



CHAPTER SEVEN

CITY OF SHAWNEE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

IMAGE & DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

Identity is a critical component of any community. Successful places are those that are remembered for that “special something.” Special character can be based upon any of a number of physical cultural or historical traits. In the community of Shawnee, the trait that is most predominant is “small town America.” However, as many have stated, the message of a small town that is a desirable place to live, work and play is often cloudy and can be difficult to interpret.

Many have often coined the phrase that “image is everything” when it comes to marketing or selling a product. Today, designers and economic development specialists have come to realize that the same can be said regarding communities. The physical presentation of a community is considered a reflection of residents and business owners. The impression left by a community with random clutter, chaotic signage, oceans of asphalt, and unkempt structures is likely to be substantially different than one which greets visitors and residents with a unique entry, limited and low scale signs, maintained and organized structures, and ample landscaping.

The Image & Design Element of the Shawnee Comprehensive Plan focuses upon opportunities for presenting the community in a way that sends the desired series of messages to residents, business owners and potential customers. Image and design recommendations improve quality of life and marketability. Solutions recognize that physical characteristics can establish messages particular to the community, neighborhood, district, or site.

Issues that touch upon image often receive two criticisms. First, “image” is considered to be a “soft issue” that does not carry the same importance as “hard services” such as water or streets. This was perhaps more pervasive when common belief was that image requirements stood in the way of economic development. Today, it is understood that image *is* economic development. Second, image is often argued to be in the eyes of the beholder. This is certainly true, but communities also often have a series of common, general values. For example, it is doubtful that many would find a downtown Shawnee revitalization project characterized by the pastel colors and art deco architecture of South Beach Florida to be any more appropriate to the area than a single story, corrugated metal warehouse.

KEY IMAGE & DESIGN ISSUES

The Image & Design Element builds upon the issues raised throughout the Comprehensive Plan such as protection and maintenance of neighborhoods or discussion of signage. In many cases, image forms a physical bridge between important elements. For example, discussion of streetscape improvements or development patterns involves land use and transportation. Issues guiding development of the Image & Design Element have a foundation in physical analysis of the community, coupled with substantial citizen participation and comment.

Establish an Image. The City of Shawnee offers a number of historical, cultural and physical traits from which to draw a strong identity. On a communitywide basis, the strongest existing identity is of Shawnee as a “small town alternative” that offers a unique mix of “big city amenities.” The presence of the two universities and the Gordon Cooper Technology Center indicates a unique and identifiable strength in education. Unfortunately, these and other marketable traits are sometimes difficult to recognize and nearly impossible to identify when approaching Shawnee from a visitor’s primary point of access – Interstate 40.

Enhance Appearance of the Community. During discussion with area stakeholders and the general public numerous individuals cited concern with the overall appearance of the community. One individual noted difficulty in getting to downtown on an attractive street. Others noted that entries provided poor appearance and that signs, landscaping and parking were unappealing. Much like personal appearance, the attractiveness of a community is often considered a reflection of community pride and confidence. Fortunately, beautification projects are often relatively easy to accomplish compared to major, more expensive projects.





Increase Maintenance and Reinvestment. Maintenance is a significant step toward community beautification and a significant indicator of community pride. Several involved in citizen participation indicated the need for improved maintenance of existing structures and amenities. In residential areas, the City of Shawnee has aggressively pursued demolition of derelict structures, yet some feel that more is needed. Similarly, infill development was noted as a means of utilizing vacant, unused land. Maintenance, revitalization and other issue such as code enforcement, are equally applicable to commercial and industrial activity.

IMAGE & DESIGN GOALS

Image & Design goals are symbolic of the community's desire to present Shawnee as a city with much to offer residents and pride and guests. They are also recognition that image plays an instrumental role in the impression that is placed on all that travel through the area. Subsequent objectives and actions statements are designed to enhance the image of Shawnee through projects and community involvement.

The following goals indicate Shawnee as a community that offers:

- ◆ Identity as a community with a small town atmosphere and diverse, dynamic character;
- ◆ An appealing and easy-to-interpret attractiveness to residents and guests; and,
- ◆ Well maintained surroundings that are the direct result of pride in ownership and active community involvement.

IMAGE & DESIGN OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS

ESTABLISH IDENTITY

Goal One: Identity as a community with a small town atmosphere and diverse, dynamic character.

POTENTIAL OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Improve sense of "arrival" and "place" in Shawnee by forming a recognizable edge between rural and urban development.
- ◆ Preserve open space, sensitive lands and areas of value to the community.
- ◆ Promote communitywide image as well as the identity of Shawnee's unique character districts.
- ◆ Ensure compatible scale and nature of development within Neighborhood Commercial Nodes.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- ✓ Consider quantifying the extent of urban development to be supported and identify a boundary by which municipal

services will be provided thereby allowing urban and suburban development.

- ✓ Prepare and adopt a long-range annexation plan to incorporate the future development areas allowing imposition of the City's regulatory authority.
- ✓ Coordinate with the County to adopt standards for agricultural areas, including permitted uses, minimum acreage, height and area requirements.
- ✓ Identify areas with rural/countryside character and establish standards such as minimum lot size, open space protection and mandated clustering to sustain them.
- ✓ Consider conservation easements as a tool to sustain rural agricultural character.
- ✓ Establish a schedule of increasing density bonuses and other forms of development incentives to equitably compensate for protection of open space.
- ✓ Adopt performance standards for infill development and parcels abutting existing development allowing increased density and intensity in exchange for meeting select community image and design objectives.
- ✓ Convert current building coverage provisions to an impervious surface ratio (ISR), which more accurately reflects use intensity.
- ✓ Establish yard requirements for abutting nonresidential and residential uses based upon use density and intensity rather than a set, constant dimension.
- ✓ Incorporate intensity measures into the zoning ordinance that add flexibility to uniform regulations applied between residential and nonresidential districts.
- ✓ Incorporate, as of right provisions within the zoning ordinance, with applicable performance standards and measures, allowing cluster (25 percent minimum open space), conservation (50 percent minimum open space) and preservation (80 percent minimum open space) development without requiring a zoning amendment and a public hearing process.
- ✓ Initiate rezoning of the undeveloped or underdeveloped land within the Neighborhood Commercial Nodes to a C-1, Neighborhood Commercial zoning designation.
- ✓ Amend the C-1 zoning district provisions to reduce the required front yard setback to a 10-foot "build-to" line. Subsequently establish standards for the front yard including increased landscaping, use of the public open space, and building orientation. Subsequently, adopt blank wall regulations to control the appearance of building walls adjacent to the street.
- ✓ Adopt design standards specific to the Neighborhood Commercial Nodes requiring pitched roofs and the use of





COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- building materials that are compatible and cohesive with neighboring residential uses.
- ✓ Limit the maximum square footage of any building within a Neighborhood Commercial Node to no more than 20,000 square feet with a total cumulative building area within the district of 60,000 square feet.
- ✓ Restrict the maximum amount of development on a single site to not more than 40 percent (24,000 square feet) of the allowable cumulative building area.
- ✓ Establish a minimum open space ratio for each site, with incentives for creation of pedestrian plazas, public gathering areas, or other urban design features (fountains, public art, etc.)
- ✓ In addition to the maximum building coverage percentage in the current zoning regulations, adopt a maximum impervious surface ratio (ISR), maximum floor area ratio (FAR), and minimum landscape surface ratio (LSR) to sustain the suburban character of the Technology Campus, Expanded Education Campus and Industrial District.
- ✓ Transition the development character within the Harrison Commercial Corridor from auto-urban to suburban with provisions for minimum open space ratios, maximum impervious surface ratios, floor area and building coverage ratios, internal and peripheral site landscaping, tree preservation, and buffering requirements.
- ✓ Establish alternate intensity factors (ISR, FAR, LSR) within the interior of the Industrial Park (out of view from Kickapoo, Harrison, Wolverine and Garrett's Lake arterial roadways) to allow less intensive industrial uses with reduced standards.
- ✓ Establish standards within the PUD regulations to guide development of mixed use traditional neighborhoods, particularly allowing for a variety of housing types and lot sizes. Such standards would address net versus gross density, a minimum open space ratio, and maximum impervious surface ratio.
- ✓ Create a suburban (rather than auto-urban) character of newer neighborhoods by preserving natural areas and vegetation, planning for sufficient right-of-way width to maintain green space adjacent to roadways, integrating permanent open space, eventually establishing tree canopied streets, and considering density and building coverage limitations.
- ✓ Within the C-4, Central Business District, zoning district, adopt provisions establishing a minimum building height (minimum two stories or 28 feet), minimum floor area ratio (0.50), and required zero front and side setbacks to

maximize building enclosure and its pedestrian orientation.

- ✓ Develop regulations to accommodate higher density residential uses, commercial office and service uses, and government institutional uses adjacent to the Downtown core (along Main Street and extending one-half to one full block to the north and south) where the character remains urban, but may require relaxed height, floor area and setback standards.
- ✓ In addition to the maximum building coverage provisions in the current zoning ordinance, establish ratios for open space, floor area and landscape surface within the Uptown District and Harrison Commercial Corridor districts to sufficiently lessen the intensity of uses and enhance development character.

ENHANCE APPEARANCE

Goal Two: An appealing and easy-to-interpret attractiveness to residents and guests.

POTENTIAL OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Enhance the image of Shawnee for residents and local business owners.
- ◆ Ensure that tourists and other guests to Shawnee discover a visually appealing community.
- ◆ Improve wayfinding opportunities for guests to Shawnee.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- ✓ Strategically establish gateway points into the City of Shawnee, particularly upon entrance into the community along I-40 in coordination with parameters established by ODOT.
- ✓ Acquire a unique, themed wayfinding system to utilize throughout Shawnee as a source of information and direction.
- ✓ Allow public displays (not storage) and use of sidewalks (subject to ADA compliance) and other spaces to encourage street-level pedestrian activity.
- ✓ Require parking to be in the side and rear yards with bufferyard requirements for abutting uses.
- ✓ Amend the landscaping (Sec. 901.16) and sightproof screening (Sec. 901.17) provisions of the zoning ordinance to incorporate performance-based bufferyard standards, which offer multiple options for buffering based on the density (units per acre or ratio of floor area) and intensity (amount of open space, impervious surface) of the abutting uses.
- ✓ Establish site design standards for the areas within an auto-urban character (primarily along the major transportation corridors such as Kickapoo and Harrison)





to locate parking to the side and rear of the building, reduce the front yard setback, increase open space and landscape surface area, and better accommodate the pedestrian.

- ✓ Consider anti-monotony regulations for newer development to limit the character impacts caused by patterned (model) home styles. This may require alternative elevations of models and use of varying rooflines, building materials and architectural detailing.
- ✓ Review general parking requirements to ensure that the number of required spaces remains appropriate.
- ✓ Consider altering the number of required spaces in particular districts such as the downtown area to account for the lack of space available for parking without removing additional structures.
- ✓ Promote joint use of parking facilities/spaces to include uses that do not share the same site to permit and promote offsite, nearby parking in appropriate areas such as the downtown district or in situations such as space shared by religious institutions and office space with different hours of operation.
- ✓ Alter requirements of the sign ordinance to eliminate development of billboards to the extent possible and reduce the use/development of pole signs through shared signage.
- ✓ Encourage development of sign design standards for various character districts that appropriately reflect the desired image for the area.
- ✓ Consider coordination of taxing entities or codevelopment of a low-interest revolving loan funds for the purpose of making alterations to existing sites such as landscaping changes, structural improvements and changes to signage.
- ✓ Coordinate street furniture, street lights, street trees and other items of the streetscape to ensure an efficient and appealing image, including deviations as needed to enhance individual character districts.
- ✓ Ensure that incorporation of design and aesthetic improvements to streetscape are added into capital improvement projects as they occur.
- ✓ Develop a strategic plan for implementation of visual features in the streetscape to allow for implementation over time, beginning with sites that will have significant visual impact.

INCREASE MAINTENANCE & REINVESTMENT

Goal Three: Well maintained surroundings that are the direct result of pride in ownership and active community involvement.

POTENTIAL OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Enhance revitalization efforts in commercial areas, as well as established neighborhoods, including underutilized and vacant sites.
- ◆ Ensure that existing structures and sites are well maintained and of a quality expected to meet the desired image of Shawnee.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- ✓ Ensure increased coordination among all potential and relevant entities with an interest in a well maintained Shawnee, including the City of Shawnee, the chamber of commerce, the Shawnee Economic Development Foundation, and other groups.
- ✓ Conduct research on best practices in maintenance for appropriate application in Shawnee.
- ✓ Develop a one-stop revitalization/redevelopment shop similar to that currently utilized for development of new sites, including development of a resource/publication detailing the various programs available.
- ✓ Utilize community organizations to implement low-cost, low-skill maintenance solutions such as minor repairs, site improvements and painting.
- ✓ Examine code enforcement policies and practices for potential improvements if appropriate.
- ✓ Establish a means of informing the general public regarding code enforcement activities and accomplishments, better report response to requests for assistance, and gather feedback.

ESTABLISHING IMAGE

For the Shawnee resident, perception of identity and image are shaped through daily interaction with the community. For visitors, the first impression is often the only impression. In either case, however, image is of extreme importance. To the resident, image is a display of civic and personal pride. Just as a well maintained home shows pride in ownership, a well maintained, aesthetically pleasing community presents community ownership. More, physical image is an opportunity to convey a message regarding the character and values of the community.

The visitor or the passerby, on the other hand, will remember Shawnee as a snapshot – a compilation of messages received over a short period of time. Those messages may dictate the amount of time and money that a guest spends in the community,





aid a family in deciding to send a graduate to OBU, or be an important factor in business relocation.

As a marketing tool, crafting a physical image that positively represents the community is a benefit to both residents and guests. Establishing an appropriate image is often a matter of understanding the marketable strengths of a community; local history, heritage and trends; and the level of support for image-building among area residents, business owners, developers and elected officials.

GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING IMAGE

In older areas of the community, Shawnee continues to represent the nostalgic American image of a small town in the United States. Numerous other communities seek to build upon a similar theme; however, unlike its competition, Shawnee also offers several amenities not often found in a small town. Two universities, a technology center, an airport, and a multi-use facility are not elements commonly associated with images of “Mayberry, USA” – the image that many Americans continue to most associate with the concept of small town life – but certainly add to the quality of life available to area residents. Together, these and other characteristics make Shawnee a unique and marketable product.

Creating or building upon a sense of image is a delicate balance. To many, it is a frivolous activity that adds cost to development. As an economic development tool, it offers no direct relationship to new jobs or taxes. Following some simple, common sense guidelines can result in avoiding some of the pitfalls witnessed in other communities.

- ◆ **Build Upon Existing and Potential Strengths.** Image should be “comfortable” to the City of Shawnee and this is best achieved by building upon existing strengths. Admittedly this can be difficult in some communities that offer little in history, culture or specific amenities. However, Shawnee has tremendous opportunities to build upon existing strengths such as education and small town appeal.
- ◆ **Utilize the “Gestalt Approach” to Image.** In the design world, “gestalt” is a term that indicates that “the whole” is greater than “the sum of the parts.” The Land Use chapter proposes development of “character districts” that strengthen the role that various areas play in the vitality and image of Shawnee. Each of the districts – “the parts” – offer a unique function and, to some extent, identity. However, each area works together to form “the whole” that residents and guests perceive to be the image of Shawnee.

- ◆ **Design for Both Residents and Guests.** Many of the communities that initially embraced image as an economic development tool coordinated design activities with tourism efforts. Today, image is equally recognized as a tool for building community morale. Likewise, a community that is wholly attractive will be more marketable to another important group – those individuals or employers considering relocation to Shawnee.
- ◆ **Educate the Public.** Image improvements can become a lightning rod for individuals concerned with expenditure of taxpayer dollars. Extensive effort should be made to present the physical and economical benefits of enhancing image to the general public.
- ◆ **Find Balance through Gradual Implementation.** Community leaders in Shawnee have a good understanding of the threshold of design regulations and image-related projects that the general public will initially tolerate. Once those efforts are in place and education measures have an impact, the general public will likely accept or even request additional design requirements.
- ◆ **Avoid Design “Fads”.** Structural design, like many other characteristics of modern society, is increasingly focused on fashion. Communities interested in capturing the “latest look” in design guidelines run the risk of being momentarily popular and shortly outdated. Efforts to construct image should be focused upon good design and continued flexibility and creativity.
- ◆ **Go beyond physical “fixes”.** This chapter focuses on the physical features that establish or embellish image. However, while a sense of place can be created by physical elements, it must be socially reinforced to be effective. As an example, to make residents aware of the community’s history and gain support for physical improvements, the City of New Castle, Indiana designed a series of paper “place mats” used on trays at local fast food restaurants that offered entertaining tidbits about the community’s past.

IMAGE & DESIGN WORKSHOP RESULTS

On February 10th, an Image and Character public workshop was conducted at Shawnee Middle School with the intent of determining the identity elements considered most appropriate by area residents. During the workshop, attendees were provided a scoresheet and asked to rate slightly less than 100 images of different physical settings. Results were then utilized to define the visual features most appealing and unappealing to community residents.



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

APPEALING TRAITS

- ◆ **Traditional Design.** In instances of commercial and residential development, visual preference tended toward traditional design. Well maintained downtown structures with traditional treatments such as awnings, large windows and outdoor activity were considered favorable compared to new design, including those that offered additional attention to detail. Residentially, older homes and neotraditional designs such as those found in Celebration, Florida were considered more desirable than modern tract homes.



Traditional Design is popular among Shawnee residents.

- ◆ **Open Space/Campus Setting.** Two of the most popular images selected by workshop attendees were of commercial or public facilities surrounded by appealing open spaces. Manicured, well tended open spaces tended to fare better than images depicting front-facing parking or images of rural, natural areas. Examples of similar settings are present at the two universities as well as the Exxon Mobil chemical plant on Wolverine.



This school campus image was rated highest by workshop attendees.

- ◆ **Vegetation/Landscaping.** A significant number of favorable images included some form of vegetation or landscaping. Street trees were particularly popular in urban images, as were medians and planters with vegetation. “Accent” vegetation – landscaping utilized to emphasize a particular area such as an entry or crosswalk was similarly popular. In

comparison, many areas lacking vegetation, particularly large parking lots such as those often associated with strip malls and large retail stores, were considered less favorable.

- ◆ **Organization.** Respondents placed particular emphasis on images that displayed a sense of order and planning. As mentioned, manicured open spaces appeared to be better appreciated than unmanaged natural spaces. Seamless wayfinding images were strongly received when designed to be appealing.
- ◆ **Amenities.** Detail, particularly in the streetscape and in instances that are most appreciated by pedestrian traffic, were

highly favored – in most circumstances. Plazas, fountains, intersection designs, street lights, outdoor cafe’s, era-appropriate signage, awnings, benches, and a town clock were well-received. On the other hand, monuments and bike racks were less appealing.



Amenities such as this street clock add charm to an area.

- ◆ **Small Town.** In nearly every available instance, images depicting small town America were among those most favored.

Downtown images and established neighborhoods, as previously mentioned, were popular. Surprisingly, however, nostalgic amenities such as historic figures and commercial murals on the side of historic structures were not among those most popular.

UNAPPEALING TRAITS

- ◆ **Visual Clutter.** Unsurprisingly, the majority of workshop attendees reacted negatively to images that appeared unplanned and chaotic. Typical strip commercial sprawl with unscreened parking, large-scale pole signs and numerous curb cuts rated among the lowest of scores. Interestingly, two instances depicting the rear of commercial structures – one poorly maintained and another well organized – scored equally low.

- ◆ **Featureless or Incompatible Design.** Instances of mediocre design or renovation that did not match surrounding features were poorly rated. Similarly, structures or sites with few amenities or design features were considered unappealing. Two historic structures renovated with little aesthetic concern were noted as unappealing, as were sites such as a government building that had attempted on minimal aesthetic character.



Visual clutter and incompatible design were among those elements least favored by workshop attendees.

- ◆ **Traffic and Parking.** Images involving traffic or parking – with the exception of downtown parking – were largely considered to be unappealing. All instances of strip lot or “big box” retail parking areas were poorly scored.

Those parking areas that incorporated vegetation or screening were among neither low nor high scores. Images depicting heavy traffic received particularly low scores.





- ♦ **Modern/Traditional Mix.** In most cases, new development was considered among neither the most appealing nor unappealing images. On the other hand, modern design incorporated into traditional areas such as downtown housing fared poorly. For example, new townhomes, including several incorporating new amenities and materials, were not rated highly or poorly. Similar townhomes encroaching upon older, single story units were considered unappealing.

ELEMENTS OF VISUAL IMAGE

Many designers call the viewing area the “outdoor room”. Simply described, human nature prefers a “sense of enclosure” that is comfortable. Similar to a physical room, structures or other features create the “walls” of the enclosure. The concept of the outdoor room is important to building a sense of image because it allows designers to better understand why specific spaces give viewers comfort compared to others.

Within the outdoor room, identity is gathered through a collection of visual “cues.” Together, these elements provide the viewer with a mental image that is either confirmed or altered as additional visual features are captured. Imagine the following visual picture created walking along a sidewalk: the walk is smooth on a well maintained walkway with occasional color or texture at store entries, awnings against brick facades, windows allow visual access to the wares in the different stores, a series of healthy trees provide shade against the sun and a calming rustling from the wind. Together, the elements cue images of pride, attractiveness, safety, and calm, among others. What if the trees were replaced by numerous signs? What if the sidewalk was cracked and poorly maintained or the buildings were solid walls with only a single entry for access? The mental image suddenly changes dramatically and much of the positive perception of the area is lost or neutralized.

All items in the physical environment play a role in creating an area’s identity. The majority of features fall into four categories as elements of *structure, streetscape, parking & site spaces, and monuments & signage*. Each category is comprised of several key items. For example, the mere presence of sidewalks can change perception. In urban or suburban settings, lack of sidewalks is often perceived as an absence of services. On the other hand, in a rural environment, lack of sidewalks is considered a component of rural living. More, the characteristics of a sidewalk can play a prominent role, such as width, condition, materials, location (in proximity to the street), and design. Some new developments now incorporate a curvilinear sidewalk system surrounding by ample trees to mimic the impression of a trail system.

STRUCTURES

- ◆ **Materials.** Materials add texture and richness to surroundings and can give impressions of tradition, integrity, permanence, and investment. Materials such as brick and stone are more likely to establish a sense of permanence and quality. Metal and vinyl materials, on the other hand, are often considered less appealing. Increasingly, materials are mixed to add unique character to structures.
- ◆ **Height & Mass.** Structures have an impact on an area by their mere presence. Height, particularly in relationship to the width of the streetscape or height of a pedestrian can impose a sense of comfort or discomfort. Mass may have a similar impact. For example, the mass of a large scale industrial complex may seem more imposing than a typical two-story home.
- ◆ **Relationship to Site.** Location of a structure on a site can impact image in a variety of ways. Structures located close to the street can create a sense of comfort given the appropriate scale. Homes on subdivision lots are often located in the center of the lot to permit light and air between structures. Location on a site is often dictated ordinance requirements such as setbacks and perceived consumer requirements such as visible parking.
- ◆ **Structural Amenities.** A common criticism of architecture popular during the period between the 1960s and the 1980s was a lack of ornamentation or amenities. Decoration or variety is particularly important to provide visual messages to the audience. Historic structures are often noted for considerable ornamentation designed to be consumed by pedestrians and other slow moving traffic. Additionally, accessories such as awnings add character and protect pedestrians.



Limited scale and mass make older residential areas seem "comfortable".

STREETSCAPE

The streetscape is generally comprised of the space within the street right-of-way including the street, sidewalk, and any areas between. The features of the streetscape are commonly based upon anticipated use of the streetscape. For example, a downtown streetscape often includes significantly enhanced sidewalks and pedestrian traffic in addition to substantial vehicle traffic. As a result, the streetscape must reflect both the pedestrian and vehicular scale.

- ◆ **Street/Sidewalk.** The paths available for walking, biking and driving are certainly the most predominant features of the streetscape. Traits such as width, condition,



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

crosswalks/intersections, materials, and pattern can impact perceived image. As an example, brick sidewalks are considered historic and more visually appealing than typical concrete.

- ◆ **Lighting/Standard.** Street lights play a significant role in the impression left by the streetscape, even if they are simply



Street light at a pedestrian scale that matches the character of the area.

present. Street lights indicate safety. Scale is important because it quickly indicates the audience for which the streetscape is designed – pedestrians require a reduced scale while vehicular traffic needs taller standards. Also, design of the light and standard can help to promote historic character, modern sleekness or other desired images.

- ◆ **Street Furniture.** Pedestrian activity is likely to be increased in a streetscape that includes accessories such as benches, kiosks, drinking fountains, and bike racks. More, street

furniture can reinforce a particular image when designed and placed appropriately.

- ◆ **Street Trees & Landscaping.** Vegetation can be used in a variety of ways within the streetscape, but primarily serves to incorporate nature into the built environment. Street trees offer added benefits of separating pedestrian and vehicular activity, providing shade, and decreasing the perceived width of a corridor. When designed appropriately, vegetation can be used to establish a sense of place.
- ◆ **Accessories & Amenities.** Various additional amenities and accessories that are found in the streetscape can add to the character of the area. Use of curb and gutter, for example, rather than ditches can alter the image of a residential area from rural to suburban character. Telephone poles create an immediate and often undesirable impact on image. On the other hand, items such as bollards can be used to designate special areas.

PARKING & SITE SPACES

The spaces between structures and outside of the streetscape also play a major role in establishing the image and character of an area. In rural areas, such spaces can be the dominant theme. Similarly, if not designed appropriately, large scale parking lots can also dictate image – but with starkly different results.

- ◆ **Green/Natural Open Spaces.** Natural spaces within the urbanized area tend to create a sense of relaxation and enjoyment. Guests and residents traditionally associate ample green space with quality of life, particularly when such spaces are well managed. In rural areas, they help to define the sense of small town living by reinforcing the contrast between rural and urban environments.
- ◆ **Materials.** Generally, parking areas and plazas consist of concrete. However, other materials such as brick can be used to enhance the character of open spaces. An alternative is to add character to concrete to imitate brick or stone patterns, add materials to mixture to create texture and color, or design artwork within the open spaces.
- ◆ **Location.** Parking areas have traditionally been located at the front of the structure, adjacent to the roadway because common perception was that the concept of available space and accessibility superceded appearance. However, placement of the majority of parking along the side or to the rear of the structure allows the facility to move closer to potential pedestrian traffic and creates a more comfortable “outdoor room”.
- ◆ **Vegetation & Screening.** Beyond natural areas, vegetation can be used in parking and open spaces for relief from the built environment. Parking areas and other less appealing, but necessary, accessories such as loading/unloading areas, storage, or trash receptacles can be hidden or “screened” through use of trees, shrubs, other vegetation, berms, or fencing. Within parking areas, added trees and vegetation can further break up the monotony of large areas of asphalt.
- ◆ **Active Spaces & Facilities.** Additional open spaces or features add to the quality of life and visual appeal of the “outdoor room”. Water features, monuments, public art, outdoor cafe’s, and well designed plazas add to the character of an area and help to reinforce the desired visual message to the viewer.



Vegetation helps to “soften” the image of large parking areas.

MONUMENTS & SIGNAGE

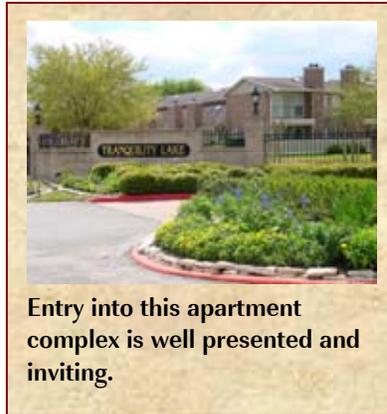
Monuments and signage convey information. Monuments, in this case, describe those features that “announce” presence in a particular area, such as gateway features. The message conveyed by signage may be public or private. Often the need to present information conflicts with the need to maintain an appealing environment. Signage becomes cluttered, unorganized and desired information become lost. On the other hand, signage that



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

is appropriately designed and presented can successfully present information without obstructing or disrupting the image of an area.

- ◆ **Gateway & Entry Treatment.** Shawnee has extensively discussed the need for entry improvements, particularly along I-40. Designed appropriately, an entry can aid in providing or reinforcing an impression of the community. On a reduced level, entry and a “sense of arrival” are also important to unique areas such as neighborhoods or downtown.
- ◆ **Information/Wayfinding.** Public signage is important for providing direction to important destinations throughout



Entry into this apartment complex is well presented and inviting.

Shawnee. It is also important because it provides the public sector with an opportunity reinforce an image through a coordinated, appealing “wayfinding” system that can serve as an example of quality for private interests.

Considerations include sign design, color scheme and design of sign standards.

- ◆ **Advertising/Commercial Signs.** Commercial signs take many forms. Billboards are often located along major roadways. Monument signs or pole signs are commonly erected on a site to advertise a business such as Cracker Barrel. Ground signs perform a similar function for nearby traffic. Wall or mounted signs likewise announce an establishment by placement directly on the structure. Numerous other variations of signs are also available, including temporary signs to announce added information such as sales or specials. Image can be impacted by the number, size, location, quality, lighting and materials used for signage.
- ◆ **Reminder “Monuments”.** Some communities utilize reminder monuments to reinforce or enhance a recurring message or theme. Downtowns often do this through use of a single type or pattern for street trees or use of banners. Virtually any design element can serve as a reminder monument if coordinated throughout the area.

THE ROLE OF CHARACTER AND FORM

Establishing image is only partially a matter of adding specific design elements into development or the streetscape. Character and form of individual developments equally contribute to the collective appearance of the community. Site design considerations include:

- ◆ placement of parking on a site in relation to the street right-of-way;
- ◆ setbacks of buildings and site improvements;
- ◆ bulk and scale of buildings in relation to the site and adjacent properties;
- ◆ density of residential uses;
- ◆ intensity of nonresidential uses (measured in floor area);
- ◆ amount of public open space retained within residential development;
- ◆ amount of landscape surface within nonresidential development (including all pervious surfaces); and,
- ◆ preservation and protection of natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas.

COMMUNITY FORM

There are two basic forms of communities:

- ◆ a *freestanding community* like Shawnee is isolated from its neighbors and has a surrounding agricultural character. A freestanding community has an observed edge – although not always clear - enabling visitors to form an identity of the community.
- ◆ a *composite community*, is a series of communities that have grown together thereby making it difficult to identify one community from another. Without clear edges, each community loses its individual identity.

Creating a permanent identifiable edge to the community through clearly defined gateway improvements, preservation of permanent open space, and protection of the rural character will collectively form an “edge” to the community thereby giving it form and definition. As sporadic development continues to stretch outside of the city limits to the north and east - and in each of the other directions - the entrance and sense of arrival into the community will become more blurred. Controlling both the pattern and type of development in these areas will help form a positive first impression and signify a formal entrance into the community.

DEFINING CHARACTER

There is an essential difference in evaluating the current development pattern from the perspective of land use as opposed to community character. Simply classifying sites according to functional use, such as low density residential or industrial does not account for other important characteristics such as density, setbacks, height, placement of the building and parking, building scale, bulk, open space, impervious cover, and landscaping.

In addition to use, each of the items that comprise character influence and impact the surrounding area, including image and local quality of life. To protect and enhance Shawnee’s character,





COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

the Comprehensive Plan examines the land use components and development design elements that contribute to sustaining the community's "small-town" character. Once established, revisions to development ordinances can be amended to ensure new development occurs in a manner that is consistent with the vision of the plan - and more importantly, the desired community character.

TYPES OF CHARACTER

Each of the community character types described below are present in Shawnee with varying degrees of significance. The more readily identifiable are the urban character along Main Street in Downtown; the auto-urban nature of commercial development along Kickapoo and Harrison Streets and to a lesser extent along Macarthur Street and Independence Avenue; the auto-urban nature of the older residential neighborhoods proximate to Downtown that have smaller lot sizes and, thus, higher densities; the suburban and estate characters of the newer single family neighborhoods; the suburban character of the university and college campuses noted for large open spaces; and the suburban character of the expansive industrial park with large properties and lots of open space. The outlying areas around the community are largely rural countryside and agricultural in character.

The range of community character types and their functions are as follows:

Urban Character. Urban areas are historically the center of commerce, culture and entertainment in the community. The features that contribute to an urban character similar to



Urban Commercial



Urban Residential



Auto-Urban Commercial



Auto-Urban Residential



Suburban Commercial

that found in Downtown Shawnee are the proximity of uses to the public ways, with little or no building setbacks, and a strong pedestrian orientation at the sidewalk level. An urban center is designed with an intensity of use to draw people into close contact, where congestion and personal encounters are both expected and essential for a vibrant community center.

Urban spaces are “architectural” meaning that they are enclosed by buildings. In other words, the distance across a space, e.g. the width of a downtown street, in relation to height of the block face is essential for creating an “urban” environment. This environment is formed in Downtown as a result of the two-story buildings abutting a relatively wide pedestrian pathway (sidewalk) and a narrowed roadway, which is further enhanced by diagonal parking on either side. If a distance-to-height (D/H) ratio exceeds four, there is limited enclosure and thus, an environment more characteristic of an auto-urban character.

The Downtown represents an urban character as a result of its high floor-to-site area ratios with zero setbacks along the street front, uses that are common of today’s downtown environments, and a mixed pedestrian and vehicular orientation. The urban character could be further enhanced by an increase in population and employment density along Main Street and throughout the Downtown District and further enhancing the pedestrian orientation by extending the streetscape improvements throughout Downtown and creating public plazas and gathering areas.

Auto-Urban Character. This character type is most commonly associated with an automobile-oriented commercial or business strip. Fast food restaurants, gas stations and strip shopping centers like those found along Kickapoo and Harrison Streets are the dominant commercial images of an auto-urban character. Higher density residential uses such as attached and multiple family housing, manufactured home communities, and site-built homes on small lots also have this character due to their density, limited open space, relative amount of impervious surface devoted to buildings and parking lots, and increased building enclosure.

The primary difference in urban and auto-urban characters is the role of the automobile in its site design. Rather than buildings oriented to the street as in an urban setting like that found in Downtown, auto-urban environments are characterized by large parking lots surrounding the buildings, such as that found at the Mall, Wal-Mart and Lowes.

Although the development intensity of auto-urban areas is usually less than that found within an urban setting, this is commonly due





to lower land values and design preference as opposed to development regulations. Auto-urban uses require a significant amount of space for high levels of automobile dependent interaction, i.e. large surface parking lots with multiple points of ingress/egress. As a result, buildings are constructed at the back of the site nearest neighboring uses and away from their roadway frontage. Auto-urban uses also have a greater reliance on site access thereby adding to the number of driveways and access points. The result is expansive parking areas that dominate the front setback and thus, the character of the development.

The impact of accommodating the automobile as is typical of contemporary development is a primary determinant in the character of an auto-urban environment. Auto-urban uses - with very few exceptions - consume more land for streets, parking and other vehicular use areas than is covered by buildings, which commonly exceeds a two-to-one ratio. This type of development design demands large sites and proximity to a high volume roadway, which diminishes the importance of architecture and results in reduced open space and therefore, elimination of natural features.

Suburban Character. This community character type is very different from the urban and auto-urban types. The distinguishing factors of a suburban character are an increased open space - both on individual sites and cumulatively throughout a development - and the preservation or use of vegetation within and between developments, which helps to create a more even balance between building mass and "green mass". Rather than creating a sense of enclosure by buildings as in an urban environment, trees and vegetation form a very different sense of enclosure. Therefore, open space and vegetative cover are essential elements in creating a suburban space.

The physical distinction between a suburban and urban (or auto-urban) character is the level of use intensiveness or magnitude of activity affecting adjacent uses. Suburban environments are sought as relief from more intensive urban settings thereby leading to the popularity of contemporary neighborhoods denoted for their larger lots, privacy fences, and open areas.

There are numerous examples of suburban character throughout the community. Perhaps the best example is the mature neighborhood along Broadway. In this area a tree-lined street and blend of traditional housing styles help to form its attractive character. While the newer subdivisions also exhibit a suburban character, it is quite different from more traditional neighborhoods as a result of the curvilinear street patterns, contemporary "box-like" housing styles, and consistent setbacks. Enhancing the suburban character of these areas may include

varying lot sizes, housing styles and setbacks; integrating more open space throughout the developments; and the use of vegetation along the streets and on each lot to increase the vegetative cover.

All too often the open space that contributed to the suburban character of a neighborhood is abutting land that is not yet developed and open views that are not yet closed. As in the case of many neighborhoods in Shawnee, particularly those that are on the edge of town or those that currently abut vacant land, the adjacent views that contribute to the rural small-town character are temporary rather than permanent. The natural open space and views of the landscape are “borrowed” from the adjoining land. Consequently, as additional development occurs abutting these existing neighborhoods, the character will also change. This is an important consideration as to the design of new subdivisions and whether they use the adjacent land or incorporate permanent open space into the development to sustain its original character.

In each of the neighborhoods in Shawnee, one-third to one-half of the homes has views of “open space” across the street or behind their lots. Additionally, the community is currently surrounded by agricultural land, which further contributes to the value and enjoyment of homeowners and thus, the small town community character. Most of this space, however, is borrowed until it is developed, which often leads to a dissatisfaction of homeowners as there are proposals to develop the adjacent land. Therefore, to maintain these views and achieve the community character expressed as desirable by the residents, this borrowed open space must be incorporated into each development. One means of achieving this character is by



Suburban Residential



Suburban Estate



Rural Countryside



Rural Agricultural



Natural





clustering development thereby maintain an equal or higher density while preserving permanent open space.

Estate. This suburban character type is becoming more common with the golf course development along Bryan Road as well as large lot rural subdivisions that are developing in the outlying areas around the community. An estate character requires low density development on larger properties (typically one acre or larger) thereby producing a visual openness. As a result of larger lot sizes, open space and vegetation are intended to be the more dominate views while the buildings are to be apparent yet secondary to the landscape. Dependent upon the size of the home and its percent coverage and location on the lot, the estate character may closer resemble a larger version of the typical suburban character. To achieve an estate character, the design of these subdivisions must actively seek to imitate more rural areas through the use of rural street sections without sidewalks, vast open space throughout the development, the use of rural fence types and/or hedgerows to divide properties, the preservation or planting of native vegetation along property boundaries, and generous building setbacks on all sides.

Rural. This character class includes three types - countryside, agricultural, and natural. The areas surrounding Shawnee are typical of a rural character as a result of the community's freestanding nature and the prevailing agricultural landscape. Similar to the transition from the urban to suburban character classes, the visible distinction of the rural character is the importance of the natural landscape – rather than buildings - as the dominant visual feature. Agricultural activities and natural areas are the dominant land use rather than conventional suburban and estate residential development.

Countryside. This type of rural character includes sparse residential acreages, which are often in the ex-urban (the area beyond the city limits) areas where the first signs of suburbanization are present. Examples of a countryside character may be seen in the outlying areas around Shawnee where dwellings are on larger acreages. The common fate of these areas is often an eventual conversion to a suburban estate (more dense) character as additional acreages are developed in near proximity to these rural areas. Very low intensities are needed to preserve a countryside character, which can be achieved by vegetative screening and locating homes where they are less visible. This character type may be sustained through stringent limits on minimum lot sizes or permanent protection of prime agricultural land and open space.

Agricultural. The character of these rural areas is dominated by agricultural use where homes are an accessory to the farming

operation. While agriculture may also be a dominant land use in the “countryside” areas, which accommodate a rural residential lifestyle while allowing agricultural use to continue, in the more rural areas it is the intended and nearly sole use. The landscape is accented by farmsteads, barns, fences lining farm fields and areas for livestock, and a virtually unbroken horizon. These elements contribute to its rural character.

Natural. The character of natural rural areas constrain development due to features such as streams and floodplain or large heavily vegetated areas. These areas may be found along the River and its tributaries, around Twin Lakes and scattered around Shawnee.

CITYWIDE CONSIDERATIONS

Following are considerations for reinforcing and maintaining the community’s image as “Small Town America” while also improving general quality of life and appearance issues:

FORM A COMMUNITY EDGE

Establishing a notable physical identity begins with forming a definitive edge marking the points of entry and exit to the community. In order for Shawnee to be noticeable to passers-by along I-40 – beyond casual notice of the mall and several hotels and restaurants – it is essential for there to be gateways to demark the entry to the community and to visually portray the community’s desired image. More, from an economic development perspective, there must be something that attracts their attention and invites them into the community. To do so, an edge or boundary must be established distinguishing between City (urban) and County (rural) development.

PRESERVE OPEN SPACE

Preserving adequate open space accomplishes multiple community objectives, including provision of areas for public recreational use, protection of environmentally sensitive and valued lands, conservation of natural resources, and buffering between adjacent uses. The incorporation of open space within both residential and nonresidential development contributes significantly to the character of development and the identity of the community. Open space affords the opportunity to enhance the green appearance of the community, sustain linear greenways such as the river and its tributaries, increase the amount of open space abutting the street frontages of businesses, allow internal landscaping within developments both both aesthetic and environmental reasons, and to provide sufficient separation and buffering between abutting uses.





SMALL TOWN DEVELOPMENT FEATURES

Many of the features recommended throughout the Shawnee Comprehensive Plan have been developed with the intent of reinforcing the themes of a “small town living.” For example, reduced street width, particularly along local roadways, makes local streets safer while also pulling homes closer together. Reduction of required front yard setbacks in addition to narrow streets further reduces the corridor and creates a more comfortable “outdoor room” for pedestrians. While these and similar adjustments appear minor and inconsequential, they do have an impact on pedestrian activity, communication among neighbors, and sense of responsibility for quality of life in the neighborhood. Sidewalks, pedestrian-scale lighting, and addition of amenities and mixed uses into the neighborhood further enhance the social and physical traits associated with “small town living.”

COMMON ELEMENTS FOR THE STREETScape

Common themes are important for occasionally reminding individuals of the initial impression received upon entering Shawnee. The streetscape provides an appropriate means of supporting a common theme for a variety of reasons, including the fact that the public sector has more control over activity within the street right of way, the majority of individuals formulate an opinion of appearance and image while traveling along roadways, and it permits the city to set the example that is expected to be followed by private entities in development, redevelopment and ongoing maintenance. Common streetscape elements may range from common light standards with occasional “reminder” banners to redesigned intersections with materials changes and the Shawnee logo. A strategy for incorporating common theme elements may be to develop a design scheme to be implemented in phases along initial corridors and with initial modifications with infill activity to be completed over time.

IMPROVED WAYFINDING SYSTEM

Directional signs and public information signs can also serve to provide a common thread throughout the community that improves appearance, but is particularly useful to guests unfamiliar with the best route to downtown from I-40 or location of public parking areas. Many communities have successfully utilized “wayfinding” systems as a means of creating an initial common element throughout the community that is also attractive and uniquely designed to evoke the desired image of Shawnee. This may be a particularly useful concept for Shawnee because of its increased desirability as a stopping point for tourists and because of the number of attractions in the community.

ENHANCE THE CHARACTER OF DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the overall image and attractiveness of the community, it is important to recognize the character and appearance of individual districts and areas. As developed in Chapter Four, Land Use, there are character districts within the community that are unique as a result of their uses, but more importantly the density, scale and intensity of uses. The character of these areas is defined by the type and form of development as well as the design and layout of each site. There are unique design features that contribute to the character of these areas. For instance, an urban setting exists in Downtown with its sense of street enclosure resulting from limited or zero front and side setbacks, high floor area ratios and generally a minimum two-story building height. The developing commercial corridor along Harrison Street has an auto-urban character caused by large building setbacks from the street, parking lots that dominate the front yard reflecting its auto orientation and limited public open space and landscape surfaces. The education campus surrounding OBU and St. Gregory College is suburban in character with large expanses of open space. Sustaining and enhancing the character of these areas can be accomplished through appropriate development regulations and design standards.

Preserving and further enhancing the definition and identity of the individual character districts will add to the image and visual appeal of Shawnee. Accomplishing this vision, however, is not without a plan and implementation tools specifically designed to achieve the desired outcomes. First and foremost, the form of individual developments must contribute to the character by way of its scale, bulk, height, layout and density. Secondly, urban design treatments and features such as architectural style, use of specific building materials, uniform signage, landscaping and other amenities may be used to generate a unique design theme for each area.

CONCEPTS FOR CHARACTER DISTRICTS

The Image and Character Workshop conducted February 10th offered participants an opportunity to apply preferred elements to a design scheme for each of the character districts of Shawnee. Following the workshop, recommendations by participants were further enhanced to produce a series of conceptual, broad standards. It is important to note that the following concepts are meant to portray a possible image for each area, *not* to establish specific recommendations or standards. Concepts shown are related to commercial and industrial districts and correspond with discussion in *Chapter 4, Land Use*.





DOWNTOWN DISTRICT

Downtown is already an area in which individuals are both sensitive to its needs as a recognizable district and anxious to see continued results. The image of downtown is already largely established based upon ideas of history, tradition, and its role as the true “heart” of Shawnee. Concepts to reinforce these themes include:

- ◆ Reinforce walkability in downtown through pedestrian scale amenities with attention to detail.
- ◆ Sidewalks along the Main Street with accents such as addition of faux brick.
- ◆ Liberal incorporation of street furniture that accents the historic character of the community.
- ◆ Incorporation of vegetation into the downtown area, but particularly into open spaces.
- ◆ Off-street parking areas that are screened using vegetation and other well designed features; well lit using standards that accent the historic character of the community; landscaping within the parking area; and alternating materials or other means to designate pedestrian pathways.
- ◆ Enhanced points of entry into downtown, particularly the entry from Harrison that may include signage, public art, water features, banners, vegetation, or other means.
- ◆ Public art or a major water feature.
- ◆ Preserved strong “streetwall” along main roadways in downtown (the “wall” created by buildings along a corridor) by minimizing removal of structures, particularly without replacement by development complementary to surroundings in scale and architectural detail.
- ◆ Preserved scale, form and character indicative of downtown.
- ◆ Improved maintenance, rehabilitation and reuse of existing structures in poor condition that could add to the character of the area.
- ◆ Possible modification/redevelopment of structures that are incompatible with the preferred scale, character and architectural theme of the area.

UPTOWN DISTRICT

Several individuals indicated some concern with the term “Uptown” in description of this area. Regardless of the appropriate title, the area near Shawnee Mall represents another commercial center for the community with an atmosphere and character that is to be decidedly different than downtown. Building upon its character as an auto-urban environment, the district could reinforce the small-town theme, but should also exhibit energy. Concepts for image include:

- ◆ Aesthetic gateways along I-40 welcoming visitors to the City of Shawnee. Gateways may include signage and other aesthetic features such as landscaping, public art and lighting.
- ◆ Use of shared signage and state-provided interstate information signs as opposed to multiple pole signs as a means of attracting and informing tourists.
- ◆ Development of parking garages to the rear of Shawnee Mall or where otherwise appropriate to allow for development of additional commercial structures in existing parking areas near I-40.
- ◆ Increased landscaping and screening along I-40 and throughout the Uptown District, particularly in parking areas as needed to reduce the visual impact of extensive parking areas.
- ◆ Increased density and mix of uses to attract individuals that require immediate access to I-40 for commuting purposes.
- ◆ Architectural standards designed to maintain a general commonality of design without stringent requirements, such as scale, cornice treatment, materials, and pedestrian amenities (such as awnings or overhangs).
- ◆ Incorporation of limited pedestrian amenities to aid in creating a more versatile environment, but with the understanding that the area will remain largely auto-urban.
- ◆ Development of landmarks such as a water feature or public art.

INDUSTRIAL “PARK”

The image of an industrial park is in fair contrast to the existing industrial activity along Harrison, Wolverine and Kickapoo from the standpoint of form. However, many of the features found in sites such as the ExxonMobil facility already exhibit the open, landscaped campus concept of a business park. The image is, in many ways, an opportunity to present an organized, efficient system designed to present a visually appealing atmosphere that intentionally protects passersby from the unappealing aspects of industrial activity. Concepts include:

- ◆ An internal access to facilities along interior collector and local roadways instead of heavily traveled roads such as Kickapoo and Harrison Streets;
- ◆ Design standards, particularly along the periphery of the industrial park that address issues such as landscaping, open space, screening, lighting, signage, access management and building materials;
- ◆ An integrated drainage system as opposed to individual retention areas that can be visually pleasing, environmentally friendly and better address storm drainage;





- ◆ Off-site directional signage as part of the community wayfinding system that offers a desired and most appropriate route to the park.

AIRPORT DISTRICT

The Airport District is intended to function as a commercial and industrial business center for the City of Shawnee. The image of the district may choose to reflect its role as a place of commerce and aviation. Pedestrian amenities will be less important in this district, except in enhancements to the trail system. Concepts for design enhancement include:

- ◆ Increased landscaping along roadways, but particularly in coordination with other screening methods to reduce the impact of parking areas, loading areas and storage.
- ◆ Enhancements to the trail system such as trail furniture and landscaping (lighting would be prohibited due to potential interference with aviation activities).
- ◆ Guidance on structural materials that may include front facade treatments, appropriate use of metal on structures.
- ◆ Minimal design standards sufficient to establish general themes for the area without prohibiting creative development.
- ◆ Mix of landscaping, public art and well-tended natural areas on sites of high visibility that are unavailable for development due to line-of-flight restrictions.

TECHNOLOGY CAMPUS

The Technology Campus offers an opportunity to highlight the unique opportunities available when creating an area that combines education, research and limited industrial activity with other accessory uses. The dynamic mix is an image of energy contained within the setting of open spaces and its small town surroundings. Concepts include:

- ◆ Architectural standards that complement the Gordon Cooper Technology Center but also allow for creative design techniques with guidelines focused upon materials, scale, height, and mass.
- ◆ Ample landscaped, open spaces with liberal use of pedestrian amenities and interconnectivity.
- ◆ Shared access and parking that is well landscaped along the periphery and interior that also offers aesthetic, “dark sky” lighting points.
- ◆ Common signage predominantly limited to ground signs and building signs indicative of a professional campus.
- ◆ Integration of a major landmark such as public art or a water feature that could take advantage of an integrated stormwater drainage system.

HARRISON COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

Of all of the districts, that which is perhaps most difficult to imagine is the future of the Harrison Commercial Corridor, largely because of the image it currently delivers is one of relative confusion. However, the corridor also offers tremendous opportunity as a dynamic bridge between downtown and the commercial areas along I-40. Concepts proposed to revitalize the image presented along Harrison include:

- ◆ Development, over time, of a loose, but unified, architectural theme that focuses on specific building materials, design, detail, frontage needed to establish a stronger “street wall”, and addition of pedestrian amenities.
- ◆ Shared parking that, when possible, is moved to the rear of the site and includes ample landscaping, screening from surrounding uses, pedestrian amenities, and improved access management.
- ◆ Shared access points that improve safety, but also reduce a sense of “chaos” that can be created along the streetscape.
- ◆ Shared signage and ground signage as opposed to existing pole signs as well as overall reduced signage.
- ◆ Integration of street trees and landscaping along Harrison to further reduce the perception of a “wide corridor” and soften the impact of substantial strip development.
- ◆ Enhanced pedestrian amenities including sidewalks with aesthetic treatments and limited street furniture that recognizes the areas auto-urban character but seeks to add moderate pedestrian activity.
- ◆ Human scale lighting incorporated into vehicular scale street lights, including aesthetic standards and the potential for banners.
- ◆ Recognizable opportunities for pedestrians to safely cross Harrison at intersections and, when needed, midpoints in the roadway using materials and techniques that enhance driver awareness such as signage and changes in roadway materials.

EXTENDED EDUCATION CAMPUS

One of the benefits of the presence of Oklahoma Baptist and St. Gregory’s Universities is the example of quality design offered by these education institutions. An image of the area focuses on education and the possible integration of residential activity into that area, but also the expansion of education and medical related services. The concept for this area includes:

- ◆ Continued emphasis on quality architectural design utilizing materials, scale and features that are prominent in a professional, institutional environment.





- ◆ Liberal use of pedestrian amenities within the streetscape and in open areas that increase the “walkability” of the area.
- ◆ Continued use of landmarks throughout the campus that can serve as “image makers” but also permit interaction with pedestrians.
- ◆ Ample open spaces that preserve the appearance of the area as a campus in a small town community.
- ◆ Incorporation of pedestrian scale lighting and additional aesthetic features such as banners.
- ◆ Change of materials in the roadway, such as faux brick or faux stone, to indicate pedestrian crossings or intersections that are likely to be used by pedestrians.

OTHER DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

MANAGING LAND USE INTENSITY

From a community character perspective, the use of properties is not as important as the design factors that contribute to its intensity. In other words, the scale and bulk of a building in relation to the site, the abutting street(s) and lot lines, and adjacent buildings as well as the building coverage and extent of impervious surfaces devoted to parking, loading and other vehicular use areas are better indicators of character than land use itself. To adequately manage development intensity the zoning ordinance must be amended to include provisions to effectively control development scale and form. Measures that evaluate the performance of development include:

- ◆ An *Open Space Ratio (OSR)* measures the proportion of a residential site that remains undeveloped and is permanently designated as open space, which excludes private land (lots) and rights-of-way. Use of this performance measure is effective to protect sensitive natural areas, to provide space available for use by the public (versus private open space), and to sustain the visual character of neighborhoods.
- ◆ An *Impervious Surface Ratio (ISR)* reflects the proportion of a site occupied by impervious surfaces, including buildings, streets and sidewalks, parking and other paved areas. This measure is a more accurate estimation of use intensity than building coverage alone. In addition to the impacts on character, managing the amount of impervious cover has benefits for stormwater runoff, water quality, aquifer recharge, and the microclimate of an area by increasing temperatures.
- ◆ *Density*, commonly expressed in dwelling units per acre, measures the intensity of residential land use. The permitted densities of the residential districts in the zoning ordinance are not explicitly stated, but are determined by the provisions for minimum lot size and lot width and other dimensional requirements. As a result, the density that is allowed by the

district (simply calculated by dividing an acre by the minimum lot size) cannot be achieved due to land required for streets, parks and other improvements. Development of a site with any constraining features, such as floodplain, further limits the allowable density resulting in a declining development efficiency. Therefore, heavily constrained sites generally remain undeveloped because the regulations do not allow sufficient density to make development feasible. As an alternative, use of a density factor measuring the number of dwelling units per acre of net buildable land allows variations of a building site to be accommodated without a penalty of reduced development efficiency.

- ◆ A *Floor Area Ratio (FAR)* is the equivalent of density for nonresidential uses. An FAR is calculated by dividing the total floor area of all buildings by the total lot area. This measure of intensity allows the flexibility necessary to ensure an appropriate bulk and scale of buildings in relation to the site and in the context of surrounding uses.
- ◆ A *Landscape Surface Ratio (LSR)* is a measure of all pervious surfaces on a nonresidential site (the inverse of the impervious surface ratio). Use of this measure effectively manages intensity by balancing the portions of a site devoted to green space versus those covered by impervious surfaces. Use of the landscape surface area allows for buffering between uses, internal landscaping on the site, preservation of existing vegetation, and green space within the streetscape area abutting street right-of-way.

BUFFERYARDS

Contributing to development character is provision for adequate separation and buffering between adjacent uses. As required by the current zoning ordinance, buffering is most needed between uses that exhibit widely varying intensities, such as single family residential and intensive commercial or industrial development. The current fencing requirements in the higher density (R1-Z) and multiple family (R-3), commercial (C-1, C-2, C-3, C-5 and CP) and industrial (I-1, I-2, and I-3) districts require an opaque, ornamental fence, wall or dense evergreen shrub of not less than six feet high, regardless of the height and bulk of the building or the magnitude of activity on the site. In addition, the current regulations require an increased side yard setback, based on building height, for commercial uses abutting a residential district, which acknowledges height as an important intensity factor. The industrial districts require a constant 50 foot rear yard setback and a reduced street side setback when adjacent to a residential district. The performance-based measure adjusting the side yard setback according to height is less in the Restricted Light Industrial District (I-1) than any of the less intensive commercial districts.





A performance-based approach to buffering results in varying standards according to the intensity of the use. Within each class of bufferyard there are several options available, which offers flexibility in the design of sites and choices as to the cost tradeoffs. Applying this technique in Shawnee would mean, for instance, that more intensive commercial uses such as Lowes and the Mall (exhibiting large buildings and surface parking areas; increased traffic, noise and light; and a higher level of activity) would require a larger buffer with greater opacity than a less intensive commercial use such as a bank or small office building.

The variables that are used to differentiate buffers include distance (width), types of plan materials (canopy and understory trees, evergreens/conifers, and shrubs), plant density and land form (berms). Combinations of these factors are used to create multiple options for adequate buffering between adjacent uses with differing intensities. For example, a wider bufferyard with more dense planting would be required to separate industrial and residential uses than between varying densities of residential uses.