

# WHITEFISH DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

2015





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# OVERVIEW

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.

The 2015 Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan updates the adopted 2006 Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan. The intent of this plan is to:

- Build upon Central Avenue private development stimulated by considerable public investment that was prescribed in the 2006 plan
- Set forth a new implementation strategy for public projects that will stimulate significant private investment and identify project phasing for priority projects
- Emphasize the importance of providing essential retail parking
- Ensure retail tenant recruitment within the City Hall parking structure
- Address the Whitefish City-County Growth Policy and the State of Montana Growth Policy requirements
- Strengthen the connection between commercial parcels along Wisconsin Avenue and north of the railyard with the downtown core
- Provide additional design detail and phasing for the Whitefish Promenade



## 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. In addition to tourism uses, the plan fosters additional resident serving retail, commercial and housing uses. Downtown projects that have significantly contributed to continued momentum and steady growth include:

- First, Second, and Third Streetscape Improvements with above- and below-grade street utilities, sidewalk, landscape and roadway reconstruction (Baker to Spokane Avenues)
- Central Avenue Streetscape Improvements including above- and below-grade street utilities, sidewalk, landscape and roadway reconstruction (Railway to Third Streets)
- Storefront improvements and expansion through renovation or conversion to ground-floor retail use
- Numerous new buildings constructed throughout the downtown
- New public retail parking lot at the intersection of Spokane and Second Street
- Improvements to the Middle School Performing Arts Center

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## A COORDINATED EFFORT

The 2015 Master Plan Update addresses objectives developed by The City of Whitefish staff, elected officials, and the general public. The objectives are organized in the following five categories:

### 1) Downtown Business Vitality

- Keep existing businesses healthy
- Provide opportunities for new community-serving businesses
- Develop a strategy to strengthen downtown retail by identifying additional viable retail sites
- Create a pedestrian-friendly environment to encourage visitors and residents to utilize downtown businesses
- Better accommodate existing and future tourist industries

### 2) Transportation

- Ensure that Highway 93 roadway and intersection changes enhance and support downtown businesses rather than serving as merely a conduit for regional through-traffic
- Accommodate increasing traffic volumes without degrading downtown livability and the retail environment
- Locate new parking facilities to support downtown retail and commercial businesses
- Accommodate alternative transportation modes (pedestrian, bicycle, and transit) to reduce downtown congestion

### 3) Public Facilities

- Identify any additional appropriate public facilities and their locations to strengthen existing businesses
- Identify public improvements needed to stimulate downtown private development

### 4) Environment

- Connect the downtown to the natural environment
- Emphasize the natural environment as a central feature in the community's appeal to residents and visitors alike
- Highlight the unique natural environment in design concepts

### 5) Growth Management

- Maximize opportunities for higher-density market rate and affordable housing
- Illustrate how Downtown Whitefish can provide adequate commercial and retail capacity to meet future demand
- Address historic single family neighborhoods land use and compatibility issues as part of future zoning and Architectural Review Standards documents updates

# 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 public officials, city staff, 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 plan materials and provided input either before or after public presentations.

### 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.

### 3. Additional Meetings

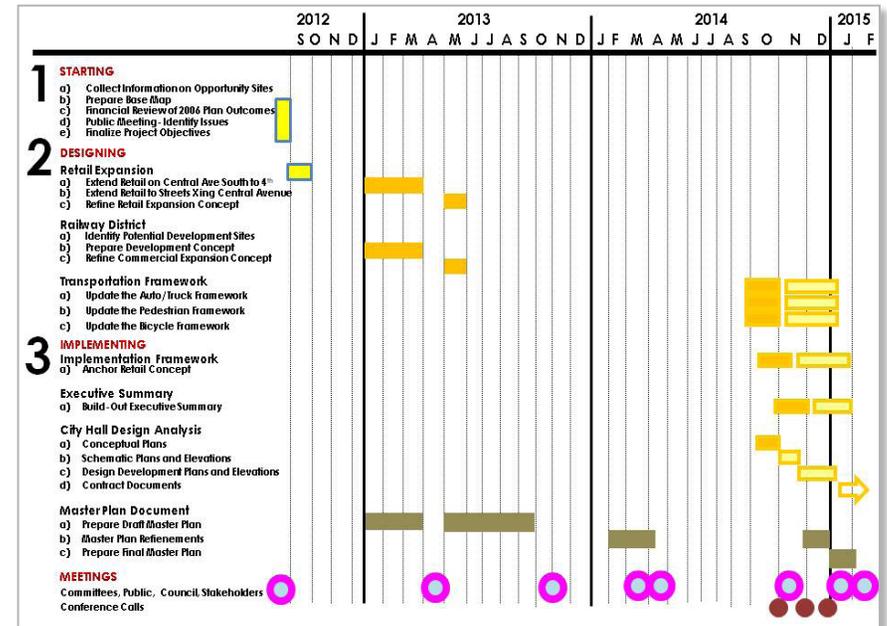
Additional meetings were held with stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- The Montana Department of Transportation.
- The Mayor and City Council.
- The Heart of Whitefish.
- City Departments and Committees.
- Whitefish School District.
- Downtown Businesses and Property Owners.

## SCHEDULE

The master plan process is illustrated below.

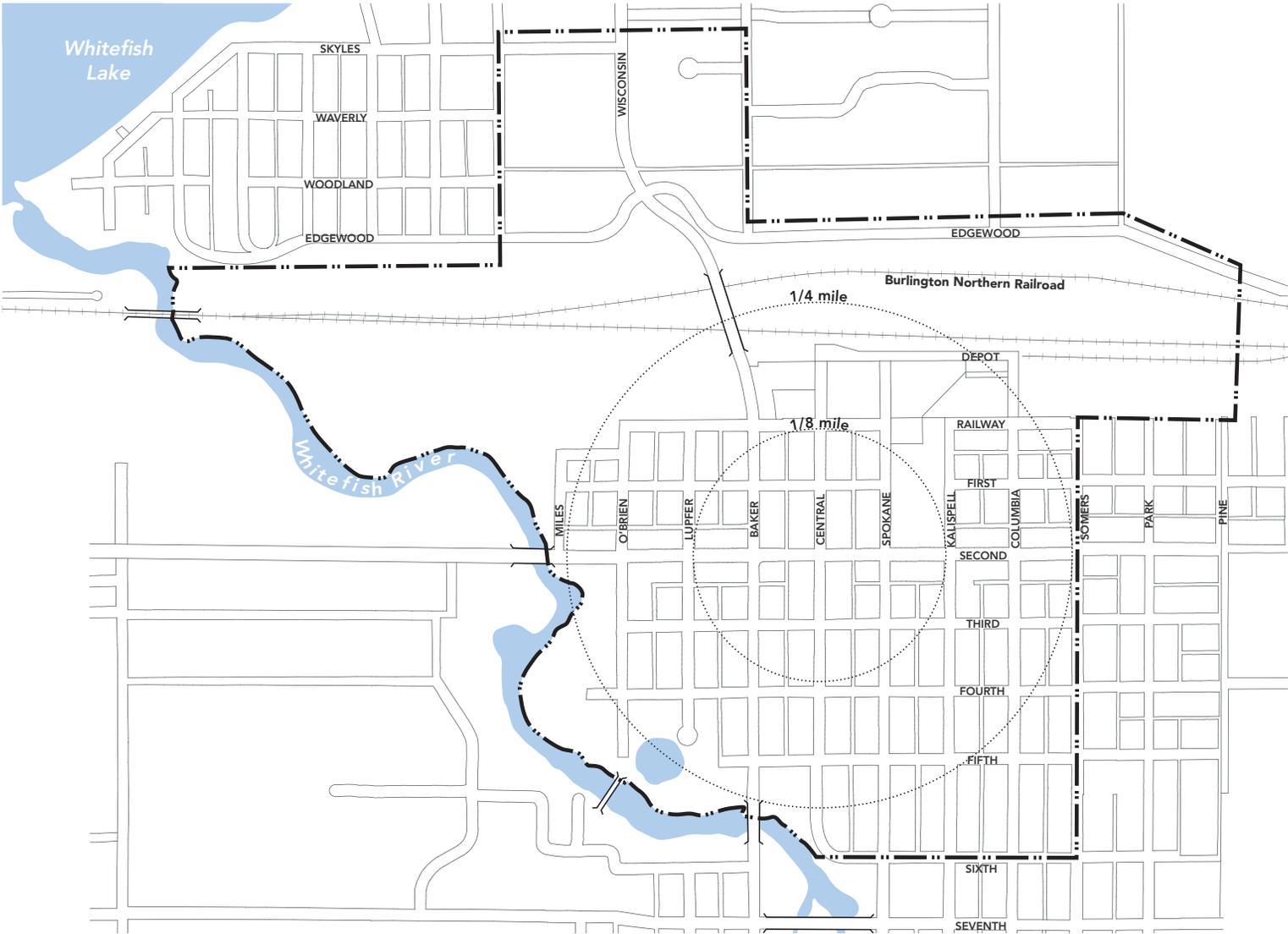
### Plan Update Process and Schedule



## MASTER PLAN AREA

The planning area includes the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe rail yards 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.

Master Plan Area



# FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPT

The key components of the long-term vision for development, improved access for all modes, enhanced livability, and maintenance of the historic characteristics of the Whitefish Downtown Business District include:

## 1) A Shopping Loop

The shopping loop will expand Central Avenue retail opportunities by providing additional retail sites in the Railway District fronting along First Street and Lupfer Avenue.

## 2) Shopping Loop Pedestrian Enhancements

Roadway, curbside parking, sidewalk and crosswalk enhancements will extend the Central Avenue streetscape south to Fourth Street, along First Street, and Lupfer Avenue. They will include elements of the existing Central Avenue streetscape and match the character and materials.

## 3) Whitefish Promenade

The promenade will extend existing multi-use trails to new routes. It will provide a protected bikeway and sidewalk enhancements along Spokane Avenue. This system will encircle and connect the downtown to the Whitefish River and downtown parks and will provide connections to commercial areas and nearby residential neighborhoods over the Baker Street viaduct.

## 4) Parking

New public parking facilities are envisioned to serve Central Avenue and Railway District shoppers and employees.

## 5) Baker Contra-Flow

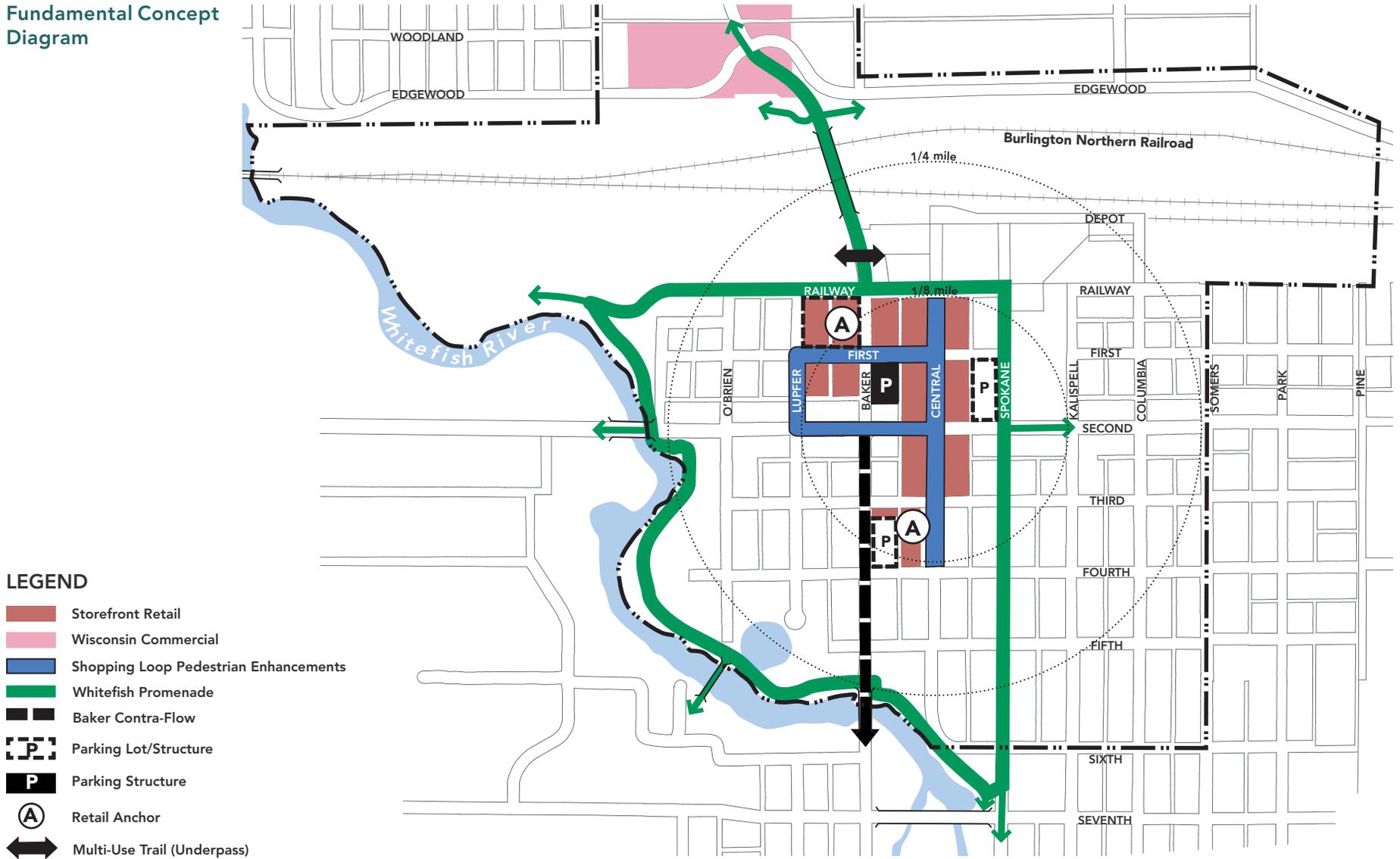
Improvements identified in the 2010 Urban Corridor Study should be implemented to ensure the efficient flow of regional traffic through downtown, via a contra-flow lane constructed on Baker Avenue.

## 6) Retail Anchors

Whitefish resident-serving retail uses, rather than tourist oriented businesses should be fostered for Central Avenue south of Third Street and in the Railway District



## Fundamental Concept Diagram



### LEGEND

- Storefront Retail
- Wisconsin Commercial
- Shopping Loop Pedestrian Enhancements
- Whitefish Promenade
- Baker Contra-Flow
- P Parking Lot/Structure
- P Parking Structure
- A Retail Anchor
- Multi-Use Trail (Underpass)

# CAPACITY DIAGRAM

The capacity diagram is a snapshot of the character and intensity of future downtown development stimulated by new public investment.

## A VISION FOR BUILD-OUT

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

- 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 and preserving Whitefish’s historic character.

## HOW THE DIAGRAM IS USED

The diagram can be used to:

- Market the downtown to potential investors
- Illustrate the return on investment as a result of public street and open space improvements.

## DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY SUMMARY

- Retail: 120,000 Square Feet
- Lodging: 90,000 Square Feet
- Commercial: 80,000 Square Feet
- Residential: 80 Units
- Retail Supporting Parking: 555 Spaces

Capacity Diagram



- LEGEND**
- New Development
  - Existing Development
  - Parks/Open Space
  - P Retail Supporting Parking
  - Whitefish Promenade
  - Multi-Use Trail (Underpass)

# TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK

The transportation framework identifies transportation elements for all modes. It establishes a comprehensive ‘complete street’ network of integrated and balanced pedestrian, bicycle and auto facilities that connect to and within the downtown planning area. While ensuring that essential auto and truck access are maintained, the transportation framework has a special emphasis on providing an ‘active transportation’ system. This system includes pedestrian and bike-friendly streets, intersections, sidewalks, and recreational trails that enhance mobility and the quality of life for those living in, working in, or visiting Downtown Whitefish.



## KEY TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS:

**Auto Mobility Streets (Auto/Truck Emphasis)**—Essential regional access routes to and within the downtown. A key addition is the Baker Avenue contra-flow lane suggested in the US Highway 93 Urban Corridor Study to improve regional mobility through downtown.

**New Streets**—Conceptual location for a new local street grid north of Railway Street. These new streets would be constructed concurrently with adjacent new development on parcels which are identified in the Land Use Framework.

**Pedestrian Emphasis Streets**— Key existing streets or future streets where pedestrian-friendly enhancements are needed to strengthen or stimulate new development and improve downtown access.

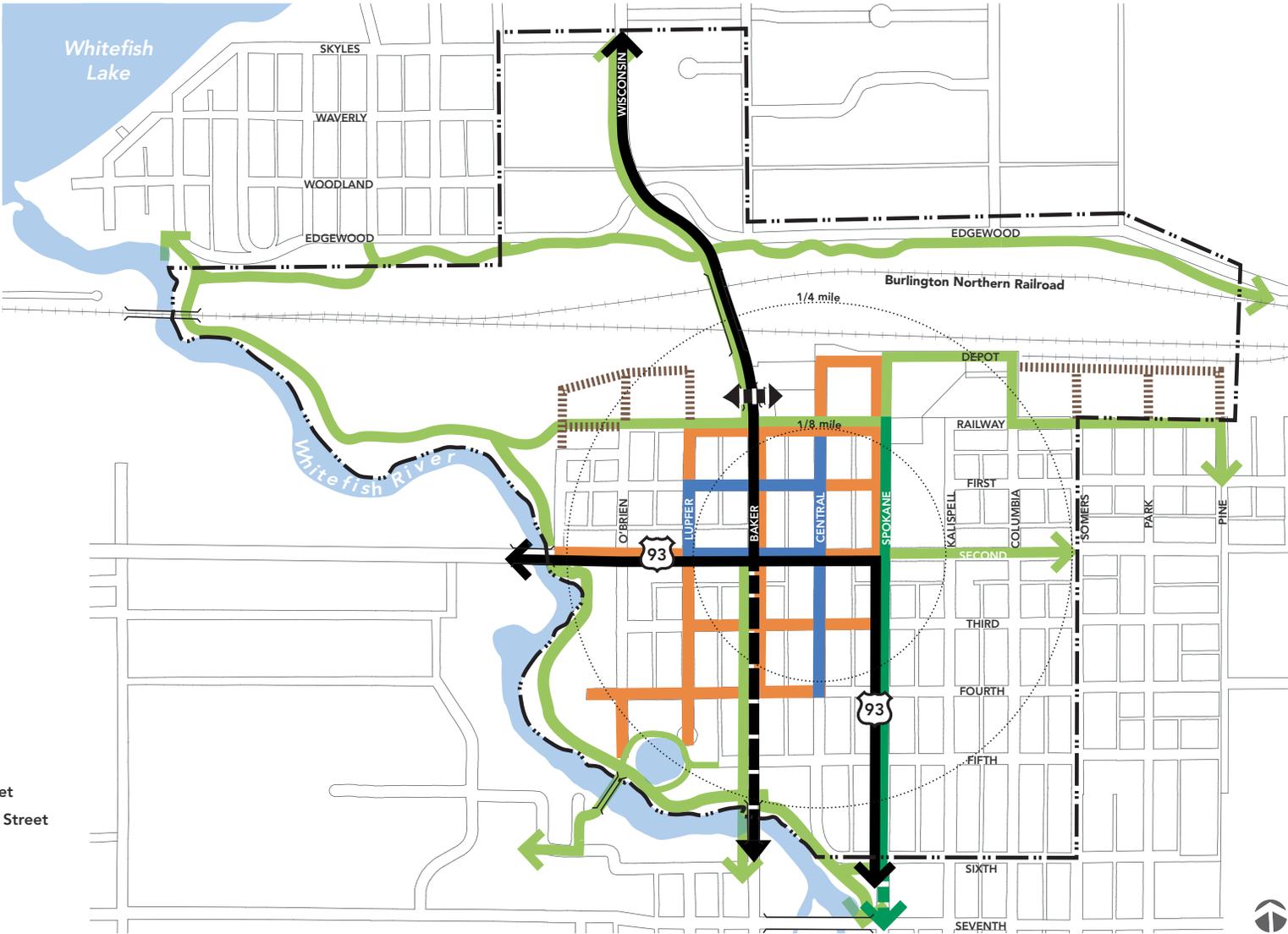
**Shopping Loop Emphasis Streets**—Pedestrian-oriented improvements needed to expand the retail offering on Central Avenue, link the Railway District to the Central Avenue corridor and provide an inviting setting for additional retail, commercial and housing development.

### The following two elements comprise the Whitefish Promenade:

**Protected Bikeways**— Bicycle facilities physically separated from auto travel lanes by a landscaped barrier, curb, sidewalk, parked cars or other means. These facilities provide safe and direct access and are generally located within existing street right-of-ways.

**Multi-Use Trails**— Off-street, shared pedestrian and bicycle trails connecting the Downtown to adjacent neighborhoods, parks and other natural features. These integrate existing and proposed trails, including the trails suggested by *The Whitefish Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan*.

# Transportation Framework



## LEGEND

- Auto Mobility Street
- Baker Contra-Flow
- New Street
- Pedestrian Emphasis Street
- Shopping Loop Emphasis Street

## Whitefish Promenade

- Protected Bikeway
- Multi-Use Trail
- Multi-Use Trail (Underpass)

# LAND USE FRAMEWORK

The Land Use Framework outlines the vision for long-term development of Downtown Whitefish. It describes the location and type of existing and desirable new uses. The Land Use Framework in itself does not change existing zoning (existing permitted uses or development regulations). Where current zoning is inconsistent with this vision, future code changes by Whitefish planning staff are suggested. In all cases where rezoning may occur, existing uses should be 'grandfathered', whereby the existing uses are allowed to remain in place in perpetuity.

## LAND USE CHARACTER

The Land Use Framework diagram describes the location of primary land uses and promotes (but does not require) a mix of uses, both vertically and horizontally on all sites.

New development or renovation of existing structures should be pedestrian-friendly, compatible in scale, massing, and character with existing desirable adjacent buildings. Sustainable practices for construction and habitation for all new or renovated buildings and sites should be fostered.

### KEY LAND USE FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS:

**Retail**—The location of parcels where the sale of goods, eating, drinking, lodging or entertainment businesses currently exist. Also identified are additional sites where retail is envisioned to be required through regulatory updates.

**Commercial**—The location where the sale of services is appropriate. Within these areas, retail uses are also appropriate.

**Public Parking**—Existing and proposed locations of public parking structures or lots.

**Civic**—Current locations of government services, churches, and schools.

**Parks**— Current and proposed locations of public parks.

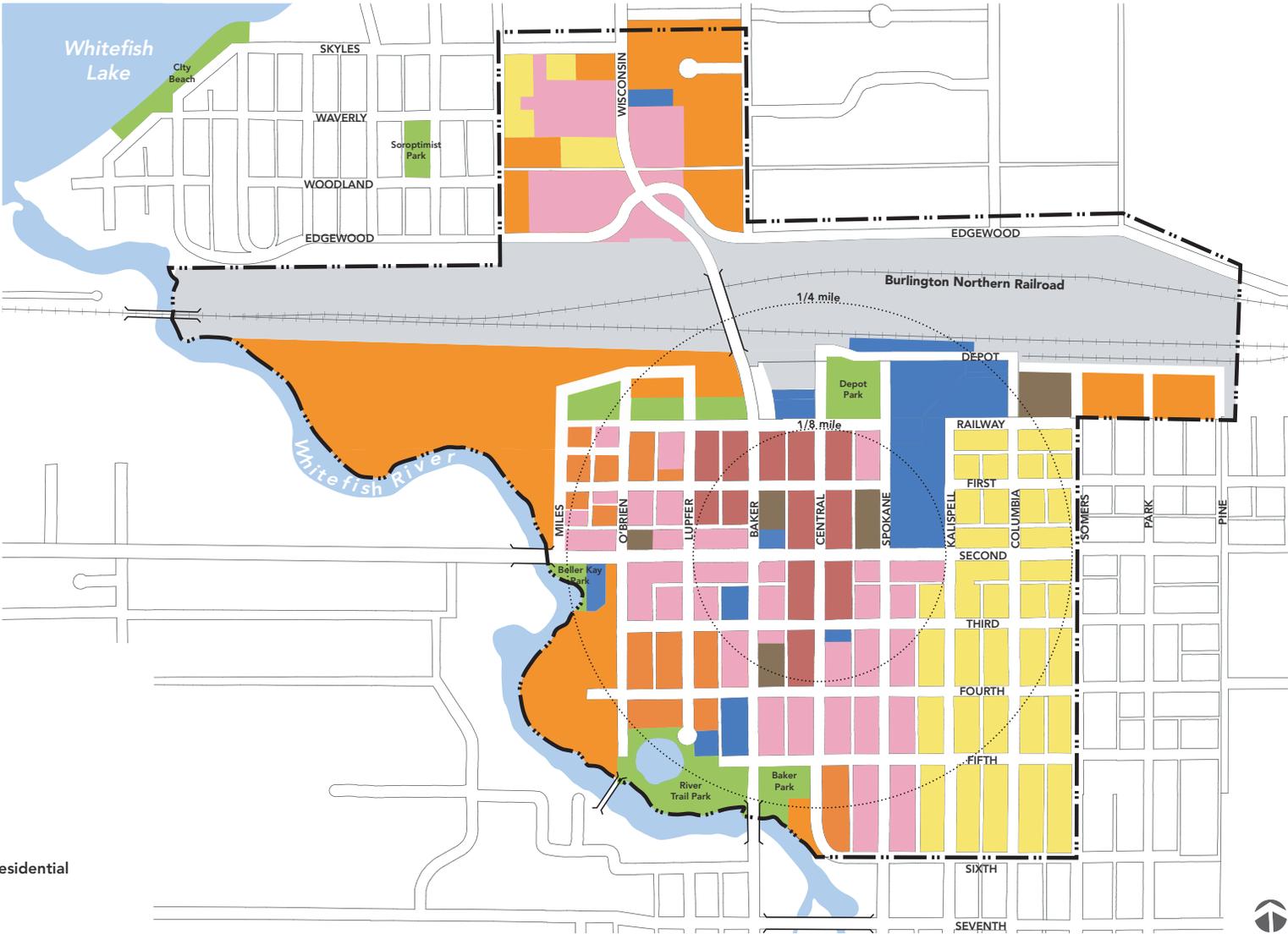


**Multi-family (Attached) Residential**—Existing or proposed locations for apartments, condominiums, townhomes or duplex residential structures.

**Single Family Residential**—Areas where one dwelling unit per parcel currently exists.

**Industrial**— The location of Burlington Northern Railway property that is envisioned to remain in its current use.

**Primary Land Use Framework**



**Primary Use LEGEND**

- Retail
- Commercial
- Public Parking
- Civic
- Parks
- Multi-Family (Attached) Residential
- Single Family Residential
- Industrial

# IMPLEMENTATION

Three steps are necessary to transform the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan from an aspiration to a development reality:

- 1) Adoption by City Council and distribution of the Plan by the City of Whitefish, the Heart of Whitefish or other Downtown individuals/ interest groups
- 2) Regulatory updates by City of Whitefish staff, consultant or other agency
- 3) Funding and construction of the identified projects. Additional public private-partnership projects may be added as needed.

## PROJECTS

The Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan provides a 5-year and long-term blueprint for continuing the momentum of the 2006 Master Plan. The projects have been grouped within either a 5-year or long term timeline.

Generally, the 5-year projects stimulate the greatest amount of economic development, are time sensitive, or are necessary for the long term implementation of other desirable projects. Long term projects have been identified that address key downtown objectives but are not likely to be funded within five years or require additional planning or actions by project partners such as the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). Projects may occur concurrently.

The Project Priorities diagram illustrates the location of:

- Necessary regulatory and guidelines updates
- Strategic public investments within public right-of-ways
- Existing or potential public-private-partnership projects necessary to stimulate desirable private investment, improve multi-modal access and safety, or address critical public building needs.

## Project Priorities

### FIVE YEAR PROJECTS

-  Downtown-Wide Action Plan and Regulatory/ Guidelines Updates
-  City Hall Parking Structure Retail Anchor
-  Whitefish Promenade- North Segment
-  Central Avenue South-Retail Anchor Projects
-  Railway District-Retail Anchor Projects

### LONG TERM PROJECTS

-  Whitefish Promenade- South Segment
-  Whitefish Promenade- Underpass
-  Spokane Avenue Parking Structure







# TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK

# OVERVIEW

Much of downtown Whitefish is within the public realm, including its roadways, sidewalks, parks, waterways and trails. The recent completion of Central Avenue and its adjacent streetscape improvements has resulted in substantial private investment, and improved livability. The Transportation Framework builds upon these projects and identifies a vision for additional improvements.

## POLICY CONSISTENCY

A number of existing Whitefish Transportation Plan policies and recommendations have informed the creation of the transportation framework of the Downtown Business District Master Plan. In most instances, the Transportation Plan and the Downtown Business District Master Plan recommendations are mutually supportive. Of note, the recommendations of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan are in alignment with the Whitefish Promenade concepts. In some instances however, the Downtown Business District Master Plan may vary from the policies of the Transportation Plan. To align the two documents, future amendments of the Transportation Plan will be necessary to ensure that its policies are consistent with the Downtown Business District Master Plan transportation framework.

## COMPLETE STREET NETWORK

A prime objective of the Downtown Plan is to maintain and strengthen Downtown Whitefish as a destination rather than simply a place to pass through. While essential access and mobility are identified for key routes, a bias toward the pedestrian and cyclist should be fostered for all streets in the downtown, including Auto Mobility Streets. The Transportation Framework identifies key routes for pedestrian and bicycle improvements. To implement this vision, 'active transportation' (pedestrian and bicycle) enabling policies and regulating design standards should be created.

## STREET FRAMEWORK

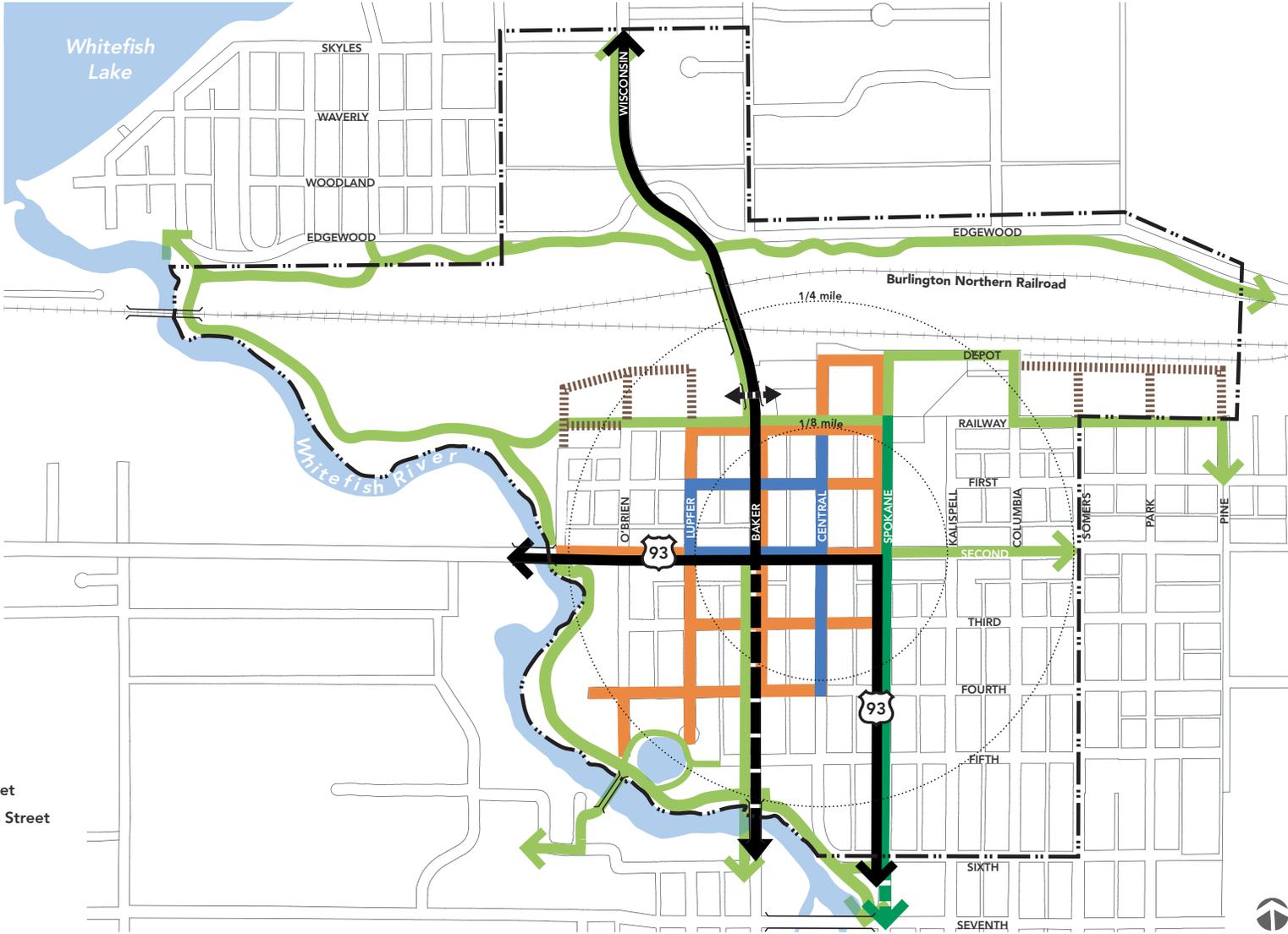
The Transportation Framework creates a network of transportation elements that complement adjacent land uses and spur additional desirable Downtown development. The Framework elements include:

- Auto Mobility Streets
- New Streets
- Pedestrian Emphasis Streets
- Shopping Loop Emphasis Streets
- Protected Bikeway Routes
- Multi-Use Trails



Provide Bicycle Parking

# Transportation Framework



## LEGEND

- Auto Mobility Street
- Baker Contra-Flow
- New Street
- Pedestrian Emphasis Street
- Shopping Loop Emphasis Street

## Whitefish Promenade

- Protected Bikeway
- Multi-Use Trail/Bike Lane
- Multi-Use Trail (Underpass)

# AUTO AND TRUCK

The Auto and Truck Element identifies regional-serving urban highway, arterial and local street access routes through and within the downtown. These routes are under the jurisdiction of both the City of Whitefish and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). Implementation of these improvements may be led by the City or MDT.

## AUTO MOBILITY STREETS

The Auto Mobility Streets framework maintains essential mobility and complements land use improvements that reinforce downtown as a regional shopping, employment, and residential destination. The framework:

- Maintains Spokane Avenue between Second and Sixth Streets as a two-lane arterial route (preserves existing trees along Spokane Avenue)
- Proposes Baker Avenue contra-flow lane improvements between Second and 13th Street
- Envisions better utilization of Baker Avenue as an additional regional mobility route

The Urban Highway and Baker arterial streets should be designed to address the unique conditions of downtown Whitefish. The design should maintain mobility while ‘calming traffic’, this in turn will foster downtown livability, and strengthen the private investment environment for adjacent parcels. Future improvements should include:

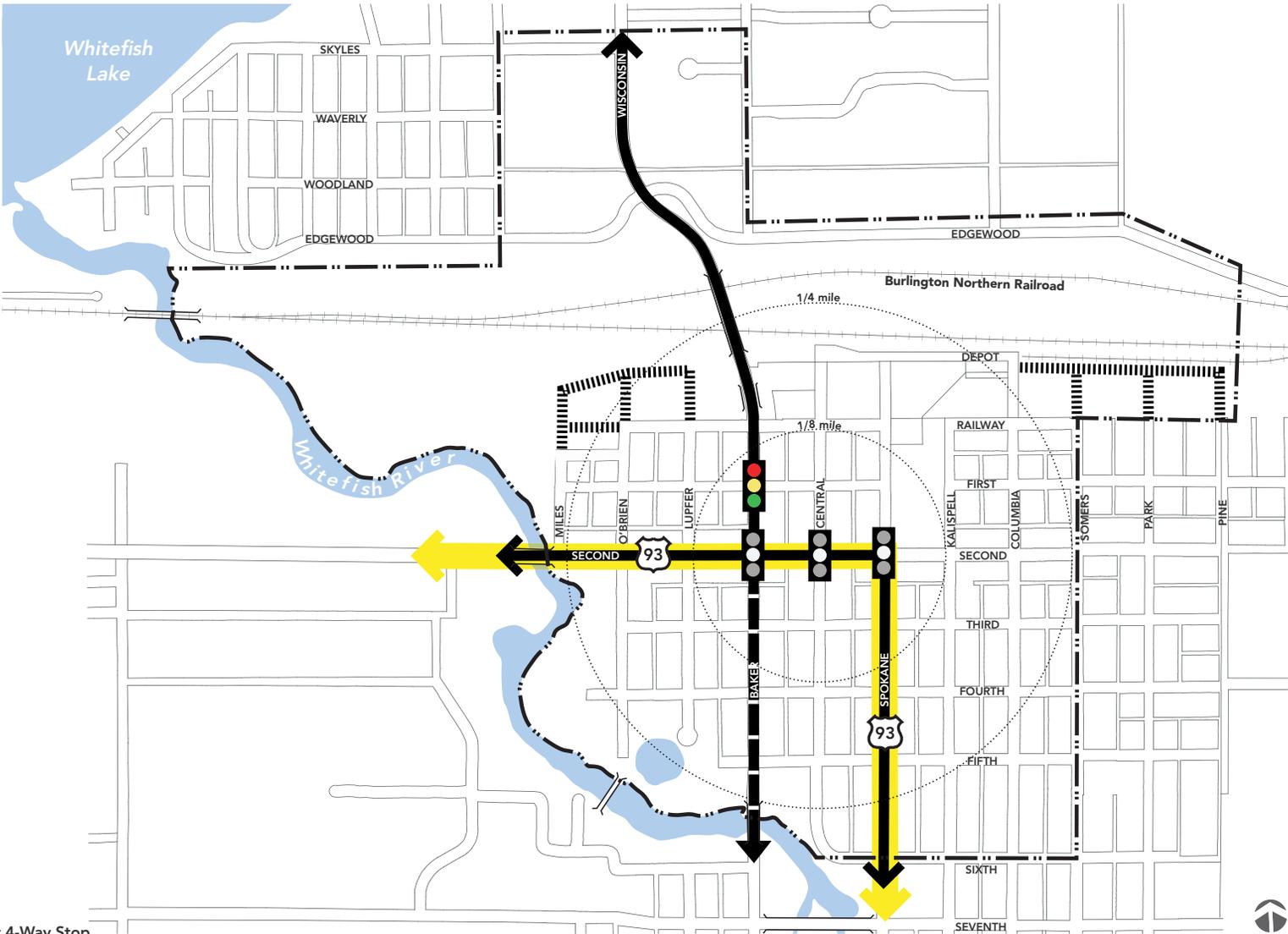
- Consideration for typical conditions rather than peak commuting hours. Level of service (LOS) or other standards that measure roadway intersection congestion should be adjusted to accept congestion levels above current requirements.
- A suggested traffic signal or four-way stop at First and Baker. The additional traffic control will improve pedestrian access between the Railway District and Central Avenue retail and commercial destinations.
- Reduction of existing large corner radii turning standards. Street intersections should be designed for a typical FedEx or similarly sized delivery vehicle that service businesses daily and accommodate occasional large semi-trailer truck turning movements by laying down curbs at key intersections.
- Maintaining curbside parking wherever possible
- Reducing speed limits to 20 mph (maximum)

## NEW STREETS

Conceptual location for a street grid north of Railway Street is identified. These new local streets will provide access to new development identified in the Land Use Framework. New streets should be constructed concurrently with new development of parcels. These streets should meet existing City local street standards. Streets should include:

- Curbside parking
- Canopy street trees within a parkway between a sidewalk and curb line
- Pedestrian-scaled ornamental street lighting
- Underground utilities

# Auto and Truck Elements



- LEGEND**
- Auto Mobility Street
  - Baker Contra-Flow
  - New Street
  - Urban Highway
  - Proposed Traffic Signal or 4-Way Stop
  - Existing Traffic Signal

## US HIGHWAY 93 URBAN CORRIDOR STUDY IMPROVEMENTS

US Highway 93 is designated as an Urban Highway through downtown Whitefish. The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has been considering roadway changes to improve regional traffic mobility through downtown since the late 1980s. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was completed in 1995 which identified a number of through-traffic mobility ‘enhancement’ projects. The US Highway 93 Urban Corridor Study considered new planning information, evolving transportation conditions, updated regional growth forecasts, and provided updated concept adjustments to the 1995 EIS. The study suggested implementation of either the Contra-Flow Configuration or Modified (Offset) Alternative, based on further study. Both options include contra-flow lanes on both Baker and Spokane Avenues.

Construction of a contra-flow lane on Spokane Avenue should not occur due to:

- Impacts to existing trees between Second and Seventh
- Spatial constraints that preclude the ability to construct a protected bikeway
- Possible ‘bottle-neck’ traffic conditions at the intersection of Second and Spokane where two northbound lanes would merge into one westbound lane

### Baker Contra-Flow–South of Second Street

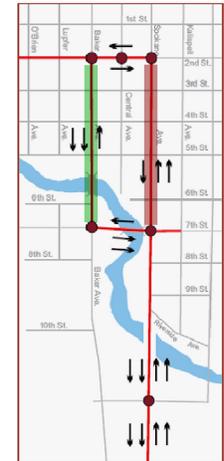
The Downtown Business District Master Plan does not support Spokane Avenue widening but, does support Baker Avenue improvements that include:

- Two southbound lanes and one northbound lane from Second Street to the Whitefish River
- Maintenance of curbside parking, at a minimum, between Second and Third (East side of street)
- Adding bicycle lanes or shared bicycle and auto lane improvements (as indicated)

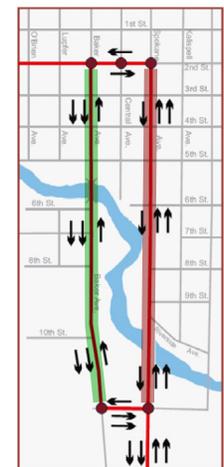
The Baker Avenue improvements South of Second Street to Fifth Street would include:

- Two southbound lanes and one northbound lane
- A 6’-6” southbound bike lane (replaces curbside parking) on the west side of the street and roadway signage and pavement markings indicating a northbound shared bike/auto lane on the east side of the street (An option South of Third Street to Fifth Street would be to remove on-street parking on both sides of the street and replace with a 6’-6” bike lane in each direction)
- Maintaining the existing curb-to-curb dimension of 50’-0”
- Maintaining the existing 10’ sidewalks

### Contra-Flow Configuration

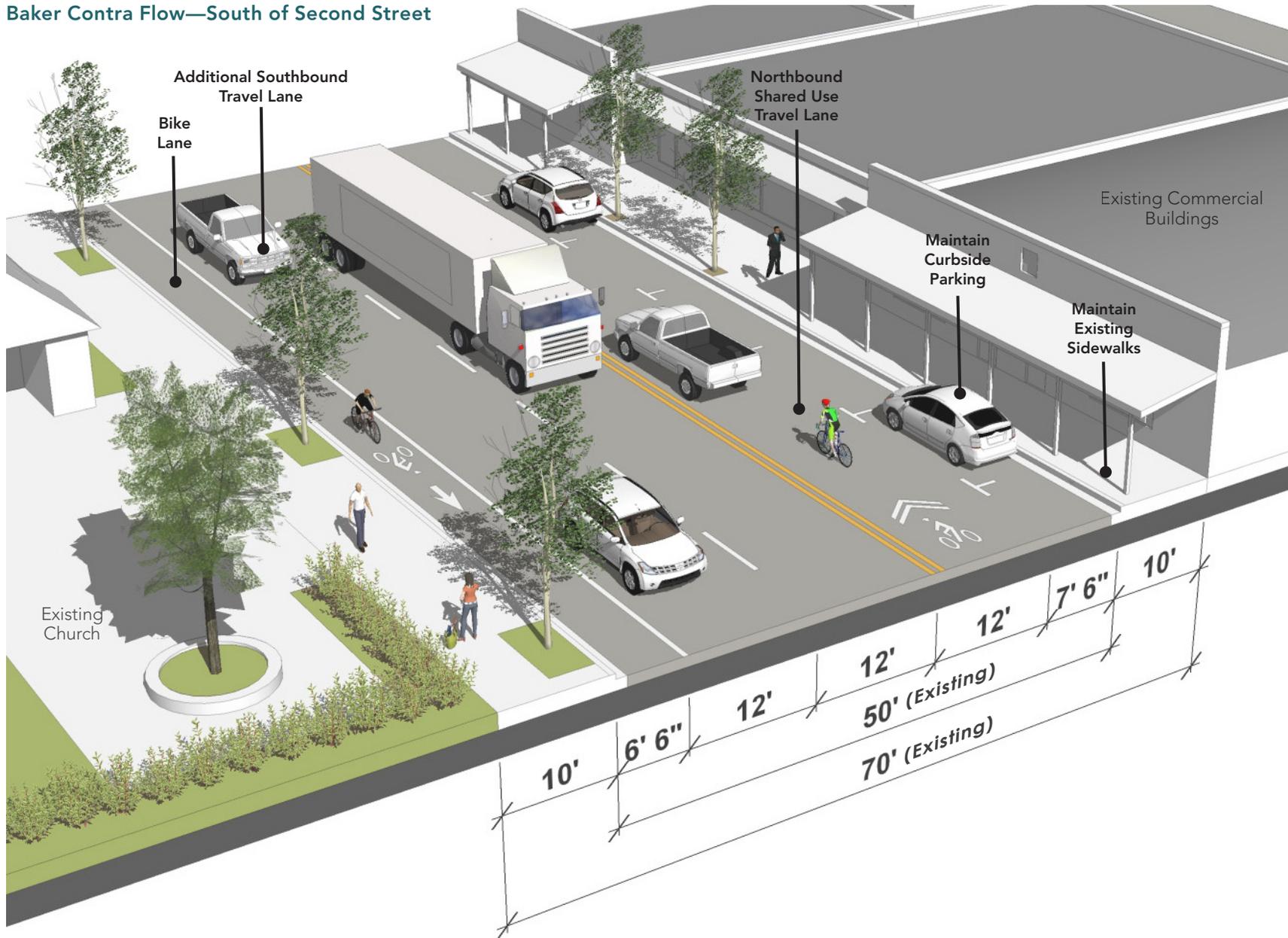


### Modified (Offset) Alternative C



- Recommended
- Not Recommended

**Baker Contra Flow—South of Second Street**

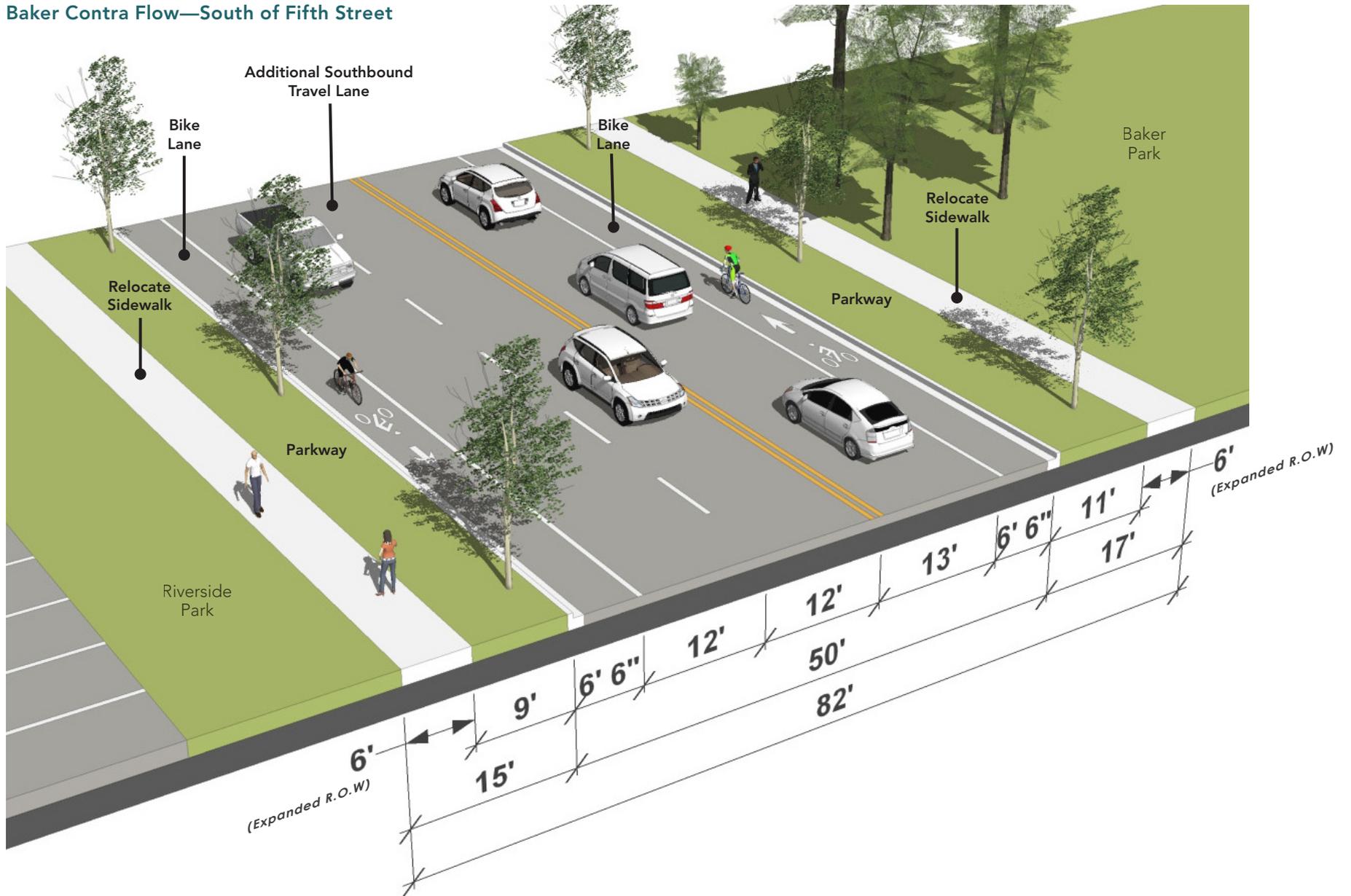


### **Baker Contra-Flow–South of Fifth Street**

The Baker Avenue improvements South of Fifth Street to the Whitefish River would include:

- Increasing the existing right-of-way from 70' to 82' (6' on each side of the existing right-of-way)
- Increasing the curb-to-curb dimension from 44' to 50' and matching the existing curb-to-curb dimension north of Third Street
- Provide an additional southbound lane and maintaining the existing northbound lane from Second Street to the Whitefish River
- Include 6'-6" bike lanes on both sides of the street that would connect to existing bike lanes south of the Whitefish River
- Include new parkways on both sides of the street to provide a roadway buffer and winter snow storage
- Relocating sidewalks (6' min.) into the existing adjacent parks

**Baker Contra Flow—South of Fifth Street**



# PEDESTRIAN

While all streets in the downtown should be pedestrian-friendly, the Pedestrian Element identifies key access routes between neighborhoods and within Downtown. The framework includes existing improved pedestrian streets and additional streets targeted for pedestrian-friendly streetscape improvements.

## PEDESTRIAN EMPHASIS STREETS

Downtown Whitefish’s visitor-driven economy is dependent on creating a pedestrian oriented setting in which customers feel comfortable strolling from shop-to-shop, relaxing on comfortable benches or eating and drinking at café tables. Recent pedestrian-priority improvements include widened sidewalks, pedestrian-scaled street lights, landscaped curb extensions, ‘tabled’ intersections, and well-defined intersection crosswalks. These improvements have created a welcoming environment that has enhanced the downtown character, livability and most importantly, has spurred increased pedestrian activity. The Pedestrian Elements diagram identifies additional pedestrian improvements for the Downtown and include:

**Pedestrian Emphasis Streets**– sidewalk and intersection improvements provided on streets within residential areas of the downtown along with commercial-oriented streets that complement and connect with the shopping loop streets

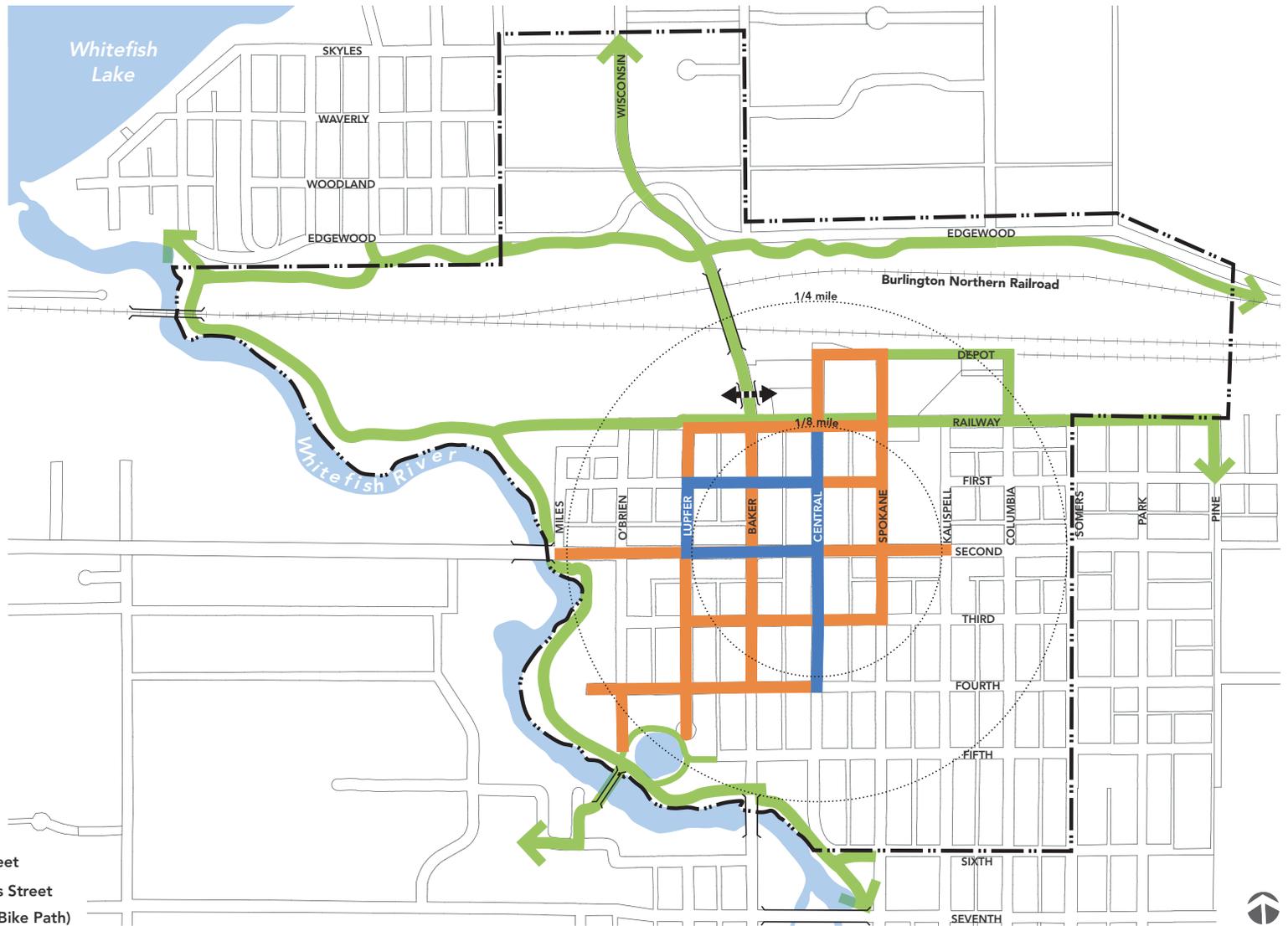
**Shopping Loop Emphasis Streets**– sidewalk and intersection improvements that foster retail activity and have a consistent character with the existing Central Avenue improvements

**Multi-Use Trails**– pedestrian, and bicycle recreation and commuting routes that link the downtown to surrounding neighborhoods

**Multi-Use Trail Underpass**– a pedestrian and bicycle underpass of the Baker/Wisconsin viaduct that provides an alternative to the at-grade intersection crossing at Baker Avenue and Railway Street



## Pedestrian Elements



### LEGEND

-  Pedestrian Emphasis Street
-  Shopping Loop Emphasis Street
-  Multi-Use Trail (Ped and Bike Path)
-  Multi-Use Trail (Underpass)

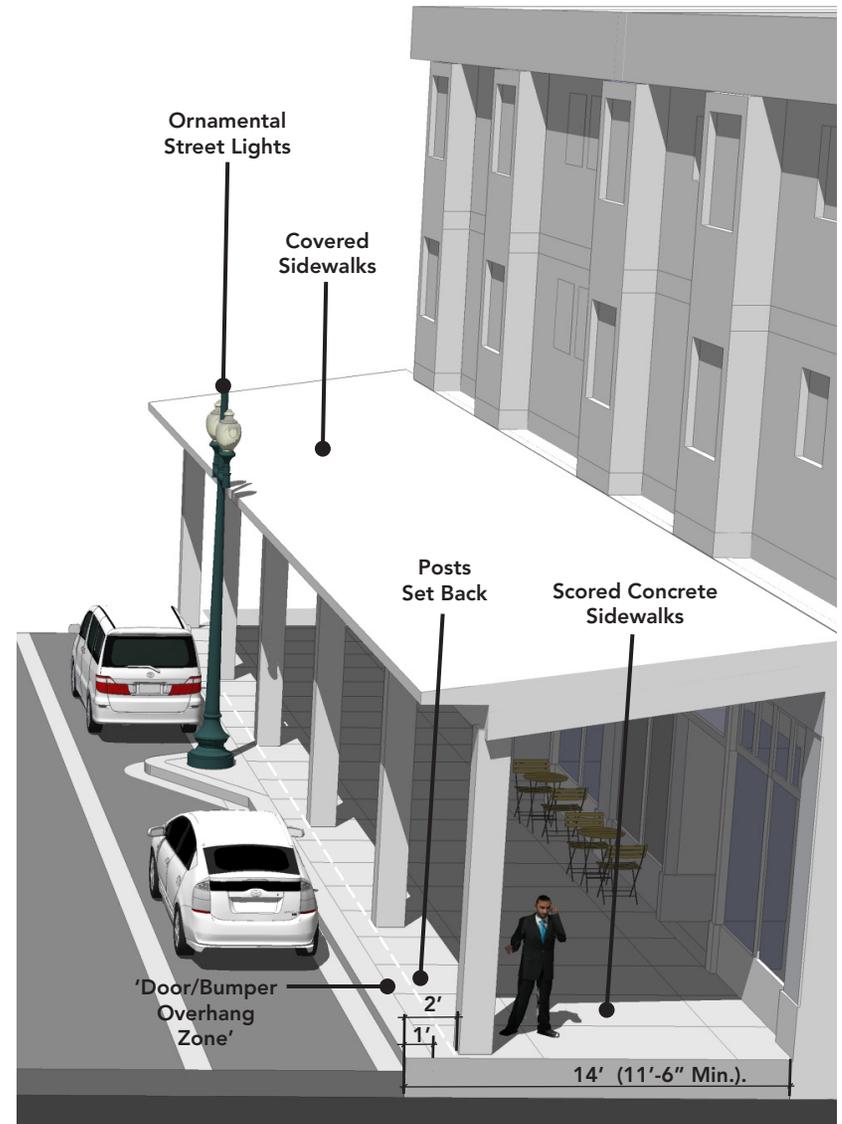
## SHOPPING LOOP EMPHASIS STREETS

The Shopping Loop Emphasis streets include street segments where pedestrian-oriented improvements, combined with land use changes, expand the retail offering along Central Avenue and link the Railway District to the Central Avenue corridor. A 'common thread' of similar Central Avenue sidewalk, intersection, lighting and landscape elements are recommended and include:

- 'Tabled' sidewalk-level concrete crosswalks at all intersections
- Recommended 14-foot wide sidewalks (11'-6" wide sidewalks minimum)
- Ornamental street lights at corners and mid-block locations
- Covered sidewalks along retail frontages
- Scored concrete sidewalks (tooled rather than sawcut joints)
- One foot wide curb
- Landscaped curb extensions (Use of native and native compatible plant materials is encouraged)
- Door zone/bumper overhang zone (set back covered sidewalk posts from the curb to minimize auto impacts and damage)



First and Baker Intersection Improvements



Typical Shopping Loop Sidewalk Elements

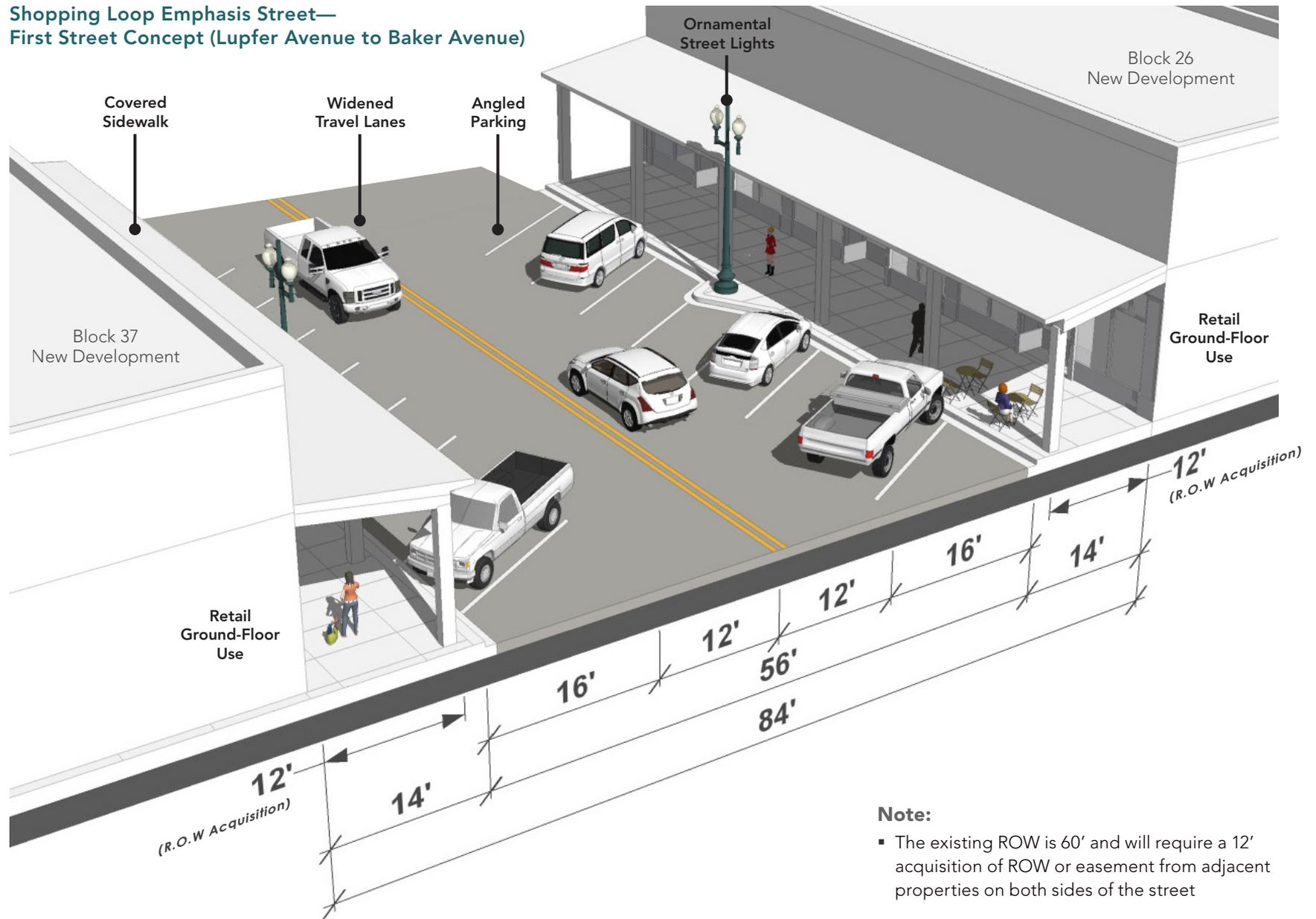
**Shopping Loop Emphasis Street—  
First Street and Lupfer Avenue  
Improvements**



**LEGEND**

-  Wide Sidewalks
-  Ornamental Lights/  
Landscaping
-  Tabled Intersection and  
Crosswalk
-  Covered Sidewalks
-  Traffic Signal or 4-Way Stop
-  Curbside Parking (Angled or Parallel)
-  SNOW Bus Stop

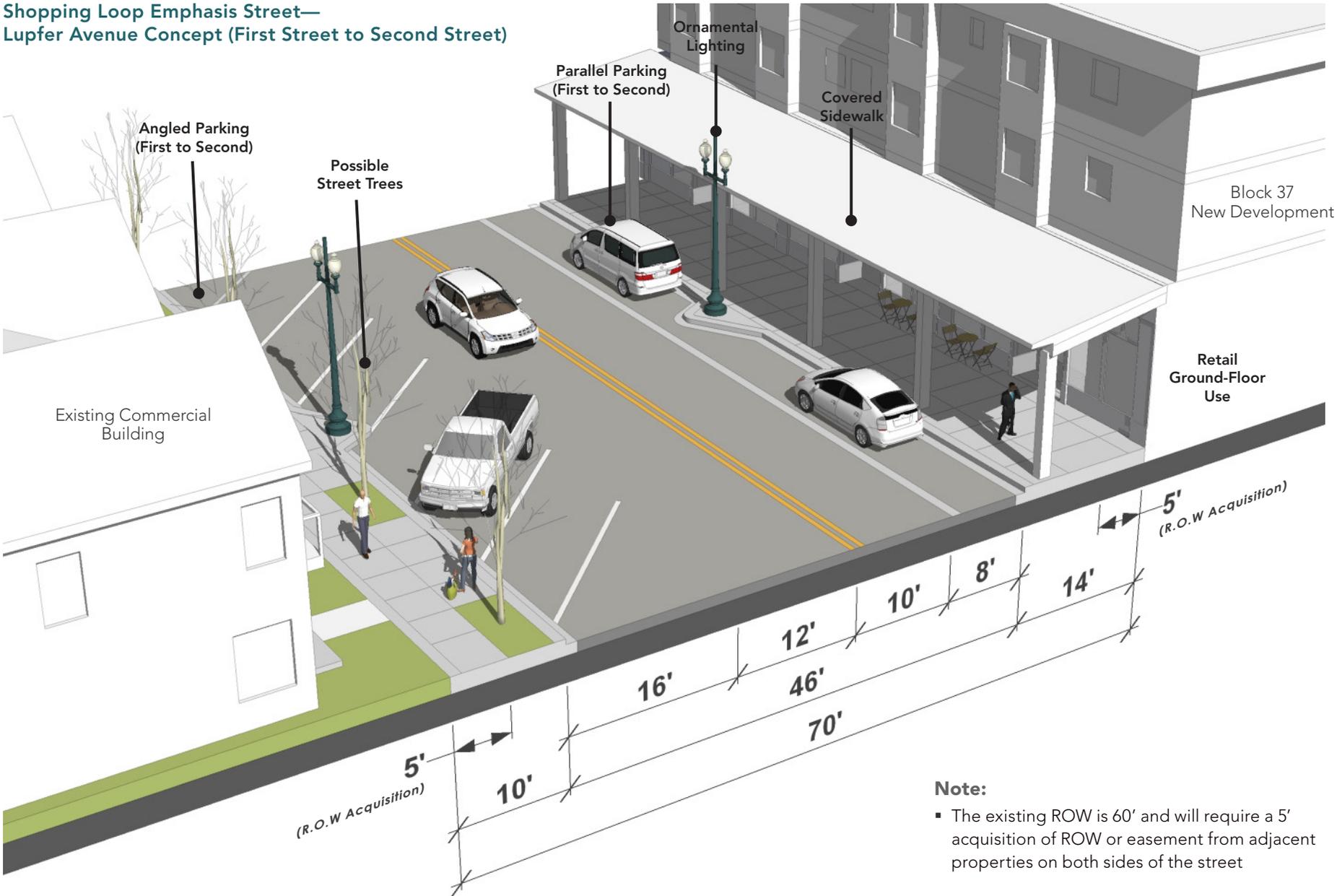
**Shopping Loop Emphasis Street—  
First Street Concept (Lupfer Avenue to Baker Avenue)**



**Note:**

- The existing ROW is 60' and will require a 12' acquisition of ROW or easement from adjacent properties on both sides of the street

**Shopping Loop Emphasis Street—  
Lupfer Avenue Concept (First Street to Second Street)**



**Note:**  
 ▪ The existing ROW is 60' and will require a 5' acquisition of ROW or easement from adjacent properties on both sides of the street

# BICYCLE

The Bicycle Element establishes a network of bicycle facilities that provide safe, direct, and convenient routes suitable for daily transportation and recreation from adjacent neighborhoods and within the downtown. The primary intent of the bicycle element is to substantially increase the bicycle trips in the Downtown. When fully implemented, the benefits of a safe bicycle network can be significant. By transferring a reasonable portion of Downtown transportation trips from automobiles to bicycles, Downtown auto congestion can be lessened and demand for parking facilities reduced.

The bikeway element includes routes identified in the Whitefish Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan and the Safe Routes to School Master Plan. Bicycle facilities include:

**Protected Bikeways**—Bi-directional, 10' wide 'Protected Bikeway' route along Spokane Avenue, as part of the Whitefish Promenade are identified. Extension of the protected bikeway south of Seventh Street to the Whitefish city limits should be fostered.

**Multi-Use Trails (Shared Pedestrian and Bicycle Facility)**—Existing, planned, and proposed multi-use trail routes are identified. New multi-use paths should be 12' wide (10' minimum) to accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists comfortably. To minimize conflicts, designated cyclists and pedestrians lane striping should be provided. On all routes, bicyclists should yield to pedestrian traffic and be required to ride at slow speeds when pedestrians are present.

**Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Facilities**— On-street Bike Lanes and Walkway routes are identified. A description of the design and characteristics of these routes are provided within the Whitefish Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan.

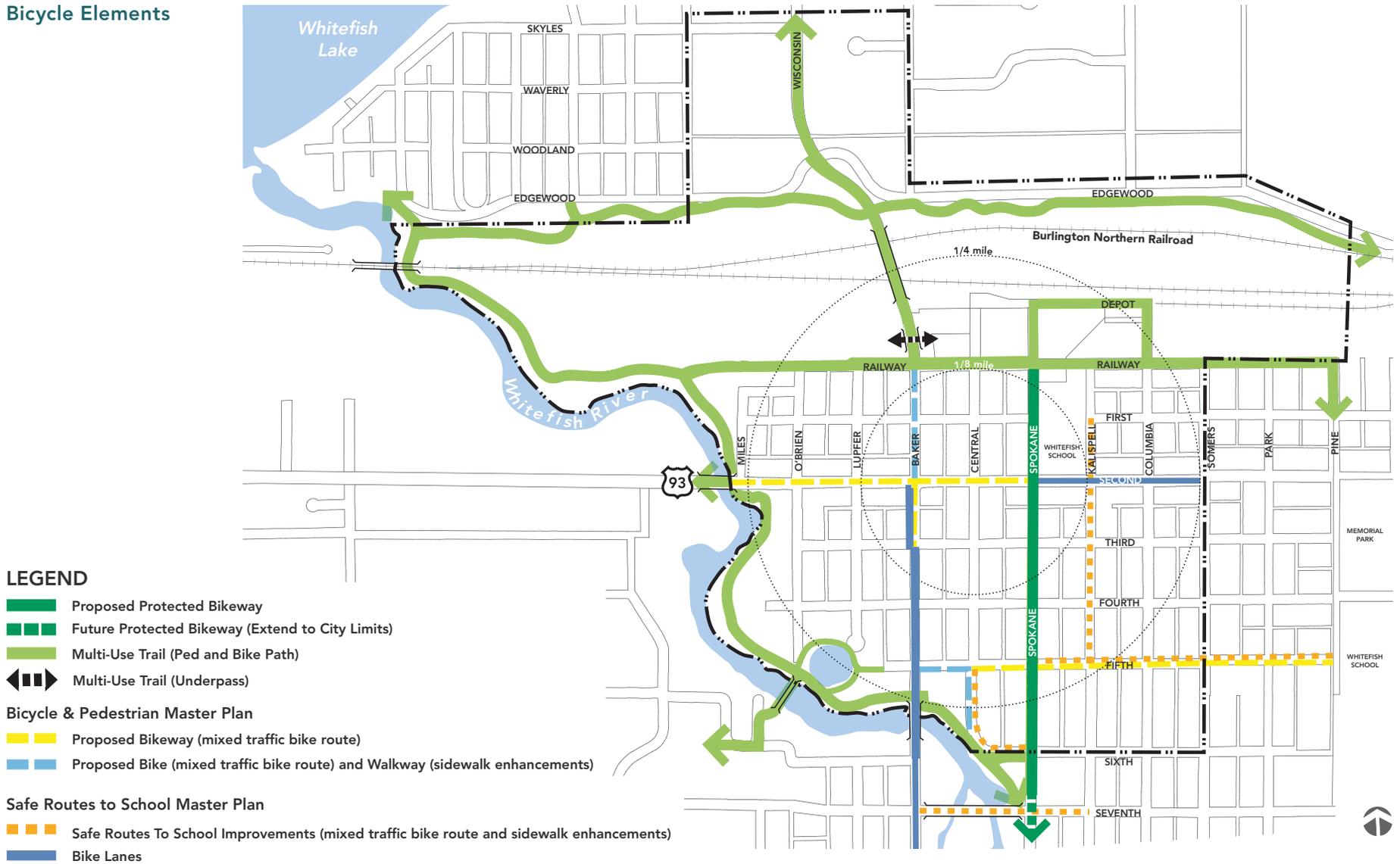
**Safe Routes to School Facilities**—Safe Routes to School Improvements and Bike Lane routes are identified. A description of the design and characteristics of these routes are provided within the Whitefish Safe Routes to School Master Plan.

**Bicycle Signal**—A signal phase for north/south bi-directional bicycle movements at the intersection of Spokane Avenue and Second Street is encouraged. As part of the implementation strategy, additional traffic analysis and intersection design is identified as necessary to determine if this signal is warranted.



Bicycle Signal

## Bicycle Elements



## WHITEFISH PROMENADE

The 'Whitefish Promenade' is a transportation and recreation route within the downtown. It is comprised of pedestrian and bicycle facilities including sidewalks, multi-use trails, and protected bikeways. Except for the identified multi-use trail segments, pedestrian and bicycle facilities are separated to minimize conflicts.

### Protected Bikeways

The protected bikeways are located along busy streets where Whitefish residents and visitors currently do not ride their bicycles because of auto conflict safety concerns. To attract these potential riders, the protected bikeway should be:

- Physically separated from auto traffic lanes by curbside parked vehicles, landscaping, a concrete curb or a combination of these elements
- Designed to provide safe cyclist crossings at intersections and driveways. Colored lane markings, special bicycle traffic signal phasing or other innovative approaches to creating safe bicycle intersection crossings should be considered.
- Designed to minimize pedestrian impacts or conflicts on adjacent sidewalks, street corners, and crosswalks. No reduction in sidewalk area should result from the construction of the protected bikeway facility
- Well maintained. Bikeways should be swept or plowed frequently to keep debris, dirt, snow, and ice off cycling surfaces. The greatest deterrent to winter cycling is not cold weather; rather it is a slippery surface. A well-maintained network will extend the cycling season well into the winter months or, for more hardy cyclists, all year.

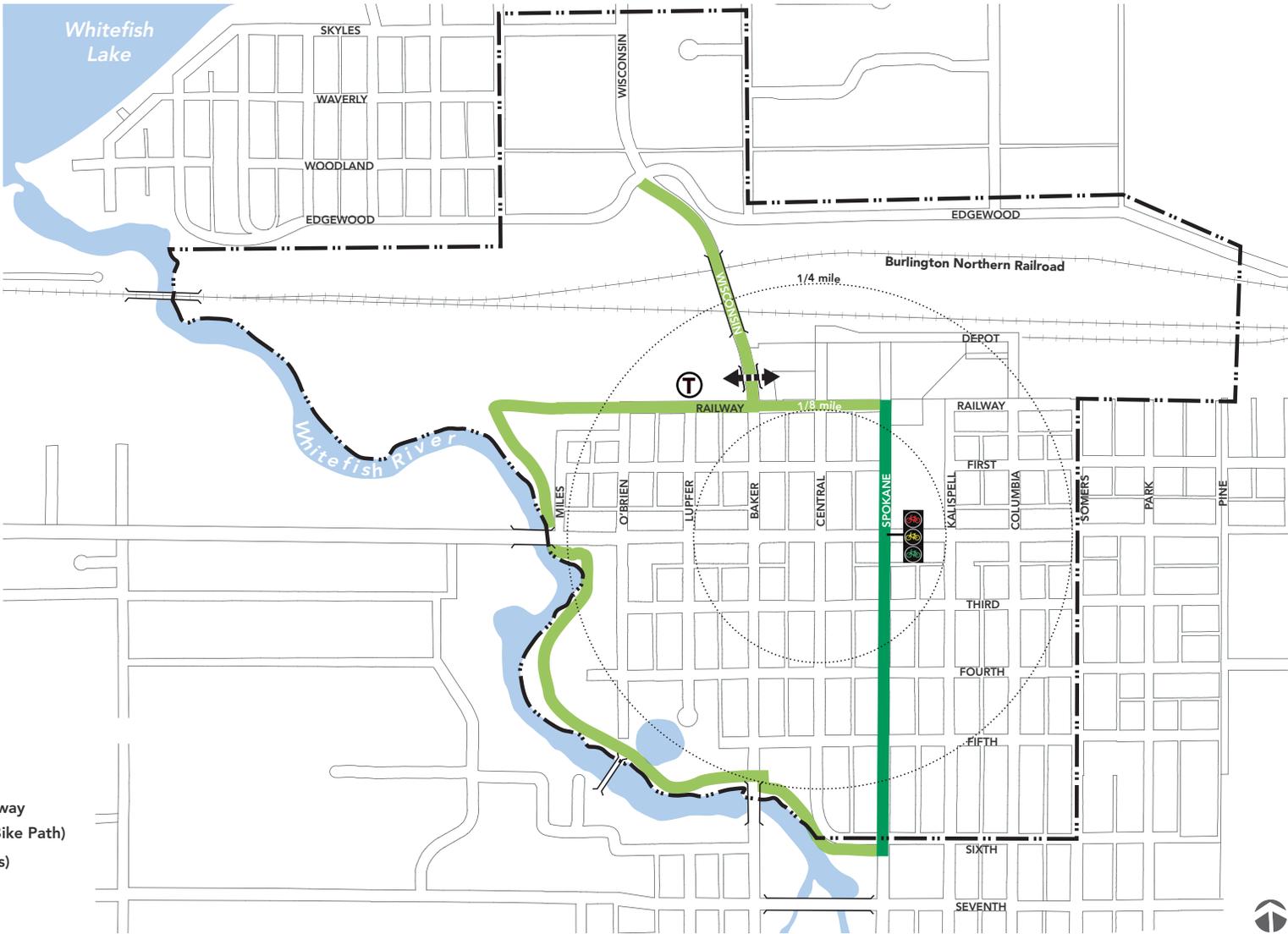
### Multi-Use Trail (Pedestrian and Bike Path)

Connections to the neighborhoods, access to recreation areas and linkages to pedestrian emphasis streets are identified. The network includes existing, planned, and proposed new facilities.



Spokane Avenue—Mature Trees to be Preserved

Whitefish Promenade



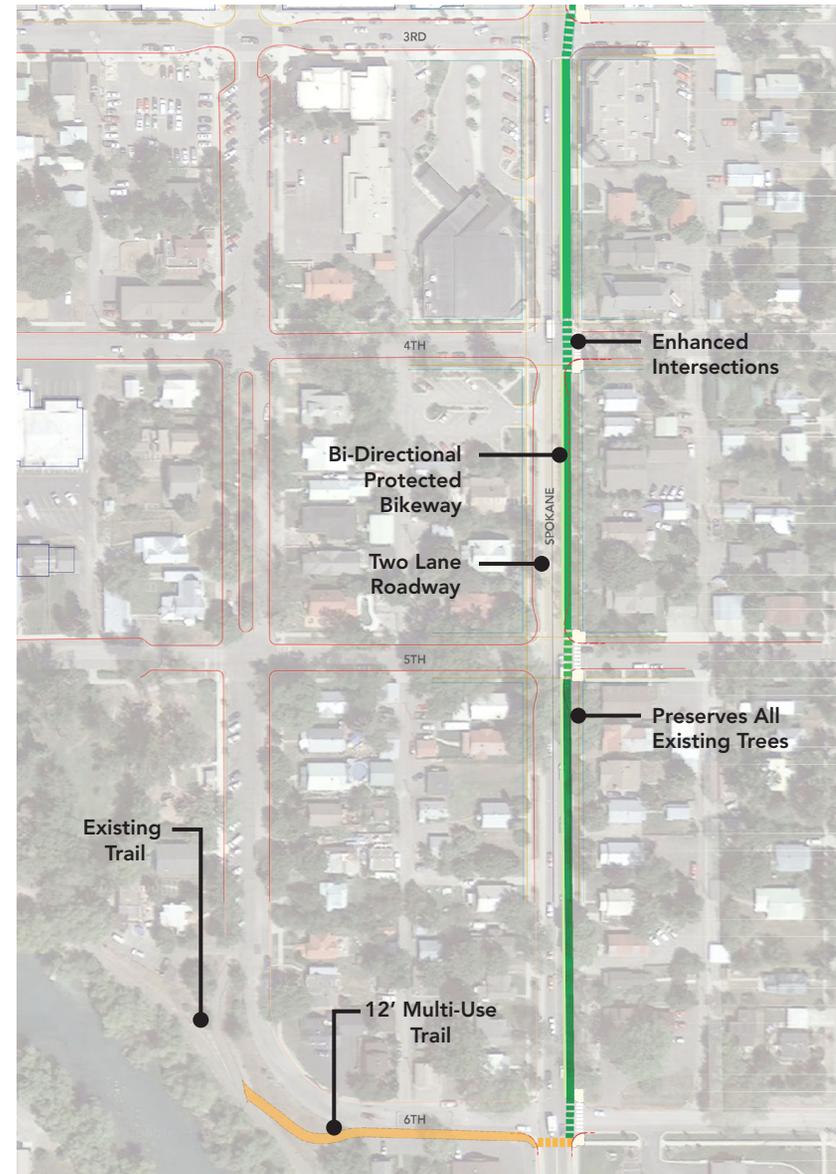
LEGEND

-  Proposed Protected Bikeway
-  Multi-Use Trail (Ped and Bike Path)
-  Multi-Use Trail (Underpass)
-  Trailhead
-  Bike Signal

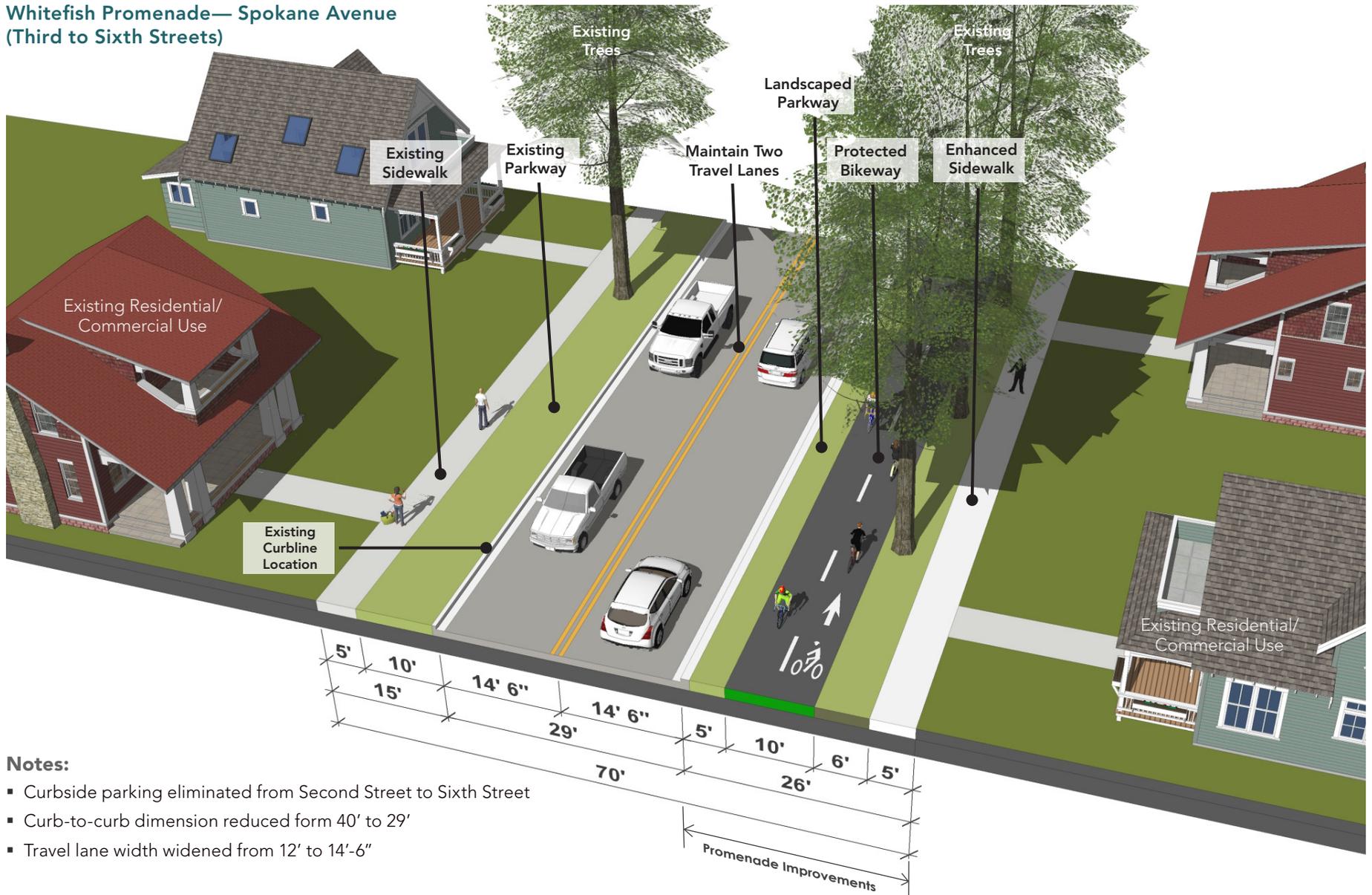
### Whitefish Promenade–Spokane Avenue (Third to Sixth Street Concept)

Construction of this segment, may occur before, but is likely to occur as part of future MDT Highway 93 improvements. The concept diagram illustrates the improvements and key elements within the existing right-of-way from Third to Sixth Street. This segment includes a bi-directional protected bikeway, landscaped parkways, and enhanced sidewalks. As necessary, the location of the protected bikeway may meander to preserve existing trees, and the design concept may vary at intersections and driveways. Detailed site survey information will be required to identify the exact location of mature trees. The Whitefish promenade improvements should:

- Be constructed within the existing 70' right-of-way
- Include a new 10' wide bi-directional off-street asphalt protected bikeway on the east side of the roadway.
- Construct the bikeway 6" (minimum) above the roadway surface or at a grade similar to the sidewalk.
- Maintain sidewalks in their current location and width.
- Preserves existing mature trees throughout. Mature trees should not be removed to construct any transportation improvements. Tree preservation measures such as permeable paving that minimize impacts on tree roots should be considered. New trees and additional landscaping should be added where needed.
- Provide a 5' landscaped parkway between the bikeway and travel lanes. This area would be suitable for temporary snow storage during winter months.
- Provide a 12' multi-use trail within the existing right-of-way along the south side of 6th Street between Spokane Avenue and the existing Whitefish Riverfront Trail. Access to existing parking lots should be maintained but configured to minimize auto and pedestrian conflicts.



**Whitefish Promenade— Spokane Avenue  
(Third to Sixth Streets)**



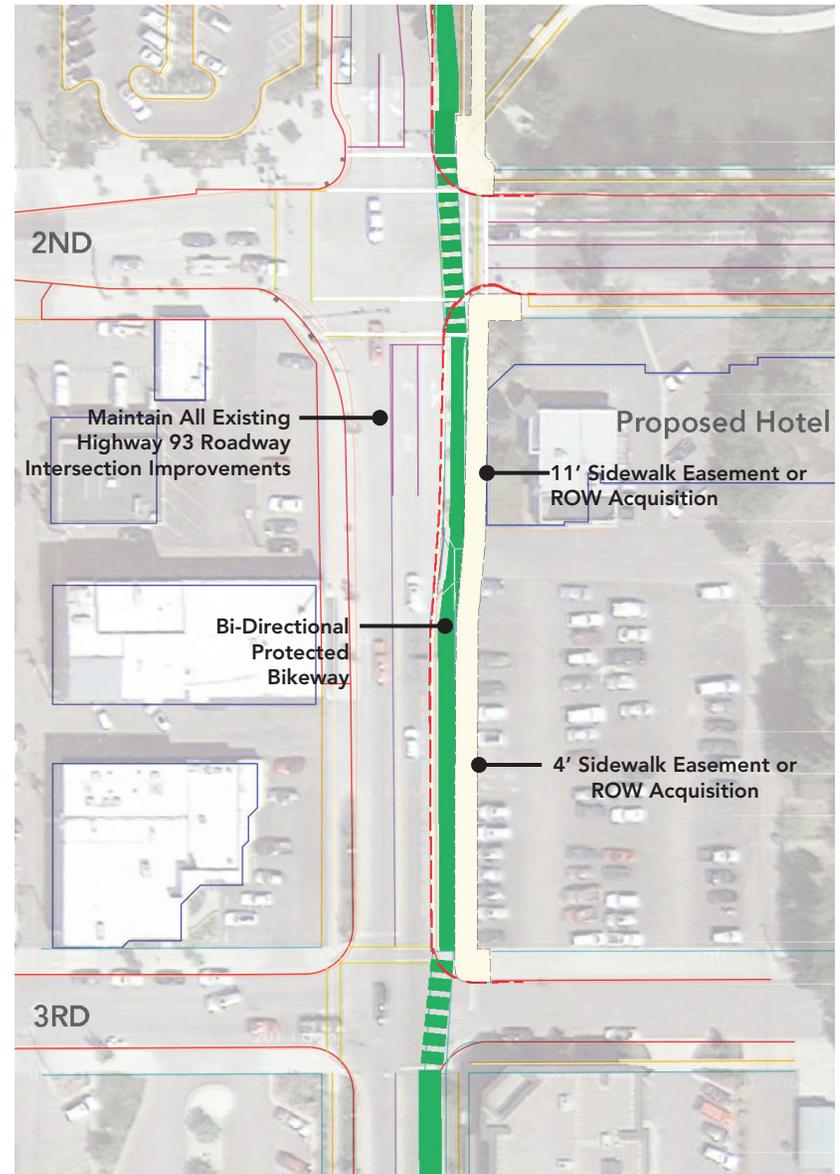
**Notes:**

- Curbside parking eliminated from Second Street to Sixth Street
- Curb-to-curb dimension reduced from 40' to 29'
- Travel lane width widened from 12' to 14'-6"

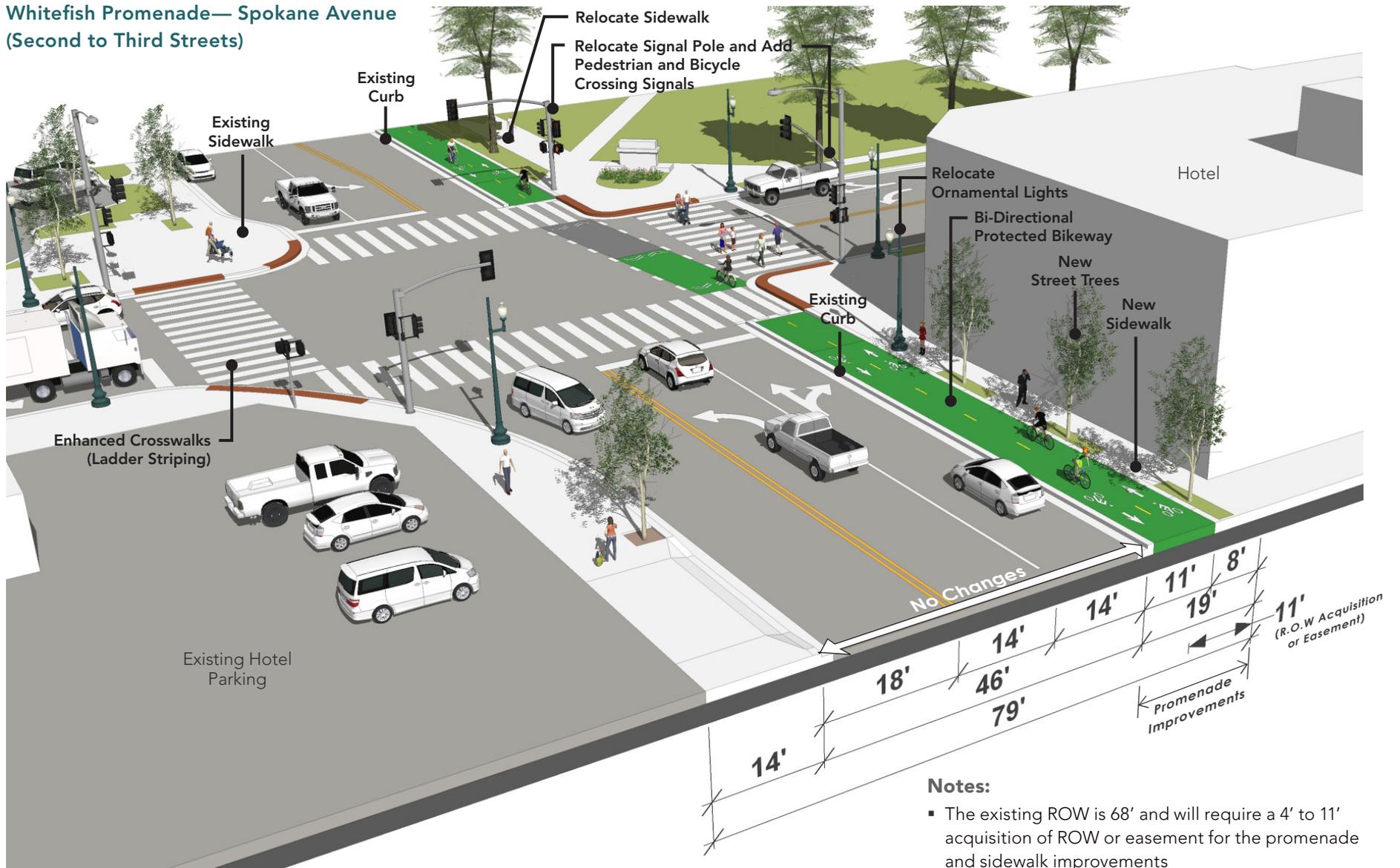
### Whitefish Promenade–Spokane Avenue (Second to Third Street Concept)

The concept diagram illustrates the improvement characteristics and locations of all key elements within the existing right-of-way for a typical segment of Spokane Avenue of the Whitefish Promenade from Second to Third Street. This segment includes a bi-directional protected bikeway and new sidewalks. This design concept may vary at intersections and driveways. The design should:

- Maintain the existing curb line location on the west side of the street and existing travel lanes
- Include a new 10' wide bi-directional off-street asphalt protected bikeway on the east side of the street.
- Include a new sidewalk on the east side of the street which will require an easement or right-of-way acquisition from 4' to 11' of from the adjacent property



**Whitefish Promenade— Spokane Avenue  
(Second to Third Streets)**



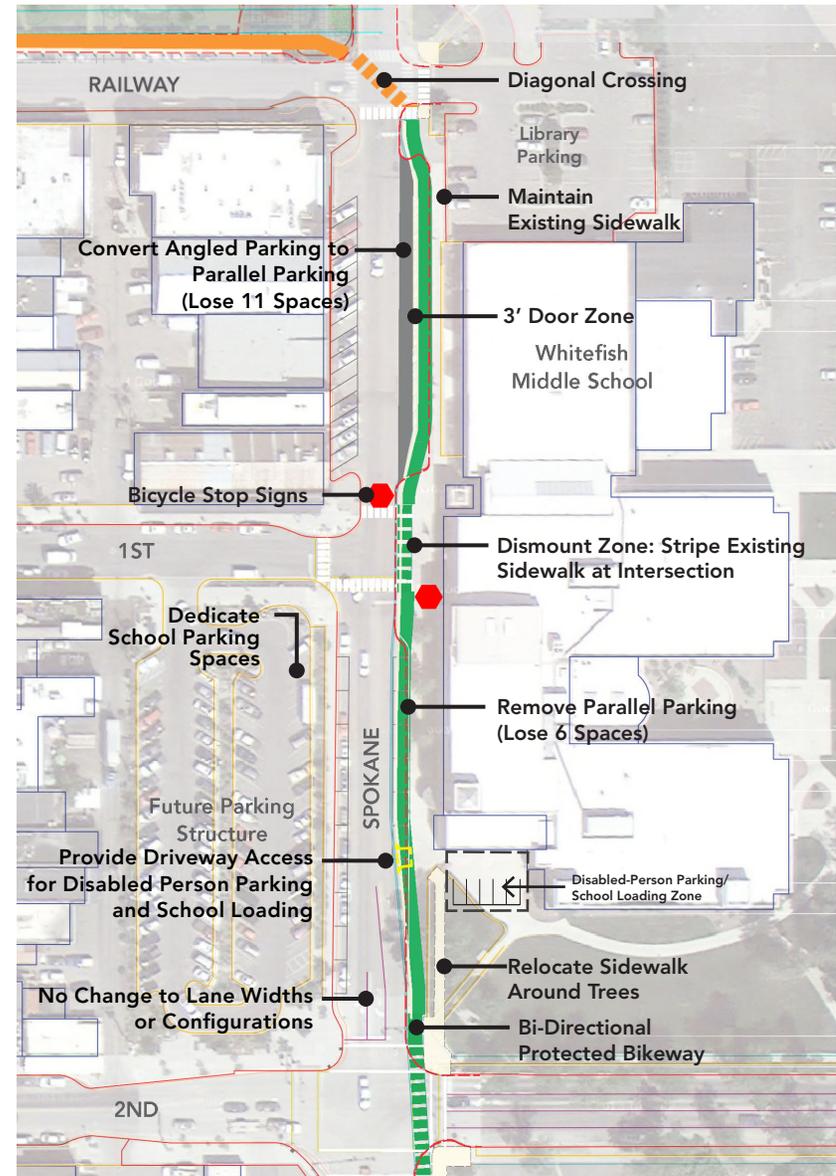
**Notes:**

- The existing ROW is 68' and will require a 4' to 11' acquisition of ROW or easement for the promenade and sidewalk improvements
- Additional width may be required to accommodate traffic signal poles, control boxes fire hydrants, etc.

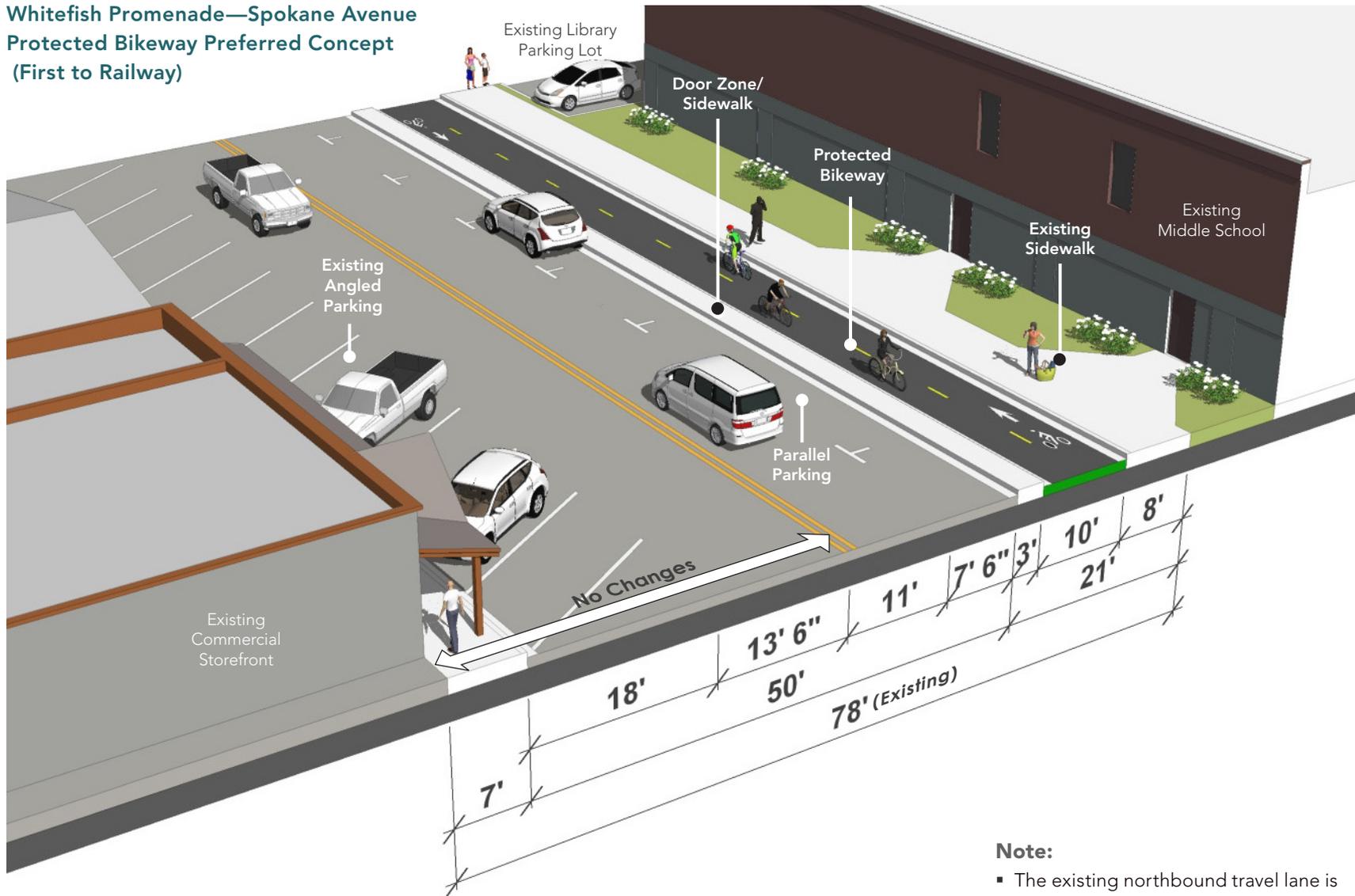
### Whitefish Promenade–Spokane Avenue Protected Bikeway Preferred Concept (Second to Railway Street)

The concept diagram illustrates the improvement characteristics and locations of all key elements within the existing right-of-way for a segment of Spokane Avenue of the Whitefish Promenade, from Second to Railway Street. The preferred concept includes a bi-directional protected bikeway throughout and maintains all travel lane configurations. The design should:

- Be constructed within the existing 78' right-of-way with the exception of relocating the sidewalk outside of the right-of-way in order to preserve existing trees in front of the Middle School.
- Provide a 10' wide bi-directional asphalt protected bikeway on the east side of the street which will replace curbside parking south of First Street and convert angled parking to parallel parking north of First Street
- Construct the protected bikeway either at-grade with the existing sidewalk or at-grade with the roadway
- Require a bicycle 'dismount' zone at the intersection of First and Baker to avoid pedestrian and bicycle conflicts
- Provide driveway access to disabled-person parking and vehicle loading areas adjacent to Central School
- Include a 6" raised door zone (3') between the parallel parking north of First Street and the bi-directional protected bikeway
- Dedicate school parking spaces in the city parking lot



**Whitefish Promenade—Spokane Avenue  
Protected Bikeway Preferred Concept  
(First to Railway)**



**Note:**

- The existing northbound travel lane is reduced from 13'-6" to 11'

**Whitefish Promenade–Spokane Avenue Multi-Use Trail/  
Protected Bikeway Alternative Concept  
(First to Railway Street)**

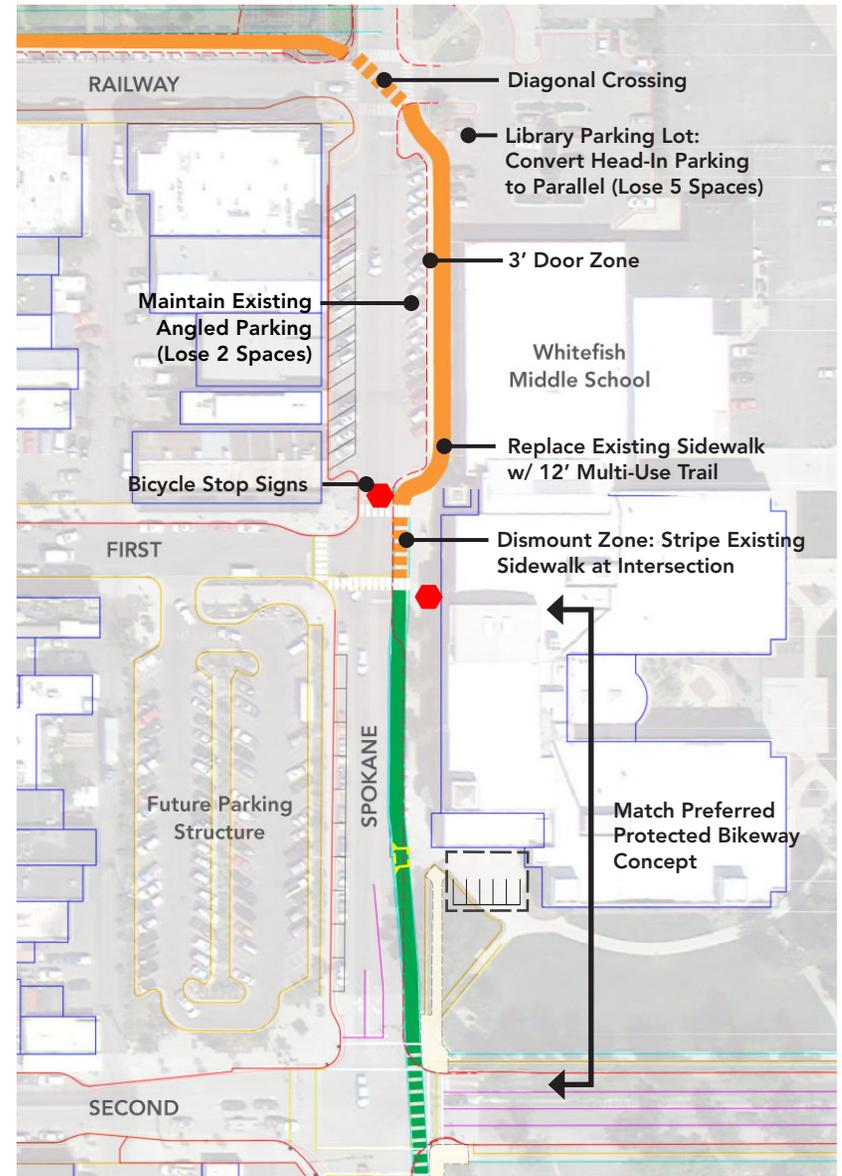
The concept diagram illustrates the improvement characteristics and locations of all key elements within the existing right-of-way for a segment of Spokane Avenue of the Whitefish Promenade, from First to Railway Street. This segment includes the combination of a multi-use trail and a bi-directional protected bikeway. It maintains all travel lane configurations and widths between Second and Railway Streets. The design should:

From Second to First:

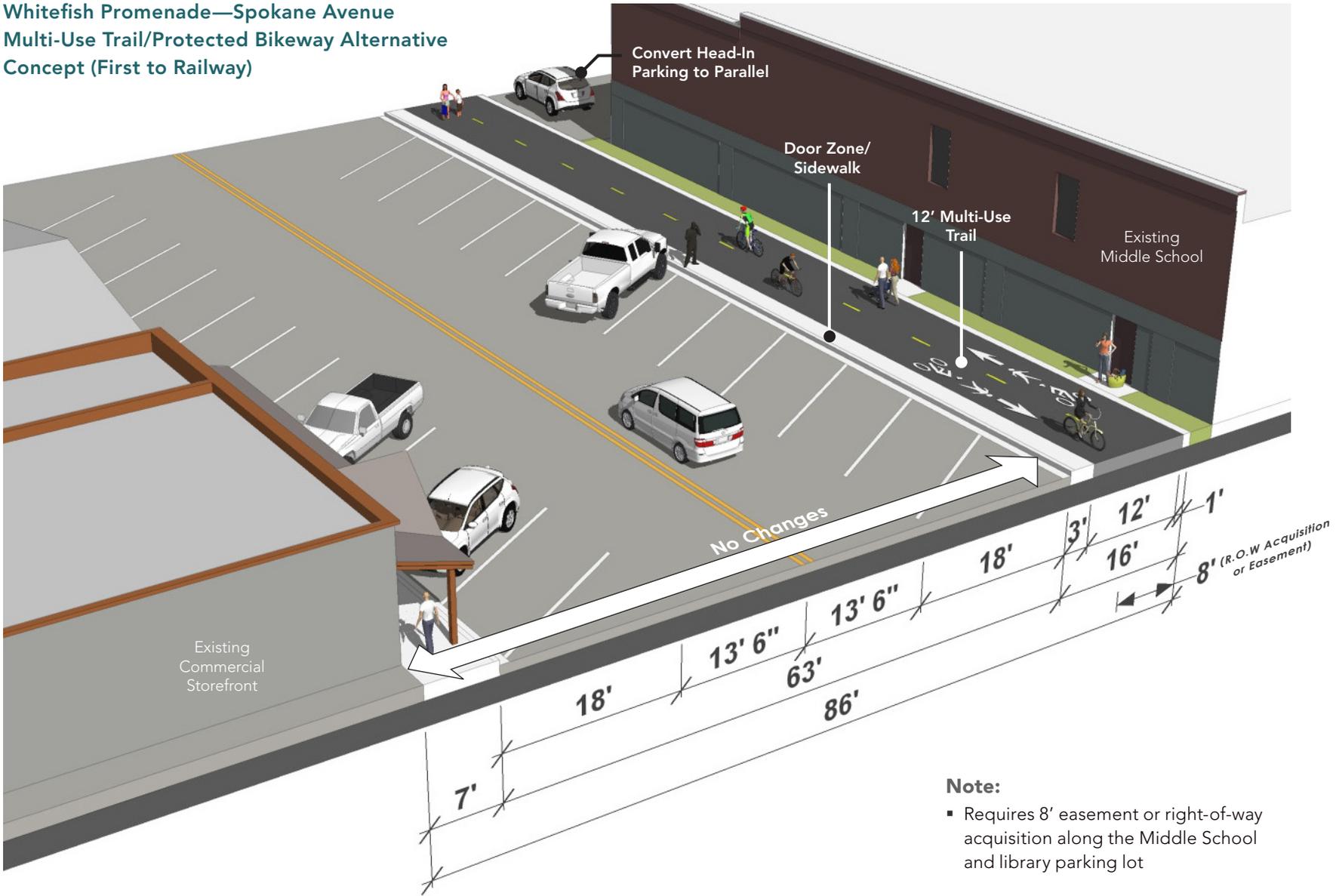
- Match the improvements identified for the preferred protected bikeway alternative concept

From First to Railway:

- Include a 12' wide asphalt multi-use trail replacing the existing sidewalk north of First Street to Railway Street
- Maintain angled parking
- Requires an 8' easement on the east side of the street from First to Railway from the Middle School and library parcels
- Include a 6" raised door zone (3') between the existing angled parking and the multi-use trail
- Maintain the existing parking, travel lanes and sidewalk conditions on the west side of the street



**Whitefish Promenade—Spokane Avenue  
Multi-Use Trail/Protected Bikeway Alternative  
Concept (First to Railway)**



**Note:**

- Requires 8' easement or right-of-way acquisition along the Middle School and library parking lot

### Depot Park (Spokane to Baker Avenue Concept)

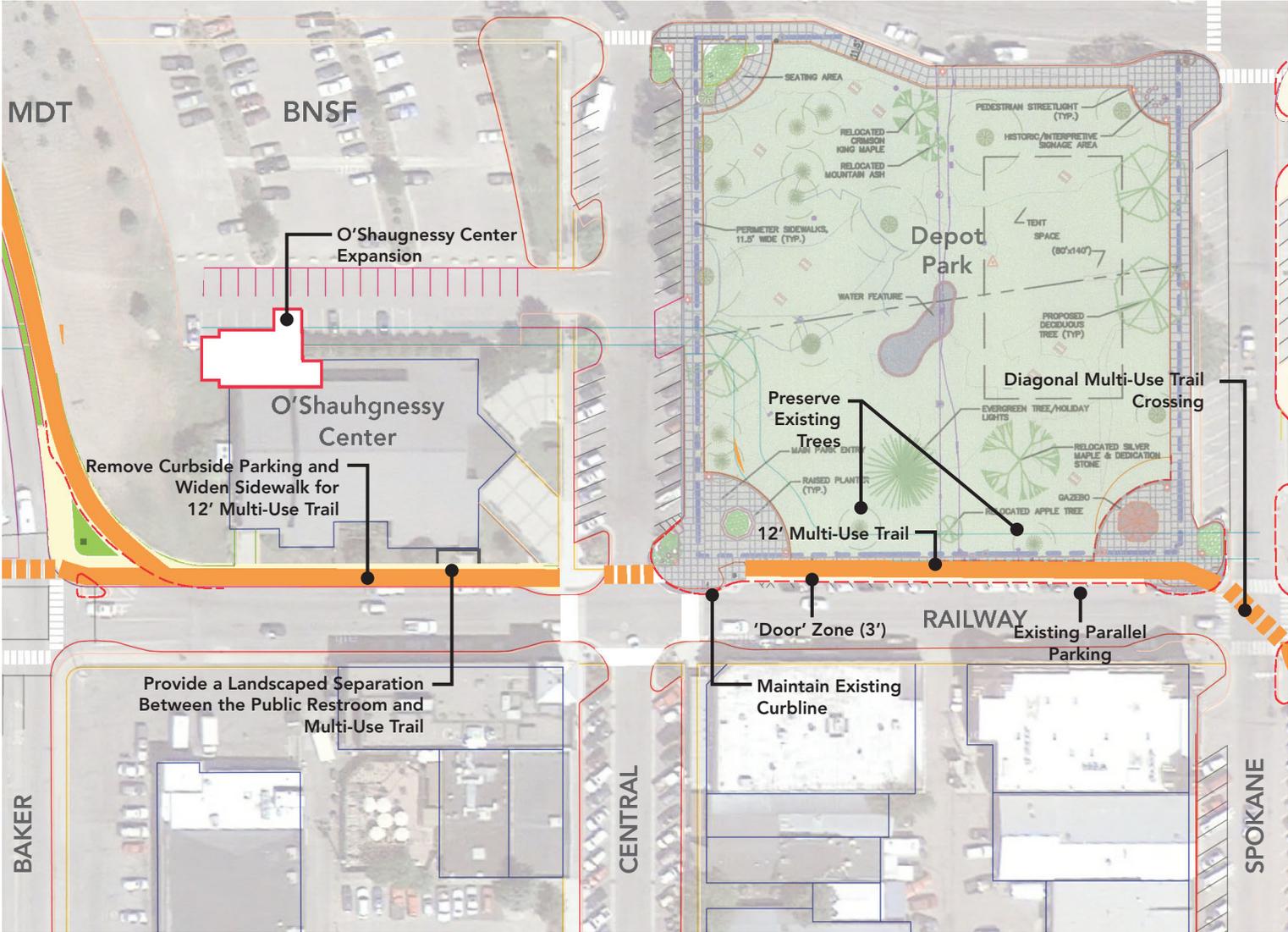
The concept diagram illustrates improvement characteristics and locations of all key elements within public areas for a segment between Spokane Avenue and Baker Avenue. The design should:

- Include a 12' wide multi-use trail as indicated
- Preserve existing trees within Depot Park
- Require removal of curbside parking along the O'Shaughnessy frontage
- Include a landscaped separation between the O'Shaughnessy public restroom and the multi-use trail to minimize conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists



Depot Park—Mature Trees to be Preserved

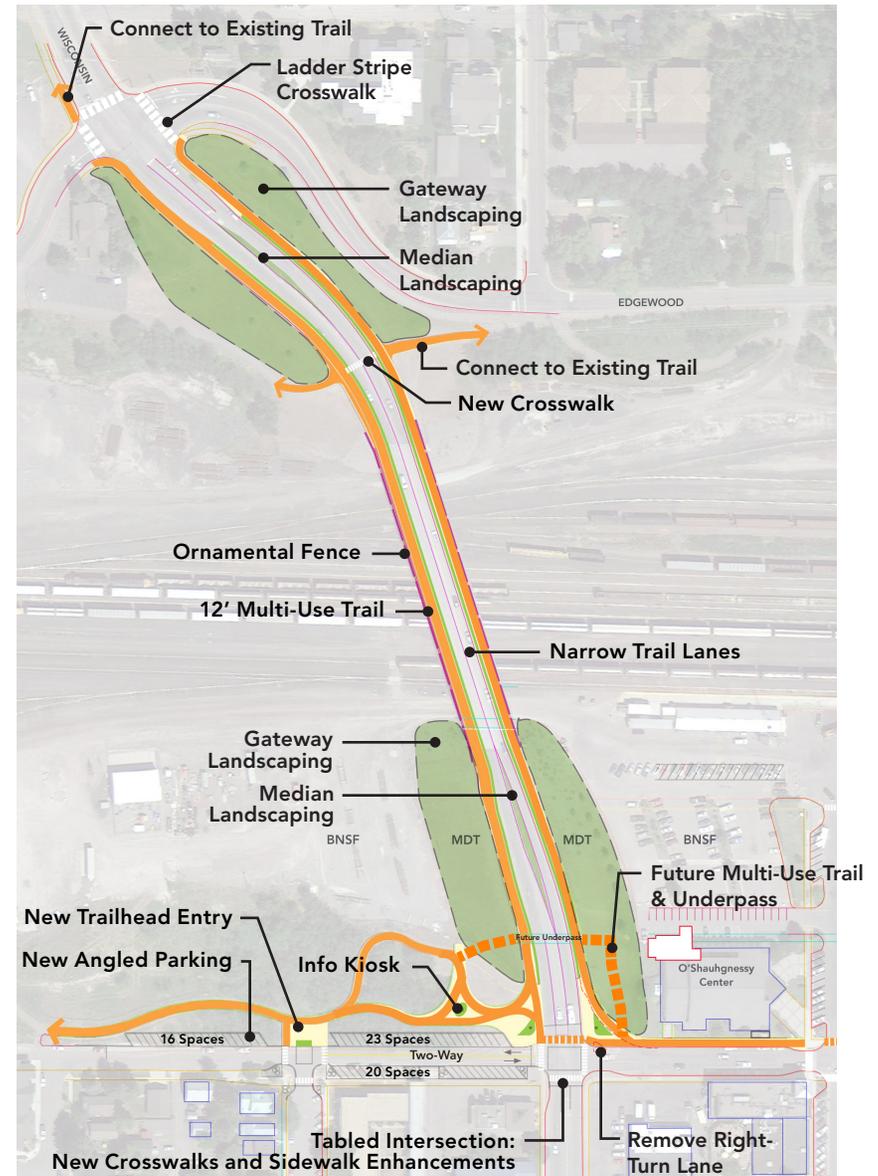
**Whitefish Promenade—  
Depot Park Route**



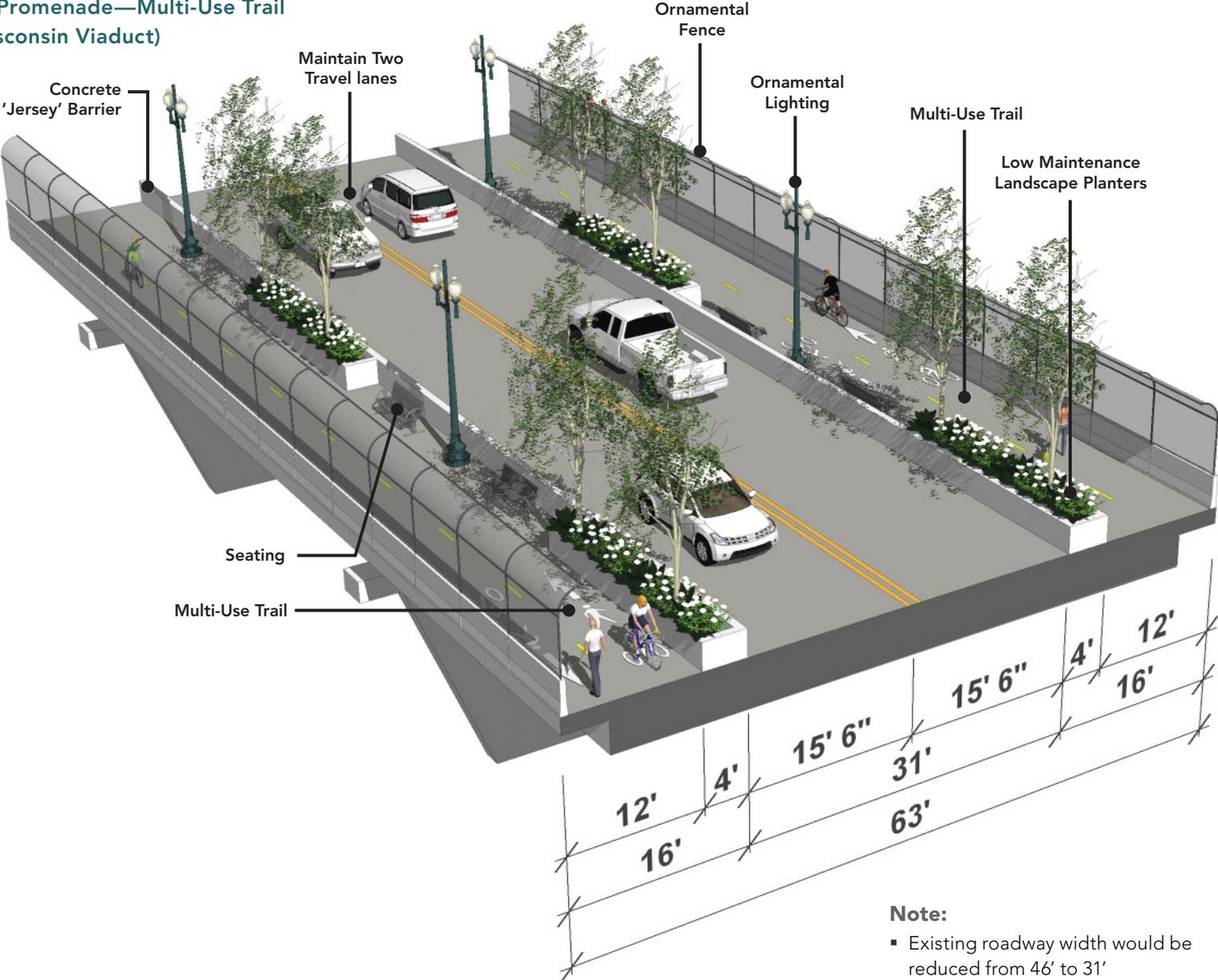
### Baker/Wisconsin Viaduct (Railway Street to Edgewood Place Concept)

The concept diagram illustrates improvement characteristics and location of key elements within the public right-of-way. The design should include:

- A 12' wide multi-use trail as indicated on both sides of the roadway
- A new ornamental wrought iron fence to replace the chainlink fence and consider integrating public art or interpretive elements into the fence design.
- 'Gateway' landscaping within roadway medians and sloped entry points at the approaches to the viaduct
- Landscaped planters along the edge of protective concrete jersey barrier walls
- Ornamental lighting and benches
- A trail head interpretive/information kiosk and map
- Pedestrian-friendly sidewalk and crosswalk improvements at the intersection of Baker Avenue and Railway Street. The crossing distance should be narrowed by removing the right-turn northbound lane. The intersection should be redesigned to be tabled with crosswalk and landscape treatments similar in design to the Second Street and Central Avenue intersection.
- Ladder style crosswalk striping at the intersection of Edgewood and Wisconsin
- A new crosswalk at the north edge of the viaduct aligned with the existing trails on either side of the roadway
- The ability to accommodate a future underpass and multi-use trail connection
- A speed limit reduction on the viaduct
- Permitting two-way travel on Railway Street west of Baker Avenue
- Adding angled parking along Railway Street, west of Baker Avenue, for recreational trail use and additional Railway District retail parking



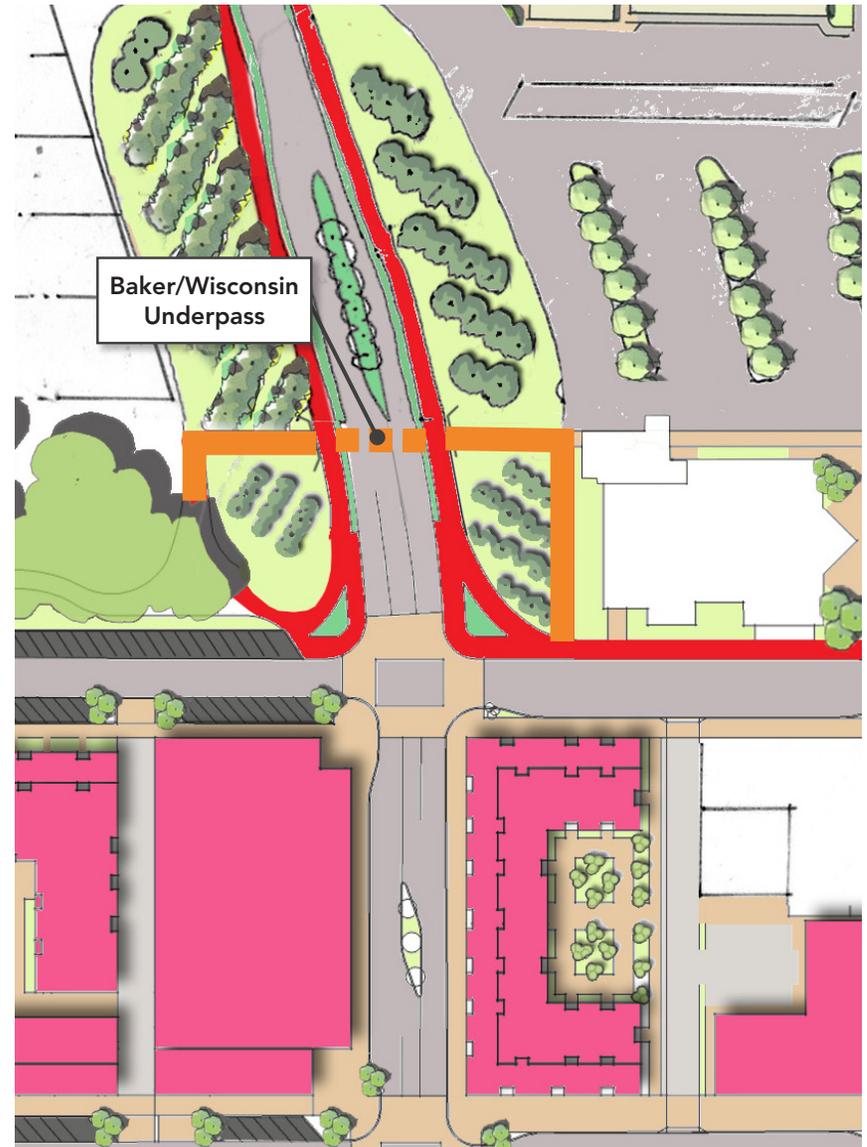
**Whitefish Promenade—Multi-Use Trail  
(Baker/Wisconsin Viaduct)**



### Baker/Wisconsin Underpass

The Baker/Wisconsin Avenue pedestrian and bike underpass is a component of the Whitefish Promenade and provides a direct linkage between the Depot Park and proposed new parks north of Railway Street. The design of the underpass should:

- Create a secure and welcoming environment that provides clear sightlines to and through the underpass. The design should not include hiding places, benches, stoops or other places where people can loiter. Bright, 24-hour lighting and security cameras linked to 24-hour surveillance should be considered.
- Be well lit. Adequate ambient day lighting, accent lighting for the walkway, and special façade lighting should be considered.
- Be easily accessible for all users. The multi-use pathway should have a minimal slope and easily meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance standards for maximum slopes. The underpass should not have steps or switchbacks.
- Be airy. It should be 20' minimum width and 10' minimum height.
- Consider methods to reduce maintenance. Durable and long-lasting materials should be employed for pathway, wall, and ceiling construction. Ceilings and walls that are easily cleaned and repaired are essential.
- Offer a clean, and durable structure. Vandal resistant design elements should be incorporated throughout.
- Minimize clutter. Signs that detract from the underpass design should be prohibited.
- Minimize extrusions, ledges or other places that provide opportunities for bird nests or perches.





Underpass Example



Underpass Example



Underpass Example



Underpass Example

# GATEWAYS

Special transition wayfinding elements that signal entry into the downtown should be provided.

## 'DOWNTOWN THRESHOLDS'

To announce the entrance into Downtown Whitefish from the major transportation corridors, the following elements should be introduced at the west and south Highway 93 and Wisconsin Avenue entry points:

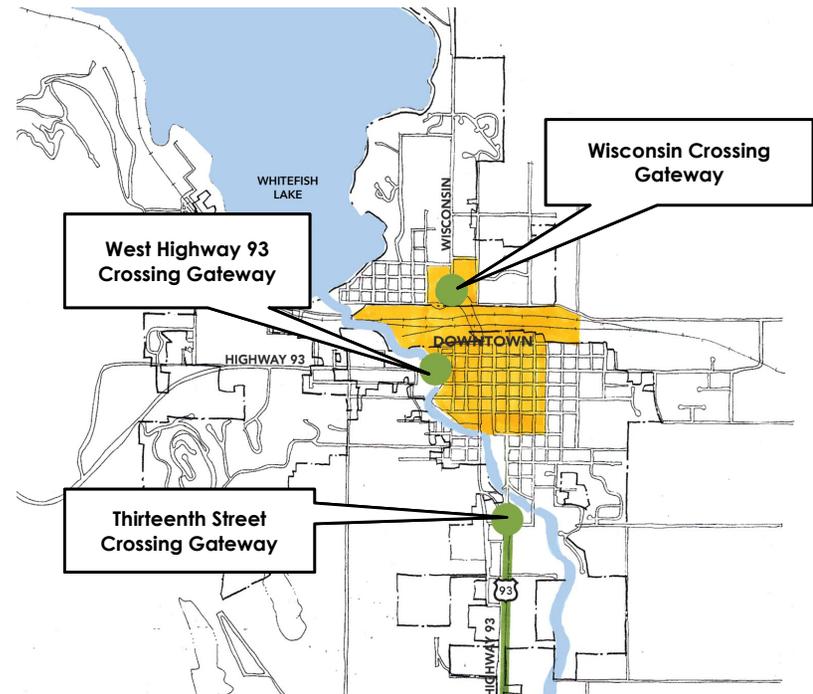
- 'Welcome to Downtown Whitefish' directional and information signing that is readable at-a-glance by moving pedestrians, motorists and cyclists alike; The signs should be constructed of high-quality, durable natural wood or metal materials and be consistently applied at all entries
- Distinctive parkway plantings of large conifer trees, native deciduous trees and shrub landscaping before and following the sign to signal a transition
- Backdrop ornamental trees, seasonal colorful flowers, grasses and evergreen landscaping
- Where necessary, evergreen landscape screening of unsightly adjacent uses
- Distinctive pole lighting and banners consistent with the downtown pedestrian street themes. Spot lighting of gateway sign and landscape elements should be considered
- Underground overhead cable and electric power lines in the vicinity of gateways
- All signage to be consistent with the established city-wide wayfinding standards

The gateways include:

**Thirteenth Street Crossing**– located at 13th and Spokane, this gateway is outside the downtown planning area. Additional analysis and design is required.

**Wisconsin Crossing**– located at the intersection of Edgewood Place and Wisconsin Avenue, improvements should be included as part of the viaduct enhancements and any improvements to private commercial parcel development north of the intersection.

## Gateway Diagram



**West Highway 93 Crossing**– located at Second Street and the Whitefish River bridge, improvements should be included as part of the Second Street enhancements or improvements to the Whitefish Promenade.



# LAND USE FRAMEWORK

# OVERVIEW

The Land Use Framework provides an innovative yet practical vision for the long-term development of Downtown Whitefish. It is intended to identify the types and location of new uses while maintaining and strengthening existing desirable uses. The framework:

- Builds upon recent new development and renovation
- Ensures that Downtown Whitefish remains the community's focus for commerce, government services, civic and recreation activities
- Balances the need to provide for both visitor and local-serving uses in the downtown
- Provides opportunities for new townhome, apartment, and condominium housing to meet increasing housing demand
- Provides opportunities for new public parks to serve Downtown residents
- Ensures vital public parking is provided to adequately meet existing and future demand
- Describes development that will be consistent with the form, scale, and character of existing historic buildings and sites
- Fosters a pedestrian-oriented environment that is safe and vibrant throughout the day

## MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

The Land Use Framework promotes a mix of uses, both vertically and horizontally. The color shown on the Primary Land Use Framework indicates the predominate use. A mix of uses is optional but not required with the exception of parcels where ground floor retail or commercial are indicated.

### Character

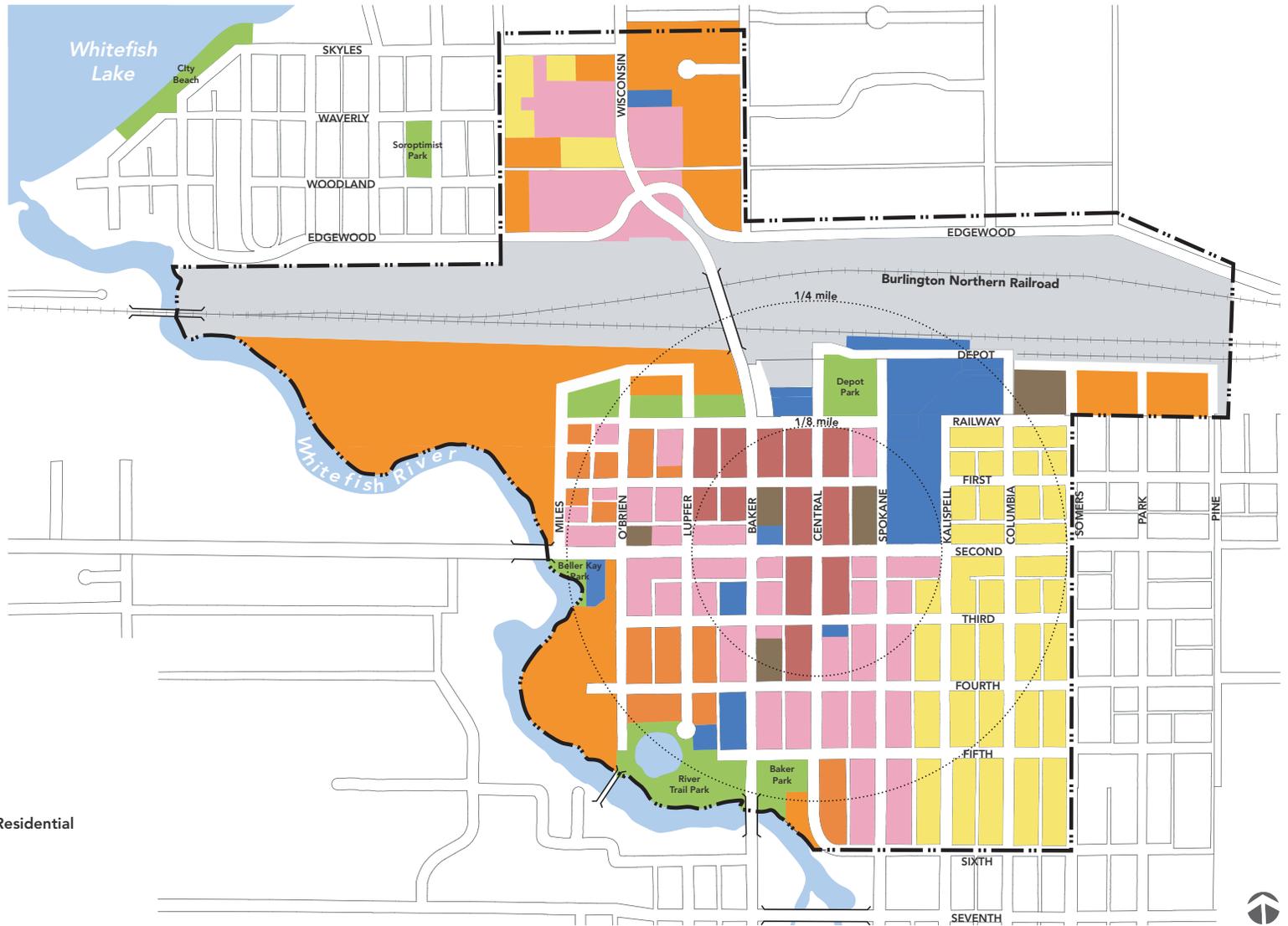
Downtown Whitefish's historic design is pedestrian-friendly and is at a scale that preserves mountain views. To be consistent with this development pattern, throughout the entirety of Downtown, all development should replicate these characteristics. New auto-oriented development that includes elements such as drive-through windows is not appropriate and should be prohibited. New development should respect historic development forms and patterns. It should be compatible with existing or adjacent building scale, massing, and building materials.

## POLICY, REGULATORY AND GUIDELINE REQUIREMENTS

The framework does not in itself change the existing policies, the zoning regulations or design guidelines. Following Plan adoption, the following documents should be updated or created by city staff or consultants to ensure consistency with the Downtown Business District Master Plan:

- Whitefish Municipal Code zoning ordinances and maps—Amendments to existing regulations or creation of a new 'overlay' district should be completed where existing zoning is not aligned with this vision. Generally, Downtown parcels should be 'up-zoned' where identified. Existing uses at these sites should be 'grandfathered' to remain, be improved or sold and operated 'as-is' in perpetuity. Designated private property shown for public uses such as a park or parking facility would be zoned and operated as-is until acquired by a public entity or transferred to public use by easement, dedication or other means.
- Architectural Review—Current discretionary guidelines used to review site and building proposals will need to be updated or created. The review process should also be assessed and amended as needed.
- The City-County Growth Policy Plan—applicable maps and policies must be updated following the downtown zoning revision process.

# Primary Land Use Framework



## Primary Use LEGEND

- Retail
- Commercial
- Public Parking
- Civic
- Parks
- Multi-Family (Attached) Residential
- Single Family Residential
- Industrial

# RETAIL

Successful retail is an indicator of a healthy downtown. Whitefish’s primary retail street, Central Avenue, is vibrant and thriving. Storefronts along the corridor are mostly occupied and shopkeeper demand is present for additional retail storefronts. To meet this demand, viable areas for expanding retail opportunities are identified.

## REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

For ground floors of buildings identified as storefront retail frontage, amendments to current Whitefish zoning ordinances and Architectural Review Standards that regulate downtown retail use will be required. Following Plan adoption, zoning amendments should address the following:

**Permitted Uses**—Ground floors of all indicated block frontages should be limited to retail uses exclusively. Retail uses should be defined as establishments that offer the:

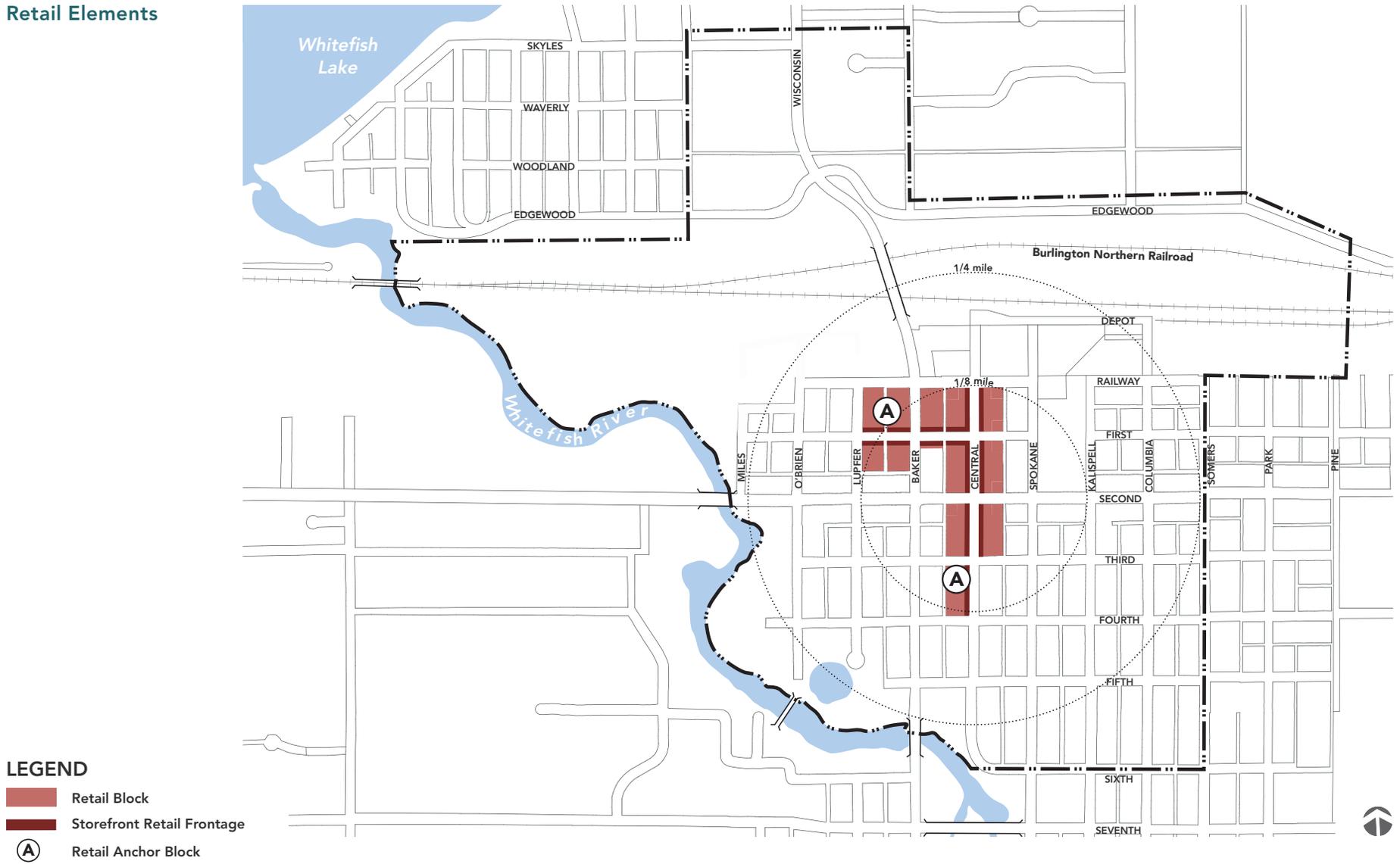
- Sale of ‘goods’- clothing, shoes, groceries, etc.
- Sale of food and drink- restaurants, cafes, bars, etc.
- Sale of entertainment- cinemas, night clubs, etc.

**Development Standards**—New or renovated retail shops should be:

- **Street-oriented**—the bulk, and massing of structures should be sited to provide continuous, edge-to-edge retail uses along identified street frontages. These frontages should be uninterrupted by parking lots or other disruptions; new Architectural Review guidelines should address form and massing elements that are compatible with the existing building character.
- **Active**—Retail storefronts should foster 18-hour uses and promote an animated atmosphere by including highly transparent ground floor windows and doors; ground floor blank walls should be prohibited for new construction or major renovations. Front doors to retail uses should be required to face the street or street-oriented courtyards.



## Retail Elements



## SHOPPING LOOP RETAIL EXPANSION

120,000 square feet of additional retail uses has been identified at build-out for parcels along the shopping loop. The identified development would occur within two anchor block project areas:

- **Railway District Anchor Blocks**—Properties that comprise this anchor area are owned by multiple entities (Blocks 26, 27, 37 and the City Hall parking structure). To maximize investment, a collaborative redevelopment approach should be fostered
- **Central Avenue South Anchor Block**— Properties within this anchor block are owned by both public and private entities (Existing municipal parking lot and single family residential parcels). A public-private partnership or acquisition of private property by the City of Whitefish will likely be required for implementation of this concept

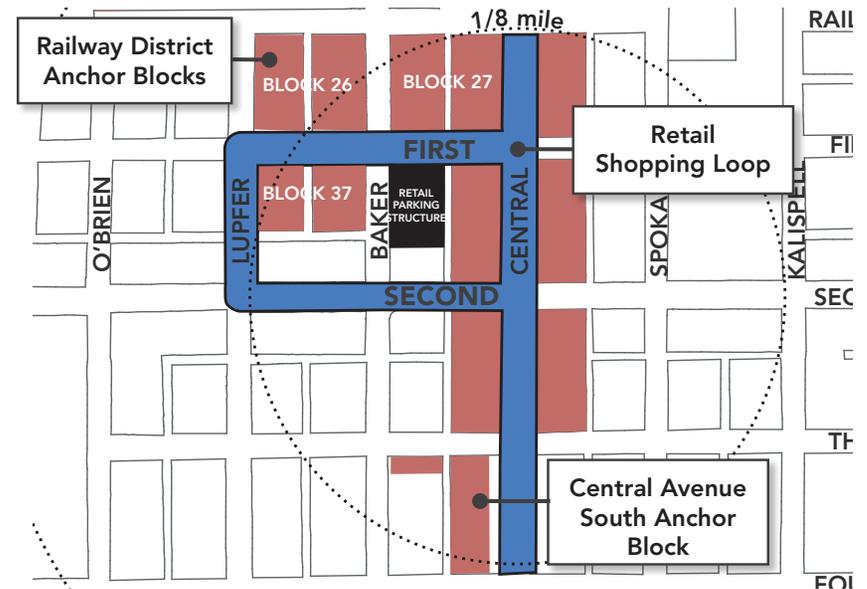
### Railway District Anchor Blocks Projects

Retail storefronts are envisioned to extend westward from Central Avenue along First and Lupfer in the Railway District. Along this corridor, new development that accommodates both small and large floor plate retail establishments should be fostered. Uses that serve local residents such as a grocery or pharmacy should be recruited for these blocks, especially in the city-owned parking structure.

The retail expansion plan (opposite page) and massing diagram (Page 62) illustrates the location of ground-floor retail storefronts, and building heights and massing that conforms to current zoning development standards. Buildings are setback from existing property lines along First and Lupfer to allow development of shopping loop street improvements.

As part of a zoning code update, the maximum size of buildings may need to be revised to permit larger uses by right rather than conditionally. The Railway District Anchor Blocks projects include:

- **Block 26**— envisions an assembled development site that includes a large Baker Avenue-oriented single story anchor along with multi-story commercial uses fronting First Street. Apartments or condominium uses are suggested as a transition and buffer between the new uses and existing uses along Lupfer. Retail and commercial-serving parking (along with possibly public parking) could be located in a basement level below the retail anchor building.



- **Block 37**— envisions smaller-scaled development on a parcel-by-parcel basis. Mixed-use buildings that include commercial, residential and ground floor retail uses are suggested. To maximize building size, parking is proposed in a shared lot behind the buildings. A shared parking development agreement between property owners and approval by the city would be required for implementation.
- **Block 27**— envisions a ‘boutique’ hotel, and commercial or residential development over ground floor retail fronting First Street. Development of the hotel would require relocation of the existing grocery use. Relocation of the grocery store to Block 26 should be investigated.

Additional redevelopment is also envisioned within the ground-floor of the City Hall parking structure (corner of First and Baker) and retail storefront infill sites along First Street and Central Avenue.

Shopping Loop  
Retail Expansion Plan—  
Railway District Anchor  
Blocks



**Shopping Loop  
Retail Expansion  
Massing Diagram—  
Railway District Anchor  
Blocks**

**DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY**

**BLOCK 26**

Retail (Ground-Floor)	30,000 SF
Commercial (Upper Floor)	11,000 SF
Multi-Family	40 DU
Parking	85 SP

**BLOCK 27**

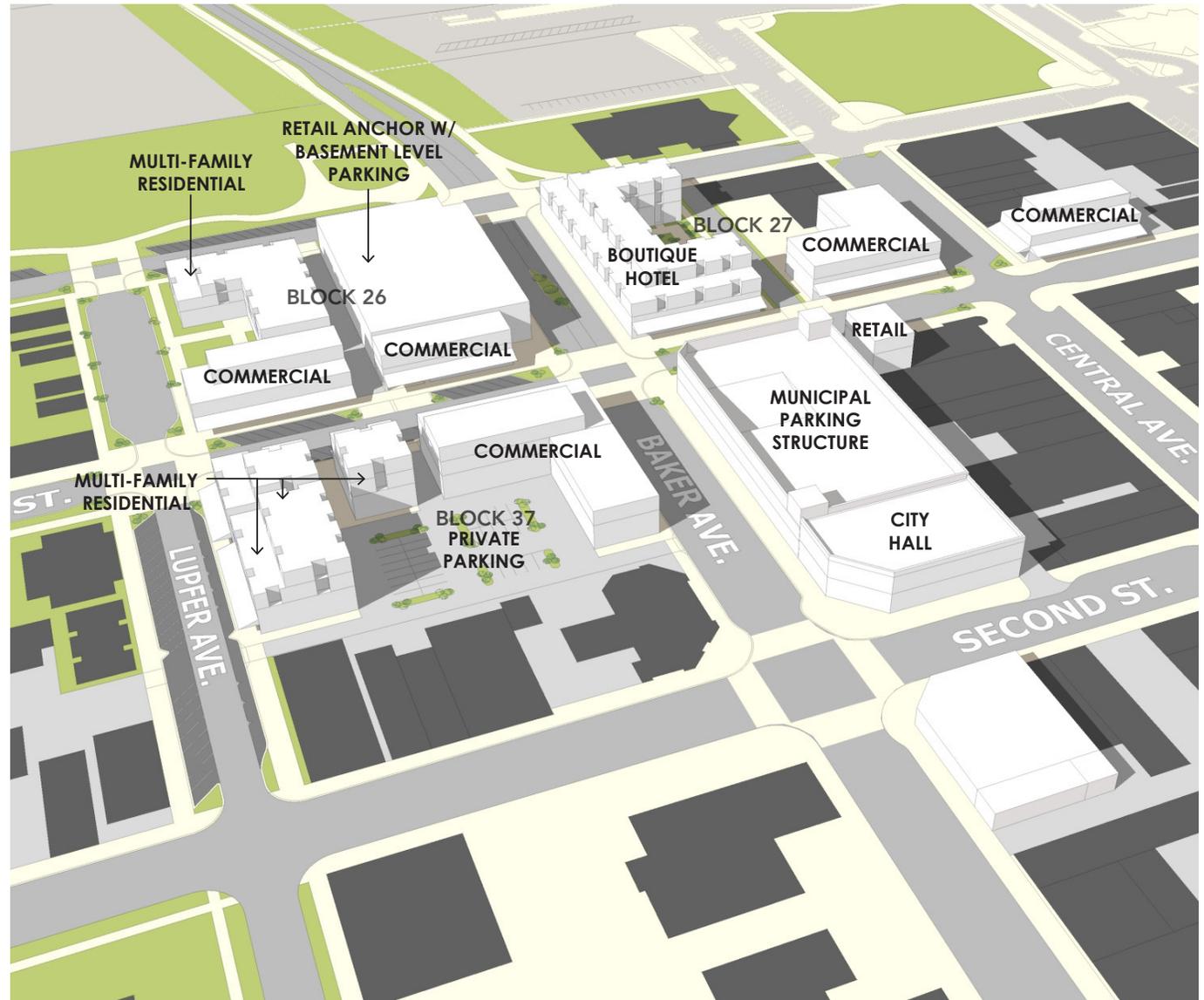
Lodging	50,000 SF
Retail (Ground-Floor)	30,000 SF
Commercial (Upper Floor)	10,000 SF
Parking	80 SP

**BLOCK 37**

Retail (Ground-Floor)	30,000 SF
Commercial (Upper Floor)	20,000 SF
Multi-Family	40 DU

**FIRST AND CENTRAL**

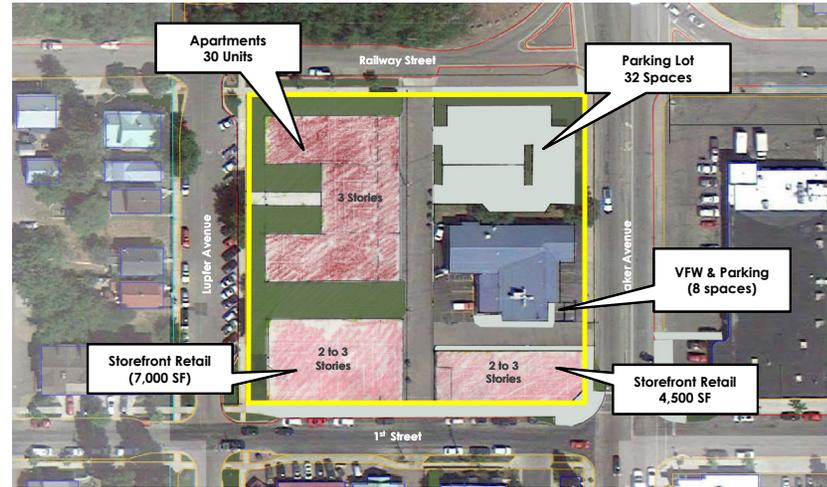
Ground-Floor Retail	20,000 SF
Commercial (Upper Floor)	9,000 SF



## BLOCK 26 'INCREMENTAL' OPTION

The previous page illustrates a preferred vision for redevelopment. However, there are a number of possible redevelopment scenarios for Block 26. The intensity of development is dependent on a number of factors such as the ability to assemble parcels (currently there are three property owners), timing of redevelopment, and the viability of possible co-development in conjunction with adjacent blocks. The scale and character of development will be determined by existing property owners and future investors. If parcel assembly is not possible the following option may also be considered:

- Preserve the existing VFW building and provide a new VFW parking lot north of the building (redevelopment of existing fast food restaurant and vacant lot)
- Include a new multi-family building fronting Lupfer Avenue
- Include commercial buildings with ground-floor retail fronting First Street

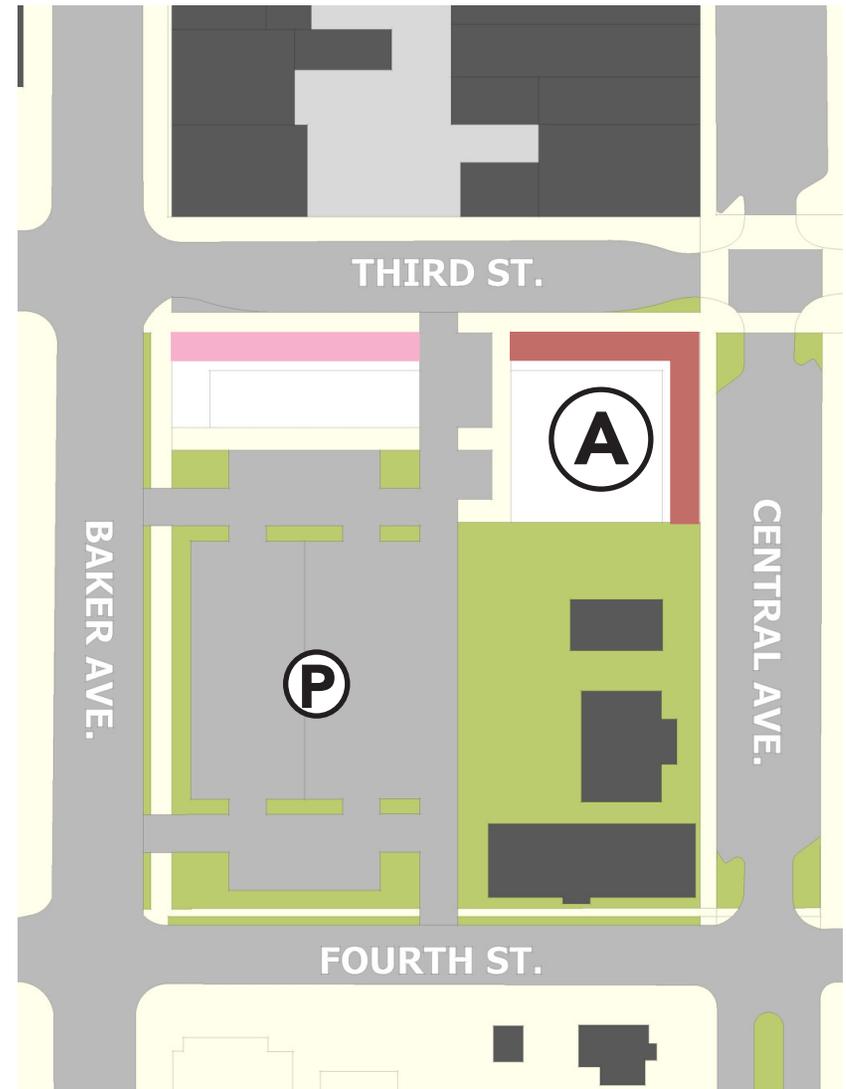


### CENTRAL AVENUE SOUTH - RETAIL ANCHOR

A retail anchor is envisioned to replace the existing municipal parking lot at the southwest corner of Central and Third.

- As part of the redevelopment, a replacement parking facility (lot or long term future structure) site has been identified for the half block site between Third and Fourth Streets along Baker Avenue. The site should be acquired by the City and constructed before or concurrently with the redevelopment of the existing parking lot.
- Existing commercial uses fronting Third Street may remain or the parcels may be redeveloped as multi-story commercial buildings.
- The retail anchor building may be a single use or may include upper floor uses such as lodging, office, or residential uses.
- The removal of retail serving parking on the corner of Third and Central should not take place unless replacement parking is provided. Replacement parking should be relocated to serve Central Avenue retail.

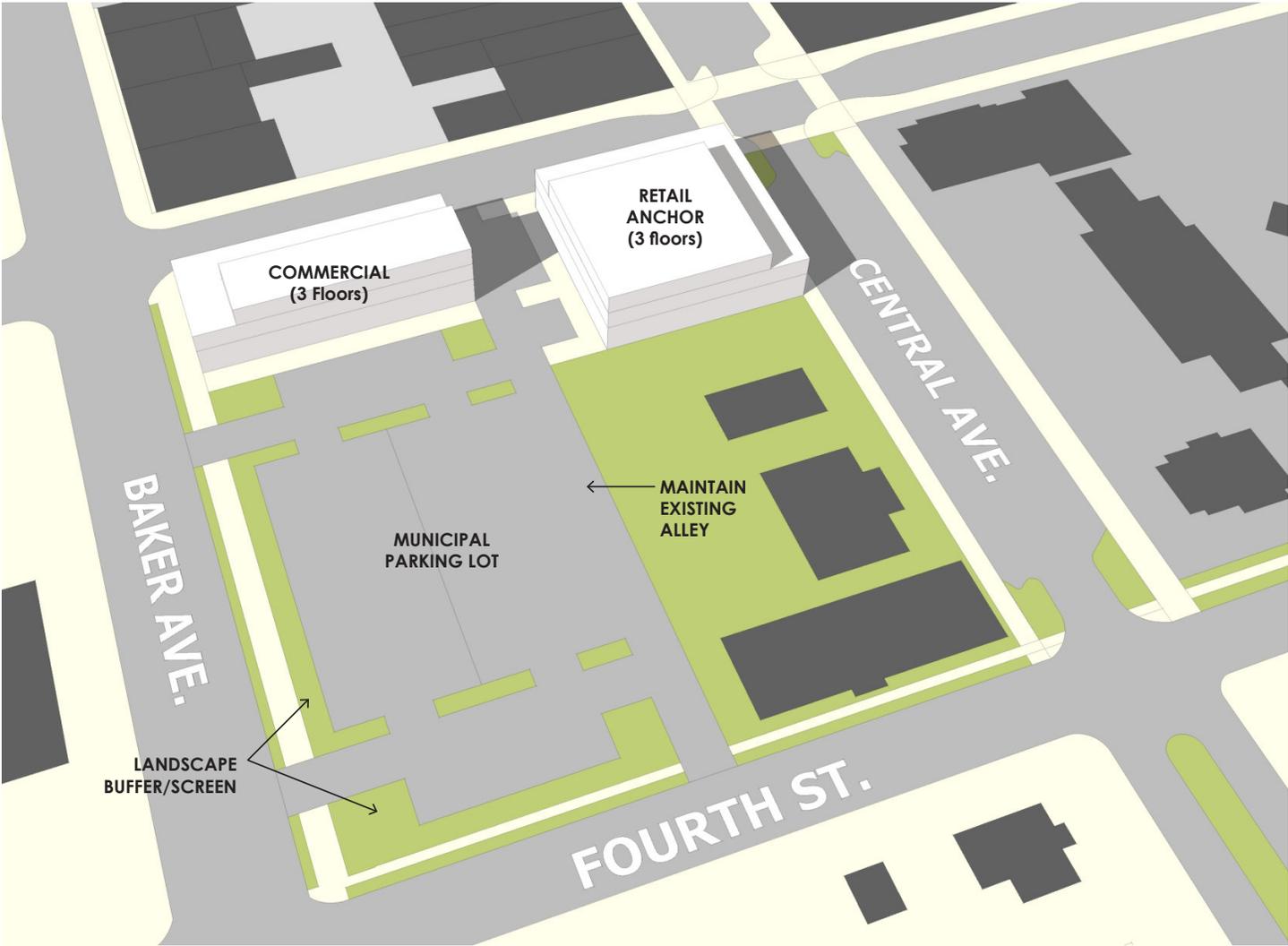
Retail Anchor & Parking Plan



#### LEGEND

- Ground-Floor Storefront Retail
- Ground-Floor Storefront Commercial
- Retail Anchor
- Public Parking

**Retail Anchor & Parking  
Massing Diagram**



**THIRD AND CENTRAL**

Retail/Commercial (ground-floor)	10,000 SF
Commercial (upper-floor)	30,000 SF
Public Parking	80 SP

# COMMERCIAL

The Commercial Element identifies a significant amount of new development opportunities throughout the downtown. Providing opportunities for commercial growth ensures that the Downtown remains Whitefish's heart of commerce rather than outlying areas along US Highway 93. The framework envisions growth in three key areas:

- **Shopping Loop**—Commercial development extending along First Street in the Railway District and along Lupfer Avenue and connecting to Second Avenue as part of the pedestrian enhanced street 'shopping loop;'
- **Railway District**—Commercial development emphasis along Second Avenue; throughout the district, redevelopment of vacant and under utilized parcels should be fostered.
- **Spokane and Baker Avenue Corridors** – Commercial development that adaptively reuses existing residential structures along Spokane Avenue and redevelopment of vacant parcels and parking lots along Baker Avenue should be fostered. Additional auto-oriented uses such drive through bank facilities should be prohibited.

## REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Following Plan adoption, zoning amendments should address the following:

**Permitted Uses**—Future zoning ordinance updates should limit permitted uses to professional offices, services and similar uses that are compatible with adjacent residential uses.

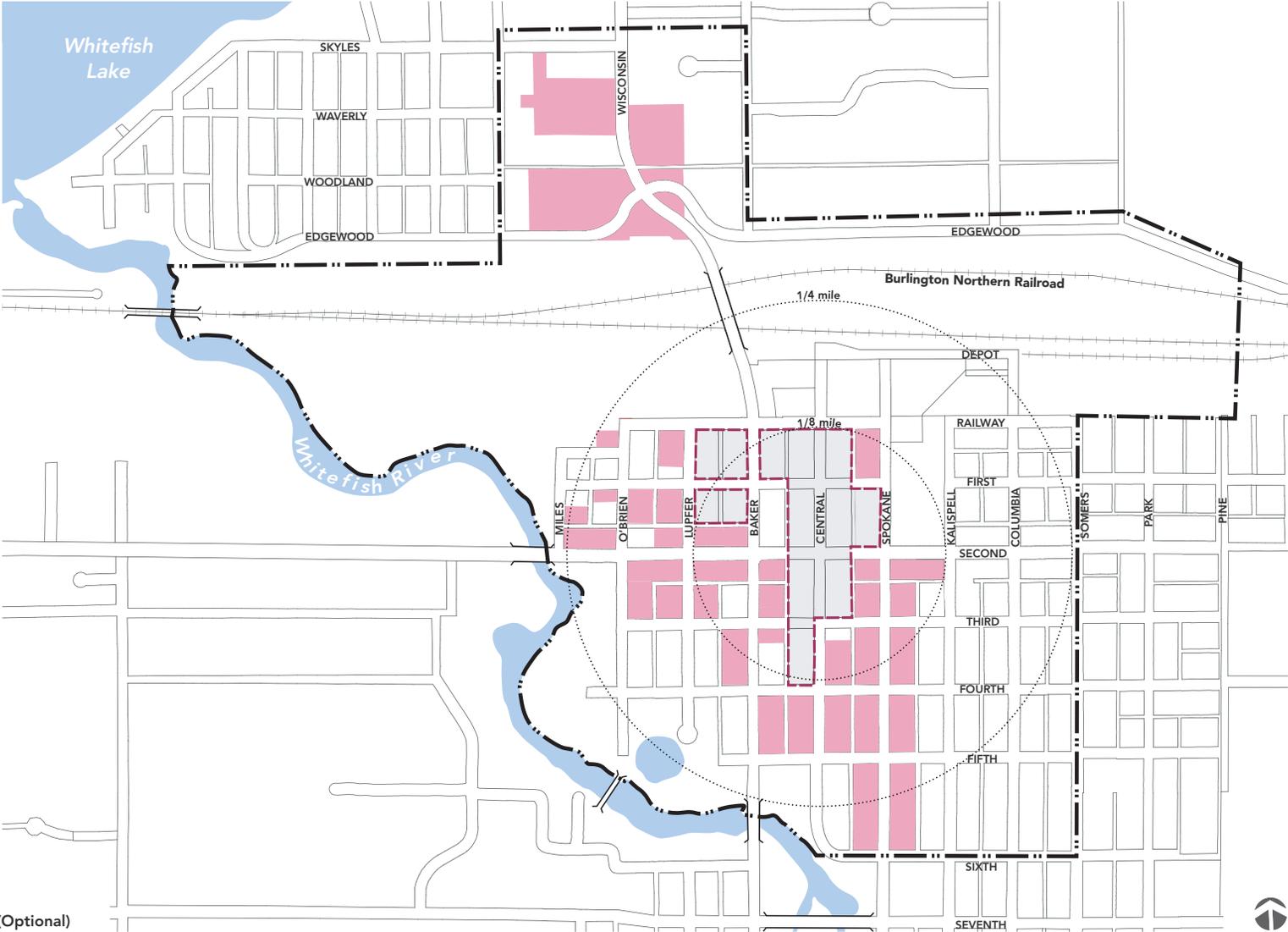
**Development Standards**—Site development standards should limit or prohibit street fronting parking, drive-thru facilities or similar auto-oriented development.

**Development Standards**— An update to the Architectural Review Standards should address commercial development compatibility with existing historic uses.



Residential-Compatible Commercial

Commercial Elements



**LEGEND**

- Commercial
- Commercial Upper-Floor (Optional)

# PUBLIC PARKING

A downtown parking facility often serves as a Downtown’s ‘front door,’ leaving either a lasting positive or negative impression on visitors and residents alike. It is simply good business practice to provide well-located, safe, and easy-to-use public parking that welcomes the shopper and supports other uses.

Providing adequate downtown parking requires that strategically located parking facilities meet the following key objectives; 1) ensure a competitive shopping environment with outlying highway commercial areas; 2) provide adequate spaces to meet future demand for employees, visitors, and those seeking government services.

## PARKING STRUCTURES

Parking structures are expensive and due to their massing and scale, have a potential to negatively impact the pedestrian environment and architectural character of the downtown. With these concerns in mind, they must be sited and designed correctly. They should be located where they will be utilized most effectively by retail customers and their form and scale can be visually mitigated. The sites should be large enough for structures to be constructed efficiently, and located along major access routes. The parking structure sites include:

**City Hall Retail Structure**–The structure should be constructed to serve City Hall, but have a primary function of serving downtown retail and commercial customers. Internal vehicle circulation should be designed to avoid conflicts (one-way preferable); vertical circulation (grouped elevators and stairs) should be provided at both the north and south ends of the structure; ground-floor retail space should be designed to accommodate retail uses that will serve local residents.

**Spokane Avenue and Second Street Parking Lot (Long Term Structure)**– Over time, structured parking should replace the current City parking lot. As part of the structure, ground-floor commercial storefronts should be located along the Second Street and Spokane Avenue frontages.

**South Retail Anchor**– This parking facility would replace parking lost as a result of constructing a retail anchor at the current Central Avenue municipal lot (Central and Third). Initially this site would be a parking lot and would transition to a structure over time.

**Block 26 Public/Private Parking Structure**– A public or private parking structure, as demand warrants, may be included as part of the Block 26 redevelopment.

## PARKING LOTS

Surface lots provide additional parking where there is a lower retail parking demand that can be met by a lot rather than a structure. Additionally, outlying lots can function as employee parking facilities. All parking lots should be constructed with adequate landscape screening from streets and sidewalks. The parking lot locations include:

**Central Avenue Municipal Lot**– Relocated to the half block west between Third and Fourth when a retail anchor is constructed at this site.

**O’Brien Avenue Lot**– Located north of Second Street, this site would serve retail and commercial uses and employee parking needs in the Railway District.

**Snow Storage Lot**– Located northeast of Railway Street and Columbia Avenue this site would provide parking during summer seasons for school, downtown activities, and employee use

## Public Parking Elements



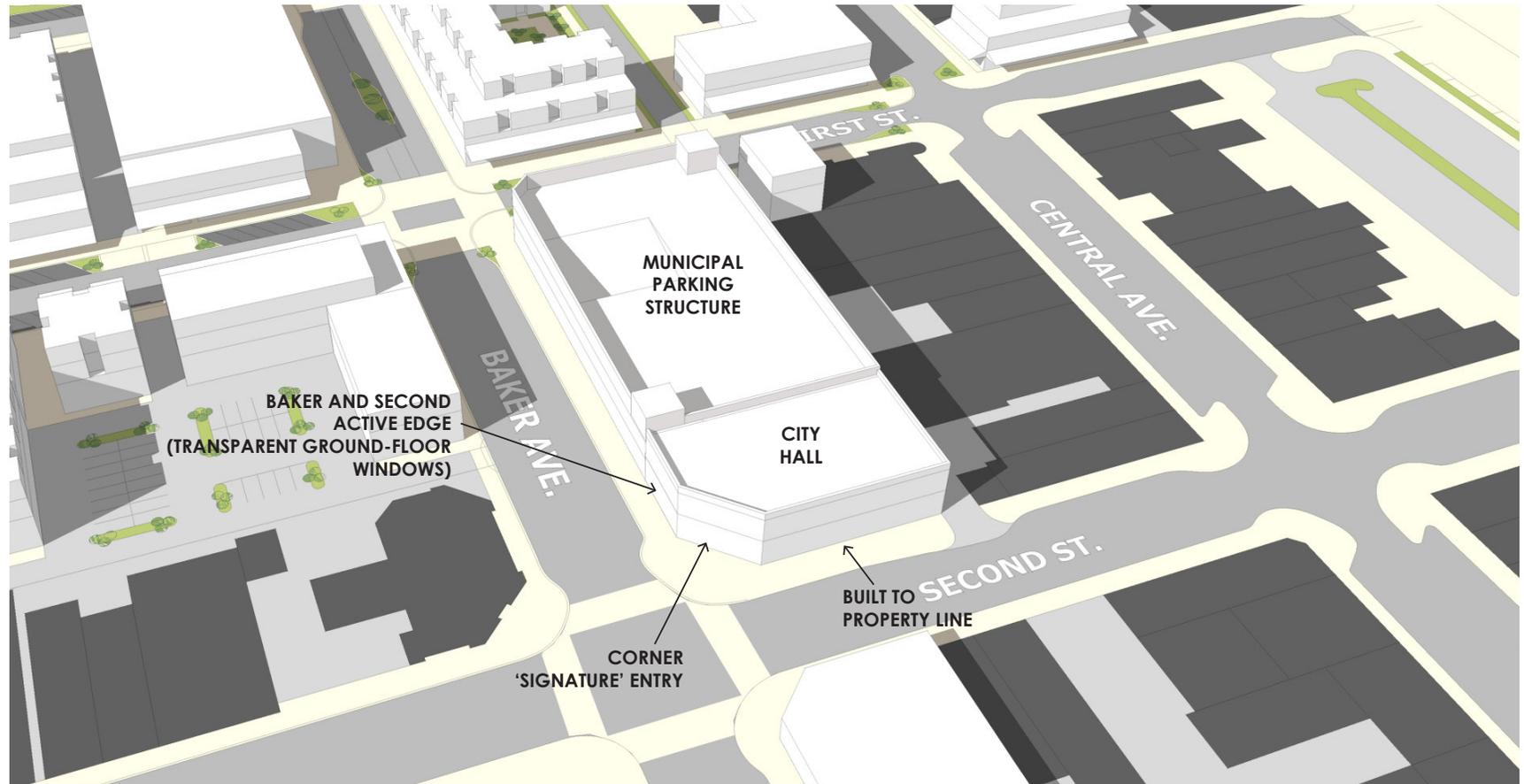
### LEGEND

- Parking Structure
- Parking Lot
- Parking Lot (Long Term Structure)
- Public/Private Structure

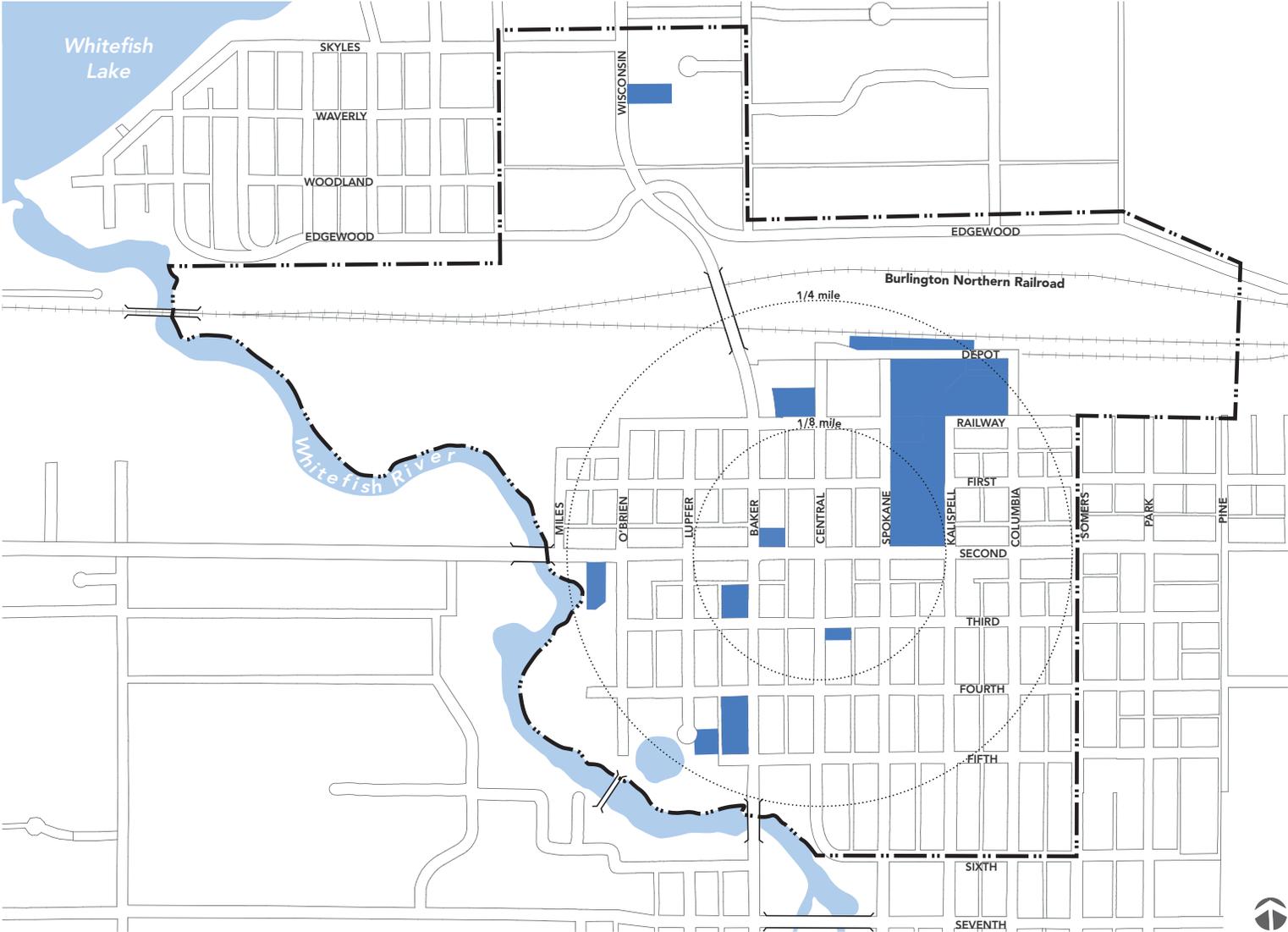
# CIVIC

The Civic Element identifies locations for government services, school, arts facilities, and places of worship. The Plan envisions that civic, institutional, educational or cultural uses will be a permanent part of Downtown thereby signaling to the community that Downtown is the community's destination for civic assembly.

## City Hall Massing Diagram



Civic Elements



**LEGEND**  
 Civic



# PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Downtown will be more vibrant and beautiful when it consists of a variety of active and passive open spaces. Currently there are limited green space opportunities to kick a ball with a child or quietly sit in a park setting with a loved one. To attract new development and improve the quality of life for existing residents, employees and visitors, it is essential to construct new parks within the downtown. Improving existing green spaces and linking these areas to recreation attractions outside of the Downtown, such as the Whitefish Lake, will also improve quality of life.

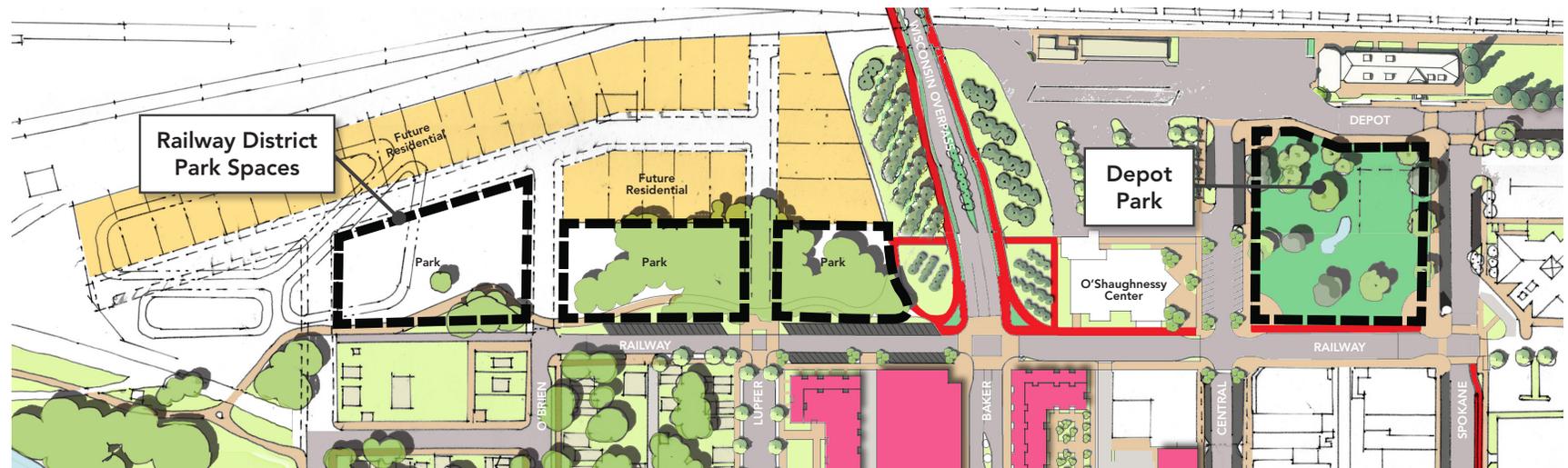
## DEPOT PARK

Improvements to the existing park space should be constructed as described in the adopted Depot Park Master Plan with the addition of design modifications to the south side of the park along Railway Street from Spokane Avenue to Central Avenue that include the Whitefish Promenade (12' multi-use trail and 3' door zone).

## NEW RAILWAY DISTRICT PARK SPACE

Currently, the Railway District lacks a green area for recreation activities and a trail head. A series of new green 'park blocks' are envisioned north of Railway Street within the boundary of the BNSF rail yard. The new park space:

- Would need to be acquired by the City through direct purchase from BNSF or as part of a joint development with a future housing development that may occur adjacent to the parks.
- May require assessment and mitigation of possible environmental contaminants of the site.
- Might include lawn areas appropriate for informal recreation activities and playground structures. A small covered area and public restrooms should be considered for these parks.
- Should route multi-purpose pathway facilities through these park open spaces.
- Should include Trailhead parking along Railway Street (West of Baker Avenue)



**Parks and Open Space Elements**



**LEGEND**  
 Future Park/Open Space  
 Existing Parks

# LODGING

Whitefish has a strong tourist economy and thousands of visitors spend numerous nights in hotels, motels and bed-and-breakfast establishments within and surrounding the downtown. The Lodging Element offers sites for urban lodging experiences within the retail and commercial core for those who desire easy access to shopping, civic activities, or businesses.

## LODGING CHARACTERISTICS

Sites identified can accommodate a variety of lodging types ranging from boutique hotels to extended-stay suites. New lodging should:

- Be designed to be in scale and character with surrounding architecture.

- Consider surrounding uses as part of the visitor experience, especially existing night life activities that can be viewed as either a benefit or detractor depending on the lodging type.
- Offer street-oriented lobbies and restaurants.
- Not impact the supply of retail and commercial parking. New lodging establishments should include parking on-site for services and guests. Valet-serviced parking may be offered off-site.
- Not include auto-oriented characteristics such as lobby-serving auto pull-out driveways or motel-styled porte-cochere covered driveways along pedestrian-oriented street frontages.

## Boutique Hotel Diagram



Lodging Elements



**LEGEND**  
 Potential and Existing Lodging

# RESIDENTIAL

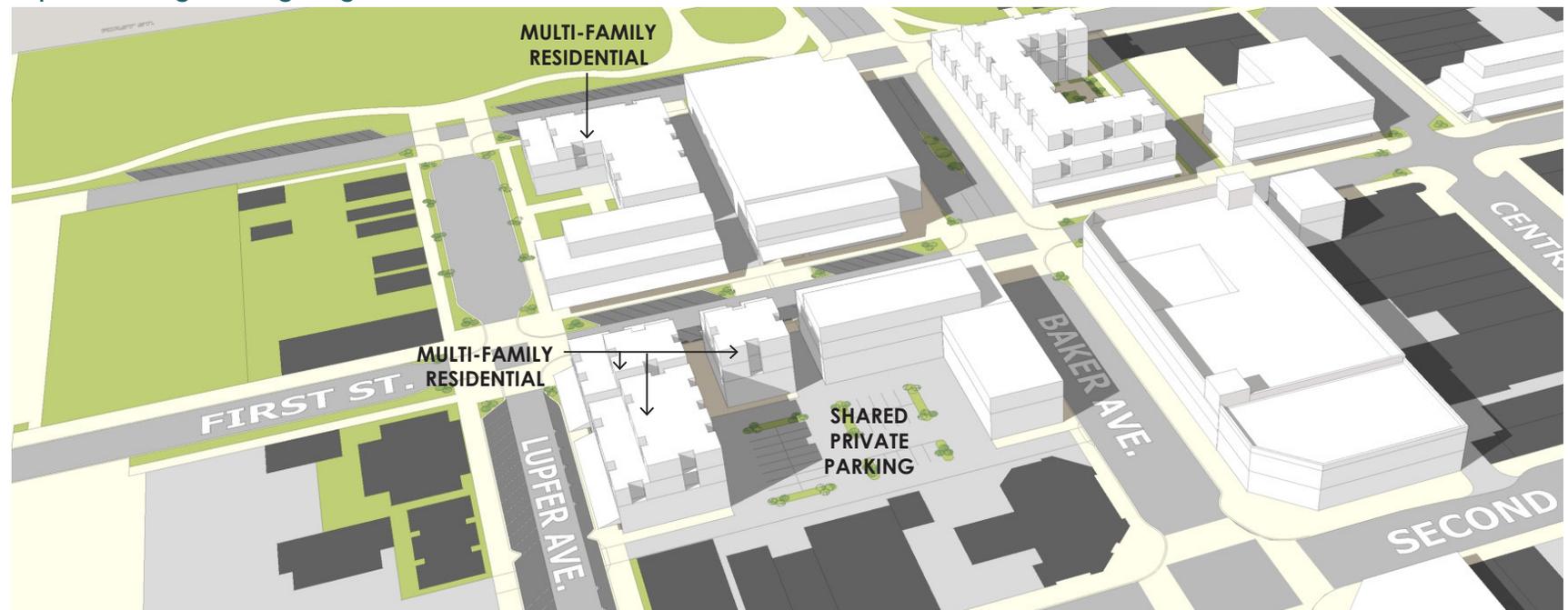
Downtown housing is an essential component to a healthy downtown and there is considerable growing demand for urban housing in Whitefish. Housing provides a pool of residents that help support downtown businesses and help animate and increase safety of the downtown environment by providing a 24-hour presence. Furthermore, downtown residents can access jobs, retail establishments, and services by foot or bicycle thereby lessening auto congestion and reducing the parking demand.

The Residential Element envisions:

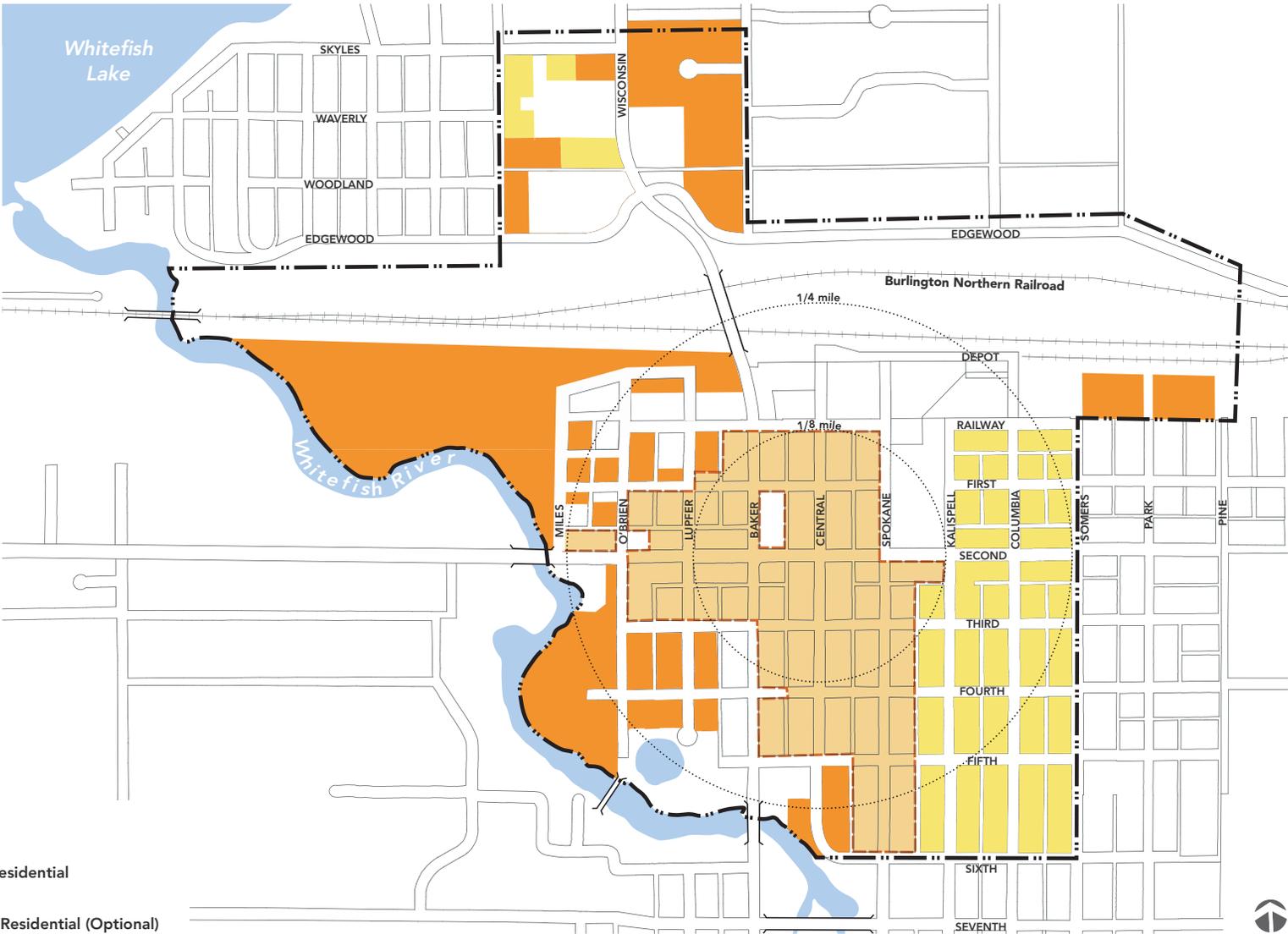
- Attached apartments, condominiums, duplexes or townhouses where multi-family residential housing is indicated.
- Existing or new single-family detached housing only where identified. As part of a future zoning ordinance update, designated multi-family parcels south of Third and west of Baker, may be considered for down zoning to permit single-family housing exclusively.

- Multi-family residential over retail, or commercial development.
- Buildings constructed to a maximum height of three stories.
- Prohibiting auto-oriented uses and development, including residential development surrounded by suburban-styled parking lots or townhomes with street-oriented garage doors.
- Providing a range of housing opportunities for a variety of incomes and ages.
- Providing both for-rent apartments and for-sale options.
- Affordable housing for those making less than 100% median family income should be provided.
- Fostering development that is oriented toward families by providing larger units with two or more bedrooms.
- Providing adequate parking for residents. All new development should provide at least one space per unit on-site parking. Where this is not physically possible, off-site parking for residents should be identified.

## Lupfer Housing Massing Diagram



**Residential Elements**



**LEGEND**

- Multi-Family (Attached) Residential
- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family Upper-Floor Residential (Optional)





# IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

# OVERVIEW

The Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan provides a 5-year and long-term blueprint for continuing the momentum of the 2006 Master Plan. The primary objective of the implementation strategy is to identify public sector improvements and public-private partnerships that will spur additional economic development. Moreover, the implementation strategy identifies issues and objectives that were not fully addressed or have emerged since the completion of the 2006 master plan. These include:

- The need to refine existing policies, regulations and guidelines that maintain downtown architectural character, scale, form and massing; regulations that address preservation of existing single family homes while maximizing opportunities for additional affordable, higher density housing residences; permitted use and map amendments that provide additional commercial sites that in turn, ensure that downtown has adequate development capacity to meet future demand
- Clarification and streamlining of the development approval process to increase approval process predictability for both the private and public sector and certainty that the Downtown build out occurs as envisioned
- Construction of street, open space and pathway improvements that will foster additional commercial and retail uses that serve local residents; additional safe and direct pedestrian and bicycle access routes within downtown that link new and existing development effectively, especially those areas north of the viaduct; increased roadway capacity along Baker to reduce peak hour congestion and minimize traffic impacts on Spokane Avenue
- Strengthening of existing retail and commercial uses by providing additional parking at strategic locations
- Inclusion and design refinement of concurrent planning projects

## **PRIORITY PROJECTS— Stimulating Downtown Investment**

Priority projects include planning actions and physical infrastructure improvement projects that support the land use and transportation elements. Identified projects are achievable within a reasonable timeframe (5-10 years) and are economically prudent. The list includes:

- Individual projects such as the Whitefish Promenade and associated improvements such as landscaping or parking remediation.
- Anchor project areas where multiple public infrastructure improvement and private parcel development projects have been grouped because implementation is reliant upon or improved by actions taken by adjoining projects

## **PRELIMINARY PROJECT SCHEDULE**

The projects have been grouped within either a 5-year or long term timeline.

- Generally, the 5-year projects stimulate the greatest amount of economic development, are time sensitive, or are necessary for the long term implementation of other desirable projects
- Long term projects have been identified that address key downtown objectives but are not likely to be funded within five years or require additional planning or actions by project partners such as MDT
- Projects may occur concurrently. Following adoption of the plan, the schedule should be refined as part of the Action Plan work task.

## Priority Projects

### FIVE YEAR PROJECTS

-  Action Plan, Zoning Ordinance Update, Architectural Review Standards Update
-  City Hall Parking Structure Storefront Retail Tenant Recruitment
-  Whitefish Promenade- North Segment
-  Central Avenue South- Retail Anchor Projects
-  Railway District- Retail Anchor Projects

### LONG TERM PROJECTS

-  Whitefish Promenade- South Segment
-  Whitefish Promenade- Underpass
-  Spokane Avenue Parking Structure



# PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

The schedule calls for action on all projects to ensure that Plan momentum is established.

FIVE YEAR PROJECTS	TIMELINE					
	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6
Action Plan						
Update Zoning Ordinance						
Update Architectural Review Standards						
City Hall Parking Structure Storefront Retail Tenant Recruitment						
Whitefish Promenade- North Segment						
Railway District- Retail Anchor Projects						
Central Avenue South- Retail Anchor Projects						
<b>LONG TERM PROJECTS</b>						
Whitefish Promenade- South Segment						
Second & Spokane Parking Structure						
Whitefish Promenade Underpass						

# PHASING

## FIVE YEAR PROJECTS

Physical improvement projects identified are conceptual. In most instances they will require:

- Additional technical analysis, design refinement, and construction document preparation
- Identification of a 'business case' for funding of projects using resort tax or other public financing.
- Further public outreach, public involvement, and review and input from stakeholders.

### Action Plan

The Action Plan should identify all:

- Additional staff and/or consultant expertise needed to prepare project materials
- Actions to be taken by either the public or private sectors, and/or partnerships
- Timelines for analysis, design and construction
- Responsibilities, including project lead and partners
- Preliminary cost estimates and identification of potential funding sources

The Action Plan should also identify an 'Implementation Steering Committee' that would be responsible for ensuring downtown project momentum is maintained. The Committee should:

- Be comprised of City staff, stakeholder, and citizen-at-large representatives
- Meet regularly (bi-annual minimum) to review the status of the implementation strategy
- Provide updates to City Council annually concerning the implementation status and any recommendations for adjustments or improvements to the implementation strategy

## Update Zoning Ordinance

Rather than amend existing zoning permitted uses, site and development standards for each regulating downtown zoning category, an 'overlay district' should be created for the entire downtown planning area. The intent of the overlay is to change only what is essential and leave as much of the underlying relevant existing zoning in place. The overlay district:

- Should be directed by City planning staff and legal counsel. A steering committee comprised of stakeholders and citizens-at-large should review all changes
- Would require consultant services to facilitate the process and provide a draft document for refinement and finalization by city staff
- Should include downtown specific, targeted land use categories, maps, permitted use tables, site and building development standards
- Would supersede existing zoning. Where regulations are required but not provided by the overlay, existing underlying zoning regulations would apply.
- Would incorporate a streamlined development review process

All regulatory changes should be adopted within a year (maximum) of the adoption of the Downtown Plan (March 2016).

Following overlay adoption, changes to existing Whitefish policy documents such as the city's transportation plan, should be made to ensure alignment and consistency with the Downtown overlay.

### **Update Architectural Review Standards**

The intent of an update would be to better inform the community, developers, and their design consultants what the fundamental design characteristics of downtown include, thereby ensuring that all new development is a 'good neighbor' with adjacent historic buildings. The update:

- Should be directed by City planning and include involvement from public works and parks staff
- Should include input from a steering committee comprised of stakeholders and citizens-at-large
- Would require consultant services to facilitate the process and provide a draft document for refinement and finalization by city staff
- Should apply to all development parcels in the downtown. The guidelines would be applied for all new development or building improvements that pass a threshold of minimum size (building square footage) or monetary investment (amount to be determined)
- Should include new guidelines for the development of projects within the public realm— streets , parks and open space
- Should include a new development review process that better defines the timelines, and appropriate use of the guidelines and review procedures
- Should support and supplement the overlay zoning ordinance. Linkages to parallel/ applicable regulations of the zoning overlay should be provided

The updated document should be adopted within a year (maximum) of the adoption of the Downtown Plan.

### **City Hall Parking Structure Storefront Retail Tenant Recruitment**

During the design and construction of the City Hall parking structure, efforts should be made to recruit a tenant for the storefront retail space at the intersection of First and Baker. Recruitment efforts:

- Should prioritize tenants that provide services that are needed by Whitefish residents
- Should be directed by the City Manager and City Council. A steering committee comprised of stakeholders and citizens-at-large should review all potential tenants and terms of occupancy

- Should retain a local commercial real estate broker to lead efforts to identify and recruit potential tenants and advise the City during tenant negotiations

Tenant improvements and certificate of occupancy should occur by the opening date of the City Hall.

### **Whitefish Promenade- North Segment**

Further refinement of the Whitefish Promenade conceptual plans and section drawings are required. The refinement process should:

- Be directed by City public works and parks staff
- Include input from a steering committee comprised of stakeholders, including representatives of the Middle School , Depot Park advocates, downtown businesspeople, and citizens-at-large
- Reflect consultation with MDT
- Reflect consultation with Whitefish Pedestrian & Bicycle and other committees
- Include a consultant hired to facilitate the process, provide a preliminary design, and cost estimate document for review and adoption by City Council
- Be informed by additional traffic assessment and analysis at key segments along Spokane and intersections –Spokane and Second and Baker and Railway, at a minimum
- Identify traffic mitigation proposals such as new pedestrian-bicycle signals/phases
- Refine parking mitigation concepts
- Locate possible right-of-way acquisition and initiate negotiation with property owners
- Further address and resolve handicap parking, truck loading zone, and school drop-off issues
- Identify a phasing plan for construction of the Depot Park and Hotel segments
- Illustrate key segments (3-D visual simulation drawings and other graphics should be provided)

Following adoption, cost estimates should be refined and final construction documentation should be initiated and completed. Phases of the North segment may be constructed as part of the Depot Park or Hotel projects.

The entire north segment should be substantially completed within 5 years of Downtown Plan adoption (March 2020)

### **Railway District- Retail Anchor Projects**

To implement the shopping loop concept, the following projects will be need to be constructed:

- Lupfer Avenue and First Street streetscape improvements within an expanded public right-of-way. Improvements should be designed and constructed to utilize recently completed subsurface utility improvements
- Redevelopment of the Blocks 26, 27 and 29. A collaborative effort between property owners and possible investors will be required. As an initial first step, a consultant should conduct a one day workshop to further educate property owners of existing proposals, review existing development plans, and discuss programmatic requirements. Recruitment of potential tenants should be discussed. Development preference should be for a local merchants and or housing serving local residents. Recruitment advice might be discussed with the City Hall parking structure commercial broker consultant.

Further refinement of plans and sections of the Lupfer and First concepts are required. The refinement process should:

- Be directed by City public works staff.
- Include input from a steering committee comprised of stakeholders, including representatives of the Railway District businesses and citizens-at-large
- Reflect input from an engineer and urban design team of consultants, hired to provide a preliminary concept refinement and cost estimates

A consultant should be hired to coordinate and assist in the development and execution of a possible public-private partnership and developer offering for the project area

### **Central Avenue South- Retail Anchor Projects**

*The removal of retail serving parking on the corner of Third and Central should not take place unless replacement parking is provided. Replacement parking should be located to serve Central Avenue retail.*

To expand and strengthen the Central Avenue retail framework, the following projects will be needed to be constructed:

- Central Avenue streetscape improvements within the public right-of-way between Third and Fourth (including the intersection). Improvements should be designed and constructed concurrently with planned subsurface utility improvements scheduled for construction by 2016.
- Redevelopment of the municipal parking lot at the southwest corner of Central Avenue and Third Street as a retail/mixed use 'anchor' building. Development preference should be for a local merchant. Recruitment of this anchor use may occur concurrently and be conducted by the City Hall parking structure commercial broker consultant.
- Replacement retail parking on the east half of the block along Baker bounded by Third Street and Fourth Street. Initiation of development of this site would be triggered by construction at the existing parking facility

Further refinement of plans and sections of the Central Avenue South anchor area concepts will be required. The refinement process should:

- Be co-directed by City public works staff, for street and infrastructure projects, and by the City Manger for the redevelopment of the municipal parking lot and development of replacement parking
- Include input from a steering committee comprised of stakeholders, including representatives of the downtown businesses and citizens-at-large
- Reflect input from an architect, engineer and landscape architecture team of consultants, hired to provide a preliminary concept refinement and cost estimates for all areas

Parking lot parcels will need to be acquired by the city or private entities interested in development as a public-private partnership.

## LONG TERM INVESTMENT

### Whitefish Promenade- South Segment

Further refinement of plans and sections of the Whitefish Promenade conceptual plans and section drawings along Spokane Avenue south of Third Street are required. The refinement process should:

- Be directed by City public works and parks staff
- Include input from a steering committee comprised of stakeholders, including representatives of Spokane Avenue businesspeople, residents and citizens-at-large
- Provide consultation with MDT
- Provide consultation with the City arborist and Tree committee
- Provide consultation with the Whitefish Pedestrian & Bicycle committee and other committees
- Include a consultant hired to facilitate the process, provide a preliminary design refinement, and cost estimate document for review and adoption by City Council
- Be informed by additional traffic assessment and analysis

### Whitefish Promenade Underpass

Further refinement of the viaduct underpass conceptual plans and section drawings are required. The refinement process should:

- Be directed by City public works and parks staff
- Include input from a steering committee comprised of stakeholders, including representatives of the O'Shaughnessy Center, downtown businesspeople, and citizens-at-large
- Provide consultation with MDT
- Provide consultation with the Whitefish Pedestrian & Bicycle committee and other committees
- Include a consultant hired to facilitate the process, provide a preliminary design, and cost estimate document for review and adoption by City Council

### Second and Spokane Street Parking Structure

Over time, additional retail parking will be required and parking mitigation will be required for loss of existing on-street parking for implementation of pedestrian and bicycle improvements. The 2006 Master Plan identified the Second and Spokane site as a key location for parking and was reaffirmed as the best site for a future parking structure during the planning process of the Downtown Master Plan.

Consultants should be hired to refine the parking structure concepts and develop cost estimates for a mixed use parking structure. Construction should be initiated within 10 years of adoption of the Downtown Master Plan (March 2025)

## NEXT STEPS

**The Master Plan should be formally adopted**—Approval by elected officials ensures that the Plan is recognized as the official 'road map' for future development. Adoption ensures that the Plan is considered in all future land use, transportation and economic development planning efforts. In particular, adoption of the plan provides a formal directive for policy and regulatory updates and expenditure of City financial resources for revitalization projects in the downtown study area.

**The Master Plan should be easily accessible**—The Plan should be publicly available online and in print. The plan should serve as a 'marketing tool' for those who are interested in seeking investment in the downtown. It should be easily accessible to elected officials, city staff, the general public, the Heart of Whitefish, developers, builders and their design consultants.

