



Memorandum

To: Megan Pierce, Assistant to the Village Manager – Village of Winnetka
Michael D’Onofrio, Community Development Director – Village of Winnetka
From: Michael Blue, FAICP – Principal, Teska Associates
Erin Cigliano – Senior Associate / New Media Specialist, Teska Associates
Date: April 26, 2016
RE: **Downtown Master Plan: April 25th Work Group & Steering Committee Meeting Notes - DRAFT**

Design Character Work Group Notes – Principal Discussion Points

- 1) Urban design and wayfinding elements are needed for the business districts and should be recommended by the plan, but existing and future destinations that urban design will complement are critical as well.
- 2) Consider the big picture, not just specific sites. Context is important.
- 3) A cohesive effort is needed for urban design elements to reflect a common identity across the business districts.
- 4) The value of urban design elements is found in the “big picture” of the plan and adds to the community, even though it may not be possible to identify specifically or show a dollar for dollar return.

Steering Committee Notes – Principal Discussion Points

- Urban Design elements have value but are only a part of the plan, must be tied to and supportive of other actions.
- There should be a consistent design in the Village among design elements, but a recognition of the unique character to indicate the differing districts. A common brand / identity will help to attract residents and visitors from one part of town to another.
- Attractive urban design elements are important for Winnetka residents’ enjoyment of districts and to attract nonresidents as potential shoppers and diners.
- Design elements should be used to draw people between the east and west side of Green Bay Road and the RR tracks.
- The existing plan for new streetscape (2008) was not implemented due to concerns over cost and the economic decline. However, the plan’s direction and design are sound, and the streetscape plan need not be reinvented. Since the Village has a streetscape plan to work from, the Downtown Master Plan should revisit how it can to be implemented.
- The three business districts (Elm Street, Hubbard Woods, and Indian Hill) are not all equal in their size and role in the Village. The extent of streetscape (and expenditures) in each should reflect existing characteristics and usefulness of urban design enhancements. Elm Street and Hubbard Woods are more viable for business and visited by more people, so they should see



more energy applied related to urban design elements. The key aspects of Indian Hill are as a gateway to the Village and focal point related to New Trier.

- Urban design elements can be used to reinforce the image of Winnetka and the business districts to residents and visitors – this has great value.
- Focus on elements that make Winnetka “strollable”. They should help to promote wandering and staying in the districts.
- Wayfinding signage is important to help visitors know about business districts (especially those driving down Green Bay Road through the Elm Street District who may not know what is directly east and west of them). It also sets a tone for what people feel and think when they come to Winnetka.
- Signs can also help direct visitors to specific items – especially parking. But, it is important that Downtown be more than a repository for signs.
- Downtown (and the other districts) should not become cluttered with wayfinding or other signs. Ok for specific needs (vehicular, gateway, parking, & bike) but should be limited so as not to impact character of areas. Should consolidate messages on signs and use simple kiosks or directories to help people find their way around.
- A regular schedule of special events can support districts and businesses. Larger events that may close a street are ok now and again, but smaller regular events to draw people are important (sidewalk sale, concerts, farmers’ markets, etc.). This speaks to the need for a place to hold such events.
- Gateways and wayfinding signs should be considered in light of balancing Winnetka being for residents and attracting visitors. Consider needs of each in designing signs and defining the locations (residents don’t require signs).

Steering Committee Urban Design Priority Exercise

Exercise asked participants to use only three (3) votes each for High, Medium and Low to prioritize. This structure served to focus the discussion and provide a sense of the importance of each element (votes are not a definitive indication of element priorities).

Element	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Bikes – <u>must</u> be a part of the districts based on all previous discussions. Need to think in terms of multiple types of users 1) children going to school etc, 2) residents on convenience & recreation trips and 3) regional bikers passing through town. Consider that facilities must consider both access around town and places people are going.	4	3	3
Gateways - Important for visitors and reflecting character of the Village. Good for letting people know they have arrived someplace special. Also important for those on bikes or Metra.	7	2	3
Landscape – need to consider how it can be attractive year round.	8	5	-
Wayfinding – implementation relates to Gateways. Can be a low cost items with limited number of signs (part of why scored as low	3	3	6



priority. Do not want to include so many signs as to create sign clutter – be focused in use. Can be incorporated with new developments in some locations			
Lighting – Needed for business and important for safety.	5	4	3
Outdoor Dining – can be costly to implement for owners and is a private business decision. should not retrofit (widen) existing sidewalks to accommodate – but can work in created bump outs or ped plazas. Important to many residents and visitors.	2	3	7
Parking – close by parking is useful for families with little children.	6	6	-
Pedestrian Enhancements	8	3	1
Street Furniture	1	3	8