

**Urbandale Community Design Initiative
Visioning and Image Development for Physical Improvements
Supplemental Report**

Submitted by Matt Penniman, Communications Coordinator
Allen Neighborhood Center

This Urbandale Community Design Initiative Supplemental Report together with the Report Summary of Visioning and Image Development for Physical Improvements will be used in future discussions about the Urbandale Development Project. The Supplemental Report includes: (1) Analysis of Visioning Slides Design Elements (2) Discussion of Design Element Comments and (3) Suggestions for Proceeding with Urbandale Development.

1. Analysis of Visioning Slides Design Elements

Methodology: Neighborhood residents examined the visioning slides prepared by Warren J. Rauhe's Community Design Initiative Team and made written comments to them. When analyzing the written comments, it became apparent that certain design elements were frequently mentioned. In order to better understand the residents' comments, we counted the number of comments related to each design element, and how many of these comments were positive, negative, or neutral. For example, proposed entrance archways appear in several of the slides, and draw many comments – but these comments were almost universally negative. In contrast, removal of overhead power lines was considered in many slides, but only received a few comments. We concluded that viewers did not care a great deal about removing overhead power lines, but were dead set against an entry arch.

Below are two tables. The Top Ten Elements Table lists the ten design elements that received the greatest number of comments, along with the number of positive, negative, and neutral comments for each. In the Sum column we have determined a positive ranking score. The Sum is equal to positive comment total minus negative comment total, and represents a measure of popularity. The Popularity Table ranks the design elements by those receiving the highest Sum (positive) score.

In addition to comments about specific elements summarized in the tables, there were more general comments about the overall impression or mood of a particular image or design and some comments addressed the feasibility of a particular design. These comments and impressions are summarized in the discussion section of this report.

Top Ten Elements Table: This table ranks the top ten elements according to total number of comments received, along with the number of positive, negative, and neutral comments for each. The Sum (column) is equal to the positive comment total minus negative comment total.

Elements	Total	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Sum
Plants	55	42	8	5	34
Sign	34	26	7	1	19
Lighting/Lights	27	17	9	1	8
Sidewalks	22	16	5	1	11
Buildings	21	11	10		1
Arch	14	1	13		-12
Bike Lane	14	12	1	1	11
Brick Paving	13	2	11		-9
Overpass	11	2	8	1	-6
Bus Stop	9	1	8		-7

Popularity Table: This table lists the top ten design elements in order of the sum of their positive and negative comments. Thus, “Plants” received the highest proportion of positive comments, while “Arch” received the highest proportion of negative comments.

Elements	Sum
Plants	34
Sign	19
Sidewalks	11
Bike Lane	11
Lighting/Lights	8
Buildings	1
Overpass	-6
Bus Stop	-7
Brick Paving	-9
Arch	-12

2. Discussion of Design Element Comments

Plants: The comments on proposed plants and landscaping were plentiful and overwhelmingly positive. This indicates a broad desire for more greenery and green space in the Urbandale area, possibly including a new or expanded park.

Signage and Lighting: Comments on these suggestions were generally positive, though negative comments on certain lighting styles show a need for careful consultation before adopting a standard design. Historic, rather than modern or avant-garde, was preferred.

Sidewalks and Bike Lanes: Sidewalk improvements and improved markings for bike lanes had strongly positive comments. They have the additional advantage of being relatively inexpensive.

Arch, Brick Paving, Overpass, Bus Stop: Comments were strongly negative towards various proposals for entry archways, for brick paving in bike lanes, for a redesign of the US-127 overpass, and for open bus stop designs (commenters stressed the need for enclosed bus stops to provide wind protection). These should be avoided.

Buildings: While commercial development figured heavily in the proposals, audience reaction was decidedly mixed. Though the idea of more stores and restaurants was appealing, many commenters thought that the proposed designs for plazas and

developments were more suited to a gentrified suburb than a city neighborhood, using phrases such as “looks unreal”, “yuppified!!! no, no”, “doesn’t look like our neighborhood”, “too dramatic”, “great but unlikely”, and “decorated to within an inch of its life”. In addition, developers are likely to be extremely cautious about investing in commercial construction in a flood plain.

3. Suggestions for Proceeding With Urbandale Development

Based on analysis of Design Initiative Reports and neighborhood resident comments, the following action steps are suggested to advance the Urbandale Development Project:

- Form an Advisory Committee, with neighbors, business representatives, city and township representatives, and representatives from the Flood Mitigation Taskforce.
- Organize walking tours of Urbandale – Sector 1 and Sector 2.
- Identify resources available for floodproofing homes, such as raising utilities from the basement to the first floor, landscape grading, etc.; and areas in which these strategies may be appropriately used.
- Recommend ‘small things’, inexpensive but morale-boosting improvements for the near term; two scenarios based on the Design Initiative comments follow:

Scenario 1: Bicycle Lane Painting

July 25, 2005

Last weekend, Eastside residents turned out in large numbers to paint the bicycle lanes on either side of Kalamazoo St. Groups of residents "adopted" 50 yard lengths of the road, laying down a base coat of brick red paint on the asphalt, followed the next day by bicycle stencils in any of several designs, in white, blue, or green. The project was sponsored by the Urbandale Advisory Committee, in partnership with Allen Neighborhood Center, which raised funds for the paint through the Mayor's Grant program. The intent of the paint job is to increase awareness of the bike lanes, promote their use, and add a festive touch to the area. The new paint stretches from US-127 to Pennsylvania Avenue.

Scenario 2: Unified Signage

October 10, 2005

New signs on the Eastside of Lansing were unveiled yesterday, representing a new unified look for the Urbandale (?) neighborhood. The design for the signs, reading "Welcome to Urbandale: Lansing's Hidden Treasure", was chosen through a neighborhood-wide poll, conducted with the assistance of Allen Neighborhood Center's Eastside Monthly. Three candidate designs were published in the August issue, and the top vote-getter used as a template for entry signs at three points: on Kalamazoo Street just west of US-127, on Clemens Street near the corner of Elizabeth, and on Foster Street south of Michigan Ave.

- Explore obtaining unoccupied land in deeper areas of the floodplain, and establishing a catchment / greenway park modeled after the Fairview Tollgate.

Scenario 3: Urbandale Greenway

July 2, 2007

A ribbon-cutting ceremony held yesterday marked the opening of Urbandale Greenway Park, and with it an extension of the River Trail on the north side of I-496. The park has been established on low-lying land in the flood plain of the Grand River, on property purchased through the federal Flood Mitigation program. A partnership between Lansing Township, the City of Lansing, Allen Neighborhood Center, and the Urbandale Advisory Committee was responsible for arranging the purchase and organizing volunteer labor for the park's construction.

Scenario 4: Raised Utilities

October 16, 2006

Neighbors celebrated a house-warming for a home on Hayford Street on Tuesday, the first of a predicted 40 households to take advantage of the new Utility Raising Initiative. The initiative is intended to help homeowners in the floodplain raise their electrical connections and furnaces up to the first floor, where they will not be affected by basement flooding. Some homes are also benefiting from landscape grading, another measure designed to reduce flood risk.