

7. *Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation Systems*

Policy:

Facilities needed to encourage and safely accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders are a high priority in the City Center and the City's capital budget should reflect this.

Background

The way in which people move through downtown using non-motorized means is an essential part of the urban experience. The basic framework of sidewalks establishes the primary component of a pedestrian circulation system. This system is supported by a trails system through much of the City Center. Bicyclists use the streets and some designated trails or bicycle lanes

that lead into downtown as well. This section defines how pedestrian and bicycle systems should fit into a conceptual circulation plan for the City Center.

Key Downtown Development Workshop Report Recommendations

- Improve access to Maritime Heritage Park.
- Improve access to Western Washington University.
- Provide a link along the BNSF Railroad corridor from Roeder to Chestnut.
- Provide a link along Railroad Avenue.



This walkway leads to an exciting overlook of Whatcom Creek, yet no wayfinding elements identify this important amenity.



Only minimal information suggests that this is a segment of a major regional trail.



Trail fragments along Whatcom Creek are being made continuous.



Some trailheads appear to be service lanes or alleys.

Issues and Opportunities

In recent years, the City has constructed some walkways, bicycle lanes and trails in the City Center but these remain fragments of an overall system. The network has a weak identity and, for many, it is invisible because paving materials fail to distinguish these routes from abutting streets and alleys and informative signs are absent. The real potential for integrating alternative modes of transportation into the City Center will be realized only when this system is complete.

Recommended Actions

Pedestrian ways, trails and streets should be considered in a broader context. They are a means of circulation that strengthen business centers and link neighborhoods. Therefore, roadways, sidewalks and trails should be co-

ordinated in a comprehensive system that assures continuity for pedestrians and bicyclists.

1. Consider bicycle circulation as a system.

Three types of bicycle ways should be planned:

1A. Bike trails. These are improved paths designed for bicycle use that are separated from automobile roadways. While separation from pedestrian ways is also desirable, bicyclists may share these trails with pedestrians when space limitations or cost constraints dictate.

1B. Bike lanes. These are paved ways reserved for bicyclists, but constructed as a part of an auto roadway. Typically, bike lanes are defined by a painted stripe and signs. Providing bike lanes on City Center streets should be a priority.

1C. Bike routes. These are roadways in which bicyclists share the travel lane with automobiles. Ideally, the travel lane is wider than those designated for only automobiles so that the motorists have room to safely pass bicyclists. Designating bike routes within the City Center also is encouraged.

2. Complete the missing links in the bicycle circulation system and install compatible wayfinding signs.

There are a number of missing links needed to create a connected city center bicycle circulation system. Directional signs that are compatible with the motor vehicle wayfinding signage system should also be installed.

3. Provide a trails link along Railroad Avenue.

The City's Parks, Open Space and Recreation plan calls for a link along Railroad Avenue. This is a significant segment of the downtown system for pedestrians and bicyclists. While it completes an important connection in the trail system itself, it also can bring more users into the City Center, particularly from Western Washington University.

In order to be effective as an economic development asset, the route must run where users will be able to see businesses along the way. Bicycles could leave the path at Morse Hardware (where the path currently ends) and continue into the Civic Center in the street. If the median is used to provide this connection, improvements that would result in a significant loss of on-street parking should be timed to coincide with additions to the nearby

off-street parking supply. Pedestrians should continue down Railroad Avenue on well-marked sidewalks.

By contrast, some proposals have suggested that this link be located in an alley. Such links generally are unsuccessful because of security perceptions. In addition, the spin-off marketing opportunities of people passing stores along the trail are lost.

4. Strengthen the visibility of the pedestrian system, especially as it relates to the disabled.

The pedestrian system is a complex network of sidewalks, paths, trails, alleys and crosswalks that should be linked into a comprehensive system. Streetscape improvements should be done to ensure the system is accessible to all, especially the disabled. A pedestrian-scale wayfinding sign system should be installed and be compatible with the design of the signs for motorists.

5. Enhance crosswalks to establish a sense of hierarchy in pedestrian routes.

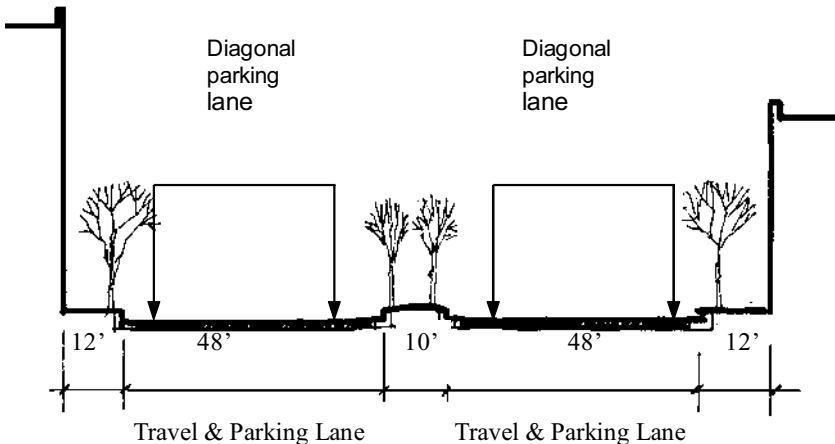
The pedestrian system, including sidewalks, paths, trails, alleys and crosswalks, should encourage pedestrian activity and provide a unique identity for downtown.

These streetscape principles should be followed for all streets in the City Center:

- 5A. Install improvements and amenities in response to high levels of pedestrian activity.
- 5B. Install decorative crosswalks in areas where pedestrian crossing volumes are high and vary the degree of crosswalk improvements in response to the fit within the pedestrian system, as illustrated on page 7-5 through 7-8.
- 5C. Improve alleys as components of the pedestrian system.

6. Apply walkway beautification guidelines.

Decorative paving could be used strategically, to express a visual theme for downtown. Decorative paving would denote special activity zones, such as intersections and pedestrian crossings, street furniture areas and public plazas. Within this paving pattern, insert special custom-made tiles as pieces of public art that will serve as "place markers," helping to bring individual identities to each block.



The median in the middle of Railroad Avenue could be widened, landscaped and enhanced with streetscape elements as shown in this conceptual drawing.



The intersection of Holly at Commercial is an example of where a type A intersection would be appropriate.

7. Consider an intersection hierarchy.

In response to the varying levels of use of intersections within Bellingham, a range of crosswalk designs could be employed. Intersection designs could include the use of decorative paving to more clearly identify the crossings and establish visual continuity with sidewalks. Edges of the decorative paving areas are bordered with a protective concrete band. As a general rule, intersections most critical to the pedestrian circulation system should receive the highest level of improvements.

Safe crossings are essential for a vital pedestrian-oriented environment. Crosswalks should be clearly identified and ample space should be provided to allow groups of pedestrians to cross. They should be designed such that motorists would be discouraged from parking so close to the corner that the visibility of pedestrians would be impaired.

Presently, most crossings downtown are defined only with painted stripes that provide the minimum in identity and protection. These are basic and utilitarian in appearance, and they do not contribute to the streetscape design. Ideally, crosswalks should visually enhance the City Center experience while also performing the functional purpose of improving safety.

Attractive crosswalks are especially important in encouraging downtown patrons to use off-street parking lots. Be-

cause sidewalk amenities and pleasant street crossings enhance the walking experience from these locations, they can help to reduce traffic congestion and relieve demand for on-street parking spaces.

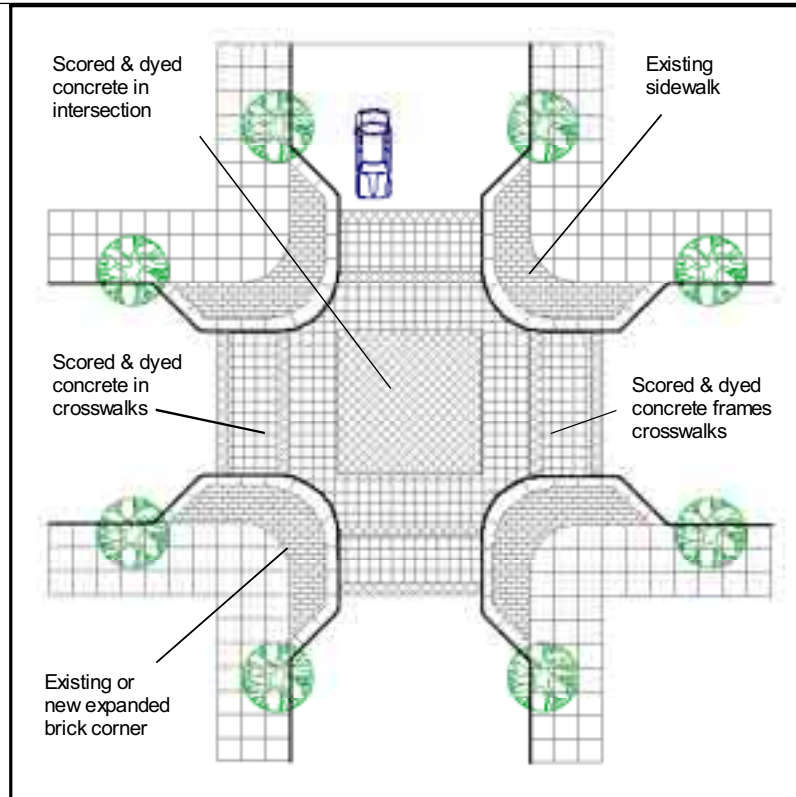
Decorative paving could be installed in crosswalks at designated locations. Scored, dyed concrete could be used in many of these cases. The paving would clearly define the walk, and create a moderate vibration that alerts motorists that they are entering the crosswalk. They also help to slow bicycle traffic in congested areas.

In some areas of intense pedestrian activity, decorative paving could be installed throughout the entire intersection. This would help to identify these intersections as places of major pedestrian use and help establish the City Center as a strongly pedestrian-oriented area.

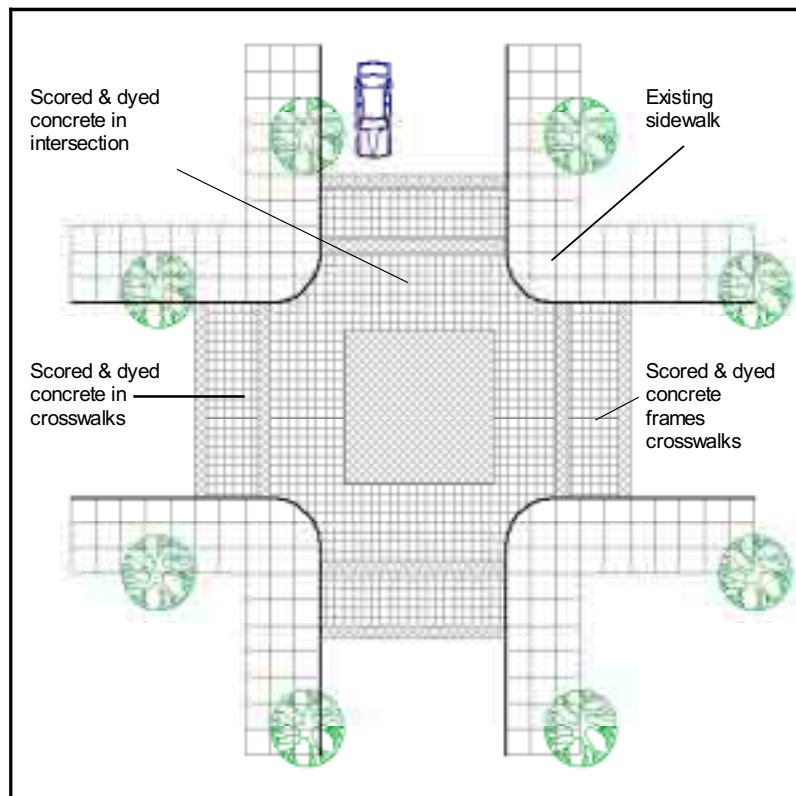
The following intersection design concepts should be considered:

• **Type A intersections.**

In this classification, the entire intersection is to be constructed of decorative paving, in order to indicate its high level of pedestrian use. Special decorative patterns may be created by varying colors and scoring patterns, and may include public art in the form of mosaic designs. A design based on the City Center’s intersecting street pattern could be considered. These intersections offer the highest level of pedestrian enhancement and provide the strongest identity for crossings in the City Center.



Intersection type A-1: with expanded corner space

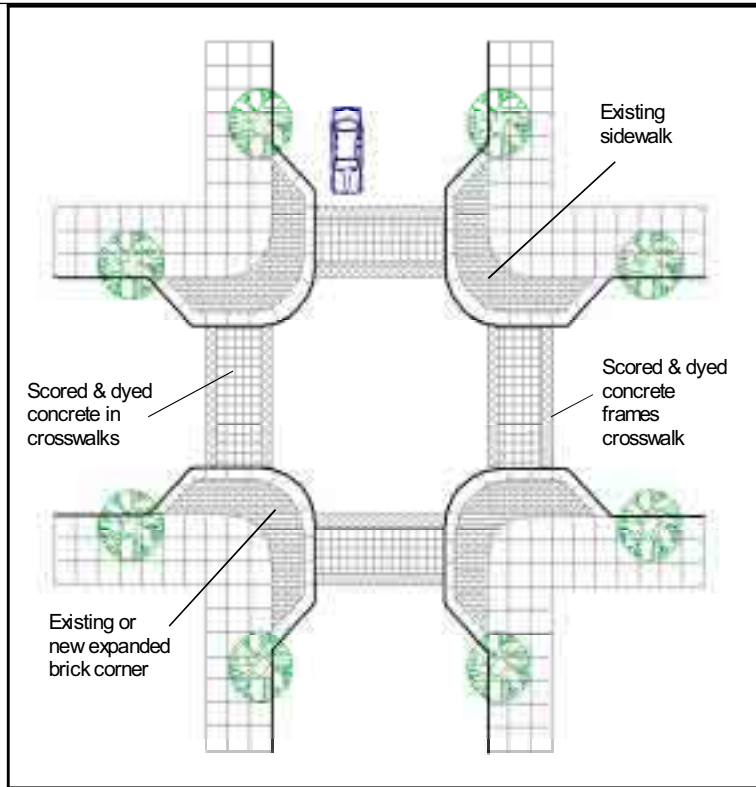


Intersection type A-2: without expanded corners

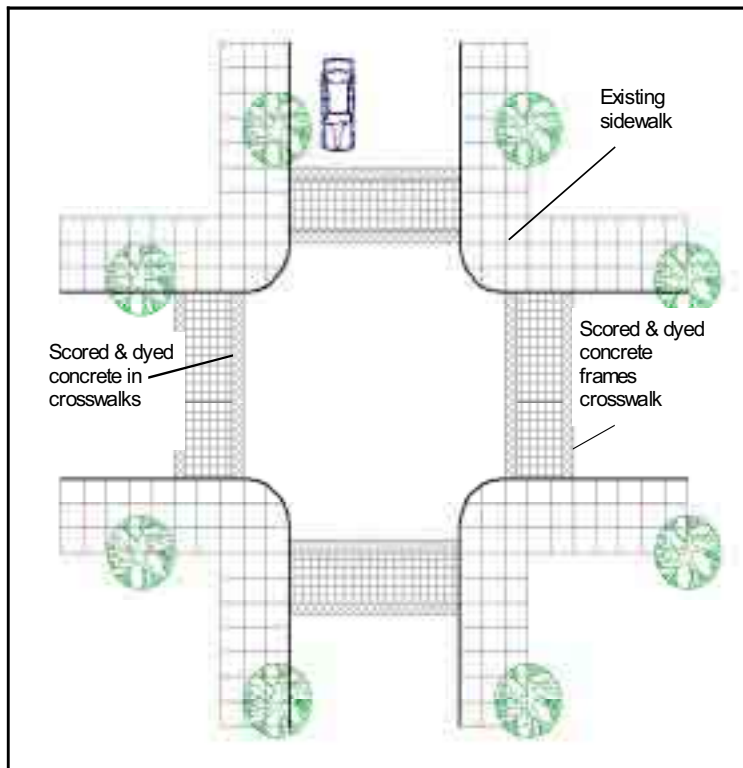
• **Type B intersections.**

This intersection type uses decorative paving in the crosswalks to define them and to visually connect them to sidewalk corners. The decorative paving is also used on the sidewalk corners. In some cases, the existing curb line and corner radius should be retained, but in some special conditions, corners of sidewalks may be expanded to protrude into the parking lanes to provide additional area for street furniture and plantings. Many of these types already exist in the Commercial Core Area.

The advantage of using expanded corners on sidewalks is that they prevent illegal parking at pedestrian crossings where visibility would otherwise be impaired, and they make it easier for pedestrians to be seen by motorists before entering the crosswalk. The expanded corners also effectively reduce the crossing distance for pedestrians, thereby improving pedestrian safety. The radius of the expanded corner should be designed to facilitate truck turning and snow plowing.



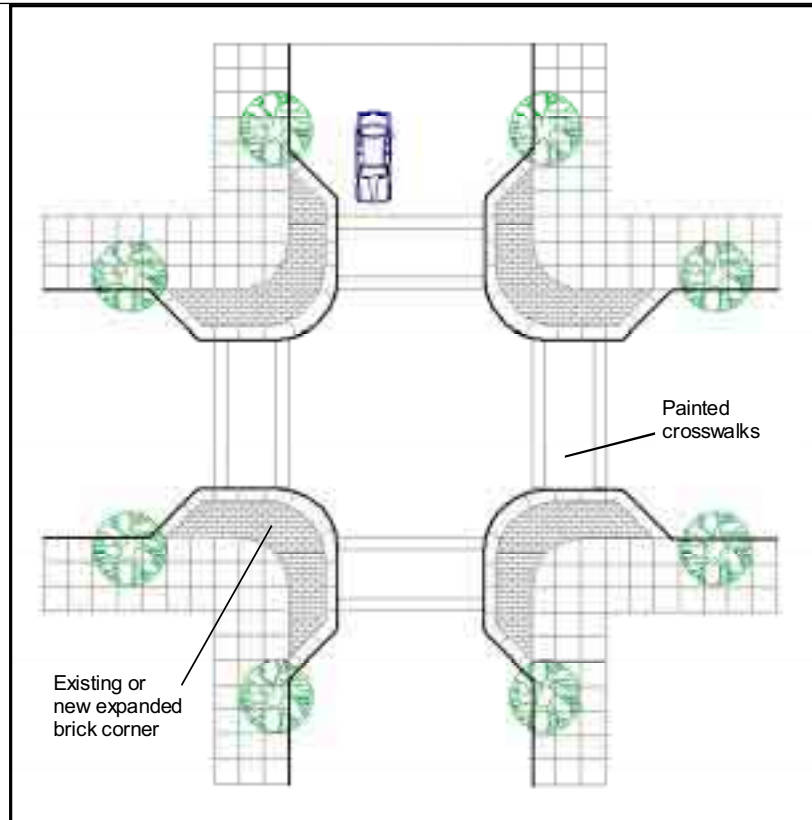
Intersection type B-1: with expanded corners



Intersection type B-2: without expanded corners

• **Type C intersections.**

In this category, decorative pavers are used within the sidewalk boundaries at corners only, while the crosswalk areas are defined by conventional stripes. This level of intersection design is appropriate in areas of lower crossing conflict. This condition presently exists for many intersections in the Commercial Core Area.



Intersection type C



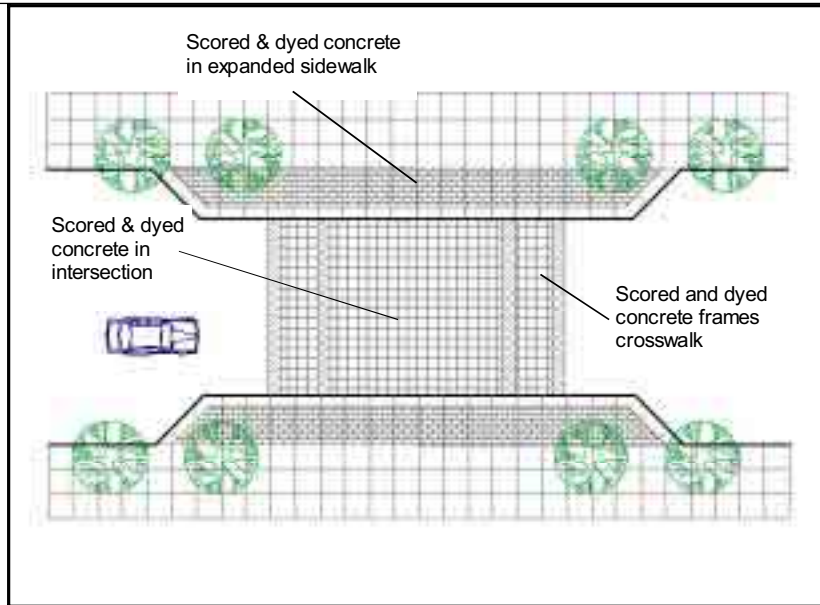
The intersection of Magnolia at Champion is an example of where type B intersection improvements might be appropriate.



The intersection of Magnolia at State is an example of where a type C intersection improvements might be appropriate.

- **Type D intersections—mid-block crossings.**

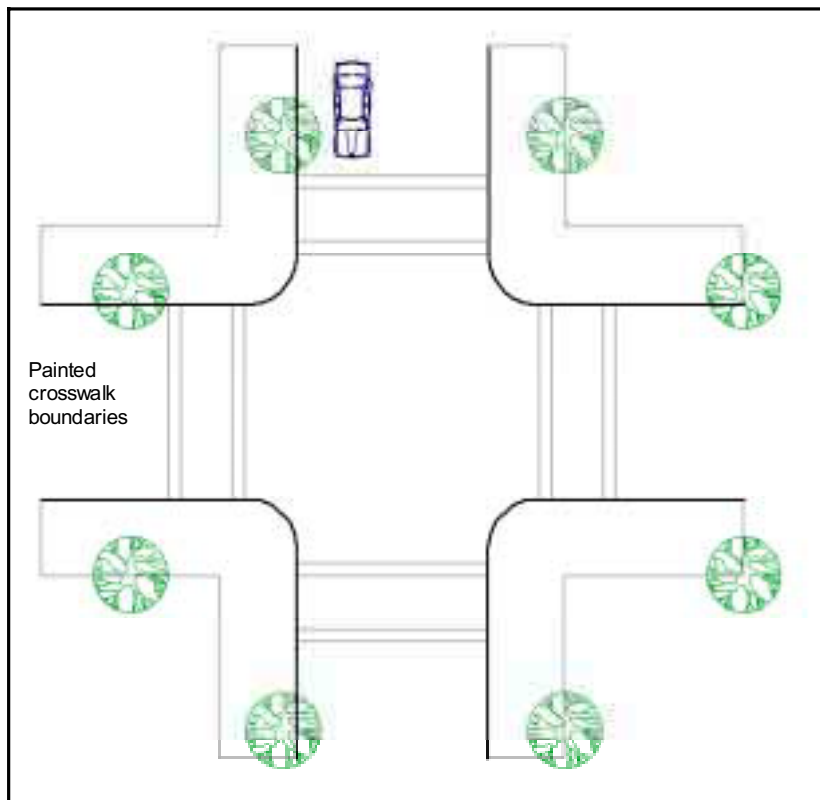
These are special crosswalk conditions that occur at intersections that are not at the corners of a street. Typical locations are mid-block crossings. These are proposed for limited use where pedestrian crossing volumes are high and enhancing safety is particularly desirable. Decorative paving should be used in the crosswalk and in the expanded sidewalk area. Special turning radius and drainage design considerations apply.



Type D intersection

- **Type E intersections.**

No decorative pavers are used in these conditions and crosswalks are striped only. This type is appropriate in areas of lowest crossing conflict.



Intersection type E

**PLACEHOLDER FOR 11 X 17 MAP FOR
BICYCLE ROUTES**