DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to addressing the functional considerations of land use such as mobility, economic development, housing, and recreational opportunities, community members voiced the desire for improved aesthetics as the City grows. Such improvements to the City's visual appearance could contribute to a sense of place and provide pleasant areas that are landscaped, walkable, and well-maintained. Ideas and principles in this section provide some guidelines to encourage quality development that reflects thoughtful, realistic, and fiscally achievable urban design throughout the City.

DESIGN CONCEPTS

As the City revisits its development codes, design concepts must be founded on practical and safety considerations; however, these considerations can be balanced with aesthetics and improving a sense of identity. Design concepts embedded in the codes must balance community desires with the financial constraints of land developers. Furthermore, because some common areas such as parks, plazas, storm water facilities, and landscaped areas will require ongoing maintenance by the City, implications for the municipal budget must also be considered. The wide boulevards and rights-of-way in the City provide an opportunity for beautification through landscaping and pedestrian pathways. In addition to improving the aesthetics along the major transportation routes, landscaping can help with dust management, water quality protection, and storm water run-off reduction. Key factors to consider in the design principles include:

- ☐ Community character
- ☐ Function and form
- ☐ Beautification
- ☐ Investment and maintenance

Addressing urban design issues can be accomplished through development code revisions to ensure that desired concepts are embedded in new construction. Prioritized beautification projects in existing development would complement the longer-term strategy. Priority areas for focused attention are likely to include:

- ☐ Entrances to the City
- ☐ Landscaping and Parking
- ☐ View sheds
- ☐ Lighting and Signage
- ☐ Complete Streets
- ☐ Storm water Facilities

ENTRANCES TO THE CITY

Providing focus to the City's entrances is one way of creating community character. Currently, it is difficult to know when one is leaving unincorporated parts of the City limits. Consideration can be given to a multi-year program to create visual cues at the entryways to the City. "Gateway" designs should consider traffic safety and visibility, preservation of open space, land availability, and maintenance requirements. Entry could be announced through landscaped areas, unique signage or street light design, public art, decorative banners, or other similar features.

LANDSCAPING AND PARKING

Orientation and location of parking relative to the streetscape and pedestrian areas is another consideration for design within the City. The quantity of parking required, a mix of lots, on street parking, shared lots, pavement materials (e.g., asphalt versus pervious materials), centralized or shared parking, landscape islands, and similar considerations are key aspects to consider to improve aesthetics, separate pedestrians from automobiles, and address storm water issues. Parking lots should be located behind buildings where possible to create a more vibrant streetscape.

Because some of the landscaped areas will require ongoing maintenance by the City, landscaping design has long-term implications for the municipal budget and annual work plan. The City's landscape ordinance should be revisited to ensure that the landscape design concepts required for new development address both visual and functional goals.

LIGHTING AND SIGNAGE

Design standards for street light poles or street signage to distinguish neighborhoods or districts within the City could contribute to improving the aesthetics of the City while also improving the pedestrian experience and overall safety. Lighting design should consider crime prevention by illuminating shielded areas, light pollution, and pedestrian and vehicular safety. For example, illuminating pedestrian and bike paths can encourage use of these routes during evening hours. Similarly, incorporating decorative signage that is unique to the City or to districts within the City can be considered.

COMPLETE STREETS

A "complete streets" design approach would provide a network that provides connectivity throughout the City and to areas beyond for all users (e.g., walkers, bicycles, wheelchairs users, cars, trucks, public transportation, etc.). Design standards for complete streets incorporate pavement, sidewalks, curb cuts, crosswalks, illumination and signal lights, landscaping, storm water management, and parking to facilitate functional, pleasant and safe linkages. Further, the standards need to be adaptable for new development and retrofits and adoptable by all agencies constructing and maintaining roadways in the City. Performance and level of service standards for complete streets can include metrics for lane miles created or maintained, pedestrian or bike trail miles or traffic counts, number of trees planted along roadways, and other similar metrics to gauge movement toward becoming a complete street community. In existing neighborhoods, streets with wide pavement could be restriped to provide for bike lanes. Implementation of the Safe Routes to School Plan would address some critical elements of the "complete streets" concept.