

SPECIAL PLACES

Special places for economic and social interactions create the vitality needed for a true downtown environment. Downtown is a collection of special places, including buildings, plazas and parks. These special places are a fundamental component of urban vitality. They draw people downtown for their unique character, intensity and variety of activities.

These special places for commerce or recreation reinforce downtown's unique character, based on local history and civic traditions. Not coincidentally, these places are generally located along the Great Streets of Eugene and feature works of public art. These places must be inviting and easily accessible throughout downtown, for planned and serendipitous encounters, for special times and for every day.

Special Places Downtown

The Park Blocks

The Park Blocks are the heart of downtown Eugene, the city's stage for celebration and commerce. They are used on a daily basis as an urban oasis, and they are filled with people during times such as the Saturday Market and Farmers' Market. Strategies



The Park Blocks – downtown's gathering place.



Members of The American Music Institute's Song and Dance Camp performing at 5th Street Public Market.

Photo by Sandra Dominguez

to maintain the Park Blocks as the ceremonial center of the city should include consideration of areas that were historically part of the original park, including all four corners of 8th Avenue and Oak Street. Buildings surrounding the Park Blocks are encouraged to maintain or develop street level active uses to contribute to the activity and safety of the Park Blocks.

Broadway Plaza

Located at the historic crossroads of Willamette and Broadway, Broadway Plaza was designed to provide a special place in downtown. It is used on a regular basis for sitting, eating and talking with friends. It is transformed on special occasions into an outdoor theatre for large public events. It showcases public art, including special paving, the Four Seasons sculptures, and carefully crafted ceramic tiles. An enhanced connection between Broadway Plaza and the Park Blocks is needed to create a prominent pedestrian path between these two downtown destinations.

Hult Center and Shedd Institute for the Arts

The Hult Center and the Shedd are significant cultural destinations. Performances at both locations bring citizens and visitors to downtown from all over the community and region. The Hult Center Plaza is packed with people during events such as the Eugene Celebration or free performance previews. The Shedd is a recent and wonderful addition to downtown, housed in the former First Baptist Church. This architecturally significant structure is located on Broadway, close to restaurants and shops. In addition to concerts and performances, the Shedd offers instruction and workshops in the arts.

The original Carnegie Library in downtown Eugene, which opened in 1906.



Eugene Public Library

Our new downtown public library has become a very special place for the community. The library includes both indoor and outdoor public plazas, children's activity area, public meeting rooms, a café and a used bookstore. Public art is located throughout the building and exterior spaces. The library draws people of all ages downtown, for events and activities and the simple pleasure of finding a book to read.

The River

The Willamette River is a treasured recreational and environmental asset, and should be a fundamental aspect of the identity and vitality of our city. The EWEB fountain and riverfront plaza is one of the few points of access to the river in downtown. Access to the riverfront from downtown will be enhanced as neighboring areas develop and 5th and 8th Avenues are improved as Great Streets. The plan supports the creation of a carefully designed at-grade crossing of the railroad tracks at 8th Avenue, with an inviting civic destination where 8th Avenue leads to the river's edge. Development and activities along the riverfront should support the use of this special area as an urban recreational resource. Views of the river from adjacent developed areas should be emphasized.

The Millrace and Cannery Square

The Millrace is a visible reminder of the city's industrial beginnings. Only a portion of the Millrace is an exposed waterway; the remainder is in a culvert at the end of Ferry Lane, west of Patterson Street until it reaches the Willamette River through the EWEB property. Recent planning efforts around the new Courthouse reinvigorated ideas for the Millrace to provide an above-ground pedestrian path to the river. Design concepts and

cost estimates for Millrace improvements vary widely. This plan supports the concept for full daylighting of the Millrace, between the existing surface waterway ending at Ferry Lane and the outfall on the EWEB property.

Cannery Square is the name proposed for the public space envisioned near the corner of Ferry Street and 8th Avenue, in front of the new Federal Courthouse. This space will be designed as part of the improvements to the courthouse area and may include Millrace improvements. Cannery Square is envisioned as part of the sequence of public spaces along 8th Avenue leading from the Park Blocks to the river.

Nearby Open Spaces

Downtown is bordered by a wealth of extraordinary open spaces - Skinner Butte Park, Alton Baker Park, and the extended Willamette River Greenway park system. These places provide great views of the city or the river, and opportunities for outdoor recreation. Activities such as biking, canoeing, kayaking, even rock climbing and bird watching take place directly next to Eugene's commercial core.

Eugene's unique community identity and quality of life are intricately bound to these nearby nature areas. These areas complement the urban experience downtown. They become even more critical as density and intensity of uses increase in the downtown core. These areas must be easily visible and accessible from many points downtown. They should be promoted as a key element in the marketability, economic viability and livability of downtown.



Downtown is bordered by wonderful parks, close enough for a lunchtime stroll.



5th Street Market – located on 5th Avenue –was originally a poultry processing plant. Now it is a key downtown destination for dining and shopping.

5th Avenue Area

The 5th Street Market is one of the best loved and most successful places downtown. It is a downtown destination for workers, residents and visitors. A number of other popular places are located along 5th Avenue, including shops and restaurants. Rehabilitation of the train depot at the north terminus of Willamette Street just north of 5th Avenue is underway. Future improvements may include a railway overpass, a vehicular and pedestrian loop and a public plaza. Much of the train depot area is designated and zoned for industrial uses. This area will be redesignated and rezoned to allow commercial development compatible with the adjacent downtown area. Projects that help to “fill in” the missing pieces between activity areas are especially encouraged.

Historic Properties

Historic properties are special places downtown. Not coincidentally, many historic structures are located along the Great Streets. These structures remind us of the history of our community and the architectural heritage that characterizes Eugene. They deserve recognition through informational plaques and walking tour brochures. Some of the historic crown jewels include the WPA-era post office and the McDonald Theater on Willamette Street, the Oregon Electric Station on 5th Avenue, and the Tiffany Building on 8th Avenue. **The Historic Places map on page 47 indicates properties of historic interest downtown.** Some of these properties have been designated as City of Eugene Historic Landmarks or as National Register properties; the remainder are older structures that reinforce the sense of history and the walkable character of downtown.

New development needs to respect the quality of historic structures. It is not typically necessary to duplicate older buildings in terms of details or styles. Instead, new design must be sensitive to historic

context and character, such as maintaining the same street orientation, setback or quality of materials. New buildings must preserve and capitalize on the value of historic structures.

The City encourages listing of significant structures in the National Register of Historic Places or as City Landmarks. Historic preservation planning identifies resources that are traditionally over 50 years of age, so many modern era (1935-1965) resources are coming into their own for consideration as landmarks. Properties listed as historic are eligible for financial incentives and special consideration for flexibility with the land use code. Listing of historic structures increases our understanding of local history, people and places and helps preserve these properties for the future. Listing of historic structures as city landmarks requires consent of the property owner, public or private.



The First Christian Church, constructed in 1911, is one of the crown jewels of existing historic properties downtown.

Policies

1. Enhance public places throughout downtown through the careful design of civic buildings, streetscapes, parks and plazas. Include public art and other elements to create special places for all ages.
2. Connect special places downtown with enhanced street designs, public art, directional signs, transit routes, and historic markers to create an inviting and memorable route through downtown.
3. Promote adjacent park and open space areas as a valuable complement to downtown's urban places. Improve connections between downtown and nearby nature areas.
4. Encourage listing of appropriate structures and sites of historic importance in the National Register of Historic Places or as City of Eugene Historic Landmarks.

Implementation Strategies

- A. Encourage the creation of new special places especially along the Great Streets.
- B. Amend the Eugene-Springfield Metropolitan Area General Plan to redesignate the train station from industrial to commercial land use, and rezone to a commercial zone such as C-2 or C-3.
- C. Create an artful directory sign program throughout downtown that directs people from special place to special place.
- D. Prepare an open space plan for downtown that includes the Park Blocks, parks adjacent to downtown and the riverfront path system.
- E. Provide places downtown that appeal to children and families. Consider places to play or learn about the city. Design places with kids in mind.
- F. Identify areas along streets that can be enhanced by landscaping, art or pedestrian amenities.
- G. Support programming for music, art and other events in the special places downtown.
- H. Maintain views and access from downtown to nearby open space areas. Include signs and sidewalk improvements.

- I. Create a "civic design" review board to assist in and approve the designs for all civic facilities, particularly in our downtown core.
- J. Reinforce the continued use of the Park Blocks for the Saturday Market and Farmers' Market.

Projects

Examples of possible projects that address the implementation strategies:

- Install graphics for downtown information and directions at the Park Blocks.
- Develop a funding strategy to daylight the Millrace from Ferry Lane to the Willamette River.
- Locate a play structure for kids near the Park Blocks.
- Work with Lane County to develop a mixed use or civic structure in place of the butterfly parking lot on Oak Street between 7th and 8th Avenues, to better integrate this site with the Park Blocks.
- Implement a historic plaque program and walking tour.



The historic train depot, photo circa 1910. A high-speed rail will link Eugene and Vancouver, British Columbia.