



# Chapter 8

## Corridor Character: Land Use & Transportation

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**Introduction**

A road is more than simply a route between two destinations. Roads, thoroughfares, corridors, and related facilities are all significant components of a community’s landscape and public realm. Integrating comprehensive transportation planning with land use and environmental planning is critical in creating livable and sustainable communities. The alignment, scale, and character of a transportation thoroughfare help define a community’s urban context, development patterns, and sense of place. Thoughtful design, construction, and management of streets and highways that enhance interconnected transportation options with adjacent land uses create a corridor character that becomes a community focal point and contributes to an area’s quality of life.

This chapter connects the *Comprehensive Plan Update’s* “Land Use” and “Mobility: Existing & Planned Network” chapters. The “Land Use” chapter documents Elkhart’s existing land use pattern and outlines how the community should grow, develop, and redevelop in the future. The “Mobility” chapter includes a description of the City’s functional classification system, the efforts of Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG), and Elkhart’s current and future pedestrian, bicycle, vehicular, air, rail, and water transportation systems. Elkhart’s image is perceived along its major thoroughfares, minor arterials, and neighborhood streets. It is understood that Elkhart should have a well-connected, easily accessible transportation network that provides safe, comfortable, logical, and efficient access, increases mobility options for all users and abilities, and supports economic vitality along with environmental quality. All of these components comprise the complementary relationship between transportation and land use planning, where infrastructure capacity is matched with current and future land uses. Well-managed transportation corridors meet the community’s needs for mobility while balancing other environmental considerations.



Downtown Elkhart

**Current Land Use & Mobility Description**

Industry and low density residential areas comprise the majority of Elkhart’s land use. Industrial areas are generally located toward the edges of the City’s irregular boundaries and along rail lines. Residential neighborhoods generally surround the City’s core and line the north and south banks of the St. Joseph River. The transportation corridors leading to these areas assume the character and condition of their respective, adjacent land uses and, in the less urban and more suburban or rural areas, typically accommodate only vehicular traffic.

A future land use framework and a new land use category to the City of Elkhart, mixed use development were introduced in Chapter Four, Land Use. The purpose of this new category is to



Existing pedestrian amenities

encourage redevelopment on underutilized or vacant commercial or industrial land. New mixed land uses are primarily located along key transportation corridors and downtown. Mixed use promotes a combination of situations including several types of uses within one structure or a mix of uses on a parcel or parcels where commercial, office, residential, institutional, and parks and open space are master planned as a coordinated development. To allow for the introduction of the mixed use category, the future land use framework reduces the industrial land use classification footprint along key transportation corridors.

The identification of a corridor’s character supports the future land use framework, the new mixed use category, the reduction of the City’s industrial land use inventory, reinvestment efforts directed downtown, and minimal annexation until the existing City core is strengthened.

There were five main findings from the research conducted in the Mobility Chapter, Chapter Five. These findings are:

- **Multiple Jurisdictions:** Elkhart’s roadways are regulated by the City, MACOG, and INDOT. Each organization has a schedule for when to carry out improvement projects, which can result in multiple construction periods and designs for one location. Coordination of new and upcoming improvement projects should be coordinated between agencies to reduce any negative impacts.
- **Transit:** The City has a fixed-route bus system that serves all corners of Elkhart’s jurisdiction. The system also links to TRANSPO in South Bend and the South Bend Regional Airport, where the South Shore Line also has a station. These links should be maintained with as little headway, the time between busses, as possible.
- **Bike and Pedestrian:** Elkhart has developed an extensive network of bike and pedestrian facilities. These facilities should continue to be implemented, connected, and expanded.
- **Airports:** Air travel is available for both private, general aviation planes as well as for commercial air travel. The municipal airport’s events, such as the Warbird Fly-in should continue to be supported.
- **Rail:** The City has an extensive rail network that bisects Elkhart from East to West. The City must maintain access between the two halves of Elkhart when long trains block at-grade crossings.

**Overall Concept**

To help illustrate the role and function of a corridor’s character in a community, relevant information was presented to and solicited from the citizens of Elkhart during this planning process’ public open houses in 2010 and 2011. In the open house presentations, the reciprocal relationship between land use and transportation planning was explained along with the connection to a community’s perceived quality of life. The perceived quality life is particularly important when recruiting new investment to the City and in sustaining the existing investment and residential base.

The purpose of identifying the character or “personality” for the major and minor arterials in the City is to assign an image to these corridors that will lead to technical recommendations pertaining to future land use development or redevelopment and transportation policy. These character classifications will assist the City, property owners, and developers in understanding the desired development aesthetic within the City of Elkhart. The following “Corridor Character Framework” diagram is a product of public open house and Steering Committee member input. Citizens and committee members were asked how they view or experience, from a visual and functional standpoint, the City’s major and minor arterials using the following five descriptions:



*A neighborhood street in Elkhart*

- **Commuter Route.** Road or street with primary access to destinations or other major transportation routes, characterized by mixed land uses.
- **Neighborhood Link.** Local street primarily serving local users, adjacent residential land uses.
- **Scenic Drive.** Attractive road or street with adjacent natural features, extensive landscaping, or aesthetic views.
- **Commercial Corridor.** Road or street characterized primarily by a concentration and distribution of retail/commercial uses.
- **Industrial Corridor.** Road or street characterized primarily by industrial uses and substantial truck traffic.

**Corridor Character Framework**

Purpose:

Use identified character or “personalities” for the City’s major and minor arterials to guide future corridor design and development of public and private spaces.



Bridges linking Elkhart's automotive and pedestrian corridors

Framework Highlights:

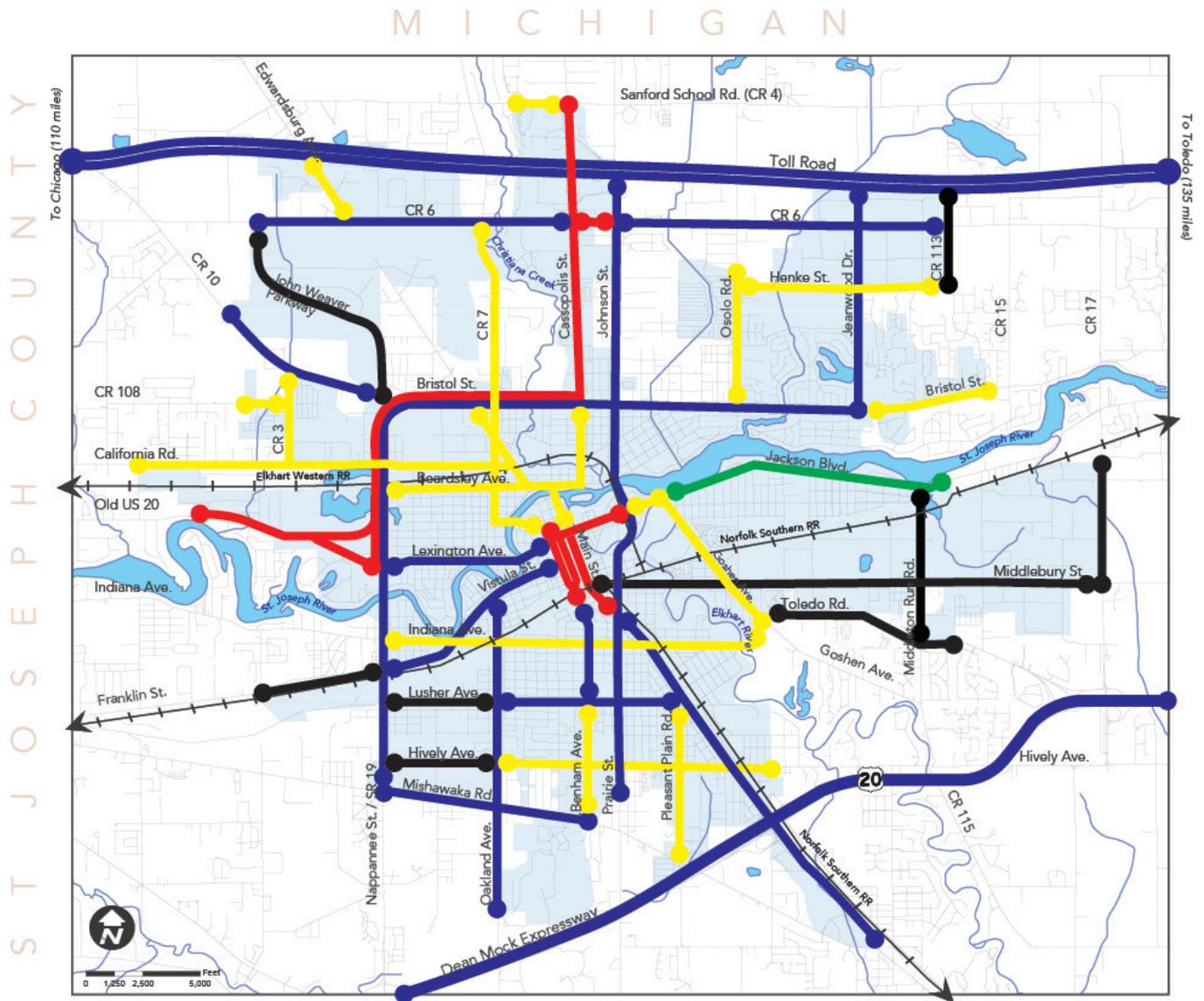
- Five corridor character types occur throughout the City defined by adjacent land uses and transportation systems.
- Application of corridor character types reflects the interdependent and reciprocal relationship between land uses and adjacent transportation systems.
- Corridor character definition does not alter the roadway's functional classification.
- One street may traverse through several corridor character types with the change of context and adjacent land uses.
- Recommended design features enhance the transportation efficiency and qualitative experience along the corridors.
- Corridors in an urban or suburban context feature dedicated facilities and amenities, where appropriate, for pedestrians and bicyclists.

**Corridor Character Application & Use**

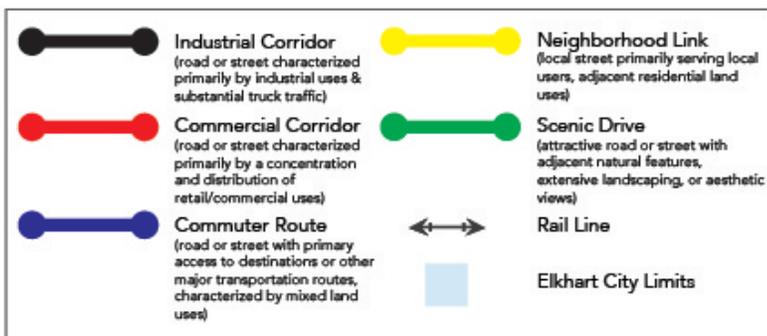
The framework emphasizes five corridor character types that occur throughout the City of Elkhart. Application of these corridor types reflects both the existing as well as the preferred direction of the corridor in terms of desired future land use, development, or redevelopment and transportation options. The chart on the following page outlines how the application of the corridor personality may guide the development direction of the corridors' public and private spaces. This chart is the basis for recommendations pertaining to land use and transportation decisions and outlines possible, likely, and/or optimal design considerations.

It is important to note that the assigned corridor character, and subsequent recommendations, does not attempt to alter the roadway's functional classification. Rather, this application of desired design and features serves to enhance the efficiency and qualitative experience along the corridor in a thoughtful, inclusive, and comprehensive way. This application considers organized land use patterns, sense of place, site access, safe, comfortable, and balanced transportation options, and economic development opportunities in the respective designations.

The chart defines each of the five designated corridor types and the application of the future land use, environment and design, mobility, and economic development attributes. Application of these attributes considers the corridor's context first – rural, suburban, or urban. Relevance of environment and design treatments, mobility options, and economic development potential



Key





Elkhart's Civic Plaza and adjoining commercial area

is determined by the corridor's environment and current and future land uses. Environment and design treatments involve corridor medians, access control, curbs, streetscape amenities, landscape and lighting, whether the corridor is a gateway into the City, and if design guidelines are applicable now or in the future. Mobility considers if a corridor is likely to host transit in the future, how and where bicycle and pedestrian facilities should be incorporated, and if on-street parking is appropriate. Ultimately, improving Elkhart's corridors is a tool for area economic development efforts in that land uses will be organized, transportation facilities will be comprehensive and consistent, and aesthetics and urban design will complement the environment and adjacent uses. These improvements are intended to increase the appeal and establish the corridor's sense of place within the Elkhart community. New and continued economic investment is more likely to occur in areas that demonstrate enduring investment by both the public and private sectors.

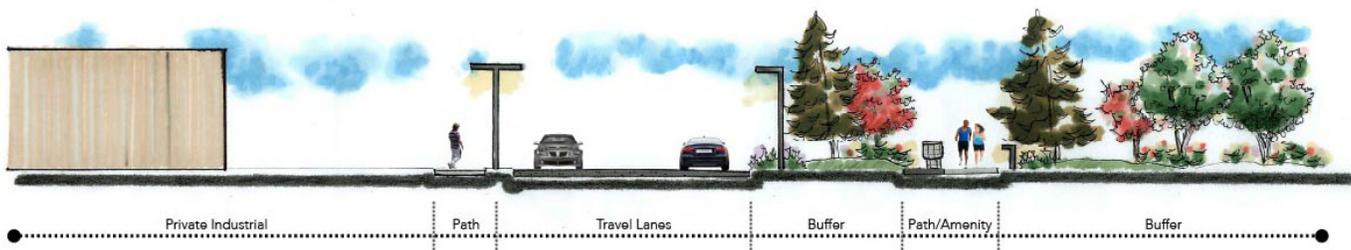
The illustrations below demonstrate how the public and private space along the identified corridor types could be organized to maximize the land use and transportation reciprocal relationships and associated facilities. Each example provides for dedicated travel lanes for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians and incorporates streetscape amenities, natural features, and landscape design. The intent of these examples is to represent a possible option and should not be considered the sole design solution for the respective corridor classification. Specific design standards are described in the Department of Public Works' "Standard Construction Specifications" (1998).

**Industrial Corridors** are characterized primarily by industrial land uses, such as light or heavy manufacturing, warehouse, production, logistics and distribution, or those uses that require a large amount of area for outdoor operations or storage. These corridors also accommodate a significant amount of truck traffic. Desired future land uses along these corridors include clean industry with enclosed/screened storage with appropriate buffering between uses and from the public right-of-way. A dedicated bicycle and pedestrian facility, or facilities, should be incorporated along the roadway with physical separation from the parallel vehicle travel lanes. Industrial Corridors offer prime economic development and redevelopment opportunities for the City and Elkhart County.

**Commercial Corridors** are characterized primarily by a concentration and distribution of retail and commercial uses. These corridors are thoroughfares that, in most cases, include neighborhood commercial nodes, regional shopping destinations, and/or lead to downtown Elkhart. Neighborhood nodes are typically located at intersections of collector roads that lead into

CORRIDOR TYPE & DEFINITION	CONTEXT CONTINUUM	LAND USE	ENVIRONMENT & DESIGN							MOBILITY			ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		
			Gateway	Median	Access Control	Curbed	Streetscape Amenities	Landscape & Lighting	Design Guidelines	Future Transit Accommodation	Bicycle & Pedestrian Accommodation	On-Street Parking	Adjacent Commercial District or Node	New Commercial Investment Potential	
<b>Industrial Corridor</b> Road or street characterized primarily by a concentration and distribution of industrial uses and substantial truck traffic.	Rural	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Suburban	Yes, at City limits and key intersections	Desired	Yes, coupled with median	Possible	Possible, in retail/commercial areas	Yes	Yes, in overlay districts & at gateways, low impact development (LD) preferred	Yes	Dedicated bicycle & pedestrian facilities & amenities	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Urban	Yes, into districts and at key intersections	No	Yes, reduced conflict points with pedestrians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, in overlay districts & at gateways, low impact development (LD) preferred	Yes	Dedicated bicycle & pedestrian facilities & amenities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Commercial Corridor</b> Road or street characterized primarily by a concentration and distribution of retail/commercial uses.	Rural	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Suburban	Yes, at City limits and key intersections	Desired	Yes, coupled with median	Possible	Yes, in retail/commercial & mixed-use areas	Yes	Yes, in overlay districts & at gateways, low impact development (LD) preferred	Yes	Dedicated bicycle & pedestrian facilities & amenities	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Urban	Yes, into districts and at key intersections	No	Yes, reduced conflict points with pedestrians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, in overlay districts & at gateways, low impact development (LD) preferred	Yes	Dedicated bicycle & pedestrian facilities & amenities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Commuter Route</b> Road or street with primary access to destinations or other major transportation routes, characterized by mixed land uses.	Rural	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
	Suburban	Yes, at City limits and key intersections	Possible	Yes, coupled with median	Possible	Possible, in retail/commercial areas	Yes	Yes, in overlay districts & at gateways, low impact development (LD) preferred	Yes	Dedicated bicycle & pedestrian facilities & amenities	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Urban	Yes, into districts and at key intersections	No	Yes, reduced conflict points with pedestrians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, in overlay districts & at gateways, low impact development (LD) preferred	Yes	Dedicated bicycle & pedestrian facilities & amenities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Neighborhood Link</b> Local street primarily serving local users, adjacent residential land uses.	Rural	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
	Suburban	Yes, at City limits and key intersections	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes, in overlay districts & at gateways, low impact development (LD) preferred	No	Dedicated bicycle & pedestrian facilities & amenities	Possible, in residential areas with low traffic volumes	Possible, at neighborhood activity centers	Yes, at neighborhood activity centers	Yes	Yes
	Urban	Yes, into districts and at key intersections	No	Yes, reduced conflict points with pedestrians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, in overlay districts & at gateways, low impact development (LD) preferred	No	Dedicated bicycle & pedestrian facilities & amenities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Scenic Drive</b> Attractive road or street with adjacent natural features, extensive landscaping or aesthetic views.	Rural	Yes, natural features	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Possible	Signed bicycle route or shared road	No	No
	Suburban	Yes, natural features	Desired	Not formal though adjacent development should be limited	No	No	No	Restricted new development, all new development should complement existing surrounding structures & landscape, low impact development (LD) preferred	Possible	Dedicated bicycle & pedestrian facilities & amenities	No	No	No	No	No
	Urban	Yes, natural features	No	Yes, reduced conflict points with pedestrians	Yes	Yes, minimal, in character with natural features	Yes, minimal, in character with natural features	Restricted new development, all new development should complement existing surrounding structures & landscape, low impact development (LD) preferred	Yes	Dedicated bicycle & pedestrian facilities & amenities	Possible	Possible, at neighborhood activity centers	Yes, at neighborhood activity centers	Yes	Yes

residential neighborhoods. Retail at these nodes includes smaller scale establishments, such as convenience stores or personal services that serve the immediate residential population. Regional shopping destinations attract a customer base from outside the immediate area, including customers from neighboring jurisdictions and passersby. Regional shopping includes big box retailers, chain restaurants, grocery stores, and complementary-scaled development. Corridors that feature neighborhood or regional-scale retail and commercial establishments should be accessible by multiple modes of transportation, including transit, bicycles, and pedestrians. Access control with medians and consolidated driveways is desired, as are streetscape amenities, a consistent landscape, and appropriately scaled lighting. A commercial corridor also identified as a community gateway should entail a higher level of design criteria. Downtown is the historic retail, employment, and cultural center of the Elkhart community. Streets and roads that lead into downtown are important to the City’s history and current sense of place. Downtown streets should feature dedicated pedestrian space, such as sidewalks, activity space for outdoor dining and special events, streetscape amenities, such as plantings, benches, bicycle parking, and pedestrian-scaled lighting, and on-street parking, where appropriate. Like Industrial Corridors, Commercial Corridors offer prime economic development and redevelopment opportunities for the City and Elkhart County.



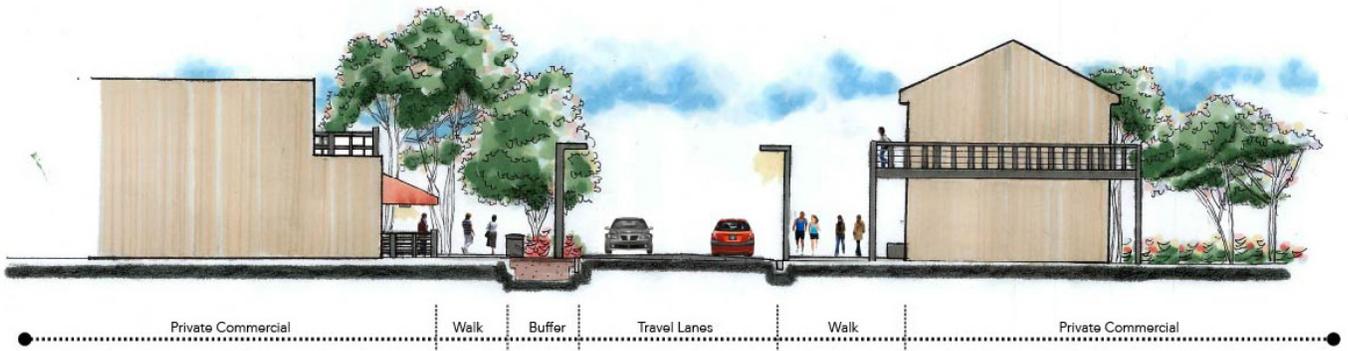
Industrial Corridor example illustrating dedicated bicycle/pedestrian facilities and green buffers protecting bicyclists and pedestrians from adjacent industrial uses and moving vehicles.

**Commuter Routes** are characterized by a mix of land uses and have direct, primary access to destinations and other major transportation routes. These are the streets and roads that a majority of residents take to work. As such, these corridors should offer commuting opportunities via multiple modes of transportation, including transit, bicycle, walking, and private automobile. Access control with medians and consolidated driveways is desired to reduce potential conflicts with pedestrians and bicyclists.

**Neighborhood Links** are local streets primarily serving local residents and adjacent neighborhoods. These streets are typically low volume and low speed and should accommodate bicycle and pedestrian traffic along with private automobile traffic. These streets may lead to or feature neighborhood commercial nodes. In these cases, access control, streetscape amenities, appropriately

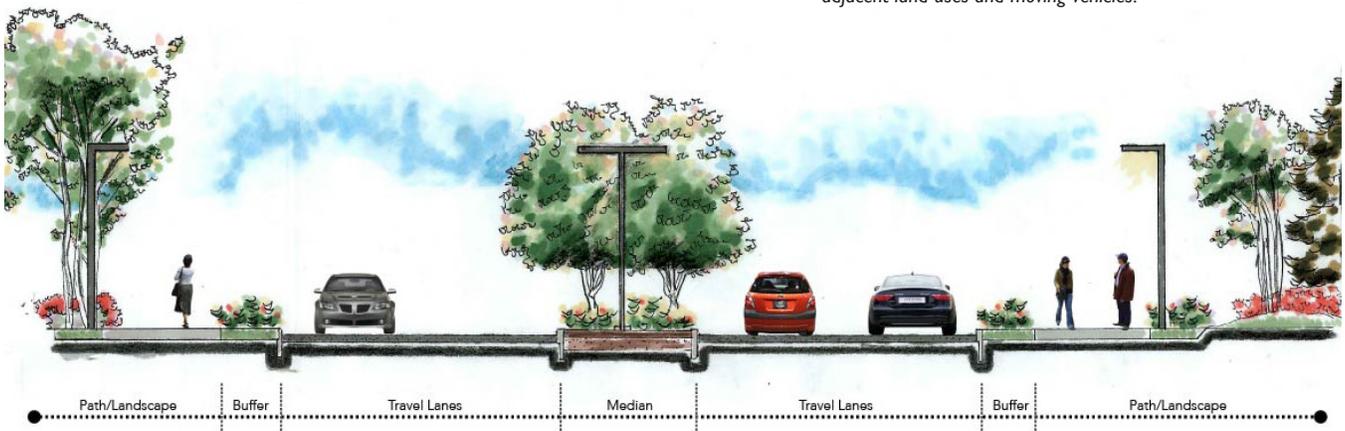
scaled and placed landscape and lighting, and on-street parking opportunities should be considered.

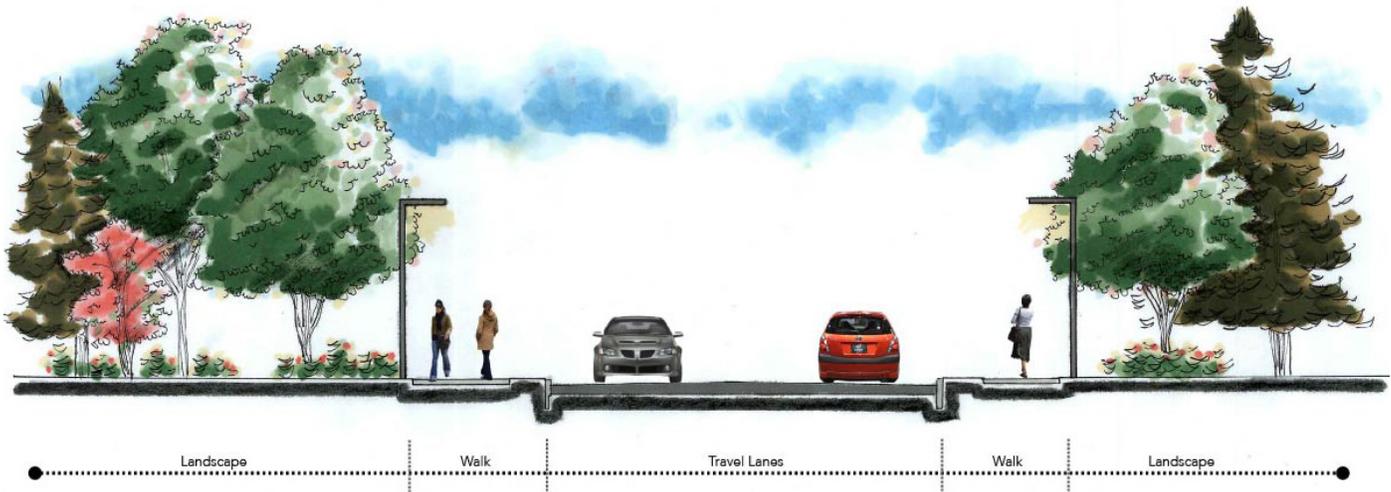
**Scenic Drives** are attractive streets or roads with adjacent natural features, extensive landscaping, or aesthetic views. Scenic Drives may lead to or be adjacent to recreational areas, parks, or natural areas. As such, the Scenic Drive transportation system should include dedicated bicycle and pedestrian facilities offering opportunity to travel to/from recreational destinations by bike or foot. In keeping with the park-like or natural setting, new development along these corridors should be limited. Any new development should complement existing, surrounding structures and landscape; low impact development (LID) is preferred.



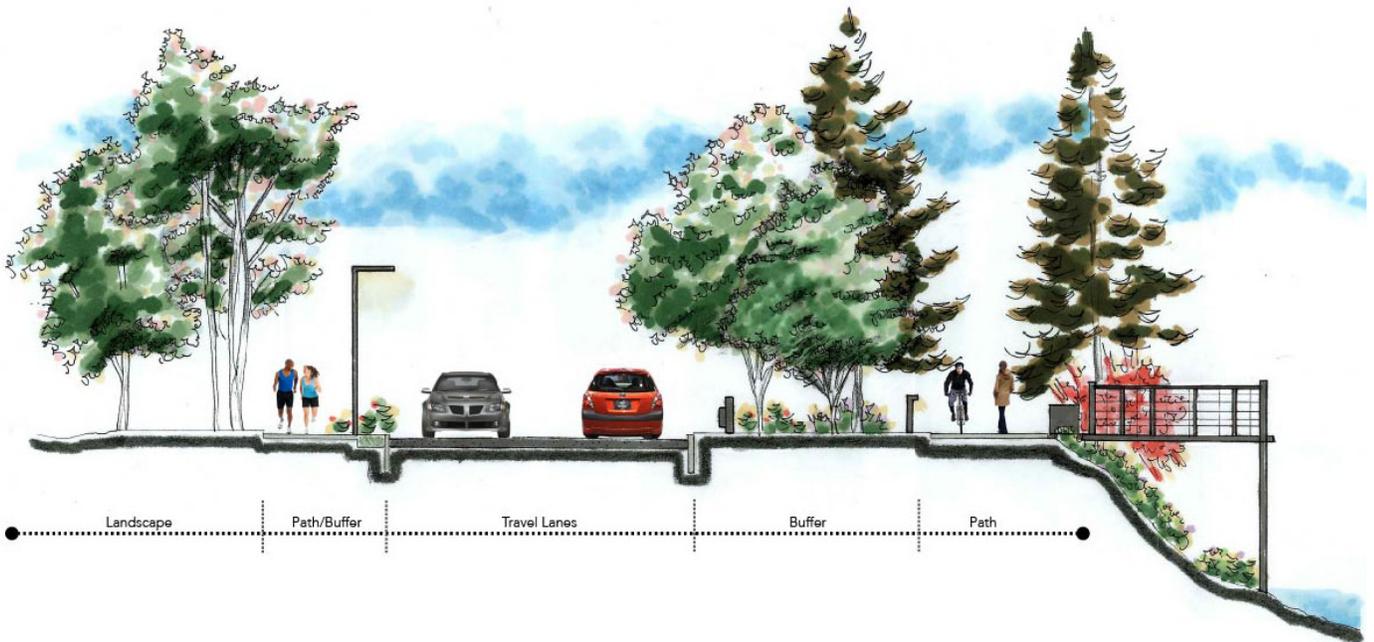
Commercial Corridor example illustrating dedicated pedestrian facilities, activity space, and streetscape amenities.

Commuter Route example illustrating dedicated bicycle/pedestrian facilities and green buffers protecting bicyclists and pedestrians from adjacent land uses and moving vehicles.





Neighborhood Link example illustrating a separated pedestrian facility along a low volume and low speed street.



Scenic Drive example illustrating the relationships among the pedestrian/bicycle space, vehicle travel lanes, green buffer, and a natural feature, such as the St. Joseph River.

