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# 4 Master Plan

## Master Plan

The master plan is a conceptual plan, outlining a general direction for positive change over the long-term. The master plan recognizes the positive qualities and character elements that exist today and recommends adding to those qualities a series of projects that will become a valued part of the community. Ultimately, this plan describes an implementation strategy, a series of redevelopment catalyst projects and redevelopment initiatives in concert with the community's vision and guiding principles for the community.

The City of Osseo and its downtown will not change overnight. This master plan looks out over a period of roughly 20 years in the future, and throughout that time the community should expect the details to change and remain steadfast in their effort to make the downtown and surrounding districts accomplish their vision. This master plan is not the defining image of what Osseo and its downtown will become but rather an articulation of what Osseo might look like once the community applies the prescribed redevelopment initiatives within the context of the community's vision and guiding principles.

## The Vision

The community's vision and guiding principles are the foundation of Osseo's Redevelopment Master Plan. The vision statement embodies the community's desires and intentions for its future, creating a picture of what the community should become and its critical elements. The guiding principles provide a means for guiding and evaluating future efforts to achieve the plan's vision. Together, the vision and guiding principles provide the big picture view and inspiration for the Redevelopment Master Plan that will be necessary for future planning and decision-making.

Osseo's traditional small town character, rich history and friendly hometown feel make the city a truly unique and desirable place for living, working, shopping and visiting within the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The City values its desirable small town quality-of-life amenities; including attractive neighborhoods with a diverse mix of older traditional homes and new housing choices for residents at all stages of life, the vitality of Central Avenue's traditional Main Street with its community-oriented shops, services, restaurants and activities, schools (elementary, junior and senior) with walkable access for families, attractive and safe streets; inviting public gathering places; and the excellent walking/biking environment. Osseo offers a unique opportunity for residents to live in a small town within a major urban center.



*The Vision for Osseo centers around the existing traditional small town character that makes it a desirable place to live, work, shop and play. (Top image from the Metropolitan Design Center Image Bank.)*

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Osseo is a unique and thriving community in the Twin Cities because it has what other places can only aspire to have, authentic small town character and passionate, involved, diverse and forward-thinking citizens willing to act with an eye toward the community's future and to invest in a common vision. The City is committed to preservation of and revitalization of Osseo's traditional small town character and quality-of-life amenities that will keep existing residents and attract new residents. Osseo's revitalization approach strives to balance preservation of the city's unique small town identity with the needs to attract and invest in redevelopment projects that will improve the vitality of Osseo's neighborhoods and Main Street, strengthen the City's property values and tax base, and enable the provision of high quality city services.

## Guiding Principles

### 1. Preserve Osseo's Small Town Character

Osseo's long city history, traditional small town physical character, "Main Street" businesses and school facilities, which are major sources of residents' hometown pride and the city's strong sense of place, should be preserved as redevelopment projects and initiatives are undertaken. While redevelopment projects should complement and enhance Osseo's existing small town character, they should also reflect their own period of development and effectively facilitate contemporary uses and needs.



*Osseo's rich history established its traditional small town appeal.*

### 2. Enhance Osseo's Downtown Identity

Osseo's authentic downtown and Main Street makes it a unique community and destination within the Twin Cities metropolitan area. As Osseo's downtown ages and is faced with increased competition from surrounding commercial developments, it is critical that Osseo's traditional downtown identity be enhanced through reinvestment and redevelopment. To enhance its identity, Osseo encourages redevelopment efforts that will help create a unique and memorable place attractive to nearby residents and employees as well as visitors. Osseo strives to maintain a unique and thriving downtown business community focused on small stores and services catering to the daily needs of nearby residents, unique restaurants, specialty retail shops targeting niche customers/product categories, arts/cultural features, entertainment, tourism (specifically ecologically or recreation based), and specialty retail. As redevelopment occurs, it should fit the architectural scale and character of a traditional small town Main Street by providing mixed-use buildings with street level retail and preserving architecturally important buildings.



*Central Avenue is Osseo's Main Street with shops and services lining the pedestrian-friendly street. (Image from the Metropolitan Design Center Image Bank.)*

### 3. Stimulate Redevelopment & Economic Growth

As a small city with limited resources, it is critical that Osseo maintain growing property values and a strong tax base. Osseo encourages reinvestment in buildings, sites and streetscape amenities in downtown and along Bottineau Boulevard to create a positive environment for business development and to attract a critical mass of customers to



*Reinvestment and redevelopment will increase property values within the city.*

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support the businesses. Reinvestment in existing buildings and redevelopment of new buildings will strengthen both commercial and residential property values, increase the tax base, and improve the types and levels of city services that can be provided.

#### 4. Create an Exceptional Walking & Biking Environment

Osseo promotes a walkable and bikeable community through attractive streetscapes, well planned roads and traffic systems, pedestrian-oriented street crossings and intersections, strategically placed gathering spots, clear way-finding systems, active storefronts and front yards, and a complete city sidewalk and trail system that links to regional trails.



*Elements like bike lanes and wide sidewalks establish a more comfortable and safe environment for walkers and bikers.*

#### 5. Encourage Healthy Community Design

Osseo encourages environmentally sensitive design in public and private development investments. These features are reflected through physical improvements such as tree planting, landscaping, rainwater gardens, permeable pavement, green roof buildings or solar energy systems. A Green Lifestyle is also reflected by Osseo's support and investment in transit systems and in support of cooperatives that seek alternative means of sustainable delivery of public and private services (garbage collection, yard care, snow removal, and telecommunication).



*Rainwater gardens are one of many environmentally sensitive design elements to encourage a healthy community.*

#### 6. Add New Housing Choices

Osseo's current housing stock is predominately single-family detached houses and multi-level senior housing buildings. By adding other housing types and achieving a mix of housing that meets all lifecycle needs, more people's housing preferences/needs will be met, the market for future residents will be expanded, and existing residents will be better able to remain in Osseo as their housing preferences/needs change. By adding higher density housing types along and near Central Avenue, Osseo will be able to attract people who are interested in living in a walkable downtown environment and increase the local customer base for businesses on Central Avenue.



*Increasing the variety of housing options means existing residents will be able to remain in the community as housing needs change.*

#### 7. Support Reinvestment in Older Traditional Homes

Osseo's diverse mix of older traditional homes is a community asset and a key component of Osseo's small town character. Ongoing maintenance, reinvestment, and enhancement of existing older homes is encouraged to preserve the quality and unique character of Osseo's neighborhoods. It is important to keep housing marketable for today's residential preferences.



*Charming family neighborhoods of diverse older homes define Osseo's character.*

#### 8. Create Youth-Oriented Places & Activities

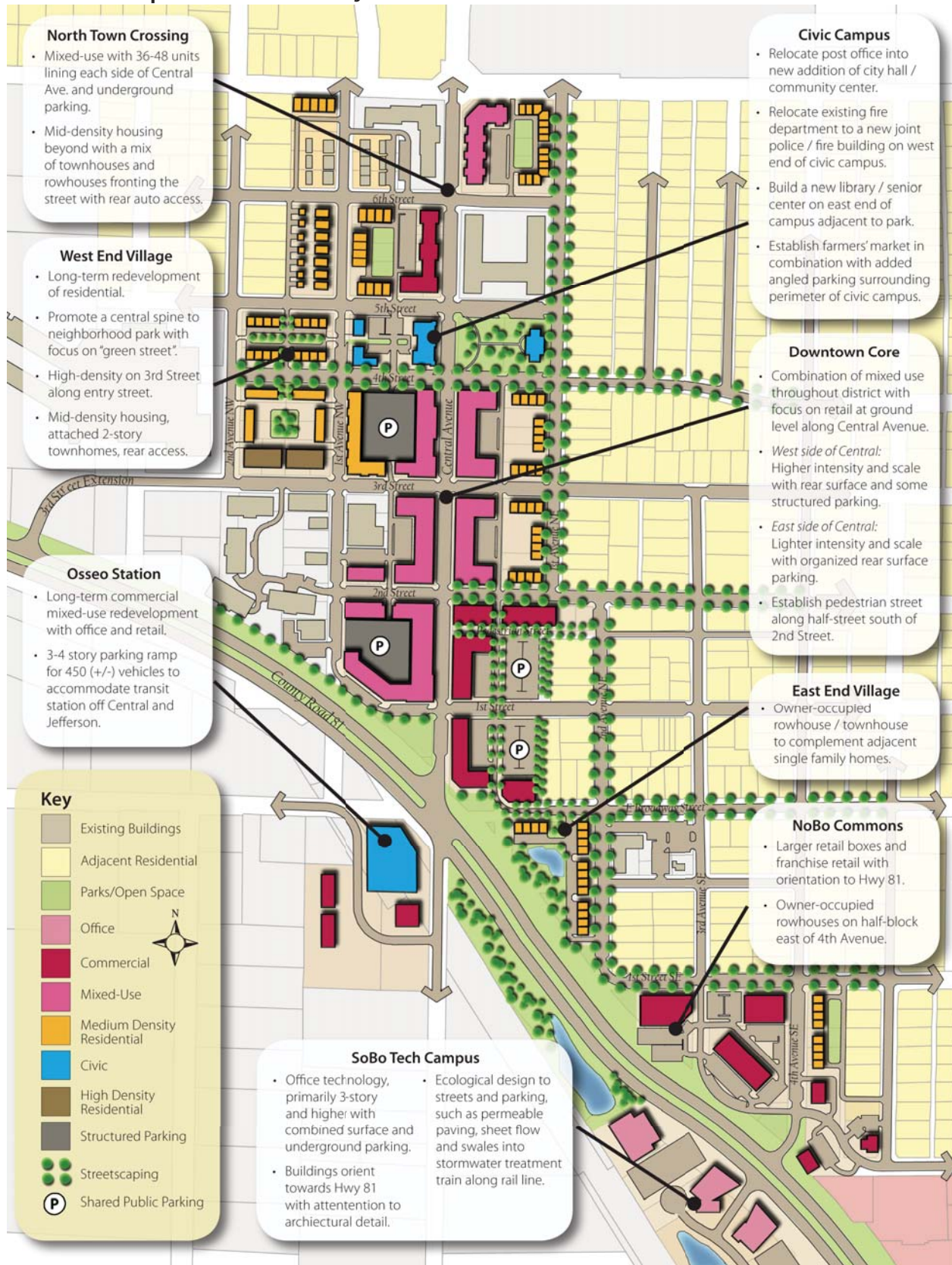
Osseo is home to many families with kids as well as schools that serve students of all grade levels, K-12, including the well-respected Osseo High School. Redevelopment projects and initiatives should support increased youth-oriented places and activities within the city, including public gathering places, active recreation facilities/paths, and stores/eating places.



*Activities for children and families are vital to the community.*



# Osseo Redevelopment Master Plan *Figure 4.1*



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## Keys to a Successful Redevelopment Master Plan

Simply put, land use direction is not enough to enhance the critical areas of the community. Through their input in the planning process, Osseo residents have stressed a desire to retain the feel or character that this small town possesses. As all downtowns continue to evolve in the face of ever changing business practices, it is important to find the balance between the history and future vitality of the district. It's the attention to the unique "urban" features of the community which must be included in the future vision for the community to become an active destination for many different people, enticing them to return on a continual basis. The following community elements are the keys to a successful Redevelopment Master Plan in Osseo:

### 1. Preserve Osseo's Identity and Unique Features

Osseo is a truly a unique place, but has no sole element defining its character. Rather what makes Osseo the special place which registers with everyone are the many unique features that add up to tell the story of whole community. This plan looks at ways to promote, enhance and compliment these features to bring the desired vitality to the downtown which all community residents desire.

#### > *Community Scale*

At roughly one square mile in size, downtown Osseo developed as a historic rural small town, which today appears as a Midwestern town "island" within the suburban sprawl that surrounds its perimeter. The walkable grid pattern of interconnected streets and sidewalks lined with modest homes and front porches give the city a true Americana charm. Even the majority of the commercial structures along Central Avenue are small in stature. Primarily single-story with tight building setbacks, the three to four block stretch along Central Avenue has a distinct and comfortable "Main Street" feel.

#### > *Residential Neighborhoods*

The overall land mass of the city is dominated by detached single family homes. The preservation of these homes is a critical component to the master plan. The fabric of these residential neighborhoods is what residents of the community continually point to as the identifying element of Osseo.

#### > *School System*

Both the community residents and surrounding neighbors have a strong sense of pride in the educational system in Osseo and recognize the quality of the Osseo school district. Grades K-12 are all present within the city limits, housed between Elementary, Middle and High School facilities. The school district has a strong presence and involvement in a wide range of community functions.

#### > *Civic Pride*

The structural beacon of the community is the historic water tower located adjacent to City Hall and Boerboom Park. Although not currently operational, the old water tower



#### *Community Scale*

*Osseo was built with a walkable street grid.*



#### *Residential Neighborhoods*

*Most of Osseo consists of single family homes.*



#### *School System*

*The Osseo school system accommodates grades K-12.*



#### *Civic Pride*

*The Osseo water tower serves as a community icon.*





**Main Street**

*Intersection “bump-outs” and pedestrian-scaled lighting establish Central Avenue as an inviting and safe area for pedestrians.*

is the iconic symbol for the community – it’s the City’s logo - and has a strong presence in the landscape as it can be seen from nearly all parts of the community. Amidst City Hall and the primary open space for downtown, Boerboom Park, the water tower creates the strong civic identity for the community.

> **“Main Street” – Central Avenue**

Osseo has made tremendous strides along Central Avenue by improving areas of the public realm with pedestrian-scaled street lighting and traffic calming bump-outs at intersections for increased pedestrian safety. However, missing are the captivating buildings and storefronts providing an active district along Central Avenue. Attention should be paid to any new structures to create inviting storefronts and a continued safe and secure zone for pedestrians throughout the downtown.

**2. Create and Maintain Key Activity Generators**

Often times, successful downtowns similar to the size of Osseo’s are dependent upon a mix of attractions rather than a single “anchor” dominating as the activity generator. Throughout the work week or on weekends, either day or night, one use may be more important than another, but overall this mix of uses establishes the vitality sought for downtown Osseo’s future.



**Retail/Service**

*An important use to keep downtown.*

> **Retail/Service**

Traditionally, downtown is the center for business activities of the community. Destination uses like banks and grocery stores combined with retail/service shops attract patrons looking for a particular item as well as people just strolling by. It’s this mix that adds vitality at various times. Downtown Osseo should work hard to retain the grocery store, pharmacy and bank uses. Ultimately their locations may change, but the uses are important elements to the success of downtown. However, uses that need larger footprints and are more auto-oriented, such as drive-thru restaurants located along the County Road 81 commercial corridor.



**Entertainment**

*Osseo has potential to be an attractive entertainment district.*

> **Entertainment**

Downtown has the potential to become a desirable entertainment district with additional restaurants and other eating/drinking establishments. Entertainment options in the downtown should consider teenage and family audiences as well as young professionals and empty nesters that will likely be a major component to the new housing in and around the downtown. Convenient and easily accessible parking is critical to the success of these uses.



**Civic**

*Further consolidation of Osseo’s civic services into a central civic campus can create energy for downtown.*

> **Civic**

The prominent location of City Hall on Central Avenue provides a great identity for the community. A continued commitment should be made to further invest in City Hall and Boerboom Park area. The consolidation into one distinct location of important civic uses such as the City Hall, Library, Post Office, Community Center and Senior Center can create a dynamic environment and further bolster community pride.

> *Recreation and Open Space*

Throughout the community there are limited areas for expansion of park space. Currently, Boerboom Park provides the gathering place for outdoor events, but has no programmed recreation components. Steps should be taken to investigate the expansion of Boerboom Park to potentially include a skate park and playground facility. Additionally, a larger entry plaza should be incorporated into a community identity element at County Road 81 and smaller courtyards should be explored in-conjunction with new residential development.

> *Residential*

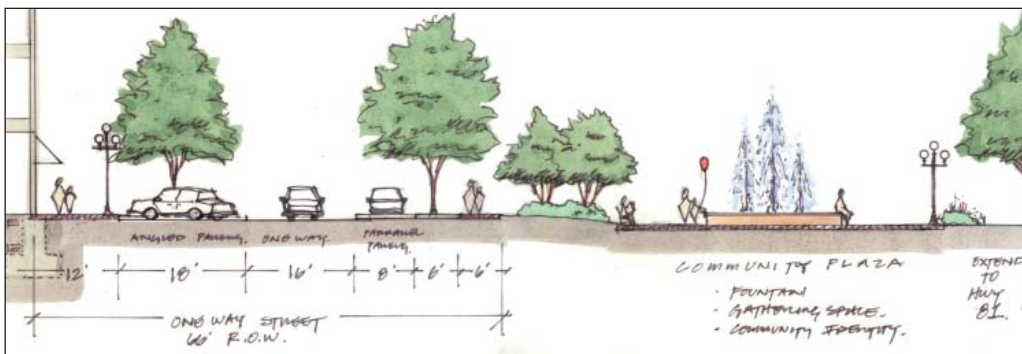
In order to create and sustain the energy needed for a successful downtown, both day and night, additional housing should be a major component to the revitalization effort. A wide variety of housing types in direct proximity to downtown will ensure a broader base of patrons for the district and help establish a lifecycle of housing options for the community.

### 3. Enhance the Public Realm

In order for downtown to be successful, there must be activity on the streets. In order to create that activity, people need to feel the desire to come to downtown. Street activity is created through the combination of interesting storefronts, comfortable pedestrian scale, convenient parking as well as an attractive and safe streetscape environment. To date, Osseo has made improvements with lighting and traffic calming. However, enhancements to building facades, selection of proper users and development of clear relationship between parking areas and the “front doors” of business should be addressed. A captivating public realm will ultimately entice customers to stroll along Central Avenue and actively engage the businesses within the downtown.

### 4. Enhance Community Gateways

Gateways can be as simple as a sign or monument, but often gateways can be “felt” as one identifies the change in the surrounding environment making them aware they have entered a different place. With the dominant transportation element moving through the community, thousands of people travel the corridor on a daily basis. However, few ever feel they have entered or left Osseo let alone realize the unique aspects of the Osseo Downtown District. One of the goals of the master plan is to better articulate the gateway to the Downtown District and the community of Osseo as a whole.



**Recreation**

*Osseo should seek to increase recreation. Boerboom Park could be expanded with a playground and skate park.*



**Residential**

*Osseo should continue to strengthen efforts to accommodate lifecycle housing opportunities.*



**Public Realm**

*Attention to storefronts, proper uses and clear connections from parking lots to front doors will help increase activity on the streets.*

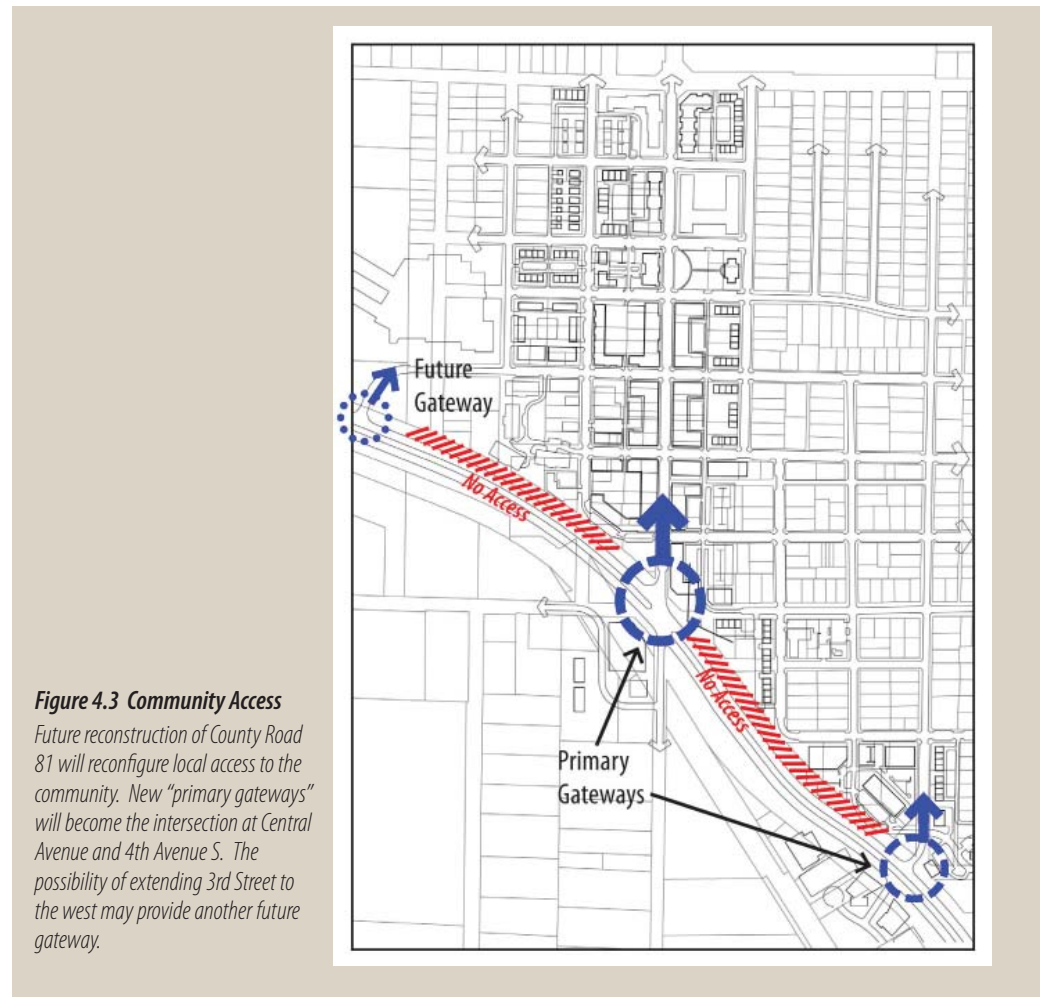
**Figure 4.2 Community Gateway Cross-section**

*Shown on the left, the intersection of Central Avenue and County Road 81 is the primary entrance to downtown Osseo and a prime location for establishing an identifiable gateway to the community that incorporates public space.*

With the future reconstruction of County Road 81 and the subsequent closure of many of the frontage roads, access to the community becomes focused at two locations along County Road 81. The first, and most significant, is the intersection at Central Avenue; the second is at 4th Avenue in the southeast. The Central Avenue intersection serves as the gateway to the downtown district and the master plan proposes a broad plaza in the northwest corner with new buildings tighter to the street to visually connect the character of Central Avenue to the County Road 81 corridor. Fourth Avenue becomes a secondary entry to the community and the proposed NoBo Commons District. Access configurations will likely dictate the pattern of redevelopment in this area.

The plan also suggests exploring a third access off of County Road 81 with an extension of 3rd Street to the west, which would ultimately connect to Maple Grove in the southwest and better serve Osseo High School, particularly bus pick-up and drop-off traffic.

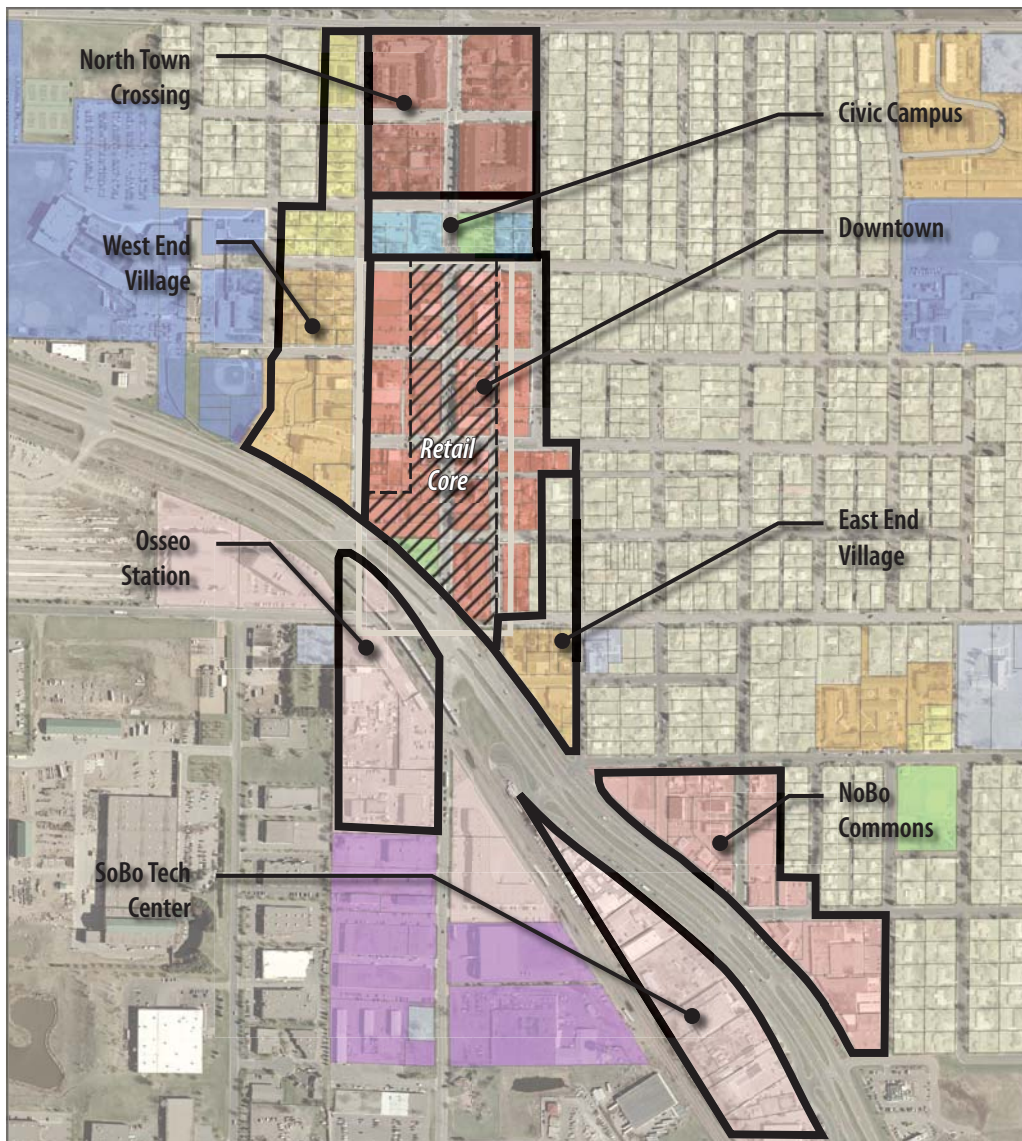
Furthermore, attention should be paid along the entire County Road 81 corridor as it makes its way through Osseo. Enhanced landscaping and screening areas and attention to the design and placement of buildings will help travelers assimilate this unique section of the County Road 81 corridor within Osseo.





## District Design

In order to clearly articulate the differences in not only land use, but the unique urban design character throughout the community, the master plan has identified “districts” or key areas to which similar features, uses and overall design character exist. These districts, to some degree, have their own distinct identity. Between variations in their uses, building form and architectural styles and design of the streets and public spaces within them, each district becomes an identifiable place in the community. Together these districts form the fabric for redevelopment efforts described in this master plan.



**Figure 4.4 District Design**

As described in Chapter 3, the master plan organizes redevelopment efforts around a district approach. Each district is intended to have its own unique identity and character and knit together the fabric of the entire community.



**Stepped-Back Architecture**

*“Stepping back” the upper stories of new mixed-use development retains the existing character of Central Avenue.*

**Downtown Core**

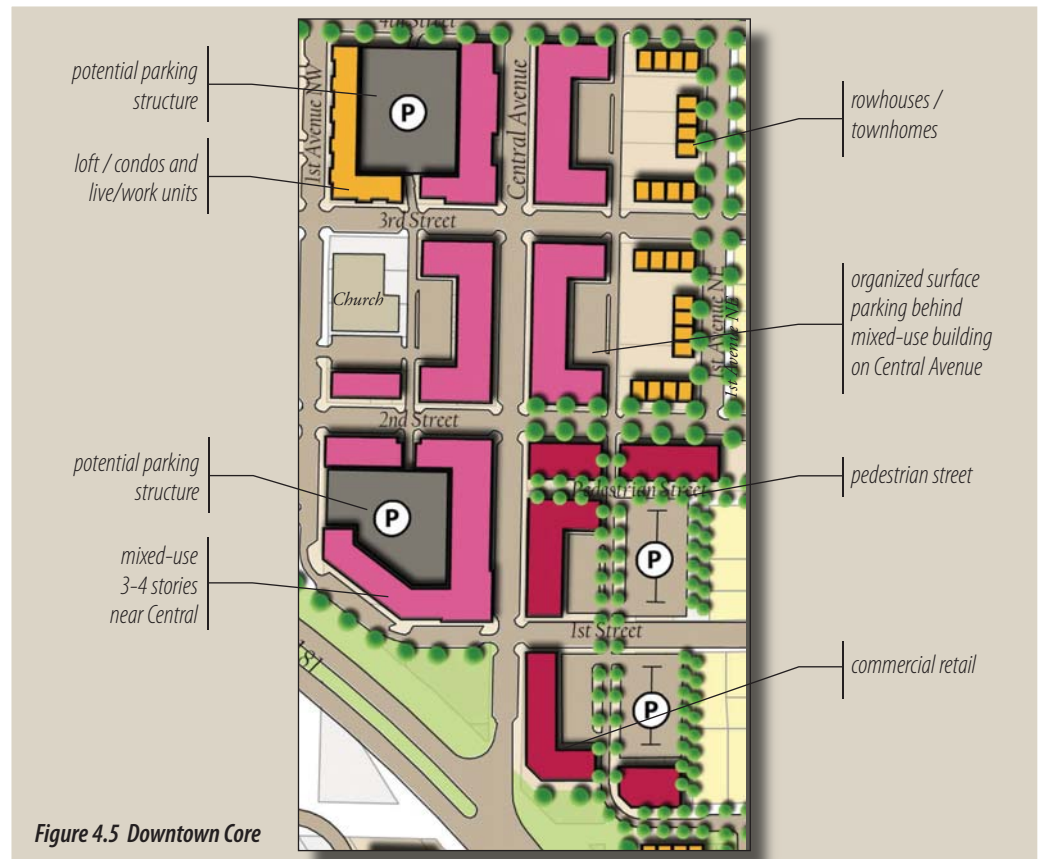
At the heart of the revitalization effort for Osseo is the Downtown Core district. In this district, the master plan proposes varying degrees of mixed use development with a focus on ground level retail along Central Avenue. Throughout the Downtown Core, the scale and intensity of the proposed development along the west side of Central Avenue is envisioned as slightly higher and more intense in scale than the eastern side of Central Avenue, allowing development patterns to better fit the scale of the adjacent single-family neighborhood to the east. On the west side of Central Avenue, structures could reach up to four stories. However, the master plan advocates portions of these new buildings “step back” to keep the street corridor in harmony with many of the existing one and two story structures lining the street. The notion of stepping back or reducing the bulk of the upper floors of the buildings will allow one to two stories at the street level to align with the existing buildings, keeping a continuous façade of storefronts along the block. Setting back the upper floors an additional 10-15’ from the building line at the street will allow existing structures to coexist with new construction and prevent Central Avenue from becoming a “canyon” lined with buildings.

In the downtown core, the master plan shows organized rear parking behind development on Central Avenue, which would primarily occur as surface lots, or potentially structured parking. The largely undeveloped block between 3rd and 4th Streets west of Central should be targeted for larger redevelopment and possibly a public parking ramp.



**Downtown Core**

*Design of the Downtown Core focuses on maintaining and enhancing the small town character of Osseo with attention to architectural detail and public space.*



**Figure 4.5 Downtown Core**



Another feature of the downtown district is the creation of a pedestrian street along what is now 1 1/2 Street. Here, the long term redevelopment of the adjacent uses could be designed to spill out onto a pedestrian plaza space just off of Central Avenue. Buildings with large roll-up doors could entice more pedestrian activity though indoor/outdoor shopping and cafes. See Figure 4.5.

### North Town Crossing

Located on the four blocks north of City Hall between County Road 30 and on both sides of Central Avenue, a second mixed use district is proposed: North Town Crossing. Here, two recent development projects have already helped shape the character of this district. Realife Cooperative of Osseo is a 77-unit senior housing complex with commercial retail use on the first floor along Central Avenue. Steeple Pointe Senior Housing is a second recently-developed senior residence providing assisted living but not including commercial use.

The two remaining blocks in this district have been identified in a previous market study completed by Maxfield Research as potential redevelopment sites due in large part to underutilized parcels and contiguous land ownership. The master plan suggests continued development of mixed use on the half blocks immediately adjacent to Central Avenue where commercial ground floor uses should be focused at the intersections and remaining floors should consist of residential units. Underground parking is recommended for residents. On the remaining half blocks off of Central Avenue, row houses are proposed to provide an additional housing option that fits well with the size and scale of single-family housing across the street. The row houses should be designed with a front porch aesthetic with parking and garage access units off the alley in organized internal parking courts. See Figure 4.6.

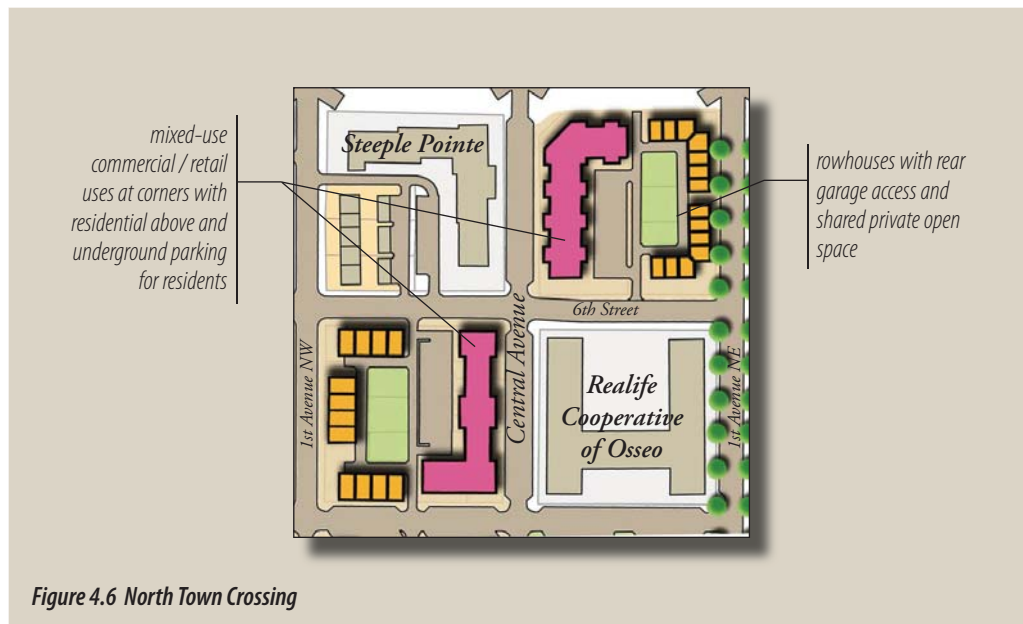
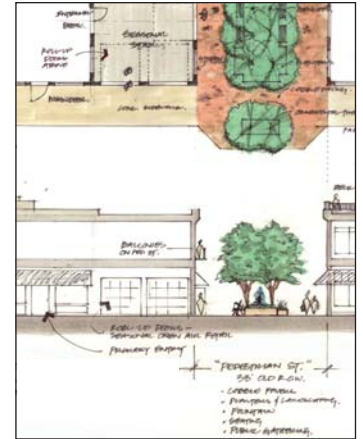


Figure 4.6 North Town Crossing



### Pedestrian Street

A pedestrian street can add greater activity to the Main Street by providing space for sidewalk cafes, entertainment and public gathering.



### North Town Crossing

This district includes mixed-use retail and residential buildings, but rowhouses on the half blocks off of Central better fit the scale of single family homes across the street.



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## Civic Campus

Located between the Downtown Core and North Town Crossing is the proposed Civic Campus District. Currently home to City Hall, the fire station, library, police department, community center and Boerboom Park, the master plan suggests further development of the community's civic activities in this district to bring additional activity and help foster community identity and civic pride.

One of the primary components for change is the relocation of the post office to the district. With the future closure of the access to County Road 81 at 1st Avenue Northwest, access to the current facility will be difficult. Post offices are destinations for community residents and the relocation of the post office to a newly expanded portion of the City Hall building on Central Avenue (a portion of the current fire station location) would bring an additional activity to the district and Central Avenue as a whole. The city should work with the USPS to verify the programmatic functions of the facility, such as delivery trucks and storage. Portions of the existing fire station garage could be utilized for postal trucks, and parking would be served by expanded angled parking on 4th and 5th streets.

In conjunction with the post office relocation, a new joint facility is proposed for the police and fire departments behind City Hall. Currently, the police station is housed in an old single-family home on the back half of this block and does not serve the needs of the police force very efficiently. The creation of this dual facility will likely occur with the relocation of the post office, and subsequent move of the fire station, so timing and funding options should be explored to keep costs of the facility realistic.

The expansion of Boerboom Park to the east is another component to Civic Campus District improvements. The master plan suggests portions of this expanded park space may include a small skate park and playground facility. While additional active park space for the community may be difficult to find, the expanded Boerboom Park is a logical location. Fourth Street, envisioned as a "green street" by the master plan, is the primary connection from the single-family neighborhood and Osseo Elementary School to the east and Osseo High School to the west. Additionally, the creation of a new library/senior center could be explored as another component to this expansion. The proximity to the senior co-op building to the north and the location between the two schools on 4th Street provides excellent symmetry; however, the new library and senior center may not occur until some time in the distant future.

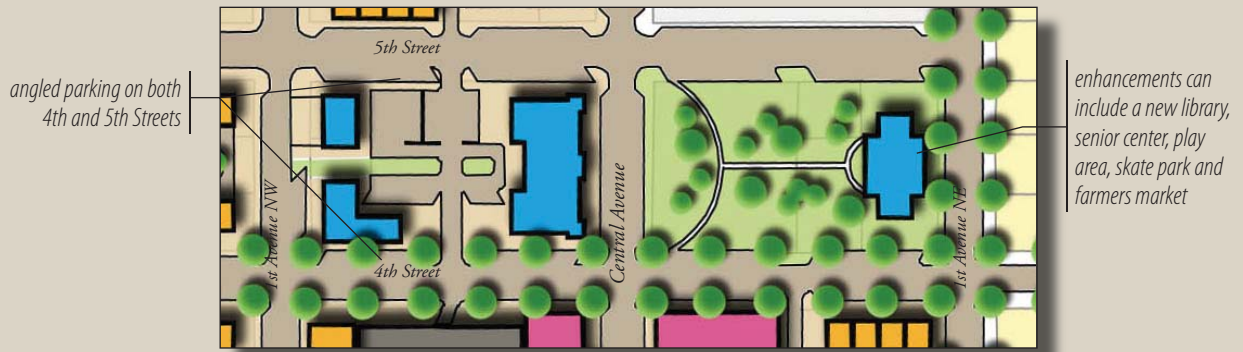
Furthermore, the stretch of 4th and 5th Streets between Central Avenue and 1st Avenue Northeast, both north and south of Boerboom Park, have tremendous opportunity to be utilized as an expanded public gathering space. The master plan proposes to organize the perimeter of the park into a farmers' market and perimeter plaza space. New angled parking, broad walkways with dynamic paving, pedestrian-scaled street lighting and other streetscape elements unique to the Civic Campus District would be designed to take advantage of a wide range of outdoor shopping experiences from weekly farmers' markets to annual art fairs and community events.



### **Post Office**

*Relocating the post office to the Civic Campus on Central provides a community destination along Central Avenue.*

**Figure 4.7 Civic Campus**

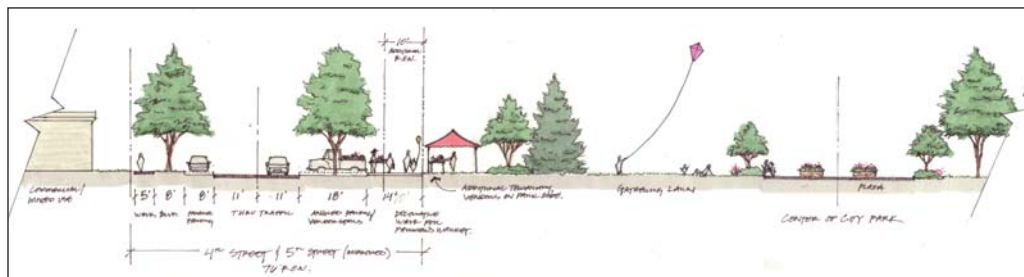


Concept sketches illustrate preliminary ideas for redevelopment of the Civic Campus and Boerboom Park.



**Civic Campus**

The Civic Campus, centrally-located along Central Avenue, should continue to provide a variety of public amenities.

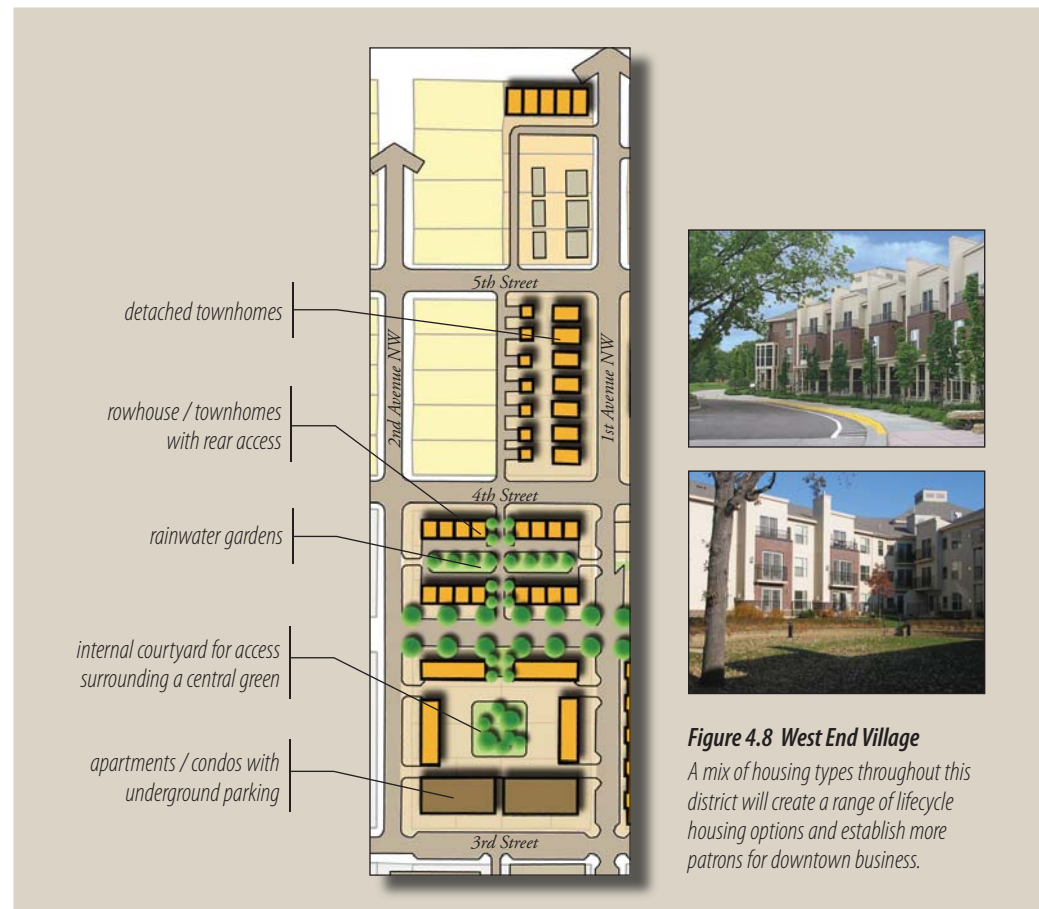


**Civic Streets**  
 Portions of 4th and 5th Streets adjacent to Boerboom Park could have an expanded right-of-way to create a broad pedestrian walkway to serve as an outdoor marketplace and community event area.

## West End Village

Immediately beyond the districts lining Central Avenue, two new housing districts have been identified to support the downtown businesses, create a wider range of housing options within Osseo and transition from the larger scale of commercial and mixed-use buildings to smaller scale single family homes. The West End Village is envisioned to undergo a long-term redevelopment into a mix of townhomes, rowhouses, condominiums and apartment buildings. While residents and community leaders have expressed a strong desire to retain single family residential uses, they have also acknowledged that the area of West End Village is a logical place for a mix of housing greater in density than single family because of its location directly between the high school and downtown core.

More intensive uses, such as Celtic Crossings, would be located near County Road 81 and along 3rd Street, while the remaining blocks focus on owner-occupied townhomes and rowhouses. Currently, flooding problems persist in the area and the inclusion of additional stormwater treatment facilities should be looked at in conjunction with a central “green” spine of open space running north-south through the center of the block. This could be developed into a strong amenity component for the new neighborhood.





## East End Village

The East End Village is a narrow half block stretch of development south of 2nd Street and west of 2nd Avenue NE, to the east of the Downtown Core. This district is a small corner of owner-occupied townhomes and rowhouses designed to function as a transition from the retail and commercial activity along Central Avenue to the single family neighborhood the east. Proposed units face east and north, away from County Road 81/Bottineau Boulevard to the south. Facades of the units would be similar to the front porch aesthetic of existing adjacent homes. Vehicular access to parking for these units is from the rear where green space can also accommodate stormwater treatment and recreation.

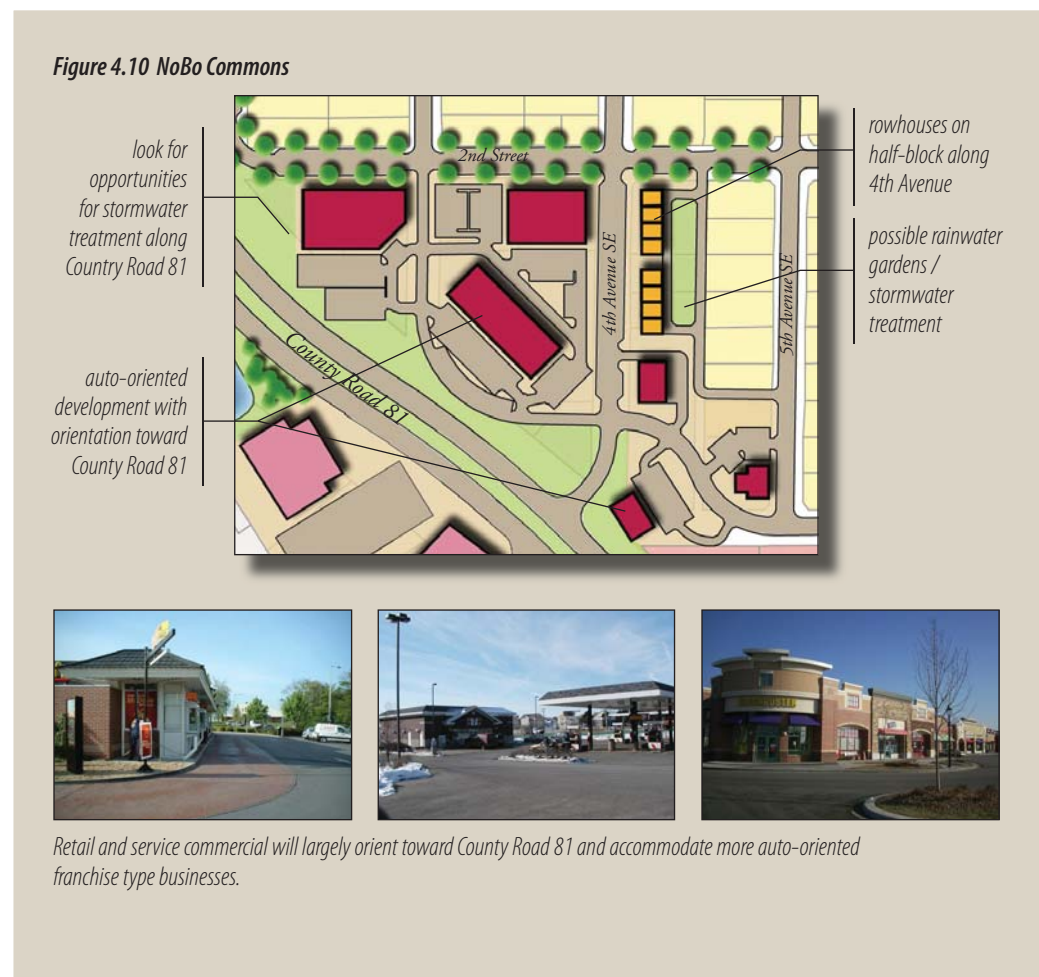
The East End Village surrounds several existing residential properties where compatibility with redevelopment is essential. A heavily landscaped buffer zone is needed to separate existing residential homes from adjacent commercial development to the west.



## NoBo Commons

Beyond the urban fabric of the downtown core and surrounding districts, other distinct areas have been identified as part of the redevelopment master plan. NoBo Commons (referring to its North of Bottineau Boulevard geographic location) is a unique district at the southeastern entry to the community along County Road 81. Here, the master plan shows the possibility for larger box retail and commercial uses to exist. Franchise retailers, restaurants and auto-oriented uses with drive-thru needs will be attracted to this location due to the convenient access and high visibility from County Road 81. To separate this area from the adjacent single family homes, the master plan proposes a strong landscaping buffer along 2nd Street and a half block stretch of owner-occupied rowhouses on west side of 3rd Avenue to mark the edge of the district and reduce the number of cut-through trips on 4th Avenue.

Attention should be paid to the future design of intersections and frontage roads by the county and how this may impact the site planning for this area. Stormwater treatment and corridor landscape plantings should also be identified in collaboration with the County Road 81 design.



## SoBo Tech Center

The narrow strip of land located southwest of County Road 81 and the rail road line presents difficult redevelopment challenges due to access issues and parcel configuration; however, the visibility from County Road 81 and availability of transit make this location ideal for office users.

The master plan proposes the long-term redevelopment of this area into a cutting edge office technology park. Highly articulated architecture and siting of the buildings frame views as people enter and leave Osseo. Parking lots located behind and between buildings reduce visual clutter and provide opportunities for innovative stormwater treatment strategies that will help make this a unique district. Ecological design for streets and parking lots, such as permeable paving, curb cuts and infiltration basins directed into swales, and interconnected stormwater treatment trains along the rail line follow the objectives of the plan for creating a more sustainable community.

Figure 4.11 SoBo Tech Center



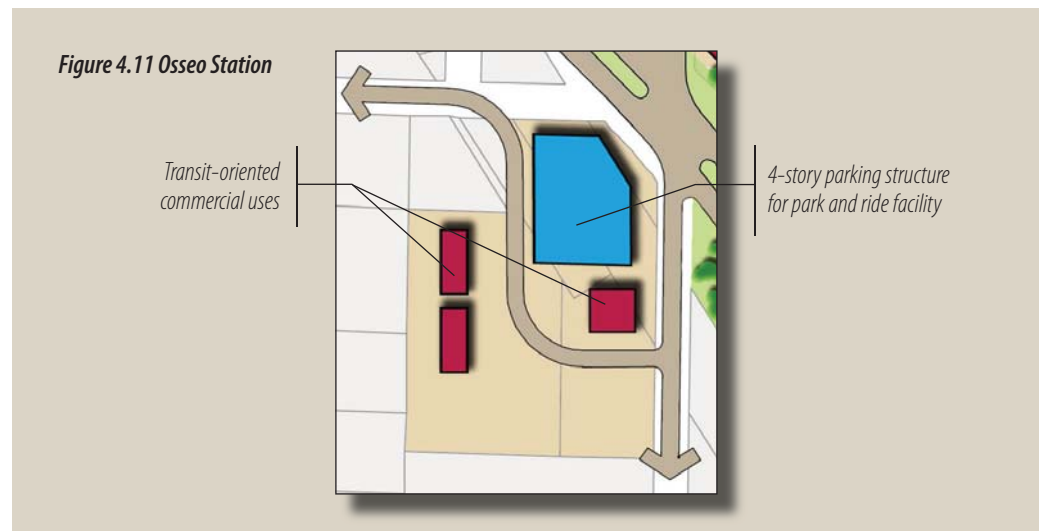
Attention to architectural and ecological design will establish a unique identity for this district.



## Osseo Station

The recent loss of the park and ride facility at the “Devil’s Triangle” location along County Road 81 and Highway 169 has prompted some discussion on the need for a park-and-ride facility to be located in conjunction with the future Bottineau Boulevard Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridor. South of County Road 81 and west of Jefferson Avenue, the master plan suggests the long-term development of a park and ride facility. The facility would house a 4-story parking ramp for roughly 450 +/- vehicles, with supportive commercial mixed use redevelopment consisting of office and retail uses, creating a transit station hub off of County Road 81 and Central/Jefferson Avenue, collectively known as Osseo Station.

Morning commuting south bound traffic to Minneapolis and Saint Paul traveling on 81 could efficiently make a right-hand turn onto Jefferson Avenue and subsequently into the parking facility, catch the bus and head to downtown Minneapolis. Although issues surrounding the realignment of 3rd Street connecting to Maple Grove and the intersection configuration on Jefferson Avenue will need to be explored further with Metro Transit, the location is ideal to create another boost of activity to serve the Downtown Core District.



## Parking

Currently, a perception exists among downtown business owners and community residents that there is a parking shortage throughout the district. All residents of the community have expressed their desire to see a vital downtown for years to come. In order to achieve this goal, it is important to understand the balance between building for parking and building for activity. While parking spaces are not always available immediately adjacent to the desired destination, the surface lots behind the businesses on Central Avenue are rarely full either. So, rather than giving valuable land away to parking, the master plan attempts to identify appropriate activities and uses that will spell success for downtown as well as lay out a strategy for parking that can satisfy anticipated demand without over-building parking spaces.

Downtown Osseo is a compact geographic area; the retail core of the downtown is only four blocks long. This distance equates to one-quarter mile in length, which is typically identified as a 5-minute walk. While the distribution of available parking spaces may not be ideal for each individual business, the ability for patrons to park their cars in rear surface lots and/or ramps and then conveniently walk between multiple destinations within downtown becomes the overall parking strategy of the master plan. Ultimately, it will be the combination of a number of parking initiatives that will assist in alleviating the parking concerns of downtown business owners and community residents. The following are parking goals the master plan identifies for downtown Osseo:

- Establish a retail or commercial district parking approach to improve parking management;
- Maximize the provision and use of on-street parking;
- Create strong pedestrian connections between attractive surface parking lots and storefronts along Central Avenue;
- Explore opportunities to develop public parking structures to provide shared district parking;
- Investigate strategies for reducing the parking quantity required for individual property owners and businesses under current zoning standards.

### On-Street Parking

Downtown customers typically want to park at the front door of their destination, which puts on-street parking spaces at a premium. On-street parking is an essential component to downtown activity and the master plan looks to increase the number of on-street spaces by developing more angled parking options along the side streets for one block off of Central Avenue. The right-of-ways of these streets in downtown are wide and currently portions of 2nd and 3rd Street have one side of the street as angled parking. Portions of 1st Street and Broadway Street east of Central Avenue and 4th and 5th Street along the Civic Campus would be reconfigured as angled parking to increase the number of highly valued on-street parking spaces.

### Off-Street Surface Parking

Downtown parking lots should not be vast areas of pavement, but rather disguised as parking gardens and courtyards. Enhancing pedestrian lighting, planting trees to provide shade for parked cars, and installing perimeter landscaping to screen views of the cars can help reduce the negative visual impact of surface lots. However, for the rear parking lots to be truly effective, they must provide clear connections to storefronts. Clear signage and accessible walkways with an attractive streetscape will help to lead patrons from their cars to Central Avenue. Additionally, business owners should better articulate rear-building entrances to provide a secondary access where appropriate.



#### **Street Parking**

*Side streets leading to Central Avenue provide the best opportunity for additional parking.*



#### **Surface Parking**

*Perimeter landscaping can screen vehicles and reduce the vast expanse of pavement, while signage and clear connections to businesses are critical.*



### Structured Parking

Structured parking fits well with a district-parking approach.

## Structured Parking Ramps

The compact nature of downtown and the financial realities of redevelopment shared by local developers throughout the master planning process suggest that parking structures could become an integral component to the redevelopment strategy. Structured parking would fit well with the district parking approach for downtown by allowing for additional infill along Central Avenue and an overall shared parking approach throughout the district. Locations targeted in the master plan are logical areas for public parking ramps serving the entire downtown. Both locations are on the west side of Central Avenue the first between 4th and 3rd Street and the second between 2nd and 1st Street. Each location could be in conjunction with full-block redevelopments. These structures could effectively serve the needs of the broader public for downtown retail businesses. Adjacent residential and office uses should also be accommodated in structures. All parking ramps would be envisioned as “internal” structures within the block, with buildings lining Central Avenue and 1st Avenue West. The ramps could exist in a variety of fashions but would likely not be more than four levels, with one to two levels underground.

## Streetscape

### Overview

Public investment in the downtown is a critical component to the revitalization effort and new development alone will not bring improvement for the downtown. Inherently, streets are the meeting place of the community and attention to the pedestrian realm is a key aspect to a successful downtown. The master plan identifies varying levels of streetscape improvements on Central Avenue and other key streets throughout the community, with the goals of these enhancements to:

- Create strong pedestrian activity within the downtown district by calming traffic and creating a more comfortable pedestrian-centered zone along Central Avenue and within the immediate surrounding blocks.
- Establish a network of green streets throughout the community to connect civic and institutional uses, single family neighborhoods and downtown and offer a recreational loop for walkers, joggers, bladers and bikes.
- Develop a unique street encompassing the civic campus to provide a range of outdoor gathering opportunities.

### Streetscape Elements *Figure 4.12*



*Pedestrian-scale lighting*

*Awnings create sidewalk “roof”*

*Continuous canopy of street trees*

*On-street parking creates safer pedestrian environment*

*Plenty of seating and site furnishings*



## Streetscape Elements and Vocabulary

Pedestrian-scaled lighting and proper illumination levels of sidewalk and street surfaces are critical to attract people to the area. Currently, Central Avenue has appropriate lighting, but many of the side streets leading to the downtown core are lacking comfortable illumination levels. The addition of lighting on these streets will assist patrons parking in rear lots by providing a safe and secure environment to walk to Central Avenue storefronts. Street trees play a critical role in providing shade for pedestrians and when placed in the boulevard provide an added level of separation between automobiles and pedestrians. However, street trees should be placed in areas on streets where the trees will not conflict with the commercial storefront signage.

Signage is another critical component to streetscape. A logical and attractive way-finding system is vital for downtown businesses and can add tremendous character to the district. Clearly identifiable signage to and from public parking lots is very important. Also, aggregation of street elements, especially regulatory signage, can help keep the appearance of the street clean and free of “signage clutter.” Additional components such as benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, newspaper dispensers and other pedestrian supportive elements can add to an attractive streetscape environment.

## Streetscape Types

Streetscape improvements are described below in terms of their elements and configuration:

- **Central Avenue:** the “Main Street” for the community.
- **Green Streets:** the “Connectors” of the community.
- **City Streets:** the “Small Town Charm” of the community.
- **Civic Campus Streets:** the “Civic Identity” of the community.
- **Pedestrian-Only Street:** the “Garden Plaza” of the community.



### Streetscape

*Attention to design and investment in the streetscape of appropriate roadways helps strengthen community identity and provides a comfortable environment for pedestrians as well as drivers.*

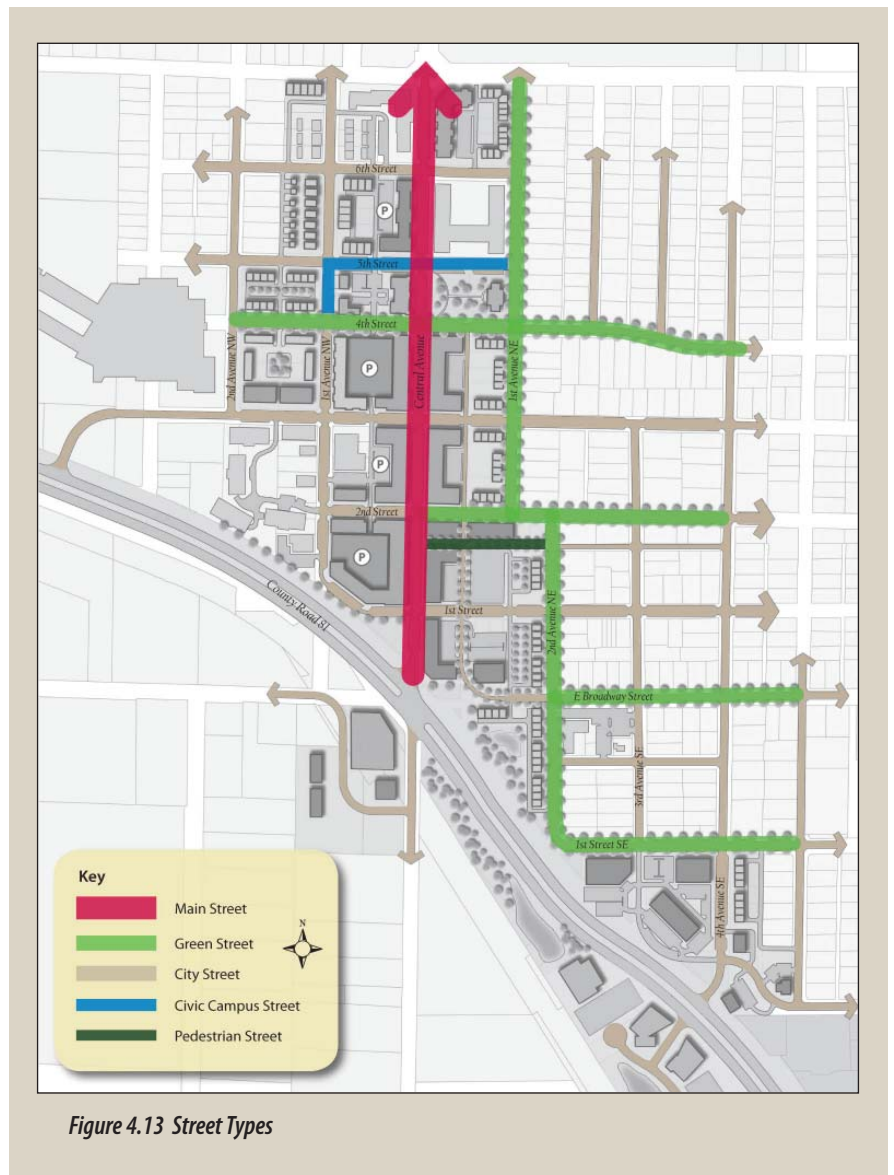
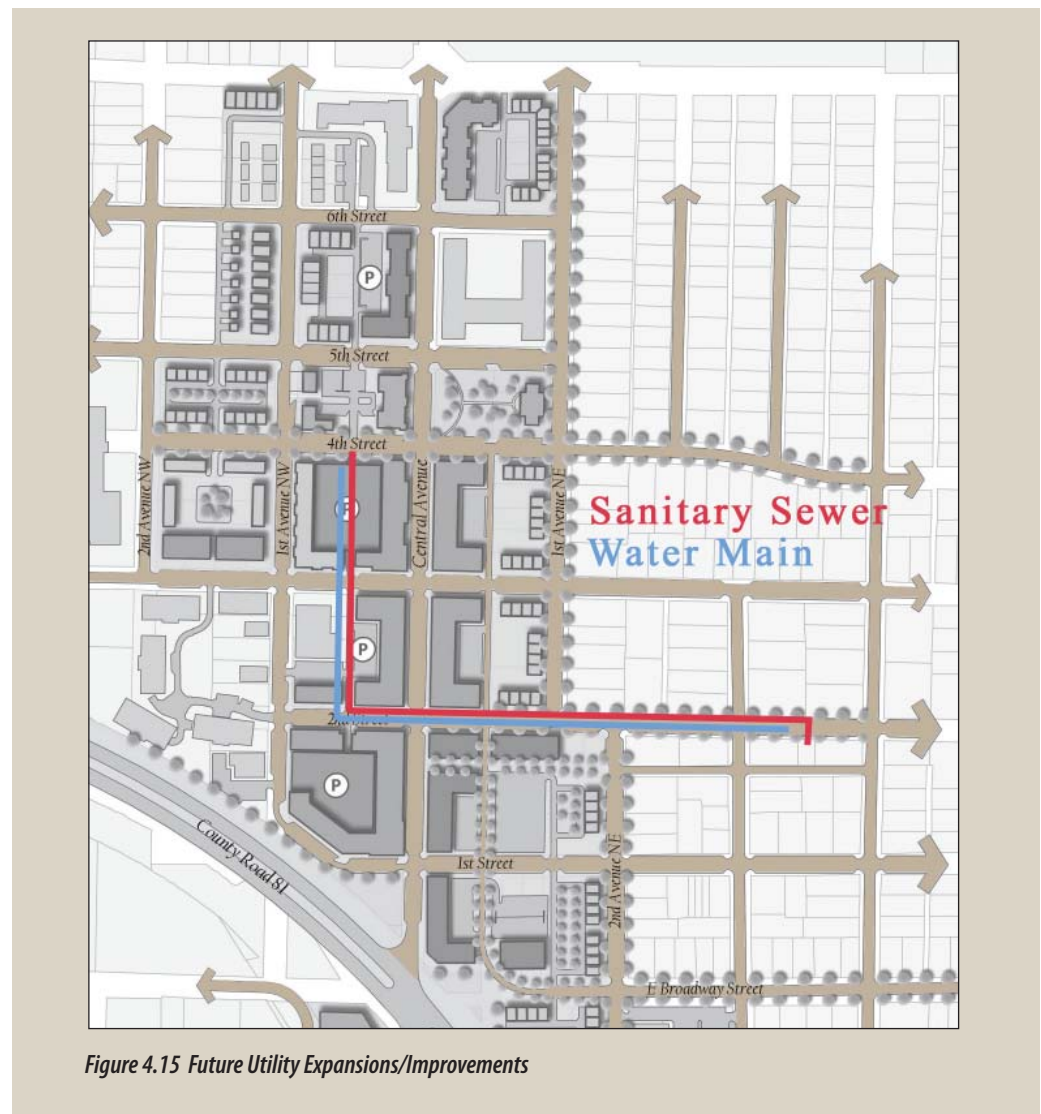


Figure 4.13 Street Types

## Utilities & Infrastructure

Redevelopment in Osseo will not be able to occur without major upgrades to key infrastructure components. Deteriorating and undersized sanitary sewer lines and water mains, coupled with existing flooding problems west of the downtown district are major obstacles for initiating redevelopment in downtown. Community leaders must work with developers to find feasible and logical sequential strategies to allow infrastructure improvements in downtown. Specific infrastructure goals should include:

- Establish areas for regional treatment of stormwater in right-of-way of County Road 81 through coordination with Hennepin County.
- Utilize rainwater gardens and other creative alternative infiltration/treatment options in conjunction with large-scale redevelopment and smaller urban infill projects.
- Coordinate major utility upgrades with redevelopment projects in the downtown.



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## Stormwater Treatment

Today there is an immediate need for stormwater storage north of County Road 81. Flooding problems persist in an area west of Central Avenue along 1st Avenue Northwest between 3rd Street and 5th Street, often times reaching water depths of 2-3 feet and forcing road closures until the water subsides. The flooding is primarily caused by the lack of storage but can also be traced to an undersized ditch south of County Road 81, which frequently overflows and an undersized pipe conveying the water south under County Road 81. Currently, there is no timetable for replacement of the storm sewer line under County Road 81; however, as the county moves forward with the redesign of County Road 81, Osseo should work diligently to find additional areas for storage both north and south of the roadway, potentially through interconnected surface treatment system running parallel to the roadway. While the redesign of the stormwater systems along Country Road 81 may provide some relief to the flooding problem, it's likely that a stormwater ponding system will need to be installed within the affected area. Creating a pond of such size in the center of the downtown core could severely limit a variety of future redevelopment opportunities. The master plan suggests including a stormwater pond for storage, but of a smaller size and to include rainwater gardens and other underground stormwater treatment technologies to control the amount of surface water runoff. Potential funding options for these approaches may be available through the two watershed districts, which currently govern Osseo; in the north, the West Mississippi Watershed District, and to the south the Shingle Creek Watershed District. Also, the green streets identified in this plan present an opportunity for alternative stormwater treatment measures. Curb cuts and infiltration trenches can treat small events and help reduce peak flows during larger storms.

## Sanitary Sewer

With the increase in housing and commercial space in the downtown district, it is likely that a new sanitary sewer line will need to be constructed to serve development in and around downtown. The area of most concern is north of 3rd Street to the west of Central Avenue. One potential option is to look at a new service which runs down the alley west of Central Avenue, crosses Central at 2nd Street, and extends east to the City's lift station. (See Figure 4.15.)

An old sanitary line running through the single-family neighborhood northeast of downtown is another issue. The line is currently at capacity and runs through a series of easements in tight side-yards of homes and would be very difficult to replace in its existing location. Likely, the line will be abandoned after a new line is installed in the right-of-way along County Road 30 on the northern boundary of the city.

## Water

Currently, both of the existing water towers sit empty as the City of Osseo buys water from Maple Grove. Supply for proposed development levels is therefore not a problem;



**Figure 4.14** Area of seasonal flooding concern.



### Stormwater Treatment

Practices like permeable pavers and rainwater gardens work to infiltrate runoff close to the source.



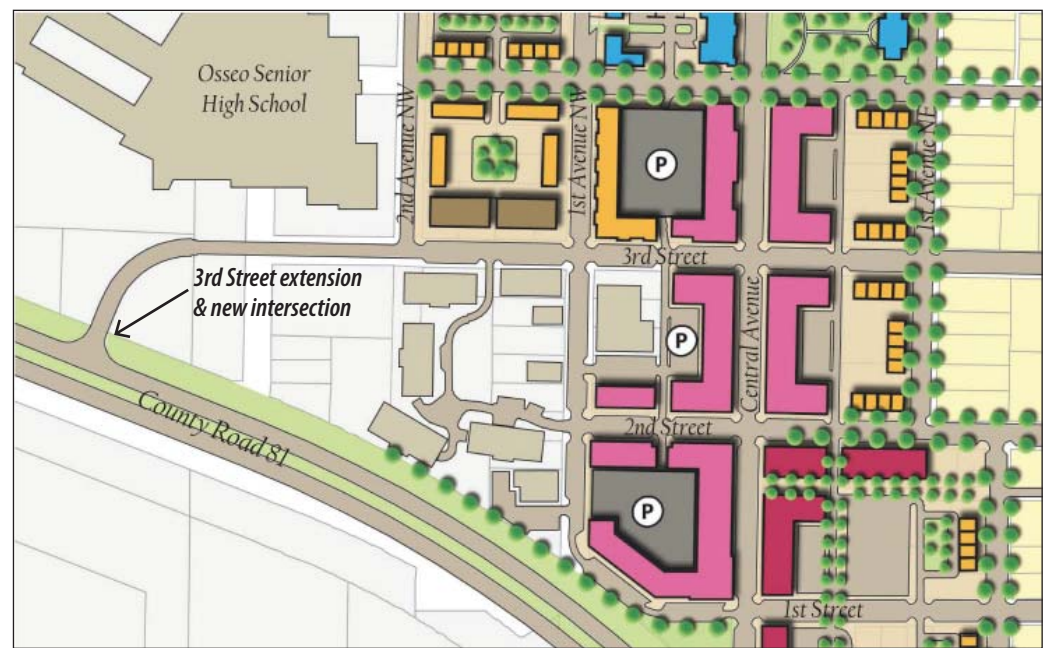
however, the ability to provide enough pressure for fire flows for the new developments is the primary concern. Only a 6-inch water main services the downtown and would not be sufficient for any level of new development. Budget concerns on the future Central/Jefferson Avenue resurfacing project prohibit any upgrade to this water main. One potential option is to install a new 10 or 8 inch water main located in the alley west of Central Avenue. This line could be constructed in conjunction with the sanitary sewer upgrades. This would allow the proposed development west of Central Avenue to draw from the new line and let the existing line service the eastern side of Central Avenue.

## Streets

As of late Spring 2007, Central and Jefferson Avenues will at a minimum be re-surfaced in the near future. The City should explore the critical dimensions of the side streets reaching east and west of Central Avenue for potential to expand the on-street parking by introducing more areas of diagonal parking. New striping, resurfacing and minor curb adjustment could be done in conjunction with this effort.

Additionally, as the conditions of the identified green streets begin to deteriorate over time, the city should investigate ways to incorporate boulevard tree plantings, striping for bike lanes and pedestrian-scaled street lighting for these important community connector streets.

One potential improvement project could result from the extension of 3rd Street to the west, beyond the High School baseball field and ultimately connect to County Road 81 at



**Figure 4.16 Street Extension** An extension of 3rd Street to intersect with County Road 81 will provide better connection to Maple Grove and improve traffic access to the high school.

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the intersection of 3rd Street. This extension provides a connection to Maple Grove and a secondary access point serving traffic to the High School.

## Downtown Storefronts & Buildings

Any new buildings or façade improvements to existing structures will need to reflect their surrounding environments address the relationship to the neighboring structures in the form and scale of the building and utilize the proper materials of traditional downtown commercial structures. Today, a few buildings in the downtown have significance either through the history or character of the buildings, such as the old implement building on the southeast corner of 4th and Central Avenue. The distinct one-story structure stands out along Central Avenue and occupies a great retail use for downtown. However, other buildings in the downtown are also in need of attention. These structures, whether they undergo façade improvements or are redeveloped, should have the similar organization in their position along Central Avenue and architectural character.

## Design Guidelines

Design guidelines create a framework for creating new structures or enhancing older buildings in downtown. They provide direction, but allow for the kind of individual expression needed for a lively downtown experience. Most importantly, they recognize that use and location are important determinants in creating buildings appropriate to downtown. The Architectural Design Guidelines for Osseo Business Districts from Spring 2000 provide a wealth of information and a great foundation for guiding the form and style of new development and appropriate improvements to existing buildings. Good design cannot be specifically legislated, but it should not be left to chance either. The master plan does not provide an entirely new set of design guidelines, but instead offers a set of principles to help refine and enhance the existing guidelines. These enhancements help describe a desired character of the Downtown Core district with a stronger relationship to the surrounding districts. The following is a list of refinements to the existing Osseo Business District Architectural Design Guidelines.

## Central Avenue Buildings

- Architectural details should engage pedestrians with appropriate “Main Street” design principles: proper materials, glass storefronts, and articulated entries.
- Building should be placed at the back of the sidewalk to ensure a constant facade in the retail core.
- Building facades should be scaled and oriented for pedestrians and vehicles that use the street.
- New buildings should be placed, scaled and oriented on a site so that they are harmonious with existing structures that may remain.
- Primary retail entries should be oriented toward Central Avenue, although secondary entries off of side streets or in the rear of the buildings are not discouraged.



*Example storefronts*



*Design Guidelines will help build a consistent design character for Osseo.*

- Retail uses should “spill onto” the sidewalk and should provide awnings and canopies that offer shelter from extreme elements.
- Commercial uses should have “active” storefronts with significant areas of transparent glass at street level. Facades should be active and avoid broad expanses of solid walls.
- The upper front façade of the building is encouraged to be set back by 8-16 feet allowing for a terrace overlooking the street. The terrace should function as an aesthetic outdoor living space or could serve as a rooftop garden that infiltrates stormwater.

### **Buildings Beyond Central Avenue**

- Buildings off of Central Avenue should be setback with a similar residential setback to buildings across the street.
- Variation in façade footprint (setting some façade areas back from the right-of-way) is encouraged within a range of up to 20% of the frontage length and up to 12 feet back from the right-of-way.
- Residential units on the first level should be set above the street elevation by 3-5 feet. This contributes to the sense of security and the transition from public to private space as one approaches the building.
- Residential facades should be set back from the right-of-way 10’ for stacked residential and 20’ for attached residential uses. Setback areas should be functional terrace and/or garden spaces that serve the first level living units. Walk-up entries should be canopied and have individual addresses.
- Front porches and real “usable” balconies are encouraged as part of stacked multi-family housing development.

### **Sustainable Design**

The notion of sustainable development and sustainable design revolves around meeting today’s needs and, through our decisions and the implementation of our needs, ensures that future generations can build on what we’ve done and can continue to do the same. Sustainability involves integrating social, economic and environmental considerations and focuses on the long term solutions which address the interrelationships between human and natural systems. Throughout the ongoing redevelopment effort, choosing the most sustainable approach implies that actions we take today will not degrade the quality of life in our communities or the natural systems that support them.

The master plan envisions sustainable design practices, integrated throughout all districts of the master plan, woven into streetscape public realm improvements, utility installations, upgrades and new building construction. Rooted in sustainability and environmental leadership, these principles are increasingly regarded as best management practices worthy of adoption throughout the country. In the redevelopment master plan the character of each of these principles should take direction from the Vision and Guiding principles. The



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following are principles, adapted from Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) which the master plan suggests implementing for future redevelopment:

- Maintain stormwater discharge rates, such that post project development 2 year 24 hour peak discharge volume does not exceed the pre-project development.
- Implement a stormwater management plan that results in a 0% increase (if not a decrease) in the rate and quantity of post-project development stormwater runoff when compared with pre-project rates and quantities
- Implement a stormwater management plan that captures 90% of the average annual rainfall using acceptable best management practices (BMPs)
- Require enhanced storm water management or low impact development (LID) techniques to manage the first inch of runoff from private sites, such as:
  - Shallow infiltration basins adjacent to impervious areas;
  - Vegetated (i.e. green) roofs or portions of a roof;
  - Bioretention areas and rainwater gardens throughout residential and commercial areas;
  - Grassed filter strips and channels along roads and parking lot areas with ribbon curbs or curb-cuts to allow overland flow to these areas;
  - Mechanical sediment and litter control devices (e.g. sump manholes, vortex separators, etc.) in the storm sewer systems through retrofit or new installations;
  - Porous or permeable paving installations.

The principles outlined here only brush the surface of sustainable development and environmentally friendly design. Today, many professionals including developers, architects, landscape architects, engineers and planners are familiar with the resources that guide sustainable development. The Minnesota sustainable Design Guide published by the University of Minnesota College of Design and the standards through the US Green Building council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program can help aid communities by guiding the creation of municipal programs that facilitate the community-wide application of sustainable design practices. These sources can be accessed through the following web sites:

[www.sustainabledesignguide.umn.edu](http://www.sustainabledesignguide.umn.edu)

[www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)



*Green roofs are an example of sustainable design.*



*Green streets better accommodate stormwater management techniques, such as curb-cuts to infiltration basins and rainwater gardens.*

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