

## 8. Streetscape Design

### Policy:

The streetscape should be designed to enhance the pedestrian experience and to establish a unifying image for the City Center. Over time, variations in the streetscape scheme could be used to highlight the different Character Areas within the City Center.

### Background

A key part of the City Center Master Plan is the development of a comprehensive design image for downtown that will help establish a sense of identity for the community. Streetscape design includes the introduction of furniture, such as benches and waste receptacles, and the construction of planting areas, all coordinated to establish a distinct identity for the area.

Bellingham's City Center already has noteworthy streetscape design elements. In 1981, downtown property owners within the Commercial Core Area initiated a program to expand the sidewalks at the corners, and add decorative paving, trees and other street furnishings. Over time, trees have matured and many of the other design elements have endured.

### Issues and Opportunities

Earlier improvements provide a framework for enhancing the

streetscape. However, the extent of the area already covered by the streetscape improvements is limited to the Commercial Core Area and Railroad Avenue. While it is effective, the maximum visual impact has not been realized.

If streetscape design is to extend beyond the Commercial Core Area, then an issue arises about the appropriateness of applying some of the existing design elements to other Character Areas. For example, an ornamental street-light standard (pole) is used throughout the Commercial Core. This includes an acorn-shaped luminaire (lamp) and a fluted shaft that is evocative of a classical column. This style conveys a sense of an urban setting in the early Twentieth Century and is quite appropriate for the Commercial Core Area. A question is the application of this fixture in the Old Town area, which has a maritime heritage and where buildings and street furnishings have traditionally been more modest than those seen within the Commercial Core.

#### Key Downtown Development Workshop Report Recommendations

- Install more street furniture.
- Install pedestrian light standards.
- Expand downtown streetscape improvements, including paving, bollards, trees and other accents to a wider area.



*Concrete bollards define street corners in the Commercial Core Area. New street furniture designs, including those for benches and planters should be compatible with the established streetscape elements.*

## Recommended Actions

### 1. Establish an overall maintenance program for City Center streetscape elements.

Streetscape improvements are key to successful implementation of this plan. Establishing a maintenance program for these improvements needs to be made a priority to demonstrate the City's long-term commitment to the success of the City Center.

Streetscape elements should be designed with Bellingham's weather in mind. While most furnishings will see greatest

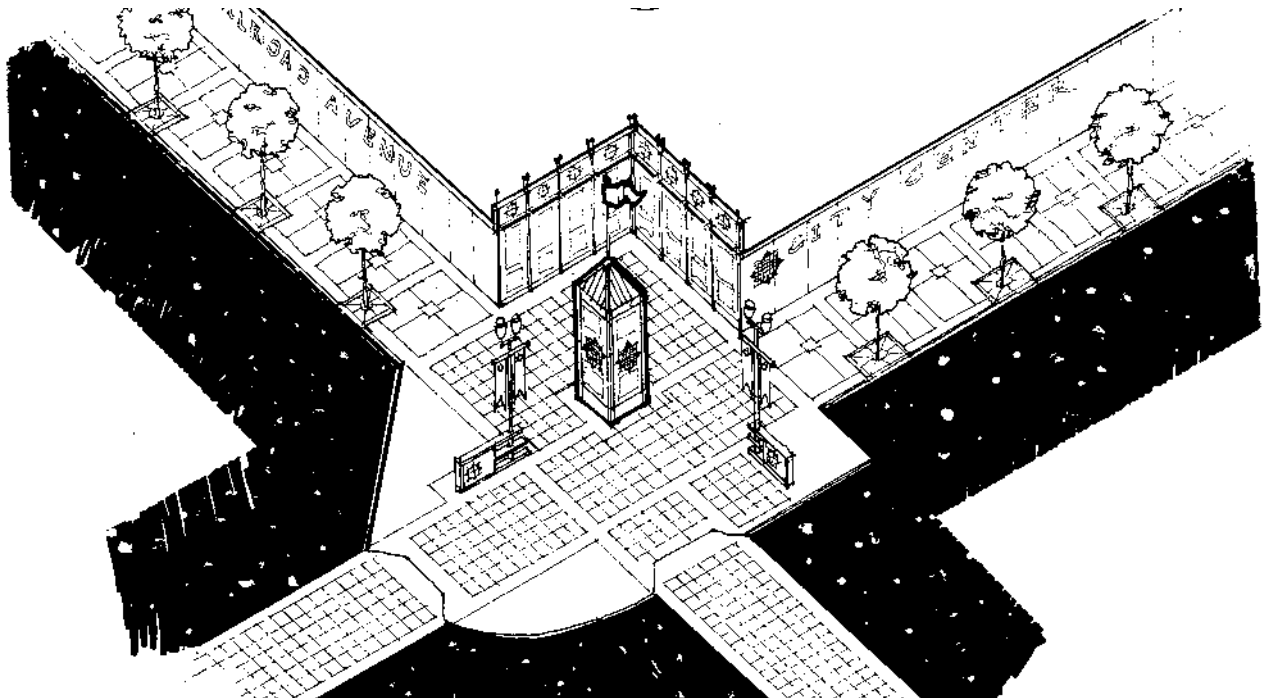
use during summer months, any elements, including benches, can be used most of the year if carefully designed. For example, wood slat benches are more comfortable in colder months than are metal mesh seats. Even if designed to accommodate Bellingham's weather, a maintenance program will be necessary for the streetscape elements.

### 2. Establish a set of streetscape elements that includes some that provide a sense of unity throughout the entire City Center and others that reflect the uniqueness of each Character Area.

Streetscape elements (e.g., street lights, benches, waste receptacles, bollards, signs, landscaping) should be designed so that they provide a consistent general image throughout the City Center. However, they could portray the unique characteristics of each of the Character Areas (e.g., the maritime heritage of Old Town, the government focus of the Civic Center). An example of a streetscape element which does this would be consistently designed signs (i.e., same size, shape, color, type styles) incorporates distinct logos for each Character Area.

This chapter presents a number of streetscape designs.

## City Center Promotional Panel System Concept



### *Illustrative concept of a promotional panel system.*

- *Metal frame components screen can be reassembled at different locations.*
- *Changeable panels carry graphics, information and public art.*
- *Ornamental lights match existing City Center styles.*
- *Information kiosk highlights City Center events and projects.*

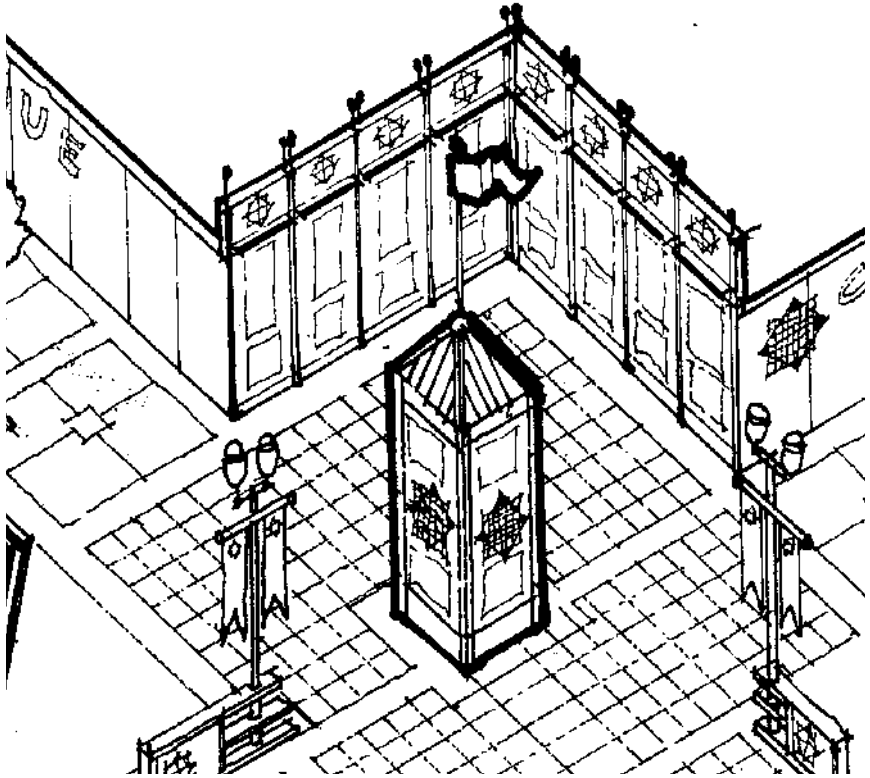
Note that the illustrations included are conceptual, and are provided in order to establish character. Detailed design work must occur before actual installations of the streetscape elements.

**3. Develop a promotional kiosk that can be used to highlight downtown events and activities.**

One or a number of information kiosks could be created to display information about downtown events. The kiosks should be placed at high pedestrian use intersections and on Festival Streets for special events.

**4. Implement a streetscape “Kit of Parts.”**

Benches, signs, bollards, planters, landscaping and streetlights are examples of streetscape elements that could be used to further establish the character of the City Center and to encourage pedestrian activity.

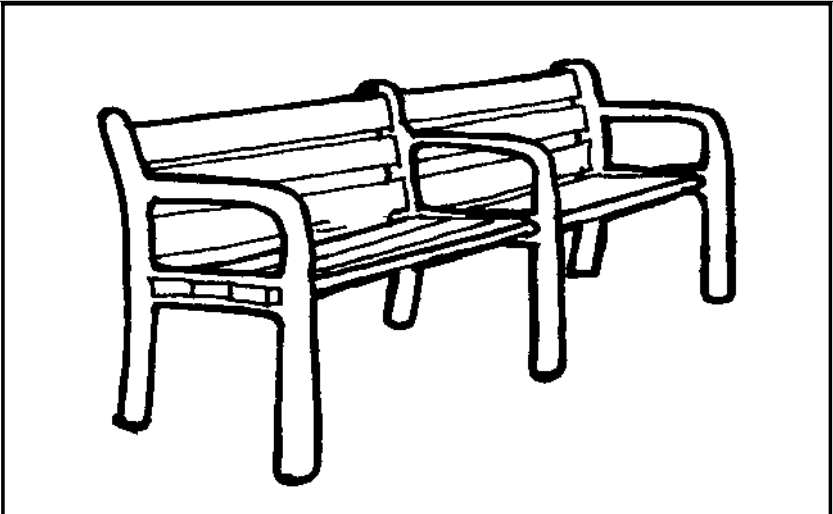


*One example of a promotional panel system and information kiosk.*



*Street trees have matured in the Commercial Core Area and they should be carefully maintained.*

**Benches.** Use benches to enhance the streetscape design and provide places for pedestrians to rest. Updated bench designs should be added to this plan as they become available.



*A contemporary interpretation of traditional wood slat benches could be added to the street furniture plan for use throughout the City Center.*



*Mature landscaping on Railroad Avenue will anchor a possible widened median.*



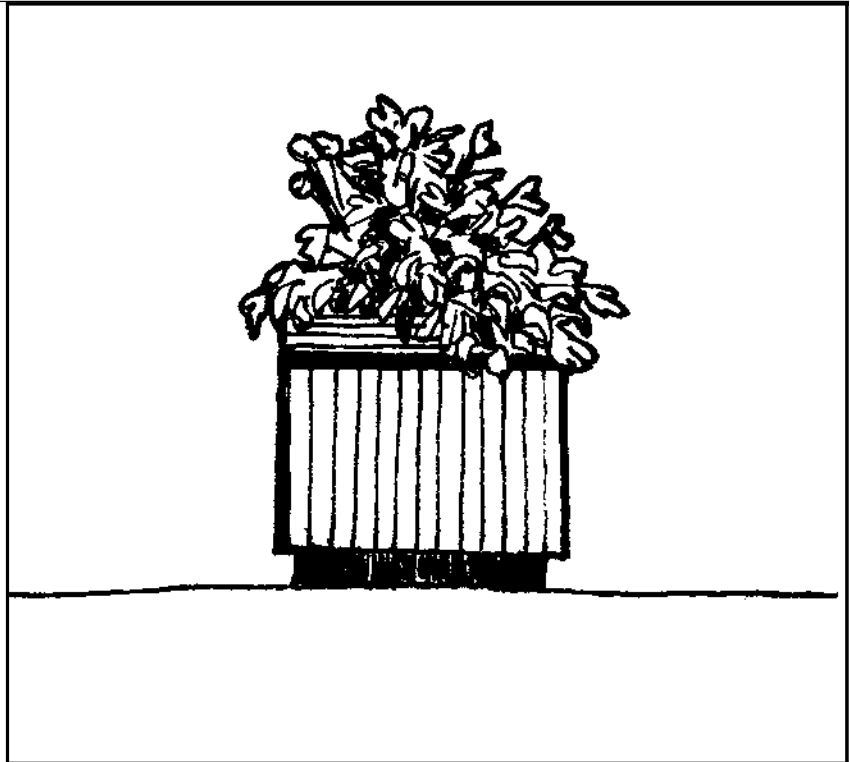
*Benches should be combined with planters and waste receptacles to define outdoor spaces.*

**Bollards.** Use bollards to define crosswalks and to limit automobile access to plazas and sidewalks. The existing rounded concrete bollards should be updated and replaced, including the addition of lighted bollards at selected intersections. The footprint should continue in the Commercial Core area and along Railroad Avenue. Updated bollard designs should be added to this plan as they become available.



*The cast metal bollards installed at the intersection of Holly and Central Streets could be continued in the Old Town and Civic Center areas.*

**Planters.** Ornamental plantings should be installed throughout the City Center. This includes freestanding planters that are located in plazas at key intersections, as well as smaller containers that may be installed as hanging baskets on light poles. Updated planter designs should be added to this plan as they become available.



*A mid-sized planter could be included in the street furniture for broader application in the City Center.*



*These are examples of compatible concrete planters that may be applied in a number of settings.*

**Street Lights.** The contemporary bronze light fixture being used in some areas of the City Center should be replaced with a pedestrian scale fixture. The current fixture appears more appropriate for areas with high-speed auto traffic, rather than pedestrian and lower speed vehicular travel. Pedestrian scale light standards also minimize the amount of light pollution - the unnecessary light that does not focus on street activity, but rather washes out the night sky and can spillover into residential areas.

Updated street light and banner designs should be added to this plan as they become available.



*This contemporary bronze fixture is used in the City Center.*



*The ornamental period street lights in the Commercial Core Area should be continued throughout that area.*