

KZFD DESIGN

DOWNTOWN ANDERSON PLAN

ANDERSON TOWNSHIP
HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO

July 2013



**ANDERSON TOWNSHIP “DOWNTOWN ANDERSON” PLAN
July 2013**

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INTRODUCTION

As an addendum to the 2005 Beechmont Corridor Vision Plan, a Focus Area Study was developed for the area between Towne Center Way and Asbury Road, due to its character, location and suitability of properties for redevelopment. This Focus Area, or "Downtown Anderson" Plan, suggests how the area should be developed moving forward, using building placement and character, streetscape enhancements, pedestrian facilities, improved vehicular access and circulation and building façade improvements. The land use and building changes were expected to be market driven by the individual developers and property owners.

Since the adoption of the Vision Plan in 2005, this portion of Beechmont Avenue has continued to develop and properties have begun to redevelop in accordance with the Study. Over the past several years this portion of Beechmont Avenue has become increasingly referred to as Anderson's "Downtown" due to its central location and economic importance. With recent redevelopment focused in this area, and proposed new investment and commerce planned for this area, the Township has initiated an update to its Vision Plan for this portion, or neighborhood, of Beechmont Avenue.

This Downtown Anderson Plan is intended to complement the existing 2005 Vision Plan only for the subject neighborhood. Thus, corridor-wide recommendations from the Vision Plan remain intact are still being pursued, and guidance for other neighborhoods along Beechmont have not changed from that suggested in the 2005 Vision Plan. It is anticipated that a forthcoming overarching Beechmont Plan will then incorporate the recommendations of this Plan, those from the Vision Plan (including recommendations for the corridor and those for other "neighborhoods"), and the Beechmont Corridor Plan.

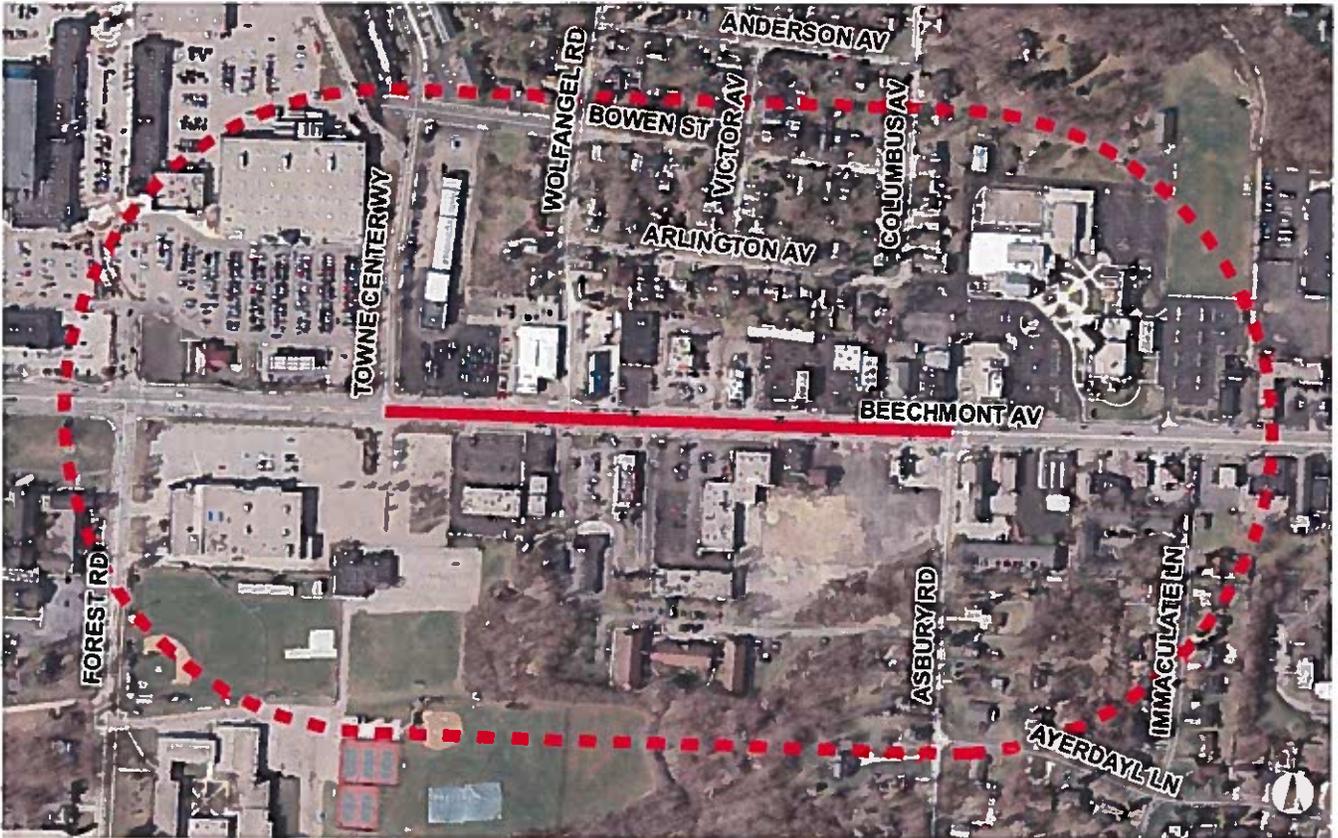
Background

In 2011, the Anderson Township Economic Development Committee established a number of goals, one of which being an update to the Vision Plan for Beechmont Avenue, in particular the area between Towne Center Way and Asbury Road. Work began in early 2012 and this ultimately was dubbed "Downtown Anderson", due to their interest in encouraging a more walkable environment in this area to provide a greater link between the destinations in this "neighborhood" uses. Recent, ongoing, and forthcoming private development, coupled with potential future public investment in the streetscape area, is intended to create a new sense of place that differentiates this part of Beechmont from the rest of the corridor.

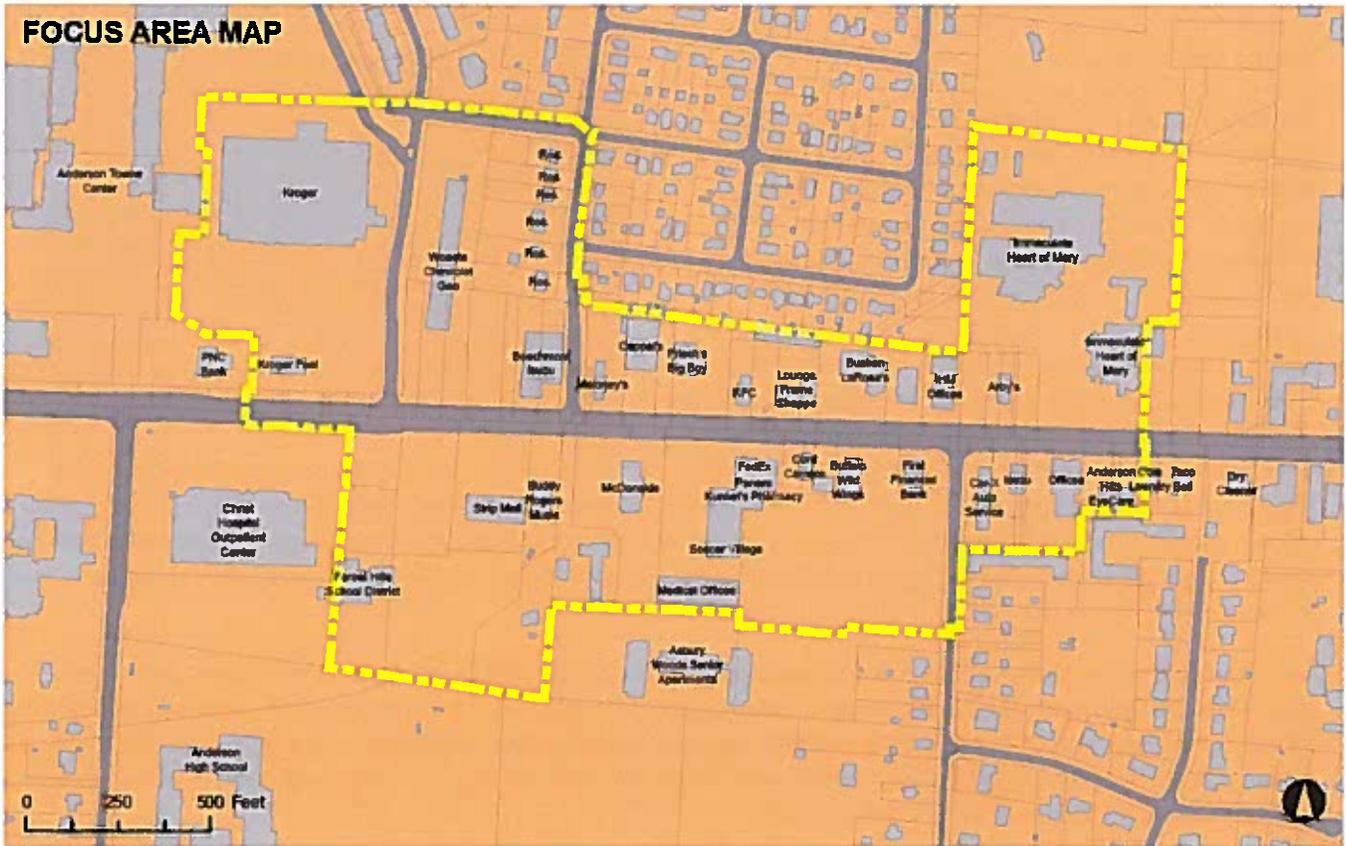
While this effort was overseen by the Economic Development Committee, several meetings were held with property owners and tenants in this area, as well as the community at large. The resulting plan is intended to be an update of the Vision Plan for this targeted area, therefore replacing the design and streetscape recommendations for Neighborhood 3 from the 2005 Vision Plan. Ultimately, this plan will serve as a guide for redevelopment, as well as the basis for streetscape improvements, in this area.

Focus Area Description

The "Downtown Anderson" study area is a unique section of Beechmont Avenue just east of the Five Mile Road intersection with a variety of uses, building types and visitors. The study area lies with the boundaries of Towne Center Way and Asbury Road, and includes parcels on both sides of the street. The Focus Area serves as a transition zone along Beechmont Avenue, with residential neighborhoods and office-oriented development to the west and auto-oriented commercial to the east.



FOCUS AREA MAP



The area's urban, compact development pattern, access to transportation facilities, mixture of diverse land uses, concentrations of people and regional destinations have led this area to be considered the "downtown" of Anderson Township. While this area's land uses resemble a downtown, the area lacks the urban character, appearance, walkability and public spaces for civic functions that are vital to a vibrant "downtown."

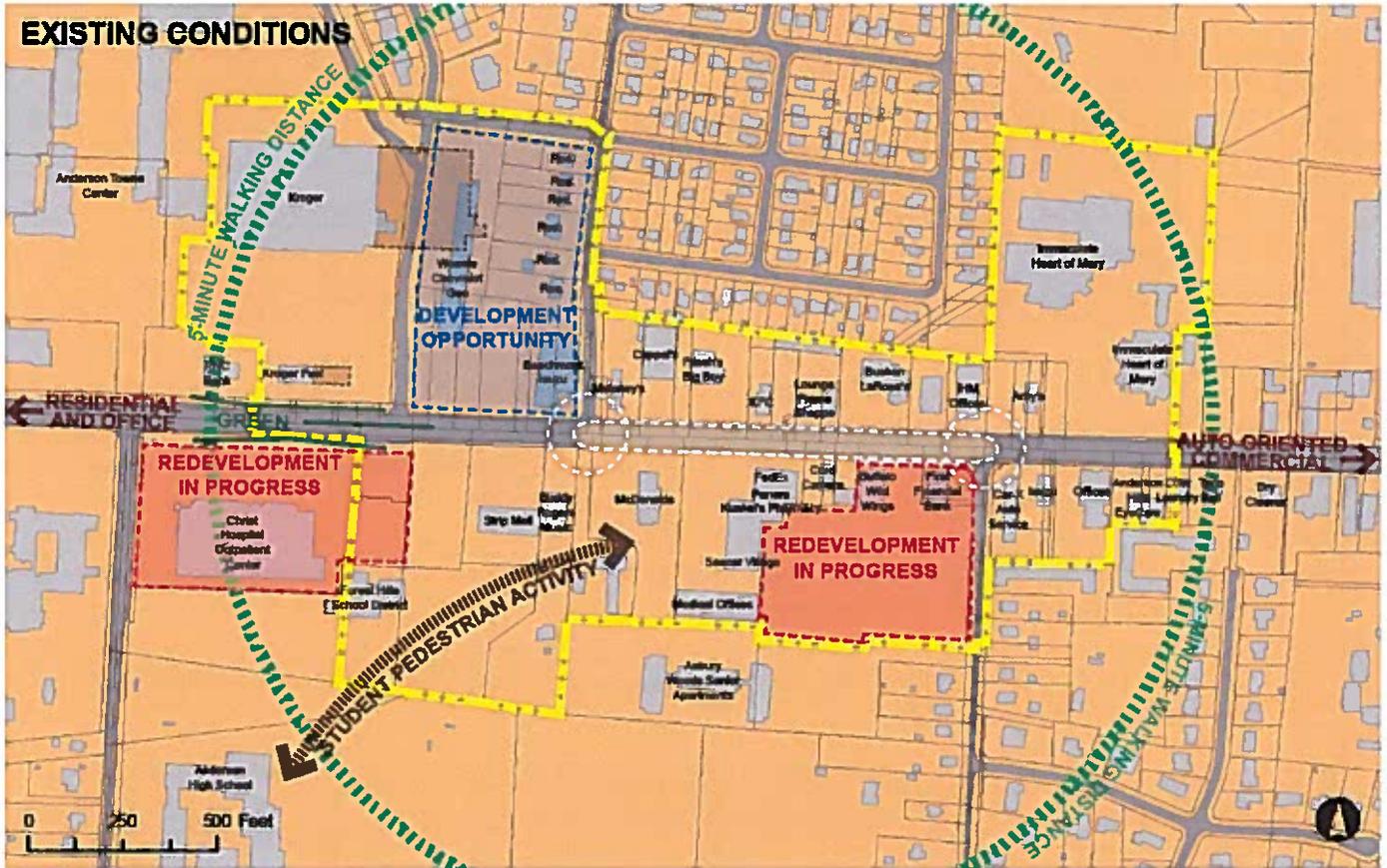
The Focus Area includes large- and small-scale commercial, grocery, restaurants, fuel, school, church, office and medical office buildings which are surrounded by residential, creating a confluence of diverse uses in this two-block segment of Beechmont Avenue. Buildings are located closer to the street, bringing a unique character that is atypical of most of Beechmont Avenue and range in size from smaller, individual retail stores to big-box retail. Significant destinations including Anderson Towne Center, Kroger, Immaculate Heart of Mary and Anderson High School are all within walking distance and bring visitors of various age groups from the surrounding areas. Students, shoppers and retail employees have the opportunity to walk from one destination to another to grab a quick lunch at the nearby restaurants.

Visually, the area is paved from building-to-building across Beechmont Avenue with roadway, parking, utilities and signage being the noticeable visual elements. Trees and landscaping are almost nonexistent, leaving a harsh environment for pedestrians. Opportunities exist for pedestrian movement within the Focus Area, but it is obvious the automobile is the primary mode of transportation on Beechmont. Sidewalks are not continuous, do not meet ADA Guidelines in some areas and are frequently broken up by curb cuts, driveways and parking lots, making driving from one destination to another the most viable option. The existing five foot wide shoulders meet minimum bicycle facility guidelines, but do not provide an atmosphere that is bicycle-friendly. Buildings are oriented toward parking lots, furthering the disconnect between nearby destinations. Street lighting is provided though utilitarian, cobra head-style fixtures, which provide adequate lighting but are neither inviting nor scaled to the pedestrian.

Larger parcel sizes, convenience and ability to assemble larger properties have made the Focus Area a prime location for redevelopment. Recent investments include redevelopment of the former King Pin bowling alley site into a mixed-use development and the potential expansion of Kroger. New buildings are being built closer to the street, with parking located to the side and/or rear. Township policies promote sidewalks, shared parking, reduced curb cuts and compact, mixed-use development.



The Anderson Towne Center has continued to be an asset to the Downtown Anderson area and a catalyst for nearby redevelopment that has occurred since its completion in 2004. The Towne Center's adjacency to Anderson Center serves as a significant connection tying two of the economic and civic drivers of the area. An important part of that relationship is the Towne Center Way roadway itself. Continued development and improvements should be encouraged along Towne Center Way including hospitality, housing and out-lot development, all of which will be reinforced by pedestrian and vehicular improvements to Wolfangel Road, where future sidewalks are being design to connect to the north and State Road.



Based on existing conditions, a series of design sessions held with Township staff and community meetings, the following set of guiding principles were developed for the study area:

Guiding Principles

1. Establish a unique, downtown identity and character
2. Create a walkable and accessible pedestrian-oriented environment
3. Develop vibrant and active outdoor gathering spaces
4. Guide redevelopment of existing properties oriented towards "open spaces"

VISION

Downtown Anderson is the economic and civic center of Anderson Township, providing residents and visitors an experience that is walkable and connected, with public spaces that are activated by retail, civic functions, employment and housing.



Downtown Anderson is...

- an area that promotes walking by providing safe, appealing and comfortable street environments that are connected to buildings, while improving access to surrounding buildings and neighborhoods through improved transportation facilities and shared parking opportunities.
- a place with a central outdoor space where the public feels welcome, is encouraged to come together and is recognized as the heart of the community.
- an economic generator for the Township, with diverse uses that are designed to take advantage of the surrounding built environment.

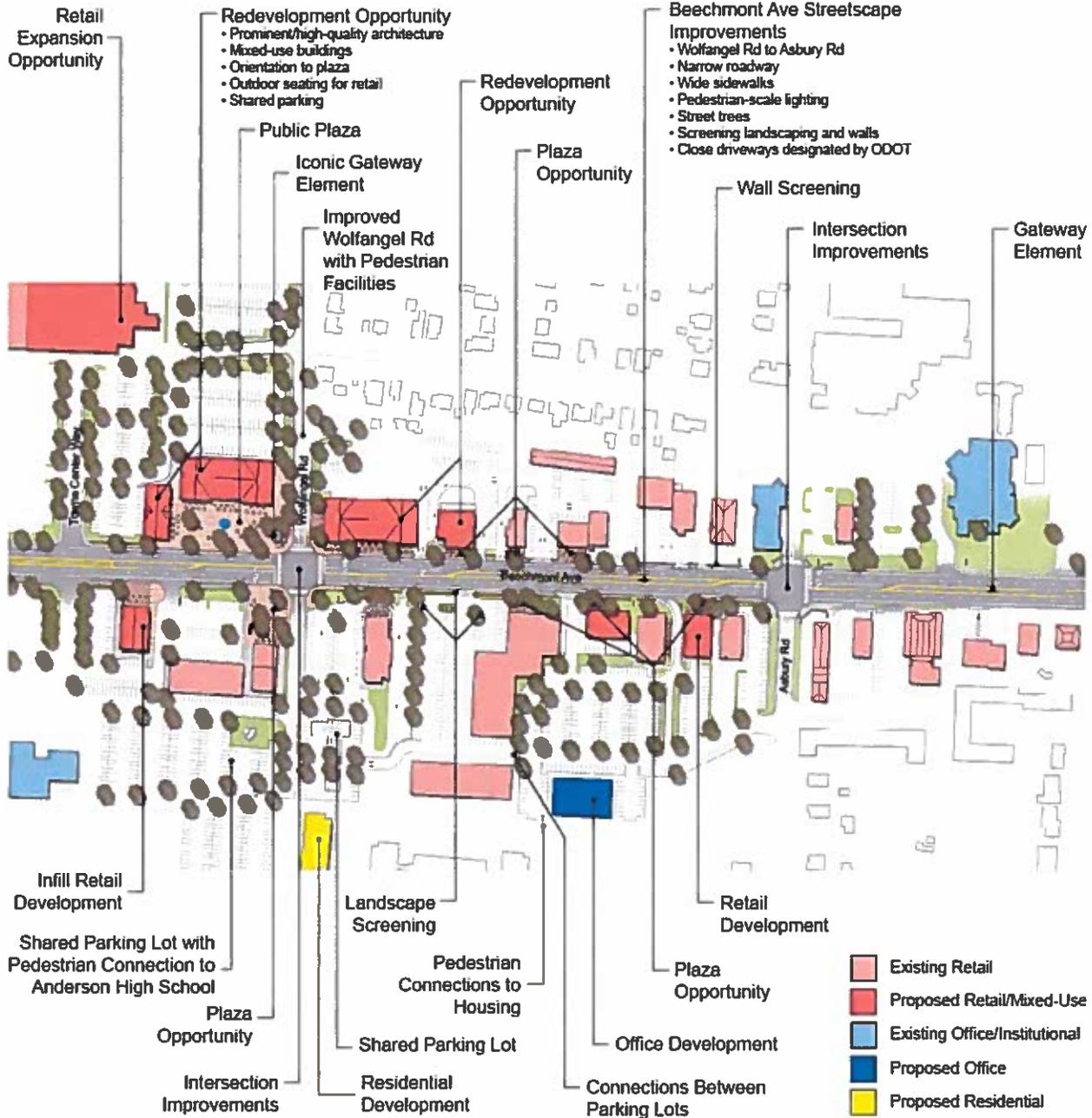


The vision for Downtown Anderson incorporates the following strategies within the Focus Area:

- Streetscape improvements and improved pedestrian facilities
- Central outdoor public plaza
- Site planning and design guidelines for redeveloping properties
- Architectural character guidelines for buildings
- Private plazas that engage the street

DOWNTOWN ANDERSON CONCEPT PLAN

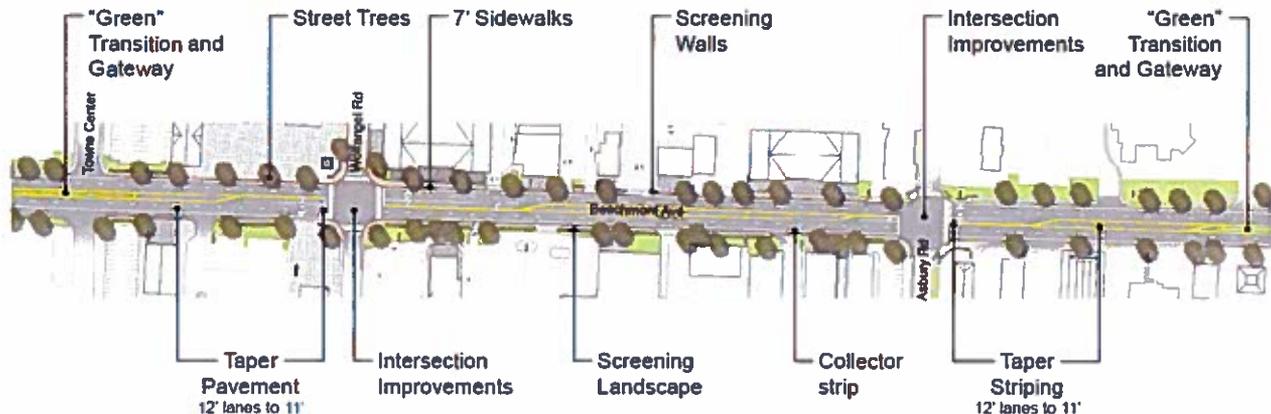
This plan is a summary characterization of the concepts and objectives of this Focus Area Study for Downtown Anderson and should be used as a general framework to guide future growth and development. Should other properties within the Focus Area, not identified in this plan, redevelop they should follow the principal design concepts identified for other properties.



The Township should encourage permeable pavement types, pavers and other hard surfaces in the streetscape, plazas and parking lots and promote integration of stormwater best management practice (BMPs) into future public and private improvements.

Streetscape Improvements

The streetscape improvements in Downtown Anderson will reclaim pedestrian and greenspace from the roadway and provide drivers with the sense of arrival through an aesthetic that creates a “downtown” feeling and pedestrian-scaled elements. This will be established through a unique streetscape treatment that is different than most of Beechmont Avenue, beginning with gateway elements at each end of the Focus Area and narrowing the overall street width between these elements. Similar to the existing median at Towne Center Way and landscaping/trees in front of Anderson Towne Center and the Christ Hospital Outpatient Facility, the eastern gateway will consist of an overall “greening” of the street and potentially a “flush” median that does not create a barrier or restricts turns.



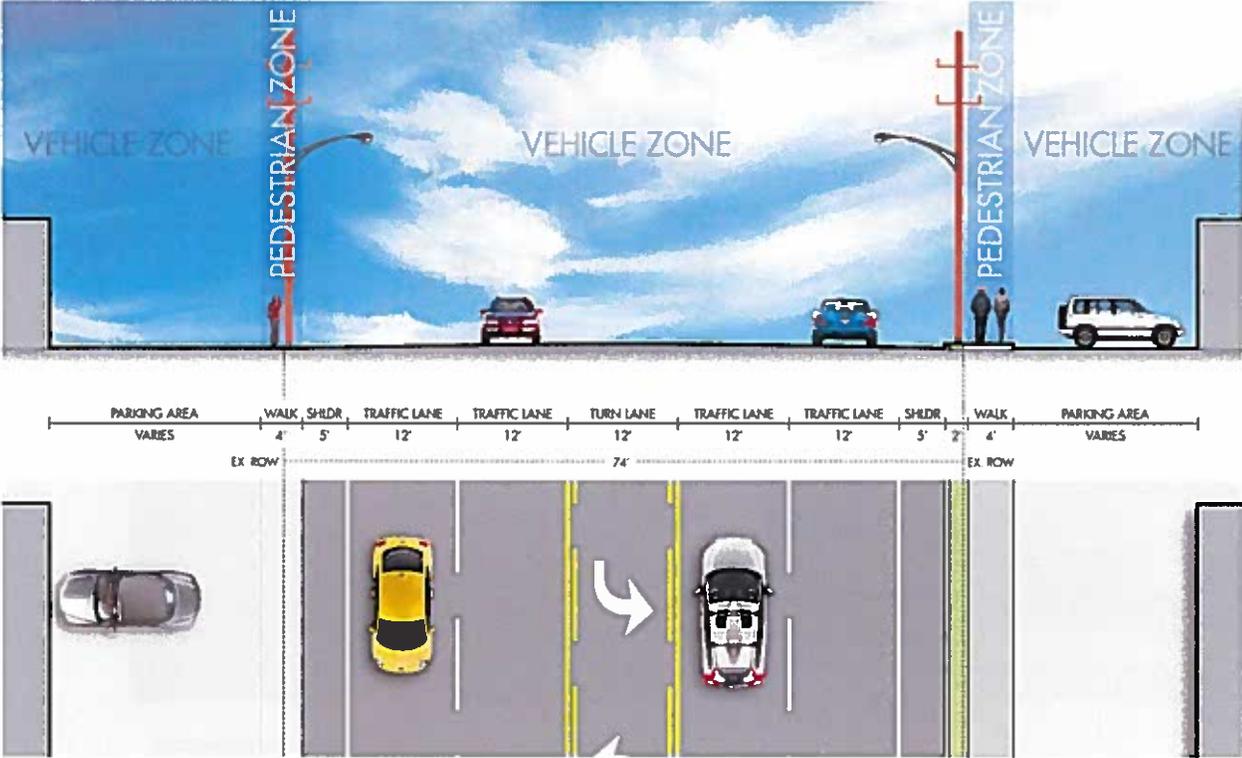
Between Wolfangel Road and Asbury Road, streetscape features include narrowing travel lanes from 12' to 11' wide and 7' wide sidewalks including a collector strip (of distinctive material, color or joint pattern that is complimentary to the existing walls), pedestrian-scale lighting every 80' and street trees every 40' where they do not impact sight distance. Wide sidewalks with curb ramps, pedestrian-scale lighting and trees will create a safe and inviting public realm with visual interest. Landscape and stone walls should be used to screen parking areas. Public rights-of-way and/or travel routes should be retrofitted in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Guidelines, as applicable. Collector strip materials should have a natural texture and may include stone, brick or colored/patterned concrete. The materials should be durable and complement previous improvements to the streetscape environment without being overstated or garish. Vertical elements (ex: lighting and mast arms) should be dark grey or black in color to compliment other streetscape materials.

Improved intersections at Wolfangel Road and Asbury Road will feature stone walls consistent at other intersections along Beechmont Avenue, but will also include larger sidewalks for pedestrians, seating if bus stops are present, pedestrian lighting, striped crosswalks and new mast arms for traffic signals.

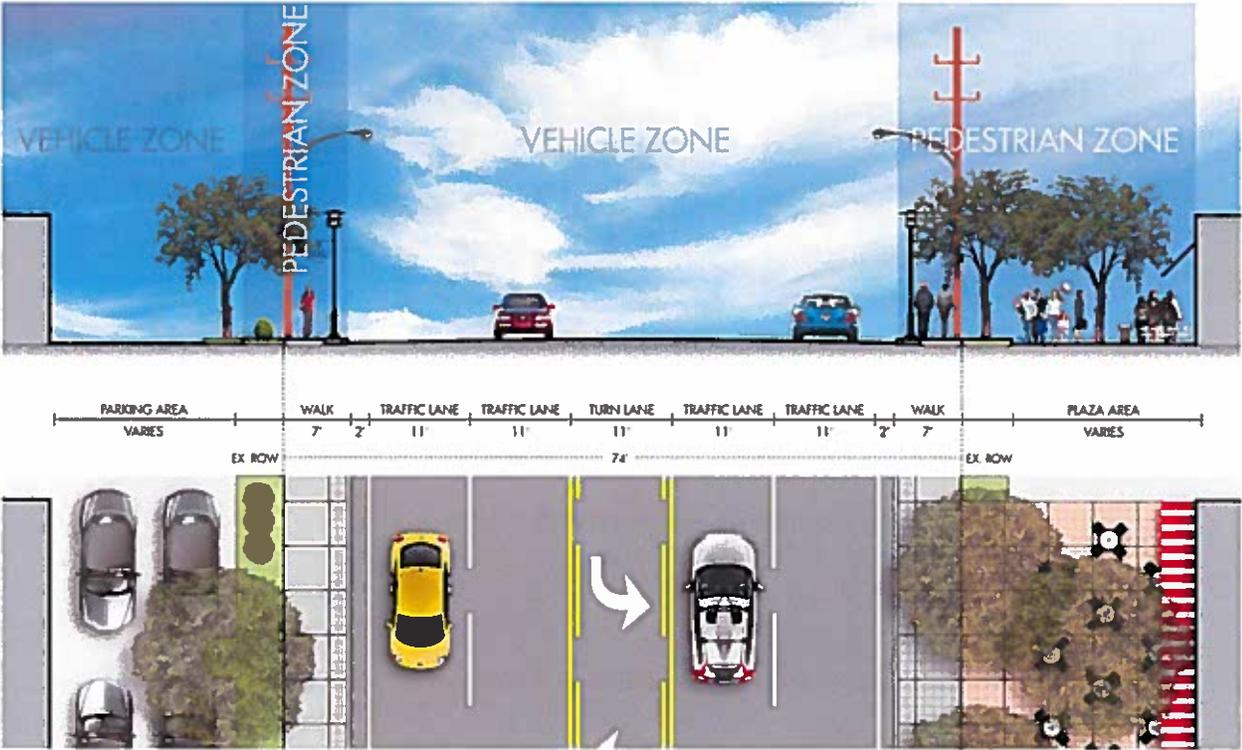


Bicycle travel within this two-block downtown section will be supported through strong share the road practices, including the possibility of Shared Lane Markings (Sharrows) to aid bicyclists with proper positioning in the outside lane, to encourage proper bicycling operation and to alert motorists where they are likely to encounter bicyclists within the roadway. The current use of "Share the Road" signs and bicycle safe drainage grates will be continued.

Existing street section:



Proposed street section:



Streetscape Elements

To soften the harshness of the existing streetscape, streetscape features should introduce more natural materials, such as wood, stone and light colors, in addition to screening landscaping and walls.

Bus stop bench and trash receptacle



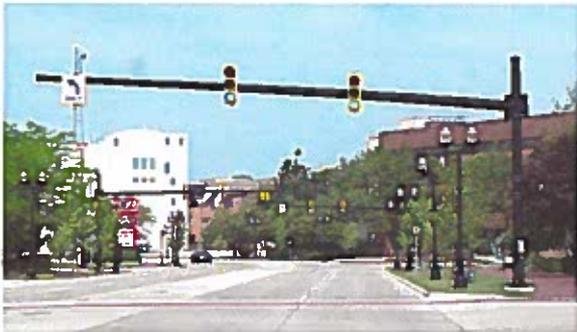
Planter



Pedestrian lighting



Intersection mast arm



Screening wall



Screening wall between street and parking



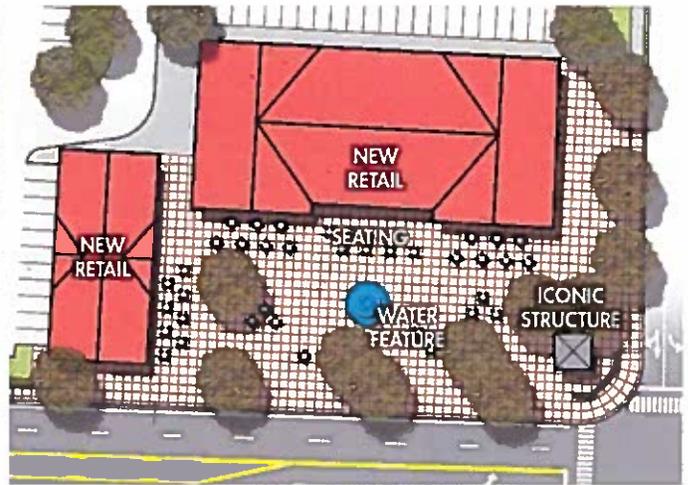
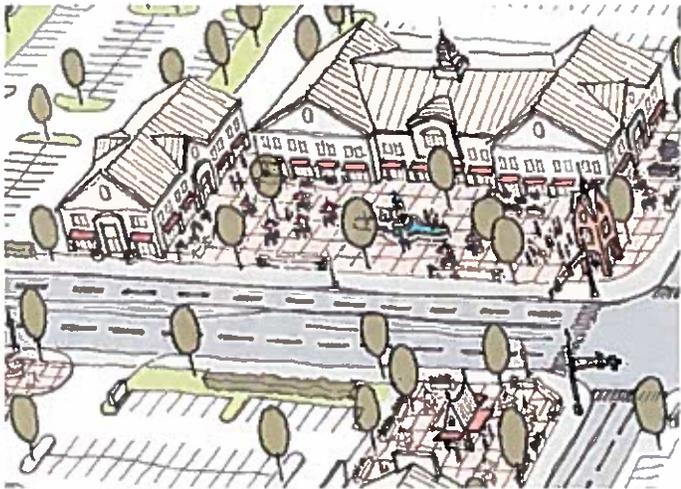
Combination of screening landscape and screening wall between street and parking



Collector strip material



Central Public Plaza

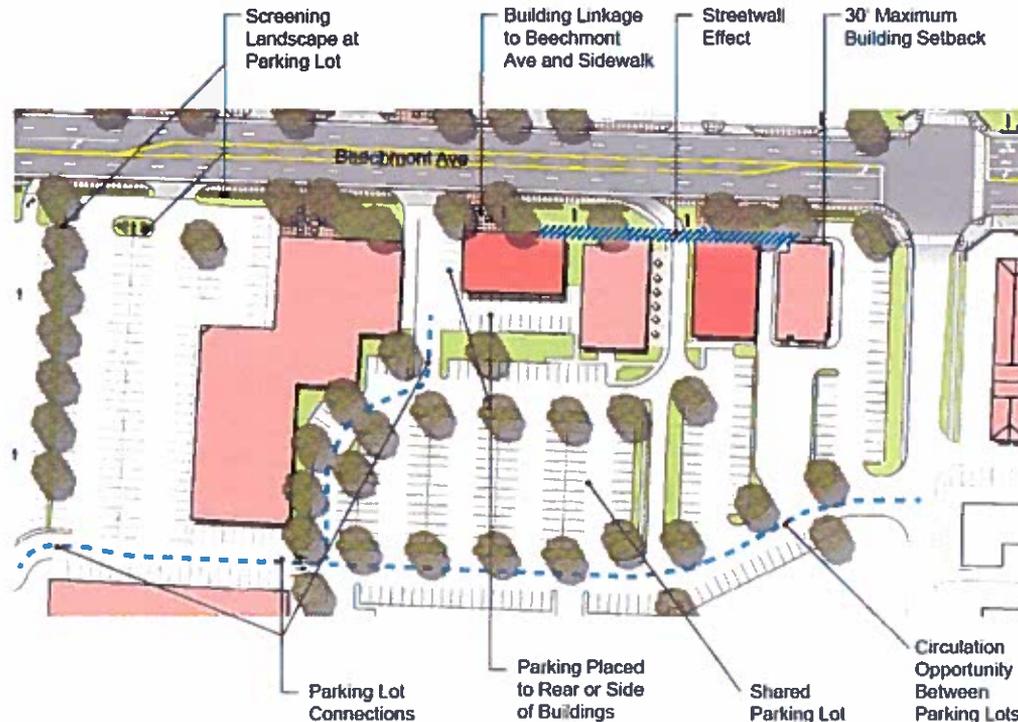


Objectives: Enhance existing development and promote reinvestment in the Downtown Anderson area through the creation of a central outdoor space that is activated by surrounding retail, employment and housing.

Because of its strategic location, at the pedestrian center of the area (including improved accessibility with new sidewalks from the north), the northwest corner of Beechmont Avenue and Wolfangel Road should feature a public outdoor plaza space of approximately 14,000 SF for events and gatherings, surrounded by new retail and/or mixed-use space. Buildings should be oriented towards the plaza, be two-story or greater in height (or have a mass that is equivalent to two stories in height) to provide a scale that is appropriate for the larger open space and feature prominent, high-quality architecture. Buildings should have an entry facing the plaza to allow for use of the plaza space by businesses and customers. A unique, iconic structure will be located in the southwest corner of the plaza and will serve as a wayfinding element and the demarcation of Downtown Anderson. This plaza should incorporate hardscape design elements from the streetscape improvements.



Site Planning and Design



Objectives: New development and redevelopment in Downtown Anderson should promote an urban, walkable, connected environment through a sense of enclosure along the sidewalk, urban streetwall effect, connected parking areas and buildings oriented towards Beechmont Avenue.

- To create a greater sense of enclosure along street corridors, when possible, buildings should be located between 10' and 30' from the property line along Beechmont Avenue.
- To achieve the development of a streetwall effect, the following should be considered to promote buildings that front along Beechmont Avenue.
 - Building frontage should cover a minimum of 60% of the parcel width fronting the street
 - Parking should be placed to the side or rear of buildings
 - Vehicular amenities such as ATMs and drive-thru windows should be located to the side or rear of buildings
- New buildings should be oriented towards Beechmont Avenue and the redevelopment of existing buildings should consider orientation/linkage to Beechmont Avenue through sidewalks/plazas.
- Parking lots visible from the street should be screened with low walls and/or landscaping to minimize their appearance.
- The development of buildings on out-parcels extending towards the street are strongly encouraged to break up the scale of large parking areas.
- Parking lot connections between neighboring properties and parking lots should be considered to promote shared parking situations.
- Internal streets, street extensions and vehicular drive connections to adjacent developments should include facilities to accommodate streetscape elements for pedestrians and landscaping.
- Property owners should be encouraged to design, construct and/or retrofit pedestrian travel routes between Beechmont Avenue and the principal entry to businesses, in accordance with ADA Accessibility Guidelines, to enable the widest spectrum of people, regardless of age or ability, to participate in community life.
- Bicycle friendly connections between neighboring properties and parking lots should be considered.

Architecture

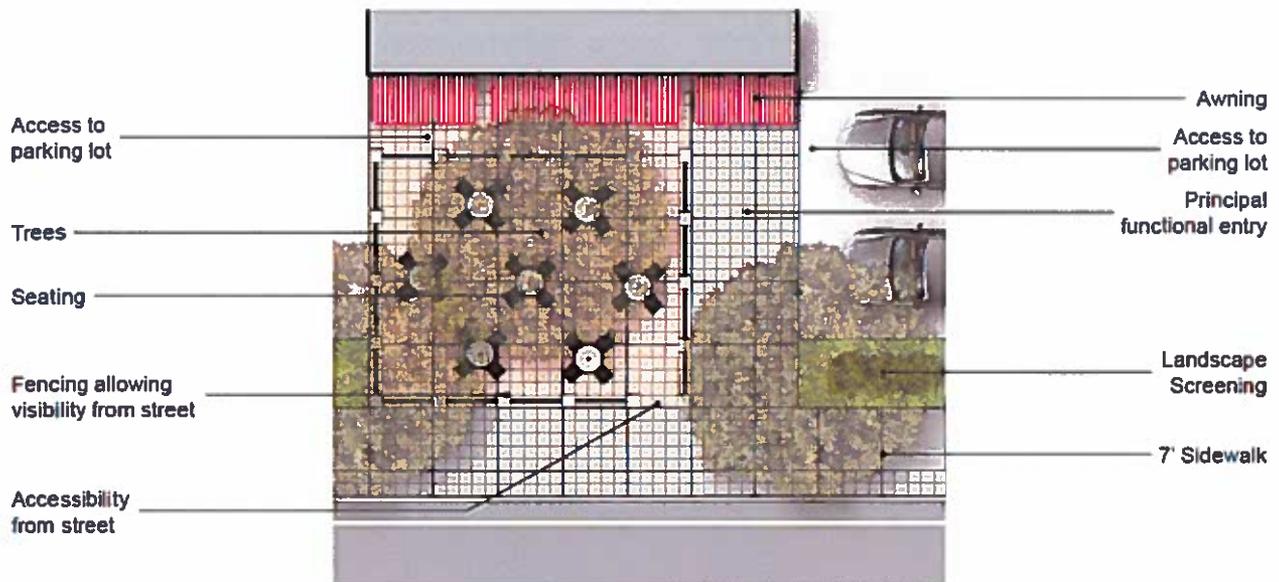
Objectives: Buildings along the Downtown Anderson focus area should promote a pedestrian-friendly environment. The design of new buildings and additions to existing buildings should create a special environment unique to the Focus Area. Special attention to the design of architectural forms, massing, detailing and use of materials and color for each building should be given in order to shape the downtown, urban appearance and human scale of the business district.

- The architectural forms and massing of the buildings should encourage a special urban environment with two story massing, corner towers and roof forms such as gables and dormers that create a unique environment.
- Façade treatments should utilize lasting materials organized to breakdown large areas of facades and encourage pedestrian interaction with the streetscape with display windows and transparency.
- Unique architectural elements should be encouraged to create a special downtown environment. Human scaled architectural elements – cornices, door pediments, recessed openings, divided pane windows, architectural window headers and trim, flower boxes, building mounted light fixtures and awnings, dormers, cupolas, projecting rooflines, covered walkways – integrated with the overall building structure contribute to the unique pedestrian environment of the Downtown Anderson area.
- Freestanding accessory and vehicular-oriented structures should be integrated with the design character of the building and placed to separate vehicular traffic from the pedestrian oriented environment of Downtown Anderson.
- The building should feature a principal functional entry on the front façade facing the street that is connected to Beechmont Avenue sidewalks.
- All ground-level retail uses that face a public street should have clear glass on at least 60% of their façades on the first floor.
- If a façade extends along a sidewalk, no more than 40 feet of its length should be blank (without doors or windows).
- Awnings and lighting should be incorporated and signs should be in keeping with the architecture and scale of the buildings – per the Township’s sign regulations.



Private Plazas that Engage the Street

Objectives: Establish a connection between Beechmont Avenue, sidewalks, private buildings and their entrances through the creation of quality, active outdoor spaces for pedestrians and patrons.



The existing space between the street/sidewalk and existing businesses is an opportunity to add additional vibrancy to the street outside of the right-of-way by means of increasing pedestrian and green space, and easing the hard streetscape formed by buildings bordered by parking lots. These amenity spaces should be flexible and designed based on the building, tenant and commercial use.

A plaza should be visually interesting with evidence that it is an open, active space, should be oriented towards the street and promote an accessible route to the business. These spaces could include functional and visual amenities, including seating, trees, tables, plantings, kiosks and art for the purpose of providing pedestrians a break from the street.

Uses for plaza spaces could include the following:

- Restaurant outdoor seating
- Eating and drinking
- Garden or park space
- Music performances
- Art shows
- Reading, sitting and relaxing



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES & TOOLS

Anderson Township officials have been promoting a spirit of cooperation with the business and developer community for many years. It remains the Township's desire to encourage and leverage significant improvements within the Beechmont Corridor over time. This plan provides recommendations on how significant physical improvements may take place. However, while most of these large scale improvements will occur on private property, the public right-of-way (R/W) along Beechmont Avenue, offers opportunities for more immediate and cohesive improvements that will help to establish a sense of place in Downtown Anderson.

The following recommendations provide a number of ways, over the next 18-24 months, that Anderson Township can begin the transformation of Beechmont Avenue into a more visually attractive place in the future.

1. Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Interface

It is recommended that Anderson Township continue to work with ODOT regarding what they will allow within the Beechmont Corridor R/W. The improvements suggested within this Plan have been discussed with ODOT and are consistent with their recommendations and past implementation efforts along the corridor. As ODOT has the permit and maintenance responsibilities on Beechmont Avenue (SR125) within Anderson Township, any improvements planned within the right of way must obtain a permit from ODOT.

Corridor enhancements contained within this Plan germane to ODOT are as follows:

- a. Restriping and narrowing of the lane widths to better utilize the existing 5' shoulder and better accommodate pedestrians while maintaining traffic flow.
- b. Textured or colored paving within a portion of the center lane for the eastern gateway to the neighborhood (as a raised median in that area is not feasible as access provisions are in place).
- c. Enhancement of pedestrian crossings and nodes (zebra striping, cross walk special treatment, signalization, location, etc.).
- d. Supplemental pedestrian lighting that may fall within the R/W.
- e. Accommodations for non-motorized transportation (sidewalks, sharrows, etc.).
- f. Accommodations for public transportation (loading areas, etc.)
- g. Low stonewalls that may fall within portions of the R/W.
- h. Wayfinding signage.
- i. Landscaping.

In addition, continued coordination should occur with ODOT with regards to redevelopment proposals and access management along the corridor, consistent with the excellent working relationship that has been formed with ODOT on safety improvements along the corridor.

2. Utility Provider Interface

A similar discussion with Duke and utility representatives has focused on options to reduce adverse visual effects from the above ground electric utilities. Similar to during development of the Vision Plan and subsequent implementation efforts, meetings were held with Duke to discuss possible utility (primarily electric) service options. A variety of strategies and issues were discussed with Duke's Technical and Standards Group, to help understand the options available. These included:

- a. Option to hang selected streetscape elements from existing utility poles.
- b. Program for consolidating or cleaning up the existing overhead utility network, beginning with the south side of the roadway since the high transmission, 69K volt, line runs along the north side and must be entirely above or below ground between Markley Road and Mt. Carmel-Tobasco Road.

- c. Consolidation to reduce the number of utility poles.
- d. Feasibility of placing some of the service lines to individual existing buildings underground.
- e. Discussions of service options with other utility providers, such as Cincinnati Bell, Time Warner, etc.

3. Business/Property Owner Interface

As many of the recommendations set forth in the original Vision Plan and this Plan involved the design, configuration and/or appearance of buildings on private property, dialogue and interface with private property owners and tenants is critical to the success and implementation of this Plan. Throughout development of this Plan, such conversations occurred, but moving forward these should include:

- a. Continued contact with every property owner with regard to the Township's desire to promote visual enhancements in the Area.
- b. Create the vehicle and offer incentives as a catalyst to get owners/businesses to participate with improvements to existing structures. This could include a "Design Resource Pool" that can provide initial concepts for physical improvement to selected properties that is funded by Anderson Township. Detailed design will then become the responsibility of individual property owners.
- c. Provide guidelines (as described in the Vision Plan, this Plan, and draft design guidelines that are being developed) to property owners who are considering remodeling or redeveloping their property.

4. Implementation Tools

In conjunction with the aforementioned dialogue with ODOT, utility providers, and property owners, the following tools are suggested as strategies to help advance the recommendations set forth in this Plan:

- a. Develop design standards that would apply to new construction and substantial redevelopment, while also offering a guide for property improvements, planned unit development modifications, etc.
- b. Develop signage guidelines that encourage the visual enhancements desired by the Township and the option to remove undesirable signs through the use of TIF funds for demolition of private property.
- c. Allocate a portion of TIF (Tax Increment Funds) Funds for investment in physical improvements and seek grant funding to assist with public improvements to calm traffic and safely facilitate pedestrian, bicycle and transit use within the area.
- d. Utilize the Township's Economic Development Committee, along with other groups, to set up an Advocacy Committee whose mission is to transform Beechmont Avenue. Include residents, property owners, businesses, public officials and technical design professionals.
- e. Explore the use of a Development Authority, Community Improvement Corporation, or other entity to facilitate redevelopment of the Beechmont Corridor.

CONCLUSION

Anderson Township has long since lacked a traditional "Downtown" area. However, redevelopment pressures at the center of Beechmont Avenue, between Towne Center Way and Asbury Road, adjacent to the Anderson Towne Center, provide a unique opportunity to capitalize on private investment and target public improvements to create such a physical focus for the community. By working with developers, property owners, business, residents, government agencies, utility providers and other key stakeholders, Anderson Township can foster the realization of the 2005 Vision Plan and help facilitate "Downtown Anderson". This concentration of a new focus or pattern of development will not only revitalize this area, but will hopefully encourage the expansion of other patterns of development in the other neighborhoods of the corridor, consistent with the 2005 Beechmont Vision Plan.