

# GREAT STREETS

*Great Streets connect special places with safe, convenient and interesting routes.* They are pedestrian-oriented in design and appearance, with retail and other active ground floor uses. They accommodate bicycles, slow-moving automobile traffic, on-street parking and emergency vehicles. Great Streets are places people choose to walk along and return to.

The concept of Great Streets was one of the most strongly supported ideas in the *Vision for Greater Downtown Eugene* as a way to characterize downtown and focus public attention and funding. These Great Streets will be the basis of a walkable downtown network that encourages pedestrians and retail activity.

Historically, Broadway and Willamette were the important commercial streets downtown. Both 5th and 8th Avenues were key streets, one for market activities and one for civic uses. Part of what makes these streets great is their connection to places that are important in the history of our community, reinforced by building design and the location of public art. All four of these streets need to be designed as urban open space, to transcend the function of moving traffic and flourish as pedestrian routes and destinations.

A public improvement strategy will be created to reinforce the special character of each Great Street. Improvements will include elements such as special paving, street trees, and street furniture. Design guidelines are already in place for buildings that front Broadway between Oak and Charnelton. Similar guidelines should be extended to all the Great Streets to promote high quality, pedestrian orientated design. Commercial signs or signs for information, direction, or public safety need to be well designed and placed along these streets to add to the sense of purpose and activity but not increase the visual clutter.

## Willamette Street

Willamette Street is the historic main street of Eugene. Although the historic buildings clustered at Broadway and Willamette are gone, the street remains the significant commercial street in downtown. Several blocks along Willamette have been improved with the removal of the

pedestrian mall, but a unifying concept for the portion of this street between 5th and 13th Avenues still needs to be developed and implemented.

Willamette Street opens onto the plaza at Broadway and Willamette and the Hult Center Plaza. The City should consider changes to the Hult Center Plaza to enhance the visual connection between

Skinner Butte and Spencer Butte, and if possible, allow access for transit and emergency vehicles. The north end of Willamette Street terminates at the train depot. A pedestrian connection across the railroad tracks to Skinner Butte Park has been desired for many years and should be vigorously pursued.



Looking north on Willamette Street, the original "Great Street" of Eugene.



Well designed storefronts enhance pedestrian places, such as along 8th Avenue.

## Broadway

The pedestrian ambience along parts of Broadway is among the best downtown. It is consistently ranked as a favorite retail location for window shopping and dining. Ground floor retail, restaurants, and sidewalk activities such as outdoor cafés are specifically encouraged along this street.

In 2002, Broadway was reopened to accommodate automobiles, with enhanced public spaces and pedestrian amenities. The redesign honors the unique role of this street as a public venue for such events as the Eugene Celebration and First Night. Improved pedestrian crossings at Broadway and Mill are included in the planned transportation improvements for the Courthouse District. These improvements are opportunities to create a gateway into downtown from State Highway 99 (Franklin Boulevard).



The design of Broadway accommodates slow moving vehicles, and provides comfortable space for pedestrians.



Eugene City Council Chambers in the courtyard of City Hall on 8th Avenue at Pearl.

## 8th Avenue

Historically, 8th Avenue has functioned as a “Civic Street.” It is the location of the Park Blocks, originally including all four corners of 8th and Oak. The 1875 City Hall, which included a jail and firehouse, and the Lane County Courthouse were all located on 8th Avenue. This avenue is still the location of major public buildings, including City Hall and the County Courthouse. The new Federal Courthouse will continue this tradition, with its location on 8th Avenue east of Mill.

The civic character of 8th Avenue should be reinforced through a linked series of existing and planned open spaces. These include the Park Blocks, Cannery Square in front of the new Federal Courthouse, the Millrace, and a proposed riverfront plaza. The City has begun the process of creating a concept for a civic center, including a new City Hall and police headquarters, possibly with other local government agencies. The preferred location for the new civic center is on 8th Avenue, between the Park Blocks and Mill Street, either on the existing City Hall site, or on a block facing 8th Avenue in the immediate vicinity.

## 5th Avenue

Eugene’s 5th Avenue was an early market street. Today, the downtown urban quality of 5th Avenue stretches from Charnelton Street to High Street. A variety of uses and unique building types are located on this street, ranging from trendy shops and restaurants to the Lane County jail. Existing historic buildings along 5th Avenue have been adapted for modern uses, including the Farmers’ Union Building, the Lane Hotel, the Granary, the Oregon Electric Station, and the 5th Street Public Market.

This avenue has its own retail character and historical identity, different from the other Great Streets, due to the varied building types, setbacks and activities. Design guidelines for 5th Avenue need to respond to the quirky and fragmentary quality of the avenue, the historic context, and the development potential that exists along its length.

These guidelines need to stress filling in the gaps along the street and encouraging buildings with minimal setbacks and parking in the rear.

Currently, 5th Avenue ends at the railroad tracks at High Street, with pedestrian access to the riverfront only through a small path in EWEB's parking lot. An improved connection is needed to provide visual and physical access to the Willamette River and the riverfront path system.

## Downtown Gateways

All four Great Streets provide major entrances into, not just through, downtown. These entrances should be distinct to signify these streets and to reinforce the identity of downtown. A creative solution including public improvements such as landscaping and artful direction and information signs should be crafted for each key location.



Broadway Market, on Broadway at Olive Street. Great streets are great people places.

## Policies

1. Emphasize Broadway, Willamette Street, 5th and 8th Avenues as Great Streets through public improvements and development guidelines. Include portions of these streets as follows:
  - Willamette between 5th and 13th Avenues
  - Broadway between Lincoln and Hilyard
  - 5th Avenue between Lincoln and High Street (with potential extension to the Willamette River)
  - 8th Avenue between Willamette Street and the Willamette River
2. Strongly encourage the location of significant municipal, county, state and federal buildings along 8th Avenue.

## Implementation Strategies

- A. Develop a separate design strategy for each Great Street. Include street improvement elements such as: public art, special planting schemes, center medians, street lamps, benches and kiosks, banners and street, information and building signs.
- B. Develop design guidelines for buildings along the Great Streets. Include elements such as setback, quality of materials, design of first floor, and treatment of parking.
- C. Link Great Streets to important public places, including urban plazas and open spaces.
- D. Seek funding and develop a plan for a new City Hall and police station along East 8th Avenue.

## Projects

Examples of possible projects that address the implementation strategies:

- Implement street improvements for 8th Avenue, with public art elements, special light standards, signs and street furniture.
- Implement a design study and possible acquisition of land to make a stronger pedestrian connection from 5th Avenue to the riverfront.
- Create a pedestrian connection across the railroad tracks between the end of Willamette Street and Skinner Butte.
- Provide a loan fund for façade improvements along West Broadway.
- Include signs, public art and landscaping at the gateways to downtown along Broadway and Willamette.
- Begin site analysis of possible locations along East 8th Avenue for a new City Hall and police station.



Great Streets accommodate pedestrians and slow moving traffic – and the occasional duck.