

7. PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT AREAS

Establishing Priority Development Areas allows the City to identify opportunities for development that can be catalysts for the enhancement of the surrounding area and the community as a whole. Analyzing and discussing these Development Areas provides a direction for how public dollars and projects can be aimed to advance private sector investment. Utilizing this approach,

the City can identify types of public projects that will support private sector investment in each Development Area. This also allows the City to preserve areas with the greatest development opportunity in order to strategically implement development that maximizes function and utility.

7.0

introduction

The Priority Development Areas were identified by the Steering Committee based on a number of criteria, including their (re)development potential. The areas included some or all of the following characteristics:

- Underutilized land and/or buildings;
- Proximity to significant and essential land uses that can leverage additional economic opportunity;
- New opportunities to serve existing neighborhoods and districts;
- New opportunities to improve community identity;
- Significant economic development potential; and
- Opportunities to create a variety of housing choices and styles.

After careful consideration, the four Priority Development Areas described to the right were selected by the Steering Committee. A more detailed description of each Priority Development Area including development concepts and proposed character are described in the sections contained in this chapter.

As the City plans for the future, the focus areas should be considered a priority for City- and Developer-led infrastructure projects, as well as development incentives.

Downtown

The Downtown Development Area is the cornerstone of the community. Continuing to preserve and promote the downtown as a destination will create a stronger sense of community, enhance the local identity, offer new housing options, and create a more vibrant economic environment. By creating a mix of uses and public spaces that attract a variety of residents and visitors, Downtown can continue to be a vibrant destination for the City and the region. Due to the historical character of Downtown, new development and redevelopment should be respectful of its context while accommodating new economic growth.

Hospital District

The Hospital District consists of the area directly surrounding Wooster Community Hospital, including vacant and underutilized commercial properties to the north. By building on the medical industry and promoting the community, the City can create an economically vibrant and functional district that leverages an important community asset.

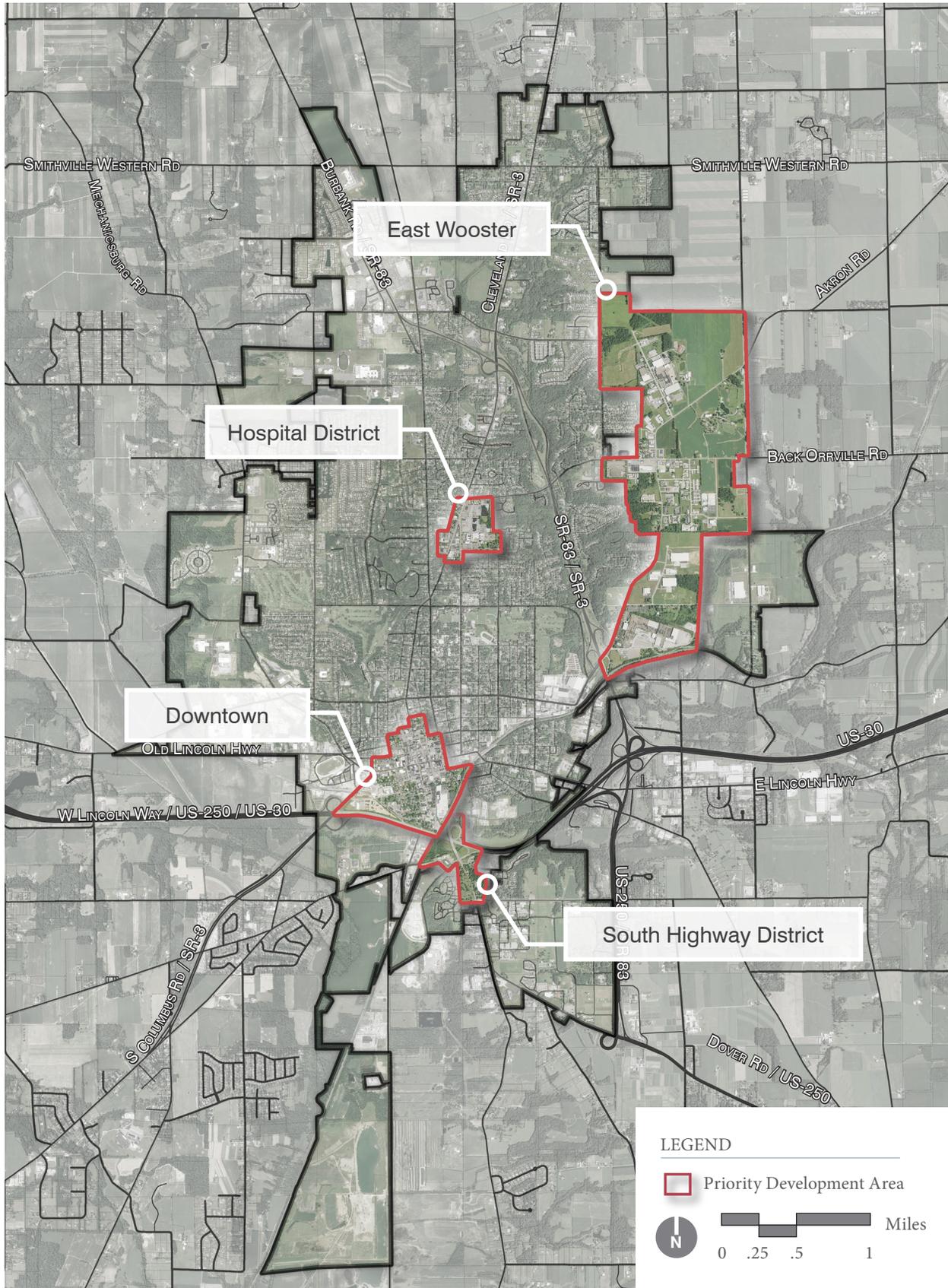
South Highway District

The area between Downtown and the OARDC that encompasses the Madison Avenue exits from U.S. 30 serves as the primary entrance into the City of Wooster. Appropriate gateway and streetscape features should be designed and implemented in this area to form a connection between highway ramps and the City. This area should help to enhance community image by establishing a dynamic “front door” through both public investment and private redevelopment initiatives.

East Wooster

Due to its proximity to highways and its availability of open space, East Wooster has drawn recent attention from new businesses and development. Serving as one of the economic hubs of the City, the area has attracted a number of manufacturing and industrial users who continue to provide a strong economic base for the City. Where the area has recently experienced new investment, new support services and enhanced image and brand will continue to elevate the economic competitiveness of the area.

Figure 7.1: Priority Development Area Map



7.1

downtown

Downtown Wooster is a dynamic commercial center that serves as the entertainment hub of the community. Redevelopment and development in this area should be planned appropriately to maintain its historic character while promoting infill and pedestrian orientation.

Downtown is the historic center and community core of Wooster that plays a vital role in the identity of the City. While much of the historic character of the area is still intact, some vacant storefronts and disinvestment prove to threaten the character and economic viability of the area.

Downtown Wooster is comprised of a mixture of retail/commercial establishments and professional offices in historic buildings with small clusters of multi-family residential. This commercial core is surrounded by traditional neighborhoods to the north and underutilized commercial areas to the south.

A driving force for the preservation of the character and the success of the businesses within the downtown has been the continued effort of Main Street Wooster. While many Ohio communities have seen their historic centers lose businesses to newer auto-centric developments, Wooster has managed to maintain a vibrant downtown that attracts both visitors and businesses. Every effort should be made by the City and by Main Street Wooster to continue the significant progress they have made within the Downtown Core.

Downtown Core

The Downtown Core of Wooster is the historic and civic hub for the City, serving as the backdrop for a thriving pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. A number of retail and dining options continue to draw residents and visitors

into the Downtown Core, and any future development occurring within the area should reinforce these current activities.

East Liberty Street

Located to the east of the downtown core, East Liberty Street is an area that should be a target for continued public and private investments. The current development pattern is characterized by vacant buildings and surface parking lots, and is not at the highest and best use. The location of this area adjacent to the Downtown Core make it a target area to continue the development pattern of the Downtown by focusing on pedestrian oriented improvements and buildings, and to provide housing options within a short walk to the core.

Traditional Neighborhood

While located mostly outside of the study area, the surrounding residential districts should complement the success of the Downtown. Residents located close to convenient, walkable amenities provide a stable base of customers for businesses within walking distance. Many of the historic homes within Wooster are located within this area, making it an attractive area for residents wanting to live close to downtown amenities, in an area with traditional neighborhood qualities.

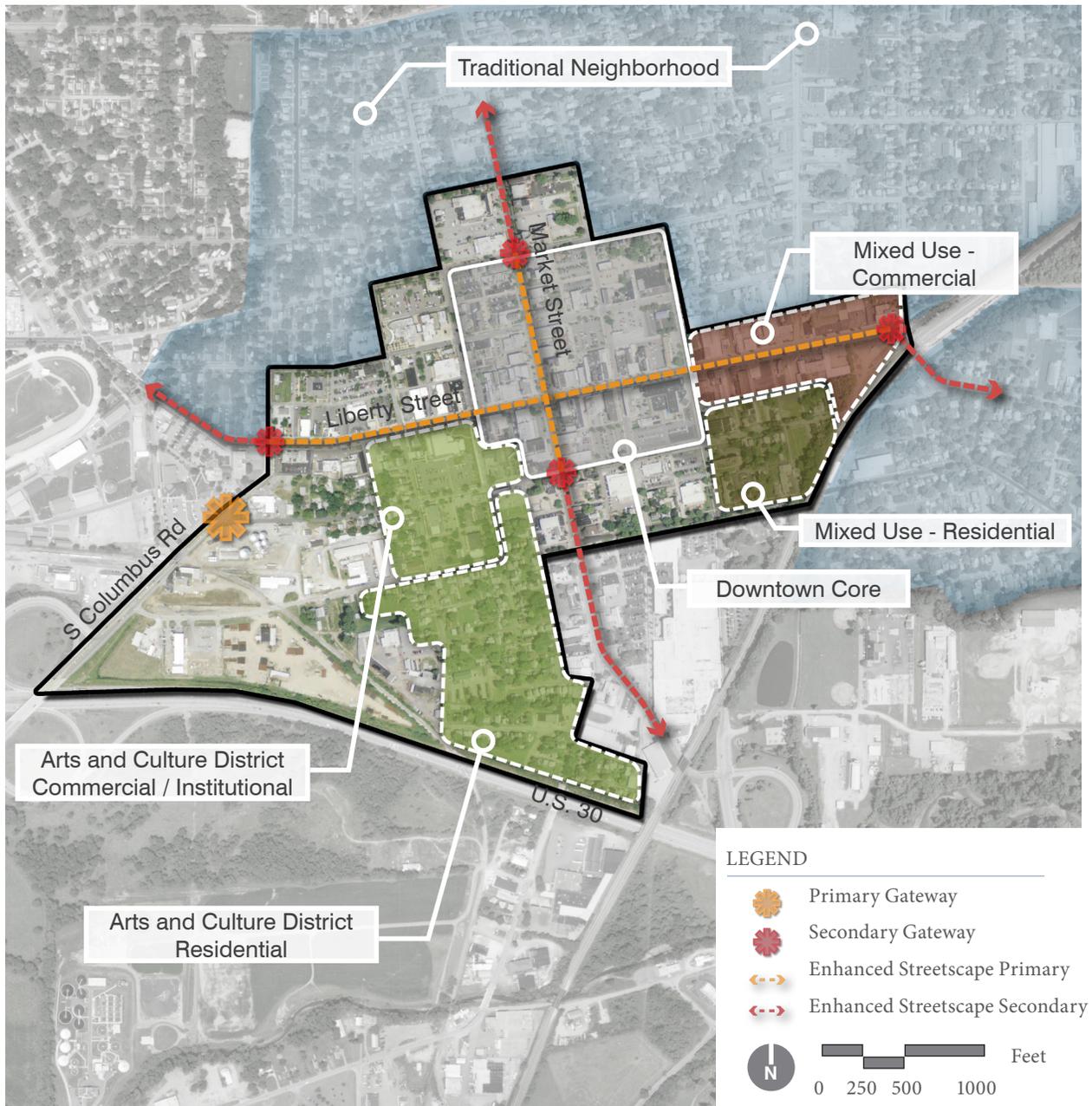
Gateways

Primary and secondary gateways are indicated on Figure 7.2. The primary gateway, located at South Columbus Road, is intended to mark the entrance to the City from the highway. Secondary gateways located to the east and west of Liberty Street, as well as to the north and south of Market Street, are intended to signify entry into the downtown. Gateways can take the shape of entry features, signage, or enhanced landscape treatments.

Arts and Culture District

The area south and west of the Downtown Core is currently occupied by outdated and underutilized properties and surface parking that detracts from the overall vitality of the downtown. By creating an innovative Arts and Culture District directly west of the Downtown Core, Wooster can add to its creative class and attract some of the Millennial population. This District would be complemented by a large residential district to the south that should be used to attract those working and creating in the area.

Figure 7.2: Downtown District Urban Framework Map



Development Area: +/- 201 acres

Existing Land Use

Commercial: 28.71 acres (21%)

Recreation: 4.88 acres (4%)

Public/Semi-Public: 16.01 acres (12%)

Office: 10.39 acres (8%)

Manufacturing: 31.26 acres (23%)

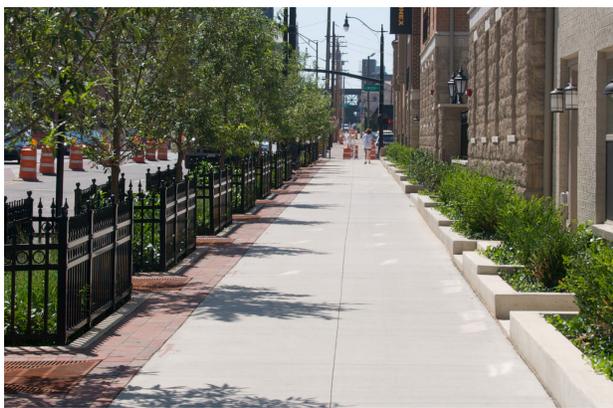
Multi-Family Residential: 10.22 acres (7%)

Single-Family Residential: 21.03 acres (15%)

Development Intent - Downtown District



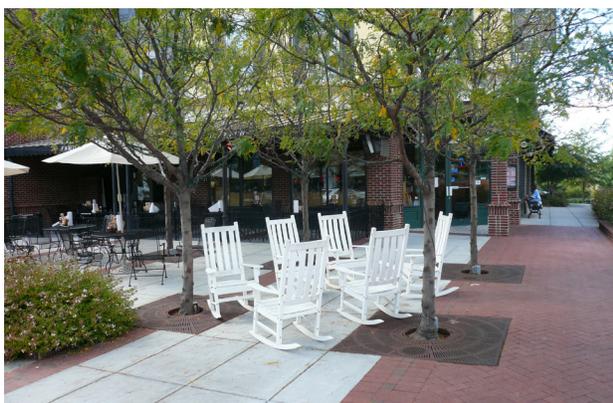
A **mix of uses** is encouraged with residential throughout the district and retail, commercial, and institutional uses focused along primary and secondary streets within Downtown Wooster. Uses can be organized vertically (within the same building) or horizontally (side-by-side), and should be focused on creating a pedestrian friendly environment. Residential uses on ground floors should be avoided along primary and secondary streets.



Streetscapes should be appropriately scaled with the pedestrian as the priority. Sidewalks should be spacious enough to provide a seamless pedestrian connection between the public and private realm. Sidewalks, pedestrian connections, crosswalks, curb extensions, and pedestrian signals should be used throughout the district. Streetscape improvements should include street trees, planters, and decorative street furniture such as public benches and street lights.



Site design for residential and commercial uses should encourage minimal setbacks with a primary façade that faces the street. Parking should be located to the rear in order to promote a pedestrian friendly streetscape to the front.



Public spaces encourage pedestrian activity along streetscapes and should include amenities such as street furniture, pedestrian-scale lighting, bike racks, trees, and trash receptacles. Public spaces should be designed to enhance the surrounding streetscape and adjacent structures and can include features such as outdoor dining, fountains, and recreation spaces which should be available for pedestrians.



Residential Density is an integral part of this Priority Development Area and residential buildings should range from two to four stories in height, built as either attached residential units at street level or above sidewalk retail or commercial uses.



Pedestrian crossings should be visible to oncoming traffic in order to increase safety and walkability. Crossings and curb ramps should also be accommodating to people of all abilities.



Architectural character should employ scaling and detailing that promote a pedestrian friendly environment. Design should complement existing historical character while employing high quality materials. Front façades should have a high level of transparency in order to activate and enhance the streetscape.



Parking should include both private and public parking. Private (on-site) parking shall be internal to each site, screened from the public right-of-way, and may be identified with signage at the discretion of the City. The impacts of on-site parking should be minimized through segmented parking areas, shared parking, rear parking areas, pervious pavement, and landscaping.

Figure 7.3: East Liberty Redevelopment Sub-Area - Existing Condition



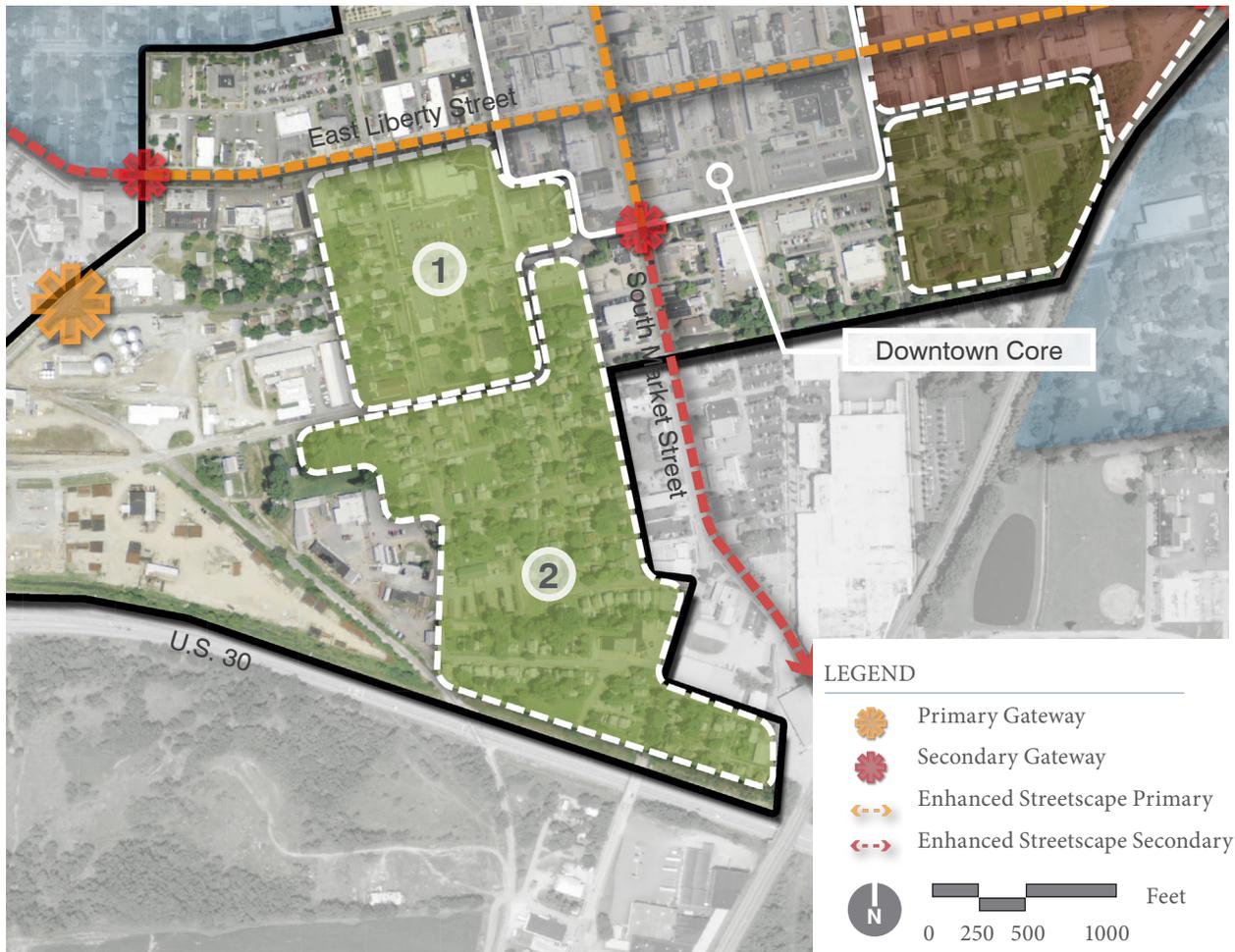
East Liberty Redevelopment

The intersection of East Liberty Street and Beall Avenue, including the area to the south, is a place that has been identified by the Steering Committee and the public as an area appropriate for infill and redevelopment. The area is currently a mixture of surface parking, vacant buildings, and retail uses.

The buildings in this area should support a mixture of uses, including retail, service, residential and office. Creating a pedestrian friendly environment is the overall intent of this area, which is accomplished by bringing the buildings closer to the street and providing an enhanced streetscape with pedestrian crossings and public space organized around the intersection. Parking should be located to the rear and sides of the buildings, minimizing the amount of parking lots that face the streetscape. The development pattern should be a continuation of the urban form that is seen throughout the downtown district.

Concept Plan Elements:

1. Mixed-use Commercial
2. Mixed-use Residential
3. Enhanced Intersection and Streetscape
4. Gateway into the Downtown District



Arts and Culture District

Located southwest of the Market Street and Liberty Street intersection is the Arts and Culture District. Anchored by several existing commercial and institutional uses, the Arts and Culture District is intended as a home to organizations, institutions and residents that are engaged in the arts or other culturally significant activities.

The commercial and institutional district to the north is in a prime location near the center of Downtown, and can take advantage of its proximity to the main thoroughfares in and out of the City. Every attempt should be made to retain and reuse existing historic buildings to maintain its existing character.

The residential district to the south can leverage its existing historic housing stock as a residential district with convenient access to the social and cultural amenities offered by the institutions in the district.

Concept Plan Elements:

1. Arts and Culture District Commercial / Institutional
2. Arts and Culture District Residential

7.2 south highway gateway

The integration of gateway features and streetscape elements between Downtown, U.S. 30, and the OARDC should aim to strengthen the image and character of Wooster by defining the “front door” to the City.

This Development Area consists of the area surrounding the stretch of Madison Avenue, South Market Street, and South Bever Street that connects U.S. 30 and Downtown to the north and U.S. 30 and the OARDC to the south. Given the proximity to the highway, this area acts as the front door to the City for residents, Downtown visitors, College of Wooster students and family, and the OARDC commuters.

The location makes this area an important section of the City in which to design gateway features and streetscape elements that promote the identity of the community. Collectively, these gateways and the adjacent corridors into Downtown and the OARDC can help enhance the image of the surrounding area and the City as a whole.

Bridge Enhancement

The Madison Avenue Bridge over U.S. 30 is the main connection between the OARDC and Downtown Wooster. This is an integral area to brand the community and better connect Wooster to the OARDC. In addition, the bridge and exit ramps provide a branding opportunity for the City along U.S. 30.

Subarea A

Subarea A is the first vision of Wooster that visitors experience as they cross under the railroad towards Downtown. As it currently sits, this area is occupied by unattractive surface parking lots and poor landscaping.

Subarea B

This Area is the next section of the entrance to Downtown, between Subarea A and the Downtown Core. It’s important that this area provides a transition between the manufacturing and industrial areas and Downtown.

Madison Hill Corridor

Madison Avenue, south of U.S. 30, is bordered to the west by the Wooster Cemetery and to the east by mostly single-family housing. Two lanes carry traffic from the highway to the OARDC campus while a single lane runs the opposite direction. There are also currently no modes of pedestrian or bicycle-specific transportation along this area such as sidewalks or bike lanes. This stretch of road provides a unique opportunity to create a connection between Downtown and the OARDC by improving Wooster branding, streetscape elements, and transportation options. This area has the potential to be a greenway that promotes healthy transportation and connectivity.

Little Apple Creek Path

Efforts should be made to reclaim the accessibility and function of the Little Apple Creek by adding a path that can accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. This path would add to the City’s non-motorized transportation network while improving the access to natural environments.

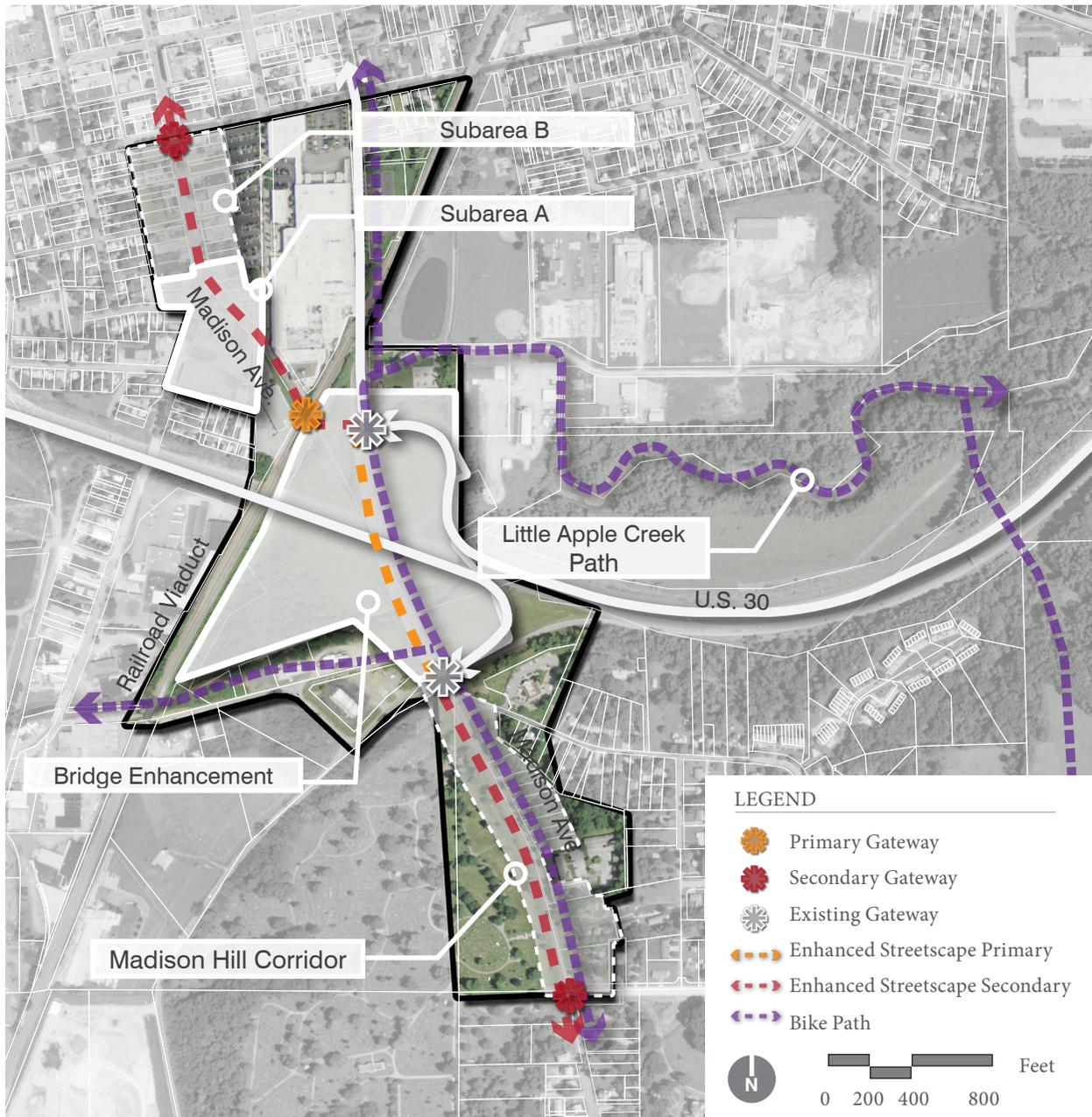
Primary Gateway

The intersection of U.S. 30, South Bever Street, and Madison Avenue serves as the primary entrance from the highway into Downtown Wooster. Due to the complicated navigation from the highway to Downtown, it is important for this location to provide clear directions for visitors into Downtown. The area should also be used to promote community character and overall beauty by enhancing streetscape elements and gateway features.

Secondary Gateway

The Madison Hill Gateway is the main entrance from U.S. 30 East to Downtown and the OARDC. This area gets heavy highway traffic, which the City should capitalize on to promote the brand and image of the community.

Figure 7.6: South Highway District Urban Framework Map



Development Area: +/- 108 acres

Existing Land Use

Commercial: 11.34 acres (19%)
 Recreation: 2.03 acres (3%)
 Community: 10.95 acres (18%)
 Office: 0.59 (1%)

Manufacturing: 15.28 (26%)
 Multi-Family Residential: 4.29 acres (7%)
 Single-Family Residential: 3.32 acres (6%)



Bicycle Connections to the proposed Little Apple Creek Trail should be in the form of dedicated lanes or sharrows that are apparent to vehicles, establishing safe routes to and from Downtown and the creek trail.



Streetscape should provide accommodation for all modes of transportation including vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle. Streetscape elements should provide amenities for pedestrians while introducing residents and visitors to the downtown.



Scale and architecture should define the streetscape in a uniform manner, creating a solid edge of buildings throughout the district. Architecture should complement and provide an entrance to Downtown that welcomes visitors and enhances their experience.

Figure 7.7: Subarea A - Existing Condition



Subarea A Development Concept

Because it is the first impression upon entering the City from under the viaduct, the properties surrounding the corners of Market Street, Madison Avenue, Buckeye Street, and Spruce Street should be of high priority for redevelopment. The current development pattern includes large expanses of surface parking buffering the street, and unimproved corners greeting visitors.

The concept to the right pulls the buildings closer to the road, while attempting to minimize the impact of parking. The unusual shape of the sites may not allow for a complete screening of parking by buildings, but landscaping screening may be added to address the street. Street trees should be used to soften the edge and to create a unified streetscape upon entering.

While not wide enough for development, the narrow corners do lend themselves as places for landscape or gateway improvements. The shape and orientation of the buildings are appropriate to accommodate a variety of uses, including flex-office, service, and retail. Every effort should be made to maximize the economic potential of the site and enhance the corridor.

Figure 7.8 Subarea A - Concept Plan



Preferred Uses:

- Retail
- Service
- Office
- Flex-Office

Concept Plan Elements:

1. Potential for gateway plaza, signage or landscaping
2. Buildings brought close to the street to frame the streetscape
3. Parking to the rear or sides of buildings
4. Street trees and pedestrian access