

Town of Lexington

Downtown Safety and Multimodal Transportation

Findings and Recommendations



July 2023

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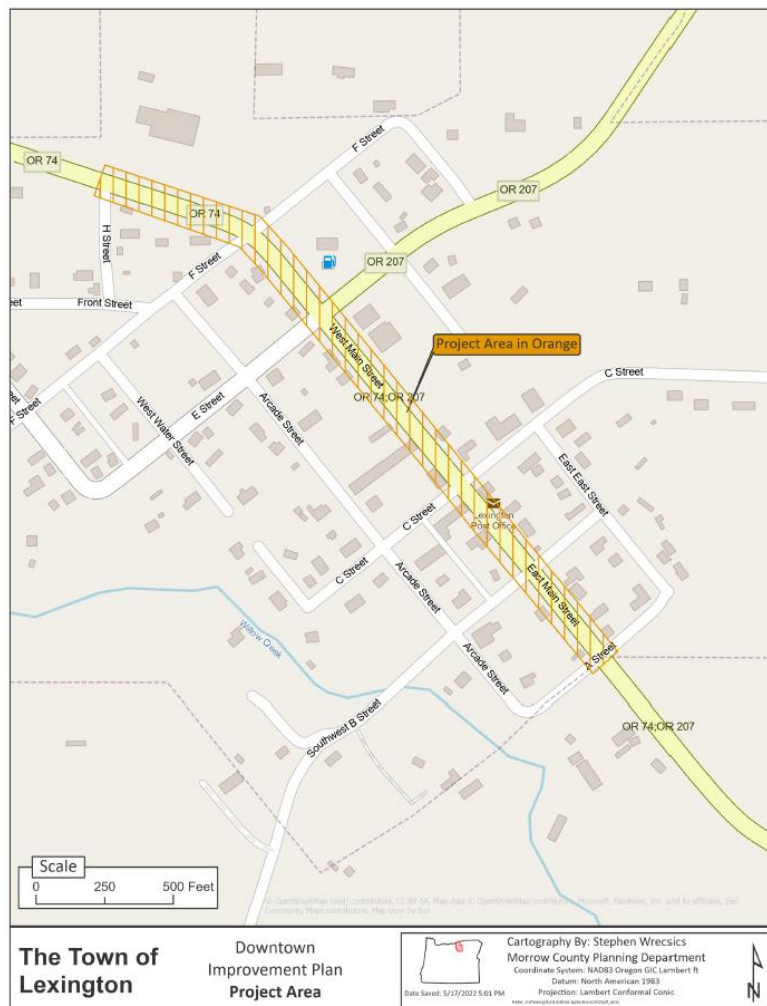
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Introduction

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to support the Town of the Lexington and its residents facilitate a community conversation surrounding the needed safety improvements in the Lexington downtown project area. The downtown project area, locally referred to as "Main Street", is the stretch of Oregon Highway 74 running from H street to A street. Particular attention is given to walkability, parking management, and safety around renewed use and development of properties along Main Street and fixed route bus stop in the heart of the downtown area.

Figure 1: Town of Lexington Project Area Map



Project Objective

The objective is to create a report of recommendations for safety and multimodal transportation improvements in the Project Area. The report serves as a guide for the Town of Lexington regarding prioritization of improvements and support efforts to obtain funding for further planning. This report also summarizes the planning process along with a series of key safety, design, and placemaking improvement concepts that were co-created with City and community input.

Specific elements of the project include the following actions.

- Engaging community members in long-term thinking about the future built environment of the Project Area, taking care to engage traditionally marginalized or hard-to-reach populations.
- Identifying priorities in land use and transportation, including but not limited to safety, ADA accessibility, and multimodality, that are clear and well understood.
- Considering land use and transportation impacts and opportunities in the context of anticipated development, including the new downtown restaurant and Morrow County Public Transit fixed route bus stop
- Recommending next steps in developing smart growth improvements in the Project Area, including but not limited parking management, pedestrian and transit-rider safety, and placemaking.

Planning Processes

This project has been supported by the Transportation and Growth Management Program (TGM), a joint program of the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD). Meeting facilitation, design guidance, and the production of this summary report were conducted by the Transportation and Growth Management Program. A project team consisting of staff from the Town of Lexington and agency staff from DLCD and ODOT managed the project tasks and produced this Recommendations Report.

Community Engagement Approach

Public involvement for this project allowed community stakeholders an opportunity to provide input into and help to direct the planning process. The engagement goals informing the public engagement strategies for the project are as follows:

- **Meaningful involvement and accountability:** Provide appropriate opportunities for Town of Lexington community members to participate in decisions about downtown safety and multimodal transportation. Explain how input will influence the process and demonstrate how the project incorporates this input into the final recommendations report.

- **Respect and sensitivity:** Foster and sustain a collaborative and mutually respectful process while completing the recommendations report. Maintain sensitivity toward historically disenfranchised and hard-to-reach stakeholders.
- **Build awareness:** Share project information through multiple communication channels to reach many community members.
- **Coordination:** Communicate actively with other concurrent projects and planning efforts in Lexington to align public processes where possible, avoid duplicating efforts, and minimize stakeholder fatigue.
- **Create space for dialogue:** Ensure that project partners and the broader public have opportunities to provide input on the recommendations report. Ensure that there are opportunities for historically disenfranchised and hard-to-reach stakeholders to participate in the development of the final report.
- **Foster understanding:** Ensure that project partners and the broader public understand the key issues and implications related to the downtown safety and multimodal transportation. Communicate complete, accurate, and understandable information to project partners and broader public throughout the project.
- **Timely communication:** Communicate regularly with the public and ensure that the project team is responsive to their requests and needs.

From April to June 2023, the project team conducted a series of four community engagement strategies to gather information about community experiences and perceptions as they relate to safety and multimodal transportation in Downtown Lexington

Project Webpage: The Town created a Project Webpage (<https://lexingtonoregon.com/projects>) on its website, with a description of the project, project point of contact information, instructions to join the project email list, and information about opportunities for comment, public meetings or hearings, and any other information Town deemed important to publish. The webpage was active between April and June 2023.

Stakeholder Interviews: The project team arranged and conduct interviews in May 2023 with six key stakeholders to identify needs and common challenges relating to land use, transportation, and safety in the Project Area and learn what interventions and resources would be most useful for addressing them. The stakeholders, listed on the acknowledgments page, represented county government and local/regional business interests.

Community Meeting: The project team arranged and conducted a hybrid virtual/in-person Community Meeting on May 22, 2023, to inform the community about the Project and solicit input from community members. The community presentation discussed the project goals and outcomes, reported on key themes from the stakeholder interviews, and invited the participants to share their input about the major issues and opportunities as they relate to safety and multimodal transportation in the project area. Community meeting participants represented local government staff and elected officials, local business interests, and the general public.

Town Council Meeting: The project team arranged and conducted a Joint Planning Commission/Town Council Meeting to present the Downtown Safety and Multimodal Transportation Recommendations Report and solicit comments.

Current Context

The Lexington project area sits at the junction of Highway 74 and Highway 207. Highway 207 connects the community to resources north including the communities of Irrigon and Boardman, while Highway 74 connects the community to the South to Heppner, the County seat, making Lexington a gateway to the northern and southern hubs of Morrow County.

It is critical that the Town of Lexington has safe, multimodal connections to facilitate the transfer of people and commerce throughout the rest of Morrow County. The Town of Lexington is also preparing for new downtown development and redevelopment, including a much-needed restaurant in the heart of downtown. This restaurant, called the Broken Spoke, is located at the intersection of W Main Street and C street. Another high-profile project is the revitalization of the Holly Rebekah Lodge into a community center. Morrow County Public Transit is also adding a bus stop in Lexington, building out its first fixed route service, a game changer in the transportation landscape of in this region. The service will begin operations in early 2024. The Town will need to consider pedestrian accessibility, parking opportunities, and transit-rider safety as it prepares for these new developments.

The current state of the downtown area poses concerns for safety and accessibility, namely the lack of appropriate roadway facilities to accommodate pedestrians walking and rolling, as well as safe parking for the variety of traveling motorists. Considering this project area for future study and human-scale enhancements will provide the Town of Lexington with a road map to establish placemaking and design opportunities to enhance the vibrancy of this community's primary corridor for all users.

Key themes gleaned from community engagement about constraints in the current project area are as follows:

Gaps in safe multimodal infrastructure



Incomplete sidewalks approaching Lexington's Friendship Park

Community members remarked about the significant gaps in safe and connected infrastructure for walking and biking. Notable locations identified by the community include the lack of complete sidewalks along the length of Mainstreet, and unsafe pedestrian crossings at F, E, and C streets.

Other multimodal infrastructure gaps informed by community input are listed below:

- Unprotected bike lanes pose a threat to cyclists.
- Infrequent crosswalks make crossing the busy street a safety risk.
- The few existing sidewalks are discontinuous and crumbling.
- Consideration for an appropriate location for incoming bus stop



The sole crosswalk in the project area is at the intersection of OR 74 and E street.

Dominance of motor vehicles



Large truck traveling southeast on OR 74

Community members expressed concern about the dangers that motor vehicles pose, particularly given the presence of large trucks traveling through this rural area. Key sentiments drawn from community engagement about this theme include:

- Motor vehicles are the dominant mode of transportation, isolating aging and low-income populations in the area
 - Concern about vehicle accidents and overturned trucks
 - Vehicles traveling at high speeds with lack of traffic calming mechanisms.
- High activity hotspots at the intersection of OR 74 with E and C Street
 - Lack of strategic parking opportunities for commercial purposes.

Sense of Place and Community



Sign demarking Lexington's Friendship Park

With the possibility of new development and redevelopment opportunities, residents identified Lexington's need for "facelift" placemaking improvements that foster a welcoming sense of place and community

Observations supporting this theme include:

- Lack of safe, central places to gather.
- Inviting access to existing public spaces, such as parks and public facilities.
- Few public art or cultural installations



Sign reading "If you are caught trespassing you will be shot on sight this means you!" on a commercial building on OR 74 between C and B streets.





Opportunity Concepts




Interwoven into community suggestions for improvements on Mainstreet are core community strengths that can be built upon and leveraged as Lexington begins to take actions to implement the recommendations listed in the subheadings below. Among the most notable assets is Lexington strong sense of community identity. Unified in their identity as a small rural eastern Oregon town, the residents of Lexington are primed to continue collectively exploring pathways to realizing a vibrant and connected downtown in ways that celebrate and remain authentic their unique community character and contributions. Similarly worth highlighting is the presence of active and engaged community and business leaders in Lexington. The Town's business interests play a larger role for the heartbeat of the region's agricultural industry, as well as are a critical lifeline for Lexington's local families. The outcomes of suggested recommendations can be maximized by building in co-benefits for agriculture and commerce. Finally, Lexington does not exist in a vacuum but is instead a lively node within a regional web that connects to the towns of Irrigon, Boardman, Heppner, and Lone in the northern and southern parts of Morrow County. The potential for local and regional collaborations can bring crosscutting benefits for fundraising, resource-sharing, and bolstering administrative capacity.

Traffic Calming

Traffic calming is a collection of tools used to improve the safety and comfort of all road users by reducing vehicle speeds or volumes. Examples include lane narrowing and adding roadside or other features to create a street network that is self-enforcing because of its physical design or psychological perception that causes drivers to slow down. Certain traffic calming measures can be implemented in Lexington to reduce speeds and create a safer environment for all road users, both in and out of motor vehicles. These design improvements are characteristic of vibrant Downtown districts, and often inspire both visitation of local amenities and enhancement of private properties adjacent.

Highway 74 (Main Street) was identified as a street in need of improvements for the safety and comfort of pedestrians and cyclists. Therefore, several traffic calming measures are recommended for the portion of Highway 74 that falls within the Project Area.

Traffic Calming Measure	Example	Location
<p>Corner extension or bulb-out: Bulb-outs shorten crossing distances for pedestrians and make the travel way look narrower, which slows traffic.</p>	 <p>Bulb-out on OR 86 in Richland, Ore.</p>	<p>Intersections of Highway 74 with A, B, C, E, and F Streets.</p>
<p>Lane reallocation: Lane capacity can be reallocated slightly to slow traffic, but still wide enough to accommodate trucks.</p>	 <p>U.S. 97 in Moro, Ore.</p>	<p>Highway 74 from A Street until Tom Street.</p>
<p>Street trees: Street trees help a street appear narrower than it is, which slows traffic. They also buffer and shade pedestrians, which improve safety and comfort for people on foot.</p>	 <p>U.S. 20 in Vale, Ore.</p>	<p>Wherever feasible along entire length of Highway 74 within the Project Area.</p>
<p>Warning signs: stop ahead</p>		<p>Approaches to the intersections of Highway 74 with E and F Streets.</p>

Four-way stop: Four-way stops may be indicated with stop signs or red flashing traffic lights. Available budget may determine which is feasible.	 	Intersection of Highway 74 and E Street.
Reduced speed: reduce speed limit to 25 mph, coupled with radar driver feedback signs where lower speed begins.		Length of Highway 74 in Project Area.

The Town of Lexington can also encourage and incentivize the tight-knit local business community and property owners to implement voluntary design improvements on properties adjacent to the right-of-way, such as

- Human-scale placemaking techniques including installing trees, landscaping, and planters for outdoor seating and eating areas.
- Private frontage improvements to include lighting, pedestrian amenities, and protected walkway opportunities; These frontage improvements can alternatively be required by development code amendments.
- Streamlined access to properties from side streets, especially for pedestrians and/or cyclists.

Streetscape improvements

- Sidewalks
 - Along the length of Main Street between H and A
 - Make sure walkway is outside of bridge between E and C street.
 - Prioritize segments that connect whole blocks to enhance connectivity.
 - Support businesses that redevelop frontages, incentivizing or encouraging:
 - Direct and convenient pedestrian connection(s) to the right-of-way
 - Designated walkways along the entirety of their frontages, especially across designated driveways.
- Crosswalks
 - At intersection of C and highway 74 (all directions, but with priority for Main Street crossings)
 - At the intersection of E with Highway 74
 - At the intersection of F with OR Highway 74

- Crosswalk design may include high-visibility markings, advanced signage, and rapid-flashing beacon(s) where sight distances are limited.
- Consider including crossing improvements with/at locations where ADA ramp improvements are implemented (short-term).
- Lighting:
 - Along length of Highway 74
 - Encourage downward-facing lights on building frontages.
- Protected bike lanes
 - Extending bike lane along length of highway 74 between H and A street, adding protective barriers between bike lane and main road
 - Consider designation of a bicycle boulevard from F Street to A Street along Arcade Street to encourage a low-stress alternative on a lower-volume local street for vulnerable users.
- Design and location of future transit stop.
 - Consider centralized location where people are likely to be gathering, include seating, protection from sun and elements, signage, route schedule.
 - Include off-street parking opportunity nearby (“Park & Ride”).
 - Ensure safe, convenient multi-modal connections to the transit stop from residential areas and shared parking areas.
 - Consider finding a private business (coffee stand, restaurant?) to “sponsor” the transit stop to create a symbiotic relationship.
- Parking Options and Opportunities Management
 - Consider designation of a heavy/large vehicle parking area to support frequent commercial vehicle stops.
 - Develop strategies for on-street and off-street parking balance that encourages safety and convenience of Downtown visitors.
 - Consider shared parking opportunities for businesses
 - Conduct a parking study, including inventory and utilization of parking spaces to determine if parking management would benefit downtown.

Placemaking

- Incentivize local businesses to have outdoor seating, murals, local music, programming, etc. co-located with potential traffic-calming elements.
- Enhance multimodal connections to Friendship and FEMA parks, to encourage gathering for public and intimate events (i.e. family gatherings, etc.)
- Enhance park facilities to include amenities such as a walking trail, shade trees, and/or park furniture.
- Partner with schools and youth organizations for public art, plantings, programming, at Friendship and FEMA Park
- Partner with schools and youth organizations for public art in the new crosswalks

- Designate a visible location within the project area to host local business temporary pop ups and vendor stands
- Develop a wayfinding strategy to highlight:
 - Public facilities,
 - Gathering places, including parks and school(s)
 - Designating the project area as the “Downtown Area”

Action and Implementation

Fully realizing a vision for a vibrant, safe, and connected Main Street takes leadership, community support, time, and effort. From creating a collective vision, to developing an action plan, to measuring and celebrating success, this mission-driven work is iterative, incremental, and long term. Below are some considerations as the Lexington community takes collective steps towards implementing their vision for Main Street.

Creating a Collective Vision

Lexington's vision for a safe, multimodal, vibrant Main Street and process for achieving it should be collectively defined. Lexington can work towards addressing the needs of the myriad community members and stakeholders that live, work, and play in Lexington by engaging all communities in this process. Community engagement efforts should be carried out early and continue to occur strategically throughout the planning and implementation process, with Lexington iteratively reflecting on potential partners and stakeholders that need to be brought in. Key questions to pose in developing a collective Main Street vision and planning process are:

- What is the desired outcome, and for whom does it benefit? Are there any potential side effects that could create a negative outcome?
- What are the shared values that bring general alignment?
- Is the town taking care to engage Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, low-income, disabled, and other historically marginalized communities?
- What will happen to feedback? Is there a plan to report back and continue engagement for the long-term?
- What are the communication channels that will be used to inform or engage the community and respond to any changes?

Developing an Action Plan

After crafting a collective vision, Lexington can shift energies to action planning. An action plan should identify specific strategies, timelines and prioritization, funding considerations, along with essential task leaders and partners that will support management and implementation.

Funding will be important to consider for this phase. Federal funding sources are available for advancing more equitable transportation infrastructure on American roads, including

- Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant: federally awarded competitive funding for surface transportation infrastructure projects that will have a significant local or regional impact.
- Federal Transportation Alternatives Program: funding for a variety of transportation projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities; construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas; community improvements such as historic preservation and

vegetation management; environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity; recreational trails; safe routes to school projects; and vulnerable road user safety assessments.

State of Oregon funding resources include

- State of Oregon Transportation Improvement Program (STIP): the Oregon Department of Transportation's capital improvement plan for state and federally-funded projects.
- Oregon Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) program: funds may be used for public transportation purposes that support the effective planning, deployment, operation, and administration of public transportation programs across the State of Oregon

Other Funding Sources:

- AARP Communities Challenge Grants: provides small grants to fund quick-action projects that can help communities become more livable for people of all ages
- Oregon Heritage Grants: Oregon Heritage offers a variety of grant programs for heritage projects from historic building preservation to oral history projects and more.
- Oregon Cultural Trust Grant: supports the great work of Oregon's cultural nonprofits in enriching collective quality of life.
- The Heppner Chamber of Commerce: partners with several grant resources locally, regionally, and at state and federal levels.

Some additional important questions and considerations to pose during this phase include:

- Is there a location to test the idea first? Several street design and safety improvements discussed on the previous pages can be tested in the short-term using tactical urbanism "pop-up" solutions.
- What are the immediate and long term costs?
- Who are some partners to help? Is the town considering strategic partnerships, such as those with the county, or with the vibrant local agricultural community?
- Who will be responsible for long-term management?

Measuring and Celebrating Success

The town of Lexington and their project collaborators will need to know what progress is being made towards achieving their vision for Main Street. Developing a clear set of metrics, such as revenue generated or number of new visitors drawn, can help chart growth. It is also important to recognize project milestones, both small and large, and give the community occasion to celebrate their hard work. Key questions to ask during this step include:

- How will success be defined? Are there measurements that can demonstrate a successful result?

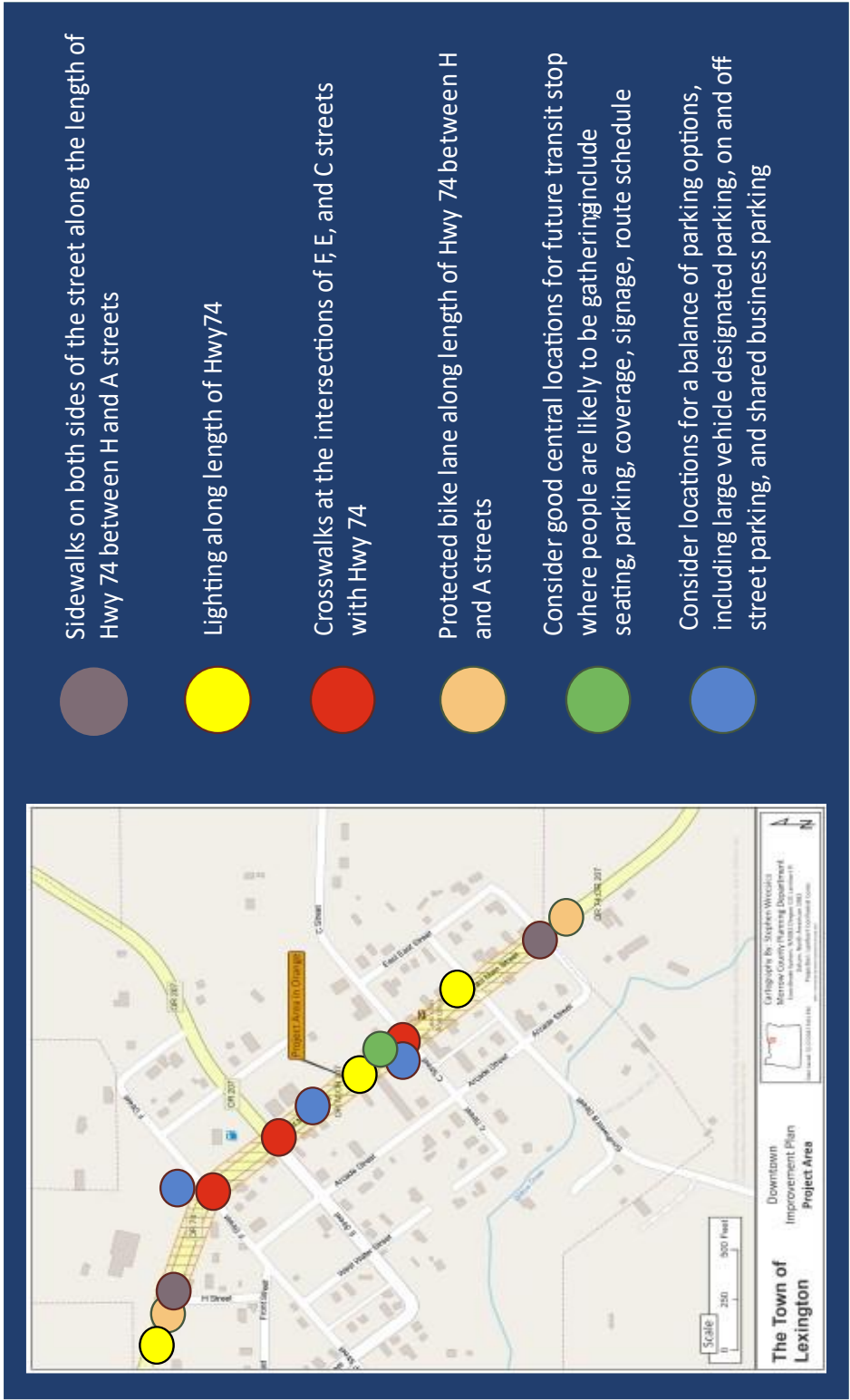
- What steps should take place if measurements fall short? How will this information be used to make any needed changes?
- How can successes be used to leverage additional resources, or ongoing funding needs?

Appendix A: Recommendation Maps

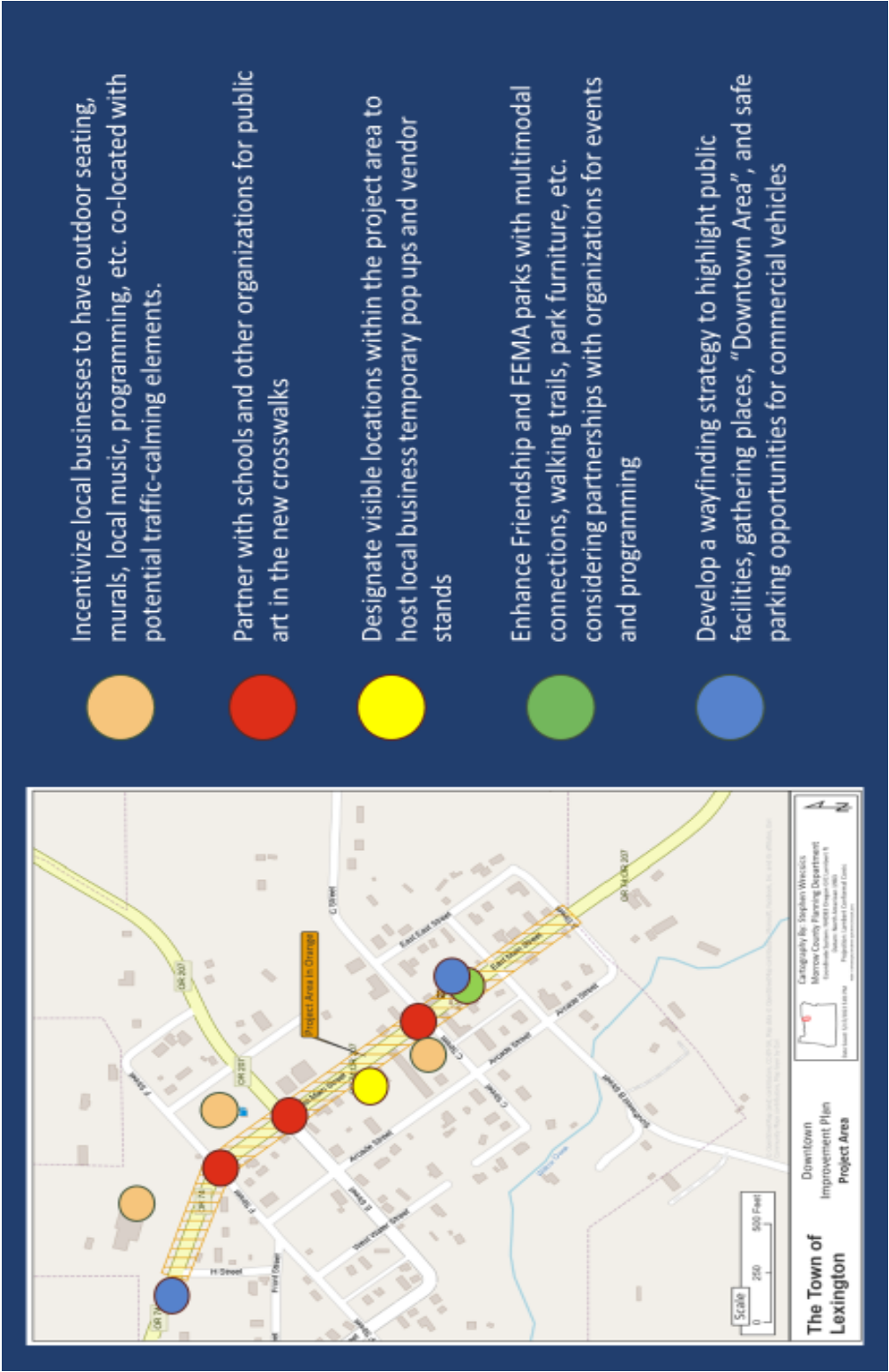
Traffic Calming:



Streetscape Improvements



Placemaking



Appendix B: Strategy Timeline Matrix

Recommendation	Time Frame
	Short (5 years)
	Mid (5-10)
	Long (10+ years)
Streetscape Improvements	
Sidewalks	Long-term
Crosswalks	Mid-term
Lighting and Signage	Short-term
Protected Bike lanes	Mid-term
Public Transit Stop	Long-term
Parking opportunities	Mid-term
Traffic Calming	
Stop Sign Signage	Mid-term
Bulb-outs/Corner Extensions	Long-term
Four Way Stop	Mid-term
Lane Reallocation	Mid-term
Street Trees	Short-term
Speed limit Reduction with Signage	Short-term
Voluntary Private Actions	Short-term
Placemaking	
Local Business Vending	Short-term
Local Business Voluntary Placemaking	Short-term
Public Art Crosswalks	Mid-term
Friendship and FEMA Park Programming and Placemaking	Short-term
Local Wayfinding	Short-term