

2013 APA/PAW AWARDS NOMINATION

Town of Wilkeson Rural Town Center Corridor Plan

RURAL/SMALL TOWN PLANNING CATEGORY



Submitted to:



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May 28, 2013

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APA/PAW Awards Committee
Washington APA Office
603 Stewart St., Suite 610
Seattle, WA 98101

Re: 2013 APA/PAW Awards Nomination

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to nominate the **Town of Wilkeson** for a 2013 APA/PAW Award in the **Rural/Small Town Planning** category for their **Rural Town Center Corridor Plan**. As detailed below, this is an innovative plan that will provide long-range benefits for the Town as well as for the region.

SUMMARY. In 2011-2012, Wilkeson developed a corridor plan for SR 165 to address multi-modal transportation through the downtown core, increase safety and enhance the commercial town center while preserving Wilkeson's unique heritage. Steering committee included Councilmembers, residents, National Park Service, WSDOT, Eagles, and local business owners.

SIGNIFICANCE. The Wilkeson Rural Town Center Corridor Plan completes gaps in the Town's pedestrian facilities, providing a non-motorized transportation system all along SR 165 through town. While SR 165 serves as a through route for vehicular traffic, it also serves as the Town's "main street." Currently, non-motorized facilities are not continuous through town; where they do exist, many are substandard. The Corridor Plan truly looks to the future with long-term solutions to the community's transportation needs. Besides offering a multi-modal solution, the plan also works to preserve elements of the Town's history, which is highly important to citizens.

The plan also has regional significance, as Wilkeson serves as a gateway community to major outdoor recreation areas, including Mount Rainier National Park and Mowich Lake Recreation Area. A key element of the plan is a connection from Wilkeson's Town Center into the Foothills Trail, a Pierce County trail system that connects Mount Rainier to the Puget Sound through Wilkeson.

Additionally, the plan serves as a model for development in other communities. It is broken into six distinct elements to facilitate funding, design, and construction. Because development is not limited to a specific order of construction, the Town can seek funding that is appropriate to each plan element, then construct each element as funding is obtained.

For instance, the Town plans to partner with the National Park Service for development of the Town Center Park element, and to pursue public-private partnering for the Hope Square element.

As illustrated further in the nomination materials, this plan has advanced the planning profession by demonstrating the value of planning to a small town wary of change. Additionally, by addressing economic development, meeting the Town's recreation goals, and aiming to shift vehicle trips to pedestrian trips, the Corridor Plan also helps advance the Growth Management Act.

EXTENT OF IMPLEMENTATION AND INVOLVEMENT. Since the Plan's completion, the Town of Wilkeson has been moving forward aggressively toward implementation. The Town has already obtained funding for over half the cost of design and construction for the entire plan, which is a big step toward implementation. Because the plan can be completed in phases, construction can begin while the Town continues to obtain funding through grants and public-private partnerships for future phases. The Town is gearing up to begin design and construction this year on the phase known as "The Trail," which, by cost, is the largest portion of the plan.

A number of public and private entities were involved in the creation of the Rural Town Center Corridor Plan. The plan was prepared by the Town of Wilkeson with assistance from SCJ Alliance and Robert W. Droll, Landscape Architect. The Town of Wilkeson had previously developed a number of planning documents that helped steer the development of the Corridor Plan, including their comprehensive plan, parks and recreation plan, and Carbon River Corridor Charette document. The planning team, guided by these planning documents, assisted the Town in identifying priorities, challenges and opportunities for the corridor.

Because of the plan's regional significance, regional and statewide agencies have also been involved in planning. These include Pierce County Parks and Recreation, which maintains the Foothills Trail through town; the National Park Service, which has worked on multiple planning projects with the Town; and WSDOT, which maintains the SR 165 vehicular corridor.

The public also played a key role in the planning process. At an open house in March 2012, as well as at the "Wilkeson Days" annual event in June 2012, the public provided input on the corridor plan. More than 30 different alternatives were considered by the community and evaluated by the project team, including trail alignment options, redevelopment of the Town Center, traffic flow improvements and parking improvements, among others. Preserving the Town's history and improving pedestrian access and safety were important to the community, and this helped drive the plan's development.

As illustrated in the preceding paragraphs, Wilkeson's Rural Town Center Corridor Plan demonstrates a thorough and innovative approach to planning, and the proposed improvements will have a positive impact at both the local and regional scales. It addresses the Town's current needs while also implementing long-term solutions to address potential future needs. For these reasons, the Town of Wilkeson's outstanding Corridor Plan merits recognition.

SCJ Alliance



Eric Johnston, PE
Principal

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Wilkeson Rural Town Center Corridor Plan provides a comprehensive non-motorized transportation system all along SR 165 through the Town of Wilkeson. The plan serves to carry out a number of the goals and policies in Wilkeson's Comprehensive Plan. It includes six independent elements, referred to in the plan as The Trail, Town Center Park, South Church Street Path, Town Center Walk, Hope Square, and North Rain Garden. These elements may be constructed independently of one another, but once constructed, will work together to improve vehicle and pedestrian safety, traffic circulation, pedestrian connectivity and associated illumination and stormwater facilities. The pedestrian improvements will also serve as connections to existing and planned public facilities throughout town. When completed, pedestrian and bicycle facilities will be provided all along SR 165 through Wilkeson. The improvements outlined in the Corridor Plan will create a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly commercial core with safe non-motorized connections to all parts of town.

While SR 165 serves as a through route for vehicular traffic, it also serves as the Town's "main street." The plan addresses economic development along the corridor and increases opportunities for walking and bicycling to and through the commercial core, while also providing public gathering spaces and access to the shoreline of Wilkeson Creek. The facilities provided will improve pedestrian safety and will be ADA accessible for the special needs population. Because Wilkeson has recently had to curtail school bus service, providing safe walking and biking routes along the highway has become important for school children's safety. The pedestrian and bicycle facilities along SR 165 will also benefit regional biking/hiking enthusiasts who use the Foothills Trail and currently have no connection through Wilkeson to businesses, planned waterfront access and new park facilities being developed.

COMPLIANCE WITH REVIEW CRITERIA

OUTSTANDING APPLICATION OF PLANNING PRINCIPLES

This Corridor Plan applied planning principles in a number of thoughtful ways. A public process was conducted to reach out to the residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in the Town of Wilkeson, with participation levels much greater than those previously seen in the Town. From this process, priorities for multi-modal transportation were identified, consistent with growth management and regional planning principles. Specific priorities included the development of a public trail along the corridor, a public park with access to the shoreline of Wilkeson Creek, and rain gardens along the corridor for stormwater management. The plan also incorporates preservation of the Town's historic character and designs sensitive to that historic context.

IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY VALUES

Public participation has played a large role in the development of the Corridor Plan. The Town has obtained citizen input through a variety of outlets, and has incorporated that input thoughtfully and thoroughly into the plan. Through open houses, Council meetings and other community gatherings, the citizens of the Town of Wilkeson have expressed a preference for corridor improvements that protect the rich history so evident throughout the town, while increasing pedestrian safety and providing for improved circulation and access to the businesses and public spaces in the Town Center. The Town has successfully preserved historically significant buildings and created public spaces and monuments celebrating its history of railroads, coal mining and sandstone quarries. This plan builds on the Town's history; improvements will be consistent with the traditional theme exhibited by Wilkeson's brick and sandstone structures and buildings along SR 165, creating a cohesive "sense of place."

Based on citizen input at an open house on March 29, 2012, and at the annual Wilkeson Days event on July 21, 2012, the Town determined that a pedestrian-oriented Town Center is important to Wilkeson's residents. Attendees voted on the corridor improvements they would prefer available funds to be spent on, with the largest share of the votes – 40% – in favor of pedestrian improvements. This project removes barriers for pedestrians and bicyclists along the SR 165 corridor into town. In addition, it creates a safe and welcoming pedestrian environment in the Town Center by providing vehicle/pedestrian separation, upgraded pedestrian crossings, widened sidewalks, and improved illumination. More than 30 different alternatives were considered by the community and evaluated by the project team, and citizen input was taken into account at every turn. Because citizen input was taken into account from the very beginning of the planning process, the Corridor Plan reflects the values of the community.

CONTRIBUTION TO PLANNING TECHNOLOGIES

Prior to the corridor planning process, none of the Town's plans were digitized. As part of plan development, the planning team digitized all Town plans, including land use, sewer, water, and stormwater. This helped the planning team identify points of conflict during the planning process, and will be useful to the Town in future planning and design efforts. It can also be used in future countywide or regional planning efforts, such as the Pierce County buildable lands analysis.

FURTHERANCE OF GMA

Development of the Corridor Plan has been driven by Wilkeson's Comprehensive Plan, as well as by other planning documents adopted by Town Council in support of the Comprehensive Plan. As required by state law, Wilkeson's Comprehensive Plan is consistent with the goals and requirements of the Growth Management Act. A number of goals and policies within the Comprehensive Plan relate to land use within the Town as it relates to SR 165 corridor planning. Relevant goals of the Comprehensive Plan include Goal 7.2.6, which supports the provision of sidewalks and walking trails in selected areas; Goal 7.2.8, which promotes a central shopping and business district; Goal 7.2.11, which encourages preservation of the character of the existing business district; and Goal 7.2.14, which discusses the "need for parks and recreation improvements to accommodate the majority of the residents' interests and needs." In addition, Goals 10.7.5, 13.4.01 and 13.4.05 (and their supporting Policies 10.7.6-6, 13.4.02-4 and 13.4.06-4) address "attracting the types of economic activities which best meet the needs and desires of the community." They also encourage the provision of walking areas in the business district, which "should promote the historic qualities of Wilkeson." The proposed improvements will create continuous trail and sidewalk facilities along SR 165, which will enhance the walkability of Town Center, while also maintaining its historic character. They will also improve access to the commercial core, facilitating business growth. These outcomes are consistent with all of the goals and policies listed here.

The Town of Wilkeson Parks and Recreation Plan, which is a subsection of the Comprehensive Plan, contains goals and policies to "develop a system of pedestrian trails and corridors that access significant environmental and historic features, public facilities and developed neighborhoods," and to "continue efforts to complete a connection from the Foothills Trail to downtown as a pedestrian corridor." By providing safe pedestrian and bicycle connections through Wilkeson's Town Center, including connections to public facilities such as the Town Hall, Foothills Trail, historic markers and monuments, planned Coke Ovens Park, planned skate park, and planned waterfront access, this project helps meet the Town's recreation goals. By furthering the Town's Comprehensive Plan and Parks and Recreation goals, the Corridor Plan also helps to advance the principles of the GMA.

SUITABILITY OF SOLUTION TO CONTEXT

The project context identified through the planning process is that of a historic small town with a commercial core bisected by a state highway and along a sensitive riparian corridor. The solutions identified improve multi-modal access to this commercial core and shoreline while respecting the historic context of the built and natural environments. The materials identified for project installation are consistent with the existing aesthetic and reflect the Town's historic character. Potential impacts to the riparian habitat are mitigated through the use of rain gardens and native plant selection along SR 165.

CREATIVITY OF SOLUTION AND APPLICABILITY TO OTHER PROJECTS

The plan provides an innovative model for other communities to follow in terms of plan development. It is broken into six distinct elements to facilitate project planning and pursuit of funding opportunities; each element is independent of the others. Because development is not limited to a specific order of construction, the Town can pursue funding that is specifically suited to each element of the plan and then build whenever funding is obtained. The Town seeks out partners, including other projects or entities (both public and private), that complement specific elements and that therefore may provide the necessary leverage to make an element of the corridor plan financially feasible. For example, Wilkeson has been working in partnership with Mount Rainier National Park over the past several years to facilitate projects that work to the mutual benefit of both parties. The National Park Service supports implementation of the Corridor Plan, and will likely partner with the Town on the Town Center Park element, which will complement potential future development of NPS facilities in and around Wilkeson. Additionally, the Town is pursuing public-private partnering for the Hope Square element, which would be appropriate because of Hope Square's economic development focus. This funding strategy has proven successful so far, with over 50% of the plan funded for design and construction.

The plan is also innovative because of its unique approach to stormwater management. Many of the goals in Wilkeson's Comprehensive Plan address a desire by the community to preserve significant environmental features – including Wilkeson and Gale Creeks – and to grow and develop in a way that protects these streams. Rain gardens are one way to capture stormwater off the roadway and filter it before it reaches these streams. By constructing rain gardens alongside the South Church Street Path, adjacent to SR 165, this project will help protect Wilkeson's streams. Additionally, by reducing water pollution in Wilkeson's streams, the rain gardens will also help protect downstream areas, including the delicate ecosystem of the Puget Sound.

OVERCOMING PROJECT OBSTACLES

The main obstacle to planning in a small, rural town is that much of the population is resistant to change. Most residents saw no value in planning and were worried about the introduction of new projects that might destroy the historic character of their downtown core. The planning team, through a very involved public process, was able to demonstrate the role planning could play in actually helping to preserve the Town's historic character. The process illustrated the value of planning and showed residents that the proposed projects would incorporate community values, and furthermore, that they could be funded and built. By fostering this relationship with the Town's residents, the planning team showed that a contextually appropriate planning process could provide immense value to the community.

EFFICIENT USE OF BUDGET

The Town of Wilkeson hired the planning team to create a corridor plan for the SR 165 vehicular corridor through town. The planning team went above and beyond to offer a thorough plan that addressed not only the corridor, but also wide-ranging issues related to the corridor and development in the center of Town, where SR 165 becomes Wilkeson's "main street." The plan addressed economic development in the Town's commercial core, particularly the salient issue of pedestrian and vehicular access to local businesses. It also provided a planned public park adjacent to the corridor with shoreline access, in compliance with the Town's Shoreline Management Program, and addressed ongoing land development issues adjacent to the commercial core, in compliance with the Town's Comprehensive Plan. The corridor plan addressed broader issues related to the SR 165 corridor, and yielded provisions to improve those issues. By doing so, the planning team was able to provide a much greater value than the Town had anticipated for the original planning budget.

Letters of Support

TOWN OF WILKESON RURAL TOWN CENTER CORRIDOR PLAN



Town of Wilkeson

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Wilkeson, WA 98396

360-829-0790

Fax 360-829-4292

May 22, 2013

APA/PAW Awards Committee
Washington APA Office
603 Stewart St., Suite 610
Seattle, WA 98101

Re: Wilkeson Rural Town Center Corridor Plan – 2013 APA/PAW Awards Nomination

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is written to support the nomination of the Wilkeson Rural Town Center Corridor Plan for a 2013 APA/PAW Award. The Corridor Plan was completed and adopted by Town Council in October 2012 to implement goals and policies listed in the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Implementation will provide numerous benefits to the citizens of this community – and to the region – including health, safety, economic benefits and historic preservation.

Wilkeson is a unique community, a living example of the historic coal towns that once boomed in the area. Citizens have a strong desire to improve pedestrian safety and enhance the commercial core while also preserving the Town's history and culture. Additionally, Wilkeson serves as a gateway community: it provides access to recreational areas, including Mount Rainier National Park, Mowich Lake, Evans Creek ORV Area and the Foothills Rails to Trail. The things that make the community unique also contribute to the need for this plan, which will improve circulation and safety within Wilkeson as well as connections to recreational areas beyond.

The Rural Town Center Corridor Plan provides a multi-use trail connection available to everyone at no cost, benefitting both residents and visitors. Improvements will provide a safe pedestrian connection where no sidewalks currently exist between the Town Center and the residential areas and Foothills Trail to the south. It will improve sidewalks and add new curb and gutter where the existing facilities are substandard. This provides a continuous pedestrian and bicycle connection through town along SR 165, which will ensure mobility choices and remove pedestrian barriers into and through the center of town.

This plan will also provide health benefits by giving residents the option to eliminate short vehicle trips in favor of non-motorized transport – a safe walk or bike trip between residential areas and the Town

Center. Moreover, it provides children with a safe walking and bicycling route to school, which is critical due to recent elimination of bus service to the local elementary school.

The plan will also create a public connection to the waterfront, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and Shoreline Master Program. Adjacent to Town Hall, the planned Town Center Park will provide public access to the waterfront where currently no public access exists. This wonderful new civic space will allow residents and visitors to enjoy our natural amenities to the fullest.

Economic benefits will be seen in the community, as well. Pierce County is developing the Foothills Trail, and the extension proposed in this plan complements the greater trail system throughout the county. The connection from the existing Foothills Trail into town will increase economic opportunities by bringing more recreational traffic through the Town Center. The plan will also improve access and circulation between the commercial buildings in the Town Center, and will implement a comprehensive improvement program that would add value and economic vitality to the businesses in the area.

The corridor plan also ties into and serves as a catalyst for other projects in the area, both local and regional. Wilkeson's Coke Oven Park, a National Registered Historic Site and home to the Town's Annual Handcar Races Event, will be developed as a regional park. A pathway from the park will connect into the corridor through Town Center and, ultimately, into the Foothills Trail. Mount Rainier National Park plans to purchase land in Wilkeson's Town Center for a shuttle system and interpretive area, which would be incorporated into the trail system. This would increase connectivity to the Park and bring visitors through Town Center to the benefit of the local economy.

As Wilkeson's mayor, I have been closely involved with local corridor planning and strongly support implementation of the Rural Town Center Corridor Plan. I am confident the elements of the recently adopted plan will greatly benefit both our community and our region. Thank you for the opportunity to share this plan for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Donna Hoyerhuis".

Donna Hoyerhuis, Mayor
Town of Wilkeson



Washington State Senate

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Senator Pam Roach
31st Legislative District
Chair, Governmental Operations Committee

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May 25, 2013

APA/PAW Awards Committee
Washington APA Office
603 Stewart St., Suite 610
Seattle, WA 98101

Re: Town of Wilkeson Nomination for APA/PAW Awards 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of the nomination of Wilkeson's Rural Town Center Corridor Plan for an APA/PAW award. I have met with the planning team, and they walked me through the planned improvements. I find the plan to be well thought out, regionally beneficial, and deserving of recognition with a Rural/Small Town Planning APA/PAW award.

As a state senator, I recognize the need for multi-modal transportation plans that serve the needs of all residents. Additionally, this plan has a focus on improvements to Wilkeson's Town Center, which is also its commercial core. Implementation of the plan will improve circulation into and through town, enhancing access to the commercial core. By doing so, the corridor plan will help stimulate Wilkeson's economy, contributing to economic growth and prosperity in eastern Pierce County. The plan also protects an important part of our region's heritage through its attention to preserving artifacts reflecting Wilkeson's history as a mining town.

Because of its comprehensive approach, this plan will improve vehicular access on the SR 165 corridor through Wilkeson while also improving pedestrian safety. It provides an excellent model for other small towns in the area, and I believe its implementation will be of great benefit to my district.

I strongly support nomination of the Rural Town Center Corridor Plan for an APA/PAW award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pam Roach".

State Senator

31st Legislative District



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Mount Rainier National Park
55210 238th Avenue East
Ashford, Washington 98304-9751

IN REPLY REFER TO:
A38

May 29, 2013

APA/PAW Awards Committee
Washington APA Office
603 Stewart St., Suite 610
Seattle, WA 98101

Re: 2013 APA/PAW Award Nomination

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Mount Rainier National Park, I would like to express our support for the nomination of Wilkeson's Rural Town Center Corridor Plan for a 2013 APA/PAW Award in the Rural/Small Town Planning category.

Mount Rainier has been encouraging, facilitating, partnering, and participating in regional planning projects with gateway communities and stakeholders all around the park since the late 1990s. We invest staff time and resources in these efforts in order to: 1) promote land conservation; 2) provide local recreation facilities and opportunities; 3) conserve cultural landscapes; and 4) develop sustainable tourism economies. These types of projects outside the park's boundaries help us to better manage and protect the park itself.

The Town of Wilkeson serves as an important connection to Mount Rainier National Park and other outdoor recreational areas, and we have worked with the Town on multiple planning efforts. The Rural Town Center Corridor Plan is a forward-thinking plan which, by improving safety and increasing walking and biking opportunities in Wilkeson, will greatly enhance the livability of this small town. It will also have positive impacts throughout the surrounding region. The corridor plan will enhance an important connection through this gateway community into the park and other recreational areas, while also strengthening the community's internal connections.

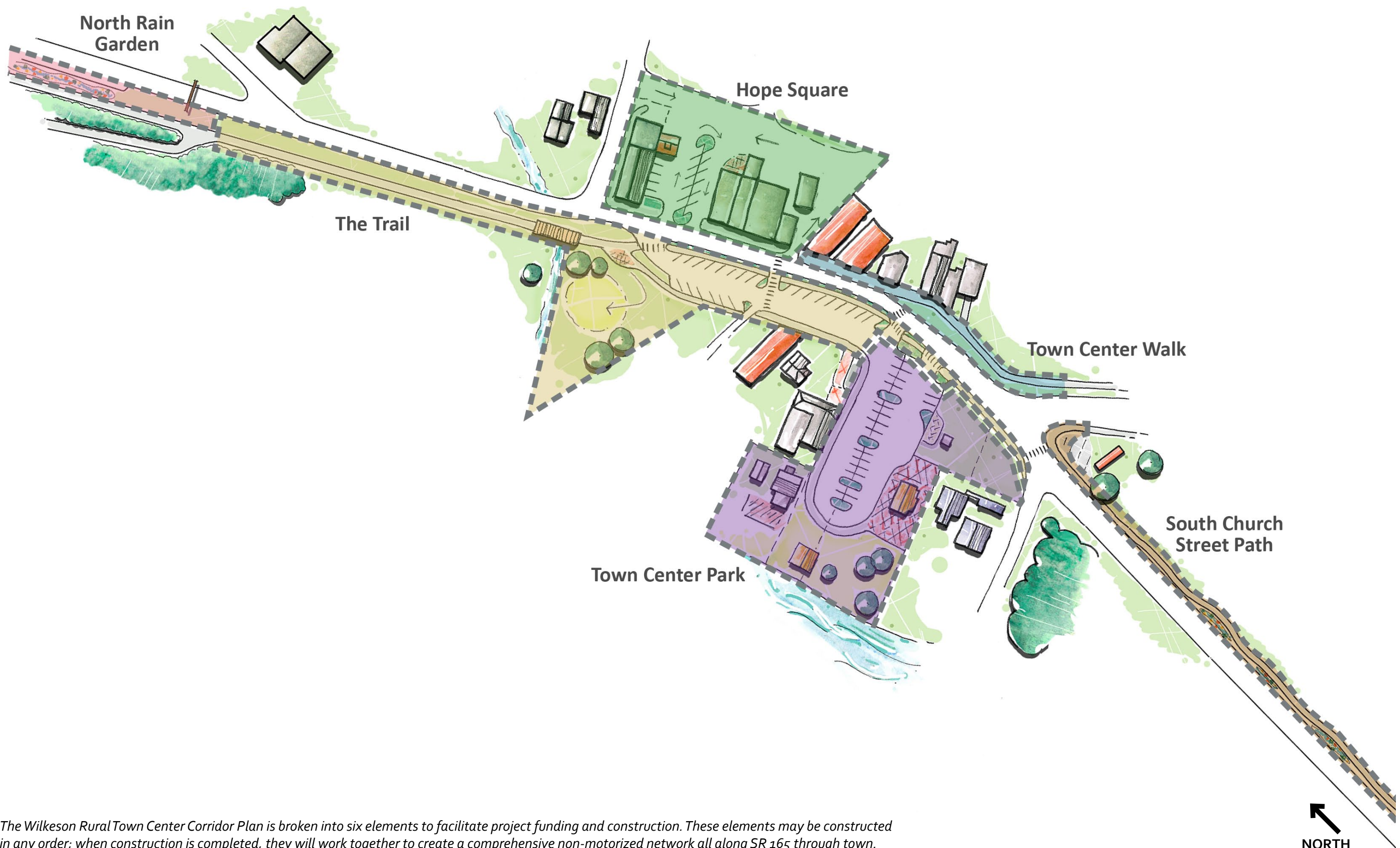
For these reasons, we strongly encourage your consideration of Wilkeson's corridor plan for an APA/PAW Award.

Sincerely,

Randy King
Superintendent

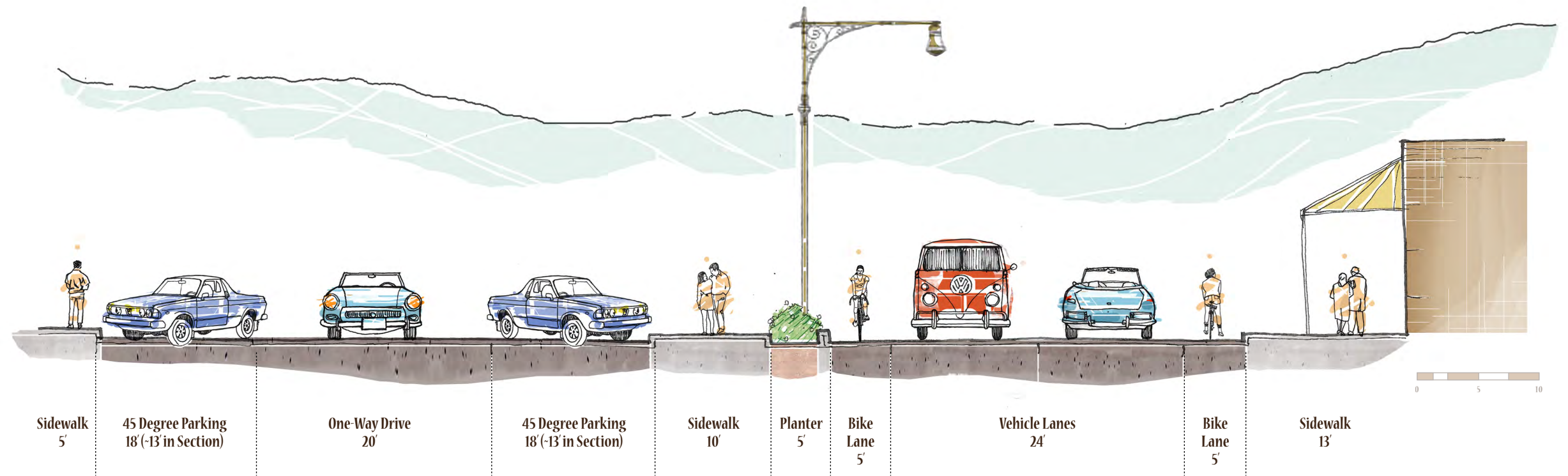
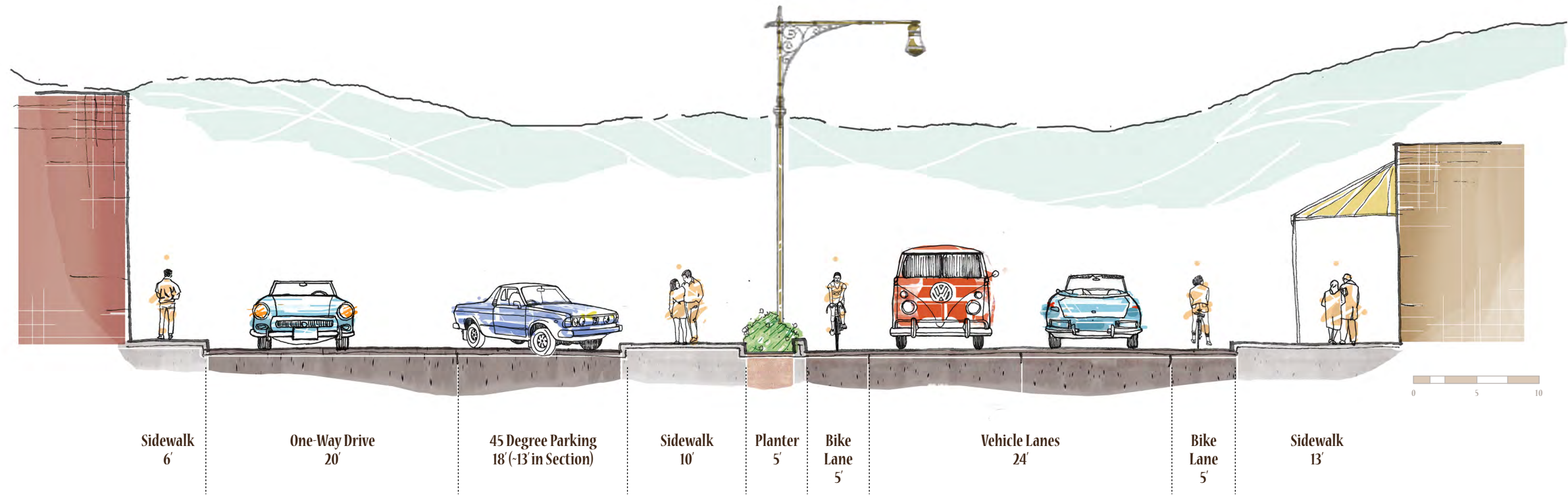
Supporting Graphics

TOWN OF WILKESON RURAL TOWN CENTER CORRIDOR PLAN



The Wilkeson Rural Town Center Corridor Plan is broken into six elements to facilitate project funding and construction. These elements may be constructed in any order; when construction is completed, they will work together to create a comprehensive non-motorized network all along SR 165 through town.

NORTH



Proposed cross-sections through the center of Town provide continuous, safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities, with improved vehicular and non-motorized circulation into and through the commercial core.



South Church Street Path: Existing



Town Center Walk: Existing



North Rain Garden: Existing



South Church Street Path: Proposed



Town Center Walk: Proposed



North Rain Garden: Proposed

The top photos illustrate existing conditions for the South Church Street Path, Town Center Walk, and North Rain Garden elements of the Corridor Plan. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities are nonexistent or substandard in the South Church Street Path and Town Center Walk areas. Below are the proposed improvements for each of these areas, which create pedestrian paths and take advantage of the area adjacent to SR 165 for stormwater treatment in the form of rain gardens.



The Trail element of the Corridor Plan repurposes an unused rail trestle as a pedestrian bridge over Wilkeson Creek.



Proposed Town Center Park provides a public gathering space and a pedestrian connection from the SR 165 corridor to the Wilkeson Creek waterfront.

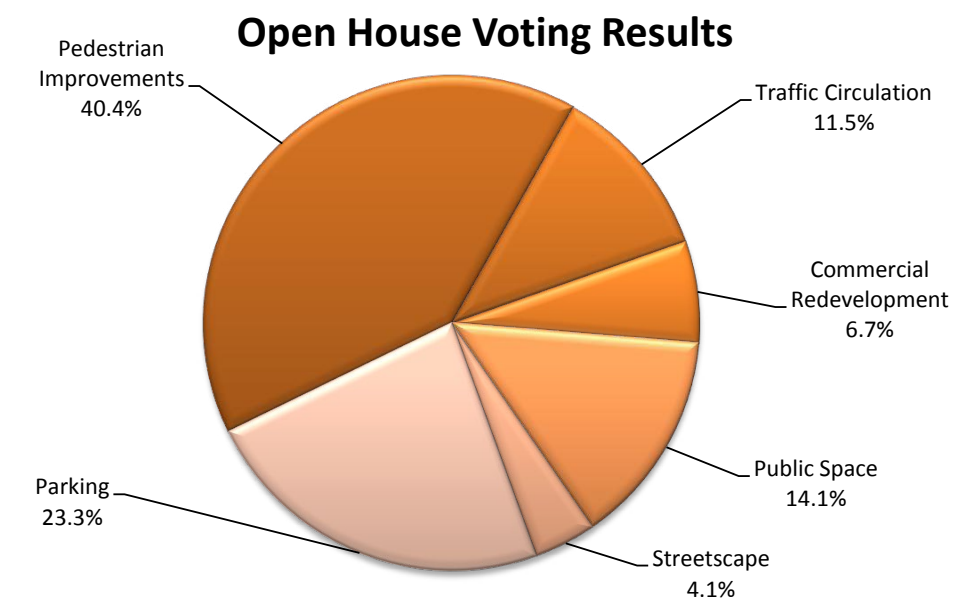


Proposed pedestrian and bicycle improvements to the SR 165 corridor include The Trail's extension into town (shown on the left side of the road) and the Town Center Walk adjacent to a number of local businesses (on the right side of the road).



A proposed concept for development of Hope Square illustrates how a deteriorating building may be repurposed as an open marketplace, with improvements to pedestrian and vehicular circulation as well as access to local businesses.

The graphics above illustrate some of the improvements proposed in Wilkeson's Rural Town Center Corridor Plan.



Images above illustrate the public's participation, which played a key role in the corridor planning process. Citizens provided input at open houses and at the annual Wilkeson Days event in 2012. The pie chart illustrates residents' priorities, as identified through open house voting.