

# Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan

Crandall Arambula PC  
December 2005



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Andy Feury, Mayor  
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Gary Stephens, Heart of Whitefish

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*Retail Expansion at Central and Second*

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# Executive Summary

# Introduction

The Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan identifies opportunities to increase the vitality of the downtown business district. The plan outlines the components that will make this vision a reality. It builds upon existing assets and historic character, capitalizes on significant land uses and features the natural environment. It also sets out a realistic action plan for implementation that public officials, private investors and the community can follow.

## Continuing Momentum

Historically, Whitefish has experienced steady growth. This growth is expected to continue over the next 20 years. The area’s natural environment supports a substantial local and national tourism market. Whitefish has experienced an increase in variety and scale of retail, service and entertainment uses as well as a need to upgrade public facilities to meet the growing needs of the community. Recent or planned downtown projects include:

- Public parking structure with ground floor retail on Spokane.
- Central Avenue improvements.
- New City Hall facility.
- New Great Northern Square.
- Promenade ped/bike loop as part of the BNSF ped/bike system.
- Highway 93 improvements.
- New mixed-use development in the Railroad District.

## The Master Plan Framework

With renewed interest in downtown, this Master Plan

Framework outlines specific land uses and guides the development of privately- and publicly-owned parcels of land. With formal adoption by the City Council, this document will provide the legal authority to direct downtown development.



*Downtown Whitefish - Looking South*



*Central Avenue - Looking North*

# Public Process and Schedule

## A Plan Created by Citizens

The Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan was created in response to the public’s vision for future growth. It also serves as a tool for citizens to proactively plan for development rather than reactively respond to development pressures. The master plan brings certainty to investors, developers, architects, business people and residents by providing a clear vision of the community’s goals, and a basis for development review and project approval. Creation of the plan was driven by information gathered from the following sources:

### 1. Stakeholder Meetings

Throughout the process, the Stakeholder Committee, comprised of local public officials, citizens and business people, reviewed all plan materials and provided input before and after each workshop.

### 2. Public Workshops

All public sessions were interactive and engaged the community. Each session consisted of two parts:

- *Presentation* – project background, issues and designs were described.
- *Workshop* – a “town hall” type workshop was facilitated by Crandall Arambula. Participants completed individual response sheets summarizing their issues and responding to specific plan alternatives. Average attendance at each workshop was approximately 100 people.

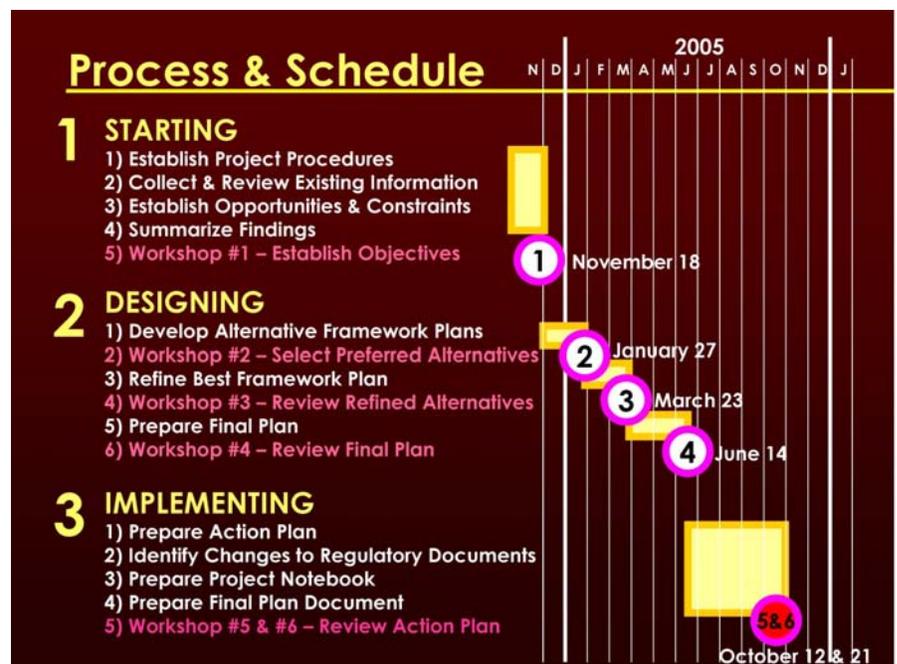
## 3. Additional Meetings

Additional meetings were held with stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- The Montana Department of Transportation.
- The Mayor and City Council.
- The Heart of Whitefish.
- City Departments.

## Schedule

The master plan and public involvement process was developed over a ten-month period and is illustrated below.



Public Process and Master Plan Schedule

## Guiding Principles

### A Coordinated Effort

The City of Whitefish, with assistance from the Heart of Whitefish downtown business association, led the downtown master planning effort. Project objectives are identified below:

#### 1) Downtown Business Vitality

- Keep existing businesses healthy.
- Provide opportunities for new community-serving businesses.
- Better accommodate existing and future tourist industries, including the expansion of the Big Mountain ski resort.
- Develop a strategy to strengthen downtown retail through proposals for retail placement and design improvements to retail streets and facades.
- Create a pedestrian-friendly environment to encourage visitors and residents to utilize downtown businesses.

#### 2) Transportation

- Ensure that Highway 93 improvements enhance and support downtown businesses.
- Accommodate increasing traffic volumes without degrading downtown businesses and the retail environment.
- Locate new parking facilities to support downtown businesses and retail.
- Strengthen alternative transportation modes to reduce traffic congestion, including pedestrian, bicycle and transit.

#### 3) Public Facilities

- Identify appropriate public facilities and locations that will strengthen existing businesses.

- Identify public improvements needed to stimulate downtown development.

#### 4) Environment

- Protect and connect to the natural environment, which is a central feature in the community's appeal to visitors and residents.
- Utilize the unique natural environment in proposals to strengthen the downtown business environment.

#### 5) Growth Management

- Identify opportunities for higher-density affordable housing in the downtown area.
- Demonstrate how Whitefish can stimulate downtown development while managing highway corridor development.

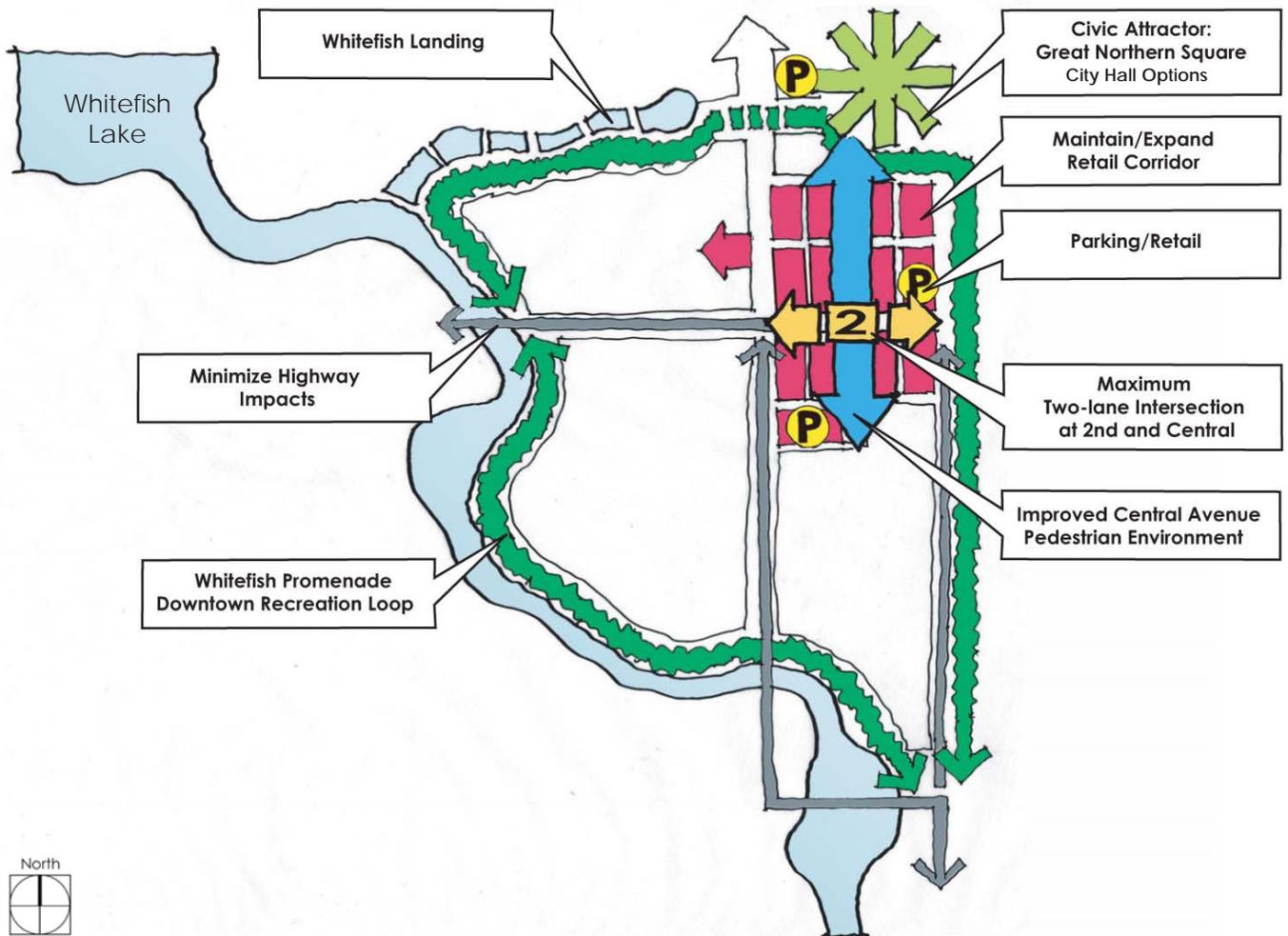


*Public Trail Along Whitefish River Near Second Street*

# The Fundamental Concept

The Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan is simple in its essence; it is based on a few proven concepts intended to ensure the long-term vitality and viability of the downtown. Its fundamental concepts include:

- **Strengthen existing downtown retail** along Central Avenue from Railway to 3rd Street by providing sidewalk, intersection and arcade improvements.
- **Minimize highway impacts** by limiting the width of 2nd Street at Central Avenue to two lanes.
- **Provide shopper-friendly parking** by designing a parking structure that is “locked-in” to the Central Avenue retail core.
- **Create “Whitefish Promenade”** by developing a multiuse trail encircling downtown.
- **Provide focus for civic activities** by developing a square and city hall adjacent to the railroad depot.
- **Create “Whitefish Landing”** by creating a downtown water amenity and recreation linkage to Whitefish Lake.



Fundamental Concept Diagram

# Capacity Diagram

The capacity diagram is a snapshot of the character and intensity of future downtown development.

## A Vision for Build-Out

The diagram illustrates design schemes and development intensity that are realistic and economically feasible. The diagram is based on:

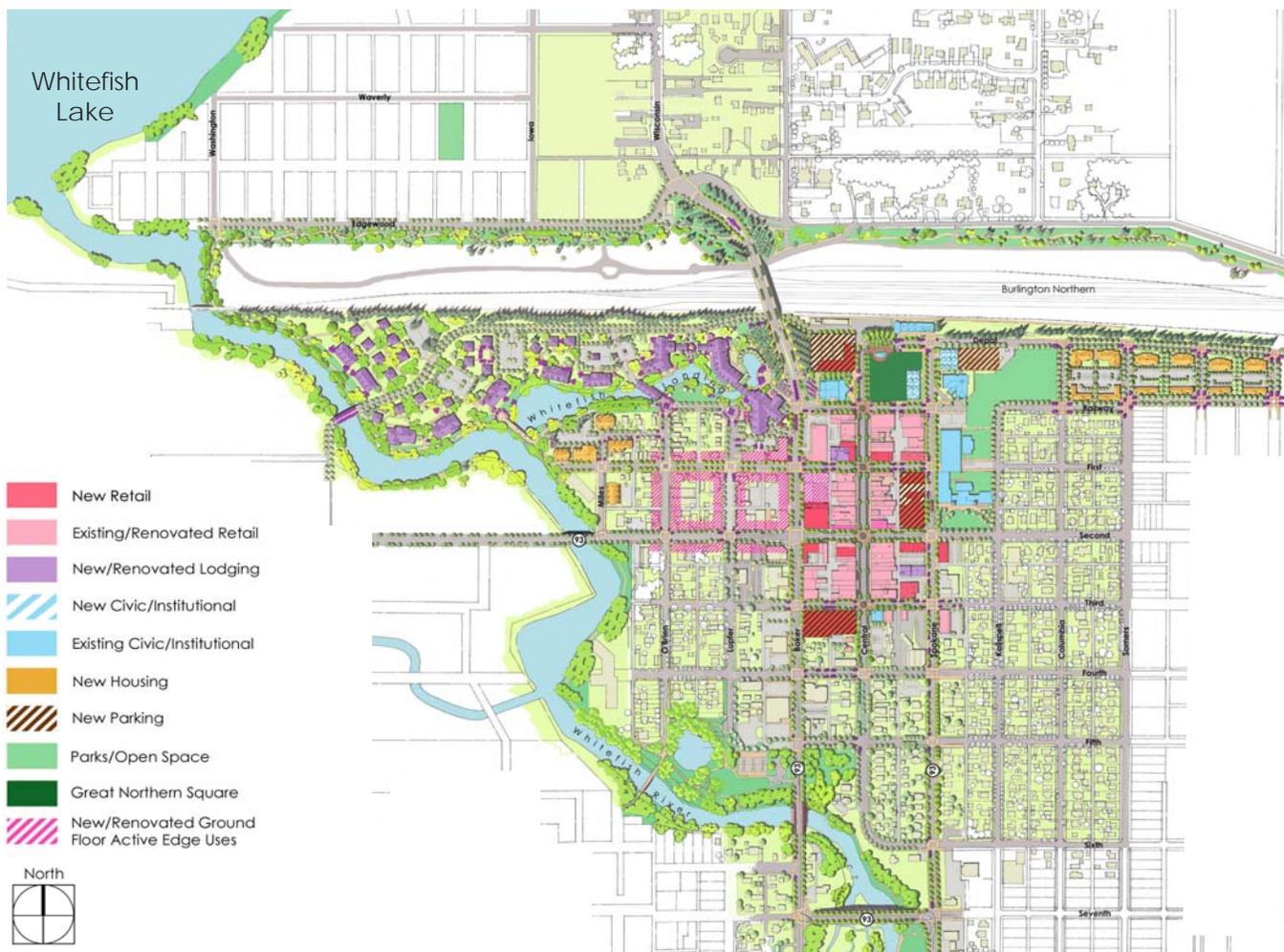
- Market research that identifies the potential for new development.
- Fundamental requirements necessary to attract investors, including proximity to public amenities and availability of parking.
- The public's desire to stimulate economic development while improving community livability.

## How the Diagram is Used

The capacity diagram is used to identify potential development investment in the downtown. The potential new private investment for retail, commercial, residential and support services is made clear through this diagram. The public improvements required to stimulate private investment are also identified.

## New/Renovated Development Capacity Summary

- New Retail: 140,000 SF
- Existing/Renovated Retail: 175,000 SF
- New Residential: 334 units
- Retail Supporting Parking Structures: 740 spaces



Capacity Diagram

# Transportation Framework

This framework identifies viable transportation options. It ensures integrated and balanced pedestrian, bicycle and auto access to and throughout downtown. It establishes a system of streets, sidewalks, promenades and trails that knit the downtown into a coherent and unified whole.

### Key Framework Elements

The Transportation Framework shown below identifies design concepts for the improvement and creation of new street amenities, a square and open spaces throughout downtown. Each of these specific design concept proposals will require further refinement, review and approval.

### Auto/Truck

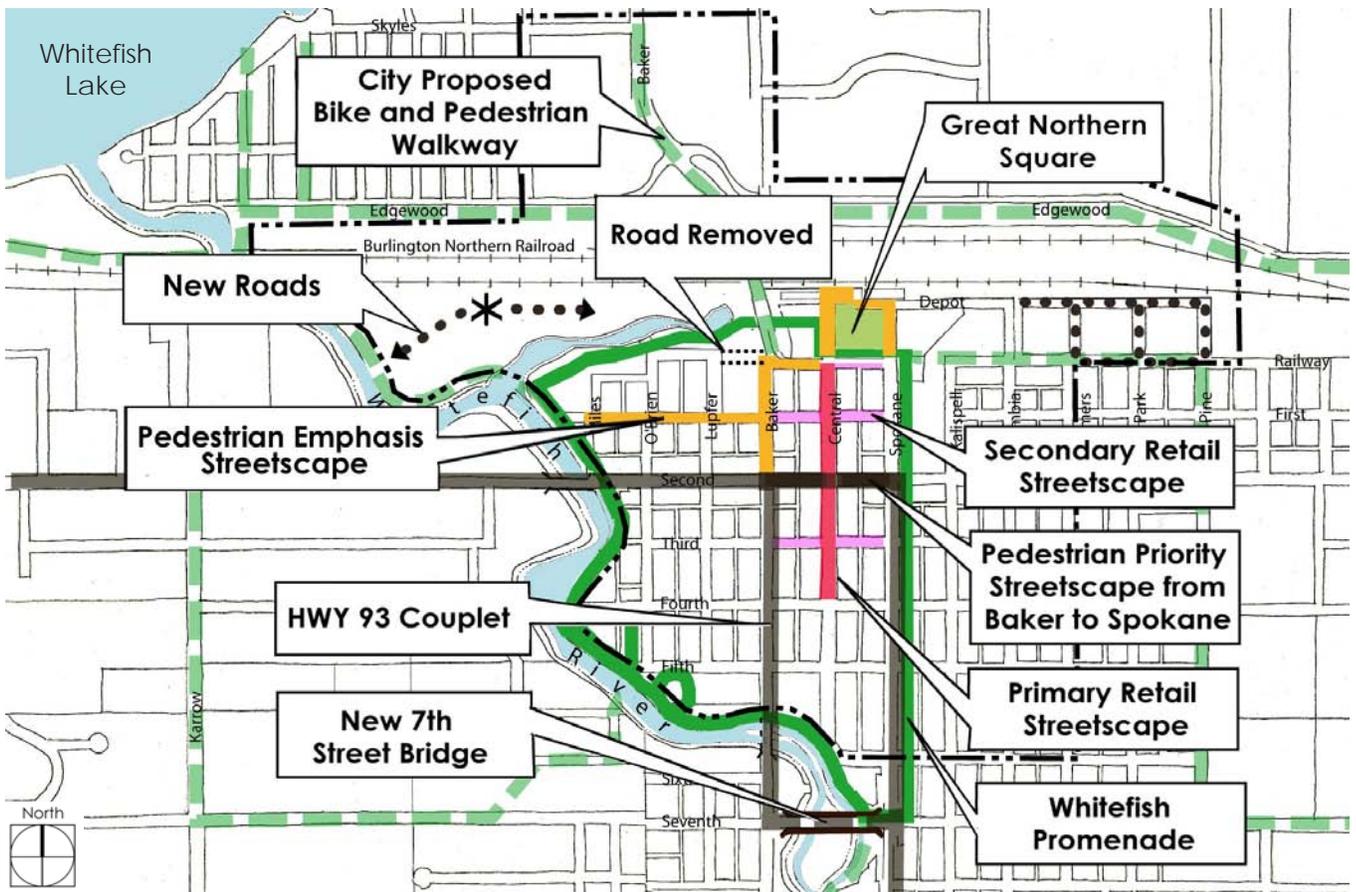
Includes Highway 93 circulation improvements and new roads providing access to future development parcels.

### Pedestrian

Includes streetscape improvements that maintain and improve downtown retail viability and provide access to adjacent neighborhoods.

### Shared Pedestrian and Bike Trail

Creates a distinctive and safe off-street recreational loop around downtown, linking to adjacent neighborhoods, the city's pedestrian and bike network and the Whitefish River.



Transportation Framework

# Land Use Framework

The Land Use Framework provides a practical, proactive guide that outlines the preferred community vision for development of downtown Whitefish. It is intended to attract new uses and maintain and strengthen existing, desirable uses.

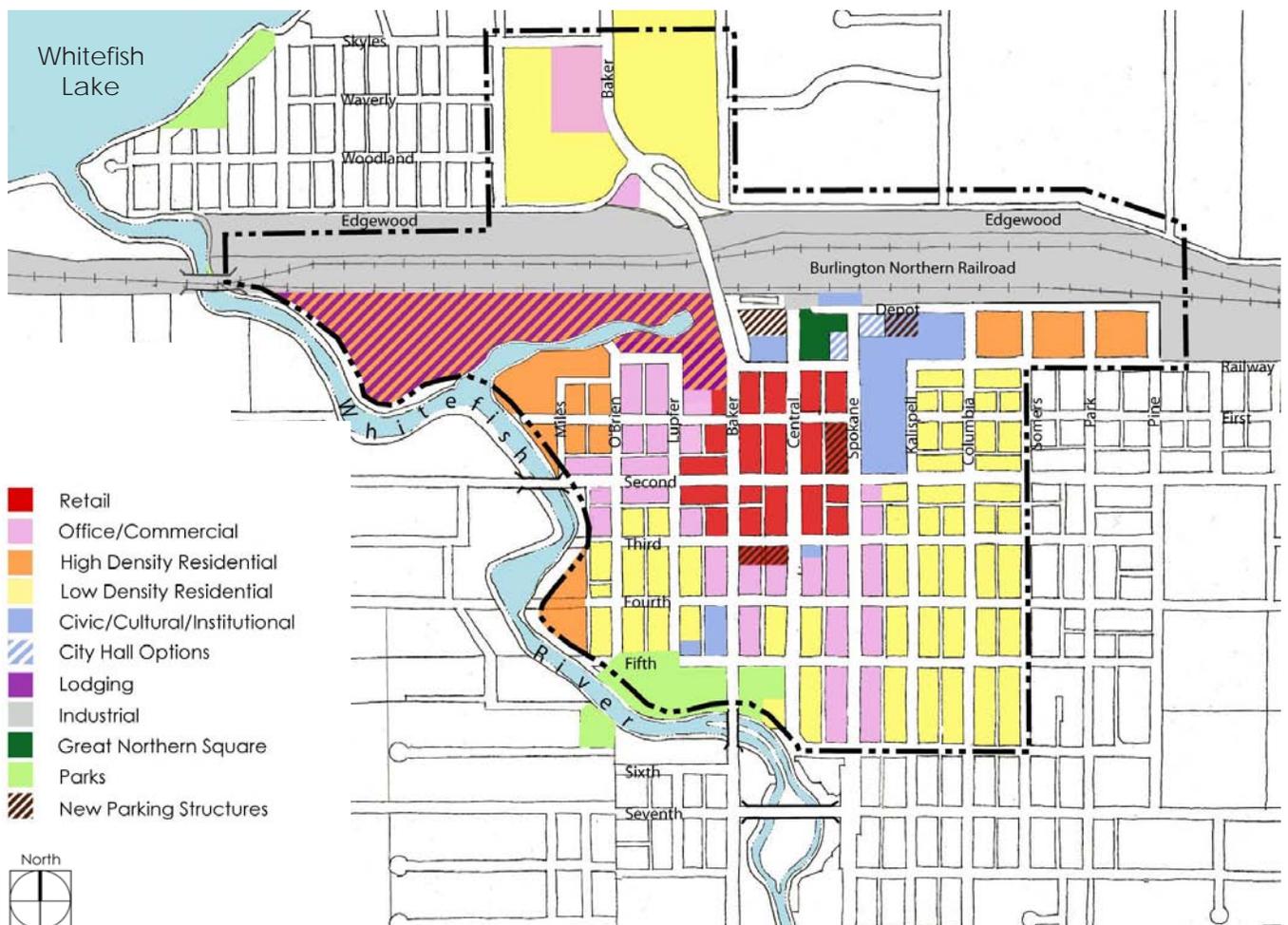
The framework is both realistic and achievable. It addresses and meets the needs of the projected market for Whitefish over the next 20 years, as identified in the *Economic and Market Evaluation for Downtown Whitefish* prepared by ECONorthwest.

## A Mix of Uses

The Land Use Framework promotes a mix of uses, both vertically and horizontally. For example, mixed-use buildings with housing or office on upper floors support the retail uses on their ground floors.

When parcels contain a vertical mix of uses, the color shown on the Land Use Framework typically indicates the predominate use.

Development should be pedestrian friendly, compatible with existing buildings and employ sustainable practices for construction and habitation.



Land Use Framework

## Implementation

Three implementation steps are necessary to take the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan from vision to reality: 1) adoption and distribution of the plan, 2) regulatory review, and 3) pursuit of catalyst projects.

### Adoption and Distribution of the Plan

The Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan will guide public redevelopment projects that could influence private sector decisions regarding downtown development. The plan must be:

- *Formally Adopted.* Adoption of the plan will require a formal schedule, including public hearings, and involve several stages of review with recommendations from the City Manager and the Whitefish City-County planning board, and approval from the council.
- *Widely Distributed to Property Owners and Potential Developers*

### Regulatory Review

Upon adoption of the plan, the City's codes, ordinances and regulatory documents must be made consistent with the master plan. The City should initiate the following:

- Make relevant changes to codes, standards and regulatory documents.
- Coordinate standards for Highway 93 improvements with the Montana Department of Transportation consistent with the master plan.

- Develop design guidelines and public area requirements to ensure that future development is consistent with the master plan.

### Catalyst and Key Projects

Through a public process, public and private catalyst and key projects, that will support revitalization efforts over time, have been identified in the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan. The catalyst projects include five priority projects:

- Public Parking Structure with Retail at Spokane and 2nd.
- Central Avenue Improvements.
- Great Northern Square.
- City Hall.
- Baker Mixed-use Redevelopment.

These projects are time sensitive and have immediate impact on the downtown. The City and Heart of Whitefish should coordinate the financing and implementation strategies required to implement these public and private projects.

The following pages outline catalyst and key projects along with budget implications and next steps required to implement the master plan.

# Priority Catalyst Projects

## A Menu of Priorities

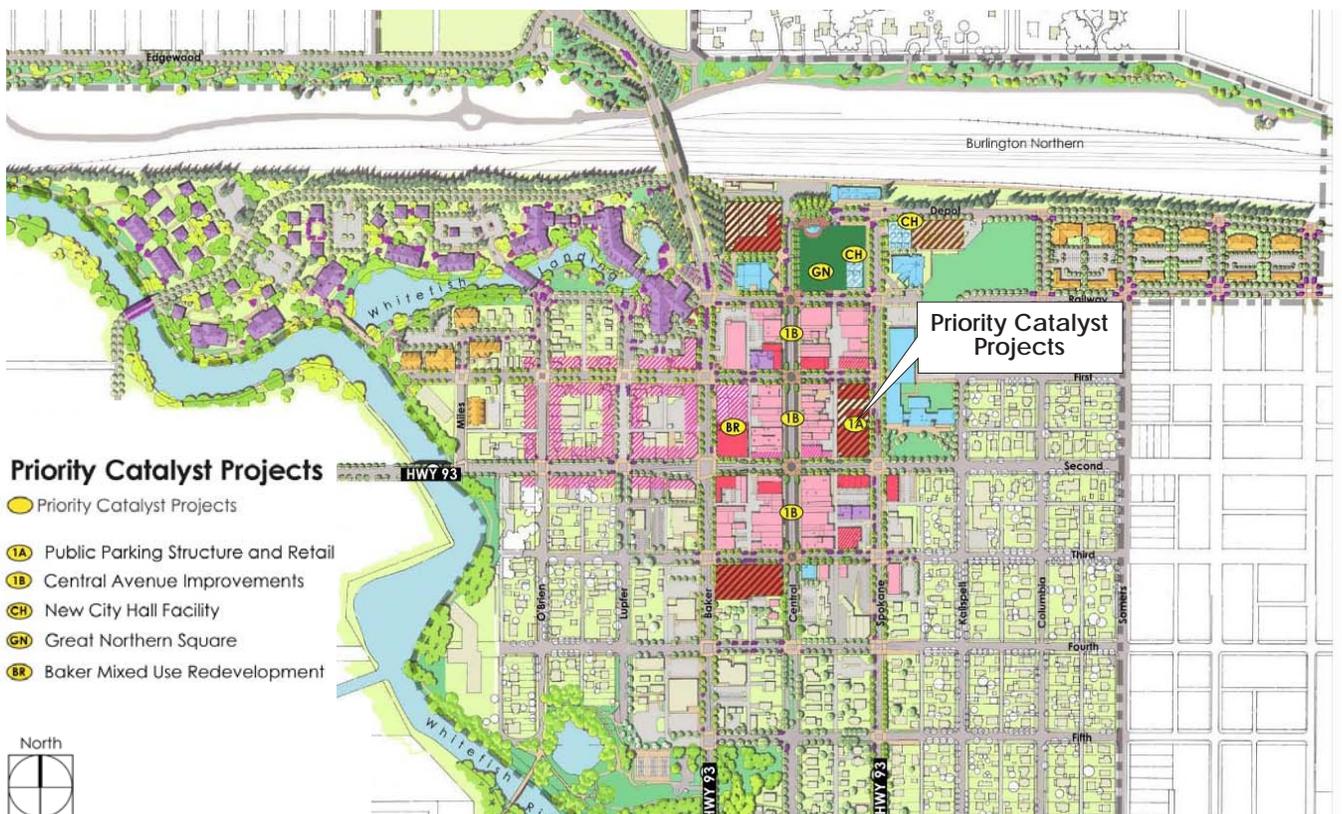
Not everything can be built at once. In Whitefish, there are 26 redevelopment projects identified for downtown revitalization.

Listed below are five priority catalyst redevelopment and public infrastructure improvement projects that will set the stage for private investment and increase the quality of life for area residents. These projects are essential to downtown revitalization efforts and will:

- Spark the greatest amount of new development and renovation based on their strategic location.
- Potentially be financed through TIF revenue or other bonding mechanisms.
- Produce a significant benefit to the public good.

The priority catalyst projects include:

- 1A. Public Parking Structure with Retail
- 1B. Central Avenue Improvements
- CH. City Hall
- GN. Great Northern Square
- BR. Baker Mixed-use Redevelopment



Priority Catalyst Projects

# Parking Strategy

The Master Plan indicates the potential for an additional 140,000 square feet of new retail. This will eventually require parking for approximately 700 additional cars in the downtown.

## Retail Parking

The draft Master Plan provided for new structured retail parking in the following locations:

■ Spokane and 2nd Site (Phase One)	270 Cars
■ O'Shaughnessy Site	280 Cars
■ Third and Central Site	190 Cars
<b>Total</b>	<b>740 Cars</b>

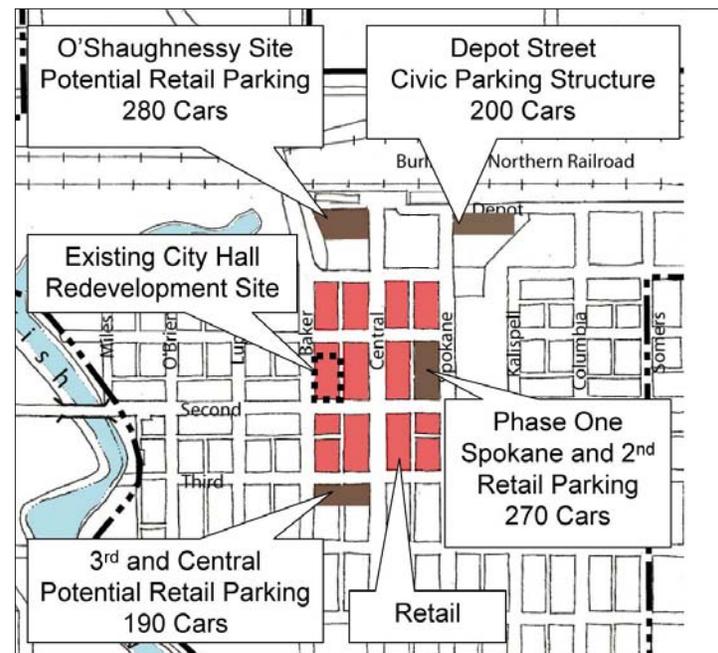
## Civic Parking

New structured civic parking for 200 cars will be provided at Depot Street, north of the library.

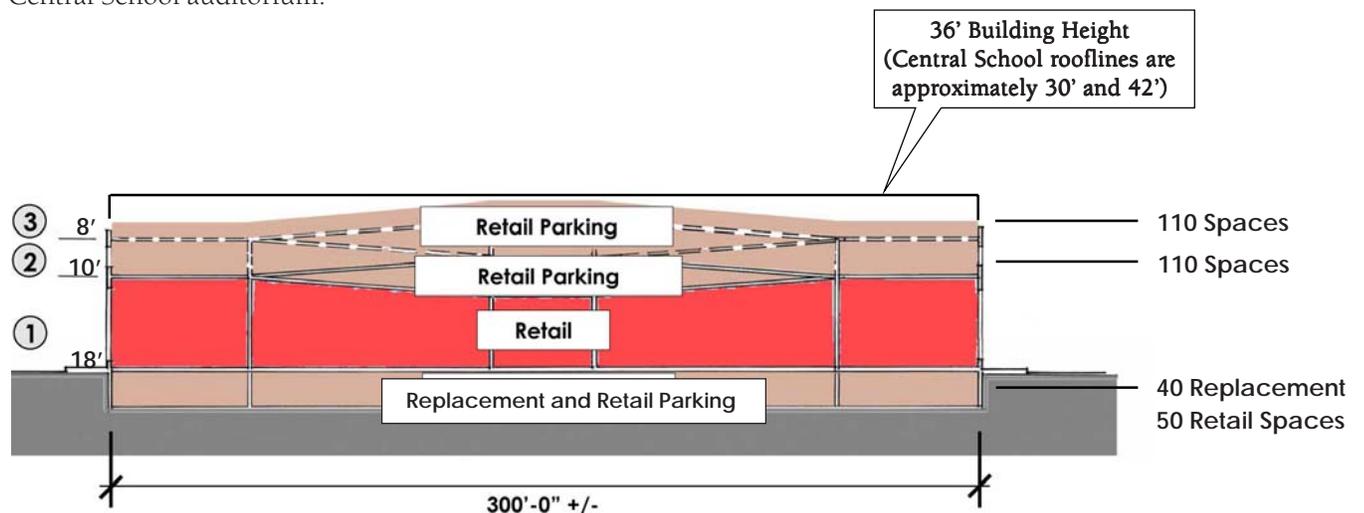
The Depot Street civic parking structure would provide 25 parking spaces for the library, 100 spaces for city parking, 10 spaces for long term Amtrak parking and 65 spaces for railroad replacement parking. The structure would also serve as parking for evening events held at the performing arts center and Central School auditorium.

## Phase One

The first parking structure would be built on the corner of Spokane and 2nd providing approximately 270 new retail parking spaces and 40 replacement spaces. The building would be 3 stories with replacement parking below grade and retail on the first floor.



Parking Strategy



Spokane and 2nd Parking Structure

# City Hall Relocation Strategy

## Two Options

Two options for the relocation of Whitefish City Hall were identified. Option A locates the City Hall at the existing Credit Union site, future site of the Great Northern Square. Option B locates the City Hall north of the library.

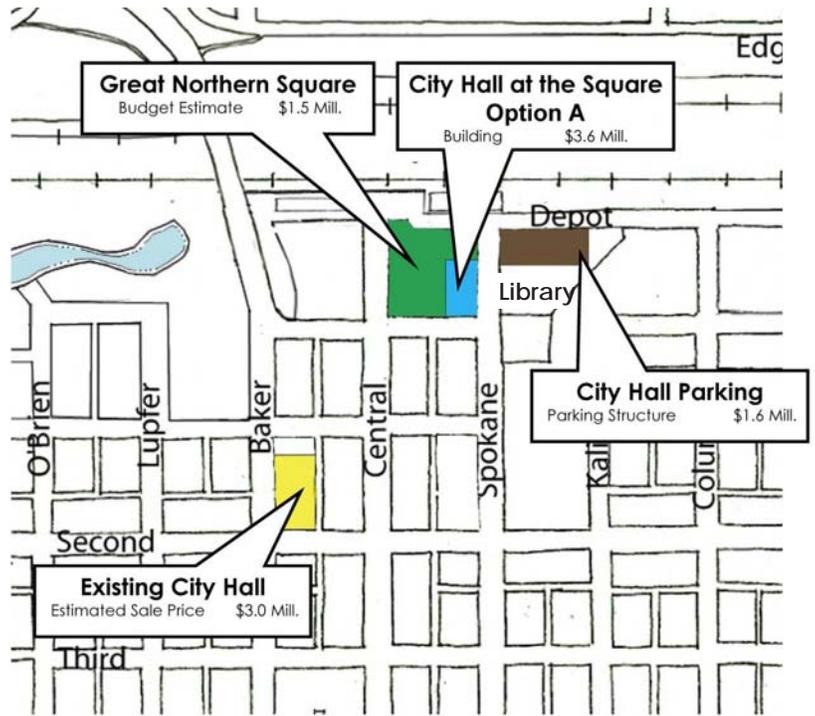
For both options, structured parking would be provided north of the library with 100 parking spaces designated for city parking, 25 spaces for the library, 10 for long term Amtrak parking and 65 spaces for railroad replacement parking.

### Option A - City Hall at the Square

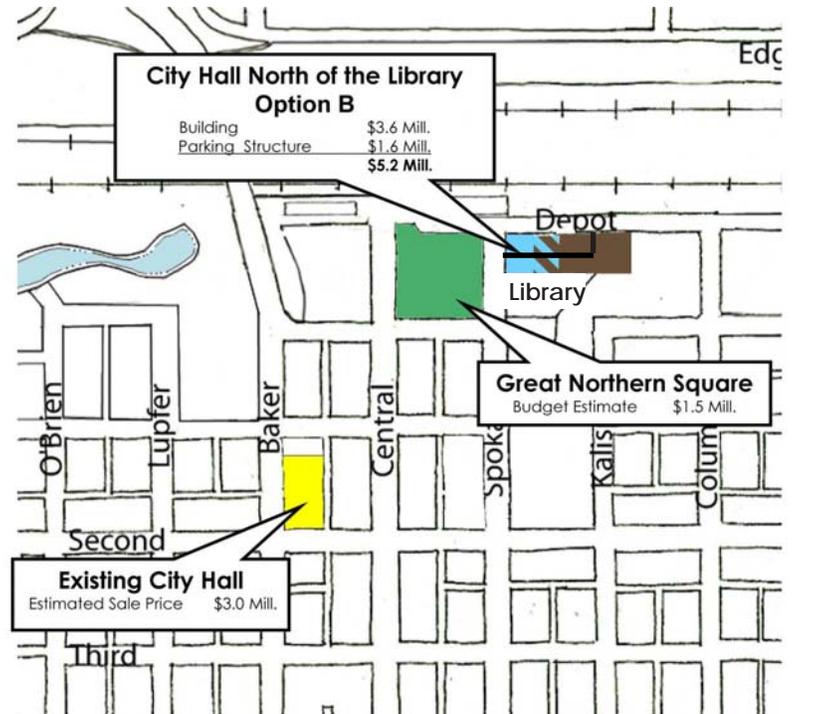
The city has finalized an agreement to obtain the Credit Union site 30 to 42 months from now.

### Option B - City Hall North of the Library

The city owns the southern and eastern portions of the potential site and the railroad controls the remaining northwestern portion.



City Hall at the Square - Option A



City Hall North of the Library - Option B

## Next Steps

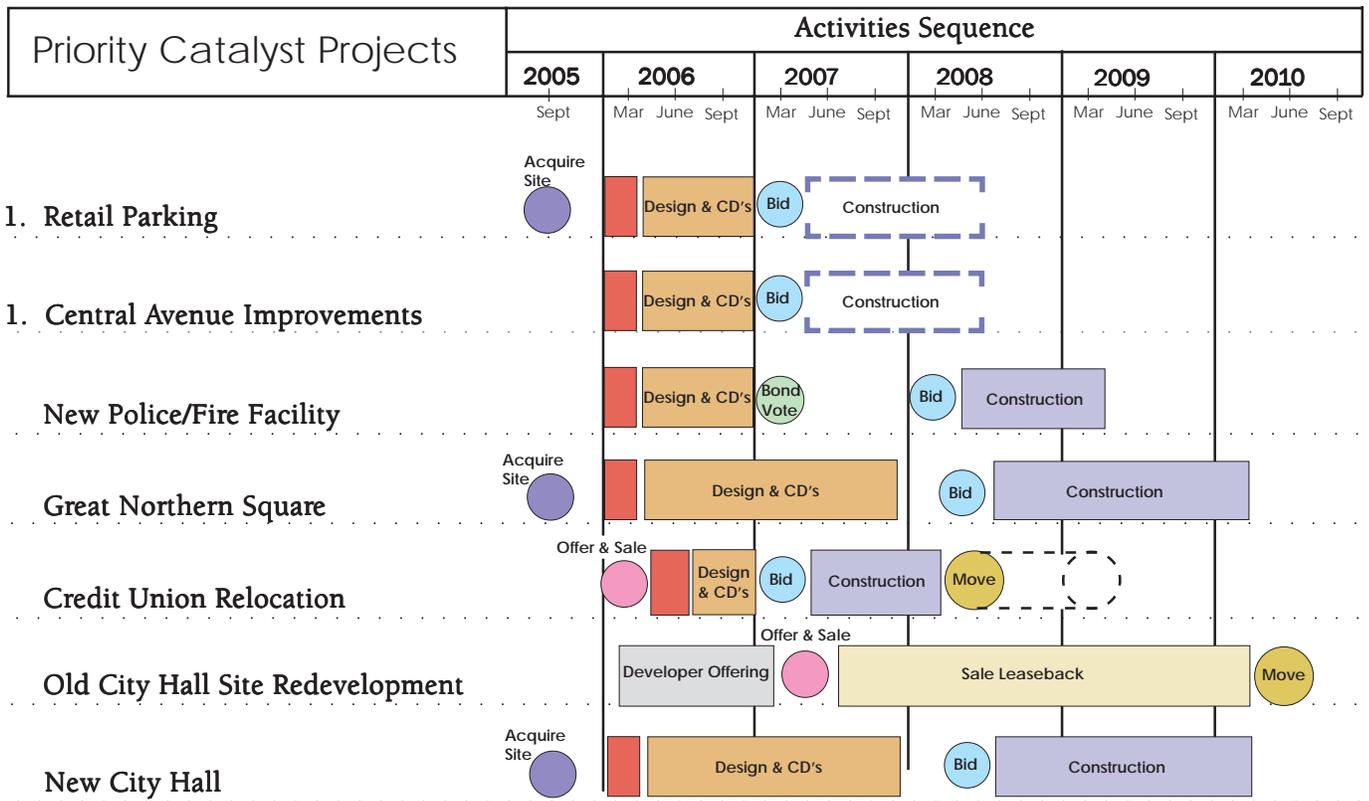
Preliminary budget implications and the required steps to implement the Action Plan are listed below:

Priority Catalyst Projects and Required Steps		Budget Estimate	Potential Revenue Source(s)
1.	<b>Retail Parking – Second &amp; Spokane</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>Public/Private Partnership</b>
	▪ Finalize site acquisition	<b>\$4.1 Million</b>	
	▪ Select design team		
	▪ Prepare design/contract documents	<b>Private</b>	
	▪ Bid	<b>\$5.6 Million</b>	
	▪ Obtain DEQ release		
	▪ Construct Parking Structure		
1.	<b>Central Avenue Improvements</b>	<b>\$2.0 Million</b>	<b>Resort Tax</b>
	▪ Select design team		
	▪ Prepare design/contract documents		
	▪ Bid street improvements		
	▪ Construct Improvements		
	<b>New Police/Fire Facility</b>	<b>\$3.5 Million</b>	<b>General Obligation Bond</b>
	▪ Select design team		
	▪ Prepare design/contract documents		
	▪ Prepare cost estimate		
	▪ Vote on bond to finance facility		
	▪ Bid facility		
	▪ Construct facility		
	<b>Great Northern Square</b>	<b>\$1.5 Million</b>	<b>City Hall Sale and Tax Increment</b>
	▪ Acquire site		
	▪ Select design team		
	▪ Prepare design/contract documents		
	▪ Bid square		
	▪ Construct square		
	<b>Sale of Old City Hall Site</b>	<b>\$3.0 Million (Income)</b>	<b>Sale</b>
	▪ Prepare developer offering		
	▪ Offer site		
	▪ Select developer		
	▪ Finalize sale leaseback agreement		
	▪ Move to new city hall		
	<b>New City Hall</b>	<b>\$3.6 Million (Building)</b>	<b>City Hall Sale \$3.0 Million Tax Increment \$3/\$5 Million</b>
	▪ Select design team		
	▪ Prepare design/contract documents		
	▪ Bid facility	<b>\$1.6 Million</b>	
	▪ Construct facility	<b>(Parking)</b>	

# Preliminary Activities Sequence

The sequence of activities needed to implement the priority catalyst projects are outlined below.

*The dashed construction schedules for Central Avenue and Retail Parking (see below) would be developed to minimize impacts on downtown businesses.*



KEY:

- Design Team Selection
- Design and Contract Documents

Background

## Overview

The consultant team, led by Crandall Arambula, worked with the Downtown Master Plan Committee, the City of Whitefish, representatives of the Heart of Whitefish and other individuals recommended by the City to establish the study area, review background materials and inventory resources and assets.

### Study Area

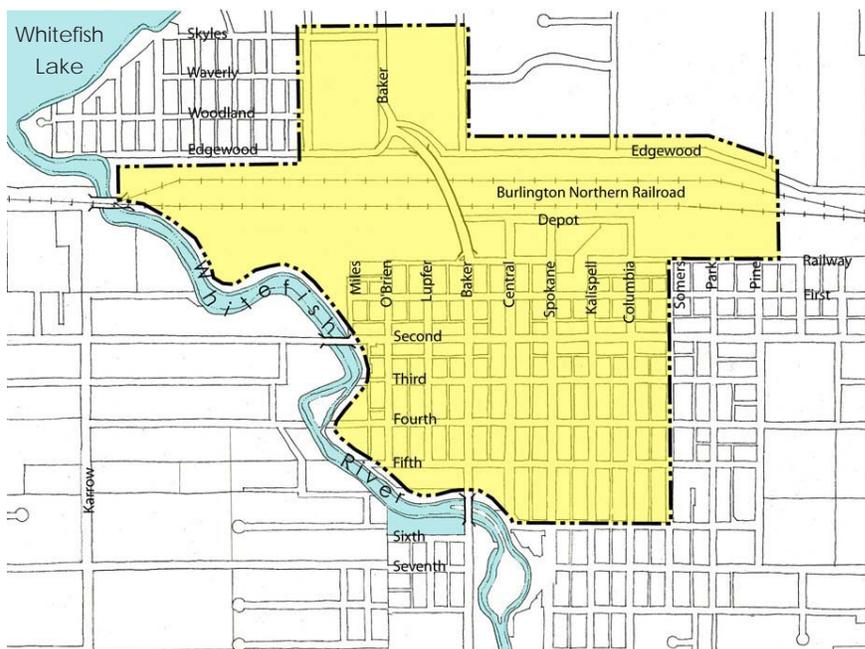
The geographic boundaries of the planning areas were identified, refined and mapped. The agreed upon study area included the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe railyards and corridor commercial area to the north, rail and residential areas along Somers and Pine to the east, 6th Street to the south and the Whitefish River to the west.

### Resources and Assets

The City's and County's mapping and data information was supplemented with field review as needed to analyze existing economic, market, transportation and infrastructure conditions.



*Downtown Whitefish Looking North*



*Downtown Whitefish Study Area*

## Community Process

The Whitefish community contributed considerable time and effort to the planning process.

### Public Meetings

Hundreds of people participated in four public workshops held from November 2004 through June 2005. Each public meeting included a presentation and workshop where attendees could express their views. Written comments and quantifiable preferences listed on the workshops' "ballot response sheets" were tallied and used in development of the master plan. This clear and constructive feedback drove each stage of the process.



Public Workshop #2 at the O'Shaughnessy Center

### Outreach

The Heart of Whitefish and the City of Whitefish were responsible for promoting the planning effort and reaching out to the community. Outreach efforts included mailing meeting announcements and publishing articles, announcements and interviews in the Whitefish Pilot highlighting each public meeting and progress of the master plan.

### Stakeholder Input

Over the duration of the project, meetings and interviews were held with a wide range of individual and group stakeholders, including businesses, public institutions, private organizations, elected officials, the Heart of Whitefish and other public agency representatives. Before and after each public workshop, regularly scheduled briefings were held with the Downtown Master Plan Committee.

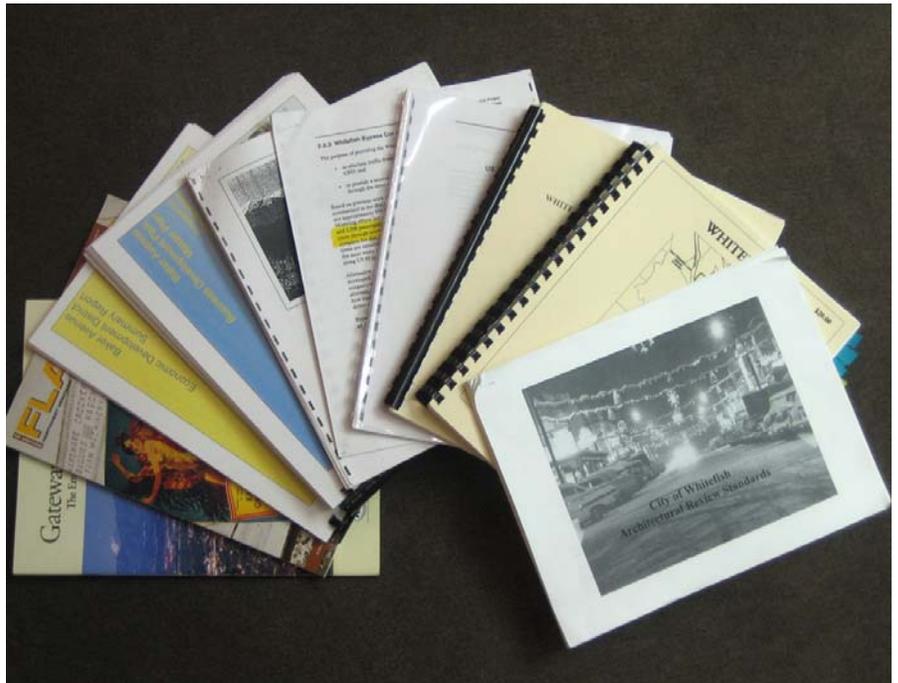
Response Sheet		TALLY		3
Workshop #3 Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan March 24, 2005				
<b>Business Vitality</b> <span style="float:right">Check Preference</span>				
1. Central Avenue Retail Framework	65 Yes	2 No	10 Other	
2. Central Avenue Street Improvements	65 Yes	3 No	4 Other	
3. Central Avenue Sidewalks	59 Concrete	16 Wood	4 Other	
4. Central Avenue Weather Protection	59 Post Supports	12 No Post Supports	6 Other	
5. Central Avenue Street Lighting	73 Pole-Mounted	4 Suspended	3 Other	
<b>Transportation</b> <span style="float:right">Check Preference</span>				
6. Highway 93 - 2nd Street Concept	64 Yes	4 No	10 Other	
7. Wisconsin Crossing Concept	74 Yes	3 No	3 Other	
<b>Public Facilities</b> <span style="float:right">Check Preference</span>				
8. Great Northern Square	62 Yes	8 No	9 Other	
9. City Hall Location	31 At the Square	41 At 2nd St.	11 Other	
<b>Environment</b> <span style="float:right">Check Preference</span>				
10. Whitefish Promenade	72 Yes	1 No	5 Other	
11. Gateway Concept	69 Yes	2 No	5 Other	
<b>Growth Management</b> <span style="float:right">Check Preference</span>				
12. Long Term Development Concept	67 Yes	0 No	7 Other	
More Comments? _____				
_____				
_____				

Response Sheet Tally of Results - Workshop #3

## Existing Regulatory Policies, Regulations, Studies and Guidelines

Existing plans, policies, regulations, codes and guidelines that affect the type of land uses, circulation and development in downtown Whitefish were gathered and reviewed. Master plan recommendations generally comply with these existing documents. The following includes the relevant plans, policies and regulations reviewed by the consultants.

- Whitefish City County Master Plan- Year 2020, Adopted- City of Whitefish Resolution No. 96-3, February 20, 1996
- Whitefish Zoning Jurisdiction Regulations- adopted Ordinance No. A-407, March 15, 1982
- City of Whitefish Architectural Review Standards- adopted Ordinance No. 03-10, April 21, 2003
- US Highway 93- Somers to Whitefish West, Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Section(f) Statement, Volume 1, 1994
- Somers to Whitefish Project- Feasibility Study of Design Alternatives.
- Major Intersection Analyses US 93, Somers to Whitefish West EIS, Technical Memorandum, September 1994
- Gateway to Glacier, The Emerging Economy of Flathead County, May 2003
- Baker Avenue Economic Development District Summary Report, March, 2003
- Baker Avenue Business Development Park Master Plan, March 2003



*Existing Regulatory Policies, Regulations, Studies and Guidelines*

## Market Analysis

Existing demographic and market conditions were used as a starting point for the creation of land use alternatives that meet realistic goals within a 20 year *period*. The Economic and Market Evaluation for Downtown Whitefish prepared by ECONorthwest can be found in the appendix to this document.

### Market and Demographic Overview

Historic growth trends and demographic conditions were examined to determine baseline development demand. As a part of these tasks:

- Population and employment growth was examined.
- Housing and retail demand was identified.

Whitefish has seen steady growth in a variety of markets. Its employment and housing stability is attributed to local tourism, a growing second homeowner population and quality of life amenities supported by the surrounding natural environment.

### A Strategy Emerges

The overall downtown market demand for residential and retail-oriented uses is summarized above and represents the cumulative 20-year demand for space in the downtown. Market and demographic forces that will probably have the greatest impact on the future of Whitefish are indicated above. The strength of Whitefish's redevelopment efforts rests on its ability to do the following:

- Establish a strong and unique retail presence that attracts

- visitors and supports local residents.
- Meet the demand for tourist accommodations in downtown.
- Increase housing opportunities in downtown.
- Provide adequate parking and public facilities.
- Improve access to the surrounding natural environment.

### A Strategy for Growth

The strategy will accommodate future demand and maximize the potential to guide forces affecting future growth. It:

- Strengthens the existing 175,000 SF of retail and provides for up to 140,000 SF of new retail along Central Avenue.

- Provides up to 334 new housing units.
- Provides an additional 740 retail supportive parking spaces.
- Identifies a site location for a new city hall and public open space anchoring the Central Avenue retail district.
- Expands downtown visitor accommodations with a 36 room boutique hotel along Central Avenue and a potential resort located on the underutilized Burlington Northern/ Santa Fe property north of Railway Street.
- Creates a public waterway amenity and a pedestrian bike loop trail linking the Whitefish River to downtown.

<u>New Downtown Demand</u>	<u>Square Footage</u>	<u>Units</u>
Retail/Restaurant/Commercial	140,000-180,000	
Residential	-----	280

*Overall Downtown Market Demand - 20 year period*

### Market and Demographic Forces Affecting Growth

1. Urban areas are attractive locations for retirees.
2. High amenity value of Whitefish's existing downtown development, cultural facilities, and surrounding natural environment.
3. Expected growth of specialty retail along Central Avenue.
4. Tourism
5. Encourage development of housing in downtown to serve low and high income populations.
6. Ability to provide adequate parking and public services.

*Market and Demographic Forces Affecting Growth*

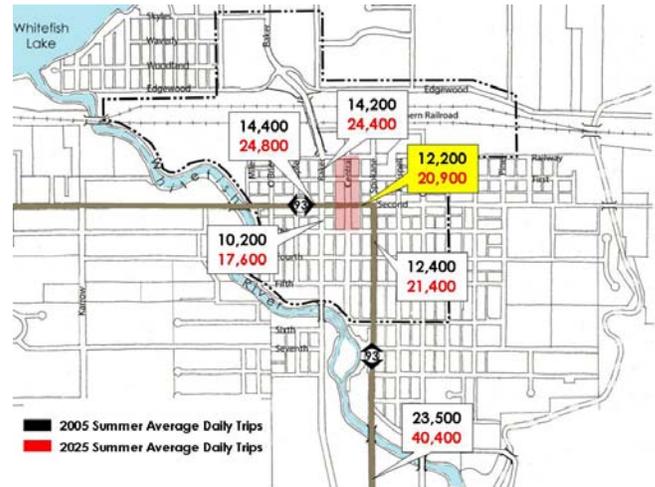
# Land Use and Transportation Assessment

Existing land use and transportation assessments were completed. This information was used as a starting point for the planning process.

## Inventory and Analysis

The City of Whitefish provided data on Highway 93, local street traffic counts, zoning, existing land uses, comprehensive plans, and additional policy and regulation documents.

In addition, an on-site reconnaissance of the downtown retail environment included a storefront evaluation that assessed current buildings and the pedestrian environment along key downtown streets. The storefront evaluation, traffic counts and a typical land use map are shown to the right. The on-site evaluation, and assessment of land use and transportation data led to the development of transportation and land use frameworks and creation of specific, publicly-reviewed alternatives that form the basis of the master plan.



Existing Traffic Counts



Existing Land Use - Typical Base Map



Primary Retail Core - Storefront Evaluation

## Opportunities and Constraints

Downtown Whitefish’s physical characteristics were evaluated and summarized (see diagrams at right) to highlight downtown’s strengths and identify weaknesses that need to be overcome or minimized.

### Opportunities

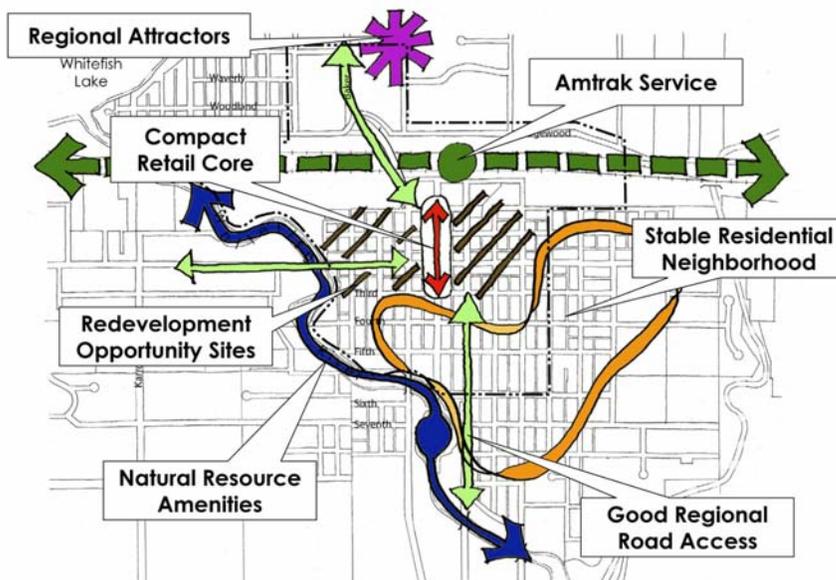
The physical opportunities that should be built upon include:

- A compact, well-established retail core along Central Avenue.
- Regional attractors and Amtrak service supporting tourism.
- Good access to downtown to and from the surrounding region.
- Local natural resource amenities, including Whitefish Lake, Whitefish River and Big Mountain.
- Stable residential neighborhoods.
- Opportunities for redevelopment and infill around the retail core.

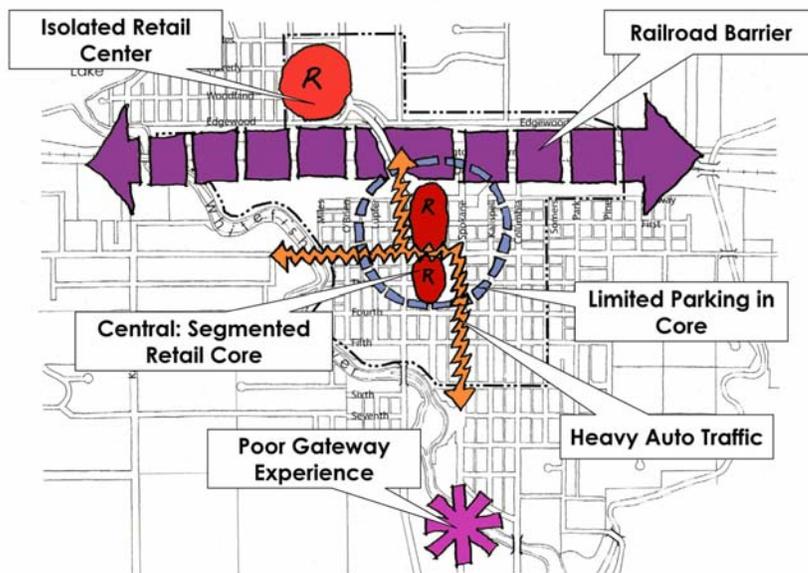
### Constraints

The physical constraints or obstacles that need to be overcome or minimized include:

- The isolated retail center north of the railyards.
- The railway that acts as a barrier between downtown and neighborhoods to the north.
- A lack of adequate parking.
- Pedestrian safety, traffic and circulation problems along Highway 93 through downtown.
- Poor gateway experiences from the south and east.
- The auto and truck traffic along Second Street that interrupts the retail string causing a fragmented retail core along Central Avenue.



Opportunities Diagram



Constraints Diagram

# Transportation Framework

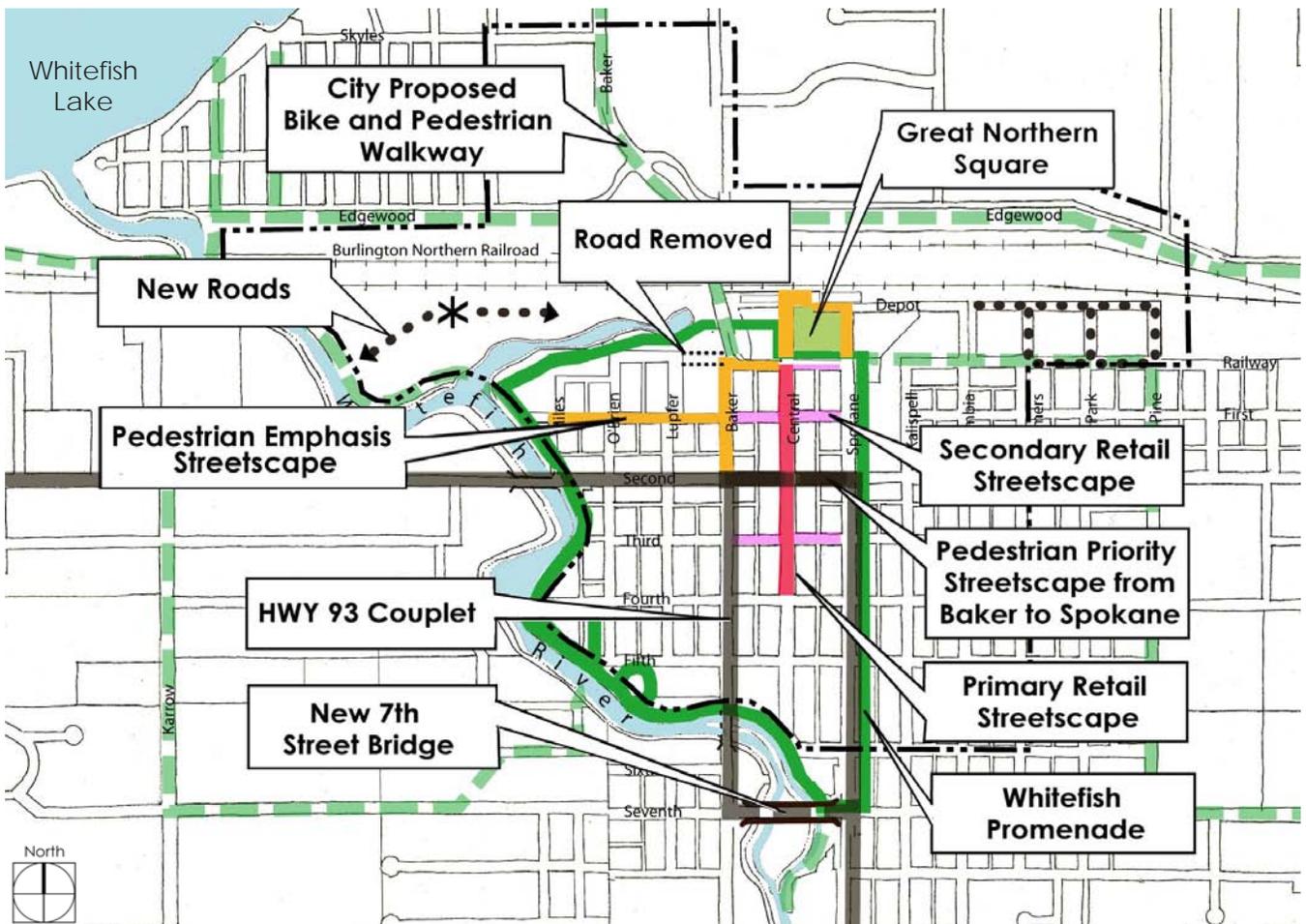
## Overview

Much of downtown Whitefish is in the public realm – its streets and sidewalks. The high-quality streetscapes, open spaces and trails make downtown a memorable destination creating an environment that attracts investment and supports a diversity of development.

### A Coherent System

The Transportation Framework establishes a coherent, pedestrian-friendly environment and auto/truck circulation network. The key elements of this framework are identified on the graphic below (*excluding gateways, see page 28*) and detailed on subsequent pages:

- Highway 93 Couplet.
- New Roads.
- Primary Retail Streetscapes.
- Secondary Retail Streetscapes.
- Pedestrian Priority Streetscapes.
- Pedestrian Emphasis Streetscapes.
- Shared Pedestrian and Bike Trail.



Transportation Framework

# Auto and Truck

The framework recognizes that autos and trucks will be the primary modes of access into and through downtown. The following elements will ensure efficient, safe auto and truck movement without negatively affecting the pedestrian and bicycle environment.

## Key Elements

### Highway 93 Improvements

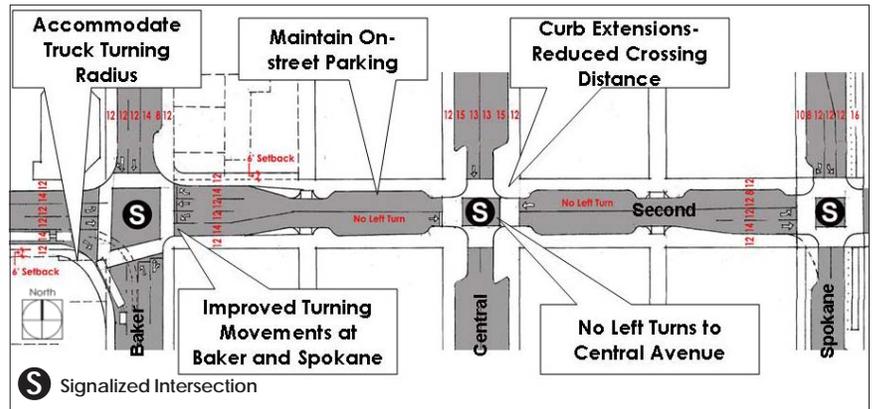
- Improve auto and truck circulation by providing a couplet along Spokane Avenue and Baker Avenue.
- Maintain on-street parking along Second Street for a minimum of a half block on either side of Central Avenue (to alleys).
- Improve access options by providing a “contra-flow” lane along Baker Street.

along Baker Street.

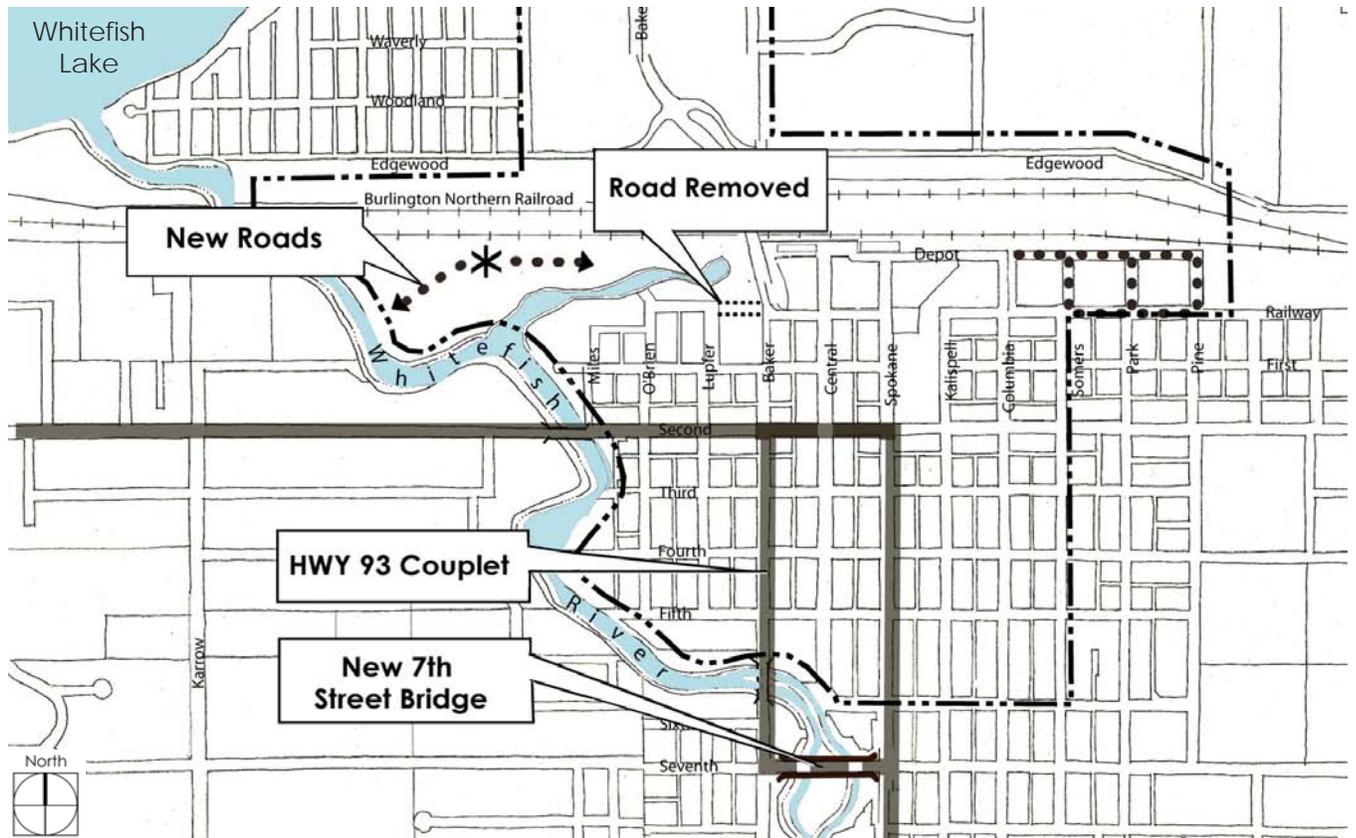
- Provide turn lanes and improve truck-turning radii at the intersection of Second Street and Baker Avenue.
- Prohibit left turn lanes from Second Street onto Central Avenue.
- Provide a new bridge crossing at Seventh Street.

### New Roads

- Create circulation and access for redevelopment parcels consistent with the adjacent residential street pattern.



Second Street Improvements



Auto and Truck Diagram

# Pedestrian

## Design for the Pedestrian

Streets and sidewalks make up more than 40 percent of the land area within downtown Whitefish. Well-designed, pedestrian-friendly streets contribute to a successful and vibrant town. The Pedestrian Framework focuses specifically on expanding and improving the pedestrian environment.

## Key Elements

### Primary and Secondary Retail Streetscapes

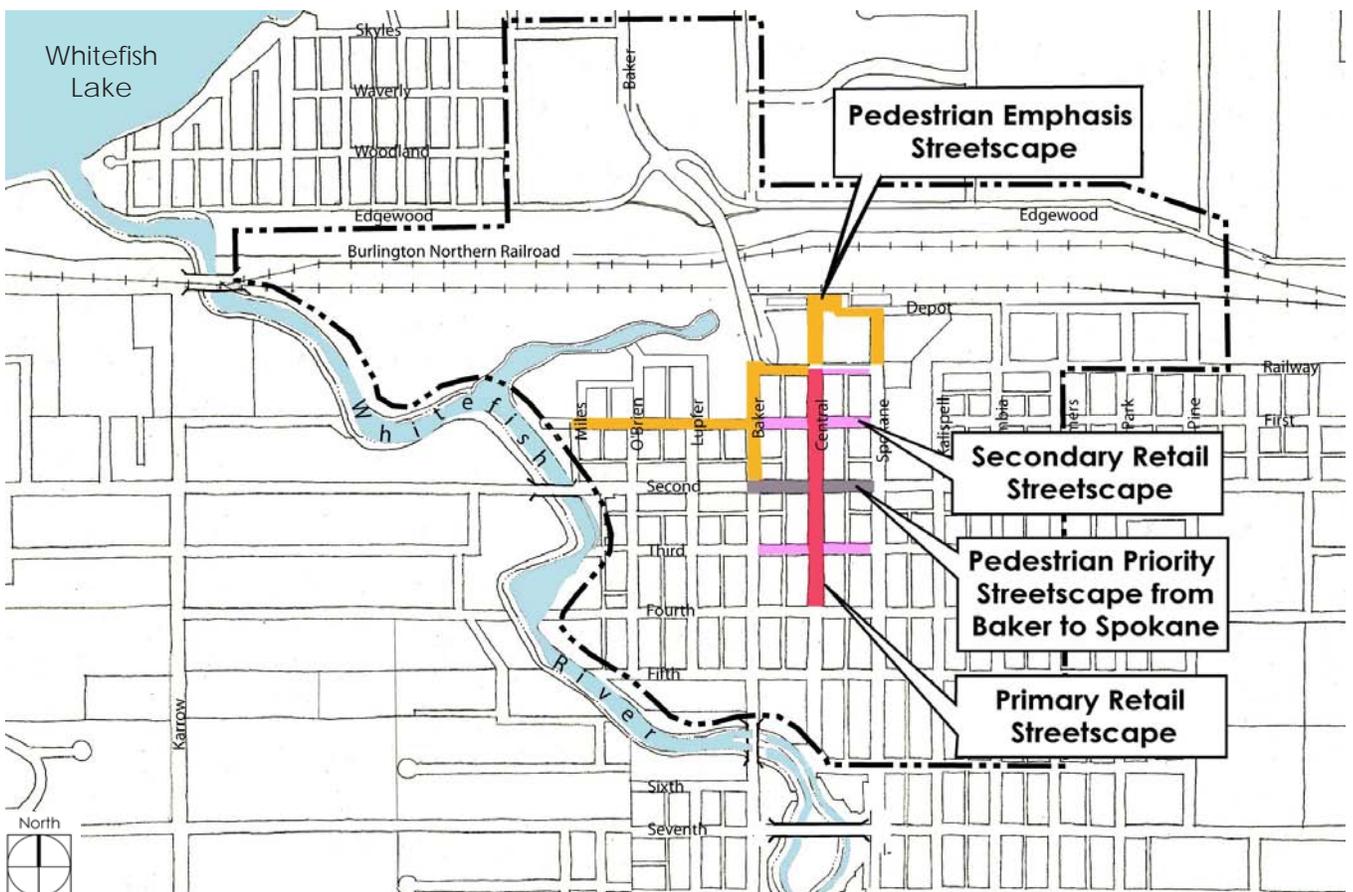
These streetscapes include specific design concepts that support and improve retail viability on Central Avenue and intersecting streets from Fourth Street to Railway Street.

## Pedestrian Priority Streetscape

This streetscape improves pedestrian safety along and across Second Street.

## Pedestrian Emphasis Streetscape

This streetscape provides a coherent organized downtown pedestrian loop and connects adjacent neighborhoods with downtown retail streets.



Pedestrian Diagram

**Primary Pedestrian Retail Streets**

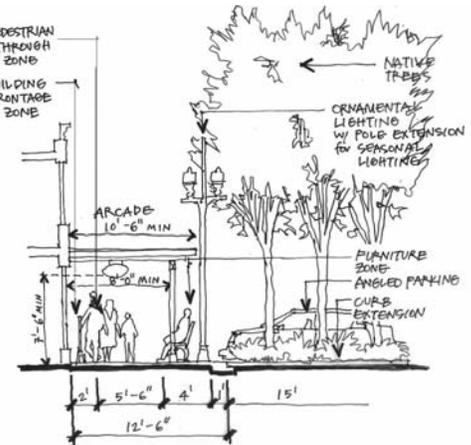
The creation of successful retail streets has been one of the most desired yet least understood aspects of urban revitalization. Whitefish's Central Avenue has many desirable elements that make a retail streetscape successful, including weather protection, wide sidewalks and a physical separation between travel lanes and pedestrian areas. What is lacking is a consistent application of sidewalk surfaces, landscaping, arcade design, lighting and street furniture elements.

**Central Avenue**

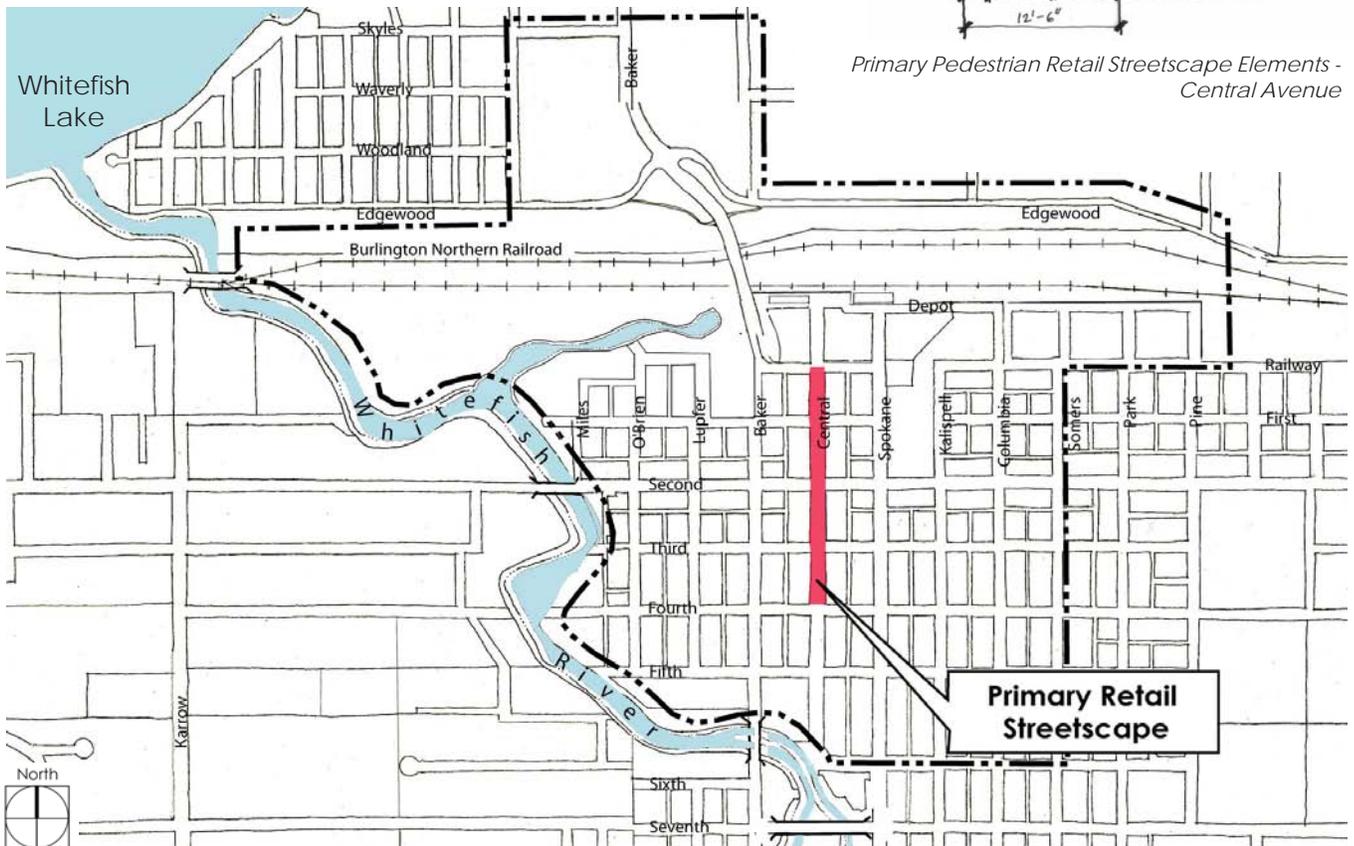
To strengthen Central Avenue's retail viability, the pedestrian Primary Retail Streetscape elements shown to the right must be provided. The erosion of one or more of these elements could result in a weakened retail environment. Detailed improvements to Central Avenue are located in the Implementation section of this report.



Central Avenue



Primary Pedestrian Retail Streetscape Elements - Central Avenue



Primary Retail Diagram

**Secondary Pedestrian Retail Streets**

The streets adjacent to the blocks that comprise the “primary retail streetscape” along Central Avenue must be complemented by secondary retail streetscape improvements as shown below. The secondary pedestrian retail streets should:

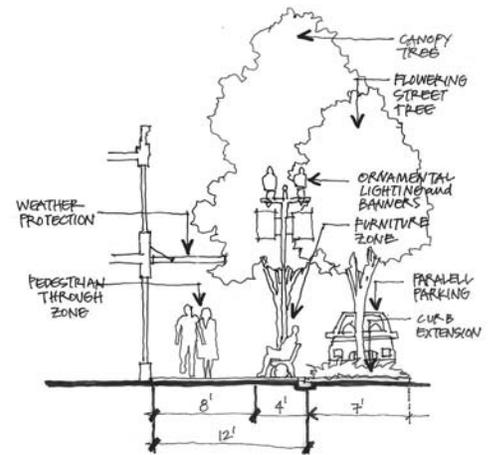
- Include similar improvements to those recommended for primary retail streets, although not all improvements are necessary. For example, secondary streets should have similar street trees and lighting to those of primary streets; however, they would not require arcades.

- Use distinctive streetscape elements – paving, street trees, street furniture and lighting.
- Include on-street parking.

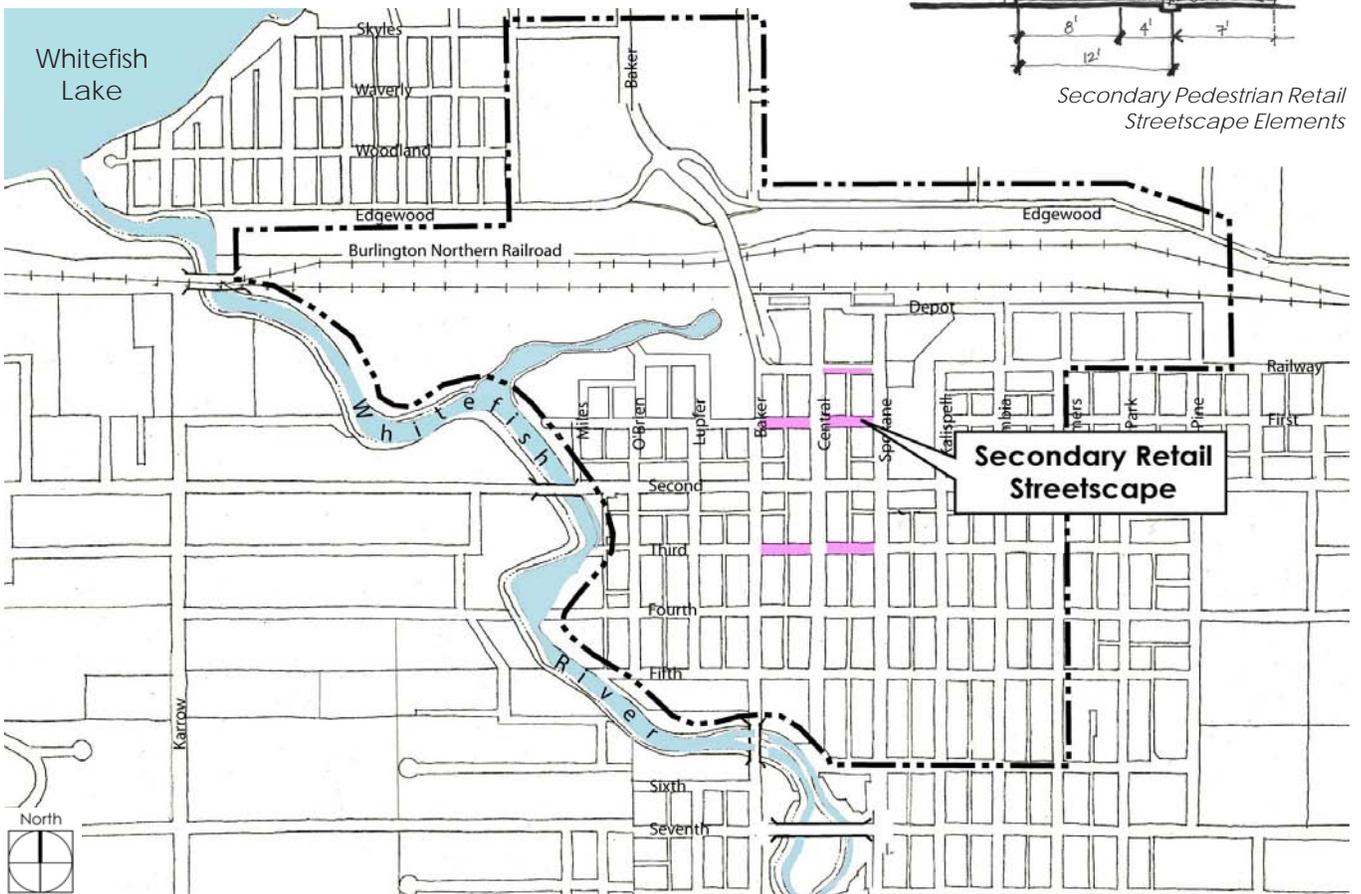
Secondary Retail Streetscape elements are identified to the right.



Railway Street



Secondary Pedestrian Retail Streetscape Elements



Secondary Retail Streetscape Diagram

**Pedestrian Priority Streets**

While Second Street must facilitate the movement of truck and auto traffic as a part of the Highway 93 system, it must not create an inhospitable pedestrian barrier that divides the retail district in half. Critical to the success of downtown, an improved, safe crossing at Central Avenue must be developed. The design concept includes:

- Curb extensions with landscaping at intersections.
- A well-defined street that uses consistent elements such as “signature” trees and links downtown with residential areas.

- A well-designed lighting and paving pattern with scored concrete sidewalks and crosswalks.
- On-street parking from alley to alley on both sides of the street (minimum).

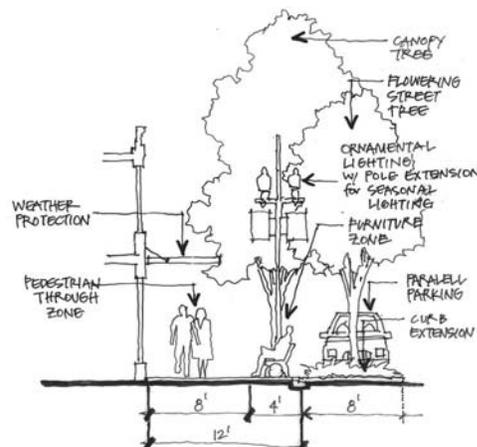
The pedestrian priority streetscape elements are shown to the right.

**Second Street**

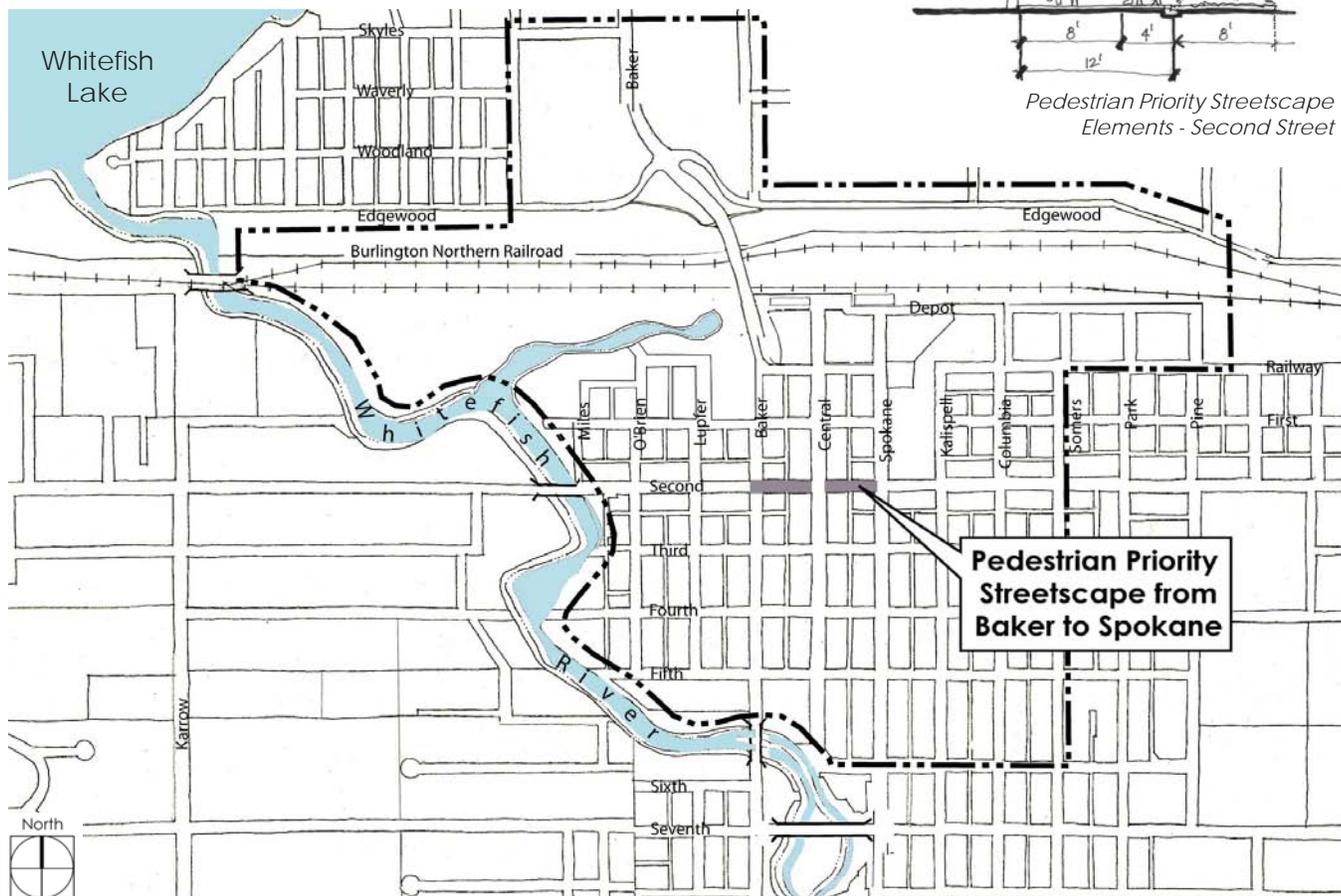
Detailed improvements to Second Street are located in the Implementation section of this report.



Second Street/ HWY 93



Pedestrian Priority Streetscape Elements - Second Street



Pedestrian Priority Streetscape Diagram

### Pedestrian Emphasis Streets

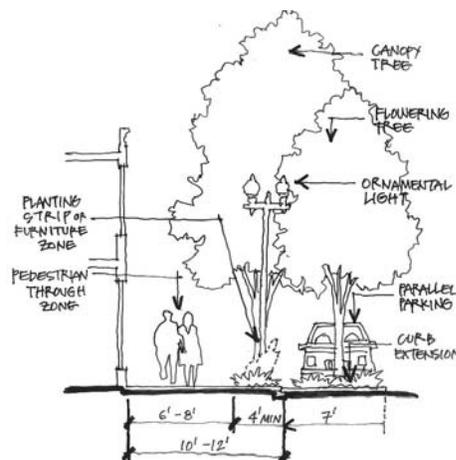
Several downtown Whitefish streets will have a “pedestrian emphasis.” These streets are intended to complement the retail and pedestrian priority streets by providing enhanced pedestrian connections to adjacent residential neighborhoods and historic districts. The pedestrian emphasis streets will:

- Use consistent elements such as street trees similar to retail and pedestrian priority streets.
- Include lighting and paving patterns (scored concrete sidewalks) similar to retail and pedestrian priority streets.

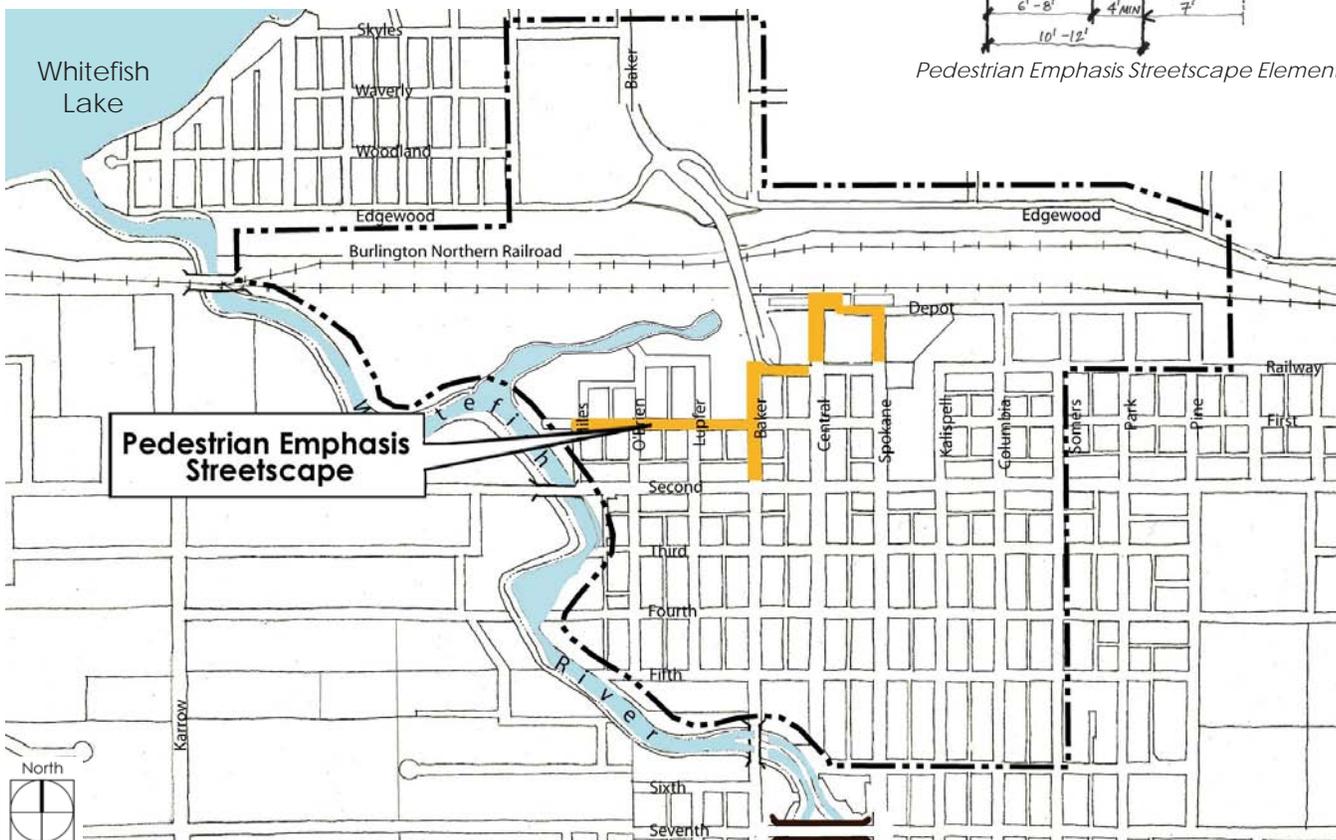
The pedestrian emphasis streetscape elements are shown to the right.



Baker Avenue



Pedestrian Emphasis Streetscape Elements



Pedestrian Emphasis Streetscape Diagram

# Shared Pedestrian/Bike Trail

The shared pedestrian and bike trail elements create an identifiable pedestrian and bike loop around the downtown connecting with the city's existing and planned bike and pedestrian walkway system. It will serve as an amenity for development and provide safe and convenient off-street recreational access to downtown attractions.

## A New Recreation Loop

The Whitefish Promenade design concept accommodates the following users:

- Pedestrians with infant strollers.
- Low-speed bicyclists, especially families and children.
- Rollerbladers and rollerskaters.
- Joggers.
- Seasonal cross-country skiers.

The new pedestrian loop would:

- Be constructed within existing public rights-of-way.

- Include three new segments –  
 1) Spokane Avenue, (west side of street) from Seventh Street to Railway Street;  
 2) Railway Street, (north side of street) from Spokane Avenue to the new Wisconsin Underpass;  
 3) along the new Whitefish Landing.

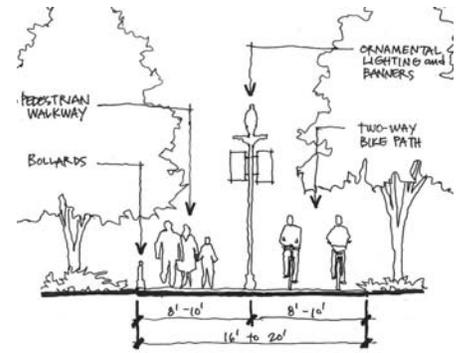
The off-street ped/bike elements are shown to the right.

## Wisconsin Overpass

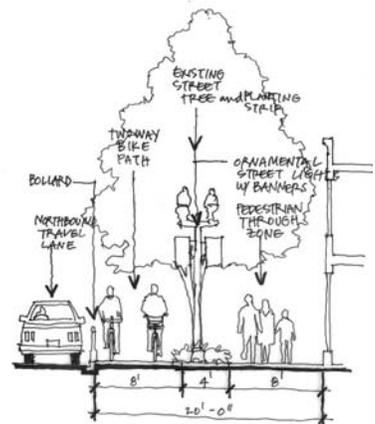
Bike and sidewalk improvements leading to the Wisconsin Avenue overpass would include:

- On-street bike lanes.
- Relocated jersey barriers with new landscaping.
- Direct pedestrian and bike access to the proposed Wisconsin Underpass.

Design concepts for Spokane Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue are located in the Implementation section of this report.



Whitefish Landing - Off-Street Ped/Bike Elements- Typical Section



Spokane Avenue Off-Street Ped/Bike Elements



Shared Pedestrian/ Bike Trail Diagram

# Gateways

Special transition elements that signal entry into the downtown should be provided as indicated on the graphic to the right. There are two gateway treatment types that respond to either corridors approaching downtown or transitions at crossings and residential areas near the center of town.

## Corridor Treatments

To improve the gateway into Whitefish along the west and south Highway 93 corridors, the following elements should be introduced:

- High-quality and consistent design of directional and informational signage.
- Roadway border plantings of large conifer trees and native landscaping.
- Strategic landscape screening of highway corridor commercial uses.
- Signature lighting and banners consistent with the downtown.

## Crossing Gateways

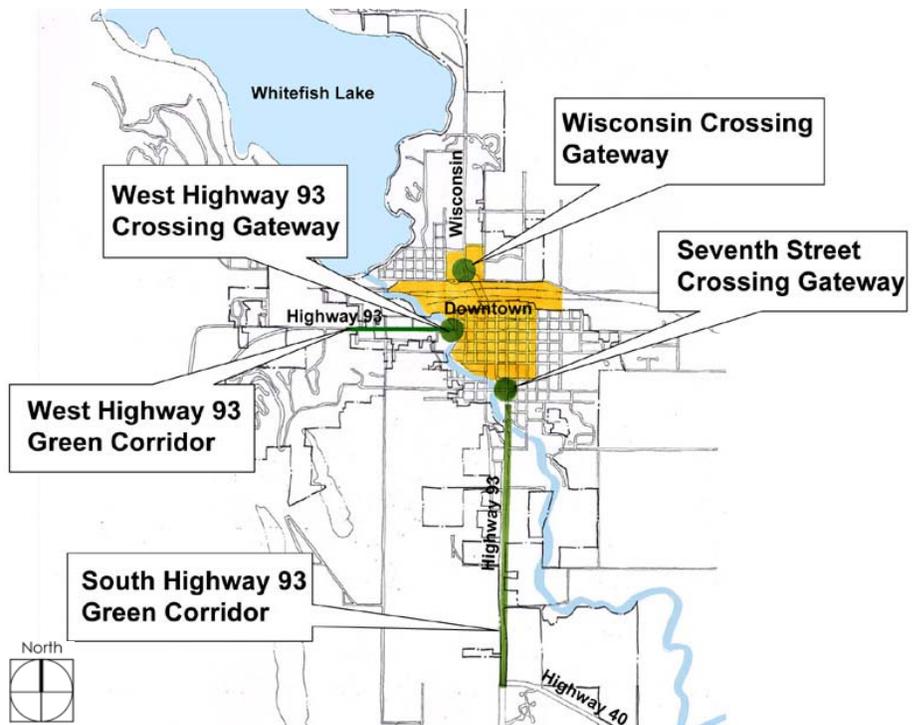
There are three primary transition gateways that occur at crossings over the Whitefish River (two locations) and the Burlington Northern railyards. The design of these areas should demonstrate a transition from the highway corridor design treatment into the downtown pedestrian-oriented streetscapes. The gateways include:

## Wisconsin Crossing

- “Welcome to Downtown Whitefish” directional and informational signage legible to pedestrians, motorists and cyclists.
- Signature lighting, sidewalk and bike lane improvements across the bridge to Baker Avenue.
- Roadway border plantings of large conifer trees and native landscaping. See concept design of the Wisconsin Crossing in the Implementation section of this master plan.

## West Highway 93 and South Highway 93

- “Welcome to Downtown Whitefish” directional and information signage readable by pedestrians, motorists and cyclists.
- Signature lighting and sidewalk improvements across Second Street bridge.
- Distinctive bridge design of the proposed 7th Street crossing that minimizes impacts on the Whitefish River both visually and environmentally.



Gateway Diagram

# Land Use Framework

# Overview

The Land Use Framework provides a practical, proactive guide that outlines the preferred community vision for development of downtown Whitefish. It is intended to attract both new uses and maintain and strengthen existing, desirable uses.

The framework is both realistic and achievable. It addresses and meets the market outlook for Whitefish over the next 20 years, as identified in the *Economic and Market Evaluation for Downtown Whitefish* prepared by ECONorthwest.

## A Mix of Uses

The Land Use Framework promotes a mix of uses, both vertically and horizontally. For example, mixed-use buildings with housing or office on upper floors support the retail uses on their ground floors.

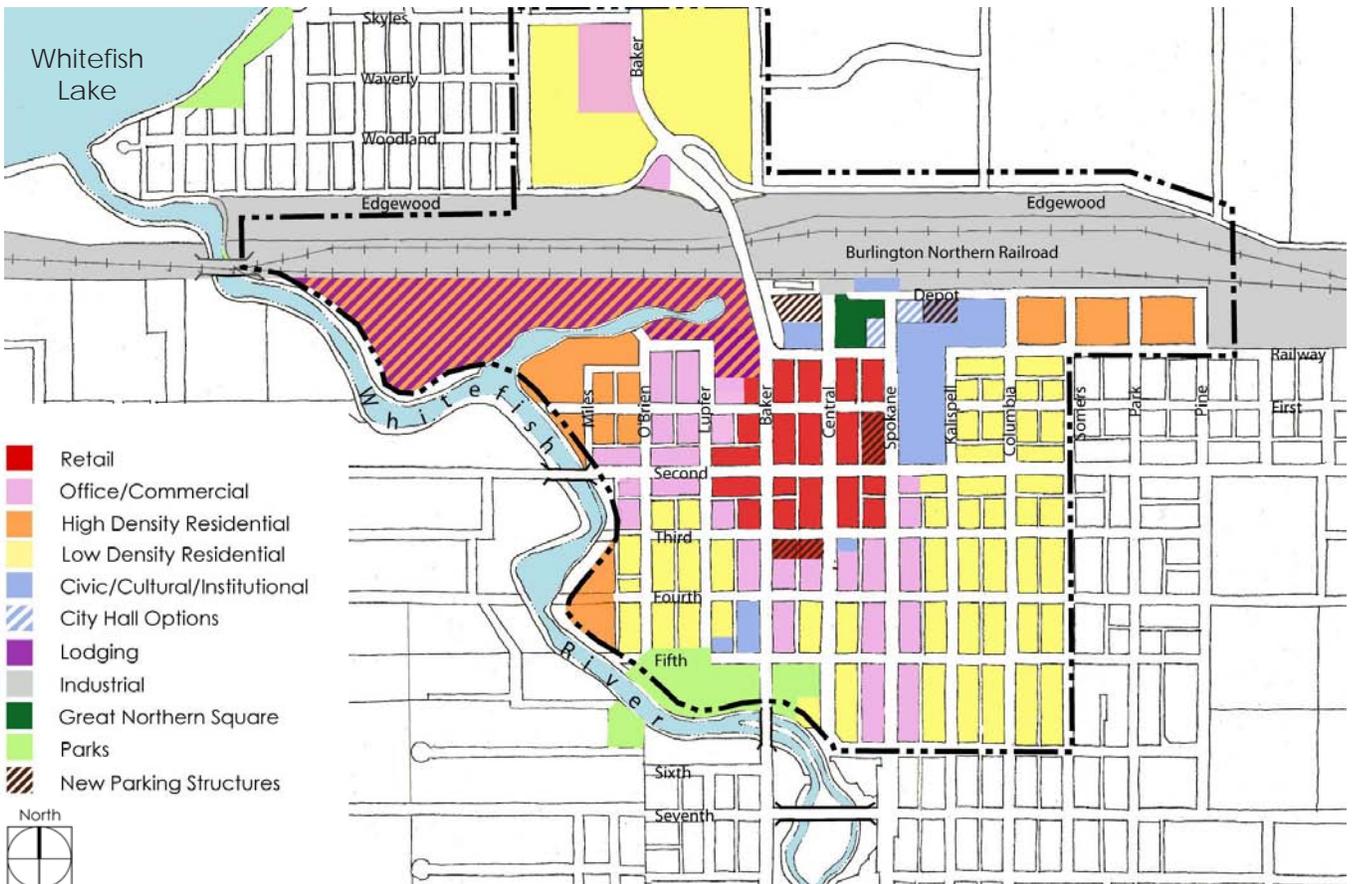
When parcels contain a vertical mix of uses, the color shown on the Land Use Framework typically indicates the predominate use.

Development should be pedestrian-friendly, compatible with existing buildings' scale, massing and materials and employ sustainable practices for construction and habitation.

## Zoning and Comprehensive Plan Compatibility

Uses proposed by the Land Use Framework require some amendments to the *Whitefish City-County Master Plan-2020 Comprehensive Plan* and current zoning ordinances.

A detailed description of these changes is included in the Implementation section of this master plan. Existing private property shown for public uses such as the Great Northern Square would operate as is until acquired by a public entity or transferred to public use by easement, dedication or other means.



Land Use Framework

# Retail

Successful retail is key to having a healthy downtown. In Whitefish, successful retail will depend on having a well-defined retail district that strengthens present retail business and provides for retail expansion. The Land Use Framework identifies sites that can accommodate both small scale retail establishments and potential larger floorplate contemporary retail development. The framework ensures that downtown Whitefish can meet projected market demand while respecting and maintaining the historic building fabric that supports many local, independent retailers.

## Recipe for Success

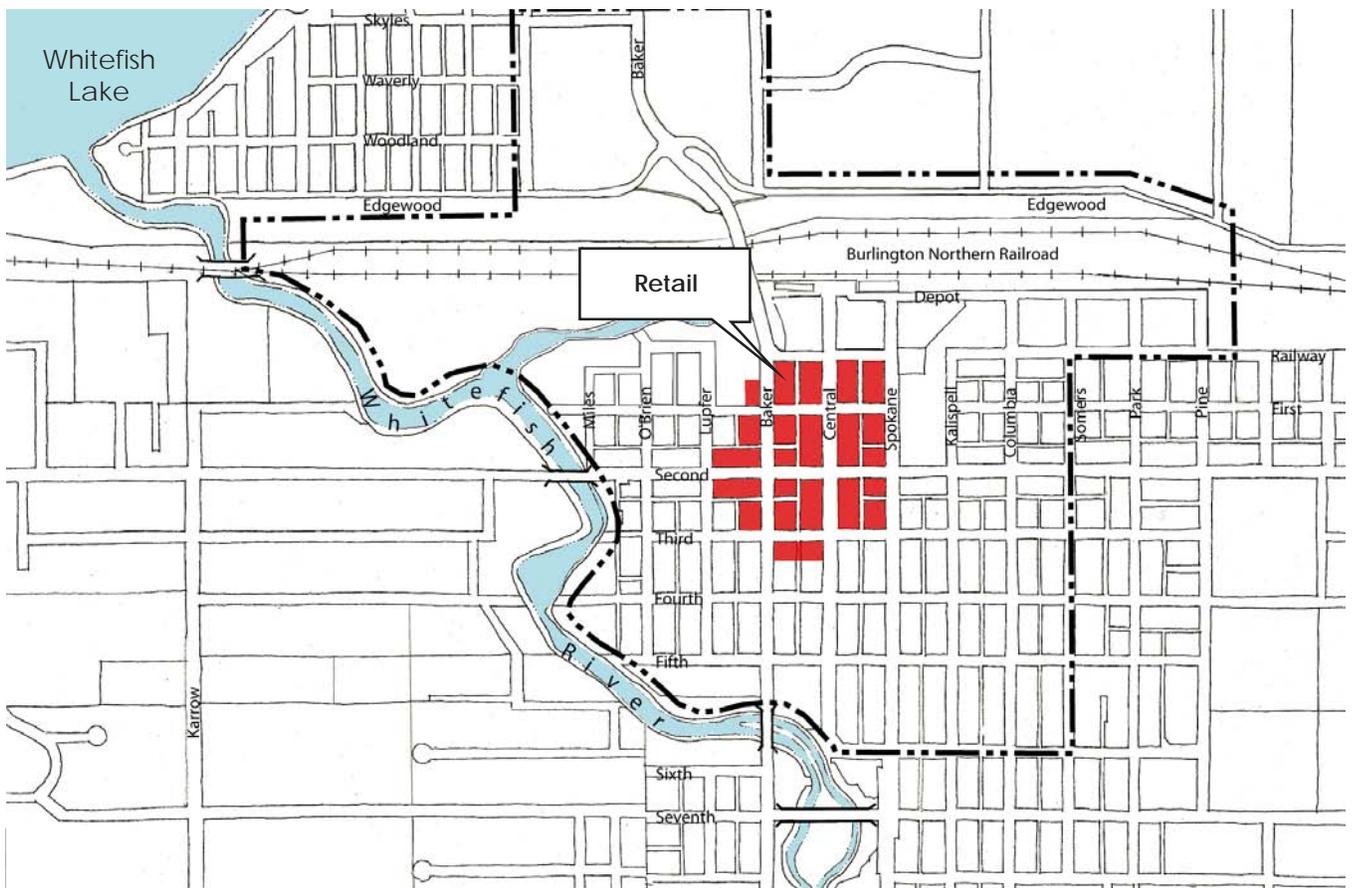
The Retail Framework builds upon downtown Whitefish's unique qualities, including its:

- Wealth of historic buildings and infrastructure of existing retail uses.
- Adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- Cultural and architectural tourist attractors.
- Convenient regional access along Highway 93.

## Fundamental Retail Requirements

The requirements for successful retail must be:

- *Compact and walkable* – extending no more than 1/4 mile in length along Central Avenue
- *Street-oriented and active* – continuous retail uses activating ground floors of buildings on both sides of streets to form a pedestrian loop.
- *Served by adequate parking* – especially on-street parking.
- *Highly visible* – exposed to drive-by automobile traffic that ensures retail viability.



Retail Framework

**Downtown Retail Concept**

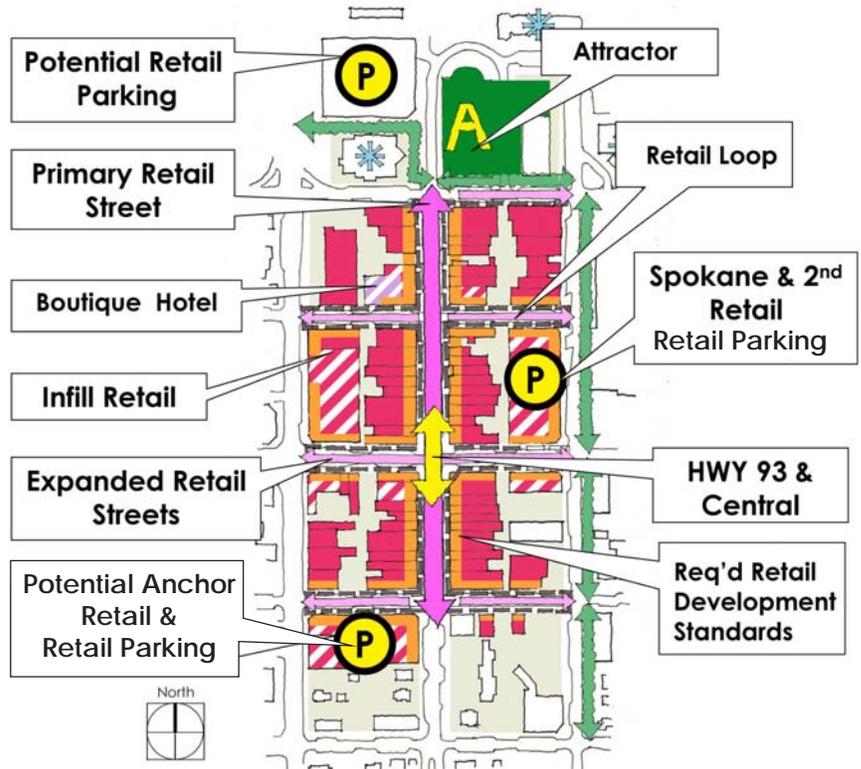
The downtown Whitefish Retail Concept includes:

- A Central Avenue Primary Retail Loop – continuous retail on both sides of street.
- Anchor/Attractor development – at each end of the primary retail loop.
- Ample room for future expansion – promotes infill along the Central Avenue retail core and onto blocks intersecting the primary retail loop and creating complementary “secondary retail” loops along Railway, First, Second and Third Avenues.

**Retail Anchor/Attractor**

Anchor retail and attractor public amenity sites located at each end of the Central Avenue primary retail street will benefit downtown by providing:

- Foot traffic south of 2nd Street to animate businesses between 2nd and 3rd Streets.
- Large floorplate sites suitable for destination uses such as an “art-house” cinema or specialty retail store.
- Parking on site.



Downtown Retail Concept



Expanding Retail Opportunities Plan

# Parking

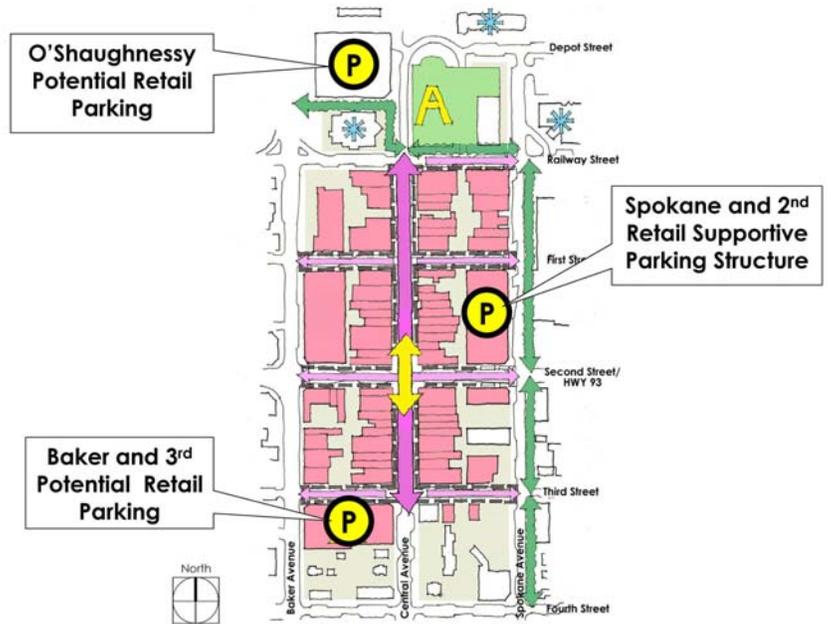
A downtown parking facility often serves as a city’s “front door,” leaving a lasting impression on visitors and residents alike. It is simply good business practice to provide public parking that welcomes the shopper and supports the retail environment.

Parking in Downtown Whitefish is at or near capacity especially during the tourist season. The Parking Framework identifies key strategic locations for downtown public parking structures. Design concepts for these retail parking structures are described in the Implementation section of this master plan.

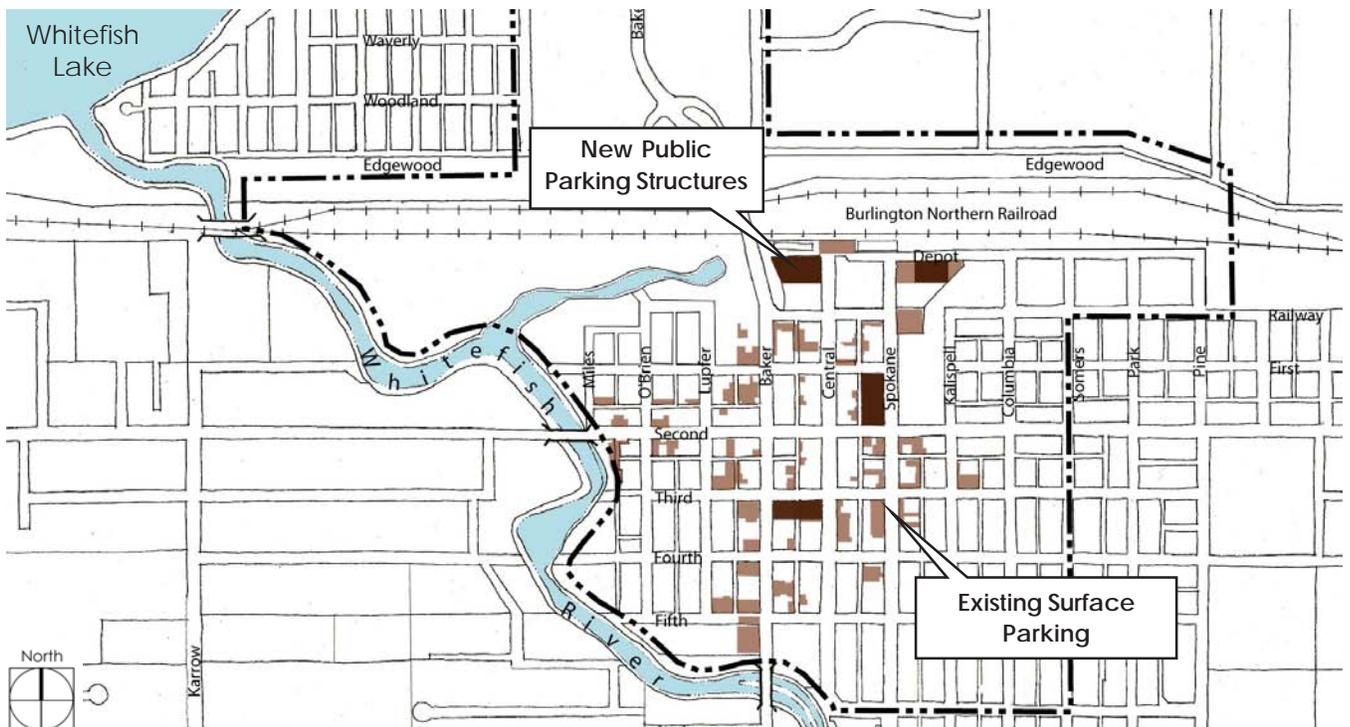
## Shopper-friendly Parking

For parking to facilitate downtown activity, it must be easy to locate, easy to use, and locked into the retail core. Therefore, parking structures should include:

- Convenient access to the primary retail street.
- Active uses at the ground floor, including corner entries to shops.
- Facades compatible with adjacent uses.
- High-quality durable materials and design details.
- Safe, well-lighted, well-maintained facilities.



*Retail-Supportive Parking Concept*



*Parking Diagram*

# Civic/Institutional/Cultural

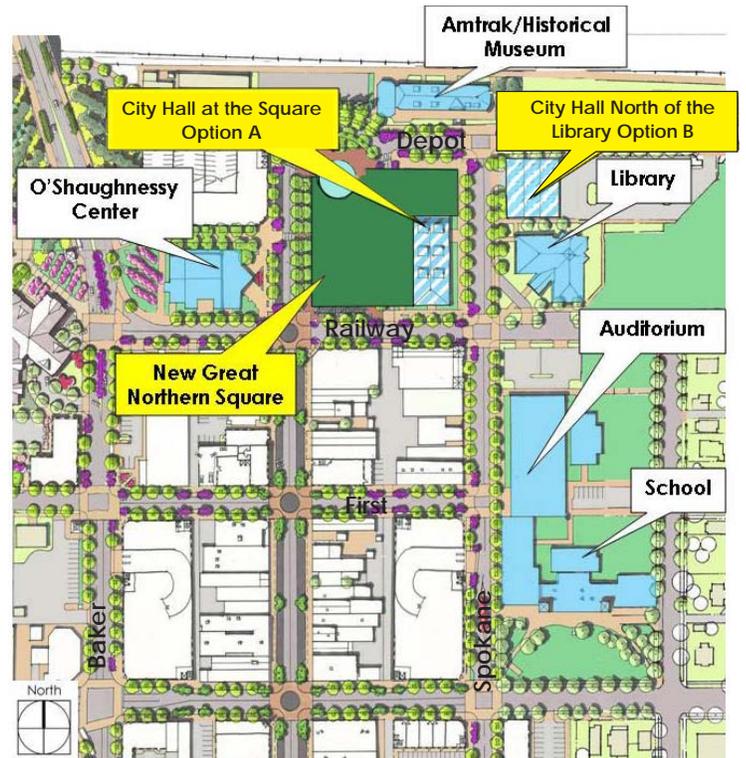
Providing for additional civic, institutional and cultural uses signals to the community that downtown will continue to be the focus for community functions and gatherings. These uses offer essential services, provide jobs and draw thousands of visitors.

## A Civic Campus

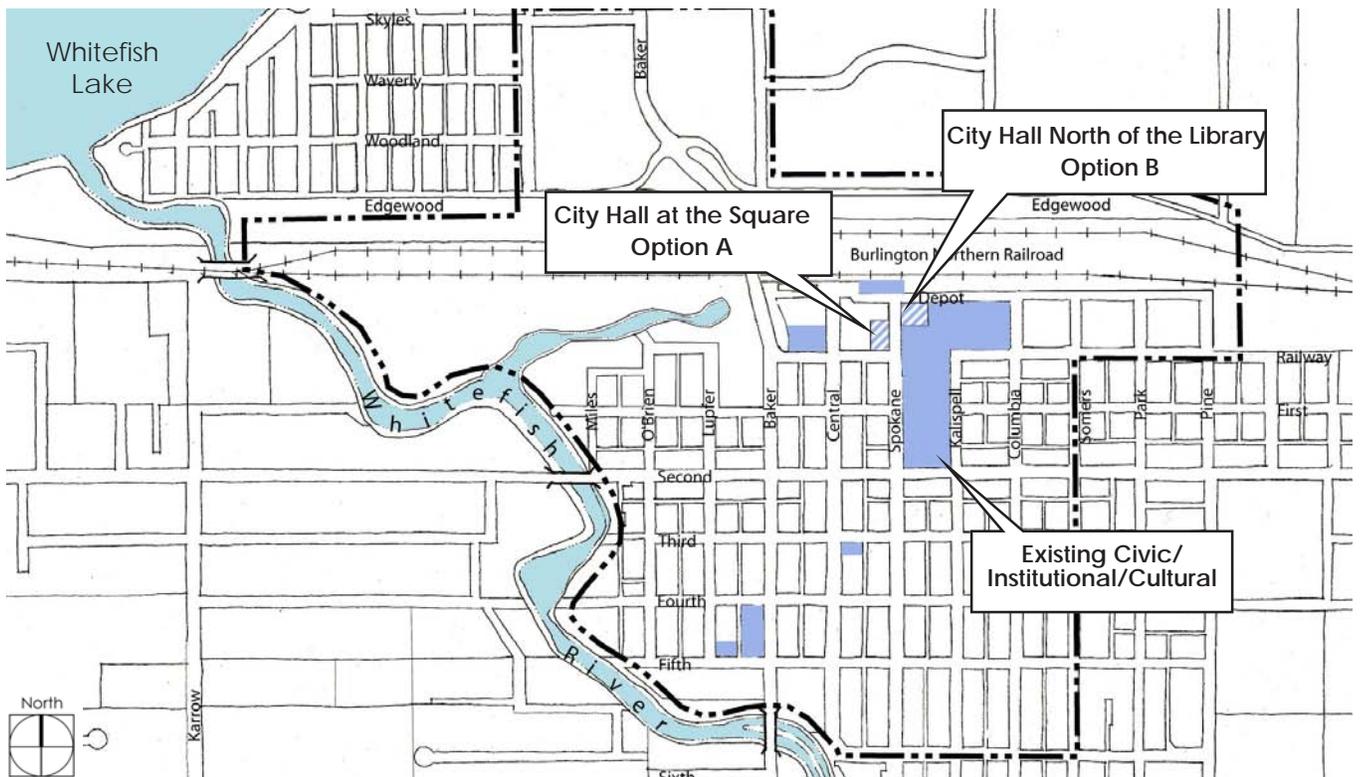
The Civic/Institutional/Cultural Concept combines existing civic and cultural attractors with a new city hall and public square for:

- A unified and distinct “civic campus.”
- A public attractor that will anchor the retail core along Central Avenue.
- An amenity for existing and future residents.

See page 43 for more information on City Hall Redevelopment - Options A & B



Civic Campus Concept



Civic/Institutional/Cultural Diagram

## Squares / Open Space

To attract new development and support the unique quality of life in Whitefish, it is essential to create new open space near downtown and maximize the use and access to existing open spaces such as the Whitefish River.

### Catalyst for Change

The Squares/Open Space diagram provides for a new public square and a new small-craft navigable waterway connecting the Whitefish River to downtown. The Great Northern Square and other open spaces should be publicly owned and maintained, however, construction costs for the waterway will be privately funded. They include:

### Great Northern Square

Located at the existing private Credit Union Park, the new square would:

- Act as an organizing element for a civic campus anchoring the Central Avenue retail district.
- Include active and passive gathering areas.
- Contain both turf and paved surfaces.
- Provide possible sites for public art display.
- Provide possible interactive fountain or other similar water elements.
- Accommodate farmers markets and arts and crafts fairs.

### Whitefish Landing

Located on underutilized Burlington Northern/Santa Fe rail property, the new landing would include:

- A small craft-navigable waterway connecting to the Whitefish River.
- Public access along all sides.
- The Whitefish Promenade off-street recreation trail along the southern edge
- An interactive fountain or other similar water elements.
- Native landscaping and tree canopy cover to support wetland and animal habitat.

See the Implementation section of this document for further description of the Great Northern Square and the Whitefish Landing.



Squares and Open Space Diagram

# Office/Commercial

Recent redevelopment of the Railway District and segments of Spokane Avenue has included a mix of commercial, office and residential uses. The Office/Commercial Framework encourages this mix of uses and supports a variety of goods, services and activities.

To support office and commercial development, opportunities must exist for:

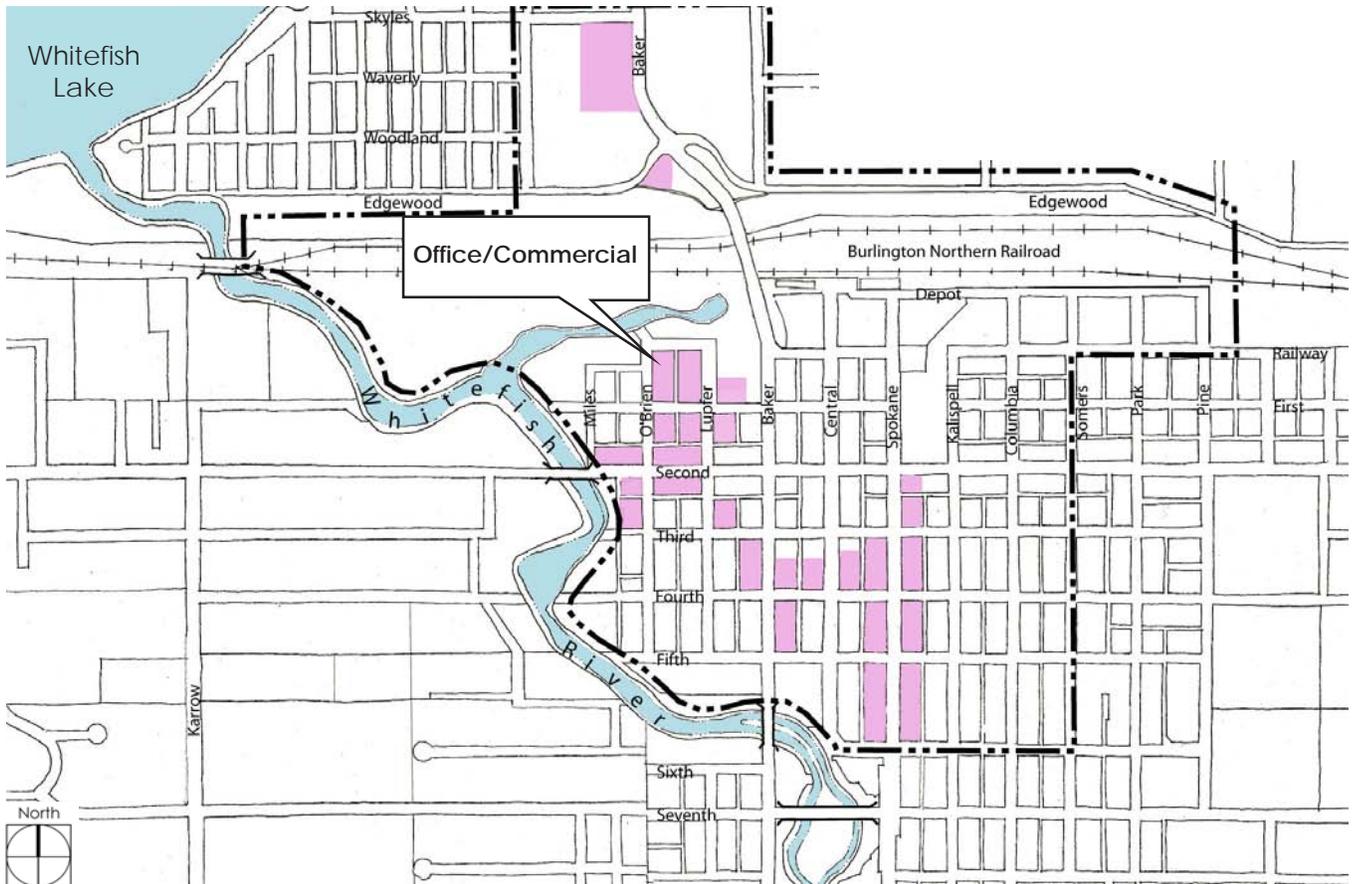
- Small “incubator” businesses.
- Larger professional office and service uses.
- A nontraditional combination of housing and employment spaces, such as work-live.



*New Office/Commercial Buildings-  
Lupfer Street*



*New Office/Commercial Building  
along Spokane Street*



*Office/Commercial Diagram*

# Lodging

Lodging can be an important element of any successful downtown. This is especially true in Whitefish, where tourism is a crucial economic driver.

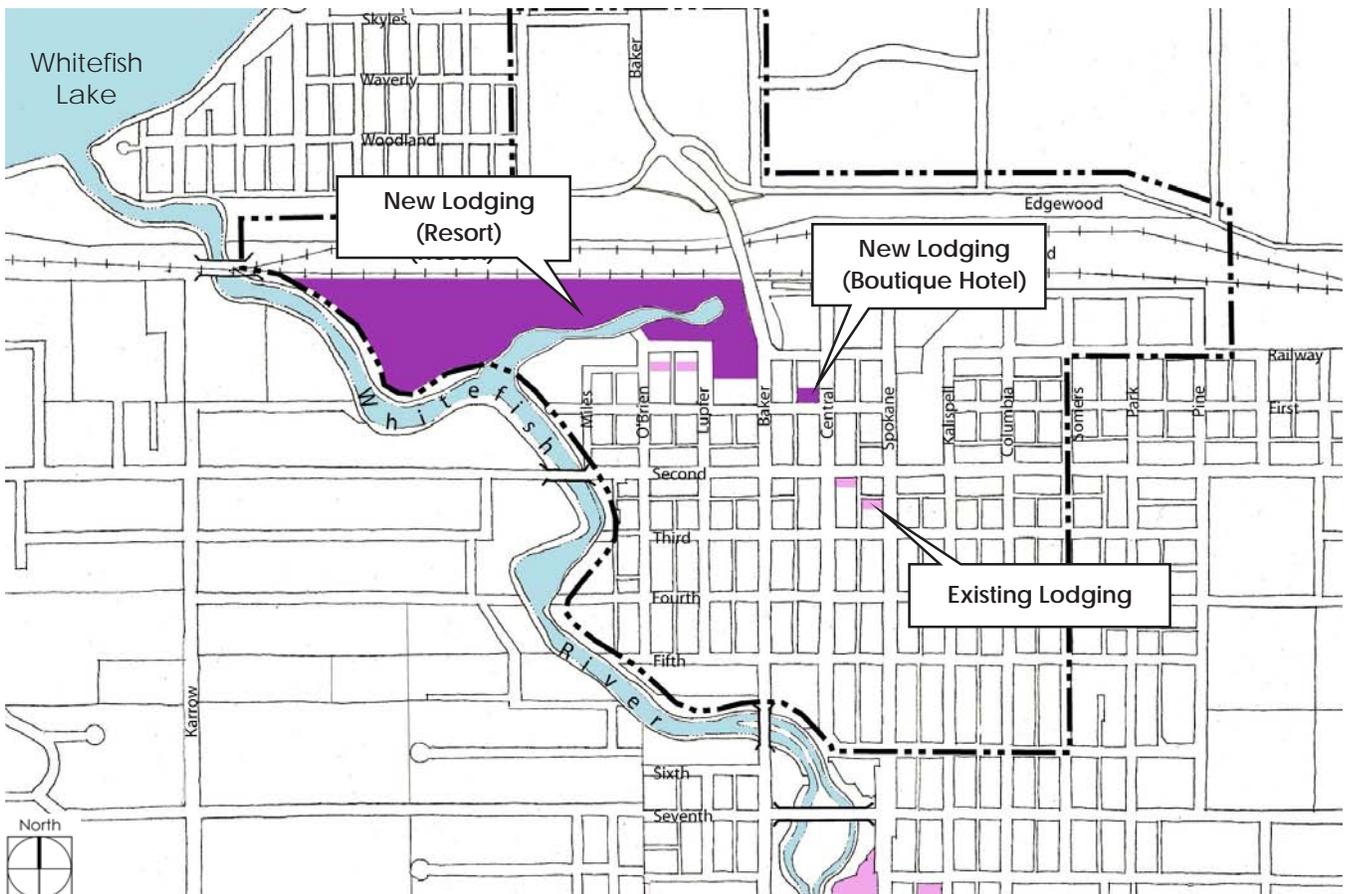
## Lodging Demand

Currently, most of Whitefish’s lodging is located outside of the study area. Yet, lodging in downtown, with its easy access to shopping, public squares and open space recreational opportunities along the Whitefish River, is highly appealing to seasonal visitors. A variety of accommodation types – B&Bs, boutique hotels and resorts – should be encouraged in the downtown.

Key elements supporting lodging in downtown include:

- Potential new resort lodging as a part of a Whitefish Landing Planned Unit Development.
- A boutique hotel on a vacant site at Central Avenue and First Street that includes ground-floor retail, luxury room accommodations and underground parking.

Detailed concepts for the boutique hotel and potential Whitefish Landing Resort are located in the Implementation section of the master plan.

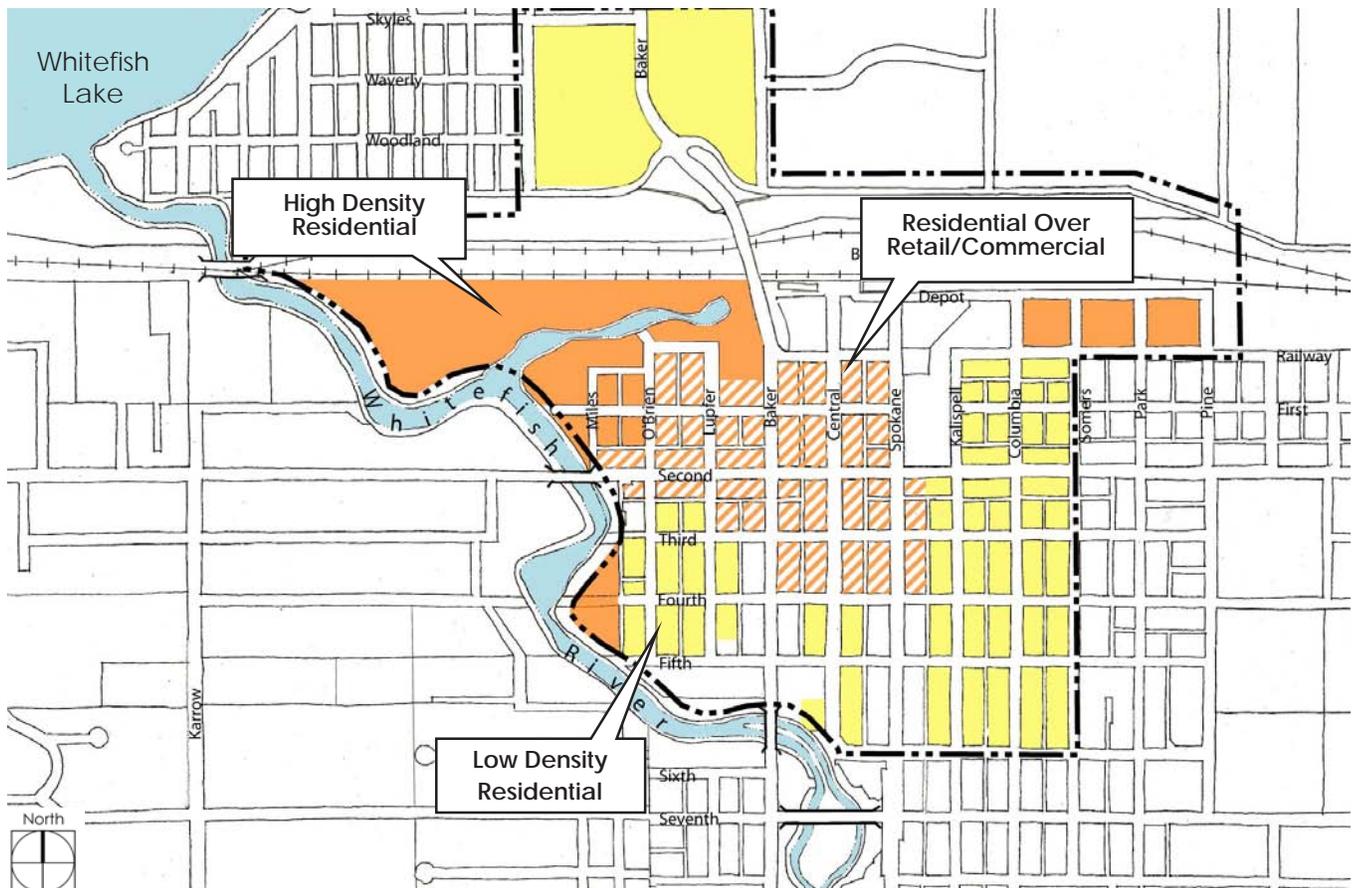


Lodging Diagram

# Housing

Residents of urban housing help bring economic vitality to downtown by supporting downtown retail, restaurants and other services. Key aspects of the Housing Concept include:

- Adding housing over new, existing or renovated retail/office where possible.
- Locating housing near amenities and within existing underutilized properties.
- Building to a maximum of three stories.
- Respecting existing significant building forms and street orientation.
- Providing a range of housing opportunities for a variety of incomes and ages.
- Providing both for-rent apartments and for-sale condominiums.
- Fostering development of housing that is oriented toward families.
- Providing a range of sizes: studios, 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units.
- Providing on-site parking.



Housing Diagram

Implementation

## Overview

The Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan provides a long-term blueprint for improving community livability and strengthening downtown Whitefish. The implementation plan prescribes a realistic and timely strategy for positive change.

It is important to seize the opportunity to honor the tremendous commitment of time and energy that citizens, business people and agency staff have devoted to the creation of this plan.

This implementation strategy is founded on the principle that public and private dollars must be spent over time to spark widespread and sustainable reinvestment in the downtown.



*Whitefish Aerial View Looking South Over Railyards*

# Downtown Potential

## Market Analysis Projections

A long-term market analysis for downtown Whitefish prepared by ECONorthwest indicated the following additional demand for space over the next 20 years.

- Retail: 140,000-180,000 SF
- Residential: 188-200 units

## Development Capacity

The capacity analysis indicates that the ECONorthwest projections can be accommodated and new development in the downtown could reach the levels shown below.

- Retail: 140,000 SF
- Residential: 334 units



Capacity Diagram

# Catalyst and Key Projects

## Overview

Catalyst and key projects consist of strategically located streetscape improvements, mixed-use parking structures, infill development, new public open space and civic structures. There are 26 identified catalyst and key projects, including five priority catalyst projects identified in yellow, described on the following pages.

## Catalyst and Key Projects

- Priority Catalyst Projects
  - Catalyst Projects
  - Key Projects
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: yellow;">1A</span> Public Parking Structure and Retail</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">1B</span> Central Ave. Improvements</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">CH</span> New City Hall Options</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">GN</span> Great Northern Square</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">BR</span> Baker Mixed Use Redevelopment</li> <li><span style="color: black;">WC</span> Wisconsin Crossing</li> <li><span style="color: black;">WR</span> Wisconsin Underpass</li> <li><span style="color: black;">WL</span> Whitefish Landing</li> <li><span style="color: black;">WP</span> Whitefish Landing Promenade</li> <li><span style="color: black;">WR</span> Whitefish Landing Resort</li> <li><span style="color: black;">SSI</span> 2nd St. Improvements</li> <li><span style="color: black;">TP</span> 3rd Street Mixed Use Parking Structure</li> <li><span style="color: black;">HO</span> Hotel</li> <li><span style="color: black;">OP</span> O'Shaughnessy Site Mixed Use Parking Structure</li> <li><span style="color: black;">RO</span> Retail and Office</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: black;">RO</span> Retail and Office</li> <li><span style="color: black;">RO</span> Retail and Office</li> <li><span style="color: black;">RO</span> Retail and Office</li> <li><span style="color: black;">RH</span> Retail and Housing</li> <li><span style="color: black;">OH</span> Office/Commercial and Housing</li> <li><span style="color: black;">H</span> Housing</li> <li><span style="color: black;">DS</span> New Depot Street</li> <li><span style="color: black;">RS</span> New Railway Street</li> <li><span style="color: black;">LS</span> New Local Street</li> <li><span style="color: black;">HT</span> Housing and Townhouse</li> <li><span style="color: black;">HT</span> Housing and Townhouse</li> <li><span style="color: black;">HT</span> Housing and Townhouse</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

## Priority Catalyst Projects

The highest priority must be given to projects that have the greatest potential to revitalize the downtown investment environment. These projects are listed below:

- 1A. Public Parking Structure with Retail
- 1B. Central Avenue Improvements
- CH. New City Hall
- GN. Great Northern Square
- BR. Baker Mixed-use Redevelopment

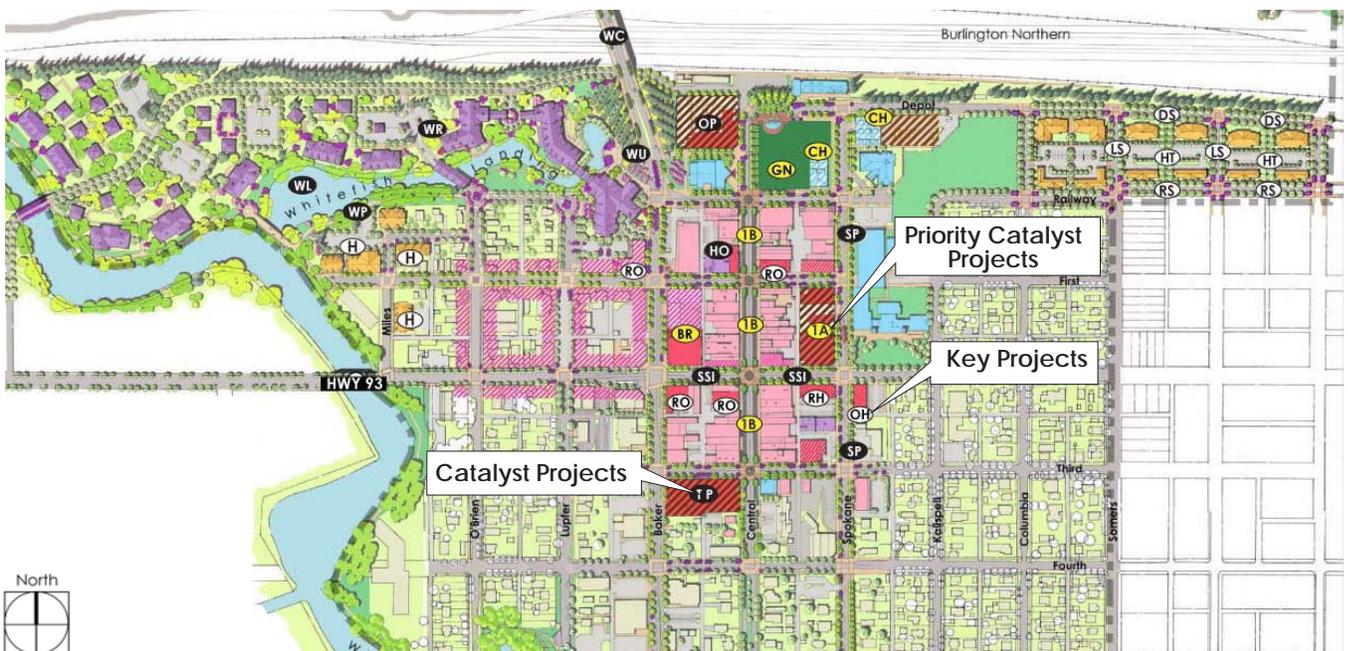
Catalyst and priority catalyst projects have the ability to:

- Stimulate new downtown development and private investment.
- Maintain and strengthen existing development.
- Draw significant numbers of people to the downtown.
- Improve the quality of life for downtown Whitefish residents.

## Key Projects

These include other downtown projects that support revitalization efforts over time. They should:

- Increase employment and retail opportunities.
- Increase housing opportunities.
- Improve and expand public infrastructure and circulation for pedestrian, bikes and autos.



Catalyst and Key Projects

## Project Descriptions

### Priority Catalyst Projects

#### 1A. Public Parking Structure and Retail

Located on Spokane and 2nd, safe, well-lighted and well-maintained mixed-use facility, offering convenient access to Central Avenue, active uses at the ground floor, corner entries to shops, facades compatible with adjacent uses, high-quality materials and design details.

#### 1B. Central Avenue Streetscape

Streetscape enhancements such as special crosswalks, widened sidewalks, on-street parking with special paving, native landscaped curb extensions, street furniture and lighting to signal its importance as a primary retail street.

#### CH. City Hall Development

New city hall, streetscape improvements along Spokane Ave. Baker Avenue Mixed-use Retail and Office.

#### GN. Great Northern Square

Renovated public square to include active and passive gathering, turf and paved areas, possible sites for public art and interactive fountain or other similar water elements.

#### BR. Baker Mixed Use Redevelopment

Mixed-use facility, located on the old city hall site, offering convenient access to Central Avenue and ground-floor retail with active edges and corner entries.

### Other Catalyst Projects

#### SSI. Second Street Improvements

Pedestrian improvements include raised intersection at Second and Central, a two-lane roadway, landscaped curb extensions at crosswalks, some on-street parking and left turn lanes at Baker and Spokane, and no left turns permitted at Central.

#### WC. Wisconsin Crossing

Landscape, pedestrian and bike improvements.

#### WU. Wisconsin Underpass

New pedestrian and bike underpass connecting public square to Whitefish Landing.

#### SP. Spokane Avenue Promenade

Sidewalk, landscape, lighting and shared off-street pedestrian and bike path improvements.

#### WL. Whitefish Landing

New small-craft navigable waterway extension of the Whitefish River.

#### WP. Whitefish Landing Promenade

Off-street bike and pedestrian path, landscape and lighting improvements.

#### WR. Whitefish Landing Planned Unit Development

25+ acre site to be developed as potential resort or housing use.

#### T P. Mixed-use Parking Structure - Third and Central

Parking structure with retail at the ground floor, replacement parking below grade and 190 parking spaces above grade.

#### HO. Boutique Hotel and Retail

Four-story, 36 room hotel, 4,650 SF ground-floor retail/restaurant space and 30 underground parking spaces.

#### OP. Mixed-use Parking Structure - O'Shaughnessy Site

A three-story building with 16,000 SF of ground-floor retail, 32 parking spaces and two levels of structured parking with 280 spaces.

### Key Projects

#### RO. Infill Retail/Office-Central Avenue and First Street

5,000 SF of ground-floor retail and 5,000 SF of upper-floor office space.

#### RO. Infill Retail/Office-Baker Avenue and First Street

7,500 SF of ground-floor retail and 7,500 SF of upper-floor office space.

#### RO. Infill Retail/Office-Second Street

5,000 SF of ground-floor retail and 5,000 SF of upper-floor office space.

#### RO. Infill Retail/Office-Central Avenue

5,000 SF of ground-floor retail and 5,000 SF of upper-floor office space.

#### RH. Infill Retail/Housing- Second Avenue

6,500 SF of ground-floor retail and 12 upper-floor housing units.

#### OH. Infill Office-Commercial/Housing-Spokane Avenue

5,000 SF of ground-floor office-commercial and 10 upper-floor housing units.

#### H. Infill Housing- Railroad District at Railway Street and Whitefish Landing

Three, three-story buildings, each with a total of 57 housing units and off-street parking.

#### H. Infill Housing-Railroad District at Miles Avenue at First Street

Three-story building with 18 housing units and off-street parking.

#### H. Infill Housing-Railroad District at Miles Avenue

Three-story building with 21 housing units and off-street parking.

#### DS. New Depot Street

New travel lanes, on-street parking, sidewalks, landscaping and lighting.

#### RS. New Railway Street

New travel lanes, on-street parking, sidewalks, landscaping and lighting.

#### LS. New Local Streets

New travel lanes, on-street parking, sidewalks, landscaping and lighting.

#### HT. Infill High Density Housing and Townhome

Two, three-story buildings with 54 units and surface parking and 12 two-story townhomes with garages.

#### HT. Infill High Density Housing and Townhome

Two, three-story buildings with 46 units and surface parking and 12 two-story townhomes with garages.

#### HT. Infill High Density Housing and Townhome

Two, three-story buildings with 46 units and surface parking and 10 two-story townhomes with garages.

## Priority Catalyst Projects

### Option A - City Hall Development at the Square

Option A redevelopment of the Credit Union Park with a new city hall and public square would create a center for a civic campus that complements existing civic and cultural uses and anchors the north edge of the retail district along Central Avenue. The city has finalized an agreement to obtain the Credit Union site 30 to 42 months from now.

#### City Hall Development

Located on the south eastern edge of the existing private Credit Union Park, the new city hall would include:

- Phased development of up to 24,000 SF of office and chamber space.
- Structured parking north of the library with 100 parking spaces designated for city parking, 25 spaces for the library, 10 for long term Amtrak parking and 65 spaces for railroad replacement parking.

#### Great Northern Square

Located at the existing private Credit Union Park, the new public square would:

- Include active and passive gathering areas.
- Contain both turf and paved areas.
- Provide possible sites for public art display.
- Provide possible interactive fountain or other similar water elements.
- Accommodate farmers markets and arts and crafts fairs.



*City Hall at the Great Northern Square Plan - Option A*



*City Hall at the Great Northern Square Perspective - Option A*

## Priority Catalyst Projects

### Option B - City Hall Development North of the Library

The northwestern portion of the potential city hall site north of the library is owned by the railroad while the city controls the larger remaining portion (see page 11). This option for City Hall redevelopment maintains a civic campus and utilizes the existing Credit Union Park entirely as the Great Northern Square. The square would anchor the north edge of the retail district along Central Avenue.

#### City Hall Development

Located north of the library, the new city hall would include:

- Phased development of up to 24,000 SF of office and chamber space.
- Structured parking north of the library with 100 parking spaces designated for city parking, 25 spaces for the library, 10 for long term Amtrak parking and 65 spaces for railroad replacement parking.

#### Great Northern Square

Located at the existing private Credit Union Park, the new public square would:

- Include active and passive gathering areas.
- Contain both turf and paved areas.
- Provide possible sites for public art display.
- Provide possible interactive fountain or other similar water elements.
- Accommodate farmers markets and arts and crafts fairs.



City Hall North of the Library and the Great Northern Square Plan - Option B



City Hall North of the Library and Great Northern Square Perspective - Option B

**1A Public Parking Structure with Retail - Spokane and 2nd**

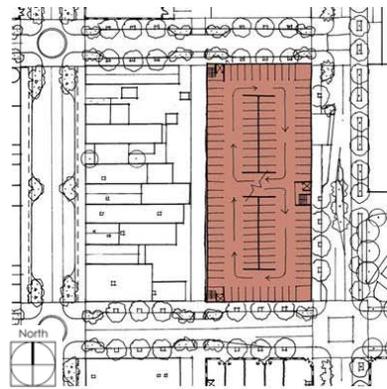
Development of this property would consist of parking for up to 310 spaces in a mixed-use retail parking structure. The Spokane parking structure provides:

- New ground-floor retail (28,000 SF).
- Two upper levels of structured parking for 220 cars total, as well as below grade replacement parking for 40 cars and retail parking for 50 cars.
- Convenient auto access off of Spokane Avenue.
- Public elevator located mid-block on Spokane Avenue or Second Street.

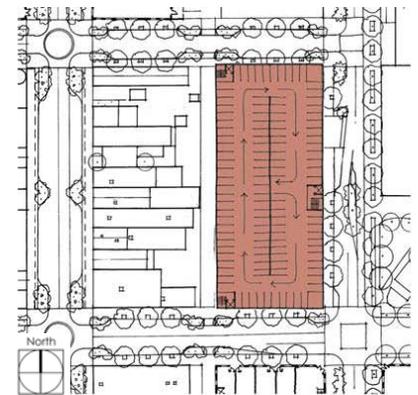
The parking structure will be designed to:

- Be a good neighbor.
- Be compatible with adjacent buildings in height, massing and scale.
- Look like a series of small buildings rather than a single large parking structure.

The Spokane parking structure is illustrated to the right and below.



**Parking level 1**

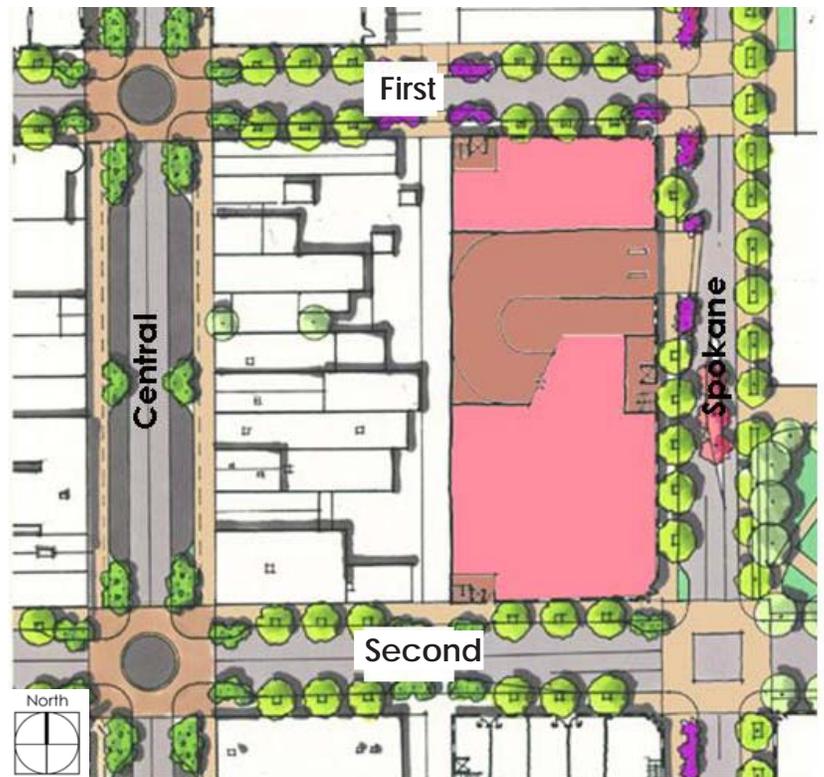


**Parking level 2 (roof)**

*Spokane Parking Structure - Upper Levels*



*Spokane Parking Structure - Looking North*



*Spokane Parking Structure - Ground-Floor Retail*

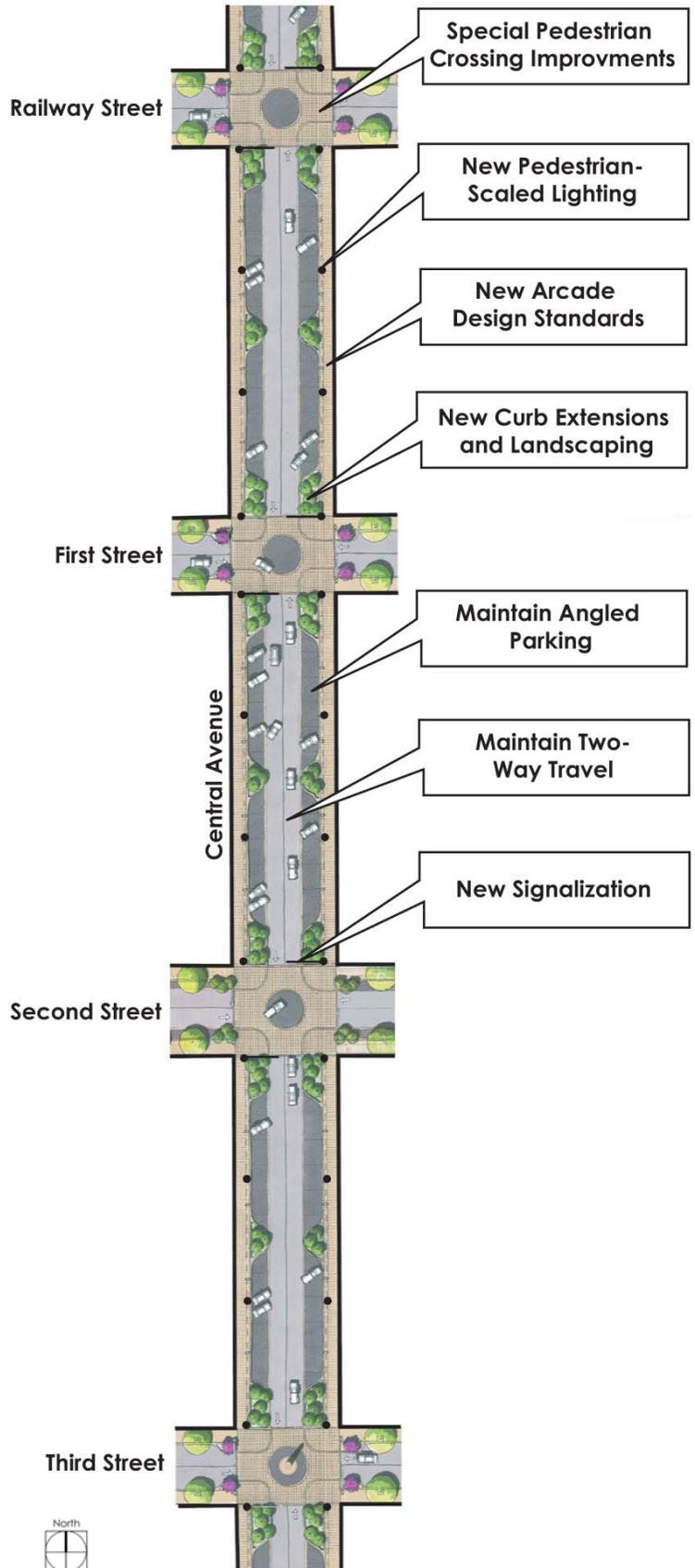
**1B Central Avenue Streetscape**

Central Avenue serves as Whitefish’s historic retail main street and offers a foundation in which healthy retail can continue to thrive.

The design concept identifies a consistent application of streetscape improvements over a three-block area from Railway Street to Fourth Street, including the following:

- New crosswalks and curb extensions at each intersection with a special raised crosswalk at the intersection of Central Avenue and Second Street.
- New native trees and landscaping at corner and mid-block curb extensions.
- Widened sidewalks.
- Special paving in parking lanes.
- New arcade design standards.
- New ornamental pedestrian-scaled lighting with integrated traffic signals at Second Street and pole extensions to accommodate seasonal lighting.

These improvements are outlined in detail on the following pages.

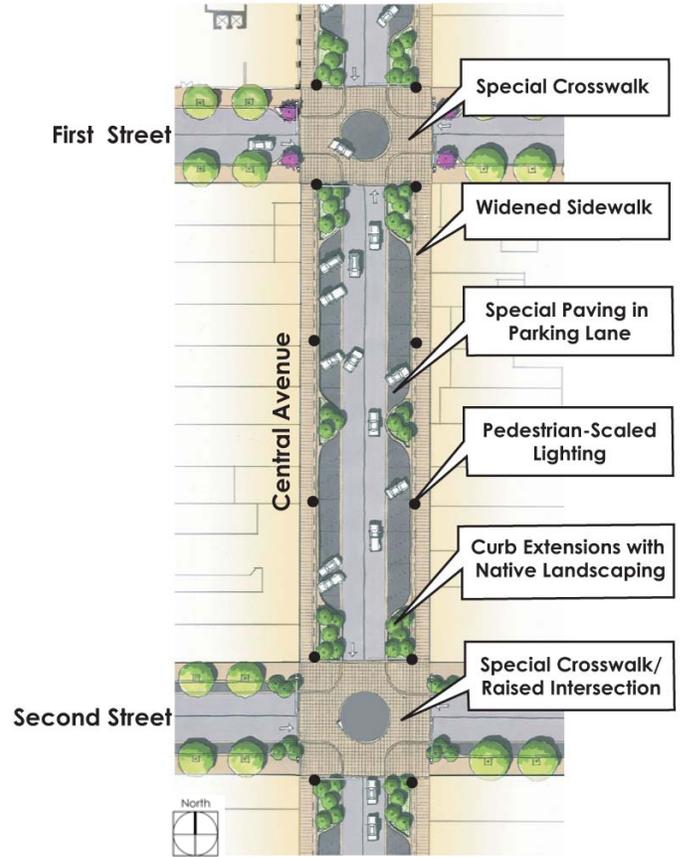


**1B Central Avenue Streetscape Cont.**

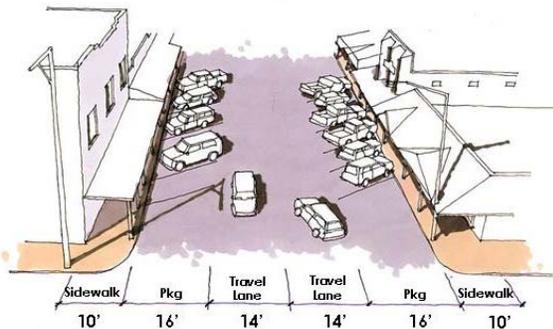
**Typical Block Improvements**

The following street, sidewalk and intersection improvements for a typical block include:

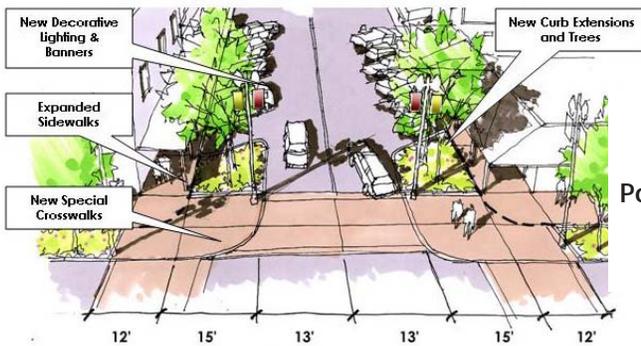
- *Special crosswalks* – raised intersections with special paving.
- *Widened sidewalks* – from 10' to 12'-6".
- *On-street parking* – 15' lane with special paving to distinguish it from travel lanes.
- *Curb extensions* – native trees and landscaping.
- *Ornamental Lighting* – pedestrian-scaled lighting, 8 per block.
- *Integrated Traffic Signals and Lighting* – traffic signals integrated with decorative pedestrian-scaled light posts.



Central Avenue Streetscape Improvements

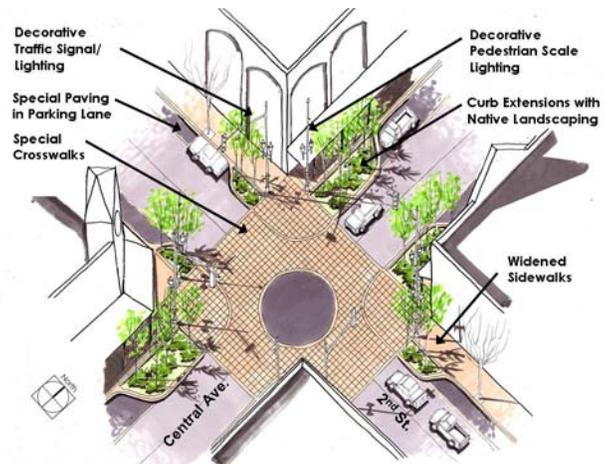


Existing



Potential

Central Avenue Streetscape Improvements



Central Avenue Intersection Improvements

**1B Central Avenue Streetscape Cont.**

**Arcade Design Standards**

Consistent, high-quality design and construction to specific standards will enhance the pedestrian experience of the arcade environment and include:

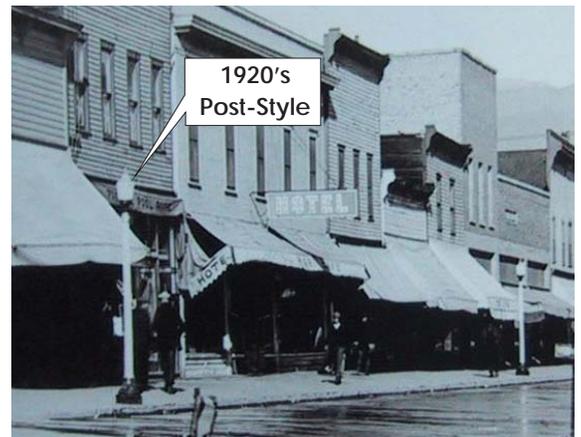
- Sidewalks – widened from typical 10’-0” to 12’-6” (includes a 1’-0” curb).
- Arcade width – typical distance between columns and building wall to be 8’-0” (rather than 7’-6” existing).
- Vertical dimensions – preferred arcade beam height 9’-6” ; preferred lower limit of hanging sign 7’-6”.

**Ornamental Lighting**

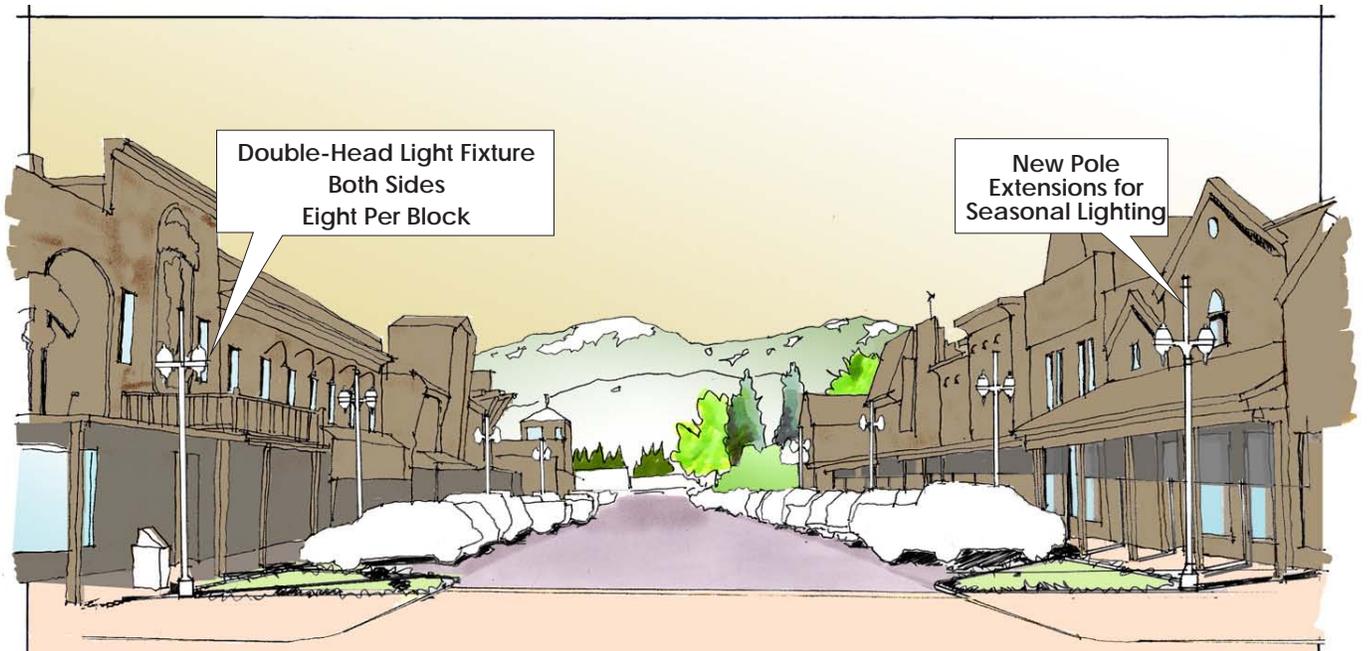
Fixtures inspired by a 1920s post style will be used as a model for pedestrian-scaled, uniform, consistent lighting. Pole extensions should be provided on each fixture to allow for seasonal string lights. Eight fixtures are proposed per block – (i.e., four double fixtures on each side of the street).



*Proposed Arcade Standards - Typical*



*Historic Photo Central Avenue*



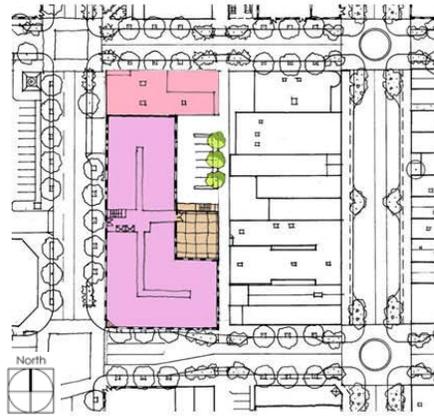
*Proposed Lighting Fixtures - Typical*

**BR Baker Mixed-Use Development**

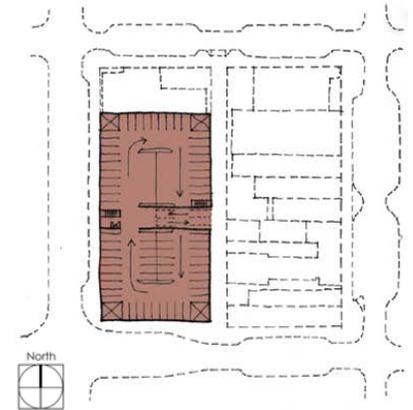
City sale of this property as part of a developer offering would generate revenue to support construction for a new city hall in the civic campus area and allow for the creation of new retail and office uses that promote the retail strategy. The Baker Mixed-Use Development provides:

- New ground-floor retail (20,000 SF).
- New upper-level offices (23,000 SF).
- Convenient auto access off of Second and First Streets.
- Below-grade parking for 88 cars.
- Surface parking for 16 cars.

The Baker Mixed-Use Development is illustrated to the right and below.

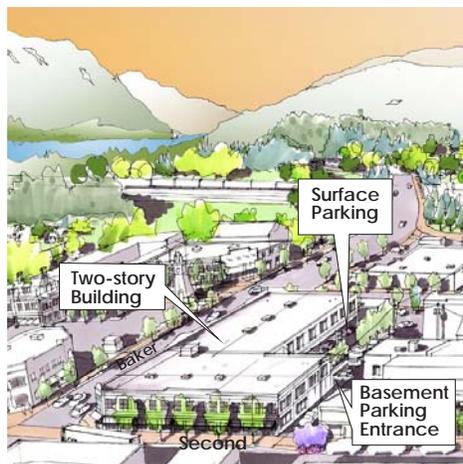


**Upper Floor Office/Commercial**



**Below-Grade Parking**

*Baker Mixed-use Development - Below-Grade and Upper Level*



*Baker Mixed-Use Development - Looking North*



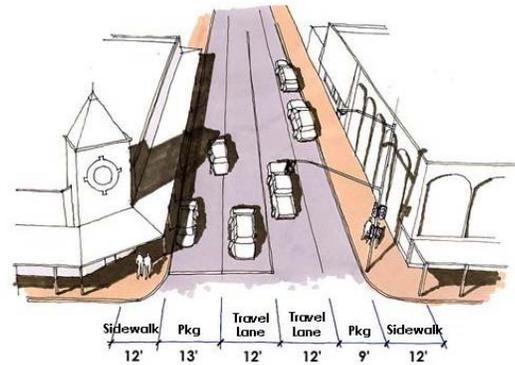
*Baker Mixed-Use Development - Ground-Floor Retail*

## Other Catalyst Projects

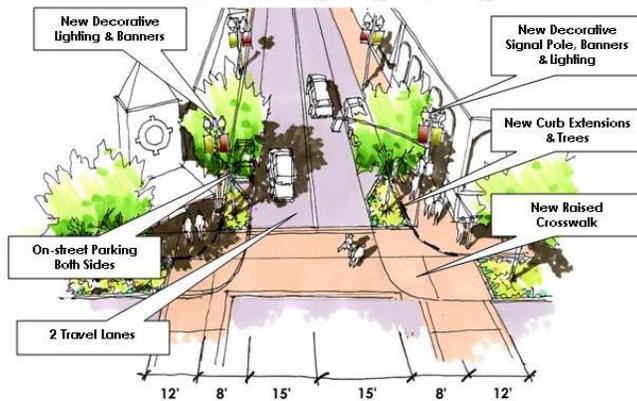
### SSI Second Street Improvements

A pedestrian priority design concept for Second Street will provide:

- A raised intersection at Second and Central.
- Two-lane road width with landscaped curb extensions at crosswalks.
- On-street parking.
- Left turn lanes at Baker and Spokane; no left turns permitted at Central.



Existing



Potential

Second Street - Pedestrian Priority Streetscape



Hwy 93/2nd Street Key Requirements

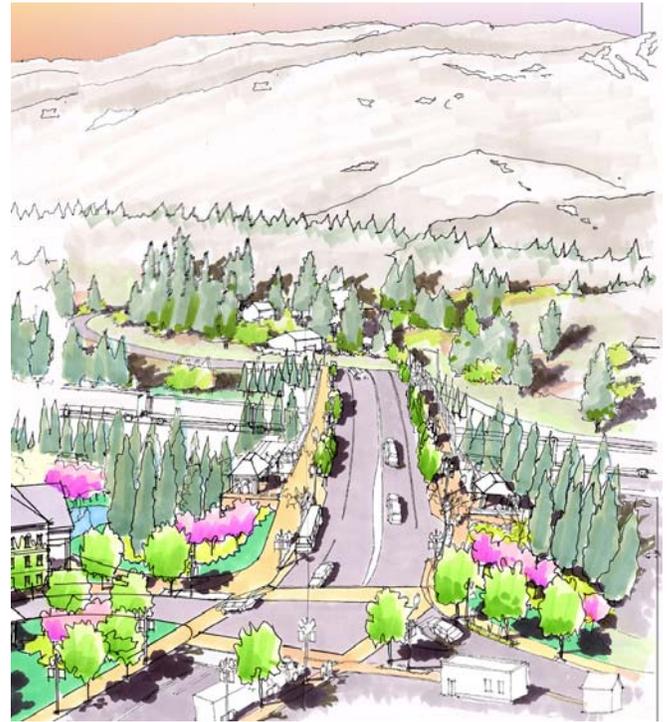
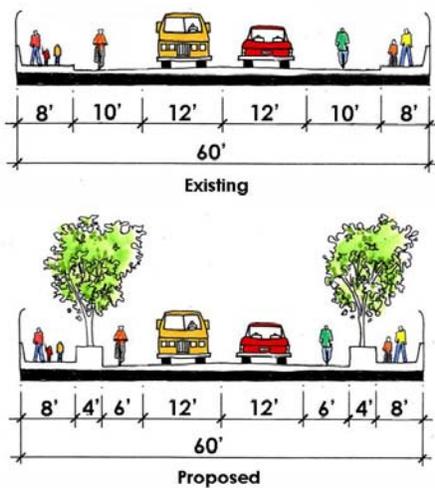
**WC** **Wisconsin Crossing Overpass**

Wisconsin Crossing will provide safe pedestrian and bike access across the railyards, connect with a new Wisconsin Underpass and create an attractive gateway into downtown. The Wisconsin viaduct improvements would require the following changes to the existing structure:

- Relocate existing jersey barriers.
- Provide planters intermittently along length of viaduct.
- Direct walkway access to the proposed pedestrian underpass.
- Add striping for bike lanes on both sides of roadway.
- Replace chain link fence barrier with decorative barrier on both sides of roadway.

New gateway elements of the Crossing would include:

- New bridge landscaping identified above.
- Clusters of new large conifer and flowering trees and decorative landscaping on either end of the viaduct and on both sides of the street.



Wisconsin Crossing Perspective Looking North



Wisconsin Crossing Plan

**WU** **Wisconsin Underpass**

The new Wisconsin pedestrian and bike underpass is an extension of the Whitefish Promenade and will link the Great Northern Square to the new Whitefish Landing. The Wisconsin Underpass would:

- Offer a clean, welcoming facility.
- Provide a safe alternative bike and pedestrian route from the Wisconsin Overpass to Central School, downtown and the Whitefish Landing.

The fundamental requirements for the Wisconsin Underpass include:

- Adequate ambient day lighting, accent lighting for the walkway, and special facade lighting.
- Ceilings and walls that are bright, easily cleaned and repaired, and have integrated mechanical openings.
- Signage requirements and signage design and locations that are compatible with the overall design concept.
- Design for security that allows for clear sightlines to and through the underpass, eliminates hiding places and provides bright, 24-hour lighting and security cameras linked to 24-hour surveillance.



*Example Underpass in The Dalles, Oregon*



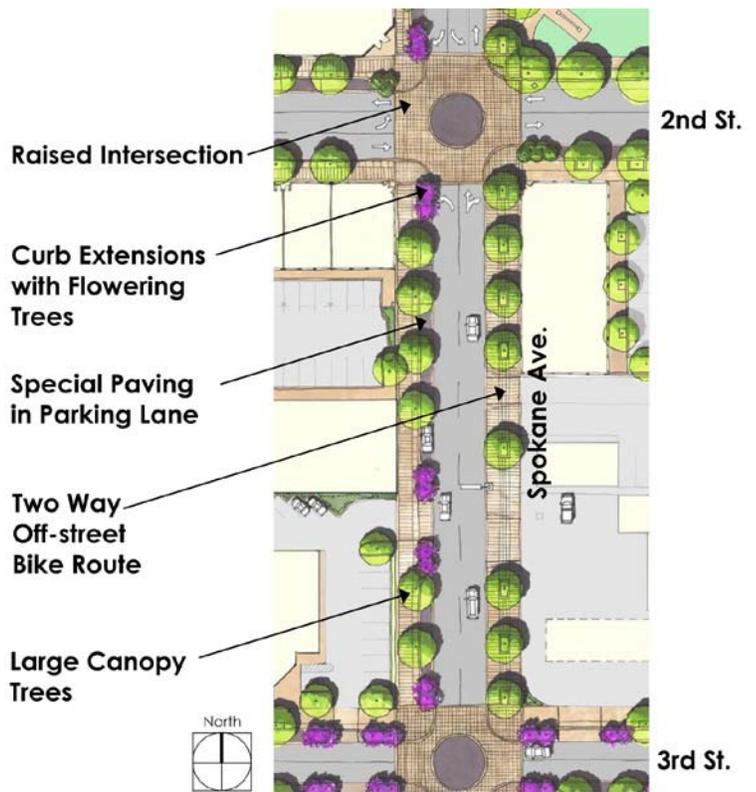
*Wisconsin Pedestrian Underpass*

**SP Whitefish Promenade - Spokane Avenue**

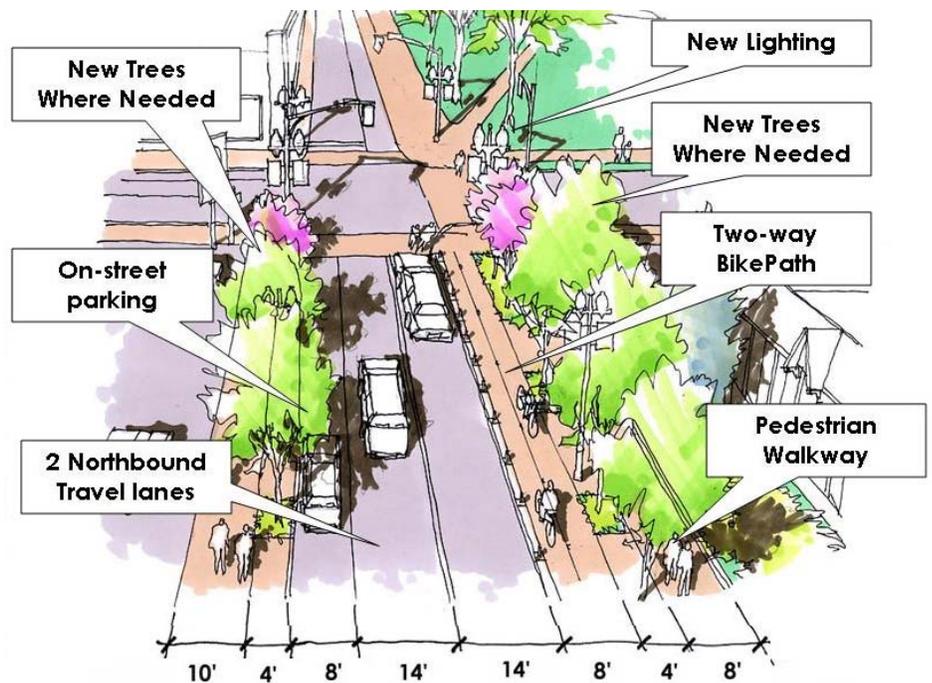
Part of the new Whitefish Promenade will include a segment on Spokane Avenue. This Spokane Avenue Promenade and multi-use path extends from the new Seventh Street bridge to Railway Street. It will:

- Be constructed within the existing 70' ROW, maintaining the existing curb line on the west side of the street.
- Maintain on-street parking along the west side of the street.
- Include new curb and new two-way bike path replacing parking on the east side of the street.
- Allow mature trees to remain as a landscape buffer between bike path and sidewalk. New trees will be added where needed.

Plan and perspective illustrations shown to the right and below depict key requirements of the Spokane Avenue Promenade segment.



*Spokane Avenue Promenade Typical Block*



*Spokane Avenue Promenade Concept*

**Whitefish Landing Development**

Redevelopment of the underutilized Burlington Northern property west of Wisconsin Avenue provides a tremendous opportunity to create a unique waterway experience, resort or housing development and promenade.

**WL Whitefish Landing**

A new water amenity would:

- Be constructed primarily on Burlington Northern property.
- Provide navigable canoe or small watercraft access to Whitefish Lake.
- Include development setback for native landscaping and tree canopy cover to support wetland and animal habitat.

**WP Whitefish Landing Promenade**

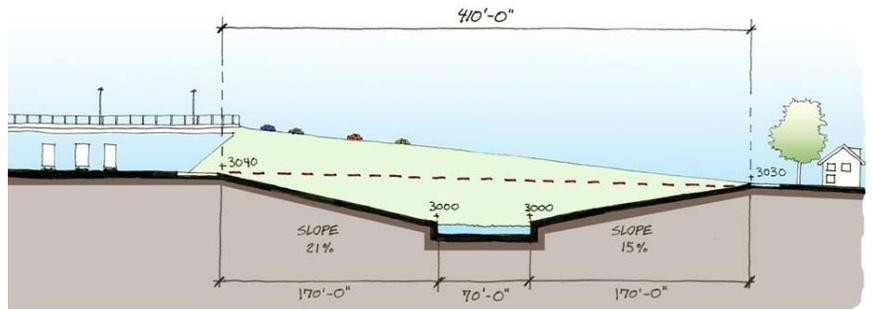
The north segment of the Whitefish Promenade off-street pedestrian and bike path would include:

- A two-way bike path and pedestrian walkway.
- Bollards and pedestrian scale lighting.

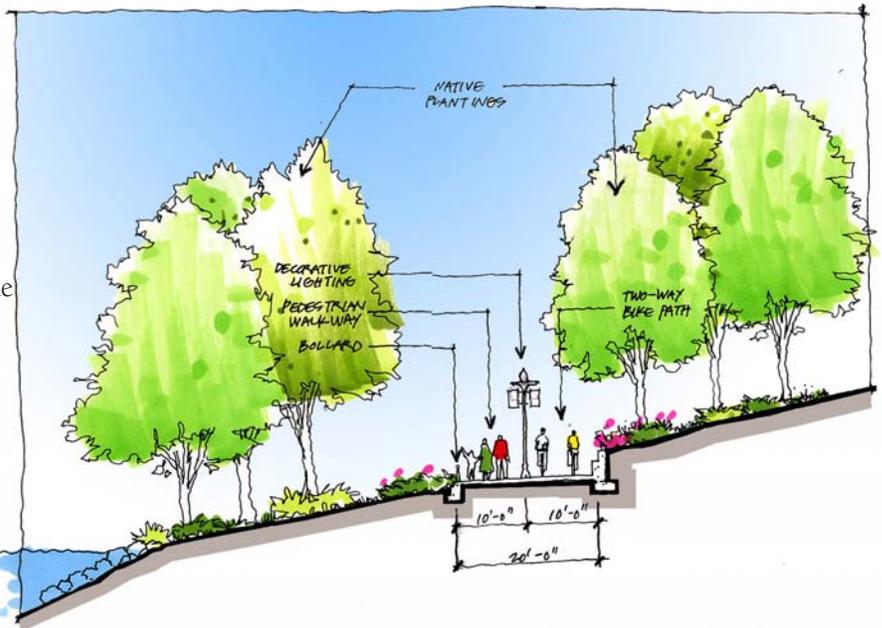
**WR Whitefish Landing Resort**

The Whitefish Landing Resort would include a 25 acre PUD with:

- A resort, hotel and rentals.
- A high-density residential development.



*Downtown Water Amenity*



*Pedestrian and Bike Promenade*



*Whitefish Landing with Resort Option*

**TP Mixed Use Parking Structure - 3rd Street**

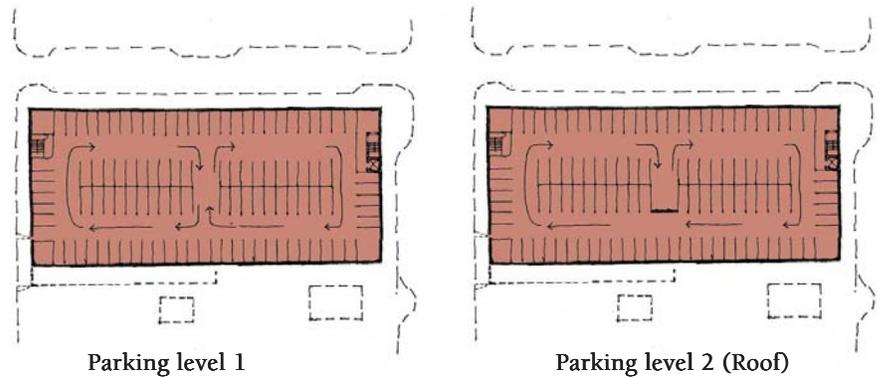
This anchor development site located on the southern edge of the Central Avenue primary retail street offers the ability to accommodate retail, an “art-house” cinema and structured public parking serving downtown. The design concept provides for:

**Ground-Floor Uses**

- A 2 to 5-screen maximum auditorium.
- Independent and “art-house” style films.
- A larger floorplate retail store.
- Local, regional or national retailers that have the ability to draw customers from across the Flathead Valley.

**Public Parking Structure**

- Two levels of above ground parking for 220 spaces.
- A single controlled access point at Baker Avenue.
- Provides for 90 spaces; below grade.



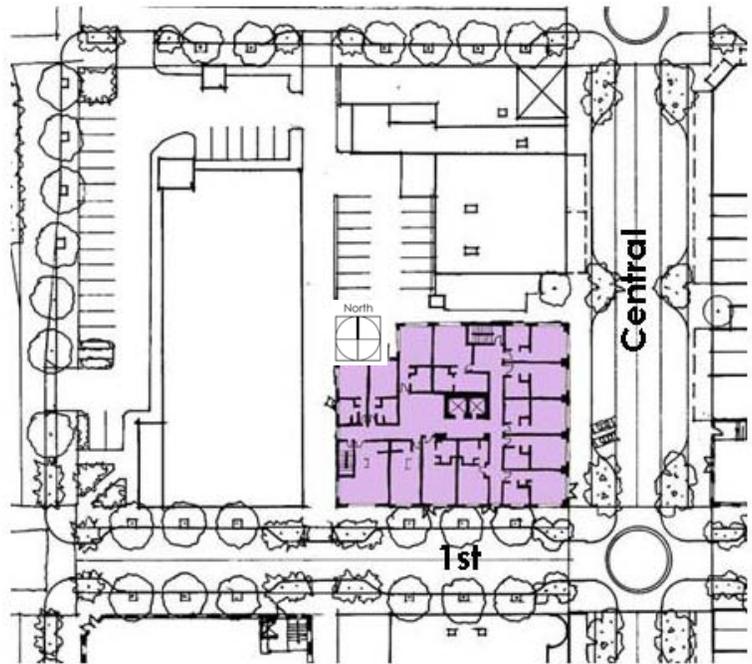
*Baker Mixed-Use Development- Ground-Floor Retail/Cinema*

**HO Boutique Hotel**

This infill site located at the corner of Central Avenue and First Street provides an opportunity for a refined, urban, downtown lodging establishment to be developed for business travelers and visitors not currently offered in Whitefish. This downtown site also offers guests a location close to the natural environment. The design concept includes:

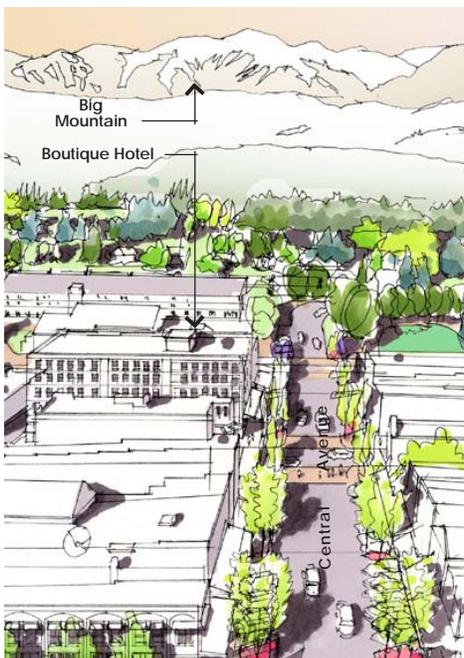
- Ground-floor retail/restaurant along Central Avenue (4,500 SF).
- Cafe or bar on rooftop.
- Conference space.
- 36 to 45 hotel rooms.
- Convenient auto access and valet parking off of First Street.
- Below-grade parking for 32 cars.

The Boutique Hotel is illustrated to the right and below.



**Upper Floor**

*Boutique Hotel - Typical Upper Floor*



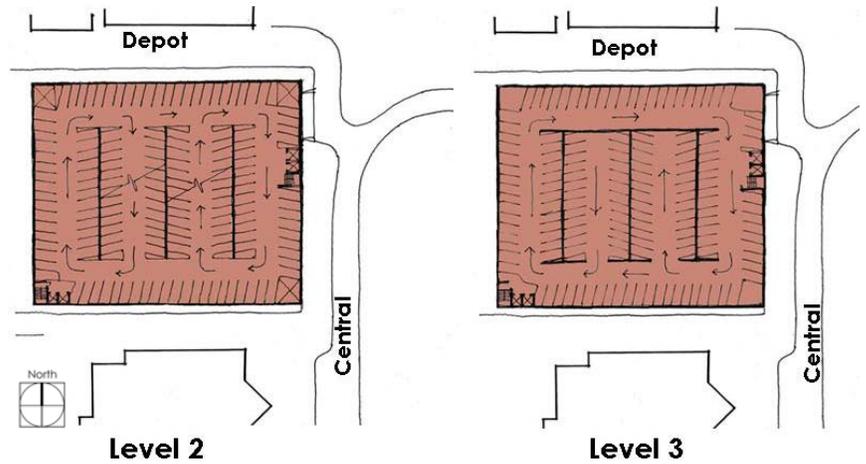
*Whitefish Landing - Resort Option*

**OP Mixed-Use Parking Structure - O’Shaughnessy Site**

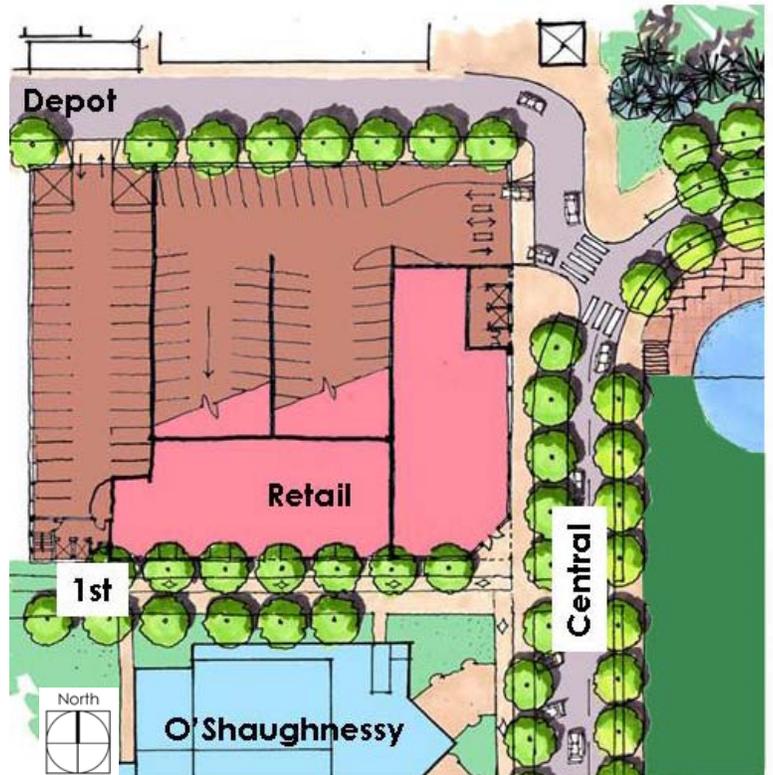
This long-term parking structure is intended to support existing civic and institutional uses, future retail and civic development north of Railway Street and potential development at Whitefish Landing. The long-term parking structure provides for:

- New ground-floor retail (16,000 SF).
- Ground-level parking for 75 cars.
- Two upper levels of structured parking for a total of 280 cars.
- Convenient auto access off of Central Avenue.
- Public elevator located mid-block on Central Avenue.

The long-term parking structure is illustrated to the right and below.



*Long Term Parking Structure - Upper Levels*



*Long Term Parking Structure - Ground Floor*

# Key Projects

## (H) (H) (H) Housing Developments

### (HT) (HT) (HT)

These housing development sites provide the greatest potential for high-density housing in Whitefish. They include:

- Up to 334 new units; not including the potential Whitefish Landing PUD.
- Maximum three-story condominiums that include off-street parking.
- Two-story townhouse with attached garages.
- New streets that extend the adjacent street network.
- Setbacks and building types consistent with existing neighborhood.

The housing development sites are identified to the right and below.



High Density Housing at Railway and Depot



Railroad District High Density Housing

## Responsibilities

Implementation of this plan will require focused, aggressive efforts by the public and private sectors over the coming years. For this plan to be successful, a comprehensive, consistent and coordinated effort will be necessary.

### Managing Implementation

The key entities below will be responsible for the following:

#### City of Whitefish

- Negotiates Credit Union Park transfer of ownership to City in exchange for sufficient land area for relocation of Credit Union Bank facilities.
- Develops an interdepartmental implementation team to coordinate public-sector efforts.
- Develops and implements urban redevelopment activities, such as attracting developers, assisting in site assembly, and reviewing and approving development plans.
- Negotiates transfer of railroad property for new city hall and/or civic parking structure.
- Coordinates and constructs public right-of-way improvements, new public facilities and amenity projects.
- Provides public parking in the downtown to relieve existing demand or as an incentive to induce private development.
- Administers loan and grant programs contributing to downtown revitalization.
- Participates in retail recruitment, outreach and marketing programs.

#### Heart of Whitefish

- Creates a curriculum and educates downtown businesses in the areas of advertising, customer service, marketing and visual merchandising.
- Provides information on available small business loan and grant programs.
- Develops information on the downtown area, including specific information on retail buildings and spaces.
- Creates an effective leasing brochure for the downtown.
- Participates in retail and office recruitment outreach and marketing programs.
- Explores the creation of a Community Development Corporation (CDC) to assist in the redevelopment process.

#### Montana Department of Transportation

- Establishes agreement for a Memorandum of Understanding, Design and Management for the Wisconsin Viaduct, Wisconsin Underpass and planned Highway 93 improvements.

#### Burlington Northern Railroad

- Negotiates transfer of underutilized and potential brownfield sites to City or private developers for mitigation and redevelopment opportunities.

#### Property Owners and Business Owners

- Focus on building renovations and tenant upgrades by taking advantage of available loan and grant programs.
- Continue to support the implementation of the Downtown Master Plan.
- Provide the information required to create an effective leasing brochure for the downtown.
- Participate in retail and office recruitment outreach and marketing programs.

## Policies, Regulations and Guidelines

The City of Whitefish will be responsible for carrying out any relevant changes to policies, regulations and development standards.

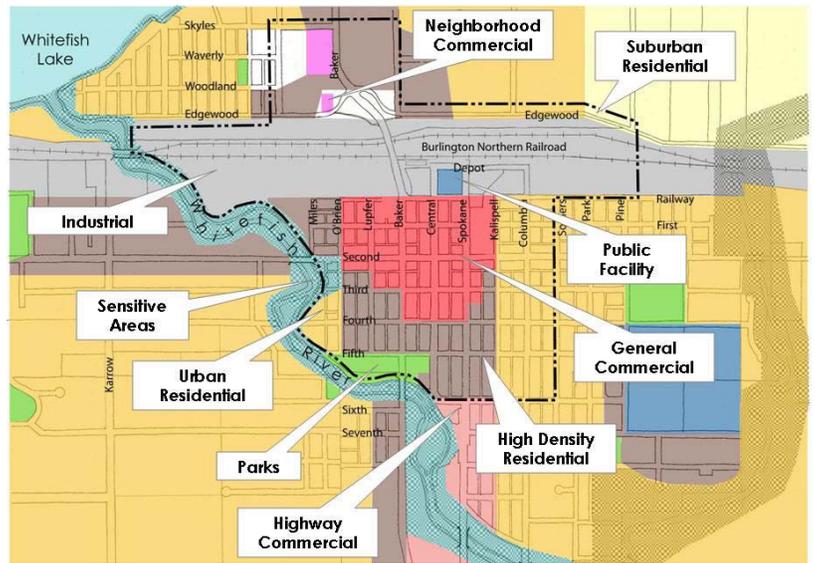
### Plan Adoption

The Downtown Business District Master Plan should be adopted as a sub-area plan or other policy-guiding plan. It should be incorporated into the City-County Growth Policy Comprehensive Plan.

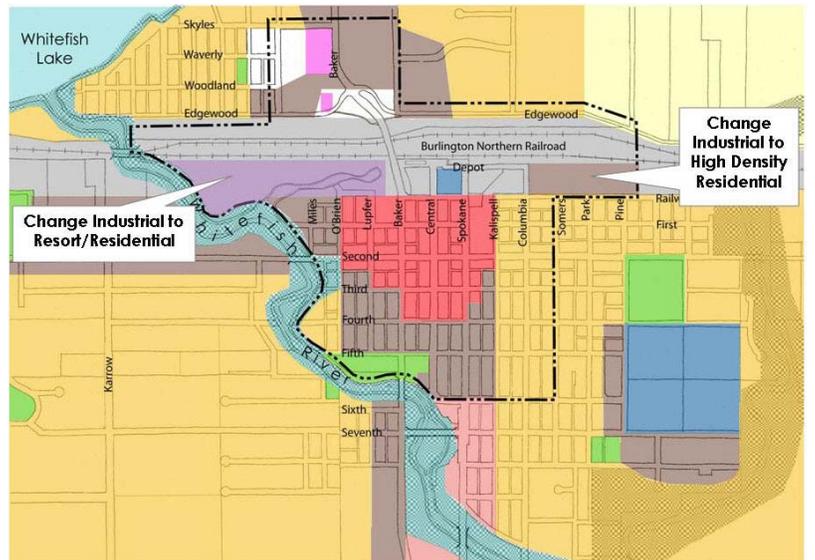
Master plan recommendations generally comply with existing plans, policies and regulations. Where recommendations do not comply, changes to the existing policies and regulations must be made consistent with the master plan directives. Recommendations for new policies, implementation actions and amendments to codes, ordinances and regulations are described below and on the following pages:

### Proposed Comprehensive Master Plan Changes

1. Change Industrial designation west of the Wisconsin Viaduct to Resort Residential and consider preparation of a Neighborhood Plan for this specific area.
2. Change Industrial designation east of Columbia Avenue to High-Density Residential



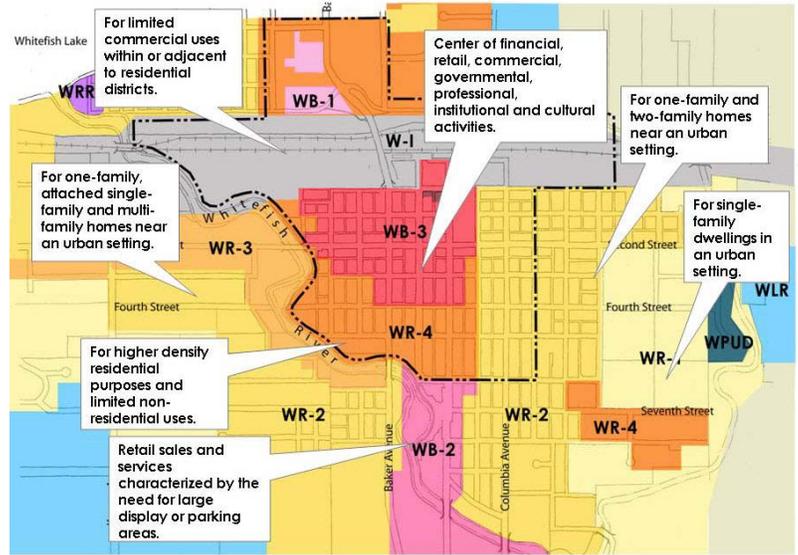
Existing Comprehensive Master Plan



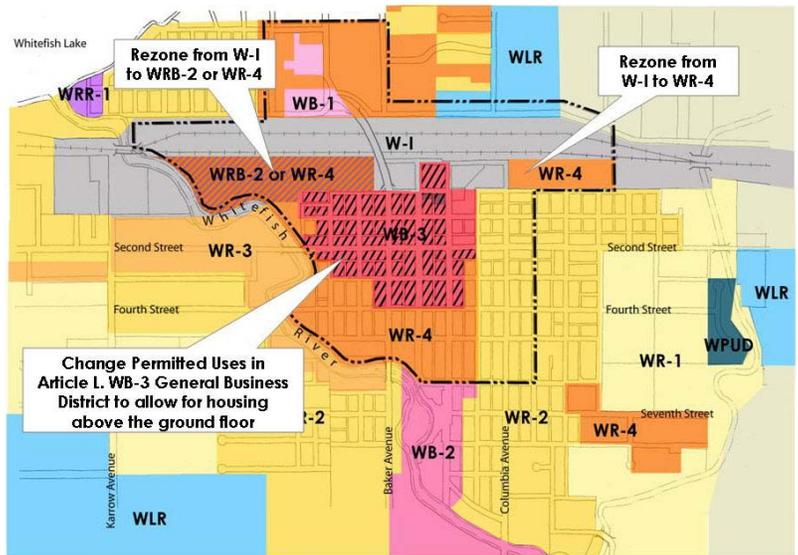
Proposed Changes to Comprehensive Master Plan

**Proposed Zoning Changes**

1. Change WI Industrial and Warehousing District to **WRB-2 General Resort Business District and/ or WR-4 High-Density Multi-Family Residential**.
2. Change WI Industrial and Warehousing District to **WR-4 High-Density Multi-Family Residential**.
3. Change Permitted Uses in **WB-3 General Business District to allow for housing above the ground floor**.
4. Consider eliminating parking space requirements for all uses in downtown and implement a parking assessment fee per unit/SF as a source of funding parking structures.



Existing Zoning



Proposed Changes to Zoning

**Proposed New Development Standards for the Whitefish Architectural Review Standards**

**1. Required Ground-Floor Retail**

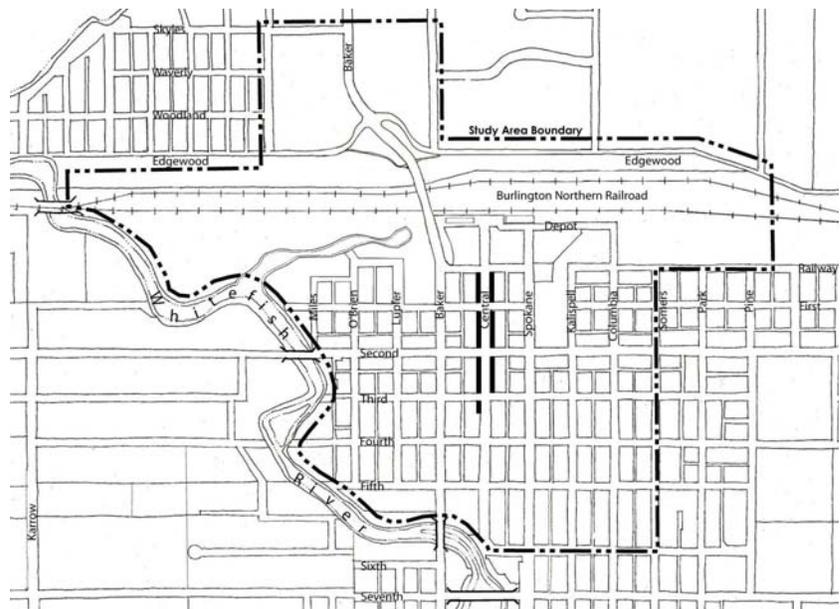
Retail uses and eating/drinking establishments are required at the ground floors of buildings fronting on Central Avenue as indicated to the right. This requirement will ensure that continuous retail storefronts and eating/drinking establishments are promoted and maintained along Central Avenue to attract pedestrians and strengthen the shopping environment.

**2. Required Ground-Floor Windows/Doors**

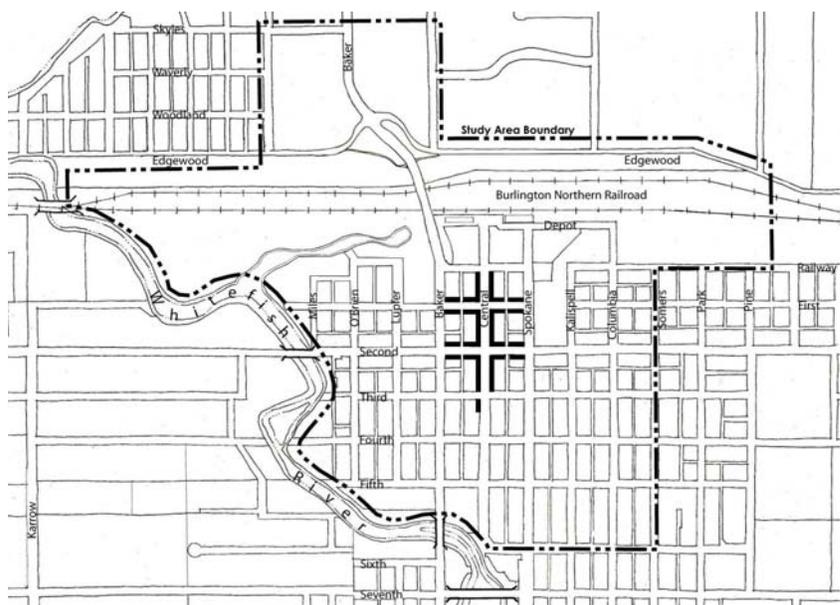
To minimize the effects of blank walls, these standards are intended to enhance street safety and provide a comfortable walking environment by providing ground-level features of interest. For block faces identified to the right, the exterior of the building walls facing the street/sidewalk must meet the following standards:

- a. 75 percent of the ground-floor street wall area must have openings; i.e. windows or doors.
- b. Doors and/or primary entrances must be located on the block faces identified to the right and unlocked when the business located on the premises is open. Doors/entrances to second-floor residential units may be locked.
- c. Clear glazing is required for ground-floor windows. Non-transparent, reflective or opaque glazing is not permitted.
- d. Ground-floor windows for buildings on the block faces identified above shall allow views into storefronts, working areas or

lobbies. No more than 50 percent of the window area may be covered by interior furnishings, including, but not limited to, curtains, shades, signs or shelves. Signs are limited to a maximum coverage of 20 percent of the window area.



*Required Ground-Floor Retail*



*Required Ground-Floor Windows/Doors*

**Proposed New Development Standards, cont.**

**3. Required Ground-Floor Active Edge Uses**

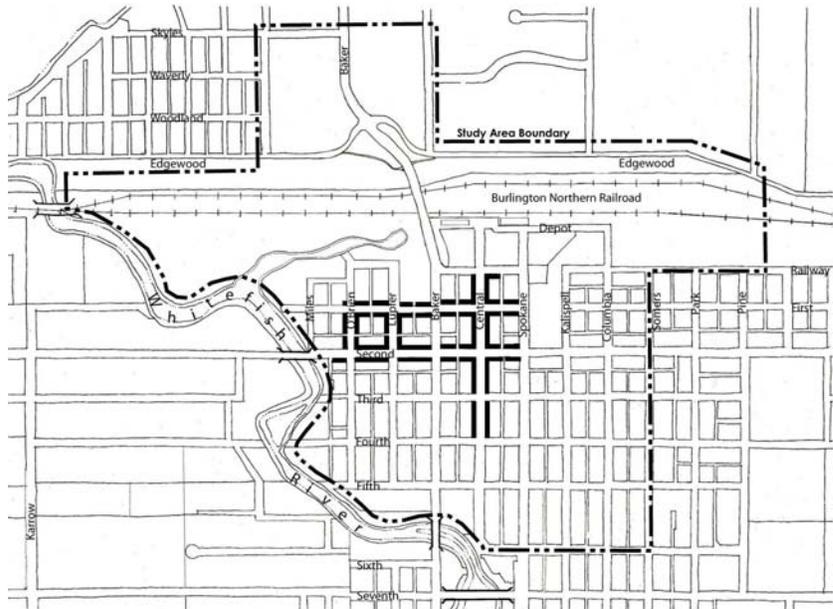
These standards are intended to reinforce the continuity of pedestrian-active, ground-level building uses. They are also to help maintain a healthy urban district through the interrelationship of ground-floor uses and street-level accessibility and activities. Active edge building uses must meet the following standards:

- a. The area may be designed to accommodate single or multiple tenants.
- b. The street frontage wall must include doors and windows, or be structurally designed so doors and windows can be added when the space is converted to active building uses.

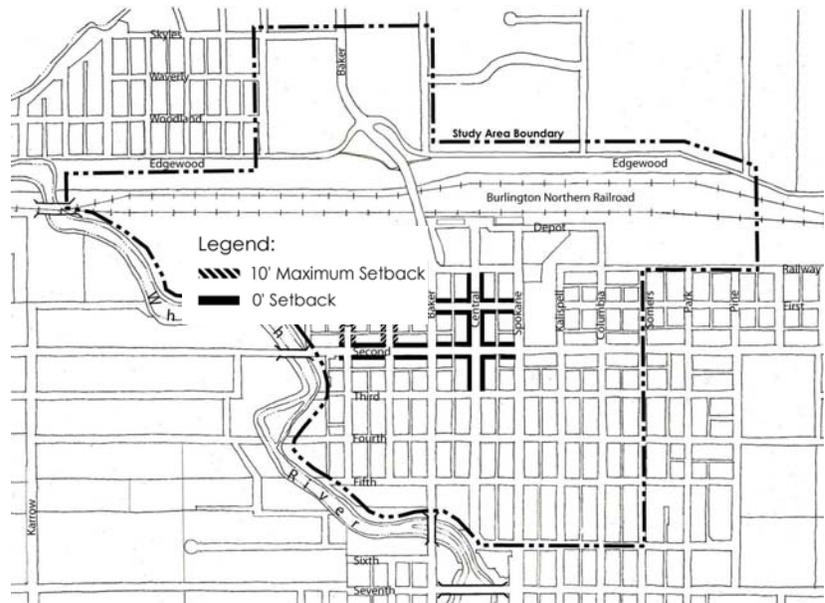
**4. Required Build to Lines**

The build to line ensures compatibility and harmony between buildings, enabling a series of different buildings to maintain or establish a continuous vertical wall as indicated to the right.

- a. First floor build to lines must comply with a zero setback or a 10 foot maximum setback for block faces as indicated to the right.



*Required Ground-Floor Active Edges*



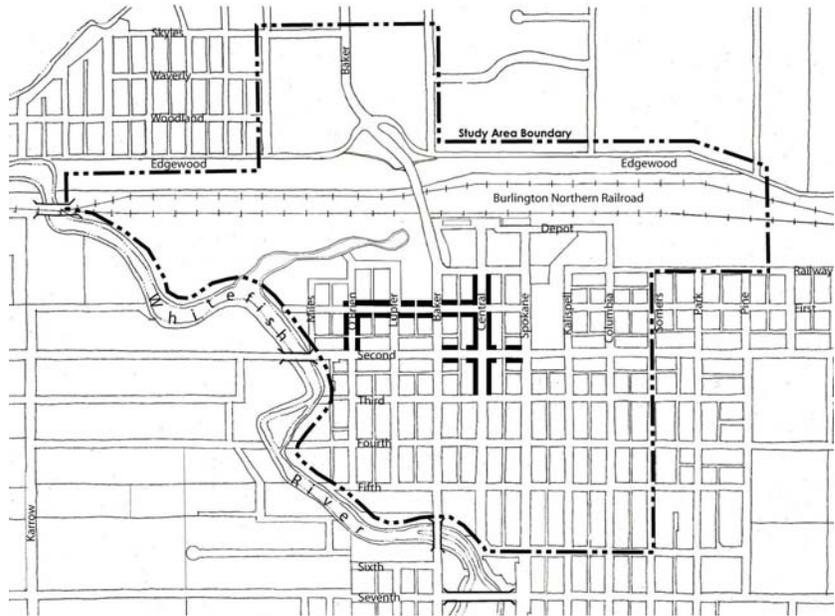
*Required Build To Lines*

**Proposed New Development Standards, cont.**

**5. Required Parking Access  
Restricted Frontages**

Restricting parking access along the frontages identified to the right will reduce the impact of the automobile, improve auto circulation, preserve on-street parking and create a more pleasant environment for pedestrians.

- a. Curb cuts are not allowed on frontages with parking access restrictions.



*Required Parking Access Restricted Frontages*

## Development Review

To ensure that the Downtown Master Plan policies are implemented as envisioned by the community and stakeholders, additional updates to existing documents or creation of new regulatory and discretionary review documents are needed. These include:

### 1. Architectural Review Standards

Update the existing Architectural Review Standards as shown below.

- Amend the typical standard for awnings, section VIII- Required Architectural Building Design Elements; B) Old Town District; pg. 32, 7) Awnings) and add new standards for Arcades and Signage to be consistent with an adopted Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan.
- Add specific standards for structured and underground parking consistent with an adopted Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan.
- Add new development standards outlined on the preceding pages.

### 2. Design Guidelines

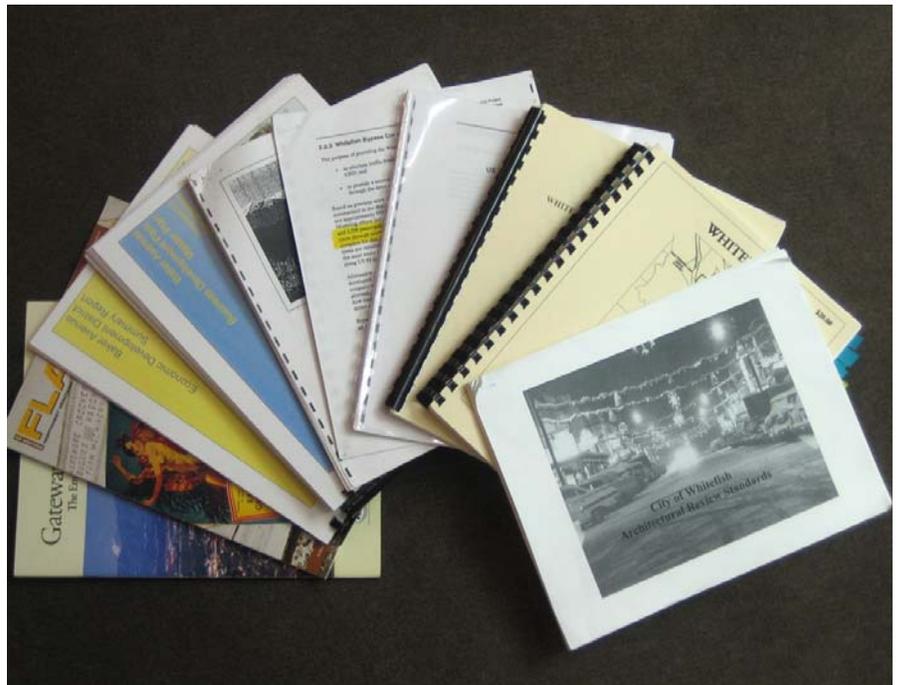
Development and adoption of Design guidelines and the design review process should be approved as the *primary* tool for review of downtown buildings and public areas. Determine process and feasibility of integrating the existing Whitefish Design Review Standards into the design guidelines and design review process.

A new structured review process should be developed and a new review committee should be created. The new committee could provide recommendations to the

Planning Commission and City Council, using the design guidelines as an exclusive evaluation tool.

### 3. Public Area Requirements

Design standards and details should be codified for the entire downtown master plan area to ensure the unified and consistent development of streets, sidewalks, intersections and public spaces. While these standards must address roadway safety requirements for automobiles and trucks, they should be developed with an emphasis on the pedestrian and bicycle.



## Possible Funding Sources

Downtown revitalization is an ongoing task that requires a multi-year commitment to funding and incentive programs. There are many financing tools available to implement the projects identified in the Downtown Whitefish Master Plan. Some of these are described below.

### Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

The Whitefish Urban Renewal Plan envisions the use of tax increment funds to finance public infrastructure projects and public costs associated with private development projects.

### Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

Federally-funded through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, this grant program primarily targets affordable housing projects. It is one of the oldest economic development tools in the country; however, its use is diminishing because of recent funding cuts by the Bush administration.

### New Market Tax Credit Program (NMTC)

This recent federally-funded program promotes private-sector investment in low-income communities to help finance community development projects, stimulate economic opportunity and create jobs.

Community Development Entities (CDEs) are formed within low-income areas to receive and administer the tax credit funds. For example, in Portland, Oregon, the Portland Family of Funds was created. Acting essentially as a

bank, it has helped finance such downtown projects as the reuse of the historic Armory Building as a regional theater complex and the renovation of the historic Telegram Building.

Since 2003, approximately \$6 billion in federal tax credits have been awarded to approximately 60 organizations nationwide.

### Transportation Enhancements Act

This federal transportation program has been creatively used to construct transportation projects; for instance, Whitefish may consider it as a funding source for the Wisconsin Viaduct and Underpass Improvement project.

### Special Assessment/Taxing Districts

Like TIF programs, this is a privately-oriented, self-funding leveraged debt program used to finance projects in a designated area. For instance, in Portland, Oregon, Portland Streetcar, Inc., a nonprofit organization was formed to construct and operate the downtown streetcar. The streetcar was funded in large part by adjacent property owners that contributed funds as part of the “assessment district.”

### Downtown Development Incentives Fund

Philanthropists often provide a significant amount of funding for projects over a long period of time through such means as:

- **Revolving loan funds** that offer interest rate write downs .
- **Matching funds** for contributions to downtown projects.

- **Direct incentives for targeted retailers** that offer a “negotiation fund.”

### Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)

This federal tax credit program was created in 1986 under Section 42 of the IRS code to encourage the development of affordable multifamily rental housing. For example, in April 2005, a Racine, Wisconsin downtown housing development project identified in the Racine Downtown Master Plan was awarded \$7.5 million of “Section 42” tax credits through the state’s Housing and Economic Development Authority.

### Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits for Certified Historic Structures

This federal program allows a portion of historic building renovation costs to be credited against federal income taxes in exchange for following certain federal (Department of Interior) renovation standards.