



8. DOWNTOWN ADRIAN PLAN

The City of Adrian’s Downtown is truly the heart of the City. Because the Downtown plays such a key role in defining the City’s overall character and identity, this area deserves careful consideration within the context of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Downtown Adrian Plan component of the Comprehensive Plan provides an analysis of Downtown Adrian’s urban pattern, parking locations, circulation, façades, signage, streetscape, land uses, and entry features. This Plan provides specific recommendations for future development, redevelopment, and enhancement of the Downtown.

OVERVIEW

For the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, Downtown Adrian refers to the area generally bounded by Front Street to the north, Broad Street to the east, Church Street to the south, and College Street and the River Raisin to the west. As illustrated by Map 8-1, Downtown Adrian also includes the northern portion of the block between Church, Winter, Nelson, and College Streets. Downtown Adrian includes a mix of retail, office, service, residential, and public uses. While the Downtown is faced with many challenges, including increased commercial development at the City’s boundaries and deteriorating building conditions along Main and Maumee Streets, its many assets continue to make it the focal point of the City.

Main and Maumee are the Downtown’s two primary or core streets, with the intersection of Main and Maumee traditionally representing the center of Downtown Adrian. The two-block section of Main Street between Church and Toledo Streets, along with the two-block section of Maumee Street between Winter and Broad Streets, encompass Adrian’s historic downtown area. It is comprised primarily of two- and

Map 8-1
Downtown Adrian



three-story buildings built up to the sidewalk to form a continuous building wall. Because this four-block area is visually and historically the core of the Downtown, it deserves significant attention and priority in the City's efforts to implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

Adrian Downtown Blueprint

In December of 2003, the *Adrian Downtown Blueprint* was completed by HyettPalma under the program titled Blueprints for Michigan Downtowns. This program is a partnership effort between the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), and the Michigan Municipal League (MML) to continue to assist communities and their downtown revitalization efforts. The *Blueprint* document includes the community's vision for Downtown Adrian, as well as the findings of a comprehensive analysis of Downtown's commercial markets. The vision and market analysis findings were used to define a specific economic enhancement strategy for the Downtown.

The Downtown Adrian Plan component of the City of Adrian Comprehensive Plan is not intended to duplicate or replace the *Adrian Downtown Blueprint*, but rather is intended to complement and build upon the strategies already identified through the *Blueprint* process. Many of the specific strategies and recommendations of the *Blueprint* are further refined in the Downtown Adrian Plan.

KEY PLANNING ISSUES

While much of the Downtown's historic character has been retained over the years, the area has experienced significant changes, many of which have detracted from the Downtown's overall character and pedestrian atmosphere. The *Adrian Downtown Blueprint* identifies the following issues, among others, related to the Downtown's existing condition and need for improvement:

- The lack of retail establishments and the limited variety and choice of retail goods.
- The influx of office businesses into the Downtown rather than retail businesses.
- The limited range of restaurant choices.
- The under-utilization of upper stories of Downtown buildings for residential uses.
- The one-way street system.
- Downtown building disrepair.

The recommendations that are included in this Downtown Adrian Plan, as well as many that are included in the *Adrian Downtown Blueprint*, are intended to address the above issues.

Downtown Adrian – Regional Center and Neighborhood

Downtown Adrian is not only a focal point for the City itself; the Downtown also serves as a major commercial center for the larger region. Downtown Adrian attracts residents of other cities, villages, and townships to shop, bank, eat, and entertain. As the Lenawee County Seat, Adrian has the advantage of drawing residents from throughout the County to its government facilities, many of which are located within the Downtown area. In addition, as the home to three institutions of higher education, Downtown has the opportunity to draw visitors from well beyond the County and region.

As discussed in the *Adrian Downtown Blueprint*, the Downtown has significant potential for economic growth. The *Blueprint's* Market Analysis focuses on specific strategies for the Downtown to gain a larger share of the overall trade area market – that is, increasing its retail sales by attracting more customers from throughout the region and retaining more customers from within the City.

An important concept that came out of the *Blueprint* process is to “make the Downtown a neighborhood.” The idea of Downtown as a neighborhood encompasses more than economic development strategies to draw customers to the Downtown. Downtown as a neighborhood unit requires a balanced mix of residential dwellings, workplaces, shopping, services, recreation, and entertainment – all within the Downtown area. In addition to Downtown being a place to shop, work, eat, and play, it must also become a place to live.

Throughout implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, it will be important to focus on strategies that are targeted toward Downtown’s pass-through customers, such as parking and circulation improvements, as well as strategies that are targeted toward neighborhood customers, such as pedestrian connections and increased residential opportunities. Enhancement of Downtown, including physical improvements and economic development strategies, will work toward increasing Downtown’s regional draw as well as realizing the goal of making the Downtown a true neighborhood unit.

DOWNTOWN RECOMMENDATIONS

Façades, Signage, and Streetscape

The following is a summary of the main issues and recommendations for improvement regarding Downtown façades, signage, and streetscape. In addition, the Main Street and Maumee Street Façade Assessments on pages 8-8 through 8-13 highlight many of the assets, challenges, and opportunities for improvement found within the core four-block area.



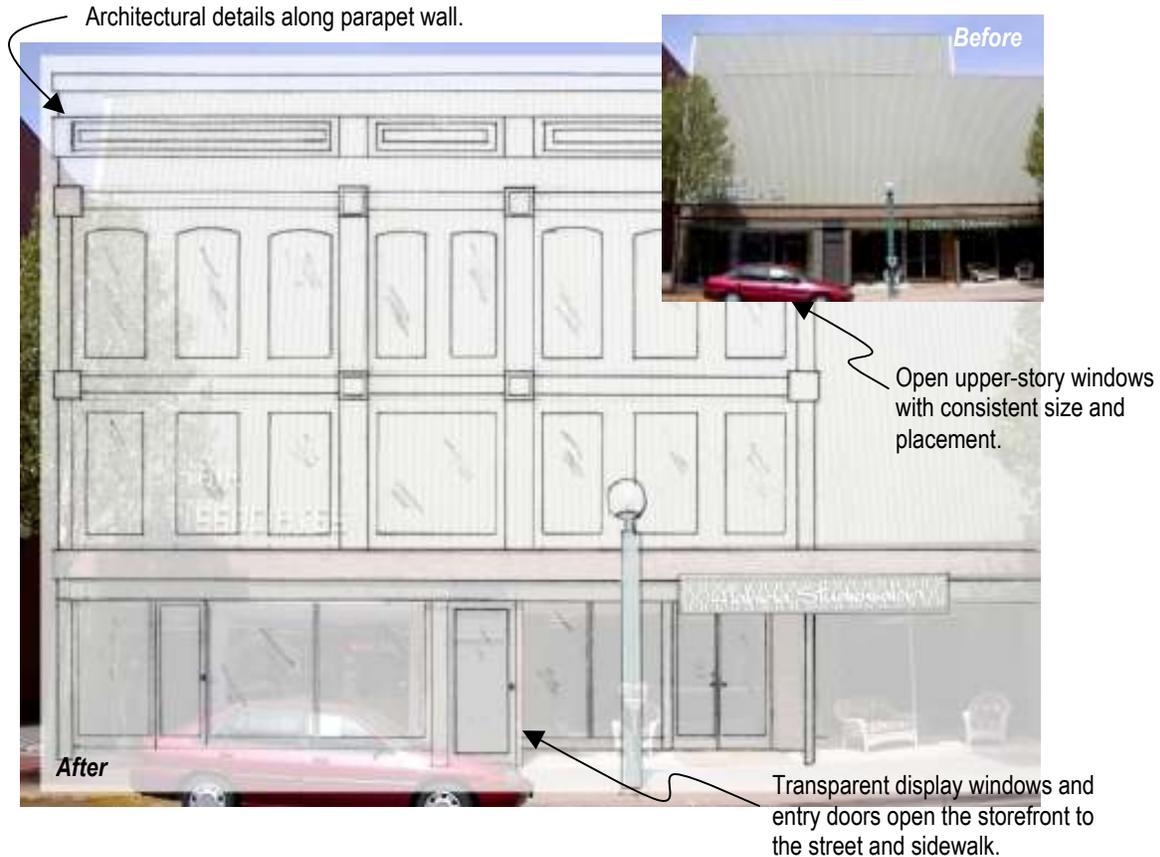
Example of cover-up façade that lacks any architectural detail and character and that is inconsistent with surrounding buildings.

Issue: Many buildings have experienced façade alterations and roof additions that detract from the appearance of the building and the overall character of the Downtown.

Recommendation: Updates and renovations to existing buildings are encouraged but should be compatible with and complementary toward the traditional architectural style of the Downtown. In order to ensure that façades stimulate interest at a pedestrian scale, historic façade details, such as those found along many Downtown buildings’ parapet walls, should be retained when a building façade is renovated. Quality materials, complementary colors, and classic design should be incorporated into building façades. Consideration should be given toward the individual building style as well as the overall character of the Downtown. Specific design

guidelines would assist in giving property owners guidance in this area. The DDA should continue to promote its grant and low-interest loan programs for façade changes that are consistent with DDA guidelines.

Figure 8-1
Example of Downtown Façade Renovation



Issue: Building height varies from one story to four stories within the Downtown.

Recommendation: Buildings within the Downtown should be at least two stories and similar in height to surrounding buildings. Greater building height is appropriate and encouraged near the Downtown's core intersection of Main Street and Maumee Street. One-story buildings should be avoided.



Example of adjacent Downtown buildings that are inconsistent in height.

Issue: The style, size, and placement of many second-story replacement windows is inconsistent with surrounding buildings and out of character with the Downtown. In addition, many upper-story windows have been covered over or shuttered.



Example of boarded windows and inappropriately sized replacement windows (*above and below*). Example of first-floor façades that lack open storefronts (*below*).



Example of rear façades that lack attractive customer entrances (*above*). Appropriate signage and awnings can be incorporated into rear facades to break up the mass of the buildings and enhance secondary entrances (*below*).



Recommendation: Throughout the Downtown, upper-story windows should be consistent in style, size, and rhythm. Replacement windows should be in keeping with the building's original character, should be of similar size as the originals, and should maintain the overall window placement rhythm found in the Downtown.

Issue: Some buildings in the Downtown lack key features of well-designed, attractive, and pedestrian-friendly storefronts.

Recommendation: Storefronts should be open to the street and sidewalk and inviting to pedestrians. To achieve this, storefronts should be designed with large display windows that extend low to the ground and recessed or covered entryways that encourage window-shopping and enhance the overall pedestrian character of the Downtown. In addition, awnings should be placed above individual windows and entryways, rather than extending across entire building façades.

Issue: Buildings in the Downtown lack attractive rear façades, signage, and customer entrances.

Recommendation: Rear building façades should be attractive and well-maintained to provide secondary customer entrances in convenient proximity to public parking areas. Signage should be limited to identifying customer entrances and should not be utilized for advertising. Loading areas and trash receptacles should be appropriately screened, and these areas should be kept clear of refuse. Outdoor storage should not be permitted. Streetscape design should be continued behind and between buildings to reinforce the Downtown character.

Issue: Signage within the Downtown does not always reflect the building's traditional character and often lacks quality in both design and materials.

Recommendation: Signs on building façades should be integrated into the architectural design of the building in a manner that will complement rather than detract from the overall character of the Downtown. Through the use of appropriate design, material, color, and texture, signage should enhance the primary and architecturally significant



features of the building. Signage should not cover, obscure, or overshadow building features and design. A DDA-sponsored sign grant program could provide seed money to encourage new signs consistent with DDA guidelines.



Issue: There is inadequate and ineffective pedestrian-oriented signage within the core Downtown area.

Recommendation: Signs with a pedestrian orientation, such as projecting signs and attractive window signs, are strongly encouraged. Menu boards are also encouraged near sidewalk entrances to restaurants. All pedestrian-oriented signage should be of high quality materials and design that are complementary to the character of the building and Downtown.

Examples of pedestrian-oriented signage in the Downtown (above).

Issue: Opportunities exist to enhance the overall pedestrian experience within the Downtown.

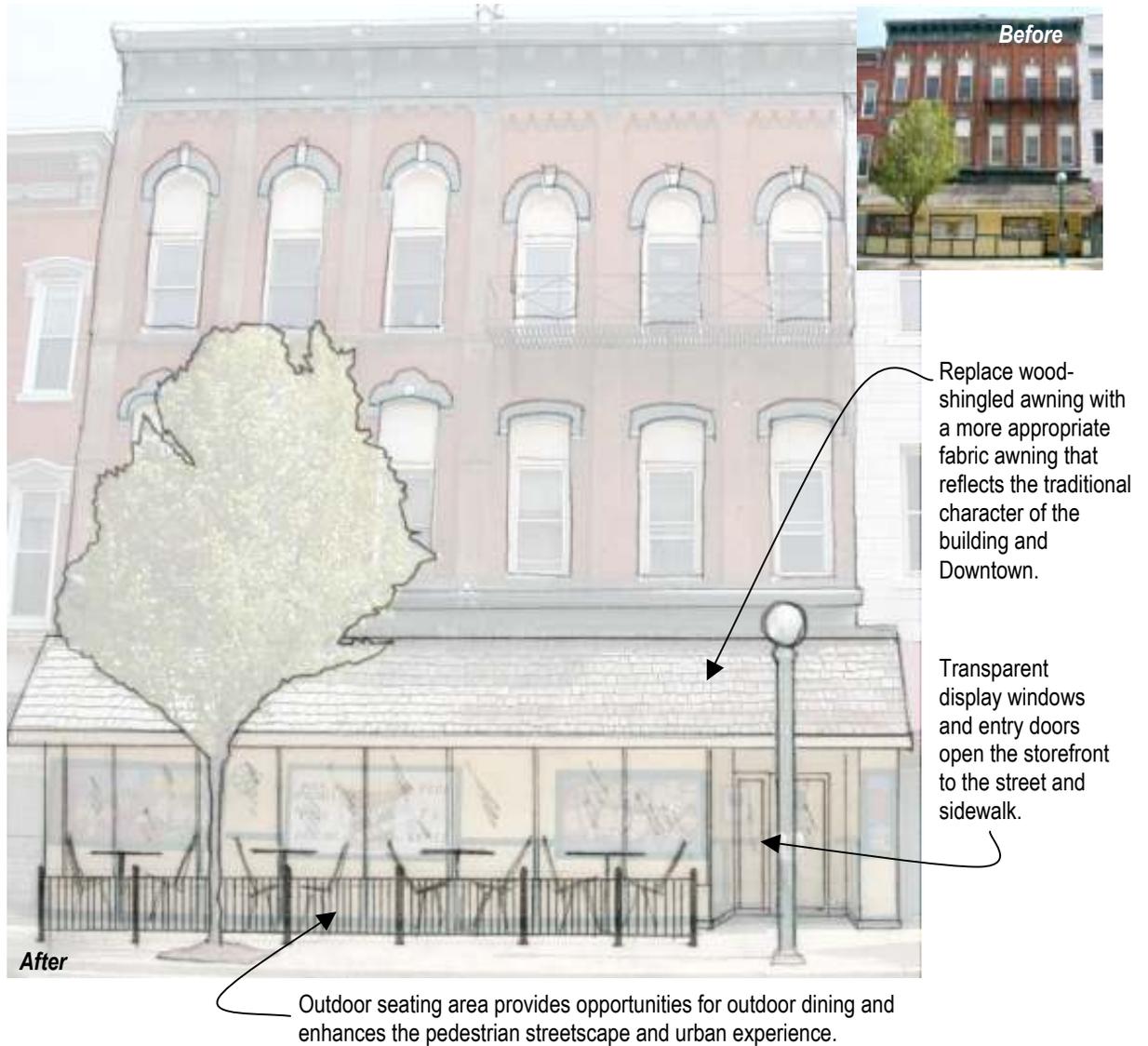
Recommendation: In addition to the façade improvements discussed above, storefronts and the overall pedestrian atmosphere should be enhanced with amenities such as planters, A-frame signs, menu boards, sidewalk furniture, outdoor eating areas, pedestrian-scaled signage and lighting, public art, and so forth.



Decorative pavers and pedestrian-scaled lighting enhance crosswalks and other pedestrian connections in the Downtown (left). Examples of decorative pavers, planters, and sidewalk furniture that enhance the Downtown streetscape and pedestrian experience (right).

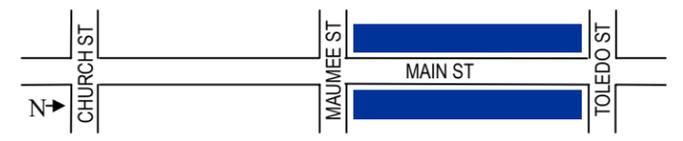


Figure 8-2
Example of Downtown Façade Renovation

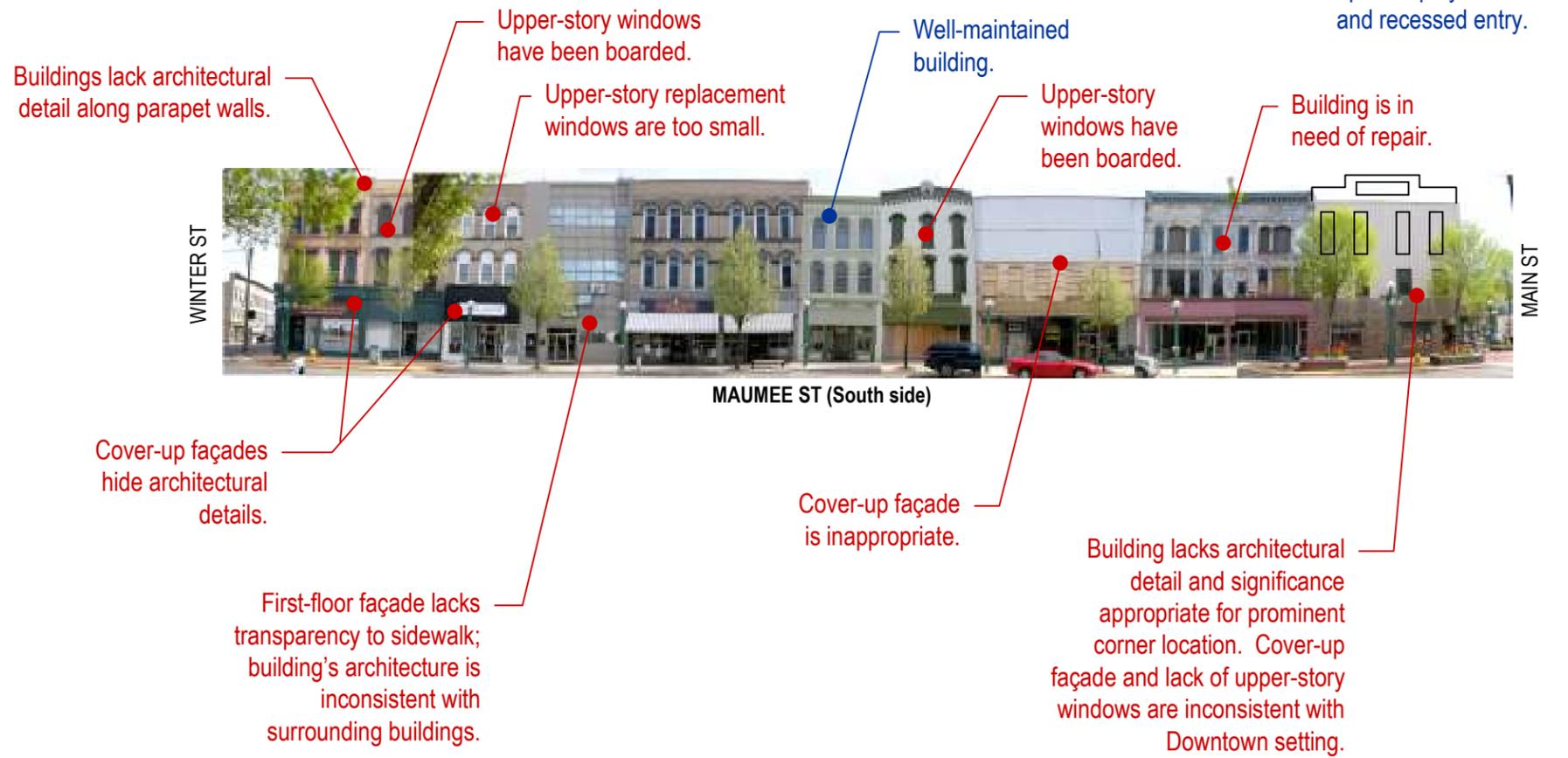
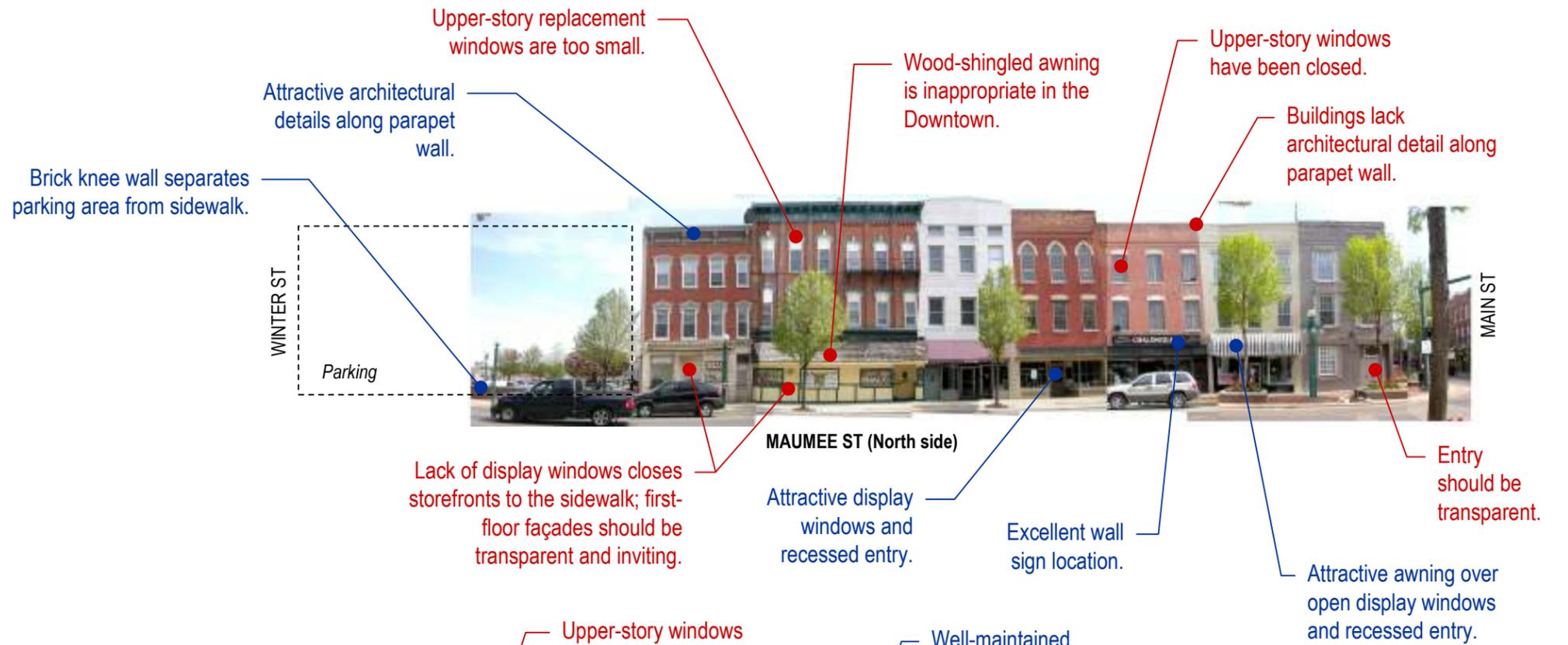




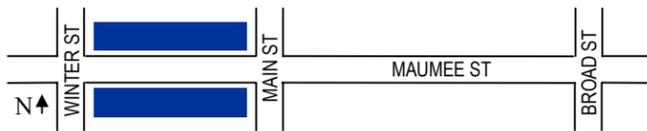
**MAIN STREET FAÇADE ASSESSMENT
DOWNTOWN ADRIAN**



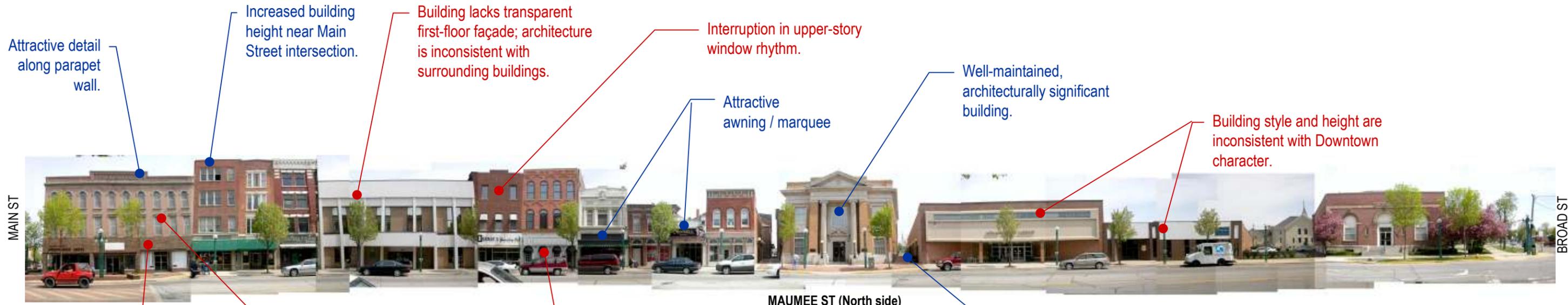
- Assets
- Opportunities for Improvement



MAUMEE STREET FAÇADE ASSESSMENT
DOWNTOWN ADRIAN



- Assets
- Opportunities for Improvement



Attractive detail along parapet wall.

Increased building height near Main Street intersection.

Building lacks transparent first-floor façade; architecture is inconsistent with surrounding buildings.

Interruption in upper-story window rhythm.

Attractive awning / marquee

Well-maintained, architecturally significant building.

Building style and height are inconsistent with Downtown character.

MAUMEE ST (North side)

Upper-story windows have been boarded.

Storefront lacks full display windows to create a transparent first-floor façade.

Lighting and landscaping provide an attractive pedestrian connection to rear parking areas.

Façade materials are not in keeping with building's original architectural character or its prominent corner location.

Well-maintained building with eye-catching corner clock feature.

Building height and window style are incompatible with surrounding buildings.

Sign panels are inconsistent with Downtown setting.

Building style and height are inconsistent with Downtown character.



MAIN ST

BROAD ST

MAUMEE ST (South side)

Attractive detail along parapet wall.

Transparent first-floor storefronts.

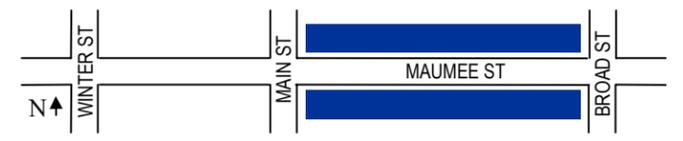
Awnings appropriately located over display windows and recessed entries.

Building lacks upper-story windows and storefront that is open to the sidewalk; additional building height is appropriate at prominent corner location.

Storefront lacks full display windows to create a transparent first-floor façade.

MAUMEE STREET FAÇADE ASSESSMENT

DOWNTOWN ADRIAN



• Assets

• Opportunities for Improvement



Parking and Circulation

Following is a summary of the parking and pedestrian and vehicular circulation issues in the Downtown.

Issue: The one-way street system is an outmoded system of circulating traffic through Downtown Adrian that bypasses Main Street and limits motorists' choices.

Recommendation: As recommended by the *Adrian Downtown Blueprint*, all streets within the Downtown area should be converted to two-way traffic with on-street parking. At the time of conversion to two-way traffic, it is likely that the state trunkline M-52 will be rerouted to follow its current northbound route (Main–Church–Broad–Front–Main) as discussed in the Thoroughfare Plan. The new two-way street system would allow travelers the choice of following M-52 around the edge of Downtown or following Main Street through the core of Downtown. In order to offset potential negative impacts of this two-way bypass of Main Street, signage and pavement markings should be designed to effectively offer a choice between the M-52 route and the Main Street route.



Downtown Birmingham's ring road system is effective at offering motorists a choice of traveling through or bypassing the Downtown. Note that signage, lane striping, and pavement markings effectively offer a choice between the two routes.

Issue: Downtown intersections lack consistent streetscape treatments.

Recommendation: All intersections in the Downtown should be enhanced with attractive and consistent streetscape improvements. Key design elements should include mast arm traffic signals, planters, directional signage, decorative sidewalk and crosswalk pavers, etc. A consistent treatment at all Downtown intersections will help unify the streetscape, announce one's entrance into the Downtown, and enhance the overall pedestrian experience.



The intersection of Main and Church lacks mast arm signals (*foreground left*), while the intersections of Main and Maumee (*background left*) and Main and Toledo (*right*) have very different mast arm designs.

Issue: Converting Broad Street to two-way traffic between Front and Church Streets may make it more difficult for pedestrians to reach the Downtown from the east.

Recommendation: Pedestrian crossings should be enhanced through the use of signage, pavement markings, and decorative pavers and signals where appropriate. Priority should be given to creating and strengthening pedestrian connections within a five-minute walking distance of the Downtown (refer to ¼-mile walking distance radius on Map 8-2).

Action Items

- ☑ Review and revise zoning ordinance standards to permit development consistent with the Downtown Adrian Plan.
- ☑ Establish design guidelines and sign standards that are consistent with the Downtown Adrian Plan.
- ☑ Actively recruit retail, food, art, and entertainment establishments.
- ☑ Develop consistent intersection and streetscape enhancements for all Downtown streets and intersections.
- ☑ Enhance pedestrian connections within and to the Downtown.
- ☑ Explore feasibility of relocating communication tower out of Downtown.
- ☑ Encourage redevelopment for residential uses in and near the Downtown.

Issue: The Downtown lacks consistent and effective wayfinding signage.

Recommendation: An effective system of wayfinding signage should be developed for the Downtown and the City as a whole that directs travelers to public parking areas, government facilities, shopping areas, landmarks, and other points of interest.

Issue: Parking in the Downtown is limited to on-street parking and several surface lots primarily located in the rear of Downtown businesses.

Recommendation: The City should continue to monitor and assess the parking needs of Downtown businesses and residents. As the Downtown attracts more retail, entertainment, and residential uses, the existing parking facilities may prove to be inadequate. As necessary, the City should pursue options for development of additional parking facilities, such as multilevel structures. Potential funding sources may include grants and public-private partnerships.

Downtown Adrian Tomorrow

The *Adrian Downtown Blueprint* envisions Downtown Adrian as an attractive mixed-use area of retail, entertainment, office, and residential uses. A place with more retail businesses and evening activity, more people on the sidewalks, and more customers. A place of respectfully restored and maintained historic buildings, and streets and sidewalks that are enhanced with beautiful flowers, trees, and pedestrian amenities.¹

To achieve this vision, first-floor storefronts should be primarily retail, food, art, and entertainment establishments. First-floor office uses should be limited to the perimeter of Downtown such as in planned Live Work areas. The upper floors of Downtown buildings should be occupied by offices and residential apartments and condominiums. Creative infill projects should provide additional residential opportunities and choices in and near Downtown.

- *Refer to the Housing Plan chapter and the Commercial Areas Element of the Land Use Plan chapter for additional recommendations regarding the Live Work (Office/Residential) land use category and other Downtown residential opportunities.*



Communication tower detracts from the Downtown's prominent focal point.

Land Use / Public Spaces

Following are several land use recommendations intended to improve the overall physical appearance and function of Downtown Adrian.

Issue: Too many first-floor storefronts are occupied by office uses.

Recommendation: First-floor storefronts in the Downtown, particularly the four-block core area, should be primarily retail, food, art, and entertainment establishments. The DDA should work cooperatively with the Chamber of Commerce to actively recruit appropriate business uses, assist in locating available lease spaces, and encourage relocation of office uses to more appropriate locations, such as the planned Live Work areas along the perimeter of Downtown.

Issue: Residential options are limited in the Downtown.

Recommendation: The Downtown should offer a diverse mix of housing types and prices to accommodate a residential population that will support Downtown businesses and make the Downtown a neighborhood. When feasible, second, third, and fourth floors of Downtown buildings should be renovated for residential apartments and condominiums. Infill and redevelopment efforts should be focused on the planned Live Work areas at the periphery of Downtown in order to increase residential opportunities as well as more appropriately located office areas in proximity to Downtown. (Refer to the Housing Plan for additional recommendations regarding Live Work areas and residential infill.)

Issue: Existing communication tower adjacent to the historic County Courthouse detracts from the landmark building and overall vista of Downtown.

Recommendation: The City should explore the feasibility of relocating the communication tower to a more appropriate location outside of the Downtown where it will not detract from such a prominent and historic focal point. An alternative, more attractive tower design should also be used to minimize its visual impact.

¹ *Adrian Downtown Blueprint 2003*, Chapter IV. Downtown Adrian Tomorrow, pp. 14-18.

Issue: The Downtown lacks a central public gathering space that can be utilized for outdoor public events, festivals, and a farmers market.

Recommendation: Maiden Lane and the adjacent parking area should be improved to provide a public gathering space near the heart of Downtown Adrian. Landscaping, pedestrian amenities, rear façade improvements, and the addition of a covered structure should be explored in order to achieve an attractive gathering space for Downtown festivals, outdoor concerts, and special events. In addition, such improvements would facilitate the relocation and expansion of the Adrian Farmers Market to a more central location near Main and Maumee Streets. Opportunities for covered parking in conjunction with a covered market structure should also be explored.

Figure 8-3
Maiden Lane Farmers Market Concept



View of Maiden Lane parking area looking east from Winter Street.



View of Maiden Lane looking west toward Winter Street.

Priority Action Items

- Convert all streets within the Downtown to two-way with on-street parking.
- Develop Downtown streetscape enhancement plan for Main and Maumee Streets.
- Promote and market façade grant and loan programs with priority attention given to first-floor storefront improvements. Consider special incentives for key demonstration projects to increase awareness and interest among private property owners.
- Develop public art placement program for Downtown with priority attention given to the enhancement of Downtown's entry points.
- Relocate Farmers Market to Maiden Lane parking area and develop enhancement plan for a Downtown gathering space.
- Develop effective wayfinding signage system.
- Develop and adopt a Historic Preservation Element as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to provide recommendations for historic preservation Downtown.

Downtown Entries

The Downtown Plan (Map 8-2) identifies four intersections that serve as key entry points into Downtown Adrian. Following are recommendations for the enhancement of these entry points, which are the intersections of Main and Maple, Maumee and Broad, Main and Winter, and Maumee and Church.

Issue: Opportunities exist for the enhancement of key entry points into the Downtown.

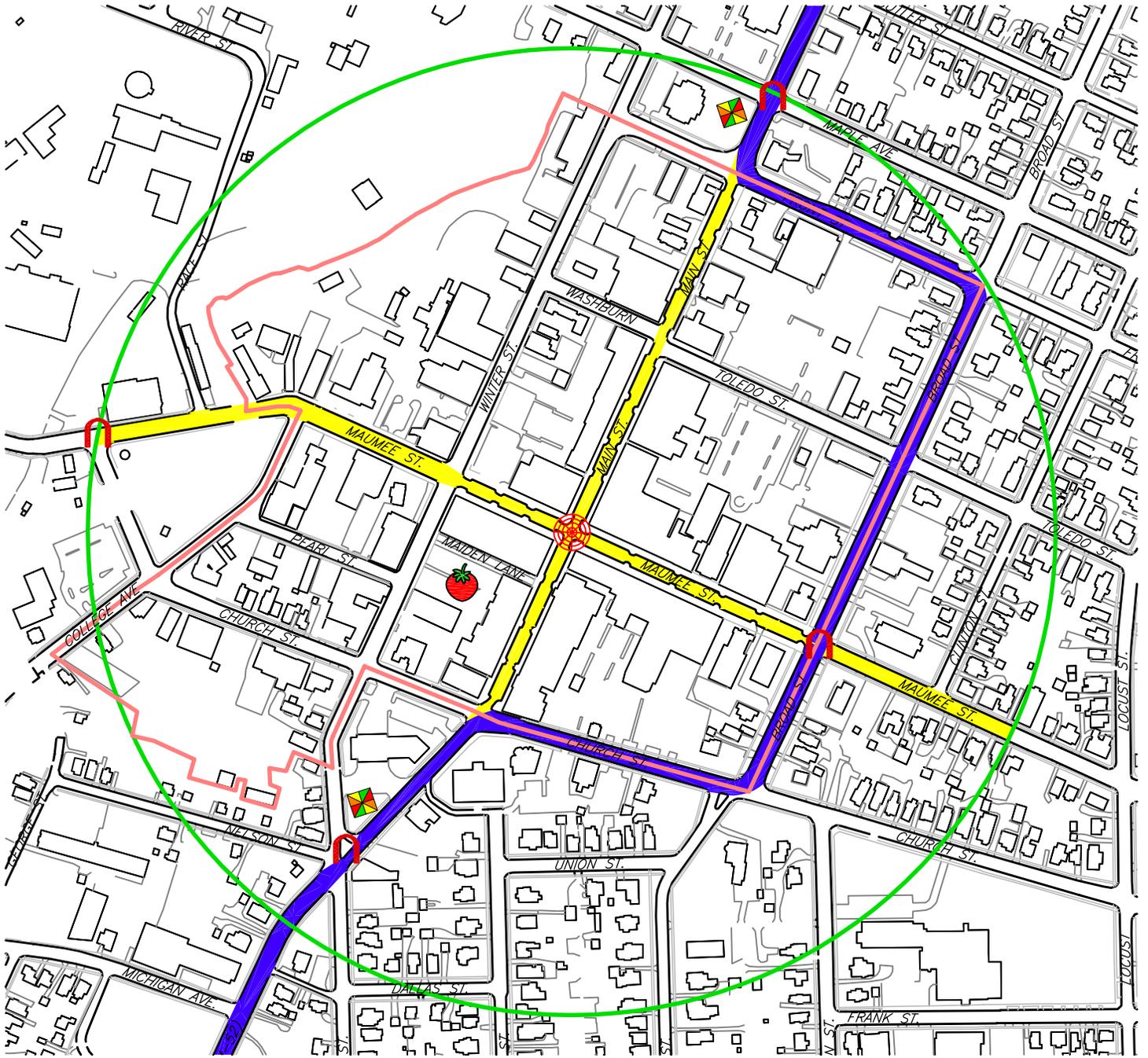
Recommendation: Key intersections should be enhanced to achieve the goal of announcing the entrance into Downtown Adrian. In coordination with streetscape amenities throughout Downtown, a special treatment, including signage and landscaping, should be developed for these key intersections. The Downtown's north and south entries along Main Street should include a public art component and possibly small pedestrian plazas.

SUMMARY OF KEY DOWNTOWN FEATURES

As noted earlier in this chapter, Downtown Adrian has experienced significant changes over the years, many of which have detracted from the overall character and success of the Downtown. The recommendations and action items included in this chapter are intended to provide the City with the vision and tools to address key issues – such as the lack of retail establishments and over abundance of office uses within the Downtown, the under-utilization of upper floors for residential uses, as well as the disrepair of many Downtown buildings. An overriding goal of the Downtown Adrian Plan is to make

the Downtown a neighborhood. The realization of this goal, and the success of the Downtown in general, will be attained as the following key features or characteristics are achieved:

- Complete cross-section of retail, food, and entertainment establishments within Downtown's first-floor storefronts.
- Office uses primarily located in upper floors of Downtown buildings and along the perimeter of the central business district.
- New development and adaptive reuse of existing buildings within proximity to Downtown to create opportunities for new residential and office spaces, as well as a mixed-use or live-work environment.
- Redevelopment of upper floors of Downtown buildings for a variety of modern housing units, including both rental units and owner-occupied condominiums.
- Restored and maintained buildings that reflect the City's historic architecture and character.



- DOWNTOWN BOUNDARY
- 5-MINUTE (QUARTER-MILE) WALKING DISTANCE FROM HEART OF DOWNTOWN
- PRIMARY DOWNTOWN STREET
- ALTERNATE M-52 ROUTE
-  HEART OF DOWNTOWN
-  ENTRY POINT
-  PUBLIC ART
-  PUBLIC GATHERING SPACE / FARMERS MARKET

DOWNTOWN PLAN

CITY OF ADRIAN
LENAWEE COUNTY, MICHIGAN

MAP 8-2

