



DOWNTOWN RIPON

RIPON, WISCONSIN

WISCONSIN MAIN STREET | STREETSCAPE TECH VISIT
STREETSCAPE CONCEPTS FOR DOWNTOWN RIPON
2018

Prepared For



INTRODUCTION

As part of their participation in the Wisconsin Main Street program, Ripon Main Street receives periodic technical assistance visits to help the program identify emerging opportunities or address challenges. With the new investment and activity occurring in Downtown Ripon, and the aging nature of its streetscape, the timing is opportune to explore potential enhancements and opportunities to solidify the district's identity and position in the marketplace, including enhancements to the streetscape and public spaces that capitalize on the district's assets, history, character, events, and eclectic mix of uses.

To further explore these opportunities, Wisconsin Main Street commissioned a two-day tech visit facilitated by Errin Welty, Wisconsin Main Street Downtown Development Account Manager and Downtown Professionals Network (DPN) team members Jay Schlinsog, a downtown consultant with DPN; and Michael Schroeder, a Twin Cities-based landscape architect and urban designer. Goals for the visit included efforts to identify and advance:

- Potential improvements and enhancements for the streetscape and public spaces within the district to reflect and complement previous and planned developments in the district and surrounding area.
- Opportunities to create stronger connections to existing anchors, potential redevelopment sites, and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Opportunities and strategies to introduce special features and enhanced amenities that promote a pedestrian-friendly environment and a stronger sense of discovery.
- Ideas for elements and treatments to the district's streetscape and public spaces that, implemented over a period of time, will help to create a more cohesive design and rhythm in the public realm, tell a story of the district's evolution, and support continued investment and entrepreneurial activity.



The Wisconsin Main Street Program administers an economic development program targeting Wisconsin's historic commercial districts. Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation staff provide technical support and training to Wisconsin communities that have expressed a grass roots commitment to revitalizing their traditional business districts using a comprehensive strategy based on historic preservation.

Communities selected to participate in the Wisconsin Main Street Program receive periodic technical assistance visits to help identify emerging opportunities or address challenges. The 2018 Downtown Ripon Tech Visit was specifically tailored to build on past work and success, to identify new and emerging opportunities, and to leverage investments being made by the public and private sectors.

Tech Visit Team Members

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THE MAIN STREET FOUR POINT APPROACH®

Design takes advantage of the visual opportunities inherent in the commercial district by directing attention to all of its physical elements: public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, landscaping, merchandising, displays, and promotional materials. Its aim is to stress the importance of design quality in all of these areas, to educate people about design quality, historic preservation and to expedite improvements in the commercial district.

Promotion takes many forms, but the aim is to create a positive image of the downtown in order to maintain and rekindle community pride in the commercial district. Promotion seeks to improve or create retail sales events and festivals, and to create a positive public image through branding initiatives of the commercial district to attract investors, developers, residents, and new businesses.

Economic Vitality strengthens downtown's existing economic assets while strengthening and diversifying its economic base. This is accomplished by retaining and expanding existing businesses to provide a balanced commercial mix, by converting unused or underutilized space into productive property, and by sharpening the competitiveness and merchandising skills of business people.

Organization establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among the various groups that have a stake in Downtown. This enables the Main Street revitalization program to provide effective, ongoing management and advocacy of the commercial district. Diverse groups from the public and private sectors (city, property owners, bankers, business owners, community leaders, and others) must work together to create and maintain a successful program. Committees that address organizational issues handle the following tasks: fund raising, media relations, and volunteer recruitment.

OVERVIEW

For two days in late April 2018, Downtown Ripon was the subject of a technical visit focused on streetscape design. During the two days, a consultant team toured Downtown, met with stakeholders and the community to gain insights and input about the function and needs of Downtown, and created a series of concepts intended to inspire changes in Downtown's streetscapes. This report summarizes those activities and the suggestions for change based on the short exposure to the Ripon community and its downtown area.

Concepts are starting points, not completed designs. The ideas and directions posed in this report should be vetted by the community, challenged, changed, refined, and then possibly implemented. It's likely that every notion suggested in this report will change substantially in that process, but that, in fact, is the point. Concepts allow for discussion and the necessary community conversation related to change in Downtown. It would be great if every idea in this report were spot on, but even determining that they are correct takes time, thought and dialog.

Use this report as a starting point, recognizing that likely two days is not sufficient to understand the full character and detail of Downtown Ripon. Working together, challenge the assumptions to make certain of correctness for this place; re-work directions that seem close but need refinement; and confirm directions that seem right and pursue them fully. Most important, Downtown Ripon is filled with great character, and it's a place that has been evolving for a long time. Better to move in well-paced steps with deliberation to implement things of quality than to look for quick fixes or to do nothing at all.



STREETSCAPE DIALOG

The consultant team was asked to host an event that might share contemporary trends in streetscape design, perhaps for inspiration but also to set a tone for the ways in which streetscapes have influenced positive changes in other places. While the discussion was, by no means, comprehensive, many factors might easily be imagined for Downtown Ripon.

Nine Trends influencing Streetscape Design

Tactical Urbanism

a means of encouraging change, usually in a downtown, using low cost and temporary features that improve the potential for human activity



Complete Streets

configuring streets to accommodate more than cars, typically shifting the balance significantly toward pedestrians and bicyclists



STREETSCAPE DIALOG

Sustainability

strategies directed to more environmentally appropriate methods of infrastructure, often directed to stormwater management for streetscape



Right Sizing

recognizing the built-in flexibility for the size of street features, particularly lane widths; street designs favoring vehicle movement resulted in lane configurations significantly larger than necessary to accommodate cars and trucks



STREETSCAPE DIALOG

Healthy Living

practices aimed at promoting health and longer lives with a significant focus on diet and exercise, and for downtowns recognizing that walking is a basic form of daily exercise



Connectivity and Safety

linking parts of a community along desired routes that result in a more connected community, along with adding features that enhance pedestrian and bicyclists safety



STREETSCAPE DIALOG

Events

creating signature and small-scale activities that might occupy a street for a limited period of time



Open Streets

a movement that eliminates vehicles from streets for limited periods in favor of pedestrian and bicycle activities



Energy and Efficiency

taking advantage of technological changes resulting in long-term cost savings and enhanced performance of systems, particularly in street lighting for downtowns



STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

The core of the technical visit was directed ideas for Downtown’s streetscapes—the spaces that span the street and include the buildings as the edges of a street-focused room. As noted in the Introduction, they’re only ideas and suggestions for change. Streetscapes form the first impression of a downtown for the community and visitors; while they are important, there needs to be a solid economic and program of activities supporting the stage of the streetscape. Put simply, streetscapes are important, but they are not the only indicator of vibrancy for a downtown.

Directions for streetscape in Downtown Ripon are organized in this report in four broad topics:

Organizing downtown

understanding the underlying pattern of streets and spaces in Downtown so that its character might be most fully expressed as streetscapes evolve

Key guidance

not necessarily rules, but strong suggestions to consider as changes are considered and eventually implemented in Downtown’s streetscapes

Twelve small things

starting points and possible opportunities for more immediate change in the streetscapes of Downtown

Six big moves

ideas that require more effort but could be significant in the evolution of the streetscape and function of Downtown



STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

Organizing Downtown by Streetscape

An initial step in creating a coherent streetscape for Downtown Ripon is understanding how the spaces work together. Instead of focusing on things, a common misstep in streetscape design, it's better to imagine the experience of a downtown almost as a series of rooms where things happen. Rooms might be different, and there might be highlights specific to the experience of each room. Starting here yields the core framework for a streetscape into which the objects of the streetscape—lights, trees, furniture—can be added.

The streetscape diagram for Downtown Ripon, displayed on the following page, is rather simple and is composed of a few basic components:

Many projects

There are many smaller steps and initiatives, some of which are described in this report but many more that might be added through the community's conversation about Downtown's streetscapes. There are also bigger leaps, suggestions for more dramatic change that will take longer, require even more discussion and dollars, but pose significant opportunities for change and new activity in Downtown.

Anchoring public spaces

Two public spaces are already established in Downtown, anchoring opposite ends of Watson Street. Perpetuating those spaces in the fabric of Downtown is a key element of the experience of Downtown. One new public space might rise in the core of Downtown, expanding opportunities for gathering and creating a new signature at a point between the two anchoring spaces.

Parking lots

Often seen as a utilitarian part of a downtown, parking lots are key parts of the experience. Every motorist destined for Downtown who chooses to park in one of these spaces begins their true Downtown experience as a pedestrian the moment they step out of their vehicle. Attention directed to the character of these expansive parts of Downtown creates a dramatic impact.

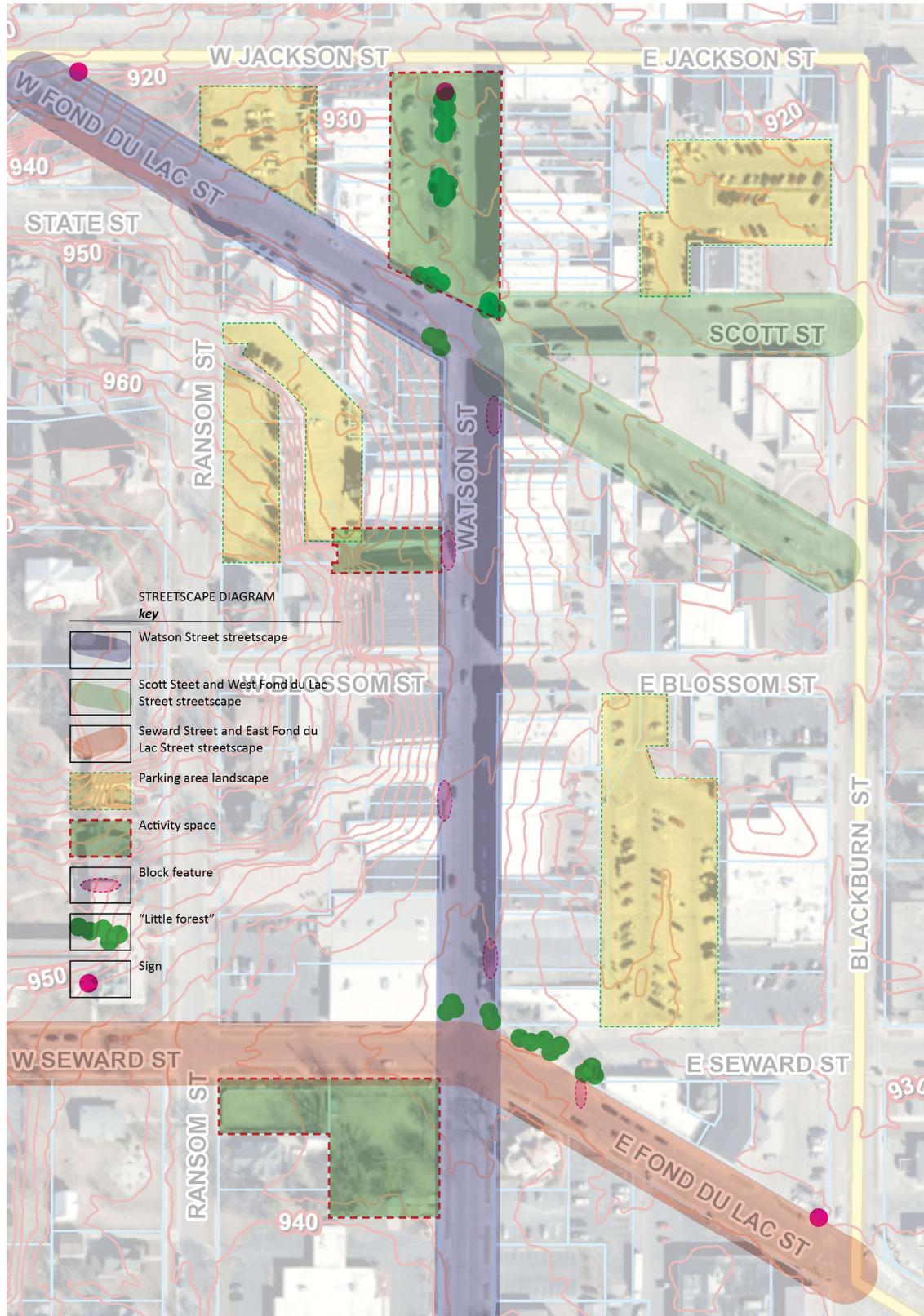
Key features

Implemented incrementally, these elements of the streetscape form the basis of the experience of Downtown Ripon. In the suggestions that follow, each block face will have one significant and distinguishing feature that is integral to the function of the streetscape but unique for its block face.

There is also the notion of more extensive planting, especially of trees, in Downtown. While there are trees planted in traditional streetscape patterns, there are opportunities to create "little forests" to truly expand green in Downtown.

STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

Streetscape diagram for Downtown Ripon



STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

Orchestrating Design Through Key Guidance

While perhaps not comprehensive, there are several points that might be made about guiding the evolution of Downtown Ripon's streetscape. These aren't rules—in fact, breaking rules might create opportunities that wouldn't otherwise be recognized. They're more like boundaries for the initial thoughts. None is an action on its own, but each might become foundational to a physical change in the streetscape.

Make space for people

Take back space from cars and use it for people, or maybe just be more judicious about how much space is directed to cars both for their movement and their storage. The space regained from cars, which never spend time in a store or occupy a seat at a restaurant or enjoy an event at one of Downtown's public spaces, can be better used for things that support visible human activity.

Don't start over

Reuse what exists as much as possible. Many elements of the streetscape are viable and working. In fact, a wholesale change might result in an unrecognized destruction of something of valuable.

Take it in steps

Allow time for the improvements, making sure that each incremental step is accomplished well and fully. An axiom related to change in downtown suggests that we may never fully understand the impact of a change, so better to take smaller steps because the mistakes we're likely to make will be equally small.

Make special things

Incorporate special features at key locations, but not more than one per block face. Streetscapes can be incredibly boring... a few trees spaced at the same interval interrupted by a few street lights spaced at their own redundant interval. It's okay to mix it up a little, to create a little surprise or delight through simple variety.

Let buildings be the focus

Let the downtown's incredible buildings be the focus, allowing the streetscape to be more of background but where necessary, make the streetscape stand out.

Add green everywhere

Find opportunities for adding plantings in the public and private realms and in places where people may not expect it. Every bit of green makes Downtown more inviting, more comfortable, and more interesting.

Remember the otters

Let Downtown be fun. Certainly, it's a place for where business and the civic life of Ripon happens. But it shouldn't be boring... it should be a place that people are drawn to because it's fresh and the chance to experience some playful or whimsical always possible.



STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

Attending to Twelve Small Things that Add Up

Not every change to Downtown Ripon's streetscape requires major investment or renovation. In fact, even the short duration of study related to this report identified a series of opportunities that might be more immediately implemented, which in aggregate result in significant change on their own. When coupled, eventually, with more significant new investment in the public realm, these changes become as essential foundation for those larger projects.

Streets are for Walking

Understanding a street as a space for more than cars requires thought about how the remaining space might be divided. While cars will always occupy the bulk of the space, sidewalks oriented to pedestrians need to recognize several zones:

- *Storefront zone (pink in the diagram) – located nearest the storefront; location for outdoor displays, bistro tables; typically, quite narrow, usually 12 inches to 18 inches.*
- *Pedestrian zone (blue in the diagram) – always kept clear of obstructions; preferred width is 8 feet; minimum width is 6 feet; desired width is 10 feet.*
- *Overlap zone (yellow dash in the diagram) – best avoided but that's not always possible; easier to have overlaps if the overlapping surface is walkable.*
- *Amenity zone (green in the diagram) – located nearest the curb; location for lights, trees, planters, maybe tables.*



STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

New Trees for Old Pits

There are several locations where trees have been removed from the streetscape at some point in the past. Replacement of those trees, incrementally, is a reasonable starting point for adding green to the public realm of Downtown. Considerations, at a very high level, include:

- *Species of trees that might be considered as a basic palette include Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*, left), Skyline Honeylocust (*Gleditia triacanthos var inermis 'Skycole'*, center), and Accolade Elm (*Ulmus japonica x wilsoniana 'Morton'*, right).*
- *The right planting environment (pit) is important. Gain as much volume of soil possible, investigating perhaps the use of structural soils if sidewalks are replaced. Add a drain in the planting pit if soils create a bathtub that the roots might sit in.*
- *While the desire is a large tree, greater success results from planting smaller sized trees and letting them grow.*



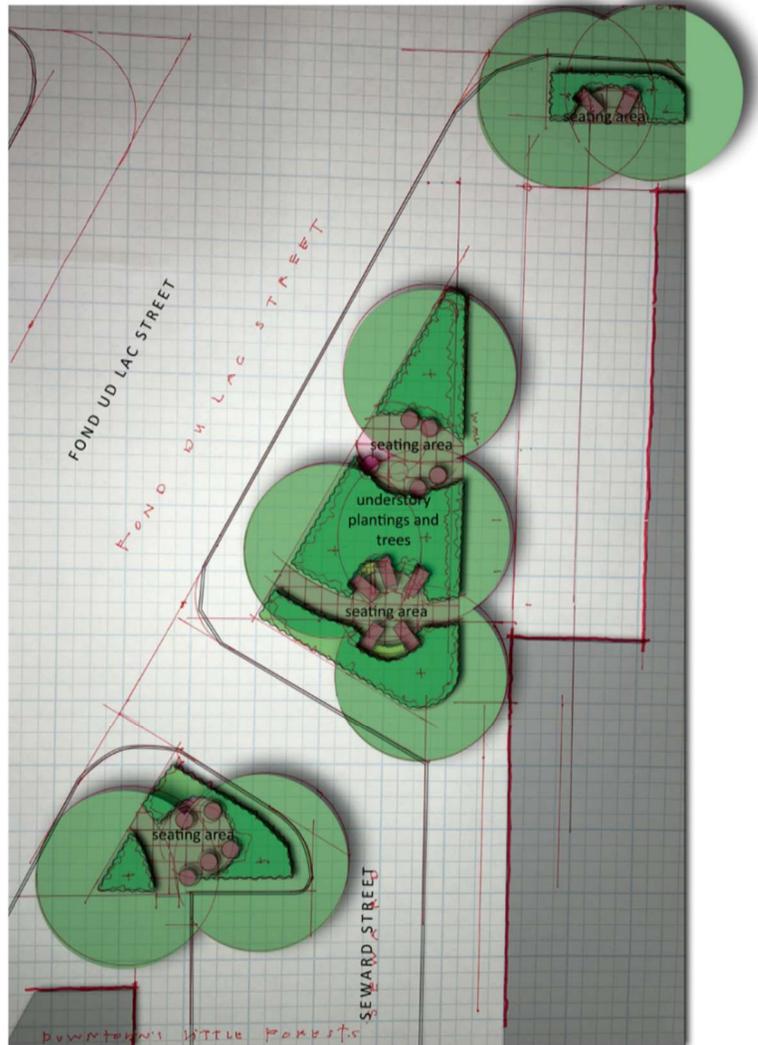
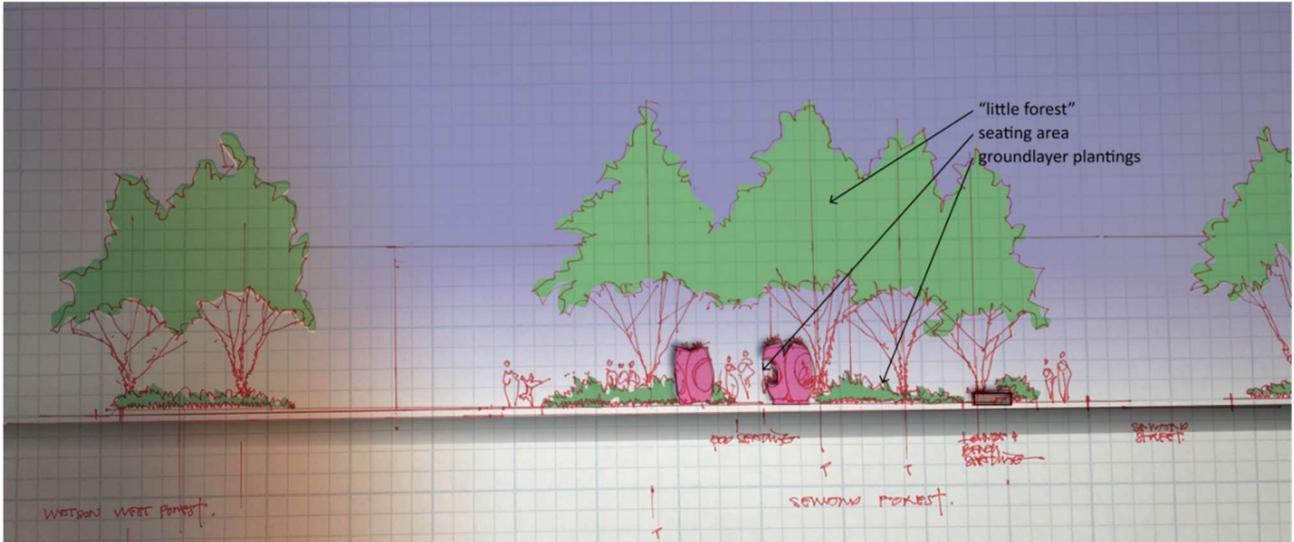
Downtown's Little Forest

Creating more green as a part of the Downtown streetscape can happen by recognizing those parts of downtown where more intensive planting of trees might happen. In some cases, it's simply planting more than one tree where one might have been planted previously, but in others it might be reclaiming a larger area for the creation of a "little forest," with the trees planted in tighter groupings.

- *Species of the "little forest" might include River Birch (*Betula nigra*, left) and American Hophornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*, right).*
- *An understory would include shady perennials (*Hosta*, *Bleeding Heart*) as well as sunny perennials at edges (*Daylily*).*

STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

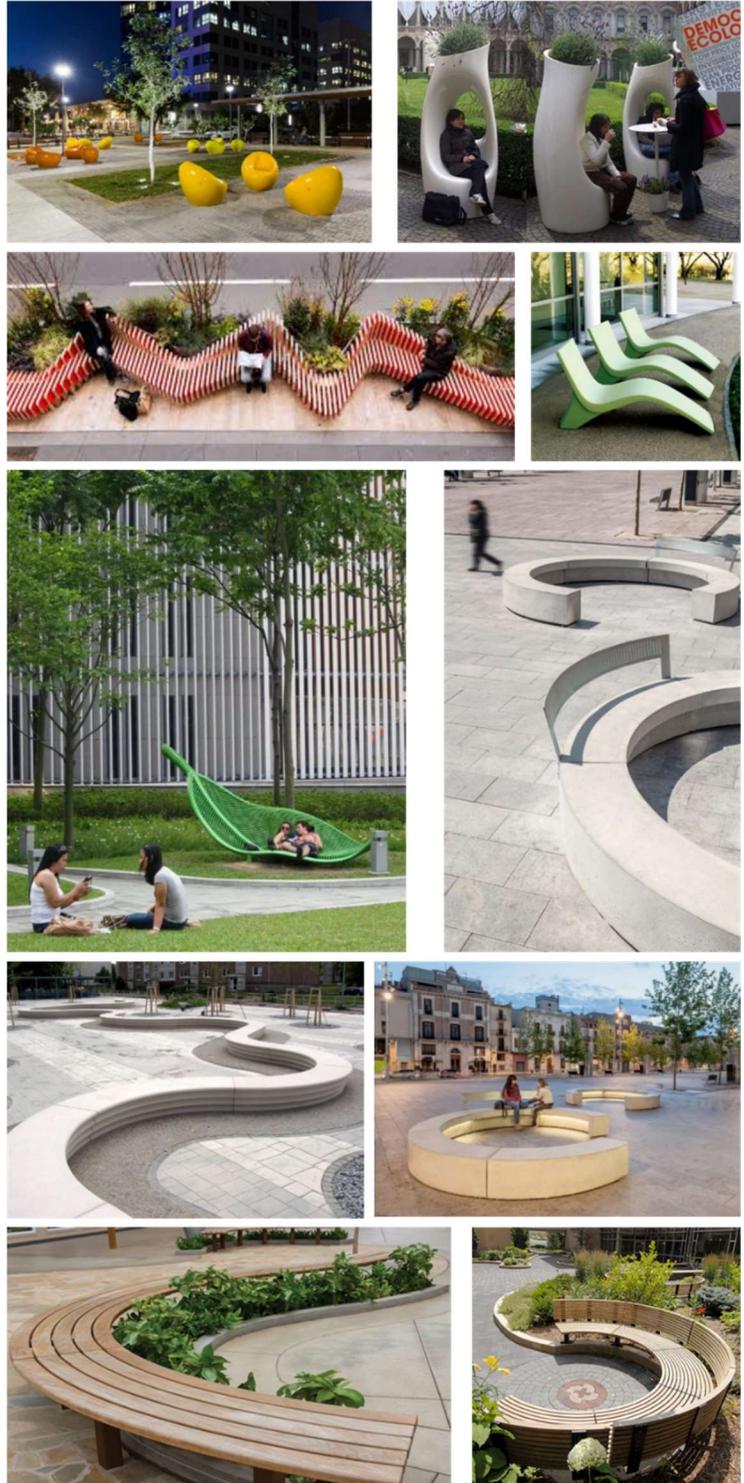
Downtown's Little Forest



STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

Hang Out

The streetscape should encourage people to linger. Seating is key: if interesting places to sit are created, people “hang out,” socialize, and begin to recognize Downtown as a meeting place. Unique seating, in fact, might become a signature for one block face, and the “little forests” of Downtown might each have their own signature for seating.



STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

One Family of Furniture

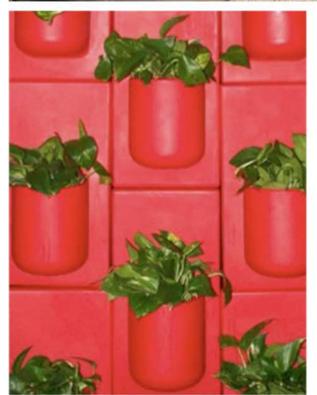
The special parts of Downtown’s streetscape are made more special because the foundational elements are simple, functional, and of a single “family.” Ripon already has benches and litter receptacles of a single style from a particular manufacturer. These pieces of furniture are solid in construction and enduring in style. They should be perpetuated as Ripon’s standard for street furniture in Downtown.



Welcoming Color at Every Door *One of the easy opportunities focuses directly on storefronts by through the placement of seasonal plantings in interesting pots. Here, the idea of the “family” of furniture changes to allow expression of the storeowner. The pot itself is most important; while it’s easy to rely on the color of the plantings, the form and materials of the pot add significantly to character. In some cases, the pot might become affixed to the wall to create an even more interesting highlight.*

STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

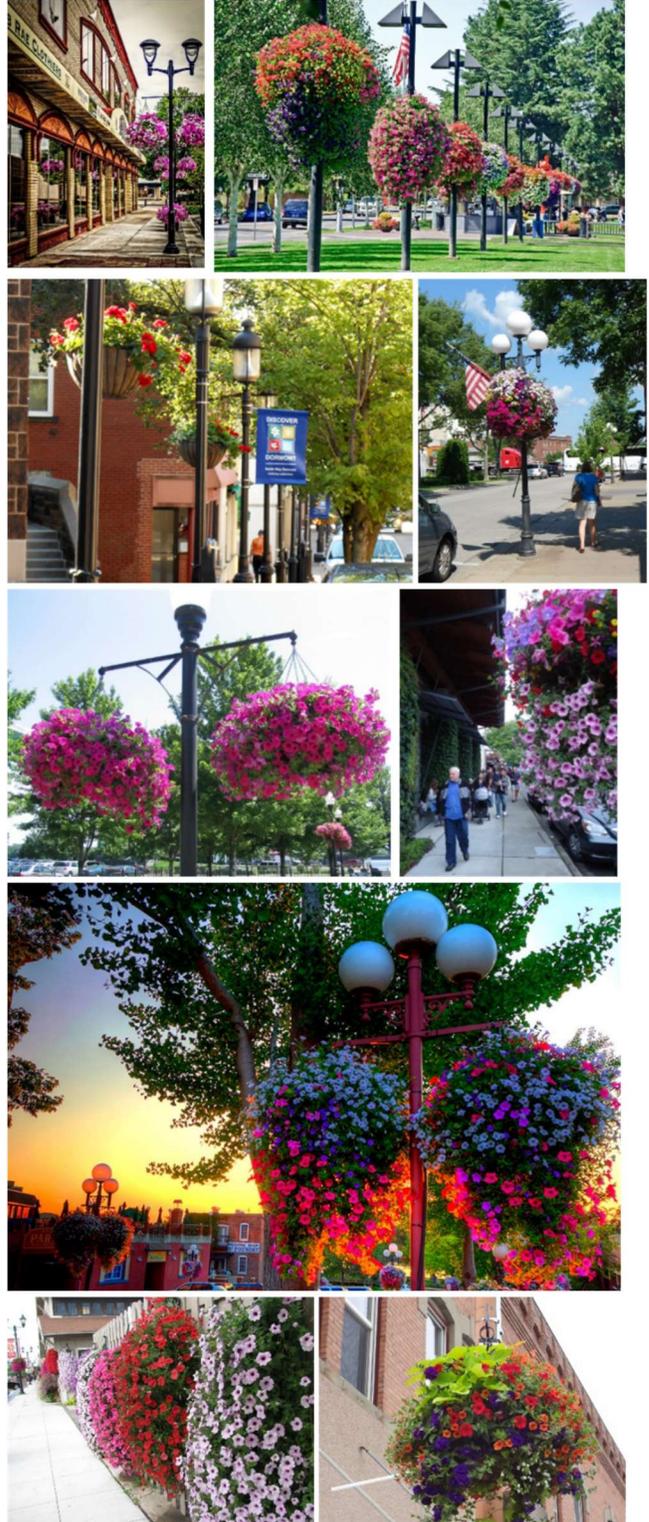
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STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

Flowers at Every Lamppost

Many downtowns use hanging baskets as a part of the streetscape. Downtown Ripon might do the same, recognizing the maintenance required to keep the plantings looking great.



STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

One “Thing” Per Block Face

In the diagram for Downtown Ripon’s streetscape, a “blob” indicates the opportunity for a shared and signature element on each block face. It could be unique seating opportunity or an artful streetlight or a sculpture... but whatever it is, the element becomes the identity for that block face, a landmark, perhaps for a part of downtown.



Switching Out Worn Pieces

The infrastructure of Downtown’s streetscape will, eventually, wear out. The street lights, for instance, are old technology and might be much improved by simply switching out the luminaire (the lighting portion of the street light) with LED technology. Illumination will be improved and energy costs will be reduced, and the costs of the light poles, because they’re reused, can be directed to other features.

STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

Energizing Events

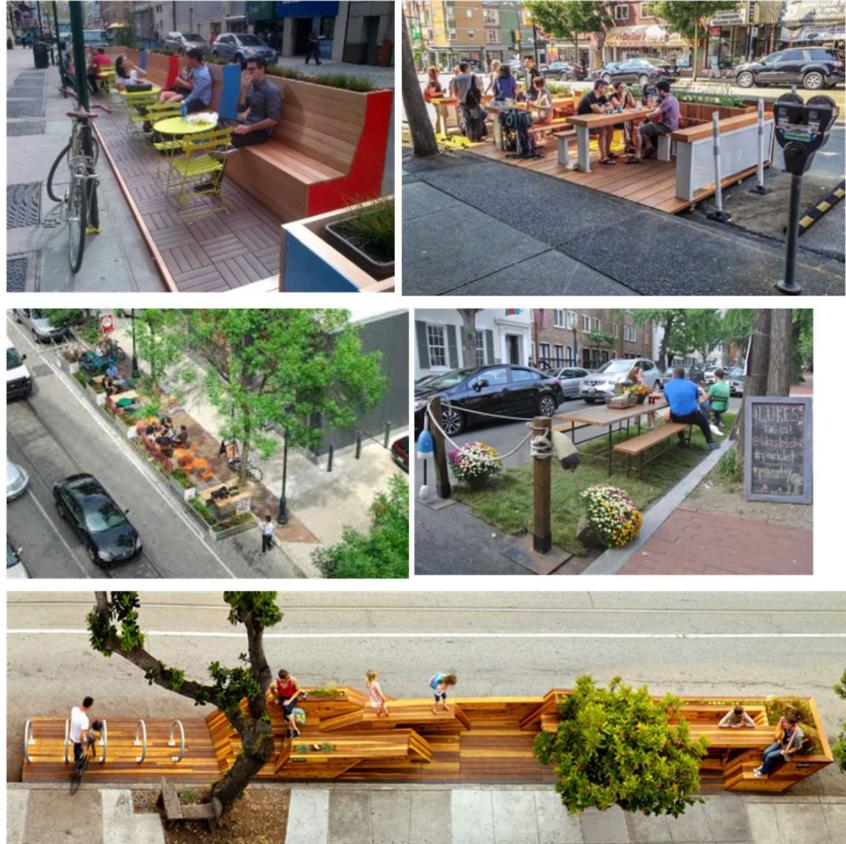
The streetscape, in many ways, is a stage for the life of a community. Having events, even ones that, on occasion, fill Watson Street with people are more important than the furniture, lights, or trees that comprise the streetscape. Ripon already has events, and they really need to be perpetuated. But as those events are planned, thought should be directed to the infrastructure that makes those events happen, especially the ways in which electricity is made available without the distraction of cords and generators.



STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

Parking to Parklets

While popular across the country, one of the most successful aspects of tactical urbanism is the implementation of parklets—a temporary transformation of a parking space that creates space for people. While some parklets last only a day or a week, some last for entire seasons, creating outdoor café spaces or more expansive spaces for people that wouldn't otherwise happen in a downtown.



Scoop the Loop Revived

During conversations with the Ripon community, many people recalled fondly a weekly event they called “Scoop the Loop.” It was Ripon’s Friday or Saturday night “cruisin”—an event to see and be seen, but it was eventually outlawed for reasons of safety, or congestion, or perhaps some other cause. Reinstating a few summer nights of Scoop the Loop might be one more of those energizing events that keeps life in Downtown.

STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

Considering the Impact of Six Big Moves

There are many small things that might be accomplished as an evolution of Downtown Ripon's streetscape. While those opportunities need to be considered and hopefully be expanded upon and pursued, there are a few "big moves" that might also be considered. They'll take longer and deserve more consideration than could be directed during the term of the study supporting this report. There may be many more similar pursuits, but six are highlighted as starting points.

The streetscape diagram becomes important in demonstrating the distribution of these big moves. They are distributed across Downtown, creating points of interest relating to spaces and streets, all intended to work together to enhance the experience of Downtown Ripon.

Rotary Square

A stage for events (and parking when needed)

Today, this space functions as a parking area with occasional events. An incremental transformation could result in a space more oriented to people that can still accommodate cars. The shift in the people-car balance happens through a few simple moves and other more aggressive changes.

Change might begin at the island, transforming it into a more attractive place for gathering by intensifying the planting and creating more intentional seating configurations. As trees are added, attention to their growing environment will encourage growth to maturity, allowing the trees to form more of a canopy over the island and portions of the parking area. The ground plane might be envisioned as a garden with shrubs, perennials, and annuals that create a true highlight for the Square. Seating arrangements that orient toward socializing spaces result in more populated spaces. Creating a more active and attractive island is also important as this is a primary entry for many motorists into Downtown.

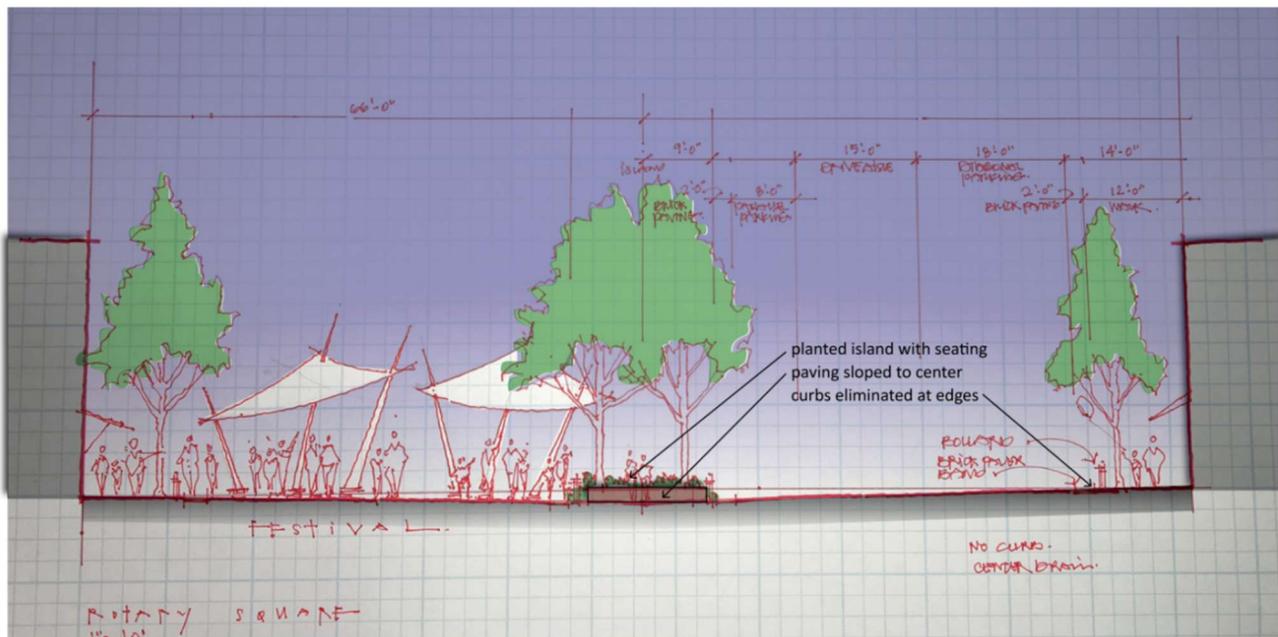
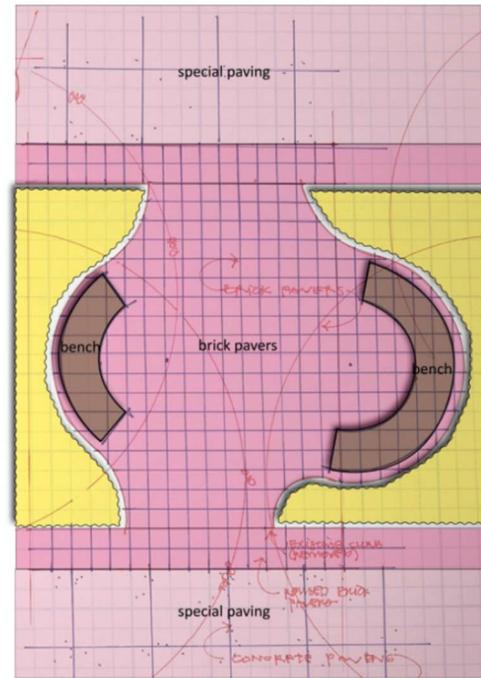
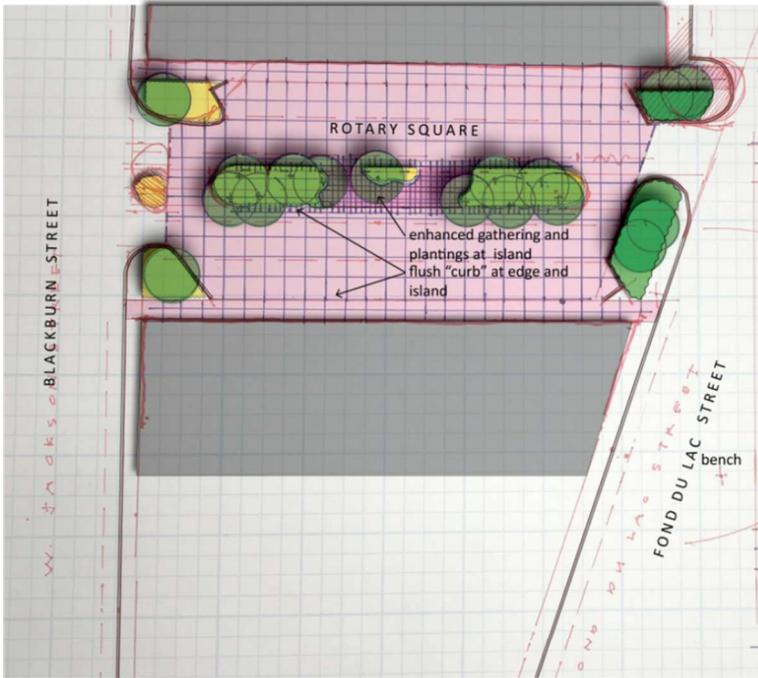
A more aggressive and long-term evolution should envision the removal of curbs from the Square, both at the edges and the island. Separation of cars from pedestrian areas can happen through less obtrusive features—artful bollards as an example, but the elimination of curbs creates a space that allows for events without the interruption of the several changes in elevation that limit use of the space.

The island is a key piece of the function of the Square for traffic purposes, but it also allows for greater use of the space for purposes other than movement and storage of cars. While some traffic function might be interrupted, half of the Square could be opened for an event with the other half remaining open for parking and one-way traffic.

The example of a woonerf is one worth investigating further. In a woonerf, a more deliberate balance is struck between vehicles and people, often with the balance favoring people. While originally popular in the Netherlands, cities across the U.S. are finding that some streets function fully as woonerfs but gain the ability of better accommodating human activity.

STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

Rotary Square



STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

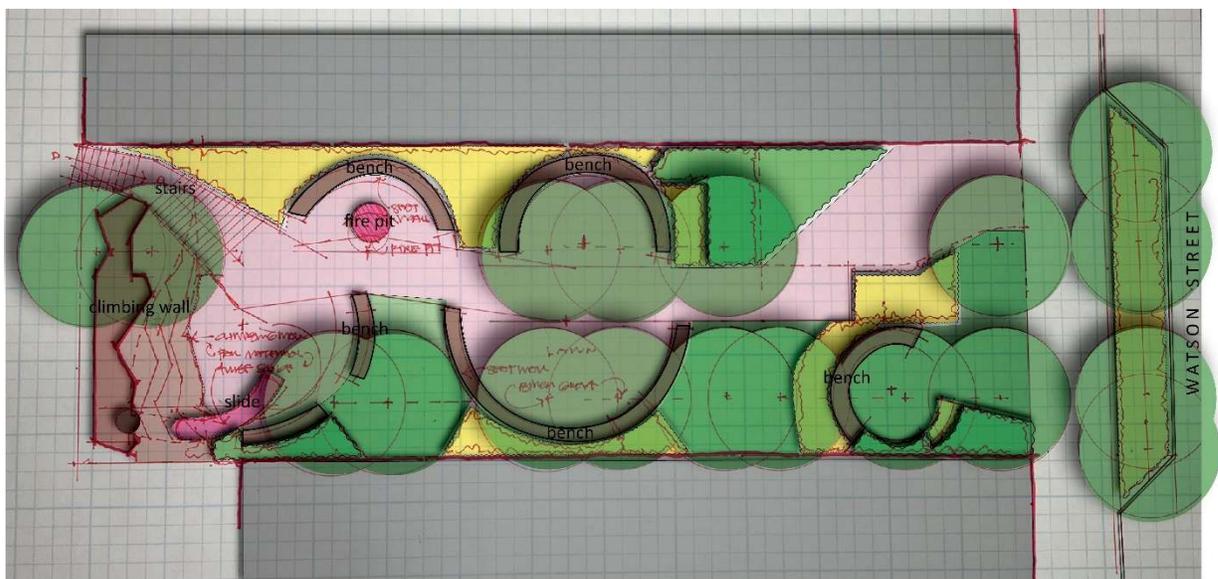
Watson Commons

Gathering and play in the heart of downtown

While there is always a desire to replace buildings that have, for whatever reason, created gaps in the street of a downtown, sometime there is good reason to consider their reuse as spaces for people. In Downtown Ripon, an evolution of one of those spaces results in Watson Commons, a new public space between the anchoring spaces of Rotary Square and the Green.

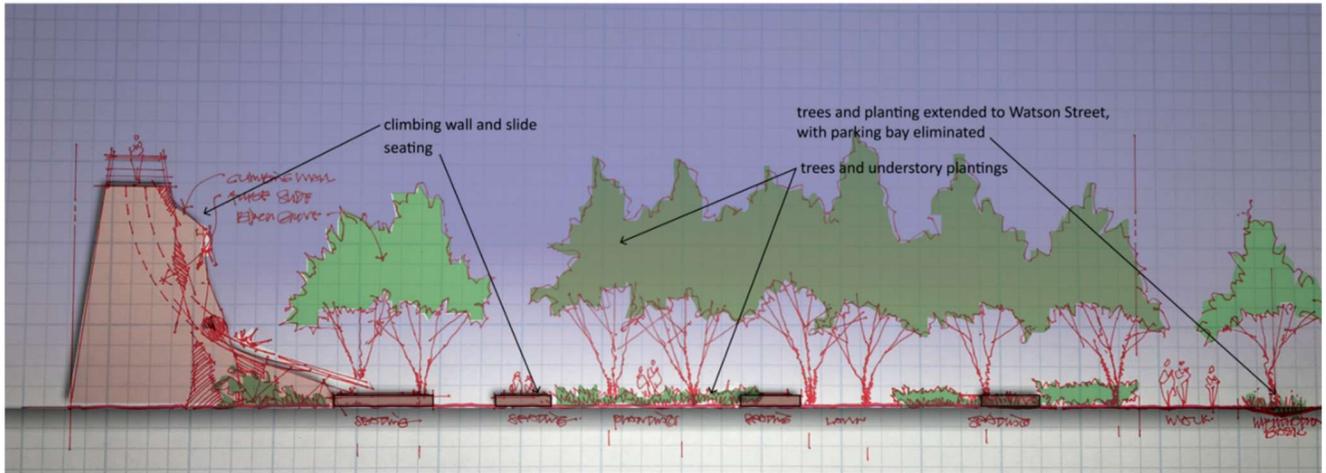
The space is deep—that is, from front to back there is a dimension close to 100 feet—that allows for several kinds of activities to occur. While the space will continue to function as a pedestrian link between Watson Street and parking behind the stores (and up the hill), Watson Commons could result in spaces for gathering through unique seating opportunities, for plantings at a greater intensity than might occur in other places in Downtown, and for a unique feature that might be an opportunity for play. In the concept sketches, the grade change at the back of the space includes not only the staircases needed to ascend the hill to access parking, but a play feature that might be envisioned as a climbing wall and a slide—play that accommodates children and adults.

While the concept demonstrates on possibility, the notion of a public space is more important than the creation of a climbing wall or slide. Watson Commons is different than the other major public spaces of Downtown Ripon: Rotary Square is an occasional public space, hosting events when cars are not present; the Green is more parklike and accommodating of large planned events. The Commons is an everyday space, based on a design that allows for small- or medium-sized gatherings, or even an individual.



STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

Watson Commons



STREETScape DIRECTIONS

The Green

Expanding on a recent tradition

The Green, even as it's located on the edge of the core of Downtown, is one of Ripon's key public spaces. It seems the programming of the space is well-considered, and events are well attended; as a starting place, improvements might consider how those events are better served, but the character and use of the space when there are no events happening might also be considered. Most important, the basic layout of the space works so improvements are additive, not starting over.

The space accommodates a lawn during summer and an ice rink in winter, a combination that never allows for healthy turf. In the long-term, that surface might be improved through the implementation of a more resilient turf profile—one constructed more like a golf green or a professional sports field, where the turf can be “pounded” but the structure of the soils in combination with drainage, irrigation, and a special turf create a surface that is always green during the growing season. An artificial turf might also be considered, particularly as the border of the space might evolve to include a perimeter sidewalk designed to accommodate inserts to contain ice for the rink.

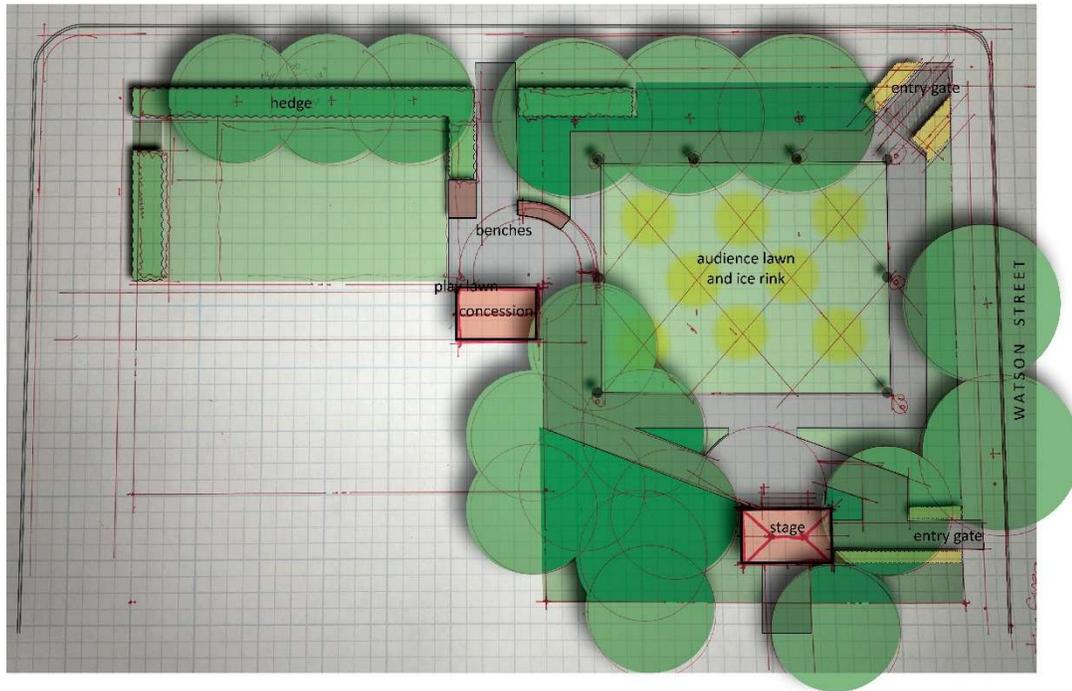
The lighting over the lawn is another attractive feature that does not need to change, except that the support poles might someday be repurposed street light poles to create a stronger connection to the character of Watson Street.

Support facilities that might someday be considered include restrooms and a concession building. While not much space exists, the potential for an evolution of the garage on the adjacent property, if it ever were to become available, could be a great addition to the Green. It's already well-positioned to serve the park, it's an interesting but simple structure, and walks and seating areas could be added to make it a central feature of the space.

The smaller lawn on the west side of the Green might also become more attractive as a play space and gathering space by extending some of the same ideas for turf as posed for the audience space/ice rink. Having a more consistent green lawn attracts more activity, so simple separation from the streets might become important—hedges, for example, fit nicely with the context of the Green and would provide definition and separation for this space.

STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

The Green



Scott/Fond du Lac

Pushing green

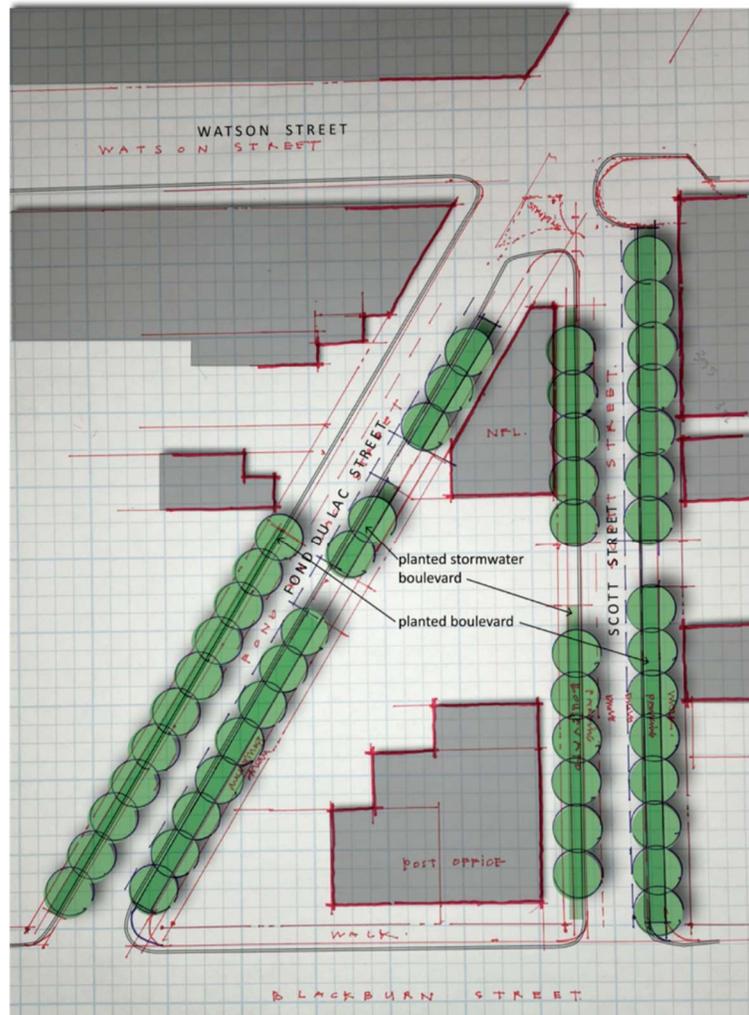
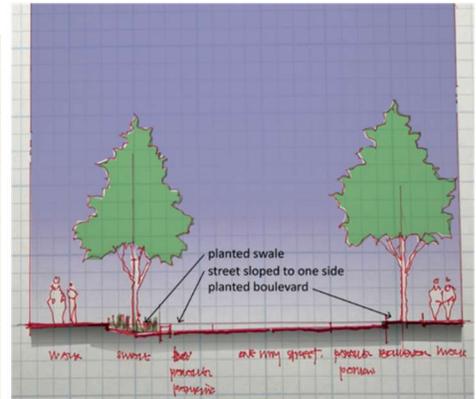
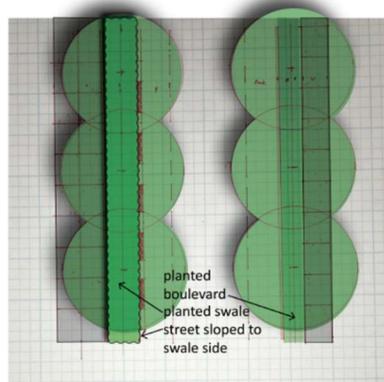
Downtown Ripon has two one-way streets, Scott Street and Fond du Lac Street, that gain purpose in traffic flow because of the Post Office. However, there is a lot of extra space in the driving surface of these streets that might be better directed to features that support the character of Downtown without changing parking counts, traffic flow, or maneuverability.

Both streets are limited in their “storefront” function, so they’re different than other streets in Downtown. Recognizing that they’re different suggests they have a different character than other streets in Downtown, as reflected in the streetscape diagram. In the concept, these streets become intensely planted boulevards.

The key is two-fold: narrowing the street by about eight feet and tilting each street so that water flows to one edge. Narrowing is simply moving a parallel parking space about eight feet, leaving significant space for traffic and truck movements. The green boulevard that already exists remains in place but is more heavily planted with trees to create one side of a boulevard. The other side of the street—which is now the lower side of the tilted street—catches stormwater in a shallow swale allowing it to feed trees that form the other side of the boulevard and more sustainably dealing with runoff from rain events.

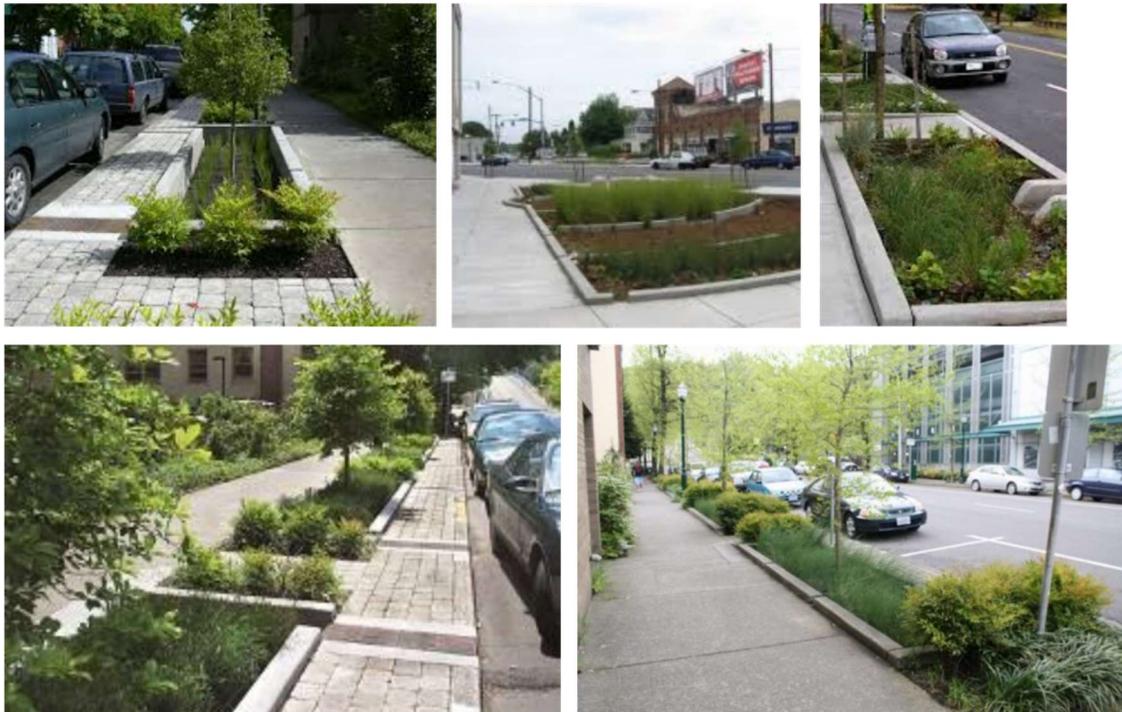
STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

A change to Scott Street and Fond du Lac Street is a long-term consideration, likely occurring when the street is reconstructed. The pavement seems to be in reasonable condition and no suggestion was offered during the technical visit that these streets might soon be reconstructed. But someday, the pavement will reach a point where the streets will need to be reconstructed and it's at that point that the more dramatic change might be implemented.



STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

Scott/Fond du Lac (Pushing green)



Accommodating ADA

Eliminating steps into shops and wet feet during rain

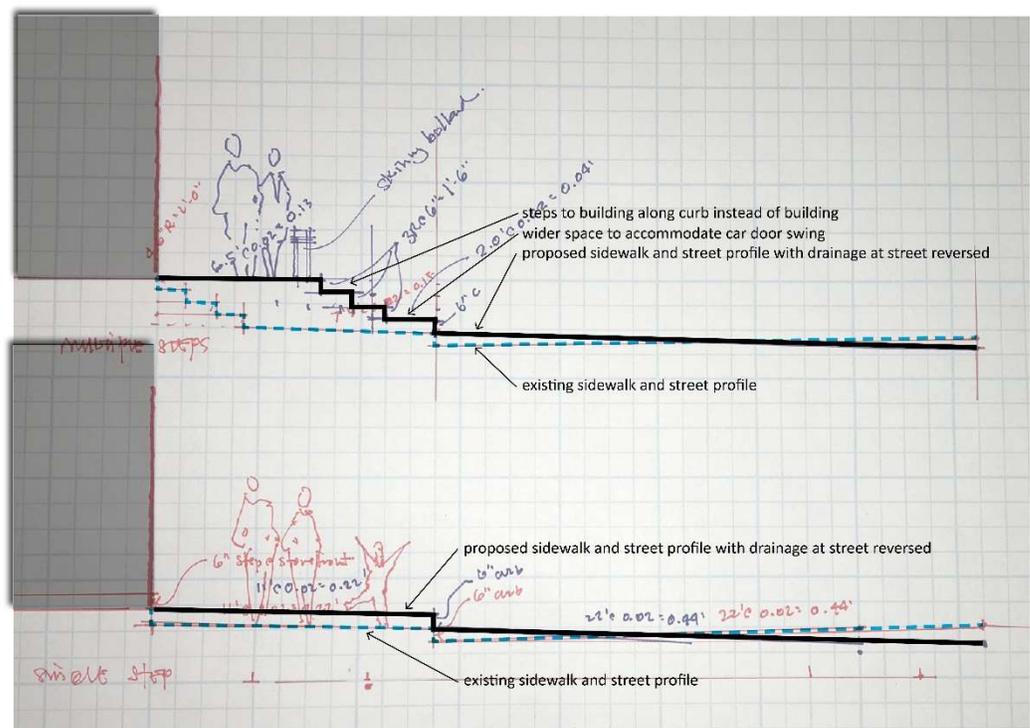
Several downtown buildings have a step at the front entry, making access difficult for people in wheelchairs or with other physical disabilities. Changes to interiors that might resolve this single step might be possible in some cases but might be prohibitively expensive for building owners. In addition, some buildings have multiple steps at their entries, making access even more difficult.

No simple solution exists, but one that might involve the streetscape might involve simple geometry that addresses nearly all of the single step entries, which might be assumed to be 5 or 6 inches. Today, Watson Street slopes from its center to the curb at each side of the street. That distance, about 22 feet at a slope of 2 percent, results in 5.28 inches. If the slope of the street were reversed, flowing from the curb to the same elevation at the center of the street, the elevation at the curb is raised 5.28 inches. The sidewalk is then reconstructed beginning at the top of the new curb, sloping upward to the storefront. The 5.28 inches is now at the storefront, essentially eliminating the 5- or 6-inch step that exists today. In addition, water now flows at the center of the street, so cars drive through the water, but pedestrians never step across or into water flowing along the curb. The center of the street would be marked by a valley gutter, constructed of concrete, making the street seem narrower for drivers without eliminating any space from driving lanes and causing motorists to move more slowly along Watson Street.

STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

While the reverse slope works for one-step entries, it only reduces a step for those buildings with multi-step entries. A more aggressive approach is needed for those locations, possible along the lines of two directions:

- A divided sidewalk where a “lane” of the sidewalk follows the curb and another follows the building. There are limited places where that approach might be applied without causing disruption to the street experience.
- Creating steps at the street edge, essentially moving building steps to a location near the curb. Of course, those steps consume space of the sidewalk, so the sidewalk becomes narrower in those locations. Marking the location of the steps is important—this is an unexpected change to the sidewalk. Using bollards or handrails, both illuminated, offers a visual cue for the change in the sidewalk environment. The steps themselves might be steeper than normal, perhaps with slightly taller risers and shallower treads so the sidewalk can be maintained at the greatest practicable width. In addition, the steps create obstacles for car doors, so a width of about 2 feet would be desirable (maybe mandatory, but it can include the first step and the width of its tread) at the curb to make sure car doors don’t hit steps and there is adequate space for passenger side movements.



STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

West Fond du Lac/Seward

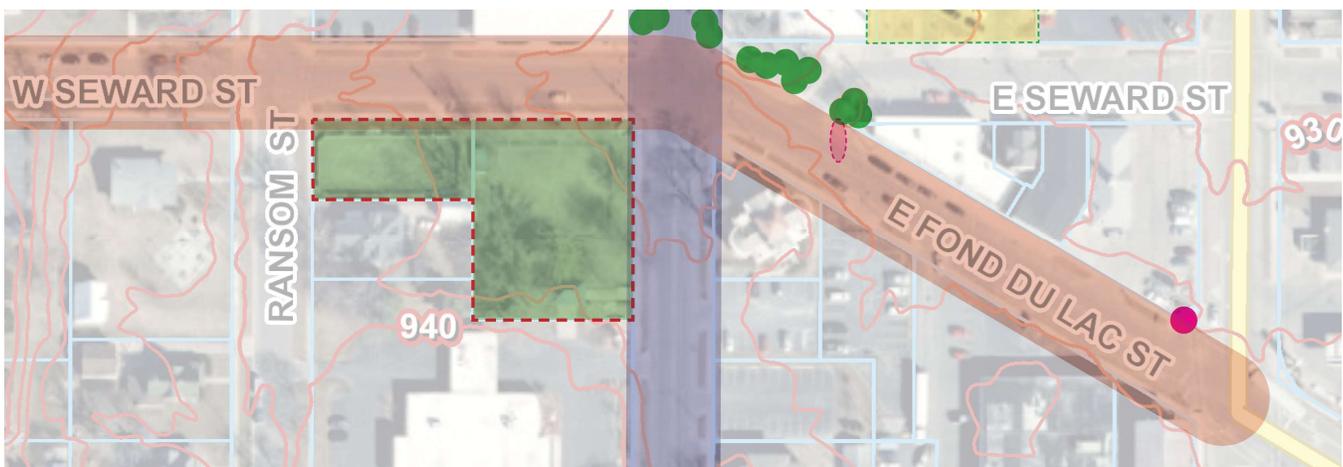
Greening for gowns

East Fond du Lac Street and West Seward Street are the primary entries to Ripon College. While not part of Downtown, the college is a key community feature and the entry most current or prospective students use might not show the college or the community at its best. With few storefronts along either street, an evolution to a grand boulevard is possible using open boulevards or eliminating some concrete in existing walks.

It's important that there is not real "street face" composed of buildings along these streets. Watson Street has that kind of character; these streets have few buildings that face upon them, leaving open spaces of parking areas or non-storefront portions of buildings to set the character of the streets. The Green plays significantly as a part of this street experience but even it could be reinforced by connecting it to a greater sense of tree canopy in Downtown.

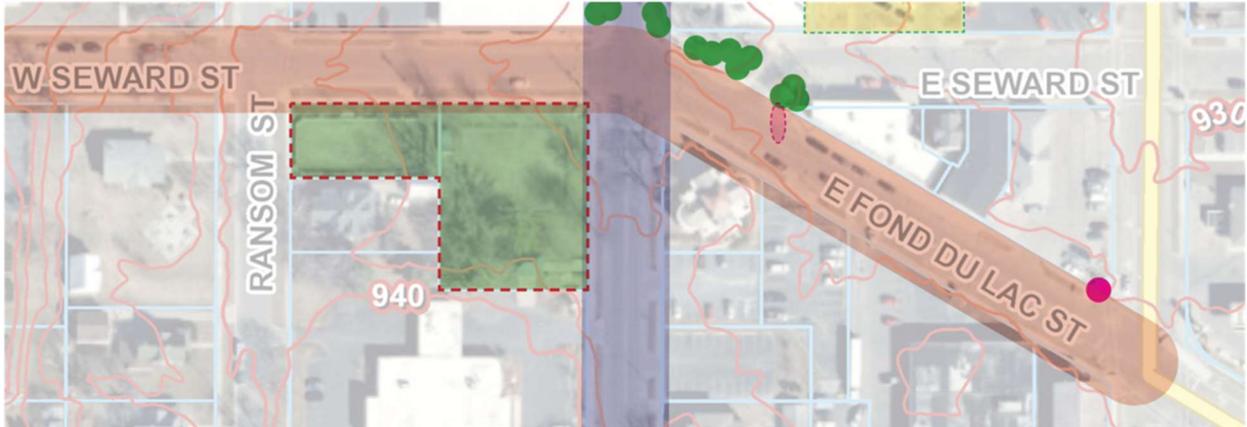
Trees should be planted to create a sense of a continuous canopy, both along and across the street. There is ample space for planting along both sides of these streets, sometimes in open boulevards and at other locations in places where sidewalk could be removed while retaining six or eight feet, or more, of usable sidewalk space.

A fully green boulevard might take years to be fully in place but planting even small trees is a necessary first step. If they're never planted, there will never be a boulevard. Cooperating with the college could be a great first step in the evolution of a street that is part of the Downtown experience but may also be an important part of the aesthetic of the non-campus experience of Ripon College.



STREETSCAPE DIRECTIONS

West Fond du Lac/Seward (Greening for gowns)



ADVANCING THE STREETSCAPE

As concepts, everything in this report can be accomplished, provided effort and dollars can be accessed. But the question about where to start is likely prominent. Recognizing the limited potential for implementing big moves, this report focused first on many smaller efforts that might be incrementally pursued, all the while keeping attention on the opportunity to engage in big move. The community might best begin by an intense review of the directions posed in this report, recognizing the limited exposure to Ripon of the consulting team, and then expanding upon the smaller moves and determining a course of pursuit.

The combination of smaller and more immediate projects with larger and more significant projects described in this report might be organized into a broad plan of implementation, where coordination with other Downtown projects is recognized along with the energy required to accomplish any aspect of a streetscape change. While the whole streetscape package might seem unattainable, it's adherence to the long-term vision that will result in real and lasting change. And there's no rush to make it all happen, but it is critical to ***pick a project*** that initiates the process of making the change.