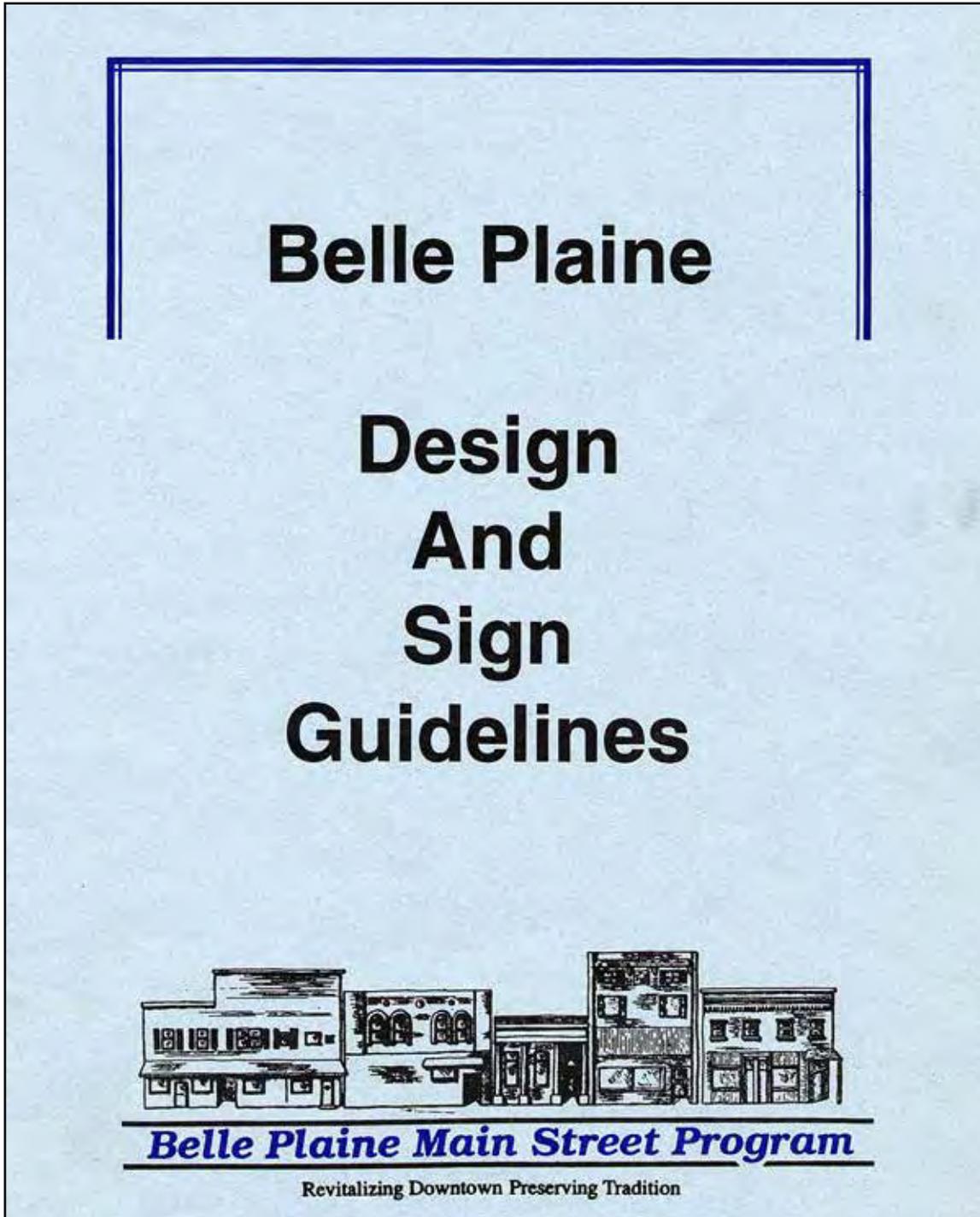


Figure A1. Belle Plaine Design and Sign Guidelines Brochure, Belle Plaine Main Street Program.



Belle Plaine Design Guidelines

Introduction:

The following guidelines were developed by the Design Committee of the Belle Plaine Main Street Program. They were developed to assist historic building owners in facade renovations. These guidelines must be complied with if a building owner wants to apply for the low interest loan pool. To

apply, visit the Main Street Office at 133 North Meridian or contact Greg Nybeck at 873-4295. The Design Committee has developed these guidelines with concern for the appearance of the town, for the economic abilities of the building owner, and for the general compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Storefront

Bulkhead:

When renovating a building, special attention must be paid



A downtown that pays attention to the detail and design of the historic buildings can be pleasing and inviting.

to the bulkhead area of the building. This is the part directly below the storefront window. The bulkhead, or kickplate, serves many functions. First, it protects the storefront window; second, it puts the merchandise up at a better viewing point for the customer, and finally it can define the entrance. Traditionally the bulkhead was made of wood with trim applied. Later, many bulkheads were altered with either aluminum, structural glass, or brick.

Guidelines for renovation of the bulkhead.

The bulkhead should be restored to its original look if at all possible. Removal of the existing bulkhead may be necessary. If the original bulkhead does not exist it should be rebuilt or recreated. Sometimes the bulkhead has been completely altered both in size and design. At that point it is important to consider the size of the window. If the bulkhead was downsized to fit a larger storefront window, the existing bulkhead should be used. See "Windows" section for more information on size.



A traditional bulkhead and storefront window.

Windows:

The main purpose of the storefront window is to display merchandise. It also allows for natural light and heat to enter the building. It is the link between the passerby and the store interior. The large window gives the store a sense of openness and friendliness. Most storefront windows were framed in wood and the sill sloped forward for drainage.

Guidelines for renovation of windows:

The storefront windows should be kept open. If the windows have been covered up, they should be uncovered as close to their original size as possible. In most cases, interior barriers that block the view of the passerby to the inside of the store should be taken out.

Transoms:

Originally the transom was directly over the storefront window and allowed light to reach the back of the store. Since the age of the fluorescent light, many of the transoms have been closed up and the ceiling lowered. The transom was often made of prism glass, or a tinted glass.

Guidelines for renovation of transom windows:

The transom should be uncovered and exposed as it was originally. If the transom does not exist it should be replaced. There are a number of options for replacing the transom windows. Less expensive glasses can be used to simulate the original transom. If the ceiling has been lowered inside, the glass can be back-painted or reflective

glass can be used. There are many inexpensive options and all should be explored before the transom is filled in with plywood and painted an appropriate color. If it is used as a sign board or covered by the signage, the signage must fall within the sign guidelines set by the committee, and to conform to the City sign ordinance.

Awnings:

Cloth awnings were typically used in historic districts and downtowns. Traditionally, awnings were retractable and were used to control the amount of light that went into the store. They were also used as protection from the elements. They were placed above the transom window.

Awnings can enhance the look of a plain building as well as provide protection.



Guidelines for renovation of awnings:

Metal or aluminum awnings should be replaced with cloth or canvas awnings. Both fixed and retractable awnings can be used. The awning should provide shade for the storefront window and protection for the pedestrian. To do this, the awning must extend at least three feet out from the building. The distance of the bottom awning to the sidewalk should be at least seven feet. The top of the awning should not extend more than six inches over the top of the transom window. Lettering and signage on the awning should be limited to the valance area and must meet standards set in the sign guidelines. Signage can be placed on the awning over the entrance upon committee approval. Backlighting of the

awning is acceptable only over the entrance. Styles and colors can be obtained at the Belle Plaine Main Street Program's office.

Storefront doors:

Storefront doors were usually made of wood with a glass panel and built with attention to detail. The door is the first experience that the customer has when he/she walks into the store. Ornate or unique doors can define the character of the business.

Guidelines for renovation of storefront doors:

Every effort should be made to utilize or recreate the original storefront door. Plate glass and aluminum doors are not recommended; however, the committee is aware of the expense of replacing the door.

Therefore, we would encourage the store owner to paint the door a historic color that matches and complements the color of the building. Appropriate materials for the door range from wood to steel. A standard aluminum door with a wide stile can be used. Baked or dark anodized enamel finish is recommended.

Upper story windows:

Upper story windows add rhythm and balance to a two story building. Often, it is the window for an apartment or office. Windows were large to allow maximum light and ventilation. Recently, many upper story windows have been filled in with boards or smaller windows. This disrupts the rhythm of the building and projects a negative closed up image.

Guidelines for renovation of upper story windows:

If the original windows exist they should be repaired, repainted and weatherproofed if necessary. Storm windows are recommended to help avoid heat loss. Under no circumstances should upper story windows be blocked in. If the windows have been infilled they should be replaced. The Design Committee suggests looking at historic photos to best match the windows. Most window manufacturers offer energy efficient matches to historic windows. New replacement windows should not have reflective glass as it takes away from the historic effect of the building.

Cornices:

The cornice can be one of the most ornate parts of the building. It is the projected molding along the top of a building where the roof and wall meet. Those that exist should be rebuilt to their original splendor. Car putty can be used to rebuild dented or ripped metal cornices. They can also be rebuilt out of wood. As in all aspects of building renovations, repair of the existing should come before replacement. Under no circumstances should they be removed from the building.

Tuckpointing:

This is a term that refers to putting new mortar in the joints between the bricks. Tuckpointing is an important maintenance tool that should be used to maintain the structural integrity of the building and to prevent water and air from entering. This process is very important and one of the most crucial steps in building upkeep. The Belle Plaine Main Street Program cannot

recommend a contractor but will provide names. References should be checked and previous projects inspected. Older brick is often softer and special care should be taken to ensure the correct mortar mixture. The Secretary of Interior's "Standards for Historic Preservation" is a good source for technical aspects of tuckpointing. It is always our recommendation that if tuckpointing is needed, it should be one of the first steps of the renovation.



Upper story windows, such as those in Melgram Jewelers, need to be kept open.



Painting:

Buildings should be painted only in extreme cases. If paint exists on brick buildings, the owner should make all attempt to remove the paint and restore the brick color. If the brick has no paint then it should be left the natural color. If the building owner wishes to change the color scheme of the building, a designer should be consulted. The Design Committee offers a selection of historic colors at the Main Street Office. The committee recommends that these colors be used in all cases. The color selection process for the trim and the main building is important and time should be spent on this to ensure a satisfactory selection of color. The Design Committee and manager will work with the building owner in the selection

process. The historic color of the building can be uncovered by scratching off a patch of the old paint in an inconspicuous area. If the building is to be repainted it should be washed first with a low pressure wash to remove dirt and loose paint and then thoroughly dried.

Cleaning:

Many brick buildings need to be cleaned periodically. This can be done with a low pressure wash and light scrubbing, or in some cases, a low pressure wash with appropriate chemical cleaners. Chemical cleaners should be patch-tested in an inconspicuous area. Under no circumstances should a building be sandblasted. Sandblasting destroys brick, stone and wood! The only material on a historic building that can be sandblasted is cast iron.

The Schumacher Inn in New Prague is a good example of how a building can be restored.

BELLE PLAINE

LOW INTEREST LOAN POOL FOR FACADE AND INTERIOR IMPROVEMENTS

The Belle Plaine Main Street Program, along with the State Bank of Belle Plaine, has developed a low interest loan pool to assist building and business owners with improvements to their property and business

Loan Rate and Term

- Initial rate is prime (New York Prime) at closing with a floor of 6%
- Maximum term for loan under low interest program is three years. Upon maturity loan is to be paid in full or renewed at current market (bank) rate.
- Minimum loan is \$1,000.00, maximum loan is \$20,000.00.
- This is not a grant. All loan applications must meet participating financial institution credit criteria.

General Criteria

- Projects must follow the Belle Plaine design guidelines, City and County ordinances, and have approval of the Belle Plaine Main Street Program Design Committee.
- No more than 30% of the project cost can be used for interior improvements.
- Applicants must pick up an application form at the

Belle Plaine Main Street Office

133 N. Meridian
Belle Plaine, Mn 56011.
Phone (612) 873-4295.
Office hours:
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday - Friday.

- All work should be done by a building contractor located in the Belle Plaine area.
- Applications must be accompanied by a written proposal of improvements, estimated costs (bids), and appropriate building permits.



Belle Plaine Sign Guidelines

Belle Plaine Sign Guidelines

Introduction:

The purpose of these guidelines is to make suggestions to building owners on how to better enhance their business and the historic area of Belle Plaine through signage. These guidelines have been written with the intention of promoting voluntary change. The committee has had to consider both the needs of the businesses and the public. It is necessary to contact City Hall for a permit prior to recifying a sign.

Type of Sign

Plastic formed signs:

Plastic formed signs are not appropriate for the historic core area. Their original intention was to be used in strip shopping center areas and with newer structures. The integrity of the historic building is lost when plastic formed signs are applied.

Historic buildings by definition are any building built before 1936. There are a few newer buildings in the downtown and exceptions should be made for them, however, we encourage building owners



This is an example of signage that is complementary to a building.

to use signs in a tasteful and respectful manner.

Neon

Neon is generally not appropriate for buildings in the downtown. If approved, the size should fit within the guidelines established by the City's sign ordinances.

Wooden

Wooden painted, carved signs, or wooden letters are appropriate for all buildings in the historic area.

Banners/Cloth

Banner or cloth type signage is appropriate for the area. Care must be taken to see that

Metal

Aluminum, steel, and copper are some of the options for metal signs and are appropriate for the historic area.

Painted

Signs may not be painted directly on the wall or roof of a building, but may be painted on the window.

Standard for Signs

Size

Signs must be proportionally balanced to the building. All signage will be reviewed by the Design Committee prior to approval.

Number of signs

Each business should have no more than three signs on its store front, indicating the

name and type of business. The building number is not considered a sign. The Design Committee recommends that all businesses paint their building number somewhere near the entrance of the business. There should be only one overhanging sign, one flush mounted sign and one window sign or signage on the awning. Each business should have no more than one sign on the back of their building. Signs used in back of the buildings should be similar in style and color to the front signage.

Placement of signs

Signs should be flush-mounted on the building. The transom area and over the transom are two places for the signage. Overhanging signs are discouraged but allowed with committee approval. Signs can also be painted on the win-

dow or on the awning. The valance of the awning is the best location for the sign.

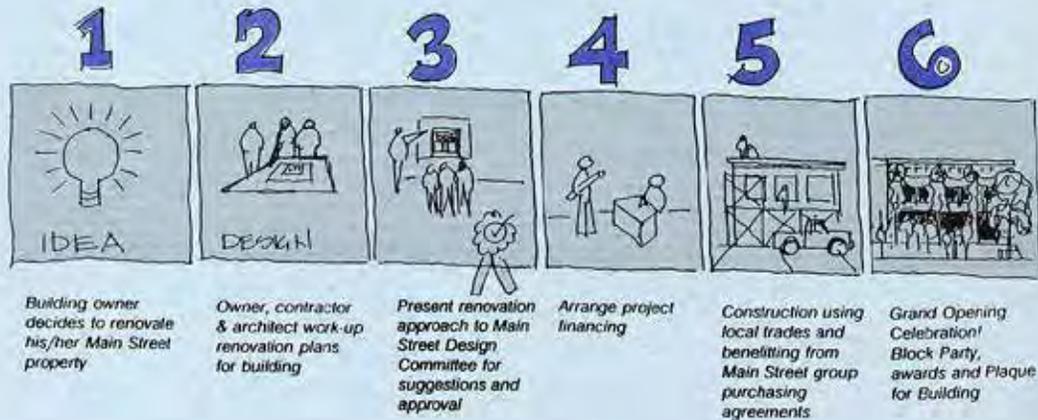
Colors for signs

The Design Committee recommends no neon or fluorescent colored signs. If desired, special approval is required by the committee. Signs should be limited to three or four colors. The best types of colors are the same historic colors as the design guidelines suggest.

Summary

In conclusion, too much signage, poorly maintained signage, or signs placed in competition with one another, can give the entire town a bad image. Each business owner should be aware of how their signs look in relationship to their neighbors and how their signs affect the look of the business district as a whole.

RENOVATION PROCESS



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIORS STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

The following Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time, those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finished, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of the deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Appendix B

Community Profile

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Figure B2. Belle Plaine Sex and Age, CRD, May, 2008.

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Figure B4. 2000 Belle Plaine Employment by Industry, CRD, May, 2008.

Figure B5. 2000 Belle Plaine Major Employers, CRD, May, 2008.

Figure B6. 2000 Belle Plaine Commute Time to Work, CRD, May, 2008.

Community Profile

Demographic Information

The Metropolitan Council estimated that Belle Plaine had a population of 6,595 in 2006. This is a 74 percent increase from the 2000 U.S. Census population of 3,789. During the same time period, the number of households in Belle Plaine grew by 69 percent. This growth is consistent with Metropolitan Council forecasts that project moderate population growth in the city through 2030. Belle Plaine's population is expected to reach 16,300 in 2030, a nearly 150 percent increase from its current population estimate. The State Demographer's Office projects that the number of households in Scott County will increase 81 percent between 2000 and 2020, from 30,692 households to 55,540 households. Belle Plaine will likely experience higher household growth given previous Belle Plaine household growth relative to Scott County household growth and population projections. (Figure B1)

Belle Plaine had a median age of 34.9 years in 2001 according to the U.S. Census. Comparatively, Scott County's median age was 32.7 years and Minnesota's median age statewide was 35.4. 49.4 percent of the population was male, and 50.6 percent was female (Figure B2). 97 percent of the population was white, and the largest minority group was Hispanic or Latino, comprising of 1.1 percent of the population. Results from the American Community Survey indicate that diversity is increasing in Scott County, particularly among Asians, African Americans, and Hispanics. (Figure B3)

Socioeconomic Information

The 2000 Census reported that 81.5 percent of the population age 25 and older in Belle Plaine has attained at least high school diploma, and 17.3 percent a bachelor's degree or higher. 16 percent of Belle Plaine's non-institutionalized population had a disability in 2000. 97.5 percent of the city's population spoke English at home.

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development reported the unemployment rate in Scott County was 5 percent in March 2008. This compares to 5.4 percent statewide and 5.2 percent nationwide. There were 28 families (29 percent of all families) or 206 individuals (5.6 percent of population) below the poverty level in Belle Plaine. The Median income was \$50,272 in the city in 2000, above the nationwide figure of \$41,994.

Manufacturing was the largest employing industry among Belle Plaine's workforce in 2000, followed by education (Figure B4). According to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, major employers in the city include Belle Plaine Lutheran Home, the Belle Plaine School District, and Emma Krumbie's. (Figure B5).

Community Profile

95 percent of Belle Plaine's workforce age 16 and older in 2000 did not work at home and therefore must commute. Of these commuters, 81 percent drove alone, 10.7 percent carpoolled, 3.5 percent walked, and less than 1 percent used other means. No commuters reported using public transportation. The average travel time to work was 24.5 minutes. (Figure B6)

	1990-2000 Growth	2000-2010 Growth Projection	2010-2020 Growth Projection	2020-2030 Growth Projection
Belle Plaine	20.30%	92.70%	61.60%	38.10%
Belle Plaine Twp	16.60%	-4.50%	2.60%	64.60%
Scott County	54.70%	63.50%	27.60%	18.70%

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Figure B1. Belle Plaine / Scott County Population Growth, CRD, May, 2008.

Sex and Age	Number	Percent
Sex		
Male	1,873	49.4
Female	1,916	50.6
Age Group (Years)		
Under 5	283	7.50%
5 to 9	295	7.80%
10 to 14	301	7.90%
15 to 19	277	7.30%
20 to 24	187	4.90%
25 to 34	554	14.60%
35 to 44	631	16.70%
45 to 54	382	10.10%
55 to 59	139	3.70%
60 to 64	126	3.30%
65 to 74	256	6.80%
75 to 84	238	6.30%
85+	120	3.20%
Total	3,789	100.00%

Figure B2. Belle Plaine Sex and Age, CRD, May, 2008.

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Race or Ethnicity	2000 Population	
	Number	Percent
One Race	3,754	99.10%
White	3,690	97.40%
Black or African American	5	0.10%
American Indian or Alaska Native	15	0.40%
Asian	27	0.70%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0.00%
Some Other Race	17	0.40%
Two or More Races	2	0.10%
Hispanic or Latino	43	1.10%
<i>Total Population</i>	<i>3,789</i>	<i>100.00%</i>

Figure B3. 2000 Belle Plaine Race and Ethnicity, CRD, May, 2008.

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Industry	Number of Workers	Percent
Manufacturing	389	20.00%
Educational; health and social services	336	17.20%
Construction	216	11.10%
Arts; entertainment; recreation; accommodation and food services	215	11.00%
Retail trade	210	10.80%
Finance; insurance; real estate and rental and leasing	127	6.50%
Transportation and warehousing; and utilities	116	6.00%
Other services (except public administration)	88	4.50%
Professional; scientific; management; administrative; and waste management services	81	4.20%
Public administration	79	4.10%
Wholesale trade	48	2.50%
Information	39	2.00%
Agriculture; forestry; fishing and hunting; and mining	5	0.30%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,949</i>	<i>100.00%</i>

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Figure B4. 2000 Belle Plaine Employment by Industry, CRD, May, 2008.

Employer	Employee Count
Belle Plaine Lutheran Home	276
Belle Plaine Public Schools-ISD #716	90
Emma Krumbree's Family Restaurant	85
Bell Pharmaceuticals	30
Huber's SuperValu	25
Lupient - Belle Plaine	25
State Bk of Belle Plaine	21
Belle Plaine, City of	20
Valley View Golf Club	20
Belle Plaine Co-op	18
Seimon Implement	17
Subway	13
Belle Plaine Clinic	12
Creative Tool & Engineering	12
Prairie Farm Supply	11

Source: Minn. Dept. of Employment & Economic Development

Figure B5. 2000 Belle Plaine Major Employers, CRD, May, 2008.

		Commute Time (Minutes)				
		0-9	10-19	20-34	35-59	60+
Belle Plaine Commuters	Number of Commuters	495	179	676	372	93
	Percent of Commuters	27.30%	9.90%	37.20%	20.50%	5.10%

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Figure B6. 2000 Belle Plaine Commute Time to Work, CRD, May, 2008.

Appendix C: Project Process and Community Design Workshop

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Project Process

The Community Vision for Commercial Development project was commissioned by the City of Belle Plaine, guided by the Belle Plaine Commercial Design Committee (Commercial Design Committee) and prepared by the Center for Rural Design (CRD) at the University of Minnesota.

The project process, illustrated in the timeline in Figure C1 (located at the end of Appendix C), began with the Belle Plaine City Council approval of the project in December 2007, the re-appointment of the Commercial Design Committee and the establishment of the project Steering Committee. The project included three major phases: the organizational and inventory phase, the vision identification phase and the Design Manual documentation phase.

The organizational and inventory phase focused discussion with the Steering Committee on existing physical and cultural assets and opportunities, potential design guideline implementation measures and precedents for urban design features and policy implementation. This phase was facilitated by two Steering Committee meetings.

The goal of the vision identification phase was to gain insight into the community's values in regards to the City's current and future image. The community values helped guide the planning principles and design guidelines in the Design Manual. The vision identification phase included two Steering Committee meetings and the Community Design Workshop. The two Steering Committee meetings focused on the design of the exercises and process of the Community Design Workshop. Figure C2, illustrates the Design Workshop Flier prepared by the City of Belle Plaine.

The Design Manual documentation phase is a synthesis of the outcomes of project phases 1 and 2, Steering Committee conversation and further research into the report. The project phase included two Steering Committee Meetings and one public meeting with the Belle Plaine City Council. The intent of the first Steering Committee Meeting was to review and gain approval of the Community Design Workshop results. Between the first and second Steering Committee meetings was an electronic transfer of a draft of the Design Manual for review and edit. The second Steering Committee meeting involved gaining the comments and further approval of the Steering Committee for the Design Manual. The culmination of the process was the public meeting with Belle Plaine City Council for approval of the Design Manual.

This project could not have been made possible without the re-appointed Belle Plaine Commercial Design Committee. The Commercial Design Committee formed the basis of the Steering Committee and was a direct liaison to the City Council. Efforts were made to have as diverse of a Steering Committee as possible. Steering Committee diversity provides needed insight into multiple perspectives and opinions from people in the City and surrounding areas. As such, additional members of the community were asked to

Project Process

provide assistance to the project without official voting rights. The combined group was the Steering Committee for the remainder of the project. The Steering Committee's role was to provide insight and guidance to the Center for Rural Design for the Community Vision of Commercial Development project.

Join us at the Belle Plaine Community **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** for the Vision of Commercial Design



You are Invited
to a
Community Workshop!

Tuesday April 8th,
2008
6:00-8:00 P.M.
Belle Plaine
Government Center
218 North Meridian
Street

Please join us!
Your opinion matters!



Making Belle Plaine Beautiful by Design

If you live, work, or
play in Belle Plaine,
we need you here!

Help Define:

- Belle Plaine's Community Vision
- The Relationship of Downtown Belle Plaine to Highway 169



We would like to hear from you!
If you can't make the
workshop, please email your
comments to Trisha Rosenfeld at
trosenfeld@ci.belleplaine.mn.us
or call 952-873-5553.

*Sponsored by the City of Belle Plaine Steering Committee with the
Center for Rural Design, University of Minnesota.
For more information check out the Belle Plaine website: www.belleplainemn.com*

Figure C2. Public Workshop Flier, City of Belle Plaine April, 2008.

Community Design Workshop: Exercises

Exercise 1

The intent of Exercise 1 was to gain a better understanding about what Belle Plaine's identity could be. As expressed in the public participation results of the Comprehensive Plan, economic development is important to the community of Belle Plaine. Research shows that in order to increase economic development, marketing the quality of life or image of a community is key. This exercise began to help the community frame the meaning of Belle Plaine to the broader region.

The Exercise 1 questionnaire (Figure 3C) was designed as an individual exercise with the goal of constructive group discussion. The table participants rated their current vision of Belle Plaine in relation to broad vision topics (e.g. arts and entertainment, industry, agriculture, etc.) individually. A rating of ten was the best or most heavily weighted. The participants then rated their future vision of Belle Plaine in relation to the same broad vision topics. The participants then picked four areas of the most importance to their future vision. The four areas were ranked comparatively from one to four, with four being the most important.

The next part of the Workshop, Exercise 1 Part 2 A and B, as shown in Figure C4, was a group dotmacracy exercise. The intent of this Exercise was to gain insight into the community's perception of the City's image. Dotmacracy is a public participation technique, in which there are a number of opportunities to submit input for one set of questions. This dotmacracy exercise entailed the participant table groups to first individually answer:

- A. If Belle Plaine were to prepare a postcard what would be illustrated on it?
- B. What type of destination should Belle Plaine be in the future?

After these questions were answered the table's answers were collected and traded with a different group. The new group then read, interpreted, discussed and recorded answers. The recorded answers were publicly posted and then the participants placed dots on the answers to the above questions that they identified with best.

Exercises 2A and B

Exercise 2A and B, as shown in Figure C5, was a set of individual questions that focused on gaining insight into the community's values in relation to the perceptions of the existing and future physical character of downtown Belle Plaine, the US Highway 169 Corridor and the City's gateways. The first set of questions focused on the character of downtown Belle Plaine. Downtown Belle Plaine is the historic heart of the City and may be the source of the principle defining character of the community. The following questions were asked of the community:

- A. What elements currently make downtown special?
- B. What elements could make downtown even better in the future?

Exercise 2C

Exercise 2C, as shown in Figure C5, focused on gaining insight into the community's sense of character of commercial development outside of the historic downtown Belle Plaine and the US Highway 169. The following question was asked:

- A. How important is it that commercial development in the other portions of Belle Plaine embody the identity of the historic portions of the City? And to what extent?

Exercises 2D and E

Exercise 2D and E, as shown in Figure C6, focused on gaining insight into the community's sense of physical character of the US Highway 169 Corridor. US Highway 169 moves through Belle Plaine on a diagonal creating a corridor that offers opportunity to introduce through-traffic to the unique character of Belle Plaine, enticing them to stop or to return in the future to explore the city. The following questions were asked of the community:

- A. Should the highway businesses facilitate the highway (face the highway) or facilitate the community (maintain the grid)?
- B. How important is it that highway businesses embody the identity of the historic portions of city? And to what extent?

Exercises 2F and G

Exercises 2F and G, as shown in Figure C7, was the third set of questions focusing on character of the Belle Plaine. The City's entry points can be an asset to the broad community, functioning as gateways to the City. They provide a crucial 'first impression' to visitors coming to Belle Plaine and can also be a source of community pride, providing a sense of 'arriving home' to residents. The following questions were asked of the community:

- A. Where are the key entry points to Belle Plaine?
- B. Should the entry points provide linkages to broader community features such as the parks, the river, internal and regional trail systems, etc., as well as the commercial districts?

Vision Related Areas	Belle Plaine's CURRENT Vision Score Individually 1-10 Rating (10 being the best)	Belle Plaine's FUTURE Vision Score Individually 1-10 Rating (10 being the best)	Pick 4 Areas of the Most Importance to the FUTURE Vision of Belle Plaine (Rank 1-4, 4 being the most important)	Comments
Arts and Entertainment				
Industry				
Agriculture				
Environmental Location				
Outdoor Recreation				
Location to the Twin Cities				
History				
Cultural Experiences				
Landmarks				
Sense of Place (Downtown Belle Plaine)				
Senior Living				
Sense of Community / Rural Heritage				
Bedroom Community				
New Belle Plaine / Old Belle Plaine				

Figure C3. Exercise One Questionnaire, CRD, April, 2008.

Project Process

Exercise 1

The results of Exercise 1 and rest of the exercises of the Community Design Workshop were tallied and illustrated by bar graphs. The bar graphs are color coded, as shown in Figure C8, to highlight the first, second, third and fourth ranked results where appropriate.

The results of the first part of Exercise 1: Belle Plaine's Vision NOW, shown in Figure C9, suggests that the community members consider Belle Plaine to be a bedroom community to the Twin Cities, with a significant agricultural base. The participants identify Belle Plaine as having close proximity to the Twin Cities and a strong sense of community and rural heritage. The results also suggest that Belle Plaine is a significant place for senior living. These results imply that Belle Plaine's location to the Twin Cities and the community's perception of living on the urban and rural edge is significant and should be considered in the project.

The results of the second part of Exercise 1: "Belle Plaine's future vision", as shown in Figure C10, suggests that the community would like Belle Plaine to focus interests on enhancing and promoting industry, outdoor recreation and the sense of place of the downtown. Sense of community and rural heritage is also significant and important to the future of Belle Plaine. These results imply that the community of Belle Plaine would like to strengthen the City's economy, natural recreational assets, downtown and community heritage.

The results of the third part of Exercise 1: "four areas of the most importance to the community's future vision", as illustrated in Figure C11, shows that industry, community heritage, uniting new and old Belle Plaine, and the location to the Twin Cities is significant. These results imply that enhancing Belle Plaine's economy is most important. Preserving and strengthening the community's heritage is important. Uniting new and old Belle Plaine or north and south Belle Plaine is significant, as well as the relation to the Twin Cities being significant.

Exercises 1 Part 2 A and B

The cumulative individual results of Exercise 1 Part 2 A, illustrated in Figure C12, shows that if Belle Plaine were to prepare a postcard, the Minnesota River would be the most significant image featured. Visions of agriculture would also be an important feature on a postcard. The prairie and bluff landscape, trails and churches (steeple) are also significant features to be represented on a Belle Plaine postcard.

The dotmocracy results of Exercise 1 Part 2A, illustrated in Figure C13, shows that a potential postcard should represent a series of images, mainly the Minnesota River, farmland, churches, the golf course, the new Highway 25 bridge, commercial areas, historic buildings, the Belle Plaine Government Center mural and wide streetscapes. The Minnesota Riverfront, parks, Belle Plaine's relation to the River and the trail systems are

Community Design Workshop Results

highly favored by the community. A transitional panorama representing the Belle Plaine and its historic and modern relationship to the Minnesota River is also significant to represent in a postcard of Belle Plaine.

The cumulative individual results of Exercise 1 Part 2B, illustrated in Figure C14, shows that Belle Plaine should be a destination that features retail/shopping, working/job center, trails, food businesses and entertainment. Outdoor recreation, parks, community heritage promotion and a place to stop are also significant features in a future vision for Belle Plaine as a destination.

The dotmocracy results of Exercise 1 Part 2B, illustrated in Figure C15, shows that Belle Plaine as an industrial job center destination is highly significant. And, Belle Plaine as a destination for the arts, entertainment, industry, connectivity to the river and trails is also important.

Exercises 2A and B

The results for Exercise 2A, illustrated in Figure C16, shows that historic storefronts are the most significant feature that currently makes downtown Belle Plaine special. The wide streets and historic architecture are highly significant. The friendly community atmosphere and pedestrian friendly environment also contribute to the elements that make downtown special.

The results for Exercise 2B, illustrated in Figure C17, expresses that new planting and a variety of restaurants and shops would most significantly enhance downtown Belle Plaine in the future. The renovation of downtown's buildings and streetscape would also enhance Belle Plaine. The community had suggested that the addition of a theater would be significant in making downtown better in the future. Enhanced business signage, benches and places to go would also make the downtown better.

Exercise 2C

The results for Exercise 2C, illustrated in Figure C18, suggests that the community mostly had no response or found it very important that the commercial businesses that are not located in either the Downtown or US Highway 169 Corridor Districts have their own character.

Exercises 2D and E

The results for Exercise 2D, shown in Figure C19, expresses that new development along the US Highway 169 Corridor should face and facilitate the highway. The responses also indicate that the new commercial development should maintain the existing grid of the City and that there should be easy access to the businesses from the highway interchanges and the community.

The results for Exercise 2E, as shown in Figure C20, suggest that it is very important that the highway businesses embody the identity of the historic portions of the City.

There were also a significant amount of responses that didn't consider that the physical character of the historic downtown should be extended to the highway businesses.

Exercises 2F and G

The results for Exercise 2F, as shown in Figure C21 support areas north and south of Belle Plaine on the US Highway 169 Corridor and areas north and south of the City on Highway 25 as being the primary entry points into Belle Plaine. The County Road 3 entry point south of the City was also significant.

The results for Exercise 2G as shown in Figure 22, expresses that linkage from the key entry points to broader community features are highly significant. More and better signage was also suggested in relation to linking entry points to major City assets such as the parks, the Minnesota River, internal and regional trails systems, etc.

Key	
Color Code	Ranking
	1st
	2nd
	3rd
	4th

Figure C8. Graph Key for Charrette Results, CRD, May, 2008.

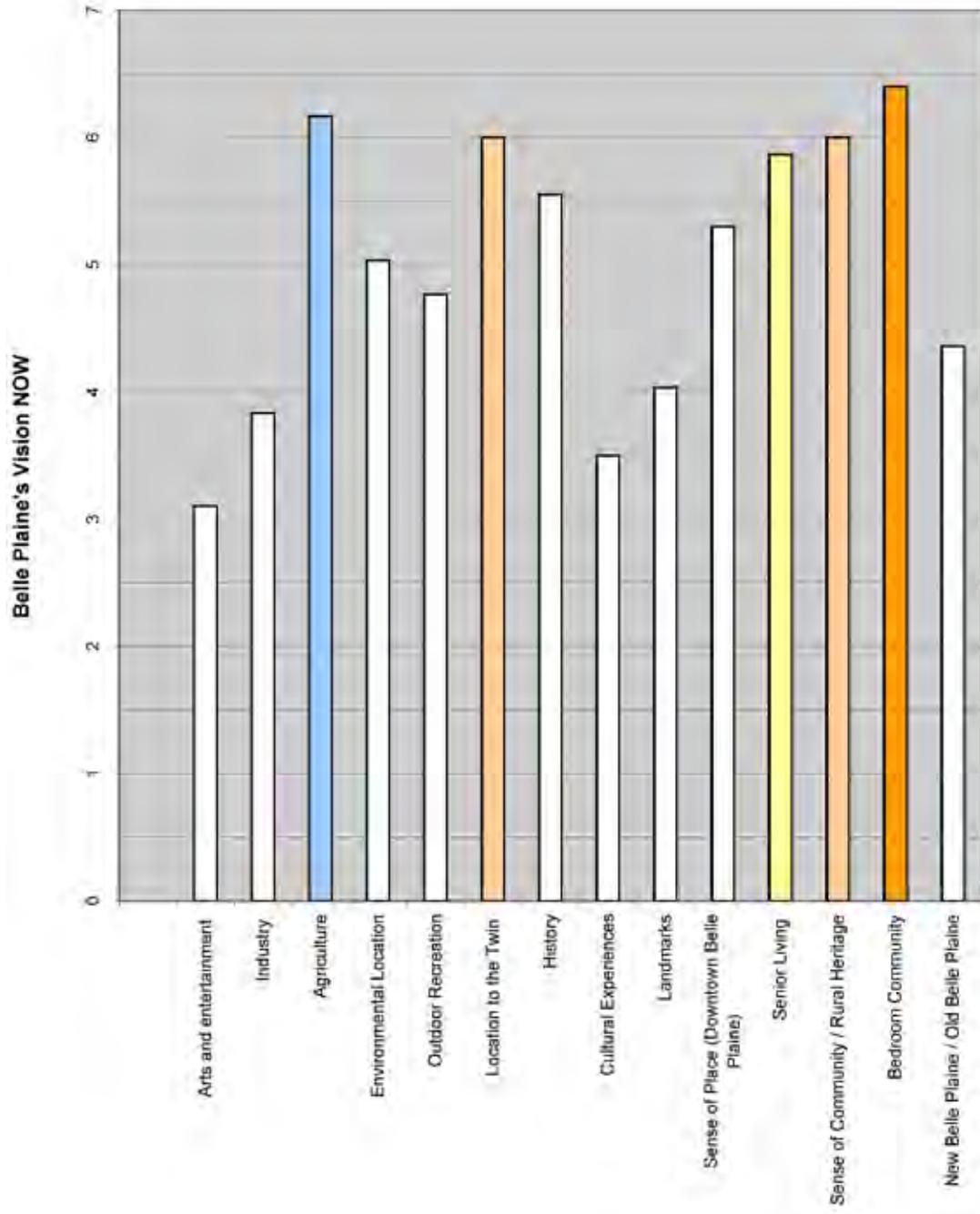


Figure C9. Exercise One Vision Now Results– Cumulative Individual Responses, CRD, April, 2008.

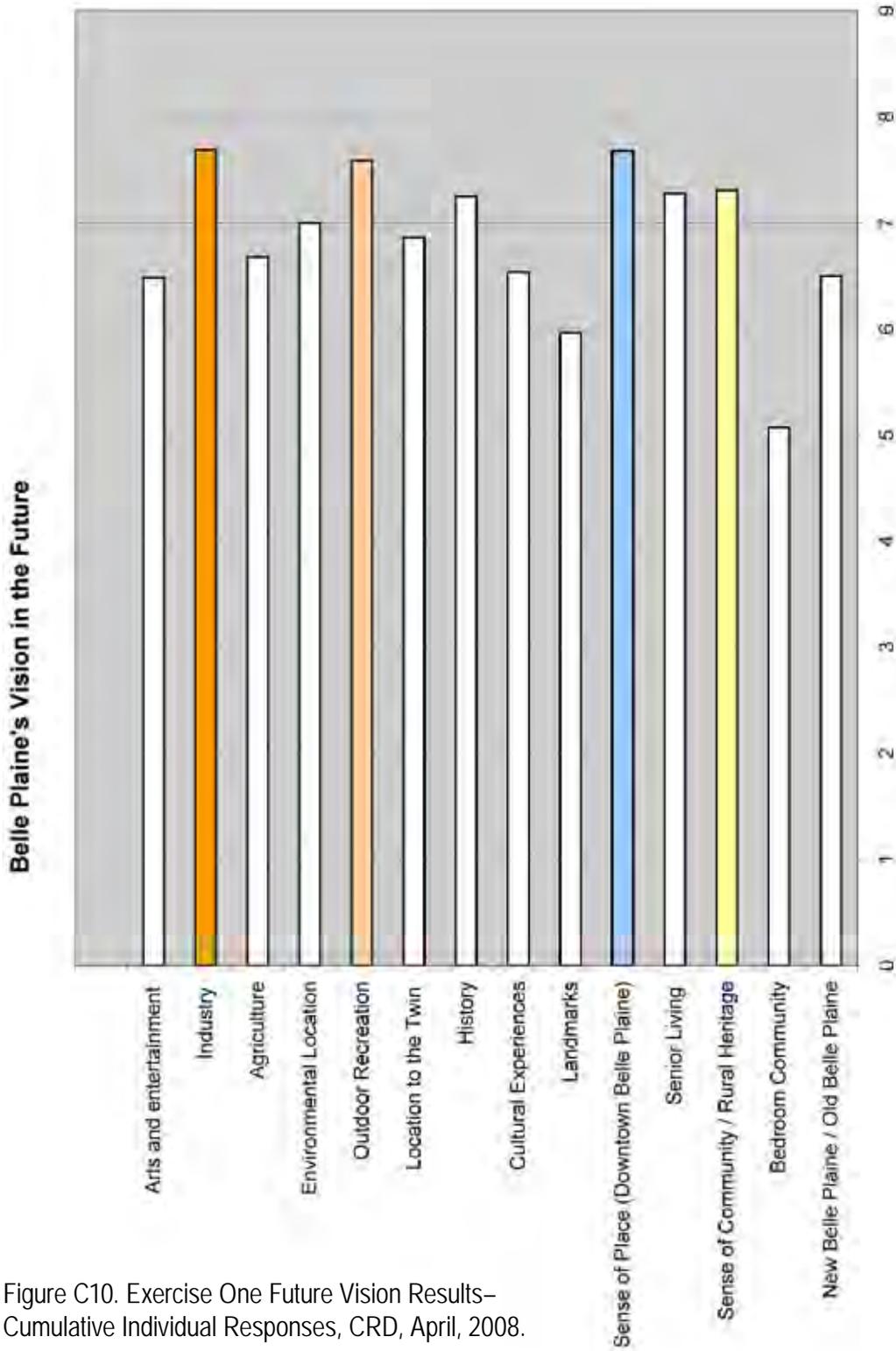


Figure C10. Exercise One Future Vision Results– Cumulative Individual Responses, CRD, April, 2008.

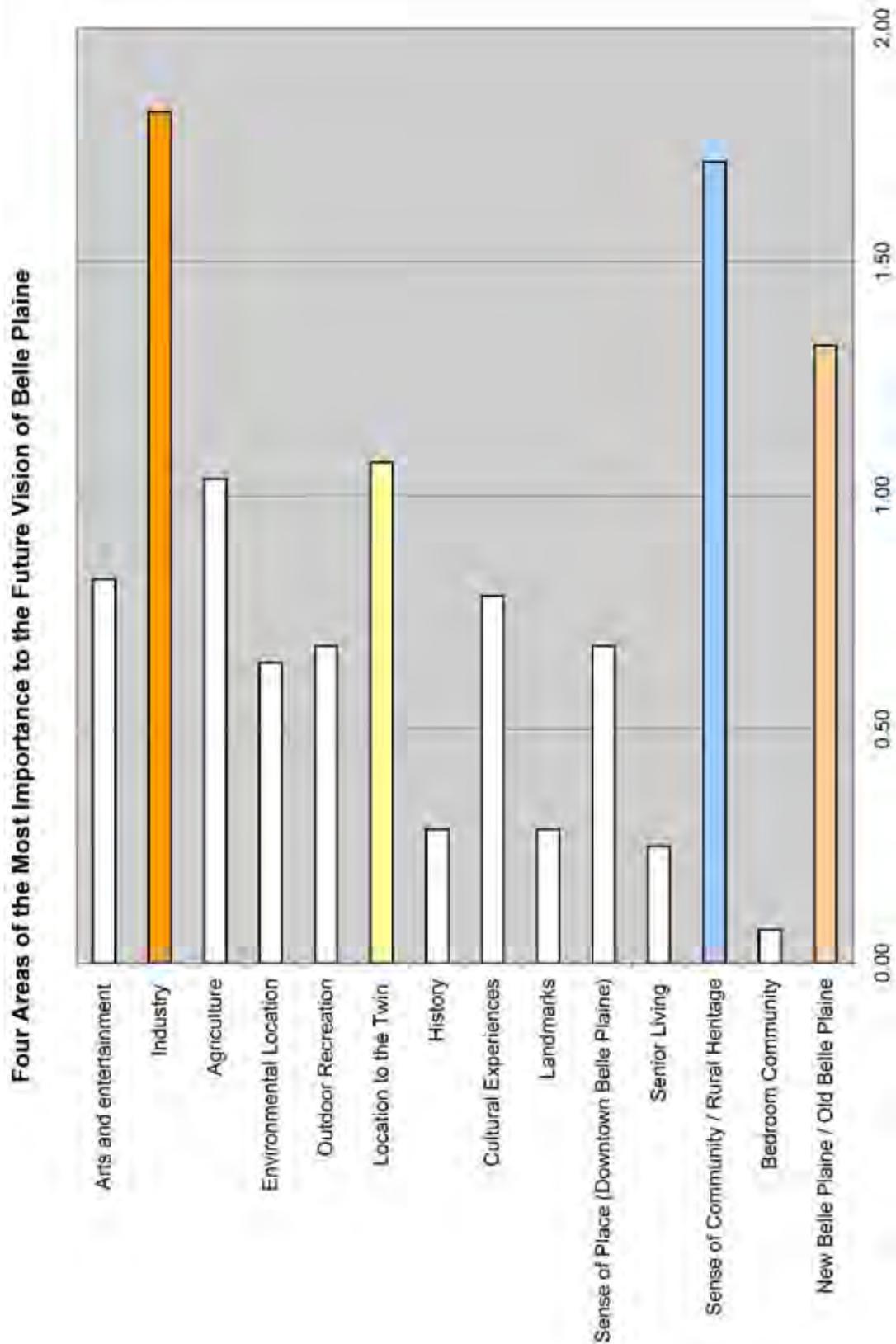


Figure C11. Exercise One: Four Most Important Results– Cumulative Individual Responses, CRD, April, 2008.

If Belle Plaine Were To Prepare a Postcard What Would Be Illustrated On It?

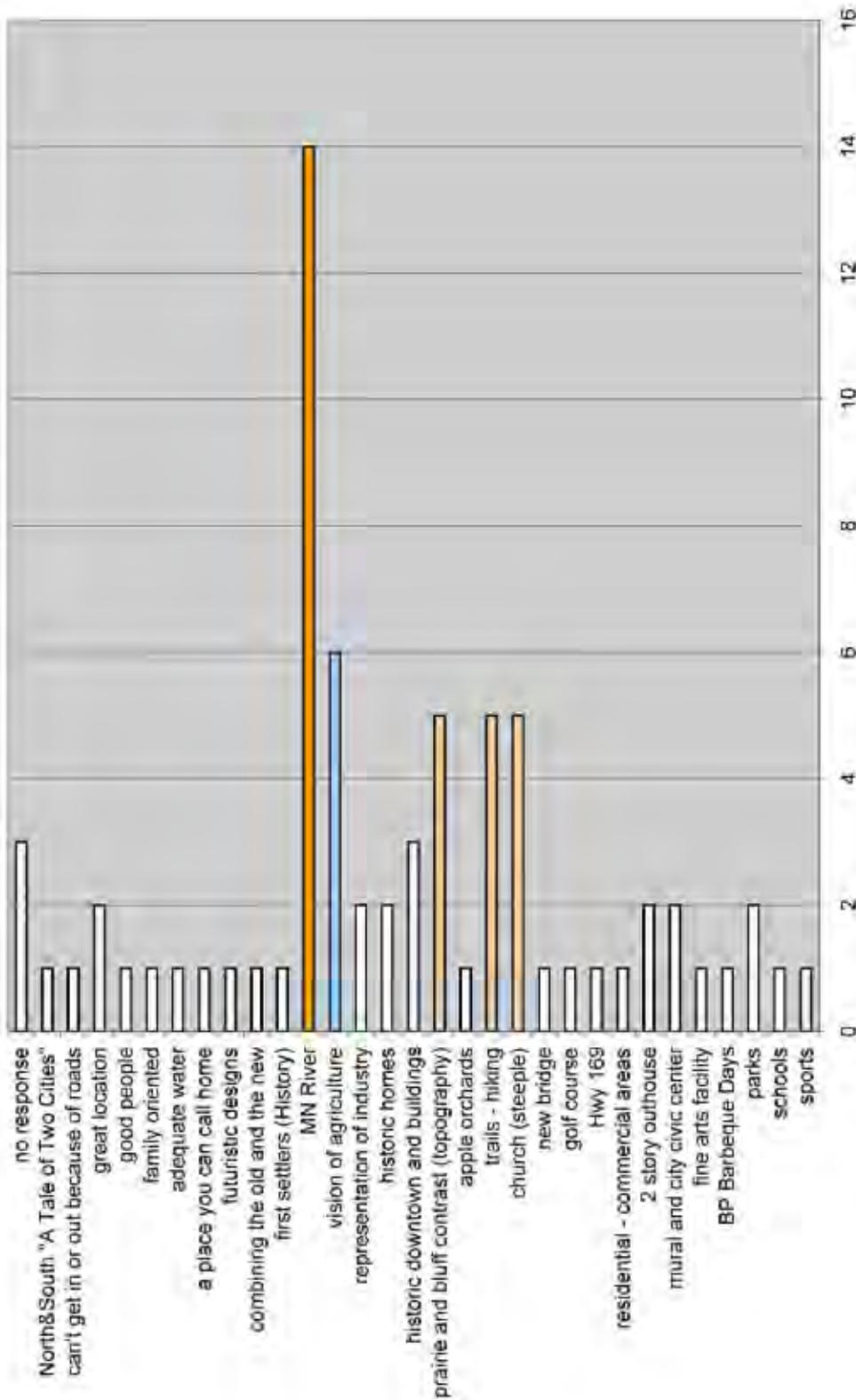


Figure C12. Exercise One Part Two A. – Cumulative Individual Responses, CRD, April, 2008.

<u>Statement</u>	<u>Dots</u>
Riverfront/Parks/Relation to the River/Trails	6
History of Settlement/Downtown Bluffs	
Historic Architecture	
Family Oriented Activities	
River, Farmland, Churches, Golf Course, New Bridge (25), Commercial areas, Historic Buildings/Mural, wide streetscapes	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mural at City Council, • Agricultural fields • River 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minnesota River Valley • Agriculture • Historical aspects 	1
Emma's	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails • Natural Features • Vistas/views 	
Transitional panorama: The town and the river. A picture of Old town and its historical touches. The reflection in the river shows the new part of town and its newer design of the future or vice versa.	6
Bridges side by side: Old 25 bridge showing old community linked by new bridge showing new community	3

Figure C13. Exercise One Part Two A. –Dotmacracy Response, CRD, April, 2008.

<u>Statement</u>	<u>Dots</u>
Commercial business growth, Ex: Arbor Lakes, Maple Grove	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • both sides of Hwy unified, • self-sufficient town • theater • neighborhood feeling 	
Shopping, working, recreation - all in one	
One stop shop	
Agriculture center	
Regional center for variety of services	
High quality of life	1
Small businesses	
Something for everyone	
Parks to admire views/bluffs	
Arts and entertainment	
Offers little bit of everything: Arts, entertainment, industry, connectivity to the river & trails -> link to regional access/activities - bike tours.	8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art gallery- places to stop during a long trip on 169. • Local shopping access to keep business dollars cycling in Belle Plain instead of being outsourced to Shakopee/Burnsville - but not as the focal point of our character. • Remove/restrict downtown parking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown filled with wider sidewalks with outdoor seating for restaurants for destination restaurants for a feeling of an evening out on the town. 	
Freestanding rural growth	
Relaxation/Entertainment destination	
"Eco-Tourism" destination - birding, biking, canoeing	
Industrial job center	12
Riverwalk - River town	
Agriculture "Ag Tourism"/local food center	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial - Good Employment work base • Commercial - Shopping, relaxing • Pedestrian-oriented 	3

Figure C15. Exercise One Part Two B. –Dotmacracy Response, CRD, April, 2008.

The Character of Downtown Belle Plaine: Downtown Belle Plaine is the Historic Heart of the City and May be the Source of the Principle Defining Character of the Community.

What elements currently make downtown special?

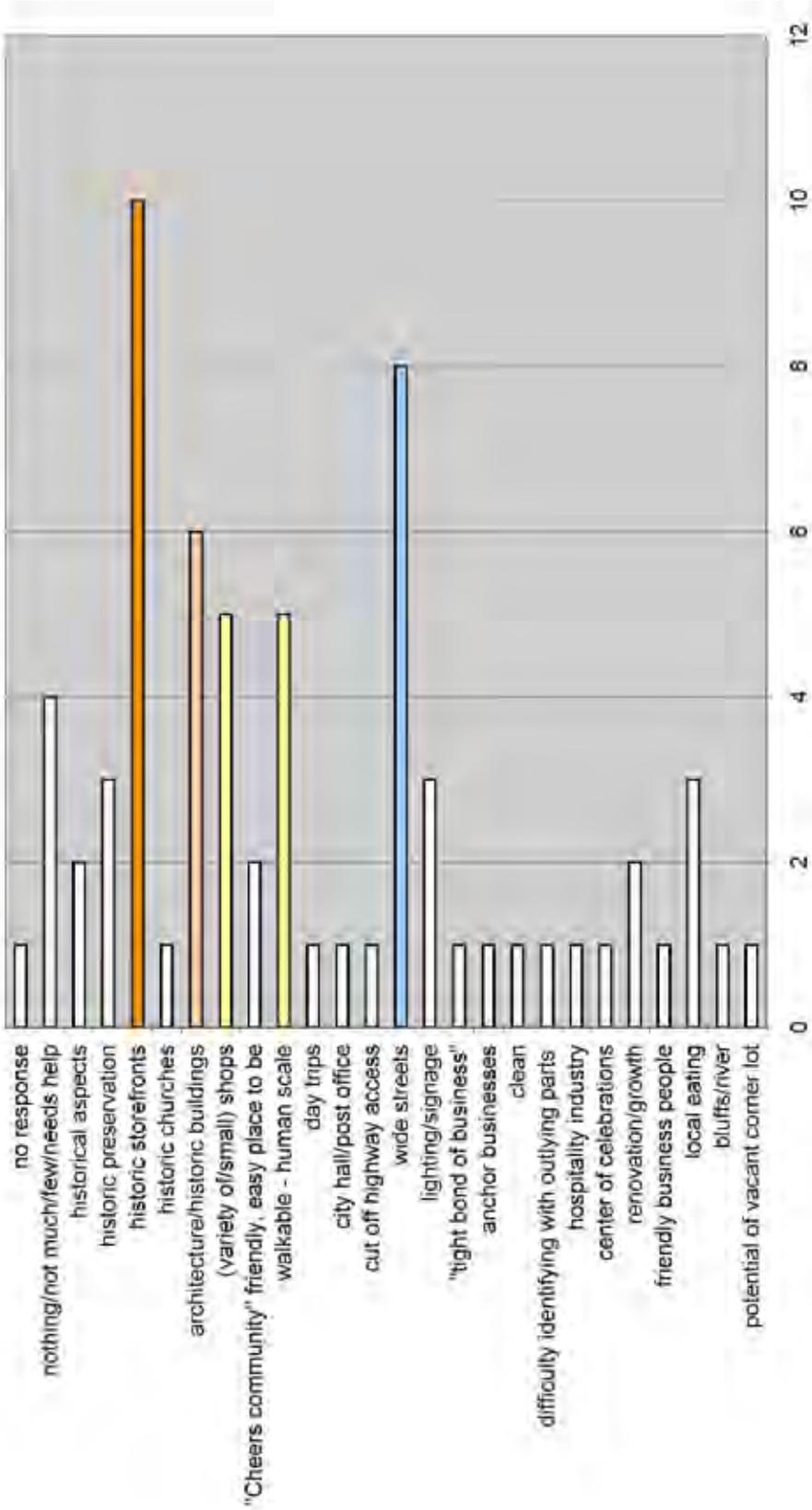


Figure C16. Exercise Two A. – Cumulative Individual Responses, CRD, April, 2008.

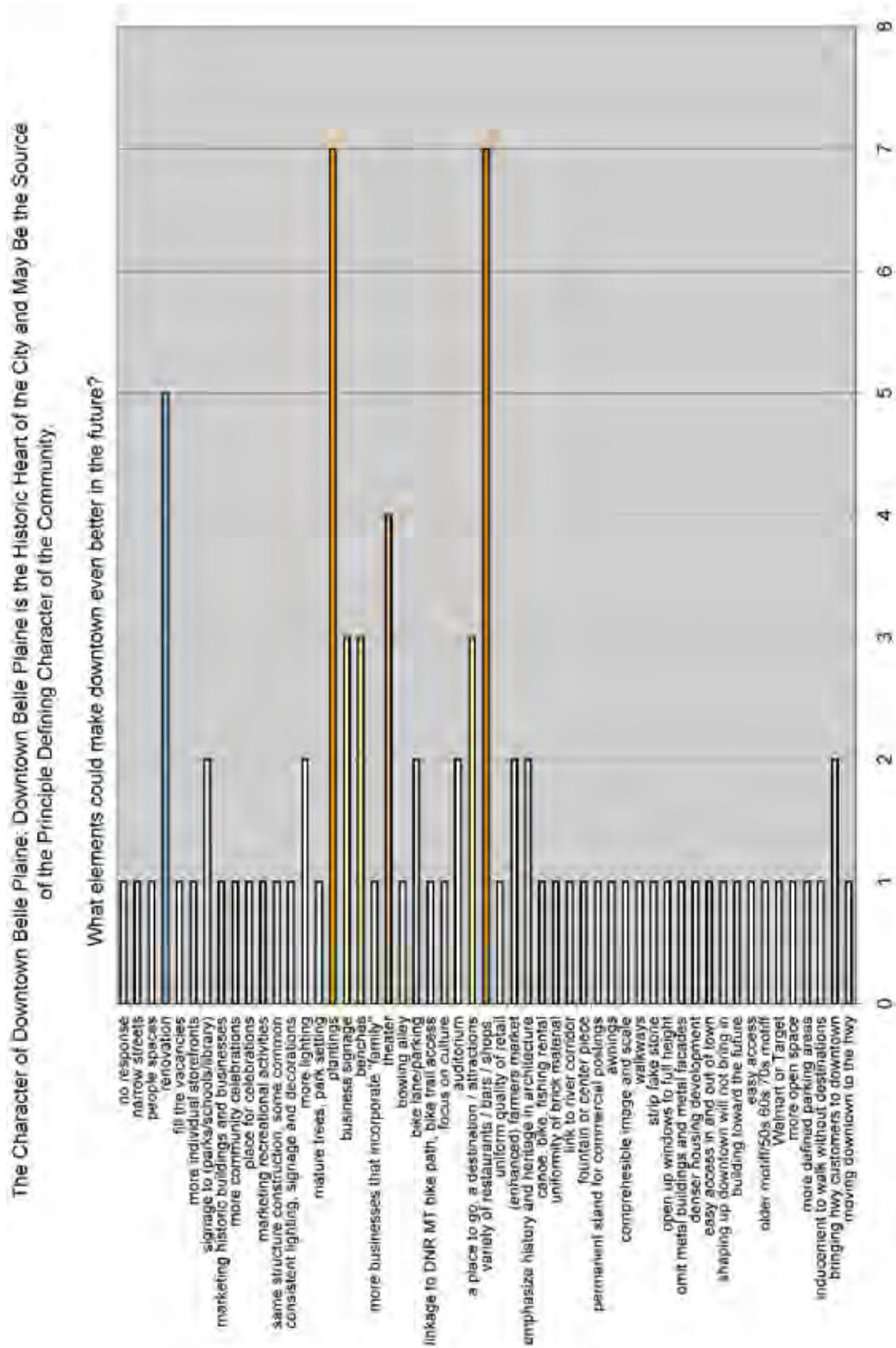


Figure C17. Exercise Two B. – Cumulative Individual Responses, CRD, April, 2008.

The Character of the US 169 Corridor: US 169 Moves Through Belle Plaine on a Diagonal Creating a Corridor That Offers Opportunity to Introduce Through-Traffic to the Uniques Character of Belle Plaine, Enticing Them to Stop or to Return in the Future.

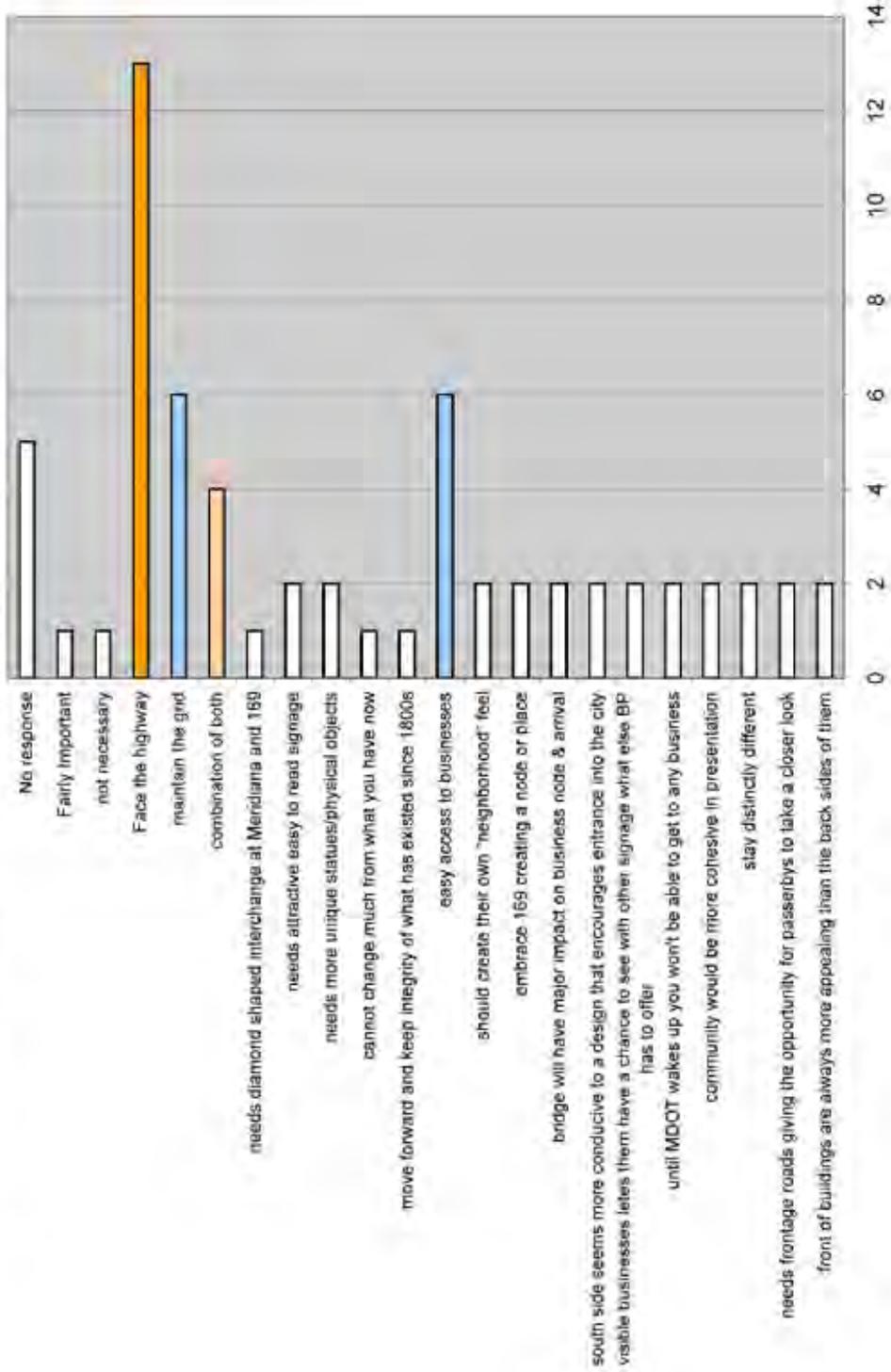


Figure C19. Exercise Two D. – Cumulative Individual Responses, CRD, April, 2008.

How Important is it That Highway Businesses Embody the Identity of the Historic Portions of City? And to What Extent?

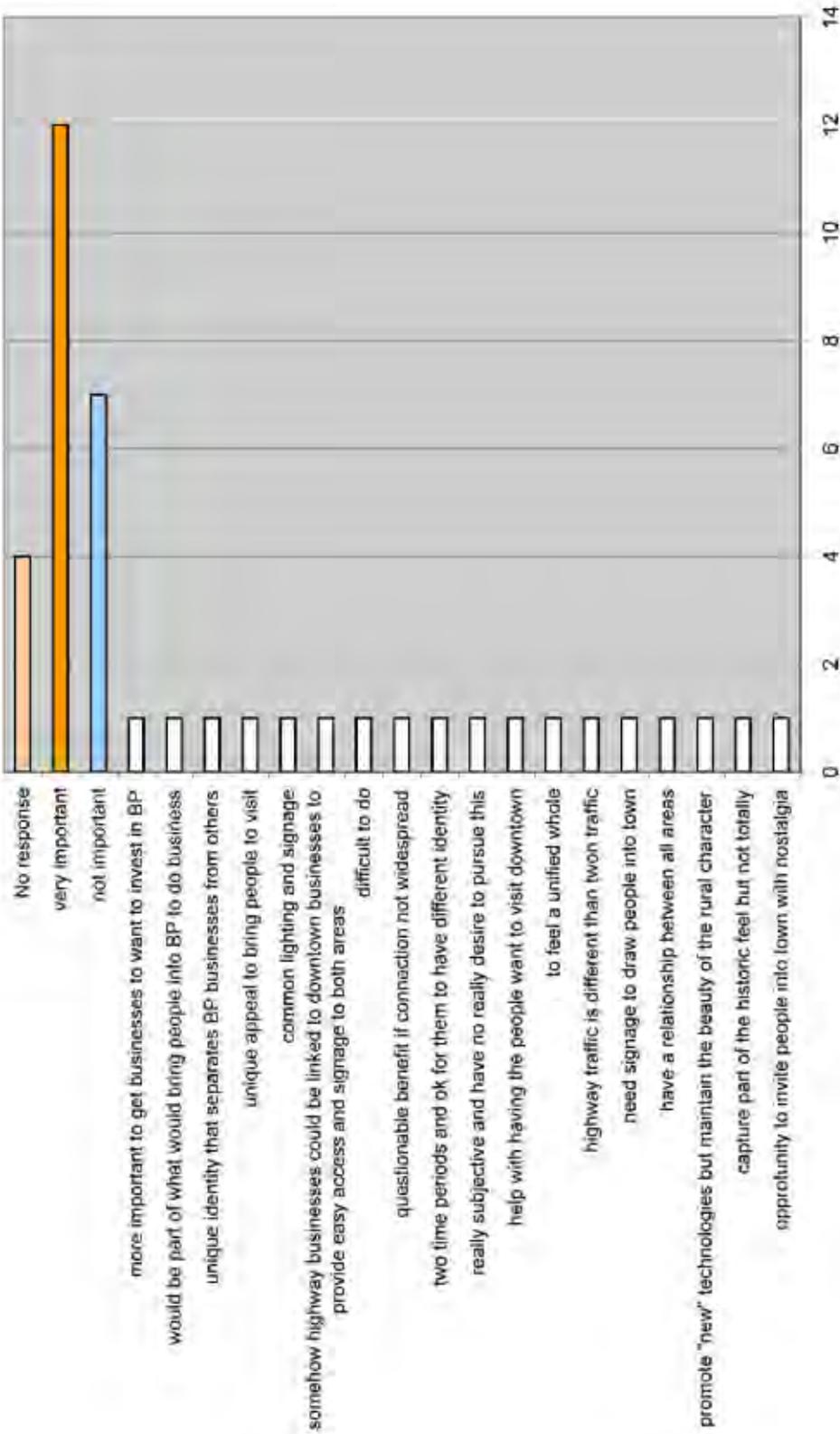


Figure C20. Exercise Two E. – Cumulative Individual Responses, CRD, April, 2008.

Should the Entry Points Provide Linkages to Broader Community Features Such as the Parks, the River, Internal and Regional Trail Systems, etc., as Well as the Commercial Districts?

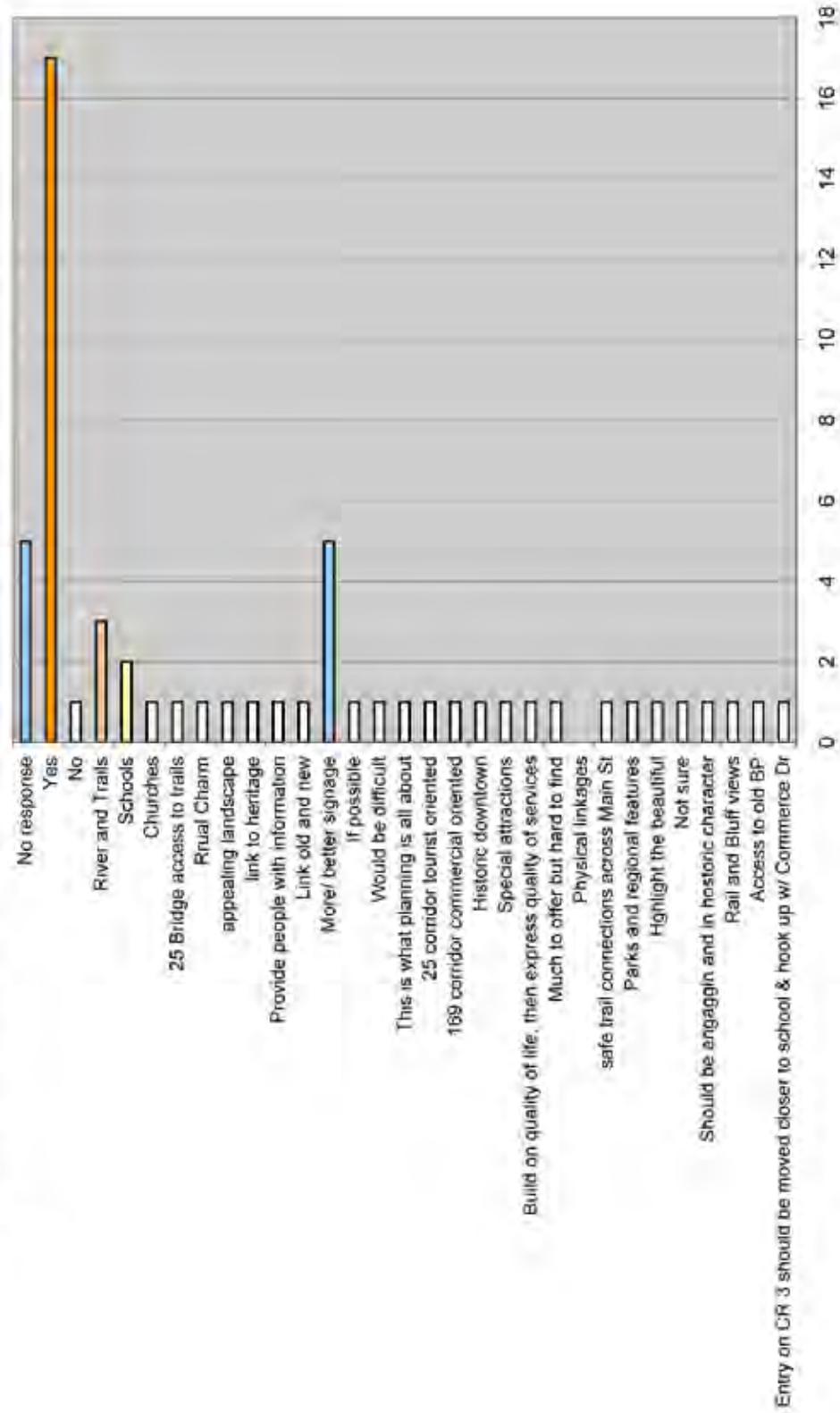


Figure C21. Exercise Two F. – Cumulative Individual Responses, CRD, April, 2008.

Should the Entry Points Provide Linkages to Broader Community Features Such as the Parks, the River, Internal and Regional Trail Systems, etc., as Well as the Commercial Districts?

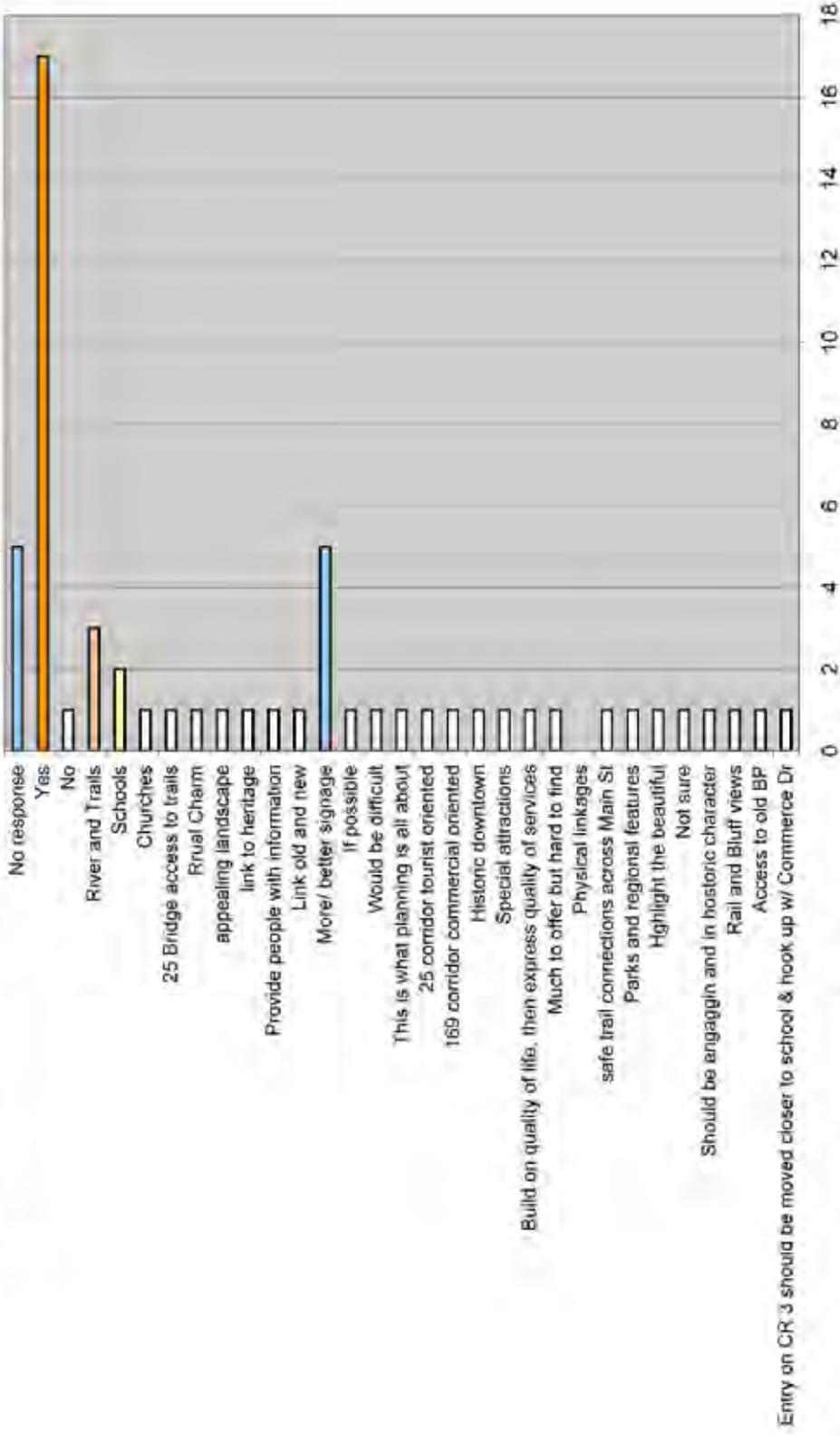


Figure C22. Exercise Two G. – Cumulative Individual Responses, CRD, April, 2008.

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Appendix D

Inventory

List of Figures

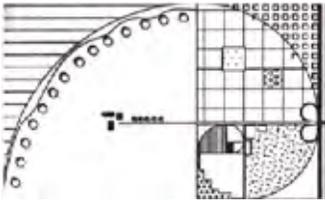
Figure D1. Downtown District Photo Inventory Plan, CRD, 2008.

Figure D2. Downtown District Photo Inventory, CRD, 2008.

Figure D3. US Highway 169 District Photo Inventory Plan, CRD, 2008.

Figure D4A and B. US Highway 169 District Photo Inventory, CRD, 2008.

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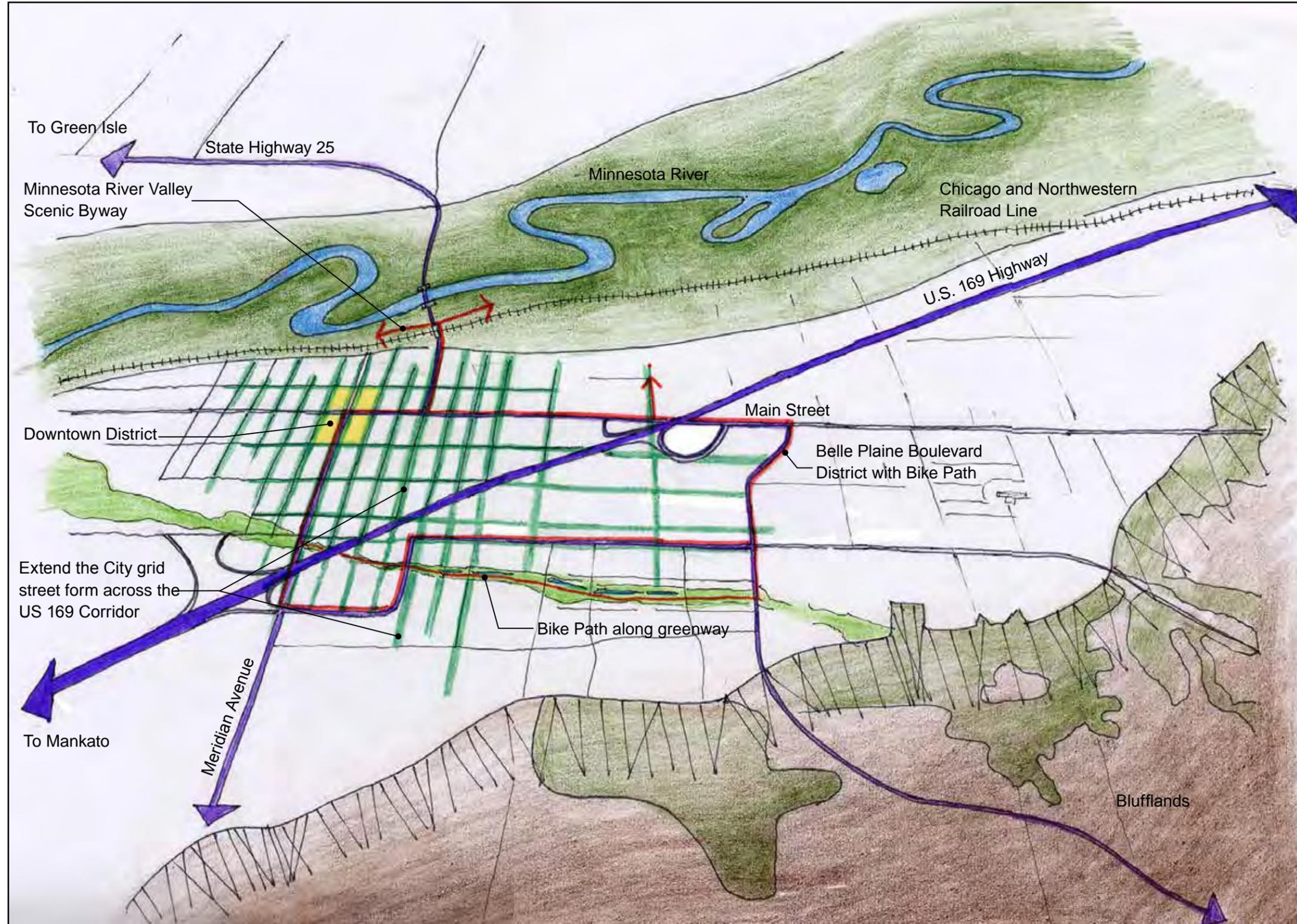
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This publication is available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact the Center for Rural Design at the above number.



Figure 2. Belle Plaine Aerial Map, CRD, February, 2008.

Design Elements



To the Twin Cities

Extend the City grid street form across the US 169 Corridor

Figure 3. Design Elements, CRD, 2008.

Belle Plaine Design Districts and Gateways

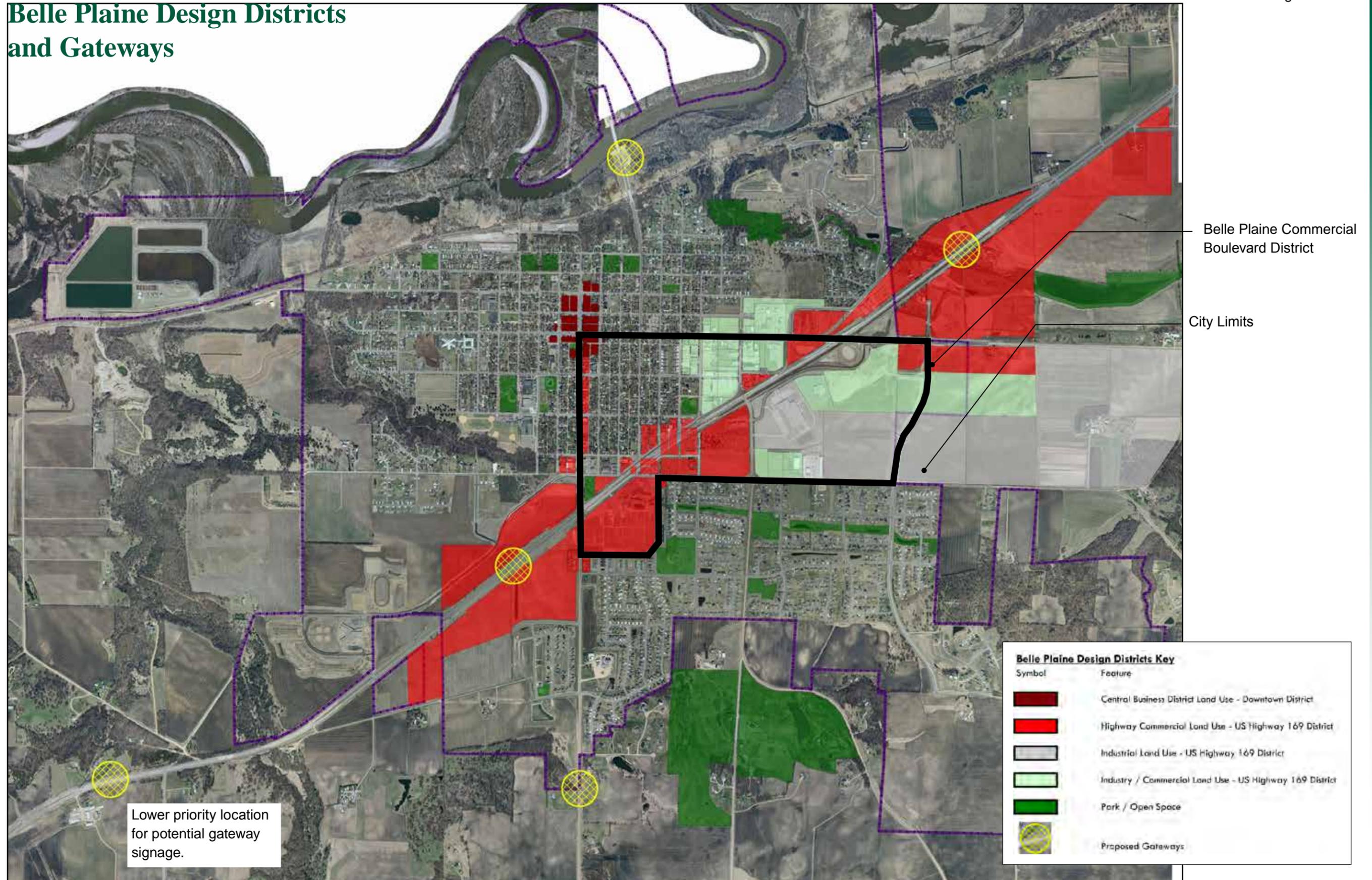
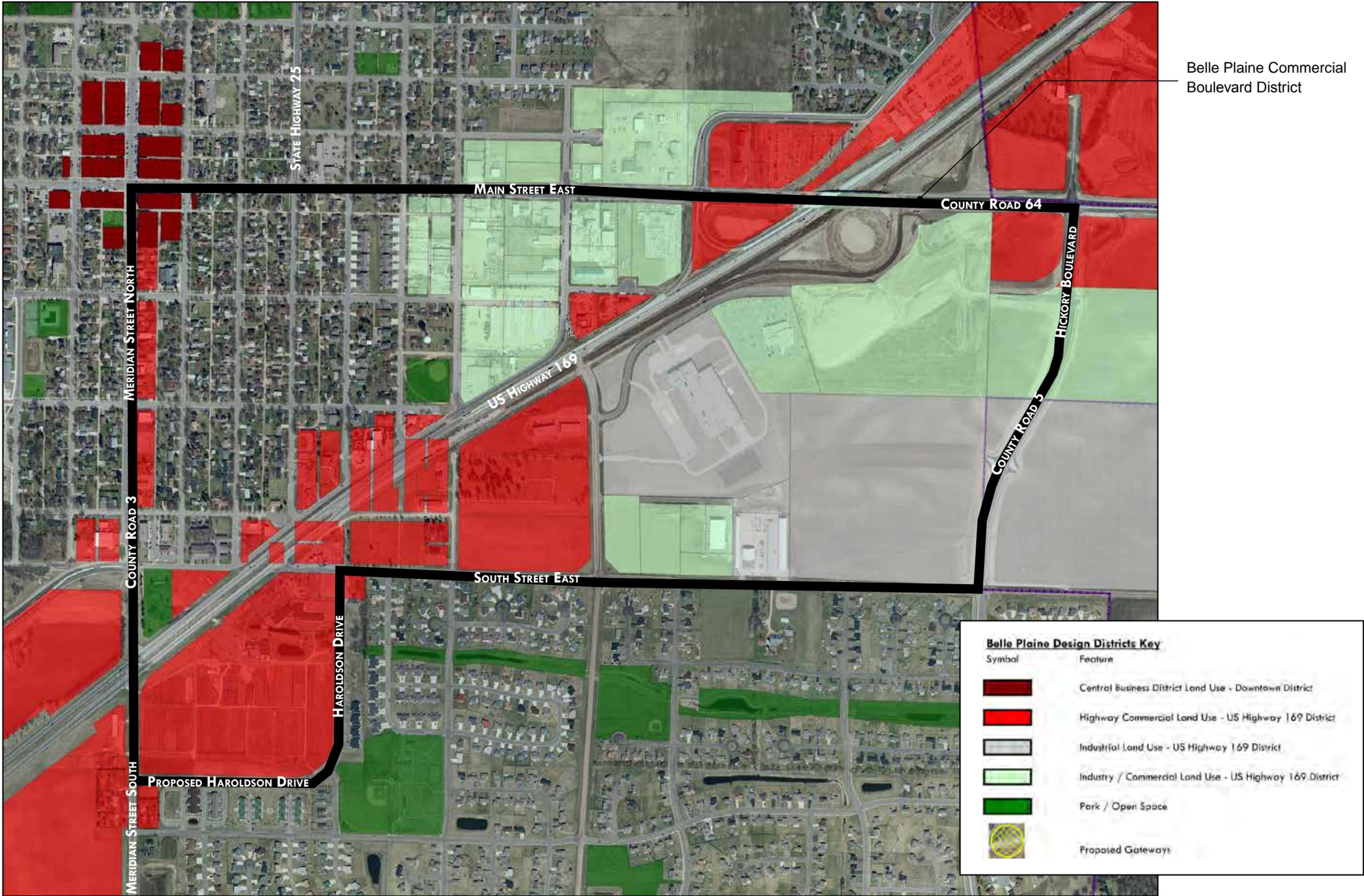


Figure 4. Belle Plaine Design District Diagram and Key, CRD, May 2008.

Enlarged Belle Plaine Design Districts

Design Districts



| Design Guidelines |

Belle Plaine Design Manual

Figure 5. Enlarged Belle Plaine Design District Diagram and Key, CRD, May 2008.

Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard

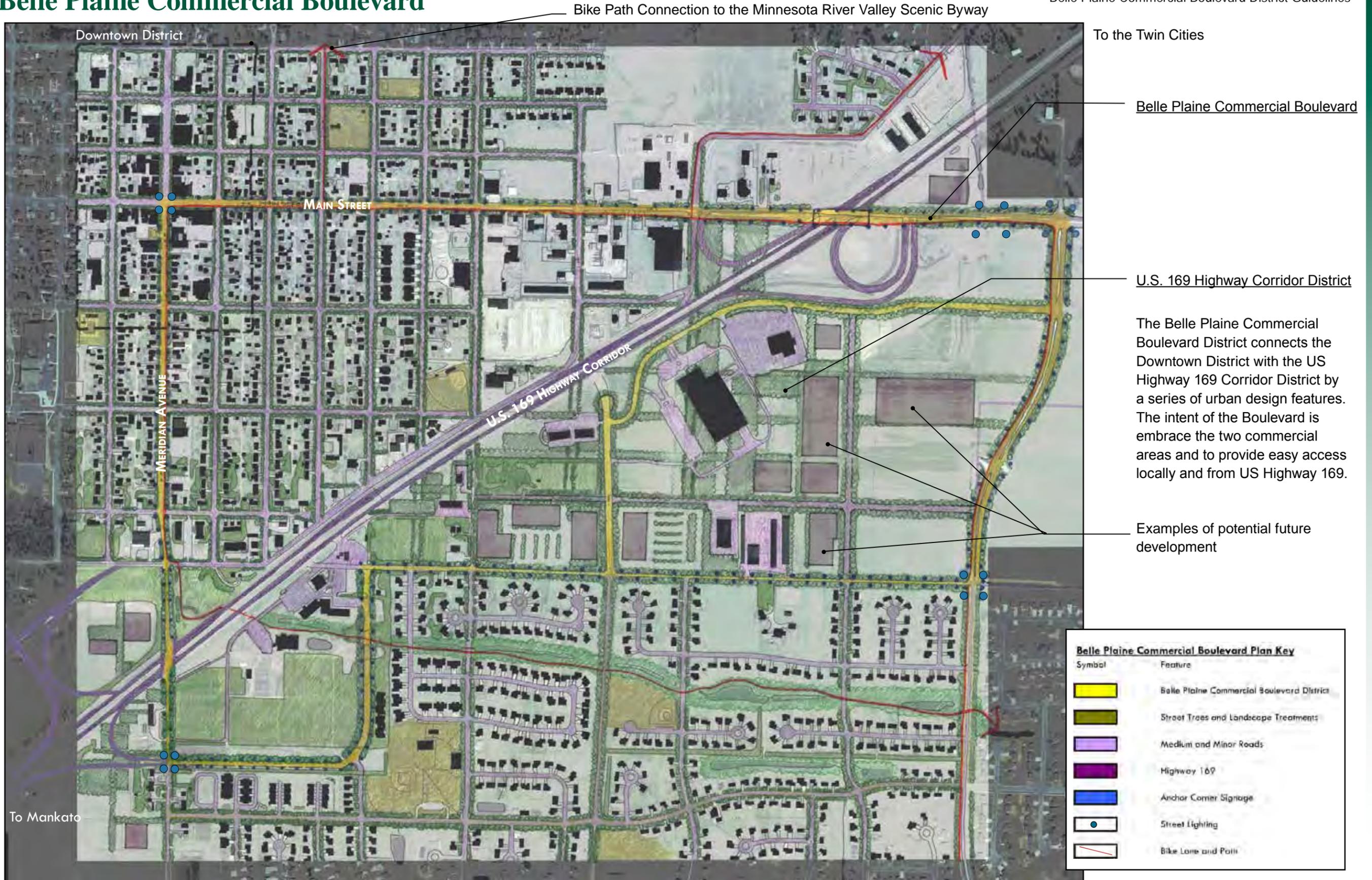


Figure 6. Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard, CRD, May, 2008.

Downtown District

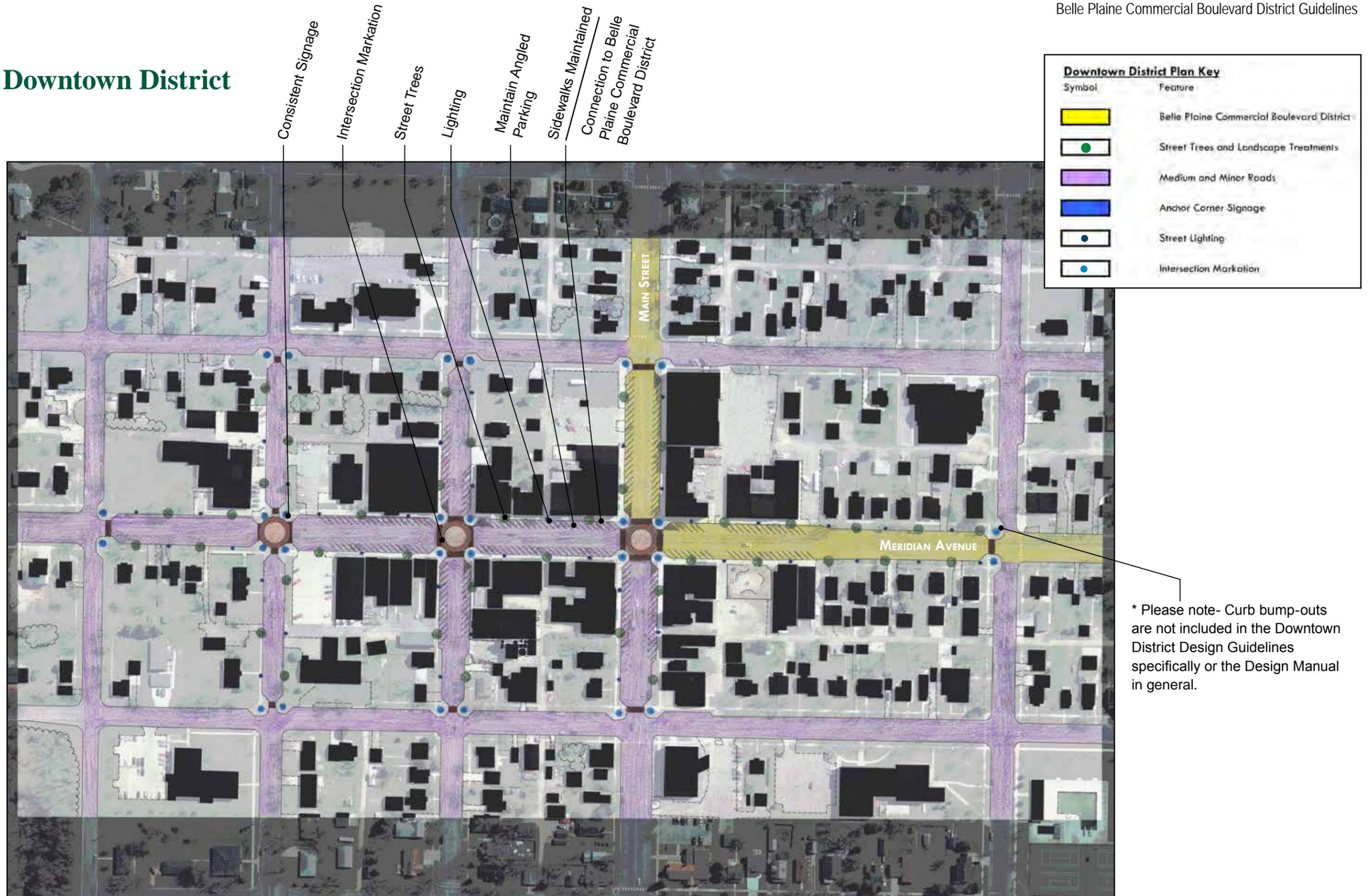


Figure 7. Downtown District Plan, CRD, May, 2008.

Downtown District - Pedestrian Oriented Streetscape



Typical Elevation



Proposed Elevation

Figure 20. Downtown Existing and Proposed Elevation, Center for Rural Design, May, 2008.

City of Belle Plaine Community Vision For Commercial Development

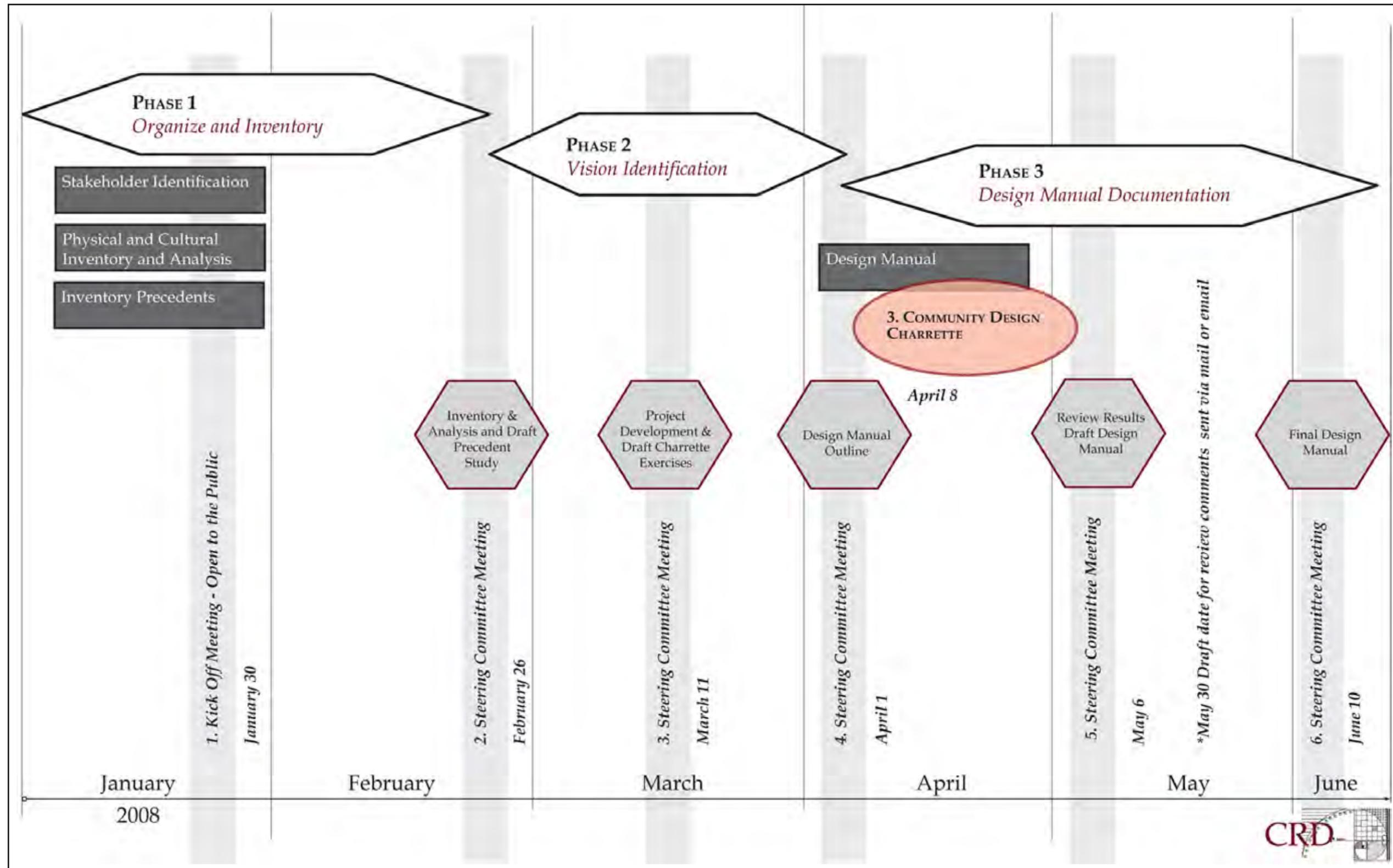


Figure C1. Project Timeline, CRD, Last revised May, 2008.



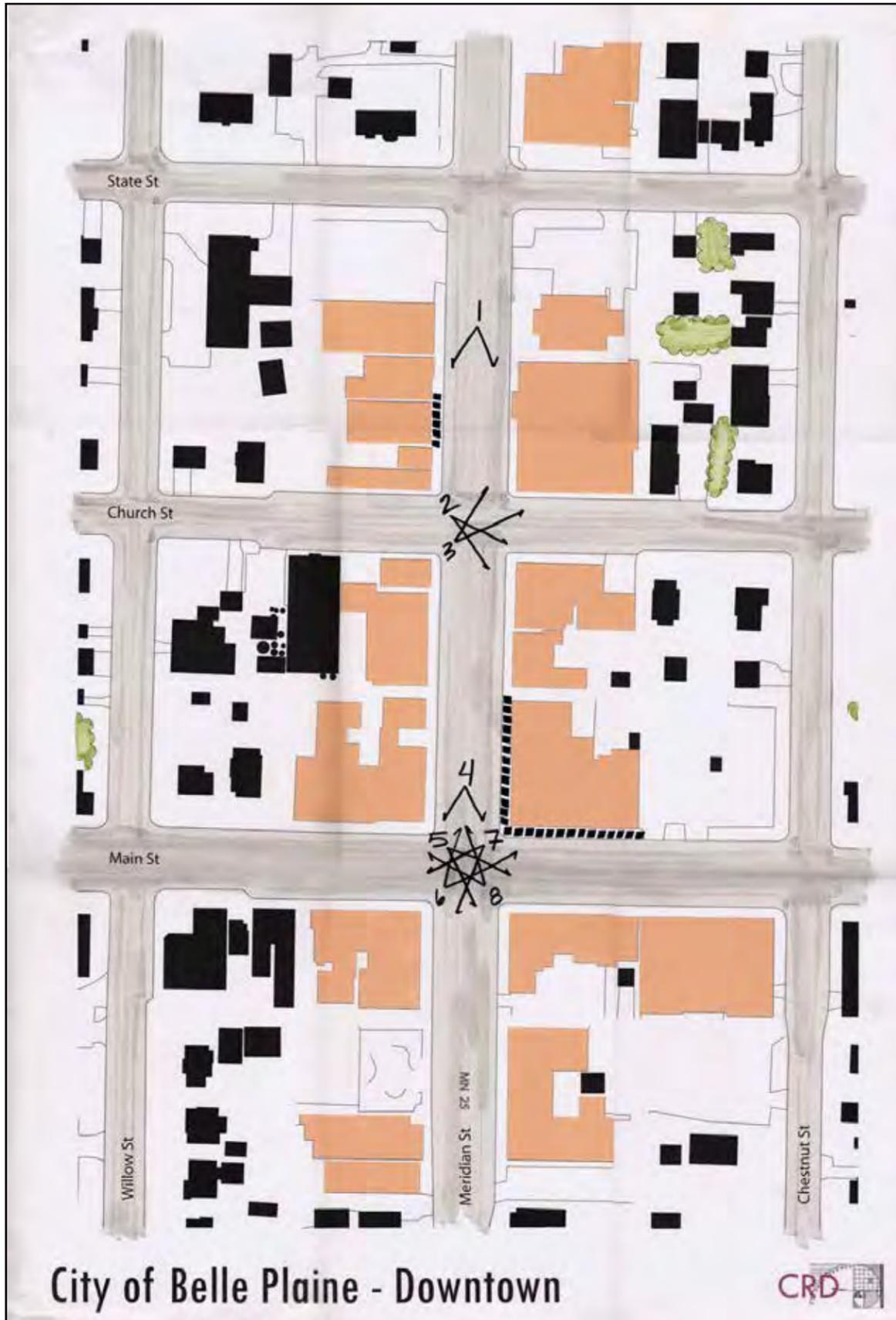


Figure D1. Downtown District Photo Inventory Plan, CRD, 2008.

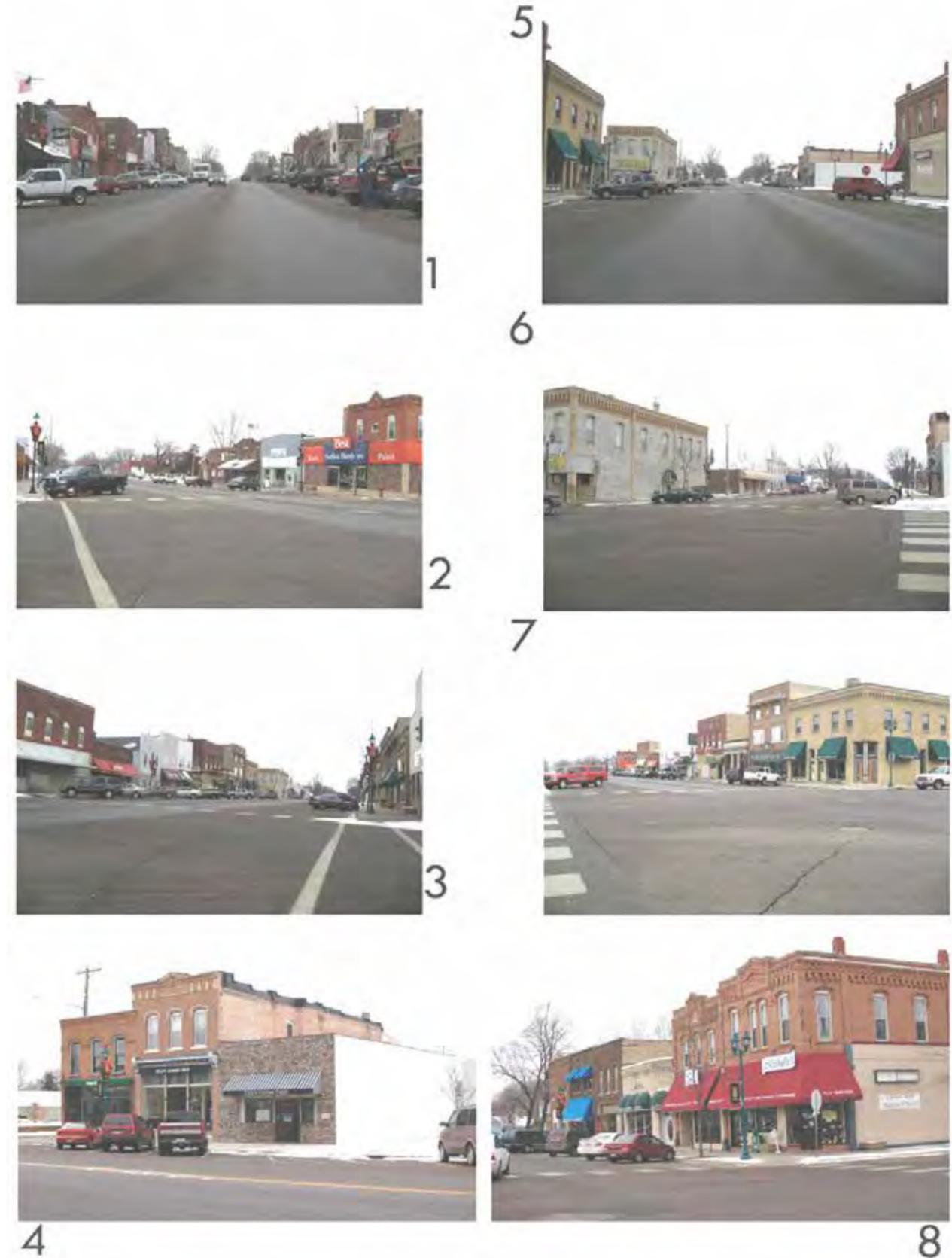


Figure D2. Downtown District Photo Inventory, CRD, 2008.

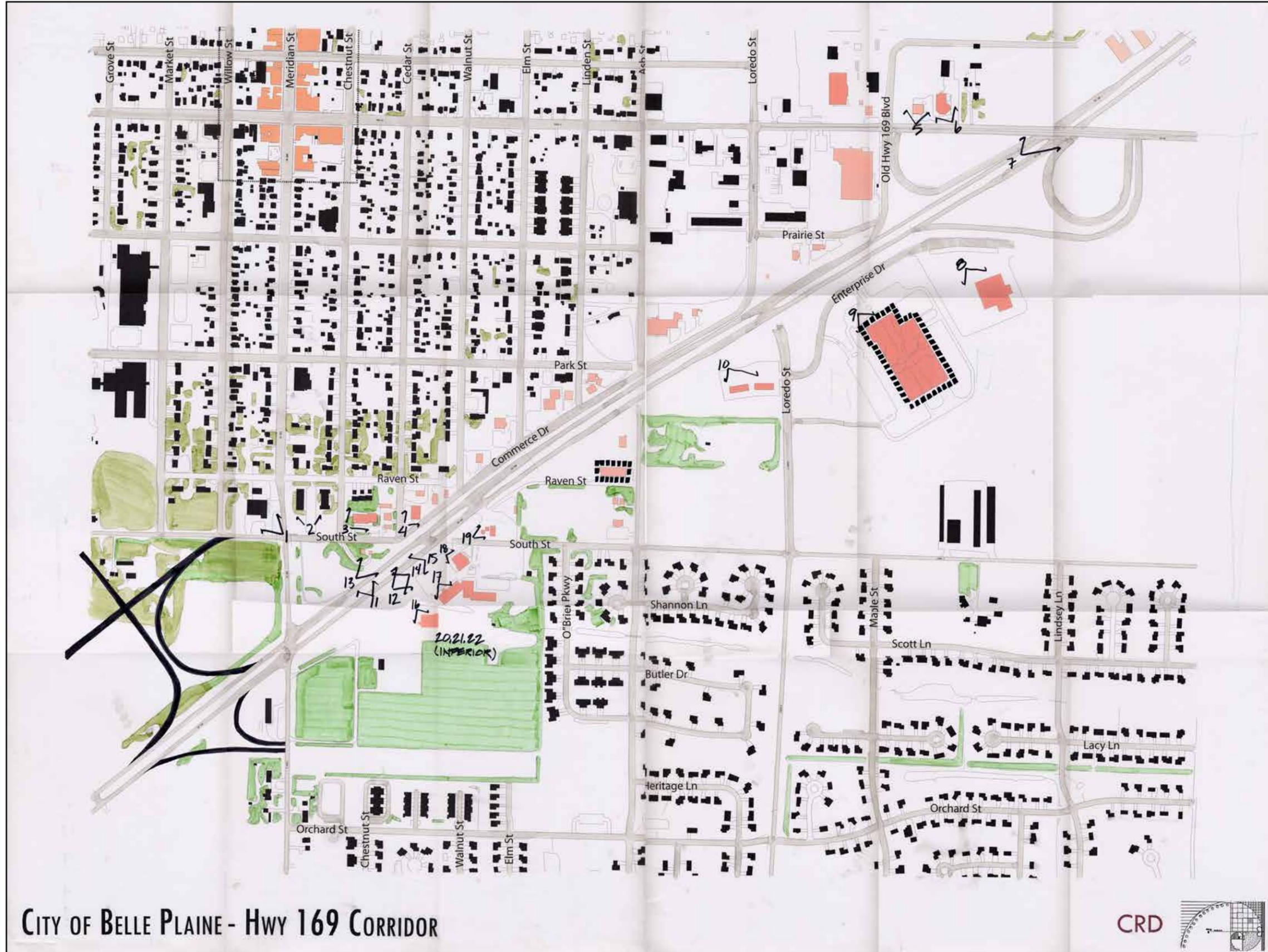
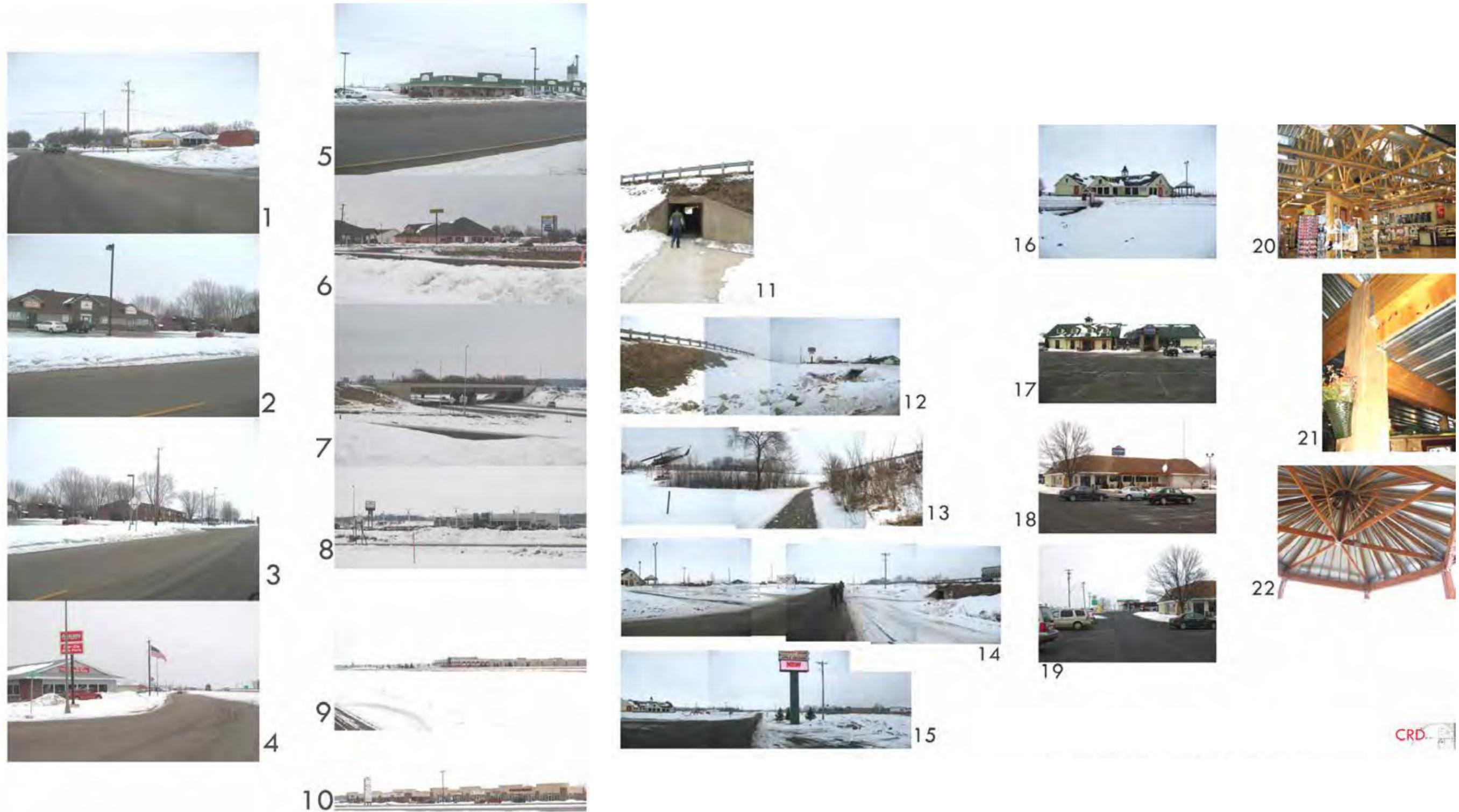


Figure D3. US Highway 169 District Photo Inventory Plan, CRD, 2008.



CRD

Figure D4A and B. US Highway 169 District Photo Inventory, CRD, 2008.