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US-2 CORRIDOR VISUAL ENHANCEMENT PLAN

IRONWOOD, MICHIGAN

SEPTEMBER 10, 2003

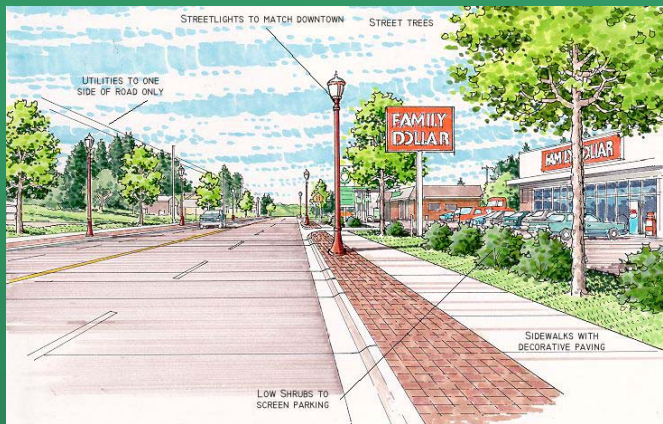


Prepared by:

The US-2 Visual
Enhancement Planning
Project Partnership

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Rita Hodgins

*District Extension Educator
MSU Extension*

Victor Nelhiebel

Victor Nelhiebel Land Architecture

Gerry Harsch

Planner, City of Charlevoix

John Campbell

*Executive Director
Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning &
Development Commission (Region 11)*

Dave Gillis

*Executive Director
Central Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Regional
Commission (Region 12)*

James Stingle

*Executive Director
Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development
Regional Commission (Region 13)*

Tom Nemacheck

*Executive Director
Upper Peninsula Travel & Recreation Association*

Adrian Stroupe

*Regional Planner
MDOT*

**US-2 Visual Enhancement Advisory Committee
Members from the Communities of**

- Ironwood
- Bessemer
- Watersmeet
- Iron River/Crysal Falls
- Escanaba/Gladstone
- Mackinac County

Joe VanderMeulen

*Executive Director
Land Information Access Association*

Carl Ferguson

*Program Development Specialist
Land Information Access Association*



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Introduction and Project Description

Introduction

Views from the road often form our first and most lasting impressions of a region and a community. What we see through the windshield can make us feel welcomed and at ease or uncomfortable and threatened. What can communities in the Upper Peninsula do to ensure that both residents and visitors feel welcomed and encouraged to stop?

Visual enhancement planning helps a community re-consider appearances from the perspective of a visitor. What attracts people to your town and local businesses? What encourages people to stay and enjoy your community's recreational resources? What keeps them coming back?

Last fall, the People and Land Program of W.K. Kellogg Foundation provided a grant to the Land Information Access Association and several project partners for the development of "visual enhancement plans" for many sections of the US-2 and M-134 corridors. The primary goal of this project is the preparation of a usable and well-supported visual enhancement plan for the US-2 and M-134 highway corridors, with a particular focus on critical community and tourist areas. We are also interested in motivating and supporting local and regional efforts to reverse on-going deterioration and preserve existing visual assets.

The project partners used a series of regional forums, press releases, newsletters and a web-site to introduce the concept of visual enhancement, describe why it is important for tourism and economic development, and discuss opportunities for communities to receive planning and implementation assistance. Building on the community participation and excitement generated from our initial outreach efforts, we invited several communities to participate in free, focused planning activities. This plan and the graphics and recommendations contained herein are the result of those activities.

What is Visual Enhancement?

Historically, highway design and construction has been oriented to concerns about safety, structure and cost. These areas remain foremost in the minds of new highway designers, as they should. However, their preeminence often eclipses another equally important design value - Visual Quality. The visual qualities of a roadway have important ramifications for drivers and communities along the corridor. A driver's view from the road often forms their entire impression of a region and informs their decisions about where to turn, where to stop and how to ultimately arrive at their destination. The visual qualities of a roadway can keep drivers informed, interested and alert or, conversely, confused, bored and tired.

When assessing existing roadways, visual qualities must be addressed from the standpoint of enhancements. What can be done to enhance the visual qualities of a particular roadway is a community decision which should be addressed at the local level. However, some activities typically associated with visual enhancement are:



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- Adding bike or pedestrian facilities
- Limiting curb cuts and providing attractive, easy to follow directional signage
- Adding attractive landscaping or interesting street level features
- Preserving, rehabilitating or renovating historic structures
- Preserving scenic vistas or agricultural land
- Cleaning up of blighted areas
- Establishing design guidelines for signage, landscaping, materials, siting, etc.

Why Visual Enhancement?

Beyond the specific benefits of attractive streetscapes and safer and more efficient travel, the benefits of visual enhancement run much deeper. More attractive, interesting and informative transportation corridors can have dramatic impacts on community pride and economic development. Specifically, communities undertaking enhancement projects have seen:

- higher tax revenues
- increased tourism revenue
- increased private investment and new business creation
- increased employment
- increased interest in community history and civic engagement



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Existing Conditions – Summary of Field Analysis

Ironwood, Michigan was one of six communities along the US-2/M-134 corridor selected to receive visual enhancement planning assistance as part of the US-2 Project. Ironwood is located in Gogebic County at the far western end of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. It is often referred to as the “Western Gateway to the U.P.”, with the US-2 approach from Wisconsin leading right in to Ironwood. The population of Ironwood is approximately 6,000.

The subject of this study and plan is the section of the US-2 main thoroughfare that lies within the city limits (2.6 miles), and the US-2 business route (1.3 miles) – approximately 4 miles of roadway (see figure 1).

Approaches to Ironwood

The west U.S. 2 approach from Wisconsin is Michigan’s gateway. The border at the Montreal River is not obvious, followed by a standard Welcome Michigan sign and understated Ironwood welcome sign. This is in contrast to the large, prominent Welcome Wisconsin sign. The area is wooded and pleasant, visually leading to an MDOT Welcome Center, which is architecturally dated. A pleasant, wooded fairground park on the north side and motels on the south complete this uncluttered first ½ mile of 4 Lane Boulevard.



Entering Ironwood along US-2 from the East, a series of billboards line the north roadside, immediately followed by a wooden welcome sign. Pines on both sides screen the limited development along the curving 5 lane road. As the curve turns west, the view dramatically changes



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<Insert figure 1: plan view of corridor>



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to an industrial park on the south side and intense commercial development on the north, stretching ahead.



The BR-2 entrance to Ironwood begins at the Montreal River Bridge. This “back door” approach enters Ironwood through a neighborhood of older houses, industrial structures and overhead wires. At a confusing intersection with McLeod St., B.R. 2 veers uphill past a well-positioned Ironwood sign, with good backdrop. Cresting the hilltop, there is a good panorama of downtown Ironwood.



In general, the approaches to Ironwood have potential, but need some attention. The existing Ironwood signs are small wooden and attractive and should be emphasized with landscaping. They could also feature the “Gateway” theme more prominently. Visitor information locations should be clearly identified for corridor traffic. There is currently no visitor information location when approaching from the east.



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US-2 Commercial Corridor

The heart of the U.S. 2 Corridor in Ironwood is a mixture of commercial and residential use with heavy traffic, best described as “linear sprawl”. While there are a number of attractive properties along this stretch, the overall impression is one of visual chaos, unappealing to tourists (see figure 2). A 1982 U.S. 2 Corridor Plan by Barton-Aschman Associates correctly analyzed many issues (see sidebar). Current analysis from the field indicates many of the same issues.

Road & Traffic Issues

There are many curb cuts with a great variation in size and spacing. This creates a confusing and unattractive visual along with traffic and access issues. The number of curb cuts also contributes to curb damage from snow-plowing. As in many northern communities, there is an accumulation of grit on roadsides, sidewalks and grass edges throughout the corridor from snow-plowing. Poor drainage often leaves standing water in outside lanes. During the winter months, snow storage contributes to visual clutter.

Parking and paved areas stretch right to the curb for many businesses along the corridor. This adds to visual clutter and is distracting for the traveler.

Sidewalks

The sidewalks along the US-2 Commercial Corridor in Ironwood are not continuous which creates problems for pedestrian traffic and detracts from visual consistency. They are in generally poor condition, often close to or at the curb and sometimes covered with snow or plowing and snow grit. There are few cross walks.

Utilities and Street Lighting

Overhead wires and utility poles are pervasive along the US-2 Commercial Corridor running both along the corridor and crossing it.. They are often close to the roadway and the wires and poles block driver’s vision. Street lighting along the corridor is provided by lamps on utility poles. These are not very attractive and cast a yellowish light.

Blight and Junk

Blight is not a pervasive problem along the US-2

1982 Corridor Analysis

From a study of the US-2 Corridor by Barton-Aschman Associates (1982)

Functions

- Regional highway traffic
- Local traffic (primary east-west route)
- Primary commercial area of city
- “Front Yard” of Ironwood
- Main tax and employment base

Problems

- Abutting pockets of residential and commercial
- Generally narrow right-of-way (78’)
- Numerous access drives - confusing & safety issue, small parcels
- Lack of setback of buildings
- Mishmash of building types and materials
- Sign clutter and inconsistent setback
- Lack of off-road or connection between business forces more car trips
- Parking sprawl, often to r.o.w. line
- Lack of landscaping at approaches, roadside, parking and key intersections.

Opportunities

- Preservation of pleasant approaches
- Redevelopment of larger available parcels (old K-Mart)



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<Insert figure 2: Plan view with picture callouts>



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Commercial Corridor. There are some derelict building structures and unmaintained properties. Front yard vehicle storage and auto sales displays along discrete portions of the corridor are not attractive and add to clutter.

Signage

Signage along the US-2 Commercial Corridor varies in size, number, height, setback and construction. The lack of consistency is distracting and the signs seem to be competing. Billboards are not a widespread problem. However, several are located in undeveloped approaches and first impressions count. There is a problem with add-on or temporary signs of varying quality. Directional signage is inconsistent and difficult to see amid all the advertising sign clutter.

Landscaping

Along the main commercial corridor there are few landscaped areas (residences, banks being the exception). There are few street trees and little, if any, screening of building sides, parking, industrial lots or other distracting unattractive views. The only focal landscape is present at the Douglas St. intersection.

Key Intersections

The key intersections along the commercial corridor are at Lake St., Douglas St., Jackson St. and Greenbush. There is no definition to the intersections with commercial development directly to the street corners (except at S.W. corner of Douglas.)

Zoning

The entire corridor frontage is zoned C-3, highway commercial.

Business Route Downtown

The intersection at U.S. 2 has a downtown sign and some landscaping but is chaotic. Douglas Street is mostly residential, with banners. The route to reach downtown includes some very awkward, confusing turns and has a “backdoor” appearance, with older warehouse structures and front yard parking.

The downtown area has an attractive Post Office and Museum area. There is a pedestrian atmosphere with street lights, walks and a pocket park along with several historic building (theater, depot). In some cases, the fine architectural details of many older buildings are covered by applied, modern facades.



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Community Input – Notes from Community Meeting

On April 7, 2003, members of the US-2 Project Partnership, along with the Ironwood US-2 Steering Committee held a community meeting to gather input on corridor enhancements. Community members were asked for their assessment of current conditions, their vision for the future and their ideas for moving toward the future vision. The following notes summarize input from that meeting:

City of Ironwood

U.S. Highway 2 Visual Enhancement
Steering Committee Meeting Notes
Monday, April 7

Current Conditions

Sidewalks

- The system is terrible
- Where there are sidewalks, they are narrow
- Sand covers them during plowing
- They are in bad shape
- Snow is an issue

Curb design

- Snow plowing damages the curbs
- We tried some ‘rolled curbs’ and some business owners complained
- Snow/winter conditions are a huge factor and impact our curbs, sidewalks and roads

Signage

- Too many
- Neon or no lighting
- Size is an issue
- Billboards are an issue
- The colors are everything in the rainbow
- Some have borders others don’t
- Some have wood frames others have metal frames
- We don’t have any ‘recognition’ signs (example – sports’ teams accomplishments)
- We don’t have any cultural identity
- Our ordinance doesn’t exactly solve the sign issue
- We let things go



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- Many of the signs are grandfathered in

Power Lines

- Distracting
- Visual blockage
- Not a clean look
- “carnival” look

Lighting

- Ugly
- Inadequate
- Only on one side of the road in places
- Tied to power poles
- Yellow lights
- No outlets on poles for decorative lighting

Access

- Too close together
- Too many curb cuts
- Not obvious where the entrance is to get downtown

Entrances

- Not very attractive
- Not well defined that we are the entrance to the state as well as to our community

Blight

- Not always enforced
- Lack the resources to enforce
- Don't always get legal support
- Comment is that ‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder’
- Vacant lots
- Absentee owners – grass isn't cut
- Tall grass is present even where property owners are in the area

Desired Conditions

- A complete citywide sidewalk system with buried power lines and rolled curbs
- Decorative lighting used in the downtown carried to the highway (with power outlets and banner brackets)
- Spaces designated for flower plantings
- Combination of paver bricks and grass
- Landscaped entrances



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- Uniformly designed signage that is tied to our culture/heritage

Bridge between Current Conditions and Desired Conditions

- Apply for highway enhancement federal funds
- Work with MDOT and the power companies to make sure that plans dovetail
- Replace the water main
- Work with MEDC (Michigan Economic Development Corp) and the Welcome Centers
- Put some focus on the Montreal River corridor
- Implement sign design (maybe a contest) with themed signs that speak to our roots (mining, logging and tourism)
- We are a ‘gateway community’ to Michigan, Ottawa National Forest and the western U.P. and Lake Superior
- Review our sign ordinance
- Make sure that we have an ordinance to do away with the billboards in the city
- Begin some public education
- Solutions for employee parking
- Publicize what we were doing
- Show some before/after
- Beautification efforts need to be a partnership among civic groups and business owners
- Identify snow storage areas
- Explore elevated walkways in the downtown area



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Suggested Improvements

Approaches

The current pleasant, forested east & west approaches to Ironwood should be preserved. They are consistent with the Community's Gateway theme and provide visitors with a visually appealing first impression of the community. Billboards in the area should be removed and future billboard siting restricted.

Entering from the East, the industrial park area should be screened with plantings in and out of right-of-way. An appropriately placed and accessible Tourist Information Center or Kiosk should direct visitors to local attractions.

Entering from the West, the Ironwood Welcome sign is lost between the Michigan Welcome Sign and the Michigan Welcome Center. A better arrangement would be to relocate and expand the Ironwood sign to Michigan Welcome Center, east of entry drive. The dated Michigan Welcome Center should, at a minimum, receive landscaping treatment and would be a good candidate for renovation or replacement.

Entering from Wisconsin along the US-2 Business Route, the McLeod/Aurora intersection should be redone. Building on the existing Ironwood sign with a nice backdrop, new street trees, street lights and sidewalks should guide visitors to downtown. Utility lines should be buried or relocated and billboards removed. The industrial structures and parking to the south should be screened. The existing Ironwood sign could be enhanced with lighting, additional focal landscaping and service club plaques. The community should also explore the possibility of a joint project with Hurley, WI for heritage murals or signs on viaduct

U.S. – 2 Commercial Corridor

The visually chaotic US-2 Commercial Corridor in Ironwood would benefit from several enhancements. They are described in more detail here under the following headings:

Roadway

- Use roll-curbs to cut down on plow damage.
- Restrict access with joint drives and service roads replacing the numerous single point drives now employed.
- Explore a 3 lane configuration.
- Use integral pole/arm signals with signage at key intersections
- Restrict frontage parking

Sidewalks

- Provide continuous sidewalks along the commercial corridor and move sidewalks further from the curb.
- Use well-marked crosswalks at significant intersections.



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Utilities

- Replace older utility pole-mounted streetlights attractive streetlights with white lamps, banner brackets and outlets.
- Eliminate overhead lines/poles away along roadway either through burial or relocation

Parking

- Eliminate unnecessary pavement in frontage between curbs and buildings.
- Encourage side-lot parking.
- Screen parking with low walls, decorative fences and plantings

Blight

- Screen storage yards
- Require setback for auto sales display

Signage

- Remove derelict signs and sign structures
- Eliminate add-on or temporary signage
- Limit or remove billboards (especially along entrances)
- Explore a directional sign system with a consistent theme, logo and structure
- Identify the following significant community areas:
 - Downtown
 - Scenic Drive to Lake Superior
 - Gogebic Community College
 - Mt. Zion
 - Fairgrounds
 - Museum

Streetscaping

- Focus community efforts on core commercial blocks and key intersections
- Use colored/textured pavers or concreted between curb and walk in tight areas
- Place benches occasionally along street
- Explore pocket parks at small unused sites
- Identify appropriate themed banners for use

Landscaping

- Use focal plantings at entries to Ironwood, in combination with entry signs
- Screen parking, sides of buildings, and industrial areas with appropriate plantings
- Use street trees where space is adequate

Key Intersections

- Provide integral pole/arm supports for signals, signage.
- Decorative landscape/screening of abutting commercial



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Business Route (US-2) and Downtown

- Possibly relocate Business Route (Lowell St.?)
- Redo awkward curve at Douglas / Frederick
- New sidewalks on Douglas, possibly paver edge
- Downtown: Renovate commercial buildings to bring out original character



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Conceptual Designs

Several conceptual designs were prepared for the US-2 corridor. The enhancements depicted in the conceptual designs on the following pages are based on input from community meetings and field analysis of existing conditions. Where possible, we selected locations that were indicated as problems areas in the community meetings or could provide the greatest impact to overall corridor enhancement. With limited resources, the project partnership was not able to prepare designs for the entire corridor. However, elements of each conceptual design are clearly transferable to other corridor sections.



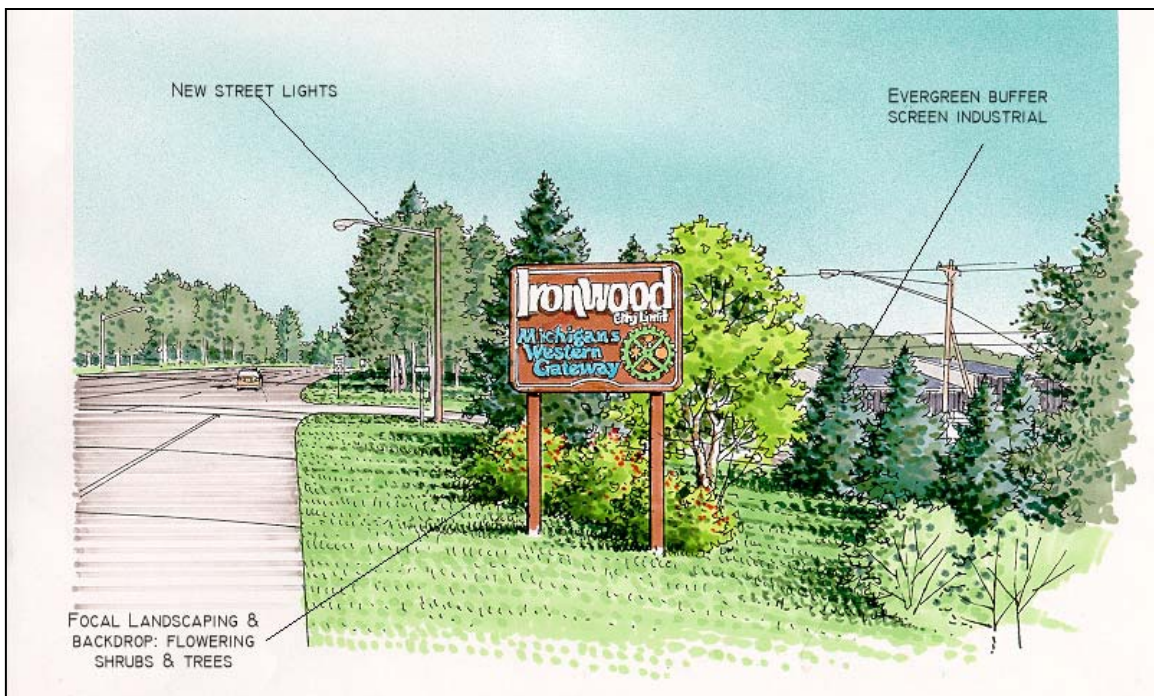
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Conceptual Plan 1 – US-2, Entering Ironwood from the East

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





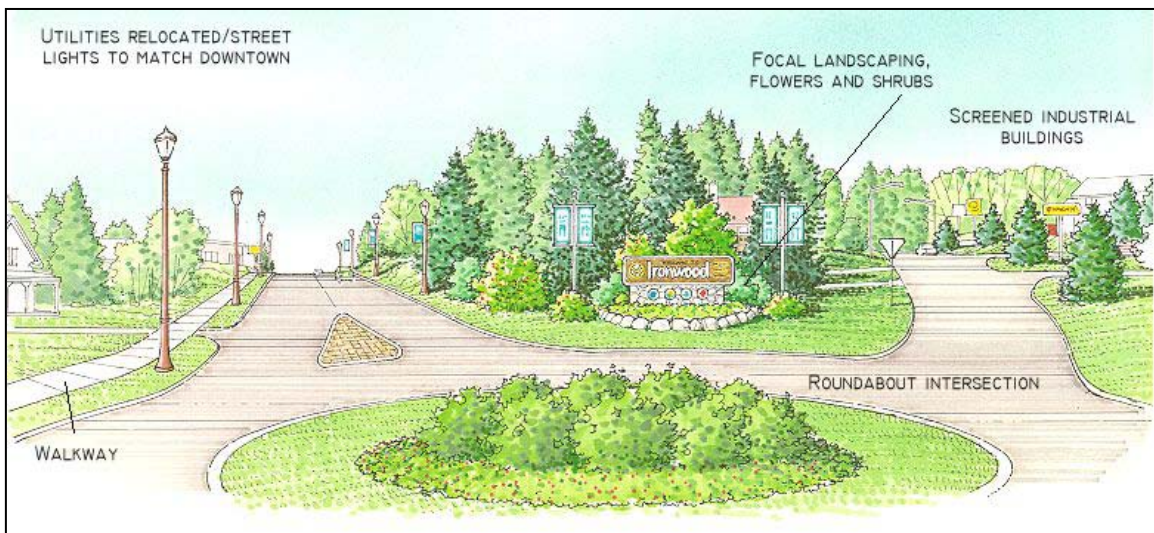
Ironwood, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Conceptual Plan 2 – Entering Ironwood from the West along BR-2

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





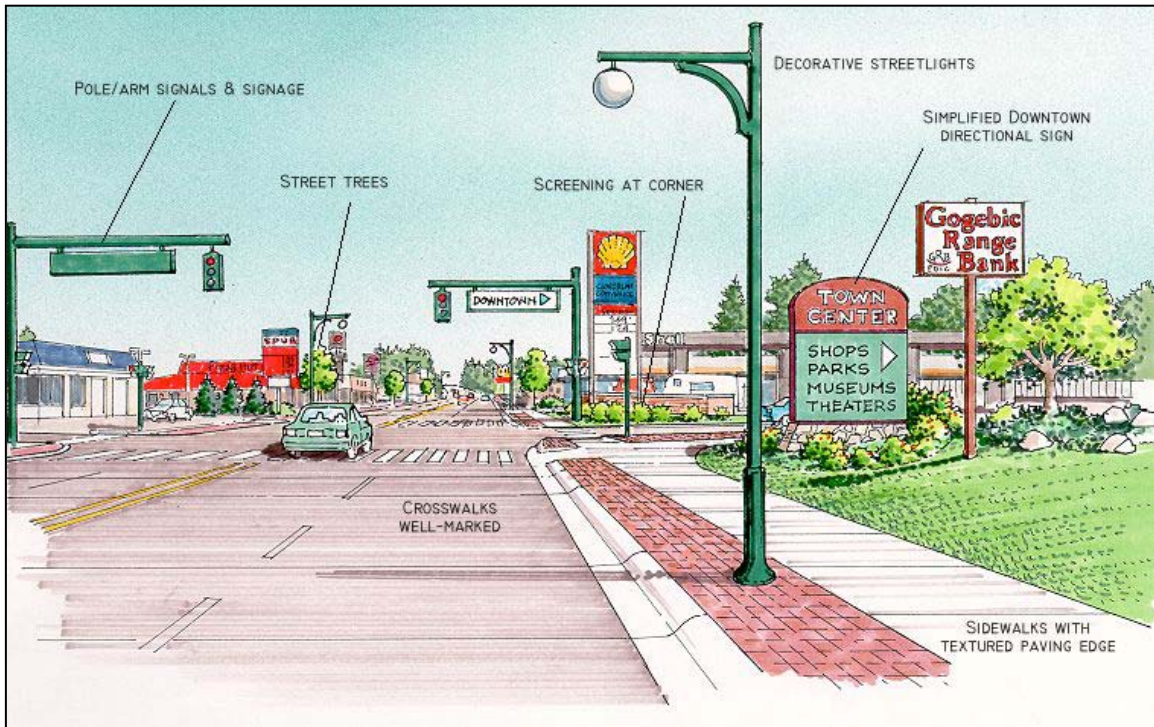
Ironwood, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Conceptual Plan 3 – US-2 Eastbound at Douglas Street

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





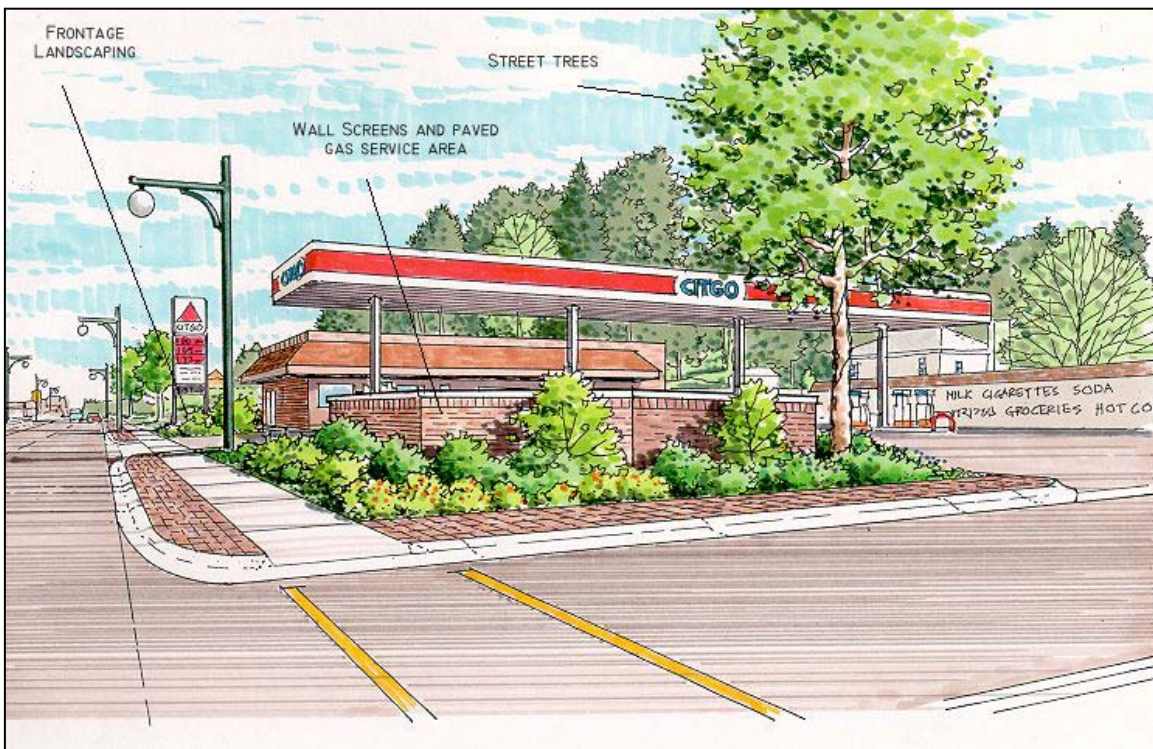
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Conceptual Plan 4 – US-2 Eastbound at Lawrence Street

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





Ironwood, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Conceptual Plan 5 – US-2 Westbound, West of Douglas Street

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





Ironwood, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Conceptual Plan 6 – US-2 Eastbound, East of Greenbush Street

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





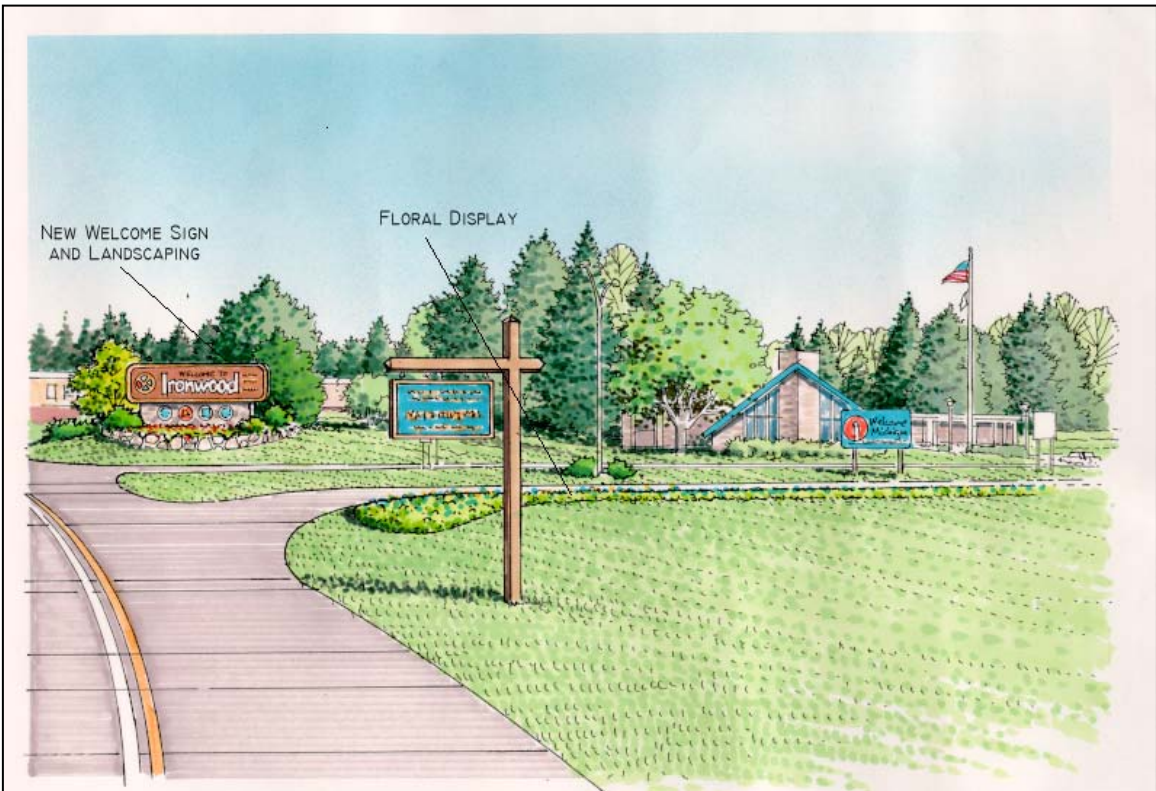
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Conceptual Plan 7 – Entrance to Ironwood

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





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Conceptual Plan 8 – Eastbound US-2 at Best St.

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





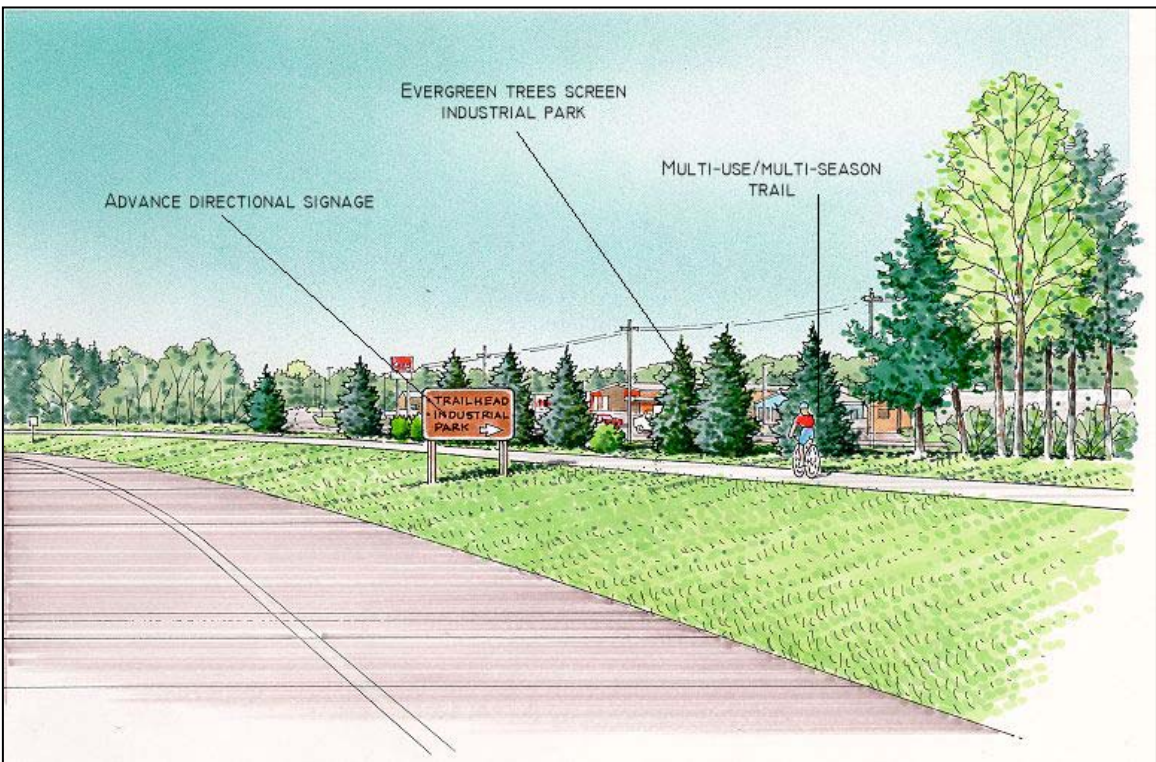
Ironwood, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Conceptual Plan 9 – US-2 Eastbound, East of Commercial Zone

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





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Conceptual Plan 10 – US-2 Westbound, East Side of Town

Current View



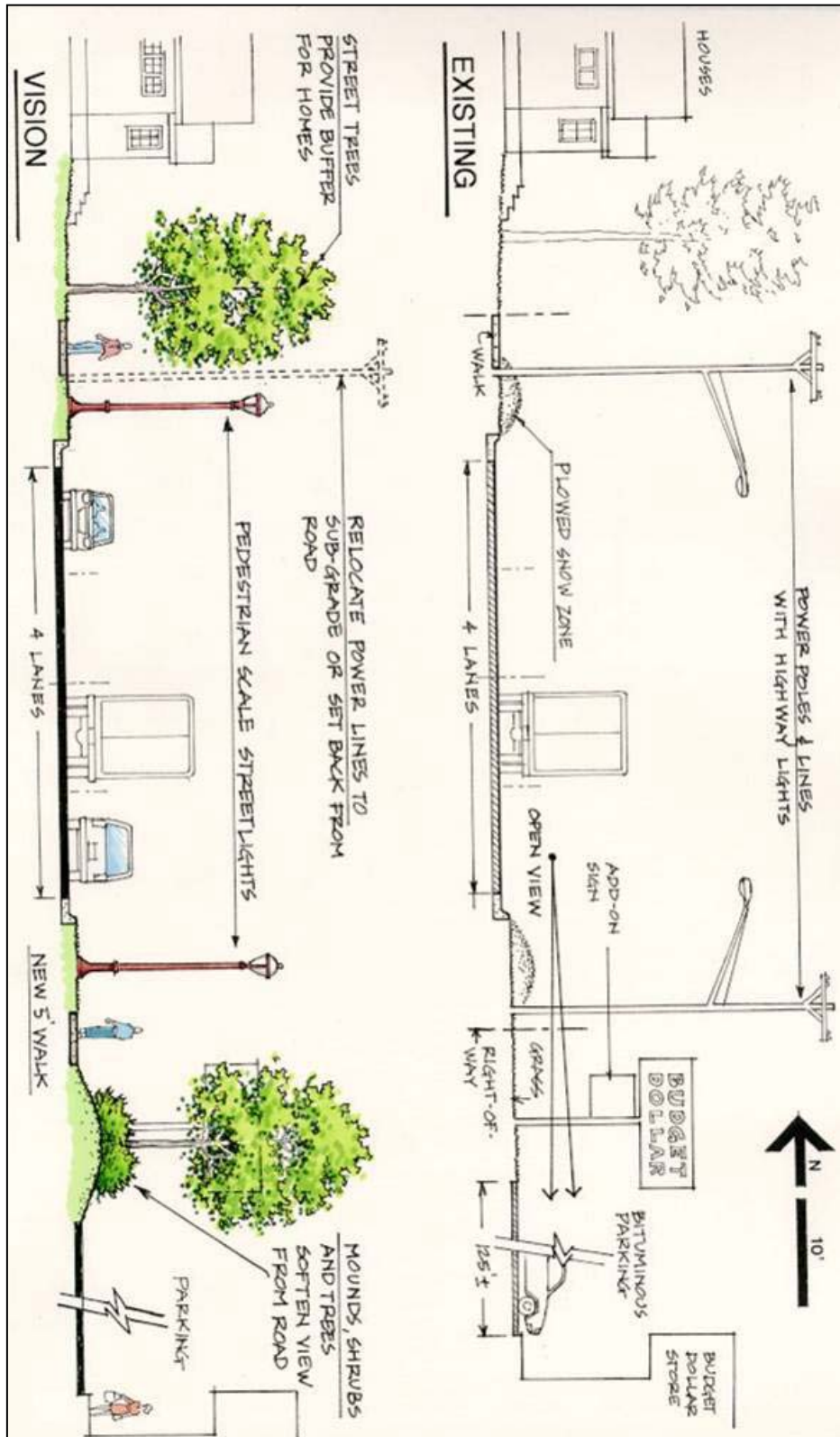
Proposed Enhancements





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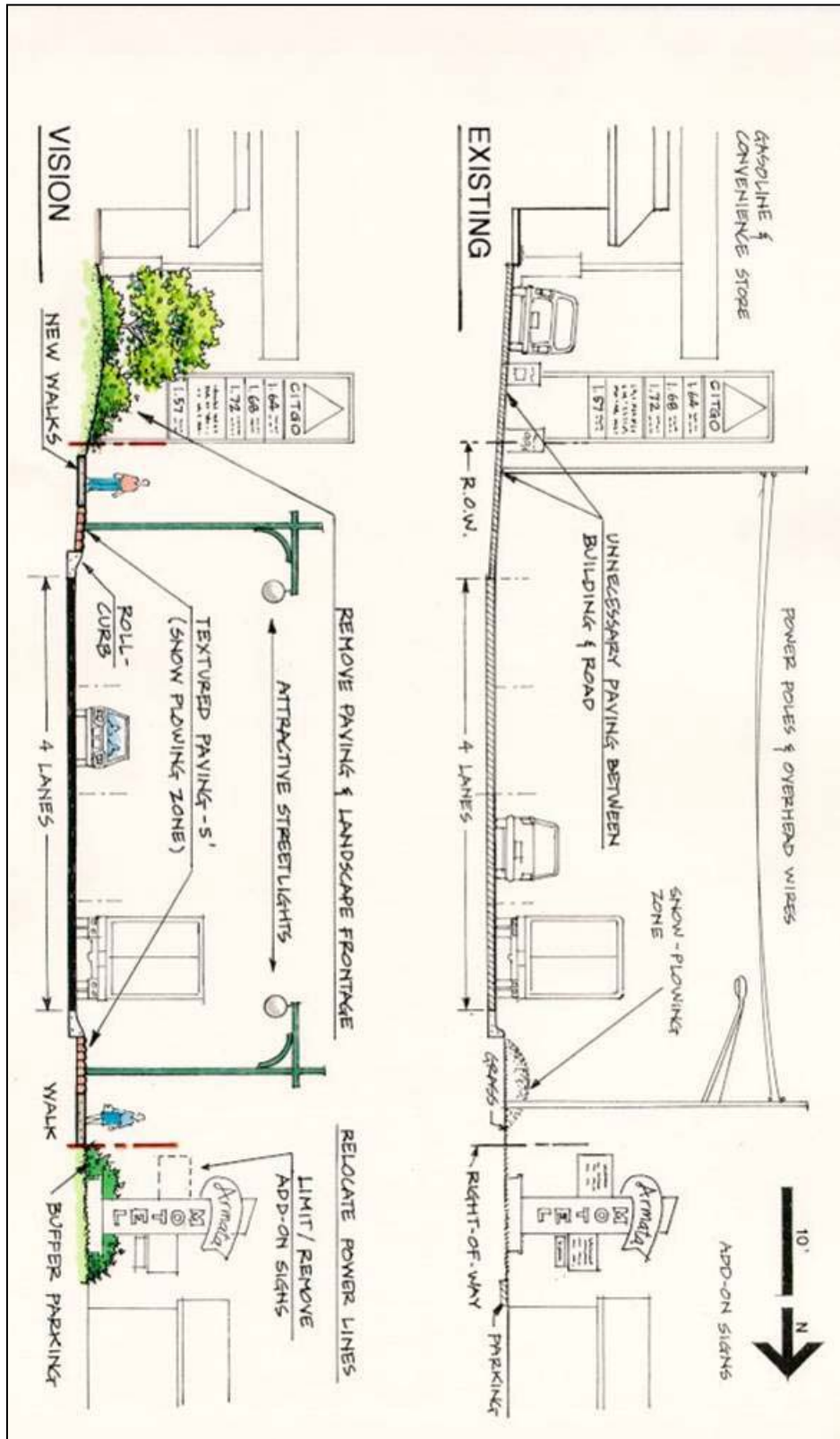
Conceptual Plan 11 – Cross Section US-2 Eastbound near Budget Dollar Store





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Conceptual Plan 12 – Cross Section US-2 Westbound near Armata Motel





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Achieving Results/Implementation

The previous sections of this plan focused on an analysis of existing conditions along the US-2 study area. We summarized findings and recommendations from community meetings and combined these comments with professional field analysis. We detailed suggestions for improving the US-2 study corridor and presented conceptual enhancement designs along the corridor. This section of the report will present an overview of how to implement the changes detailed in the conceptual designs.

It should be clearly recognized that implementing some or the entire series of corridor enhancements proposed in this plan is no small endeavor. It will require the continued commitment of the community steering team and other key stakeholders. New relationships between local officials, business owners and other community interests will have to be formed and nourished. It will require significant new sources of funding and/or substantial regulatory changes. This is a long term process and one that is likely to change over time.

Working Together

The implementation of a visual protection/enhancement program for the US-2 highway corridor in Michigan's Upper Peninsula could potentially be accomplished in several ways. Local areas acting on their own initiative could independently plan and undertake projects. Collectively, these independent efforts could result in significant protection/enhancement. An example of such a corridor is US-31 through Grand Traverse, Antrim, Charlevoix, and Emmet Counties in the Lower Peninsula where the communities of Traverse City and environs, Elk Rapids, Charlevoix, Petoskey/Bay View, Alanson, Pellston, and Mackinaw City have all worked independently and without coordination to contribute to visual enhancement of that highway corridor. The draw back to this approach can be a lack of visual enhancement/preservation continuity along the highway corridor and potential disregard for the corridor in rural areas.

A better, and perhaps more fruitful, approach to the protection/enhancement of arterial corridors that pass through a number of communities interspersed with rural areas, is to establish a supervisory or oversight body. This organization can work to plan, promote, and coordinate appropriate protection/enhancement activities throughout a large geographical area such as the Upper Peninsula. The National Scenic Byways Program provides a model for such an organization with its advocates groups. These groups are typically organized as non-profits that take on the responsibility for the preparation of "corridor management plans" which identify key resources, threats to those resources, preservation strategies, and marketing plans.

If appropriately organized as a nonprofit such an advocacy group has the ability to receive grants from charitable foundations, certain governmental funding, and tax exempt gifts from a variety of private donors. These funds can be used to support a staff and its expenses and/or to fund a variety of projects along the various roadway corridors.

The strength of such an organization, however, normally comes through its advocate members that volunteer and dedicate their time and energy to a variety of activities that support a planned and coordinated preservation/restoration program for the entire geographic area. Such an organization brings together groups from various local communities creating a synergism among interested parties which can breathe vibrant life and longevity into the preservation/restoration effort.



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Persistence to achieve the goals and objectives of a preservation/restoration effort is essential as implementation will not be achieved overnight, however, will take years as small accomplishments begin to accumulate and the effort snowballs to achieve a critical mass. That critical mass is essential to overcome false starts, political inertia, limited financial resources, resistance to change, resistance to regulate, burn out, etc.

A desire to imitate or “keep up with the Joneses” can be a driving force for community change. Often a forward-thinking community, by way of example, can inspire similar activity by other communities. This can be seen in the language found within the various zoning ordinances which are in place in communities along the U.S. 2 corridor. For example, essentially the same language requiring screening between residential and commercial and industrial uses, right down to specifying the plants to use, appears in several zoning ordinances adopted by communities along the corridor. Obviously one of these communities was the first to adopt such language. Others then followed the example of the first. The inspiration for visual enhancement/preservation projects can spread in a similar manner. For example, Community A adopts a billboard ordinance which is effective in stopping the visual blight of billboards. Community B learns of A’s success and adopts such an ordinance for its community.

A regional organization which brings the various stakeholders together can provide the inspiration, education, technical expertise and financial resources necessary to get the ball rolling and to keep it moving avoiding project melt down over time. It can assist the various component local groups in accessing and or working with the many private and public resources which either exist or could be created to contribute to the effort.

There are many fine examples of regional organizations which have been established to assure the successful implementation of a plan such as the proposed UP Transportation Visual Enhancement Project. One such organization is the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust in Washington State. Information about that trust as an example may be obtained from mtsgreenway@tpl.org. A Michigan example is the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy at Traverse City (www.landtrust.org) and the Little Traverse Bay Regional Land Conservancy at Petoskey/Harbor Springs (www.landtrst.org) that are working together to undertake protection/enhancement projects along the U.S. 31 corridor between Traverse City and Mackinaw City.

Implementation Tools and Resources

There were a number of different issues and suggestions raised during community meetings and most issues have been incorporated into the conceptual designs. In this section, we will suggest some tools and resources to address the most common problems. It should be remembered that in many cases, applications for enhancement funding, especially to state agencies, require plans and the conceptual designs can be useful for this purpose.



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For a comprehensive matrix of problems/issues and suggested vehicles to address these problems, see Table 1. (presented in four sections 1-4). This matrix identifies approximately eighty (80) resources which could have a potential roll in implementing the protection/enhancement effort being proposed. These resources range from providing advocacy support to volunteer labor. They have been identified in the matrix as follows:

A	Advocacy/community support
E	Education support
F	Funding support
L	Project labor
R	Regulatory requirements
T	Technical support
V	Volunteer labor

- A.** Advocacy/community support can come from a variety of individuals or groups. These groups are important players that can send a positive message regarding the need and community support for the project and can challenge local politicians and governmental officials to act in a positive and responsible way to implement contributing activities such as enacting appropriate zoning ordinances, sign regulations, etc.
- E.** Education support regarding the benefits of implementing a restoration/enhancement project is available from a variety of sources such as the MSU Extension Service or the staff of the various Conservation Districts.
- F.** Funding support is available from a variety of fund raising activities, to grants from private and public sources, to the better utilization of the funds expended by governmental agencies in particular those responsible for the roadways and their corridors.
- L.** Project labor is either staff or contract labor which is assigned to preservation/restoration efforts by the agencies responsible for the roadways and their corridors. It may also come in the form of prison work crews which are available to assist communities.
- R.** Regulatory requirements are those which are set out in laws adopted to regulate the use of land. They include zoning and building codes and a variety of nuisance ordinances which can regulate blight, signage, landscaping, lighting, land use, historic sites etc.

Table 1 - Achieving Results

Problem Issue/Work Topics	Public/Governmental Efforts																																				
	Multi-County - Regional					Tribal			State												Federal																
	Councils of Government	Technical assistance to local & county gov.	Grant writing assistance to local & county gov.	Organization & sponsorship of topical seminars	Solid Waste Planning	Courts		Design of Tribal communities & facilities	Two percent grant programs	Maintenance of tribal communities		Department of Transportation	Improved Maintenance	Enhancement Grant Programs	Department of Natural Resources	Natural Resources Trust Fund	Forrestry Division	Parks Division	Department of Environmental Quality	Coastal Zone Management Programs	State Police	Legislature	Secretary of State	History Division	Licensing	Department of Corrections	Work crews		Congress	State Senators	State Representatives	National Endowment For The Arts	National Park Service	Land & Water Conservation Fund	U. S. Forrest Service		
Blight, Junk/other Property Maintenance Issues																																					
Deteriorated/abandoned buildings																																					
Junk cars																																					
Scrap metal and other debris		T	T																																		
Unkept houses, buildings and landscape																																					
Coordination of garbage pickup/collection sites		T																																			
Maintenance of highway right-of-way																																					
Dead animals along roadway																																					
Hillside/road cut erosion																																					
Debris from logging and similar trucks																																					
Sand removal from winter maintenance																																					
Damaged curbs from snow removal																																					
Trash thrown from vehicles																																					
Rusty or unattractive rail overpasses																																					
Inappropriate and insensitive display of merchandise																																					
Non-enforcement of existing ordinances																																					
Signage																																					
Number and clustering of signs (too many)																																					
Dated or abandoned/poorly maintained signs																																					
Inappropriate, oversized, poorly lighted signs																																					
Sign colors																																					
Sign consistency																																					
Sign shapes																																					
Sign borders																																					
Sign materials																																					
Confusing messages																																					
Improper placement																																					
Lack of recognition and directional signage																																					
Overly numerous, over sized and poorly placed billboards																																					

- A = Advocacy/community support
- E = Education support
- F = Funding support
- L = Project labor
- R = Regulatory requirements
- T = Technical support
- V = Volunteer labor

Table 1 - Achieving Results

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Lighting																																					
Inadequate																																					
Unattractive lighting fixtures																																					
No decorative/holiday lighting																																					
Light pollution																																					
Utility Lines																																					
Pervasive/unattractive																																					
Block/detract views																																					
Sidewalks, bike lanes, trails																																					
Lack of - None in existence																																					
Poor placement relative to highway																																					
Lack continuity and systematic layout																																					
Lack maintenance																																					
Sand removal from winter buildup																																					
Cracks																																					
Vegetation growing within																																					
Width																																					
Landscaping																																					
Bland, unattractive, undefined community entrances																																					
Overly aggressive r/w clearing																																					
Lack of vegetation along corridor																																					
Lack of buffers and screening of unsightly properties																																					
Overgrown blocking views and vistas																																					
Other Issues																																					
Excessive curb cuts																																					
Community Awareness Activities																																					
Preservation/enhancement of historic sites																																					
Project funding																																					

A = Advocacy/community support
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- T.** Technical support is assistance which is available from professionals or perhaps qualified amateurs that have the technical expertise to envision, devise and implement preservation/restoration projects. They may typically be the staff or retired staff of various businesses or governmental agencies that due to their position or situation are able to offer their time and services to lead project implementation activities.

- V.** Volunteer labor may come from a variety of individual or community groups such as those that participate in adopt-a-road programs or Day of Giving efforts.

While the issues raised in each community were diverse and our suggested improvements are specific to each conceptual design, two things become clear about corridor-wide visual enhancement. The first step in corridor enhancement is removing things that clearly detract from corridor aesthetics and assuring they do not reappear. Two issues that were regularly mentioned in every community meeting that fall under this “removal” category are junk or blight and signage. We will address these issues specifically in the following pages. Other items that fall in the “removal” category and were mentioned include utility lines, unattractive street lighting and roadside debris often including waste from snowplowing.

The second step in corridor enhancement is adding things that add to corridor appeal. The issues most commonly mentioned during community meetings were landscaping, appropriate and attractive lighting, sidewalks or other non-motorized pathways, directional or recognition signage and driveway/curb cut reduction. We discuss how to implement some of these enhancements. Finally, most enhancement projects in this second category require funding. Therefore, in the final chapter, we detail available funding sources at the federal, state and local level.

Removing Problems along the Corridor

The first issue to address in beautifying corridors is removal of things that obviously detract from corridor appearance. Clearly, derelict structures, junk, trash and inappropriate signage make towns unappealing to visitors. It is also appropriate to deal with these issues first as they do not always require a source of new funds, only a collection and expression of community will.

Zoning

When there is a sufficient community will to enact and enforce adequate and workable regulatory laws such as zoning, blight and sign ordinances, much can be done in this manner to remove things that mar the visual landscape. Such laws can regulate and/or require signage, night lighting, landscaping, maintenance of property, land use, etc. Zoning ordinance provisions often take time to result in meaningful improvements particularly in slow growing communities where grand fathering may allow existing situations to continue for many years. Change does eventually come, however, after the years pass.

We performed a cursory review of select zoning ordinances currently in place in the various communities along the U.S.2 corridor. This review reveals several interesting facts. It appears that many of the communities have adopted a zoning ordinance, however many of the ordinances have been in place for twenty to thirty years and are seldom amended. Generally speaking, they seldom have meaningful sections that would contribute to the maintenance/enhancement of the visual



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appearance of the highway corridor. Sign ordinances, while in place in some communities, are either outdated or not restrictive enough. Overlay zoning, often used to deal with specific community assets without redefining zoning districts, is not used. Blight, junk and landscape provisions are weak or non-existent. Table 2 presents a summary of this review.

Blight

Blight can be described as conditions “which cause a reduction of, or lack of, proper utilization of the area to such an extent that it constitutes a serious physical, social, or economic burden on the community which cannot reasonably be expected to be reversed or alleviated by private enterprise acting alone.” (*from Blight Control Ordinance, Williams Charter Township, Bay County, MI*).

While not pervasive along the US-2 study corridor, blight remains a significant issue. Derelict sign structures, unused and unsafe buildings and junk cars and appliances were found in numerous locations. These issues and others falling into the blight category can be addressed through a properly structured and enforced blight or (in the case of derelict sign structures) sign ordinance.

Provisions within the ordinance to address junk cars and appliances typically contain the following language:

No motor vehicle shall be kept, parked or stored in any district for residential use, unless it shall be in operating condition and properly licensed, or kept inside a building. The purpose of this provision is to prevent the accumulation of junk motor vehicles, and therefore it shall not apply to any motor vehicle ordinarily used, but temporarily out of running condition. If a motor vehicle is being kept for actual use, but is temporarily unlicensed, the Zoning Administrator may grant the owner a reasonable time, not to exceed six (6) months, to procure such license.

Likewise, no old, rusty and unsightly machinery, machines not suited for use upon the premises, or quantities of old and used building materials shall be kept or stored outside a building provided, however, that building materials fit to be used to improve the premises may be kept on site for one (1) year if they are piled off the ground so as not to become a rat and rodent harbor.

Source: *City of Charlevoix, MI, Ordinance*

Model ordinances are available from the Michigan Townships Association, the Michigan Municipal League and Scenic Michigan (see Appendix A, Sources of Additional Information).

Another innovative way to deal with blight or junk in a community is to have a *Community Cleanup Day*. Typically, a *Community Cleanup Day* is scheduled once or twice per year in the Spring and/or Fall. People residing in the jurisdiction sponsoring the cleanup can bring junk of all types – appliances, lawn mowers, cars parts, etc. – to one place for disposal. The local unit of government contracts with a waste hauler to provide roll-offs and disposal. Alternatively, some communities may offer similar curbside service. This activity is typically paid for out of local government funds.

Two other issues mentioned during the community meeting that could be considered blight-related were property maintenance, specifically unmowed or long grass and vacant lots. These issues can also be addresses through zoning ordinance provisions. A “Duty to maintain property” provision



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within the ordinance can spell out what type of property maintenance is necessary. Typical “Duty to Maintain Property” language for a zoning ordinance reads as follows:

The owner or occupant of all land, structures and parts thereof, shall have the duty to maintain the same in a clean and sanitary condition free from any accumulation of dirt, filth, rubbish, garbage, junk, vermin and other duty not to act or omit to act so as to create or permit the existence of a nuisance as defined in this Chapter. This duty shall extend to any area of land between the lot line and adjoining streets and curbs.

Source: *City of Charlevoix, MI, Ordinance*

Some towns have enacted ordinances that specifically address maintenance of yards and landscaping, spelling out how long grass can be allowed to grow, etc. However, these can be seen as overly intrusive and this issue may be best addressed simply from neighbor and community pressure.

Lastly, in association with the blight and maintenance issue, the question of enforcement was raised. An ordinance is useless if it is not enforced. Properly written ordinances spell out enforcement responsibilities and it is up to the local governing body and their appointed officials to see that they are carried out. In some cases, the addition of a civil infraction ordinance helps communities enforce existing ordinances by allowing the local governing authority to secure liens against a property and lowering the burden of proof for violations.

Signage

The issue of signage was raised a number of times during the community meetings. The field observations indicate that this is clearly an issue especially along many of the commercial corridors and approaches to study communities. Specifically, in Ironwood, Escanaba and several other towns, otherwise beautiful stretches of highway approach are marred with oversized and improperly spaced advertising signage. It should be remembered, that the approach is a visitor’s first visual impression of a community, and first impressions last. In addition to the approaches, signage along the commercial corridors throughout the study area is inconsistent in size, number, height, type, color, lighting and setback creating a chaotic and confusing visual for the traveler. The abundance of advertising sign clutter limits the effectiveness of any directional or recognition signage and contributes to traffic and safety problems.

The first steps in addressing the issue of signage are to inventory the existing signs along the study corridor, gather public input and craft a practical, understandable and enforceable sign ordinance. This ensures that new developments and signage are consistent with the community’s goals. A sign ordinance should specify appropriate number, size, height, face area, type, color, materials, illumination, landscaping and setback of all newly erected signs within each type of district. The ordinance should clearly articulate the community’s goals in establishing the ordinance and mesh with goals articulated in the community’s comprehensive plan. Typical regulations in communities which have been successful in controlling signs are:

1. One free standing sign face size of thirty two (32) to (40) sq. ft. per business.



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2. A free standing sign height of twenty feet.
3. A free standing sign setback from the highway right-of-way of ten feet.
4. Wall and window signage not to exceed twenty percent of the area of a building facade
5. Provisions for a “center sign” where multiple businesses and or buildings are identified.
6. Limitation of content to land use identification and not advertising.
7. Highway advertising regulations which restrict such signs from the corridor, or limit them to small appropriate districts, provide for significant spacing between signs, and limit their sign face size
8. Prohibition of banners, pennants, inflatable devices and other such signs which are designed to attract attention and not simply identify a business location.

These, it should be noted, are not the most restrictive provisions which a community may adopt.

Model ordinances are available from the Michigan Townships Association, the Michigan Municipal League and Scenic Michigan (see Appendix A).

Adding to the Corridor

Landscaping

Most of the conceptual designs highlight some added landscape features. Trees, shrubs and other greenery as well as berms and mounds can serve many purposes along a corridor. They can be used to soften views, screen unwanted views and reduce the impacts from sound and light on the motorist. They can also be used as focal points and attractive backdrops for community entrance signs. The addition of landscaping can be accomplished in different ways.

Many communities establish beautification committees to coordinate community landscaping. These are usually voluntary efforts that attempt to get business owners and other corridor property owners to take an interest in landscaping their properties. Other times, community beautification or garden clubs will undertake specific projects such as landscaping at the town entrance or an important community attraction. In some cases, these voluntary efforts are supplemented with funding from the local government.

In addition to voluntary/community efforts, landscaping should be addressed in regulatory language as well. The community’s master plan should establish policies and guidelines with respect to landscaping and layout the goals for having landscape requirements. Landscaping requirements should be included in the zoning ordinance and administered during a site plan review process for new developments. For corridors, the ordinance should:

- specify landscape requirements along the roadways and at major intersections
- provide landscape requirements for the sides and fronts of buildings visible along the corridor
- address the issue of snow storage and removal
- require landscaping that minimizes glare and light issues for the traveler and reduces noise for those alongside the roadway



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- Require street trees along all highway frontages.
- Require parking lot landscaping that will provide summer shade for parked vehicles, screen cars from users of adjacent public right-of-ways and provide a green buffer between buildings and parking areas.
- Require screening of unsightly areas such as dumpsters, outside storage, etc.
- Require specific landscape treatment for the location and design of outdoor merchandise display areas such as those used for display of motor vehicles.
- Require watering sources for all landscape areas.
- Require appropriate design and landscaping of water retention/detention areas.

Sidewalks and Non-motorized Ways

Another often-mentioned issue during the community meetings was the lack of sidewalks and sidewalk connectivity. Sidewalks can be added during large roadway enhancement projects but should also be addressed in the zoning ordinance. Making sidewalks part of any improvement or new development will at least start the process. Hopefully, as new walks are added, completing an entire system becomes easier as the idea gains momentum. Typical language to address sidewalks found within an ordinance should include:

Sidewalks/Non-motorized ways: Pedestrian sidewalks or non-motorized ways shall be constructed to provide pedestrian access along highways _____ and other areas as may be designated by the unit of government, at such a time as any adjacent parcel is improved either by new construction or improvement to an existing land use. Sidewalks shall be provided in the _____ Districts and in planned developments in residential districts. In planned developments interior sidewalks or other non-motorized ways available to the public, may be substituted for the provision of this requirement if such substitution is approved by the _____ as a part of the site plan.

The upgrading or improvement of an existing land use shall not require the construction of a pedestrian sidewalk should the cost of the sidewalk exceed twenty percent (20%) of the construction or improvement cost. Sidewalk cost shall be based on a fixed amount of \$3.00 /sq. foot or a bid price submitted by the property owner from a qualified contractor verifiable by the Zoning Administrator. In the event consecutive improvements are made to the property within a three (3) year time period, the cumulative total cost of the separate improvements shall be considered when determining the need for such sidewalk construction.

Sidewalk construction shall meet the following requirements:

1. Sidewalk construction shall meet the current construction specifications of the Michigan Department of Transportation.
2. Sidewalk shall extend across the entire frontage of the property ownership.
3. Sidewalk shall be located whenever possible within the highway right-of-way, however, may be located on private property to avoid obstructions as



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part of a designated bike path, and shall be located so as to insure connection and continuity with existing or future walks or bike paths on adjoining properties.

4. When required, permits must be obtained from the Michigan Department of Transportation.
5. Sidewalk maintenance including replacement in the case of inadequate construction as determined by the Zoning Administrator shall be the responsibility of the adjacent parcel owner.
6. Sidewalk construction shall be in essential compliance with the Non-motorized Facility Plan.

Source: *City of Charlevoix, Ordinance*

Lighting

Street lighting was mentioned often during community meetings and is incorporated in many of the conceptual designs. Street lighting, in both form and function, has significant impacts on corridor appeal. Poor lighting can make driving difficult and distracting. In addition, unappealing street lights can detract from a corridors aesthetic appeal.

Lighting is best addressed through a community's zoning ordinance. Among other things, the ordinance should specify the type, architectural style, wattage, height, placement and spacing of lighting along the corridor for different zones. These issues should all be incorporated into the site plan review process.

Managing Access

Traffic and the number of roadway access points were issues mentioned several times during the community meetings and obvious from field analysis. There are a number of ways to improve traffic flow, safety and access. Access management is:

"a set of proven techniques that can help reduce traffic congestion, preserve the flow of traffic, improve traffic safety, prevent crashes, preserve existing road capacity and preserve investment in roads by managing the location, design and type of access to property."

Access management techniques can include

- Driveway consolidation
- Driveway alterations
- Signage treatments/Restricting turns
- Avoid additional curb cuts
- Front and rear access
- Improved local street connections
- Medians

Source: Michigan Department of Transportation, *Reducing Traffic Congestion and Improving Traffic Safety in Michigan Communities: The Access Management Guidebook*, October 2001.



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A detailed description of access management techniques, benefits and implementation is beyond the scope of this plan. For details, please consult the MDOT guidebook referenced above.



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Funding Enhancements

A variety of potential sources of funding are available for the implementation of visual enhancement projects. Funding may come from a broad array of organizations at the local, state and federal level. In some cases, federal dollars are administered by state agencies. In other cases, applications can be made directly to federal programs.

Federal Funding Sources (may be passed through and administered by state)

Federal Transportation Enhancement Funding

In 1991, the passage of ISTEA (*Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act*) mandated that every state must reserve 10 percent of surface transportation funds for enhancement activities. This act was reauthorized in 1998 through 2003 with the passage of TEA-21 (*Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century*). This act expires on September 30, 2003. The Bush Administration has proposed reauthorization with the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003 (SAFETEA)*, however, this has not been passed by congress. These acts work to fund enhancement through taxes on motor fuel and vehicles which are placed in the Highway Trust Fund. These funds are distributed to the states through the Federal Highway Program. 10% of the state's surface transportation funds are reserved for enhancement activities

Federal Eligibility

To be eligible for *Transportation Enhancement Funding*, projects must meet several criteria. They must relate in some way to transportation. They must provide for public access and fit one or more of 12 enhancement activities:

1. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities
2. Pedestrian and bicycle safety and education activities
3. Acquisition of scenic or historic easements and sites
4. Scenic or historic highways programs including tourist and welcome centers
5. Landscaping and scenic beautification
6. Historic preservation
7. Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities
8. Conversion of abandoned railway corridors to trails
9. Control and removal of outdoor advertising
10. Archaeological planning and research
11. Environmental mitigation of runoff pollution and provisions of wildlife connectivity
12. Establishment of transportation museums

Michigan Eligibility

To qualify for enhancement funding in Michigan, the project must have a sponsor. The applicant must be a governmental unit that receives fuel tax revenues such as cities, villages, road commissions, public transit agencies, or MDOT. Also, the project must meet at least one of the following qualifications:

- Must be on or next to a highway, street or road that is eligible for federal aid
- Must be a historic facility or a historic site that is significant to transportation but has current transportation use



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- Must provide a service related to transportation
- Must fit within the same types of activities as the federal program(above) except does not include:
 - a. Pedestrian and bicycle safety activities and education
 - b. Transportation museums

Regional Contact:

Adrian Stroupe, Regional Planner
MDOT-Superior Region
1818 3rd Avenue North
Escanaba, MI 49829
(906) 786-1800

State Contacts:

Amber Thelen
thelena@michigan.gov
517.241.1456

Jessica Pierce
piercej3@michigan.gov
517.241.0185

Michigan Department of Transportation
Transportation Economic Development and Enhancement Office
425 West Ottawa - P.O. Box 30050
Lansing, MI 48909

National Scenic Byways Grant Program

A program of the Federal Highway Administration, National Scenic Byway funds are available through a grant application process to undertake eligible projects associated with designated National Scenic Byways, all-American Roads or state designated byways. In Michigan, scenic byways projects coordinator is the Michigan Heritage Route Program through MDOT:

Pete Hanses
Heritage Route Program Manager
Michigan Department of Transportation-Transportation Planning Division
425 W. Ottawa
Lansing, MI 48909
Voice: 517-335-2934
Fax: 517-373-9255
E-mail: hansesp@mdot.state.mi.us

The following is a list of byways projects funded in Michigan through 2002



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Michigan

1998 SB-1998-MI-1 \$72,000.00 Corridor Management Plan
1998 SB-1998-MI-2 \$80,800.00 Statewide Planning, Coordination & Administration of Byway Program
2000 SB-2000-MI-2 \$5,695.00 M-15 Heritage Route Railway Feasibility Study
2000 SB-2000-MI-3 \$114,000.00 Development of the Michigan State Scenic Byway Program
2000 SB-2000-MI-5 \$40,000.00 Southeast Michigan's Main Street Marketing Plan for Woodward Avenue
2001 SB-2001-MI-1 \$311,074.00 Copper Country Bike Facility: Phoenix, MI to Delaware, MI
2001 SB-2001-MI-2 \$168,000.00 Cass River Bridge Aesthetic Enhancement (Vassar, MI)
2001 SB-2001-MI-3 \$35,000.00 Copper Country Corridor Management Plan
2001 SB-2001-MI-4 \$268,000.00 Southeast Michigan's Main Street Marketing Plan for Woodward Avenue/Phase II Implementation
2002 SB-2002-MI-3 \$44,400.00 Leelanau Heritage Route CMP Implementation
2002 SB-2002-MI-4 \$536,000.00 Southeast Michigan's Main Street Marketing for Woodward Avenue - Phase III Implementation

Total for Michigan \$1,674,969.00

Public Lands Highways Program

This program provides federal funding to improve access to and within federal lands. Funds are available for "any kind of transportation project eligible for assistance under Title 23, United States Code, that is within, adjacent to, or provides access to the areas (Federal lands) served by the public lands highway." A public lands highway means a forest road or any highway through unappropriated or unreserved public lands, nontaxable Indian lands, or other Federal reservations under the jurisdiction of and maintained by a public authority and open to public travel. Interpretive signs, rest areas, visitor centers, bicycle and pedestrian projects are eligible for this grant program. The next call for projects is subject to the reauthorization of the federal Transportation Efficiency Act (TEA-21).

Source: *National Transportation Enhancement Clearinghouse Website, www.enhancements.org, September 2003*

State Funding Sources

Transportation Economic Development Fund

The [Michigan Department of Transportation](#) (MDOT) administers an Office of Economic Development that manages several types of Economic Development programs under the Transportation Economic Development Fund. Grant programs A, C, D, E, and F (B discontinued) are briefly described as follows:

Category A grants are targeted at specific industries, namely, Agriculture and Food Processing; Tourism; Forestry; High Technology Research; Manufacturing; Mining; and Office Centers of at least 50,000 square feet.

Category C grants are aimed at reducing congestion on county primary and city major streets within urban counties including advanced traffic management systems.

Category D grants seek to fund projects that complement the state trunkline system in rural areas, and

Category E grants seek to create and improve forest roads.

Category F grants are dedicated for road improvement for urbanized areas in rural counties.

Source: *Citizens Research Council of Michigan, Website, Last Revised on 05/09/01*



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Contact Information for Transportation Economic Development Fund:

Administrator: Jacqueline G. Shinn
Contact: Denise Curl
Phone: 517-335-1069
E-mail: curld@michigan.gov
Website: www.mich.gov/mdot

Program Administration Section

Michael Kapp, Manager 517-373-2666
Deanna Finch, Systems Coordinator 517-241-4778

Project Development Section

Alicia Evans Suber, Project Dev. Manager 517-373-2752
Michael Leon, Economic Dev. Spec. 517-241-2568

Aesthetic Project Opportunities Inventory

Several of the programs we have discussed in this section are administered by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). These include the Transportation Enhancements and Heritage Route Program and the Transportation Economic Development Fund. In order to enhance the effectiveness of the Enhancements Program and the Heritage Route Program, MDOT undertook an Aesthetic Project Opportunities Inventory (APOI) in 2000. The purpose of this program was to identify aesthetic project opportunities along state trunklines and ensure the best and most coordinated use of funds.

The APOI identified many project opportunities along the US-2 corridor. Many of these project opportunities are located within the 6 communities and stretches of US-2 corridor that received planning assistance under this project. Also, many of the aesthetic opportunities identified during MDOT's inventory include many of the same treatments depicted in the conceptual designs presented within this plan. As MDOT may be a significant source of funds, this congruence is important to note.

A map of APOI locations is presented in Figure 3.



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Insert Figure 3, APOI locations



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Community Development Block Grant (State Administered)

(the following text is taken directly from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Website, www.hud.gov)

Program Objectives

The primary statutory objective of the CDBG program is to develop viable communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for persons of low- and moderate-income. The State must ensure that at least 70 percent of its CDBG grant funds are used for activities that benefit low- and moderate-income persons over a one-, two-, or three-year time period selected by the State. This general objective is achieved by granting "maximum feasible priority" to activities which benefit low- and moderate-income families or aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight. Under unique circumstances, States may also use their funds to meet urgent community development needs. A need is considered urgent if it poses a serious and immediate threat to the health or welfare of the community and has arisen in the past 18 months.

Eligible Activities

Communities receiving CDBG funds from the State may use the funds for many kinds of community development activities including, but not limited to:

- acquisition of property for public purposes;
- construction or reconstruction of streets, water and sewer facilities, neighborhood centers, recreation facilities, and other public works;
- demolition;
- rehabilitation of public and private buildings;
- public services;
- planning activities;
- assistance to nonprofit entities for community development activities; and
- assistance to private, for profit entities to carry out economic development activities (including assistance to micro-enterprises).

State Contact:

Mr. William Parker, Coordinator
Housing Development Authority
P.O. Box 30044
Lansing, MI 48909-7544
Phone: 517-373-1462
Fax: 517-335-4797
Email: parkerw@state.mi.us
Michigan CDBG business incentives: 517-373-6213
Michigan CDBG housing resources: 517-373-1462



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State Infrastructure Bank

The State Infrastructure Bank has low interest loans for transportation improvements. The program is administered through the Office of Transportation Economic Development and Enhancement.

State Contact:

Michigan Department of Transportation
Transportation Economic Development and Enhancement Office
425 West Ottawa - P.O. Box 30050
Lansing, MI 48909

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) has been in place since 1976. It provides financial assistance to local governments and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to purchase lands for outdoor recreation and/or the protection of natural resources and open space. It also assists in the appropriate development of land for public outdoor recreation.

Criteria

Applications are evaluated on established criteria such as resource protection, water access, and project need. At least 25 percent match on either acquisition or development projects is required from local government applicants. Recommendations are made by the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board (members are appointed by the Governor) to the State Legislature for final approval. Criteria are spelled out in the "Recreation Grants Selection Process" booklet given to all applicants. There are eleven evaluation criteria:

1. Protection and use of significant natural resources.
2. Use of inland waters.
3. Population served.
4. Economic benefits.
5. Hunting, fishing and other wildlife-related values.
6. Need for proposal.
7. Applicant history.
8. Site and project quality.
9. Special Initiatives of the MNRTF Board (See below).
10. Financial need of the applicant.
11. Local match contribution.

There are at times special circumstances that factor into grant evaluation. Currently, the 2003 Special Initiatives of the Board are:

1. Acquisition or development of railways that contribute to an overall State trail system.
2. Acquisition of lands open to hunting or development of hunting-related facilities, such as shooting ranges.
3. Acquisition of lands that provide for deer habitat with thermal cover.



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4. Local shooting ranges or State/local shooting range partnerships.
5. Acquisition projects that create, establish and protect wildlife/ecological corridors by connecting to and/or buffering existing protected and managed State or local natural areas, forests or game areas.

Eligibility

Any local of government, including school districts, or any combination of units in which authority is legally constituted to provide recreation is eligible. Local units of government, school districts and local authorities must have a DNR-approved recreation plan to be eligible.

Contact

Jim Wood
Grants, Contracts and Customer Systems
Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources
(517-241-2480)
woodjb@michigan.gov.

Source: *DNR Website, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Section, September 2003*

Local Funding Sources and Economic Development Tools

Obviously, funding for enhancement projects can come from local sources. Discretionary outlays from the city, township or county budget have been used for planning and implementation. In addition, public bonds or private foundation funding can be used. Lastly, in some cases, fees tied to development, such as traffic impact fees or assessments, have been pooled and used to fund corridor enhancements.

Economic Development Tools

There are a number of economic development tools available to communities to encourage development and improvements in specific community areas. The following table compiled by the



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Michigan Municipal League describes some of these tools:

Table 2 *Summary of Economic Development Tools*

	DDAs	TIFAs	LDFAs	BRAs	EDCs	PSDs	BIDs
Authorized municipalities	Cities, villages and townships	Cities	Cities, villages and urban townships	Cities, villages and townships	Cities, villages and townships	Cities with designated principal shopping district(s)	One or more cities with an urban design plan
Limitations	One per municipality	No new areas established after 1989	One per municipality	Industrial or commercial property	Industrial area	Commercial area with at least 10 retail businesses	Commercial or industrial area with boundaries established by city resolution
Requirements	Deteriorating property values	Deteriorating property values	Industrial area	Environmental contamination	Industrial or 501(c)(3) nonprofit in master plan	Designated as a principal shopping area cities by resolution	Designated as a BID by one or more
Eligible projects	Located in DDA district with approved DDA/TIF plans	Within defined TIFA area	Public facility to benefit industrial park	Environmental cleanup	Issue bonds for private industrial development	Improve highways and walkways; promotion; parking, maintenance, security or operation	Improvement of highways and walkways; promotion; parking, maintenance, security or operation
Funding sources	TIF from District;	TIF from plan area	TIF on eligible property	TIF; Revenue Bonds	Tax exempt bonds	Bonds, special assessments	Bonds, special assessments, gifts, grants, city funds, other

Notes:

BIDs – Business Improvement Districts; DDAs – Downtown Development Authorities; PSDs – Principal Shopping Districts; BRAs – Brownfield Redevelopment Districts; LDFAs – Local Development Finance Authorities. For a summary comparison of these and Economic Development Corporations (EDCs) and Tax Increment Finance Districts (TIFAs), see the Michigan Municipal League’s Economic Development Tools, June 2000.

Source: *Michigan Municipal League. Economic Development Tool. Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Municipal League, 2000.*



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Appendix A

There are numerous sources of information concerning visual enhancement and corridor aesthetics. Many organizations offer publications and websites with extensive resources to help communities plan for and fund enhancement projects. They offer tips on developing community support and involvement in enhancement activities and assistance with developing regulatory guidance and sample language. This appendix will list and briefly describe some of the more prominent organizations and resources.

Organizations with Additional Information

National

American Planning Association, www.planning.org

Scenic America, www.scenic.org

The Trust for Public Land

Federal Highway Administration (Context Sensitive Design), www.fhwa.dot.gov/csd/index.htm

The Surface Transportation Policy Project, www.transact.org

National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse, www.enhancements.org

National Council of State Garden Clubs Inc., www.gardenclub.org

The Nature Conservancy, www.nature.org

National Scenic Byways Clearinghouse, www.byways.org

National Trust for Historic Preservation, www.nationaltrust.org

Michigan

Scenic Michigan, www.scenicmichigan.org

Michigan Association of Regions

Michigan Society of Planning, www.planningmi.org

Michigan Township Association, mta-townships.org

Michigan Municipal League www.mml.org

Michigan Department of Transportation, www.mich.gov/mdot

Important Publications

Communities Benefit! The Social and Economic Benefits of Transportation Enhancements, National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse

A Guide to Transportation Enhancements, National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse
Land Use Tools and Techniques, A Handbook for Local Communities, SEMCOG, March 2003

Community Guide to Corridor Management Planning for Scenic Byways, USDOT, FHWA.

Preparing Corridor Management Plans: A Scenic Byways Guidebook, USDOT, FHWA.