

NOBLE MAIN STREET

**THE HEART OF THE
COMMUNITY**

City of Noble

**Association of Central Oklahoma
Governments**

OU Institute for Quality Communities



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Steering Committee

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Erika Wright – Noble Public Schools Foundation

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CERI: Community Economic Resiliency Initiative

In 2021, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) initiated the Community Economic Resiliency Initiative (CERI) to offer municipalities the opportunity to develop plans that model strategic investment, sustainable economic recovery, and long-term resiliency in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ACOG partnered with the University of Oklahoma Institute for Quality Communities (IQC) to collaborate in shaping the program and providing services to communities selected to participate in CERI. Through a competitive application process, two cities were selected. The CERI Program offers municipal governments the opportunity to develop planning demonstration (demo) sites that will model strategic community and long-term economic investment with a focus on placemaking and cultural heritage tourism. CERI aims to engage local governments to develop the tools they need to become economically resilient and sustainable.

This document compiles recommendations based on research and engagement carried out by the OU Institute for Quality Communities in response to these community-driven proposals.

Noble: The City of Noble sought a plan for its historic downtown district. The IQC team conducted regular steering committee meetings and attended two local festivals to engage with residents on participation for a community survey and design preference activities. Research and data collection/analysis were also key components of this project to gauge a sense of the community's needs and preferences. The process resulted in four big themes: pedestrian safety, placemaking, beautification, and economic development.

Choctaw: The City of Choctaw sought a corridor study of NE 23rd Street, Choctaw's primary commercial corridor. The IQC team conducted regular steering committee meetings, composed a community survey for citizens and high school students, along with additional research about the local area. The process resulted in four pillars for NE 23rd Street including pedestrian prioritization, economic development, housing, and placemaking. These goals were explored through conceptual designs, case studies, and a sidewalk gap analysis.

Project Overview

The City of Noble’s downtown business district has existed since Noble’s founding and serves as the central hub of commerce and culture for the city. The district sits on Main Street, which doubles as U.S. Route 77. This location on a major highway provides Main Street businesses with visibility and a steady flow of traffic, but also brings concerns over the potential for the street to be widened someday by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT), removing the valuable on-street parking that currently exists. This concern, as well as a desire to improve pedestrian safety downtown, are top priorities of the Steering Committee of Noble leaders created for this project. The downtown district is currently anchored by two popular restaurants and a few other key businesses, but, in alignment with Noble’s most recent comprehensive plan, the City is interested in revitalizing the area to facilitate further community and economic development.

Through a series of Steering Committee meetings and Community Engagement activities, four big themes were identified to guide the City of Noble’s revitalization efforts. These themes are listed below and discussed in greater depth later in this report.



Pedestrian Safety



Placemaking



Beautification



Economic Development

History

Noble was founded on April 22, 1889, as part of the Great Land Run. The town was planned and named by Albert Rennie, who claimed the 160-acre townsite in the land run. He named it in honor of Secretary of the Interior John Noble, and, in 1891, Noble was officially surveyed and platted.

Noble soon grew a thriving Main Street Business District, attracting a hotel, general stores, drug stores, a lumber company, two cotton gins, and its own newspaper. Noble was one of the original towns formed along the Santa Fe Railroad; trains stopped in Noble until 1944.

In 1898, a suspension bridge was built across the Canadian River. The Canadian Bridge allowed people to travel to Noble to conduct trade, as there were no incorporated towns west of the river at that time. Unfortunately, the bridge had been destroyed by floods by 1904 and was never rebuilt due to a decrease in trade as other towns were established nearby.



Downtown Noble in 1928. Picture from Pioneer Library System



Canadian Bridge, from OU Western History Collections.

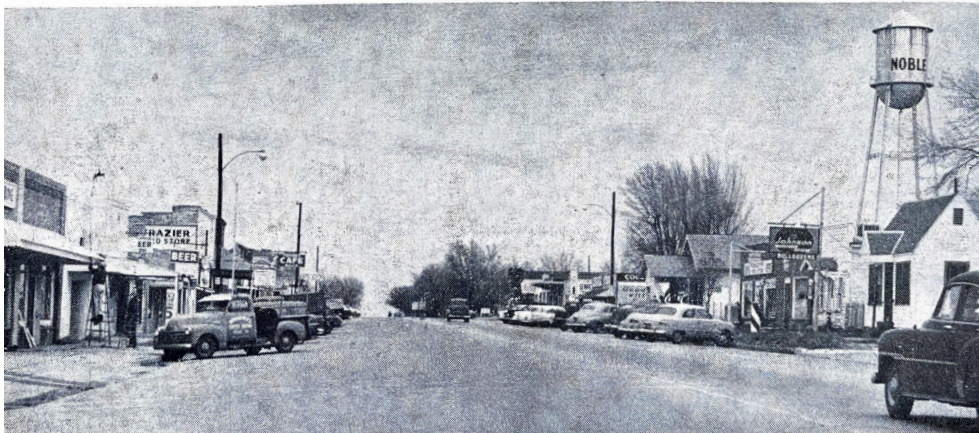
The population continued to grow steadily through the 20th century. As the 1970s approached, Noble's population started to boom, with a total of 2,241 residents recorded in 1970. As Norman and Oklahoma City to the north also expanded, Noble grew into a bedroom community for the larger cities.

In 1984, Governor George Nigh designated Noble as the "Rose Rock Capitol of the World" due to the presence of rare barite rosette, commonly known as rose rock, in the Noble area. Outside of Central Oklahoma, this unique rock formation can only be found in Kansas, California, and Egypt. An annual Rose Rock Festival is held in Noble each May.

Today, the City of Noble covers about 13 square miles. In 2022, the population was estimated to be 7,556. The population continues to grow as new neighborhoods are currently being built. Despite this growth, Noble continues to retain an atmosphere of "Small town living, just minutes from the city," as stated on the City's website. Noble has also retained its historic downtown.



Photo taken of the Smith Brothers Road Contractors in 1930



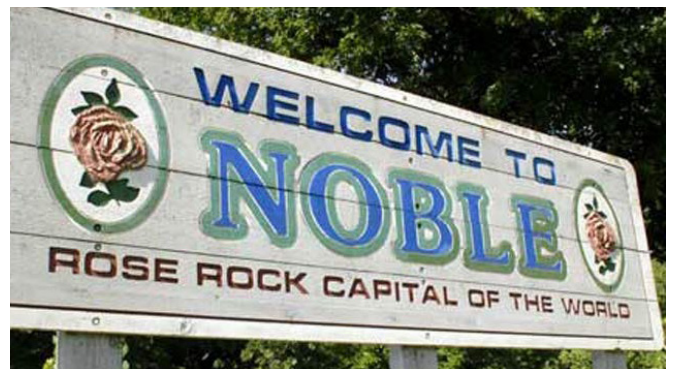
Noble Main Street in 1957. Picture from cityofnoble.org/about



Outside a Main Street Bar



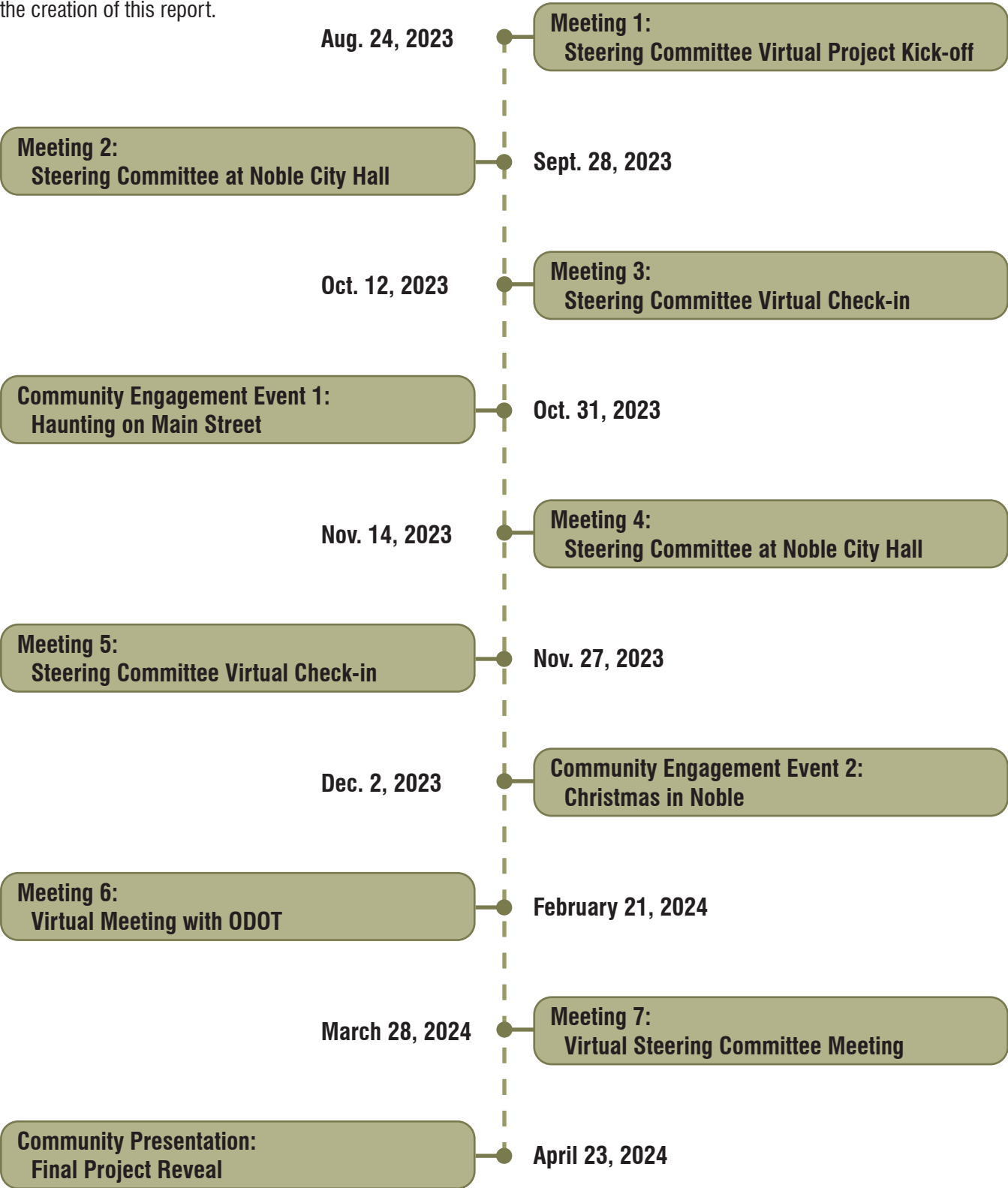
Santa Fe Rail Depot in 1887. Picture from Pioneer Library System

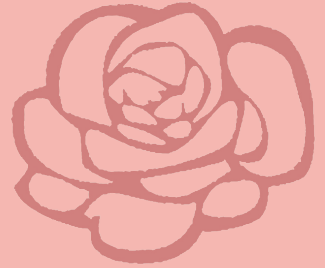


Picture from cityofnoble.org/about

Project Timeline

The following timeline lays out the various steering committee meetings and community events which guided the creation of this report.





COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was accomplished in four parts:

- **Walking tour of Main Street**
- **Community survey**
- **Haunting on Main Street event**
- **Christmas in Noble event**

The following pages include a description of each community engagement activity, followed by a discussion of findings.



Walking Tour

Sept. 28, 2023

As part of the first in-person steering committee meeting, the group walked the downtown area, evaluating the current conditions of the focus area. The committee walked from Noble's City Hall to Ash Street and back. The walk helped the team understand just how difficult it can be to cross Main Street (U.S. Route 77), but it also gave the team a chance to notice some of the unique features that make up Noble's character.

The following pictures are all from the walking tour.



Faded stop lines, missing crosswalks, and dilapidated buildings are some of the struggles faced by Noble's downtown.



The Post Office and Town Hall are not connected by a sidewalk, meaning the group's tour started with a short trek through the grass.



The wide sidewalks provide plenty of space for outdoor seating by Kendall's Restaurant.



Some stretches of Main Street have no sidewalk separating road from parking lot, creating a confusing, unpleasant pedestrian experience.



Some corners do have ADA compliant ramps, but they are not consistently placed and do not point at the crosswalks.

Community Survey

October through December

In order to collect the opinions and thoughts of as many people as possible, the committee crafted a brief survey. Paper copies of the survey were distributed at the various engagement activities. The survey was also distributed electronically through QR codes, a post to city-maintained websites, and an email blast through the Noble Public Schools system.

The 15-question community survey included multiple choice, multiple response, free response, and ranking questions. They covered everything from how people interact with downtown currently to what changes they hope to see, with a brief demographics section at the end.

Haunting on Main Street

October 31, 2023

Noble’s Main Street comes alive every Halloween as costumed families flock downtown. Local businesses and organizations set up booths on either side of Main Street to hand out candy to the hundreds of excited children.

The steering committee joined forces with the IQC team to hand out candy, surveys, and water bottles with QR code links to the survey taped to the caps at this fun-filled event. It was an exciting way to spread the word about the project!



Christmas in Noble

December 2, 2023

The team set up a booth on Main Street amidst the many local vendors that turned out for the event. While copies of the survey were available for those who were interested and still had not completed it, the main focus of the night was on two Visual Preference Boards. The Boards presented people the opportunity to vote on their preferred images in the following categories:

- Lighting
- Pedestrian Crossing
- Wayfinding
- Seating
- Art
- Placemaking



Participants voted by placing stickers on their favorite images. People of all ages were at the event and the posters attracted kids and adults alike.



Findings

Walking Tour

The findings of the walking tour are summarized in the S.W.O.T. analysis below.

STRENGTHS

- Wide sidewalks on the main block of Main Street
- Outdoor seating by some storefronts
- Seasonal decor by some storefronts
- Some corners have ADA ramps and parking
- Main Street is home to a few well-established, well-known businesses and restaurants
- On-street parking provides easy access to shopping and may help slow traffic slightly
- Regular street lights

WEAKNESSES

- Old crosswalks and stop lines are fading
- Lacking in consistent application of ADA standards
- Lack of pedestrian safety features
- Incomplete sidewalk system
- Presence of a few unoccupied buildings in need of repair

OPPORTUNITIES

- Plenty of space for outdoor seating on the west side of Main Street
- Some available spaces for placemaking

THREATS

- Uncertainty regarding ODOT plans
- Street trees are threatened by under-sized tree wells and the spread of disease
- Deterioration of some building facades creates unsafe spaces for pedestrians

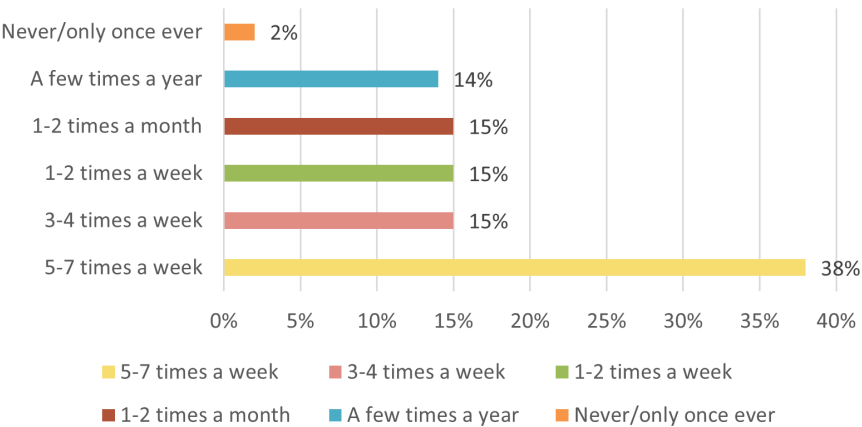
Community Survey

There were a total of 966 electronic and paper responses. The graphics below share the results.

The first few questions focused on people’s current experiences with downtown Main Street, with question 1 asking about frequency of visits and question 2 asking about the main purpose for visiting. The graphic on the right addresses question 1.

The two graphics below address question 2, with the bar chart summarizing the responses people gave when asked to describe their response of “other.”

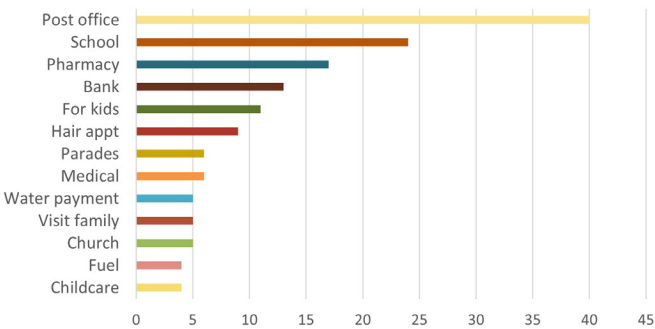
Q1 How often do you go to downtown Main Street?



Q2 What is the main purpose of your visits to downtown?



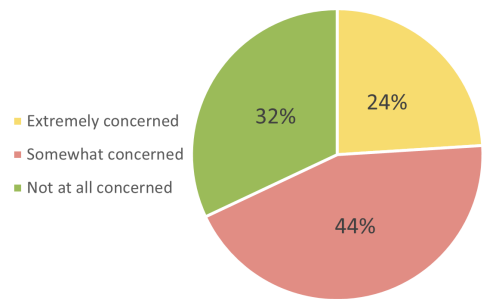
Other current reasons for visiting downtown



Below, question 3 asks about concern over losing parking. This is partially due to the possibility that ODOT may widen Highway 77 someday, thus getting rid of the current on-street parking.

Question 4 asked people how easy or difficult it is to get downtown. 5% of respondents said it is somewhat difficult or extremely difficult to get downtown. The chart on the below summarizes the reasons they gave.

Q3 How concerned are you about potentially losing downtown parking?



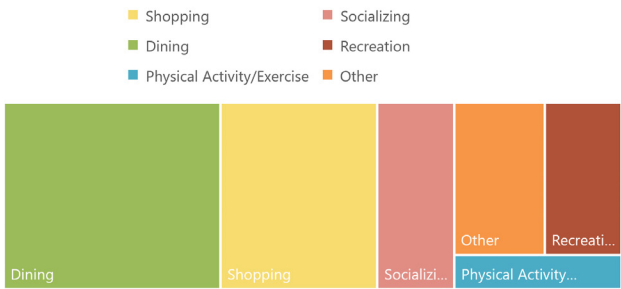
Q4 What makes it difficult to get downtown?



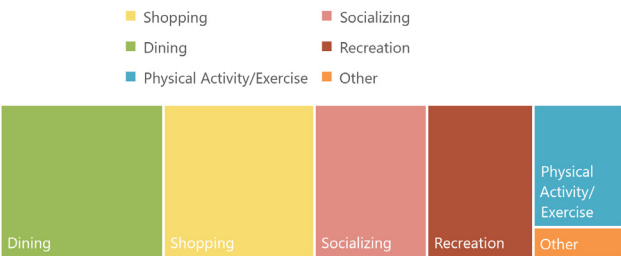
Question 5 asked what activities people currently do inside the downtown corridor. The majority of people responded by saying they **dine** on main street, with **shopping** following relatively close behind as the second most popular option. Socializing and recreation were significantly less popular, while physical activity/exercise was selected by the fewest people.

Question 6 offered the same options as question 5, but this time asked people what they would like to be able to do in the future. The results were a little more evenly weighted, as displayed to the right.

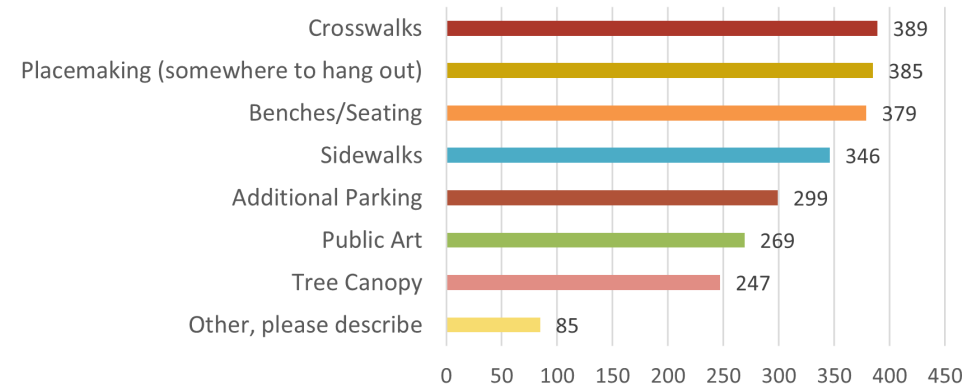
Q5 What activities do you *currently* do inside this corridor?



Q6 What activities do you *like to be able to do* inside this corridor in the future?

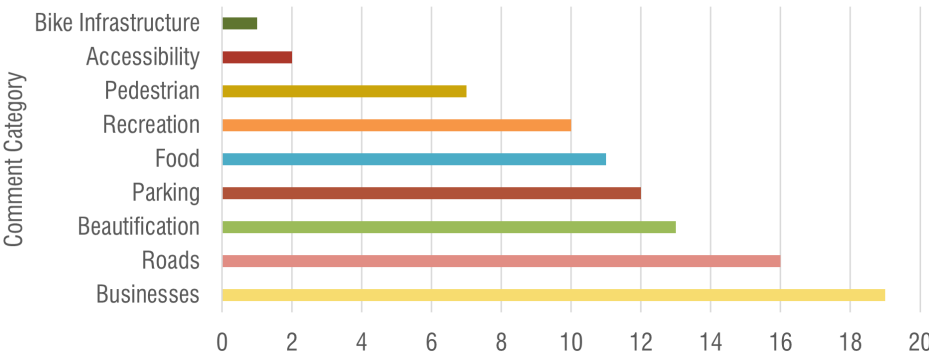


Q7 What elements would you like to see added to the corridor?



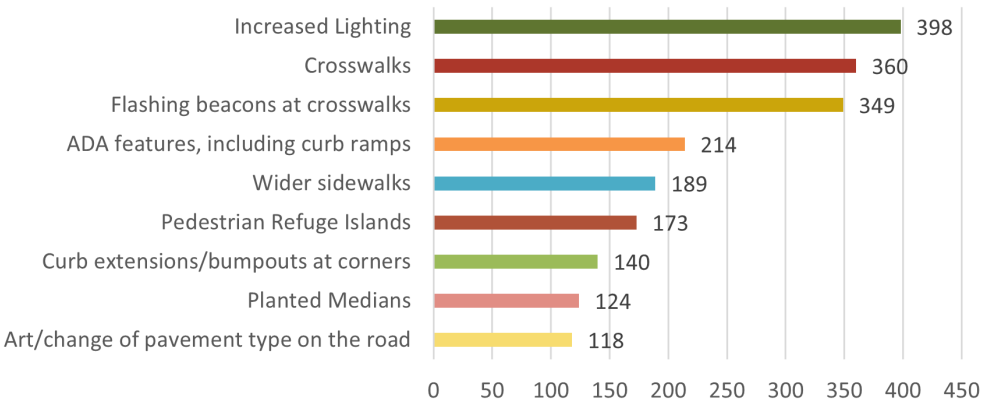
Question 7 begins a shift into asking people what physical elements they would like to see on Main Street. The graphic to the left displays those results. Like in Question 2, people who selected “Other” were given space to write in their own responses; those responses are summarized below.

Other Elements You Would Like to See Downtown



Question 8 focuses on what could be added to Main Street to increase pedestrian safety. Participants were able to select as many answers applied. **Increased lighting, crosswalks, and flashing beacons at crosswalks** received the most votes, as seen in the graphic to the right.

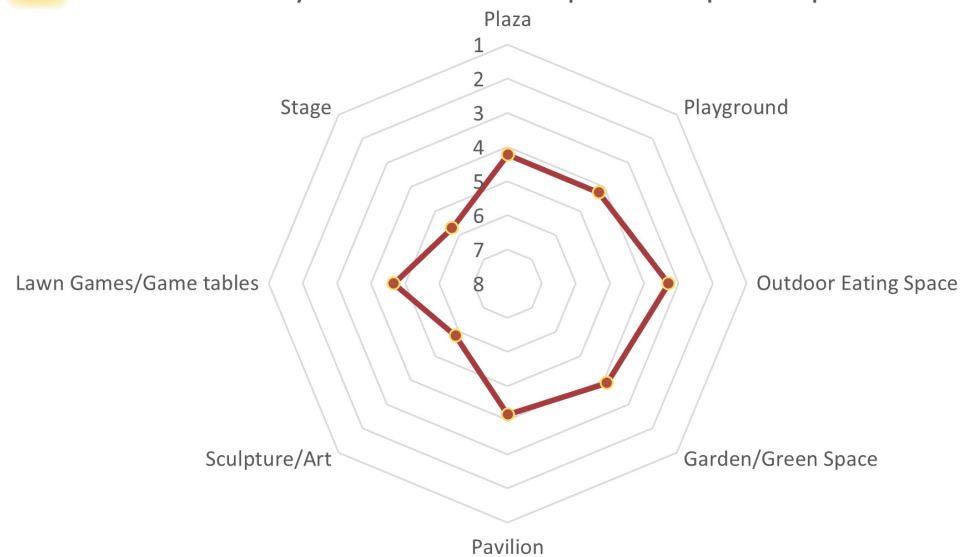
Q8 What elements would increase your sense of safety in the downtown area?



Question 9 asked participants to rate different elements in a potential pocket park according to their preferences, with 1 being the most desirable and 9 being the least desirable.

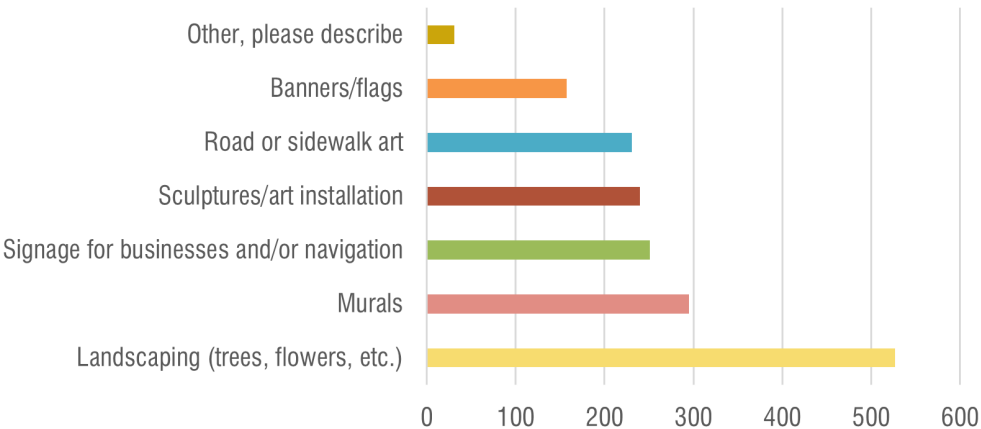
The graphic on the right summarizes the average rank each element received. The closer to 1 an element scored, or the closer to the outer edge of the octagon, the more people preferred it. **Outdoor eating space and garden/green space** received the top scores.

Q9 What would you like to see in a potential pocket park?



Question 10 asked participants to select as many of the beautification elements as they would like to see downtown. Participants who selected “Other” responded with things like desiring new businesses, general improvements to building facades, putting up string lights over the road, and adding flowers or other landscaping.

Q10 What elements of beautification would you most like to see downtown?



Question 11 was a free response question asking: “Is there anything else, not yet mentioned, that would encourage you to spend more time in Noble’s downtown?” The word graphic to the right summarizes the responses people gave.

Question 12 was another free response question asking if there was anything else we should know about Noble’s downtown. The responses mainly shared things already expressed, like concerns about traffic and parking, a desire to keep the small-town feel, a need for better sidewalk connectivity and accessibility, and a desire for some design continuity downtown. Some specific comments included desires for a pizza place, installation of solar panels and a pollinator garden, and an emphasis on celebrating Noble’s history. Many people expressed a love for Noble and a desire to see Main Street revitalized.

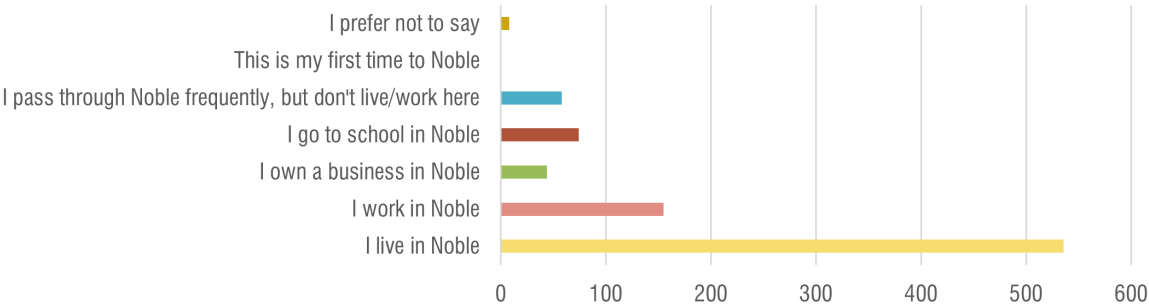


The final three questions on the survey covered basic demographics of the participants. Question 13 asked for the participants’ connections to Noble, allowing them to select all that applied. Question 14 asked them to select their age bracket. Question 15 asked for their gender.

The graphics below summarize the results from the demographics questions.

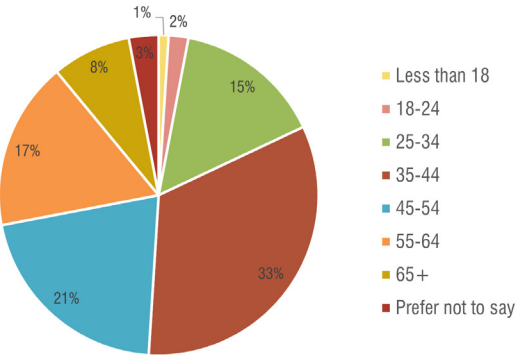
Q13

What Connection do you have to Noble?



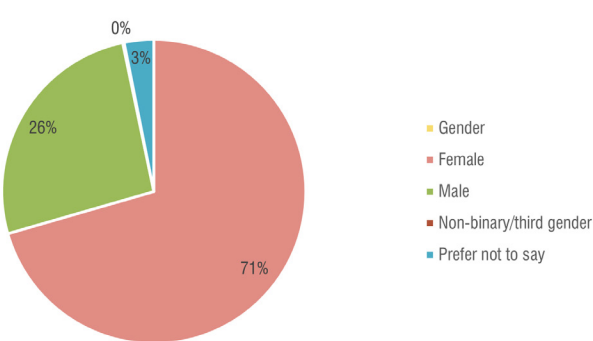
Q14

Age Bracket



Q15

Gender of Participants



Visual Preference Boards

The Christmas on Main event was very successful in garnering community input. The images below depict the top votes, based on the number of stickers placed by the end of the night. Two people mentioned things they would like to see that were not on the posters: a Veterans' Memorial and a reopening of the Rose Rock Museum.

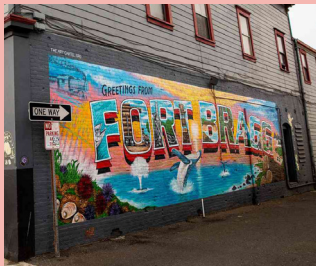
Pedestrian Crossing

Artistic crosswalk: 29.
Flashing sign: 25.
Pedestrian refuge island: 20.
In-street sign: 8.
Basic: 2.



Art

Mural: 26. **Mosaic:** 24.
Furniture: 24. **Sculpture:** 12.
Bike rack: 9.



Seating

Planter bench: 36. **Bistro:** 16.
Artistic: 16. **Classic:** 14.
Contemporary: 3.



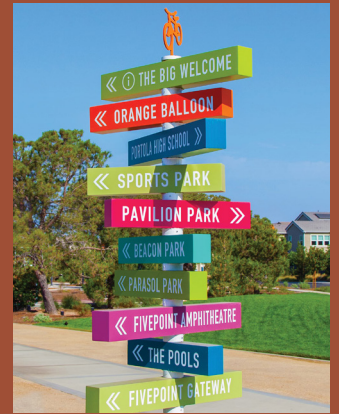
Lighting

String lights: 46. **Multi-arm:** 20. **Contemporary:** 12.
Classic: 10. **Simple:** 2.



Wayfinding

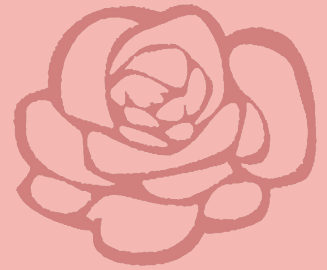
Multi-point: 35.
Branding: 20. **Eclectic:** 8.
Simple: 6. **Finger:** 5.



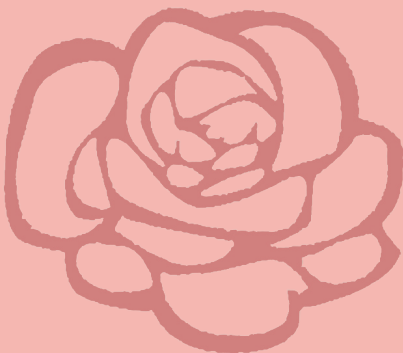
Placemaking

Nature play: 35. **Dining space:** 30. **Flex space:** 24.
Garden: 21. **Community garden:** 20. **Pavilion:** 20.
Pop-up shop: 15. **Jungle gym:** 12. **Lawn games:** 9. **Plaza:** 6.





THEME #1: PEDESTRIAN SAFETY



Context

The quality of the pedestrian experience is a large part of creating a thriving downtown district. Some of the current pedestrian safety concerns in Noble are below:

- High speeds of drivers make walking sidewalks unsafe
- The lack of a signal-controlled intersection makes crossing the street difficult, as does the large distance from corner to corner (approximately 70 feet)
- Existing crosswalk markings are badly faded
- ADA compliance of sidewalks is inconsistent
- The sidewalk system on Main Street has large gaps, even between key buildings like the Post Office and City Hall
- While being on U.S. Route 77 may bring in business, it also brings increased vehicular traffic and a measure of uncertainty regarding future highway projects

Improving the pedestrian experience on Main Street can encourage people to spend more time downtown, as they will feel more comfortable walking from business to business. The following sections provide examples of other cities that have improved pedestrian safety in their downtown districts, followed by potential interventions for Noble.

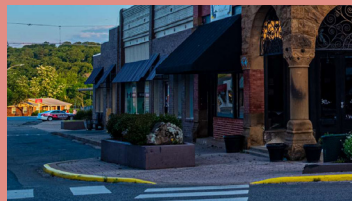


Precedent Studies

The following are a few examples of communities that have faced similar challenges as Noble and have successfully implemented various interventions to improve the walkability of their downtown corridors.

Eufaula, OK

This popular tourist destination has a permanent population of around 2,800. Their Main Street is on a state highway and has the added limitation of requiring each corner to have a wide enough turning radius to accommodate trucks pulling boats. Despite this, Eufaula was still able to install bumpouts with raised planter beds at the street corners. These raised beds not only add greenery to the streetscape but can double as seating.

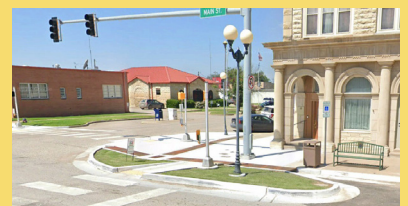
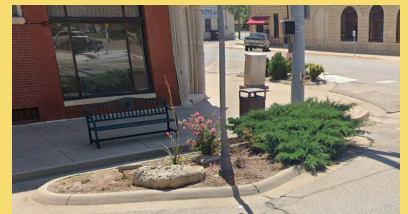


Ardmore, OK

While larger than Noble, Ardmore still offers applicable lessons. A large part of Main Street is on State Highway 199. For that portion, the road has been converted into a one-way road, with the other direction being diverted elsewhere. Bumpouts provide space for planters and seating, while a pedestrian refuge island adds further safety on the east portion of Main Street.

Newkirk, OK

This town in northern Oklahoma is home to around 2,100 people. Like Noble, Newkirk's downtown is on U.S. Route 77. To improve the pedestrian safety conditions downtown, Newkirk added planter bumpouts at the corners of each block. These bumpouts shorten the distance pedestrians must cross, add a measure of protection to parked cars, and beautify the street. They also provide space for pedestrian-level street lights.



Pedestrian Crossings

One of the easiest ways to improve the walkability in an area is by improving pedestrian crossings. Currently, Noble's crosswalks are badly faded, although there are pedestrian crossing signs at all the crosswalks which cross U.S. Route 77. However, there is no controlled crossing point in Noble's downtown. Without a stop sign or stoplight forcing cars to stop, pedestrians often end up waiting for a gap in the traffic, as few drivers notice pedestrians waiting at the corners. Below are some solutions to help mitigate these issues.

Crosswalks

During the preference board activity in December, artistic crosswalks received more attention than any other pedestrian crossing intervention. During the February 21 meeting, ODOT clarified that restriping of crosswalks is within the City's purview. This gives Noble the freedom to start restriping as soon as they are ready, although it still may be easier to wait until ODOT resurfaces that stretch of U.S. Route 77.

Artistic crosswalks, like those pictured on the right, can help catch drivers' attention, encouraging them to slow down and look out for pedestrians. They also help beautify the area and can be used to promote Noble's unique character and identity. These crosswalks can be done with paint or by using other materials like pavers or bricks. However, since Noble's downtown is on a state highway, there are some traffic control standards that need to be kept in mind.

The following standards, guidelines, and figures are taken from the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)*:

- The actual crosswalk markings shall be white (referring to the transverse lines or the high-visibility bar or ladder markings)
- Materials may include brick or paving brick/stone, of various regular polygon patterns. Be aware of the affect on experienced texture of pedestrians
- Chosen paint colors *must* be outside of traffic control colors and *should not* confuse pedestrians with vision disabilities
- Aesthetic surface treatment *cannot* contain retroreflective elements
- There *should* be a gap between transverse lines and the aesthetic surface of at least half the width of the transverse line or at least 6 inches, such as blank pavement or black paint for contrast
- Designs *should not* contain pictographs, illustrations, or symbols to avoid confusing drivers



Figure 3C-1. Crosswalk Markings

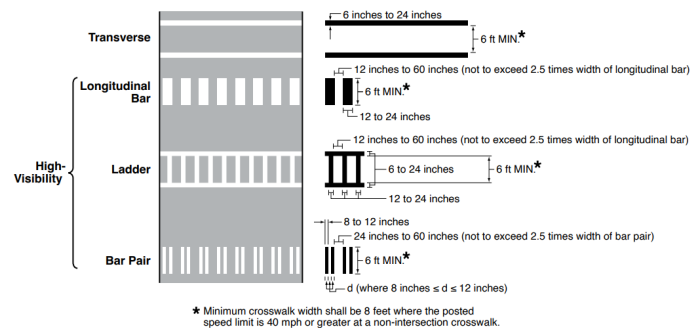


Figure 3H-1. Aesthetic Treatments for Transverse Crosswalks

Examples of:		
Material	Geometry	Color
Brick	Lattice	Red
Stone	Mesh	Brown
	Grid	Tan
Paver	Polygon	Clay

Flashing Beacons at Crosswalks

During the discussion with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT), the ODOT representatives explained that any upgrades to pedestrian crossings, including the installation of signage beyond the basic state highway requirements, are within the City's purview. Likewise, the City would be in charge of paying for whatever maintenance or management the upgraded interventions may require.

Both in the survey and on the visual preference board, people expressed a high level of interest in including flashing signage at the downtown crosswalks. These flashing signs are called Rapid Flashing Beacons (RFB) and are a useful tool in improving pedestrian safety. While a controlled crossing downtown, such as a four-way stop or a stoplight, may be a long term solution, a short-term solution could be RFB. These Rapid Flashing Beacons—which can be button-activated by pedestrians—would be incredibly helpful at one or both ends of the downtown block, to work in conjunction with the improved crosswalks.

STATISTICS FOR RAPID FLASHING BEACONS

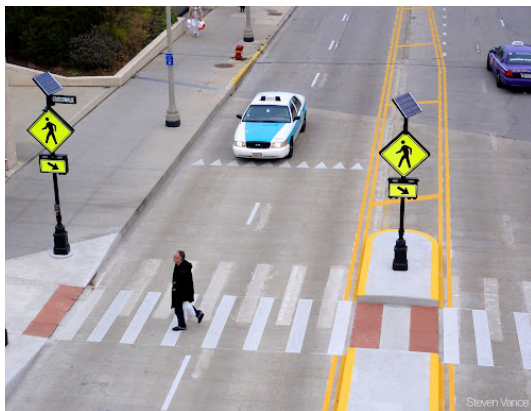
Reduces crashes by up to

47%*

Increases yield rate to pedestrians by up to

98%

*According to the FHWA



Examples of Rapid Flashing Beacons.

A NOTE ON MID-BLOCK CROSSINGS

Although the City had some interest in installing a mid-block crossing to help further increase the walkability of downtown, ODOT standards do not encourage them on highways of this size. However, due to the lack of controlled crossings within the downtown area, the ODOT representatives were more open to the possibility of having a pedestrian refuge island at an intersection. This would come at the expense of the left turn lane, but it is a viable option for city leadership to consider.

Curb Bumpouts

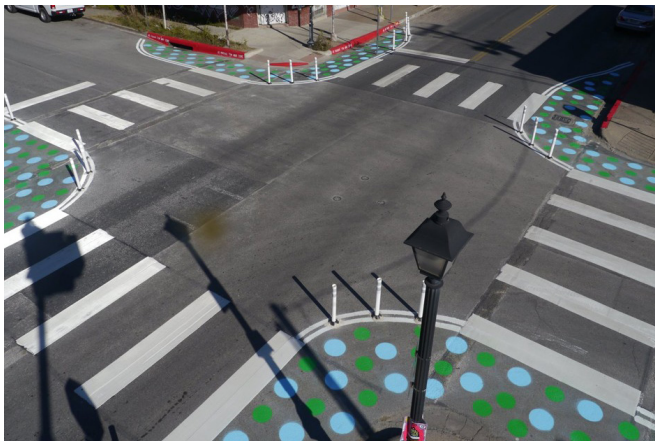
In all three of the precedence examples, the cities implemented curb bumpouts at the corners as a method of improving pedestrian safety. Bumpouts extend the sidewalk out to partially enclose on-street parking areas. This shortens the amount of pavement pedestrians have to cross between corners. It also places pedestrians at a better vantage point to see and be seen by oncoming traffic. These bumpouts also function as additional amenity space and can be paved or can incorporate planters, seating, or both, depending on the design and the amount of space.

According to the ODOT representatives, bumpouts are within the city's jurisdiction to approve. Most of the negotiations would be with business owners who may lose parking spaces to the bumpouts, rather than with ODOT.

While plans are being made for permanent bumpouts, a tactical urbanism approach can be applied to test out the potential design of a curb bumpout. This approach makes use of temporary modifications using paint, cones, movable planters, or other lightweight structures.



The above images show varying styles and intensities of bumpouts.



Two examples of tactical urbanism bumpouts, one with paint and bollards, the other with paint and planters.

Implementing Pedestrian Safety Interventions Downtown

While restriping of crosswalks can and should take place at each existing crosswalk on Main Street, a more comprehensive intervention should be considered at the Main Street intersections at both Chestnut Street and Cherry Street. These two intersections, which bookend the core of Noble's downtown, serve as the gateways to historic Noble and are where most pedestrians will likely need to cross the street. By incorporating all three of the discussed pedestrian safety interventions at these intersections, both pedestrian safety and the beauty of downtown will be enhanced.

- **Artistic crosswalks** would be fitting at these intersections, both as a way to encourage drivers to watch for pedestrians and as a way to reinforce the identity of Noble. They can also provide a way for the community to get involved in beautification efforts.
- **Rapid flashing beacons** can be installed to help alert drivers to people waiting to cross. These can be solar-powered and button-operated, preventing the need for much extra supporting infrastructure.
- **Bumpouts** will shrink the crossing distance for pedestrians and provide additional space for plants, art, wayfinding, signage, seating, or whatever else the City may imagine.

Below is a conceptual rendering of the intersection at Main Street and Chestnut Street, looking south. The concept combines all three interventions. Note that the extra space created by the bumpouts does not remove any driving lanes. The bumpouts also provide plenty of space for proper ADA ramps in each direction and could even include ramps to adjacent parking.



Sidewalks

In conjunction with safe street crossings, a complete sidewalk system is an essential part of creating a safe, enjoyable pedestrian experience. When sidewalks provide a convenient connection between multiple destinations, as well as to parking, the pedestrian experience is enhanced and people will feel comfortable spending more time downtown, walking from place to place. As with all design considerations, all sidewalks should be designed to be ADA compliant.

The map displays the existing sidewalk system along the focus corridor. Sidewalks are currently clustered around the downtown core, with very little extending outside of the core block. In some places, pedestrians have to cross uncomfortably open stretches of pavement where parking lots and streets have no markings or structures separating them. In other places, pedestrians must make their own path across large lawns or undeveloped lots. Many street corners have sidewalks that end at curbs without ramps or other ADA considerations.



No clear parking lot or sidewalk is marked on the west side of U.S. Route 77 between Cherry St. and Maple St.

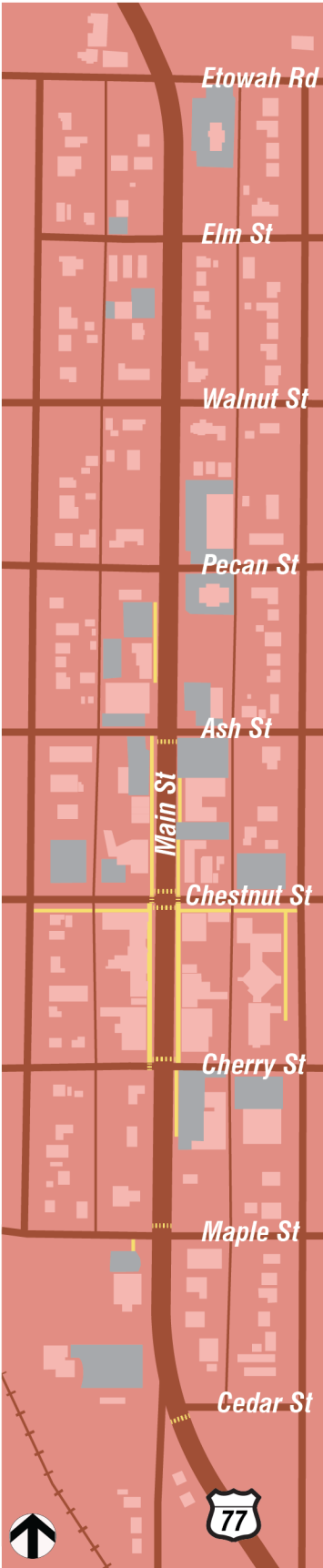
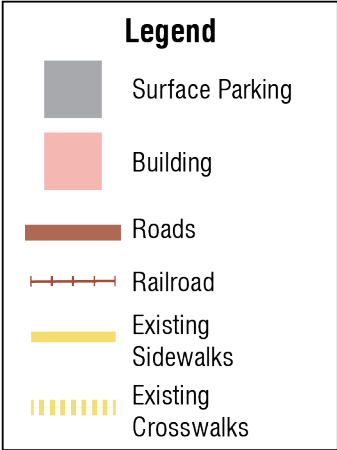


An undeveloped lot provides uneven footing for pedestrians between Cherry St. and Maple St.



Downtown, some street corners are lacking accessible routes.

Existing Sidewalk System



Proposed System

This map displays a more complete sidewalk system for the focus corridor. It also proposes locations for additional crosswalks.

The new system proposes total sidewalk connectivity between Etowah Road and Cedar Street, providing a three-quarter mile stretch of sidewalk that would connect homes and businesses to amenities like the Post Office, City Hall, and the various placemaking initiatives proposed later in this report. While the whole system does not need to have sidewalks as wide as those found downtown, all new sidewalks should be up to ADA standards.

Sidewalks leading east off of Main Street, like those indicated along Pecan Street and Maple Street, connect Noble Public Schools and the Library to the downtown area, providing more safe routes for children and families.

Various churches and banks along Main Street have large surface parking lots that are utilized during limited hours. Outside of those hours, these lots could likely be made available to provide overflow parking for downtown visitors. Proposed sidewalks along Chestnut Street and Cherry Street provide easy access to these parking lots.

Negotiations with the businesses between Cherry Street and Maple Street could lead to a restructuring of on-site parking and vehicular circulation to allow for the construction of a sidewalk. This sidewalk will help define the entrance to the parking area in front of those businesses.

With this extended sidewalk system, large events that were previously confined to one location can now spill out to encompass a larger portion of the newly activated corridor. For example, providing sidewalk connections between City Hall and the downtown core will encourage people attending the Rose Rock Festival to also explore the shops downtown.

Proposed Sidewalk System

Legend

Surface Parking

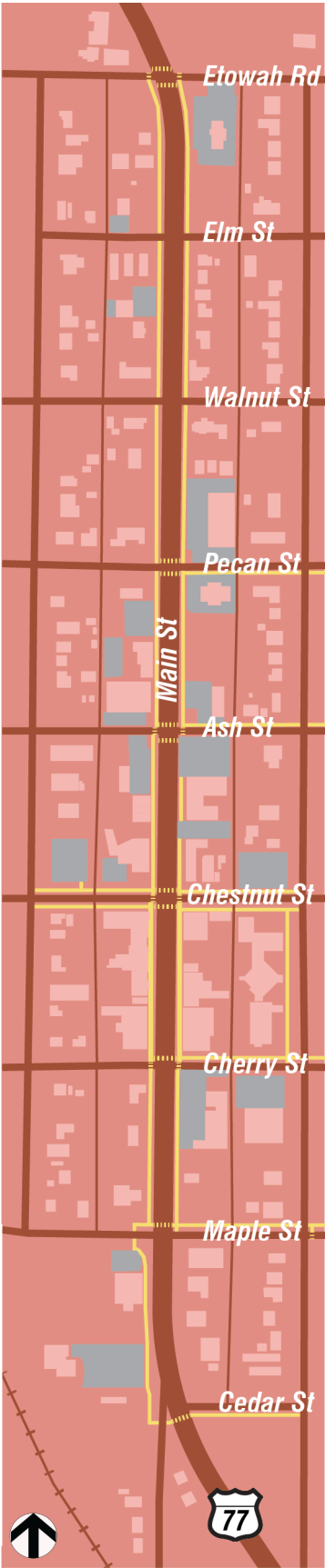
Building

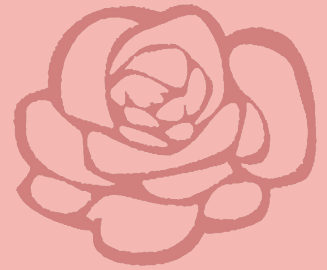
Roads

Railroad

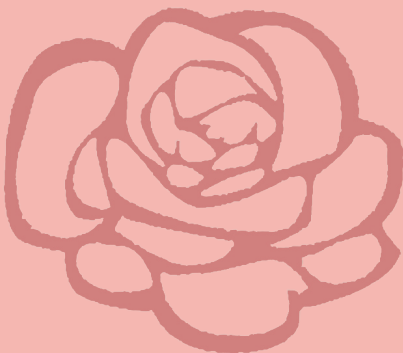
Proposed Sidewalk System

Proposed Crosswalk System





THEME #2: PLACEMAKING



Context

Project for Public Spaces defines placemaking as follows:

“Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.”



Find the full “What Makes a Successful Space” graphic at pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking


Location

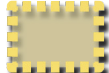
The steering committee presented two potential lots within the focus corridor to be used for various placemaking initiatives. These lots are highlighted in yellow on the map to the right.


The first lot is directly in the heart of downtown, presenting an ideal location for a pocket park that can encourage people to spend more time downtown.

The second lot is south of downtown, sitting adjacent to the City Hall building. This space may prove better for events supporting larger gatherings and has the potential to play a crucial role in extending the reach of the downtown area, thereby activating more of Main Street and creating further opportunities for growth.

Legend

Community Asset

Focus Area

Main Street Focus Corridor



A Downtown Pocket Park

A common sentiment expressed in the survey responses was a desire to have a place for casual hanging out downtown, somewhere enjoyable by both kids and adults or where people can stop to eat and gather outside. They want a Main Street filled with exciting shops and restaurants, but also one that promotes an active outdoor environment filled with community activity. People expressed an interest in having a space for outdoor movies or concerts, additional play spaces for children, multi-generational spaces that can be enjoyed by people at all stages of life, and outdoor dining options. In the survey, the highest ranked placemaking element was **outdoor dining space**, followed by **garden/green space**. The preference board revealed similar interests, with people being most interested in **nature play, outdoor dining, flexible spaces**, and **garden spaces**.

Many of these placemaking initiatives have the potential to be combined into one pocket park downtown. The map on the right indicates an ideal location for such a pocket park, right in the downtown core of Noble. The lot is already used during the Christmas in Noble event as a photo op; this use could easily be incorporated into the new pocket park, providing an immediate method of activating the space.



Pictures of the existing site conditions, including during the Christmas in Noble event.

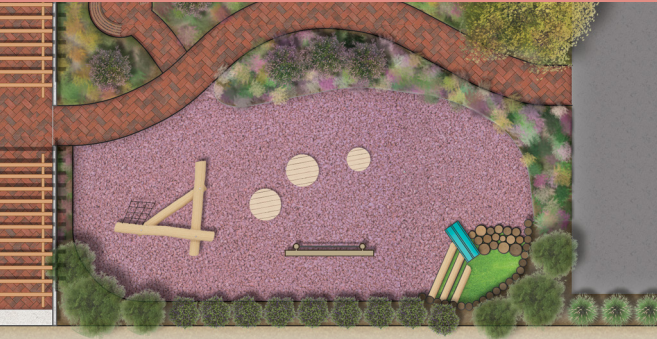
Design

The plan below provides one conceptual layout for the pocket park. Following is a breakdown of the space.



- A. Rain Garden Planters: currently, stairs from the street lead straight into handrails in some places, thus blocking access to the sidewalk. By taking out the stairs in those locations and replacing them with small rain gardens, that confusion can be removed. Plants like Purple Cone Flower, Cardinal Flower, Bee Balm, sedges, or Indian Grass do well with periodic inundations of rain and do not require extra irrigation during drier spells once established. Curb cuts allow stormwater to flow into the beds, helping filter some of the runoff from the road.
- B. Outdoor Dining Space: separated from the sidewalk by raised planter beds, this patio space includes lightweight bistro dining seating, providing people a nice place to enjoy an afternoon donut or to share a meal outdoors. Parents can sit and talk here while their children play in other parts of the pocket park. The seating can also be used during events that may take place in the adjacent Flex Space.
- C. Flex Space: this partially-covered patio can continue to host photo ops with Santa and could be used for bands providing live music during such events. Other gatherings could also take place here, from outdoor movies to birthday parties or from cook-offs to karaoke nights. Poles for string lights could easily be incorporated here.
- D. Garden: this green-filled space can be as manicured or as natural as the city would like. Either way, everyone needs a place to sit among the flowers and watch the butterflies from time to time. An offshoot from the main path provides a place to relax.
- E. Nature Play: playgrounds do not need to be massive, plastic-and-metal towers in order to be fun. Nature play, usually using more natural materials like wood and rope, provides children with multiple avenues of play options at all levels of accessibility.
- F. Parking: this paved area at the back of the site provides access to the pocket park from the back alley. It could be used for parking in the case of some event requiring setup, or even could potentially house food trucks for events.

Nature Play Design Ideas



Log piles are adaptable play structures that help children gain confidence as they move from crawling on the logs to walking on top



A slide off a berm doubles as a fort or whatever else kids can imagine



Wobble boards are versatile play elements, especially fun in a game of "Floor is lava!"



Rope climbers add challenge and vertical fun to playgrounds



An Improved Festival Grounds

The second lot to focus placemaking efforts on is adjacent to Noble's City Hall. Currently, the lot hosts the annual Rose Rock Music Festival, which draws visitors from across the region. The Noble Farmers Market also takes place on the site. The only permanent structure on the site currently is a long, narrow pavilion with a few picnic benches, trash cans, and flower pots accompanying it. There are some healthy, mature trees scattered around the relatively flat site and a few Callery Pear trees line the City Hall parking lot at the north edge of the site.

The Steering Committee expressed an interest in seeing the lot improved by installing a new pavilion for the farmers market and a sidewalk winding around the site. Additionally, though a permanent stage did not rank high in terms of attention received in the survey, interest in seeing a permanent outdoor stage in Noble seems to be growing; members of Noble City Hall have had multiple people ask about the possibility of getting a stage in the past year or so, when no interest had been shown in prior years.

Photo taken during the Rose Rock Music Festival



Above: photos of the existing pavilion



Photos from the southeast corner of the site, showing a view of the utility tower to the west and the pavilion to the north

Precedents

The images below provide examples of pavilions and outdoor stages in other cities.

Lions Park – Norman, OK

This park pavilion provides covered seating, restrooms, a drinking fountain, and a fireplace. Instead of leaving a blank brick wall on the side of the pavilion, there is a colorful mosaic, put together with the help of locals.



Memorial Park – Cushing, OK

A permanent stage sits within view of the park's pavilion and other amenities. The space has been used for many community events, including student musical performances.



Greene Commons – Stanardsville, VA

Similar to the lot in Noble, this park is adjacent to multiple municipal buildings and the post office. The pavilion hosts the town's farmers market and the stage is frequently used by local performers.



Kingswood Park – Deerfield Township, OH

A beautiful pavilion houses the Deerfield Farmers Market in this suburban park. The pavilion has 130 person capacity and attached restrooms at the back.



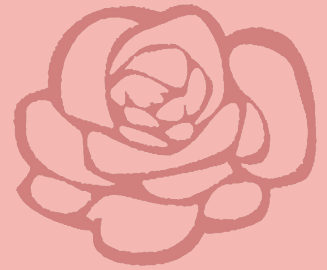
Design

The plan below provides a conceptual layout for the park. Following is a breakdown of the space.

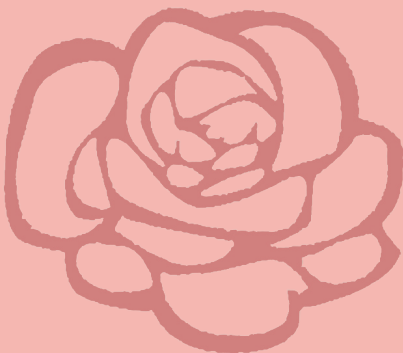


- A. Pavilion: the new structure should be built on a concrete pad for better accessibility and durability. The west side includes space for attached restrooms.
- B. New Trees: the existing Callery Pear trees should be removed and replaced with a less problematic tree, as Callery Pears are invasive, prone to limb breakage, and messy. A smaller, ornamental tree like a Chaste Tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*) could do well here.
- C. Welcome Point: this small brick seat wall welcomes people into the site and provides a place for a simple sign and small flower bed, with the pavilion visible in the background. The rendering to the right provides an idea of what this could look like.
- D. Picnic Area: a few picnic benches provide visitors a place to rest in the sun.
- E. Path: a 6' concrete sidewalk makes the site more accessible.
- F. Stage: this small stage faces an open grassy area, providing plenty of space for people to set out camp chairs or picnic blankets during events.





THEME #3: **BEAUTIFICATION**



Context

Beautification plays an important role in the revitalization of any area. While beautification includes basic cleanup and facade improvement efforts, there is a lot more that can be done to enhance the aesthetic experience of a downtown corridor. Current public perceptions of Noble’s downtown are mixed, with people enjoying the small-town feel but lamenting a number of rundown and outdated structures. Beautification efforts—including installing new landscaping, street seating, art, lighting, and wayfinding/signage—can improve the public experience. Defining a beautification plan for the entire downtown corridor creates a consistent “design language,” which helps brand the city and strengthens the identity of an area. This will increase the visual appeal of the corridor, helping increase economic investment in the area.

The following recommendation topics all stem from feedback collected during the various community engagement activities and steering committee discussions. While the focus may be on the main core of downtown initially, eventually these ideas may stretch further along the Main Street corridor and should guide any growth or redevelopment nearby.

Landscape Enhancement

In the survey, additional landscaping on Main Street received the most votes of the various beautification options. Adding plant life to the streetscape is a great way to enhance the appearance of downtown. Street trees add shade and other plants bring color and texture into the streetscape. These interventions could take the form of new street trees, in-ground planter beds, planted bumpouts, raised planter beds, pots, or any combination of these!

Existing Conditions

Currently, downtown Main Street has small tree wells supporting Lacebark Elms. During the walking tour in September, certified Master Arborist and Noble local Mariah Menzie pointed out that the current tree wells are too small to allow the trees to grow to maturity and some of the trees are being further stunted by disease. In addition, Lacebark Elms are becoming invasive in Oklahoma, so this revitalization project may be the perfect opportunity to replace the existing trees with something more fitting. There are also a few pots already in use by a few businesses along Main Street, although there is no consistency in planter design from business to business.



Existing tree well

Moving Forward

- Using a mix of trees, instead of planting only one species along the entire corridor, can help mitigate the disease issue. Teddy Bear Magnolia, Crabapples, Ginkgo, Tupelo, and Desert Willows would add exciting color and diversity to the street.
- The sidewalk is plenty wide to support larger tree wells, giving roots more space to thrive. Tree wells can either be filled with groundcover plants and perennials or they can be covered by ADA compliant tree grates.
- Giving willing businesses responsibility over a designated flower pot is another way to green up the streetscape. Prioritize native and drought-resistant plants.



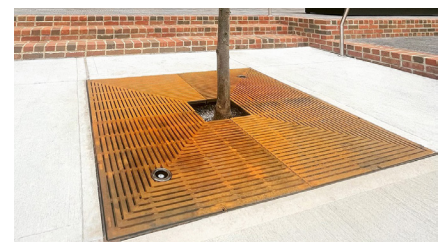
Existing planters



Mix of planters from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/641833384378115727/>



Mix of trees and perennials from <https://sdotblog.seattle.gov/>



Tree grate example from <https://www.ironagegrates.com/gallery/>

Benches/Seating

Providing places for people to sit along Main Street enhances the pedestrian experience by providing people a place to rest, relax, people-watch, or wait for friends or a reservation. Downtown Noble already has a few benches in place but would benefit from additional, varied seating.

The top seating picks during the Visual Preference Board activity were planter benches, bistro seating, and artistic seating. Benches that have built-in planters can provide the dual purpose of a place to sit and additional greenery within the streetscape. They can be located between street trees, along the face of buildings, or Restaurants on the west side of Main Street have a wide enough sidewalk to introduce a small amount of bistro seating, providing patrons with more dining options and encouraging more streetside interactions. Artistic benches create a unique, fun identity for a place and could be incorporated into parks, corner bumpouts, or even the general streetscape.



Planter benches from <https://www.streetlife.nl/en/green-benches-tree-isles-podiums>



Outdoor seating from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/281543723484172/>



Artistic seating from <https://www.stoss.net/projects/campus-institutional/harvard-plaza>

Public Art

Art brings excitement into the downtown area and provides an exciting opportunity to highlight local talent and culture. The following art forms received the most votes during the community engagement activities.

Murals

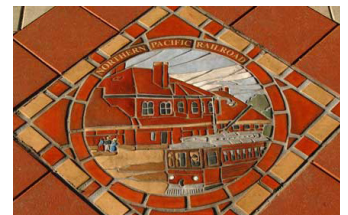
Murals can turn a boring wall into an exciting opportunity. Local artists, school classes, or mural professionals can help in this beautification effort. Murals can tie into the local culture, highlight an annual event unique to the area, or they can simply be fun works of art!



Mural in Enid, OK at <https://www.enidnews.com>

Mosaics

Mosaics are a creative way to add color to the streetscape. These could be placed in the sidewalk at any point but would maybe be most fitting at the corners. Mosaics can also be placed on vertical surfaces, such as on the sides of raised planters, walls, or even structures built specifically for mosaics.



Sidewalk mosaic in Fargo, ND at <https://craiglarsonla.com>

Artistic Furniture

Artistic street furniture is a unique and interactive method of bringing art into the streetscape. These elements can tie into the same colors, materials, or design motifs as seen in the other art forms, planters, or street furniture, but with an added flair and an emphasis on interactive, adaptable use.



Furniture in Brooklyn, NY at <https://studio.michaelclydejohnson.com/>

Lighting

While lighting is often thought of as an intervention to improve safety, it is also a part of beautification. Lighting is an important element for both vehicular traffic and pedestrian comfort, while the form the lighting takes can contribute to the overall visual identity of downtown. Currently, downtown Main Street is well lit by tall streetlights. The light poles are even decorated during the winter holidays. Even so, additional light features can further improve the pedestrian experience and visual appearance of the streetscape. The lighting options which received the most public attention are discussed below.

String Lighting

With Main Street also operating as a U.S. Highway, there are restrictions on what can go over the street, making string lights a more fitting choice for pocket parks and other locations set back off the road. However, ODOT may approve overhead string lights that meet the same height limitations that overhead utilities are required to follow.



Multi-arm, Pedestrian Scale Lights

These light fixtures help brighten the sidewalks, rather than just illuminating the drive lanes as taller streetlights tend to do. To be effective, these lights need to be spaced close enough together to eliminate dark spaces between them. This can be accomplished by consulting with a lighting manufacturer, once a style of light fixture has been selected.



Signage/Wayfinding

Wayfinding is an important element of the streetscape. It is about more than simply labeling streets; done well, wayfinding and signage can help develop a city's unique branding. Wayfinding also creates a connection between people and places, creating an enjoyable experience for people exploring downtown.

Many survey respondents pointed out the need for signage downtown. They highlighted the lack of basic signage on individual storefronts indicating business hours. They also mentioned the need for some cohesive design language in the signage downtown. Such changes would help improve the legibility of downtown, thereby encouraging more business.

During the Christmas event, the Visual Preference Board activity highlighted an interest in multi-point wayfinding signage. A multi-point sign is an eye-catching way to orient people to many important destinations at once. The sign could include destinations such as parks, schools, the post office, City Hall, or any other asset. This type of sign should be placed in a highly visible location, such as within the extra sidewalk space created by bumpouts at a key intersection.



Multi-point sign near sidewalk bumpout

People were also interested in signage incorporating city branding, which could take any of the forms displayed below.



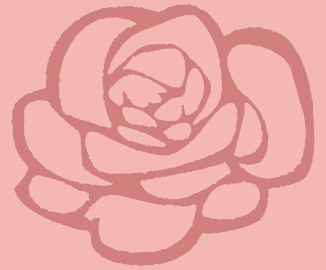
Family of Signs: provide continuity across many sign forms



Street Signs: indicate people are in a unique district



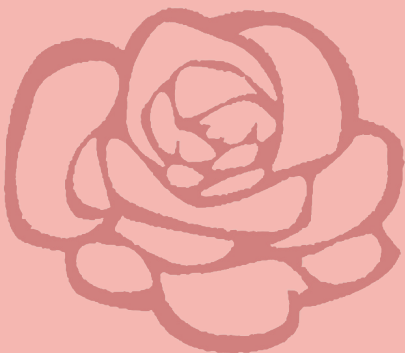
Banners: if used as business ads, will need ODOT approval



THEME #4:

ECONOMIC

DEVELOPMENT

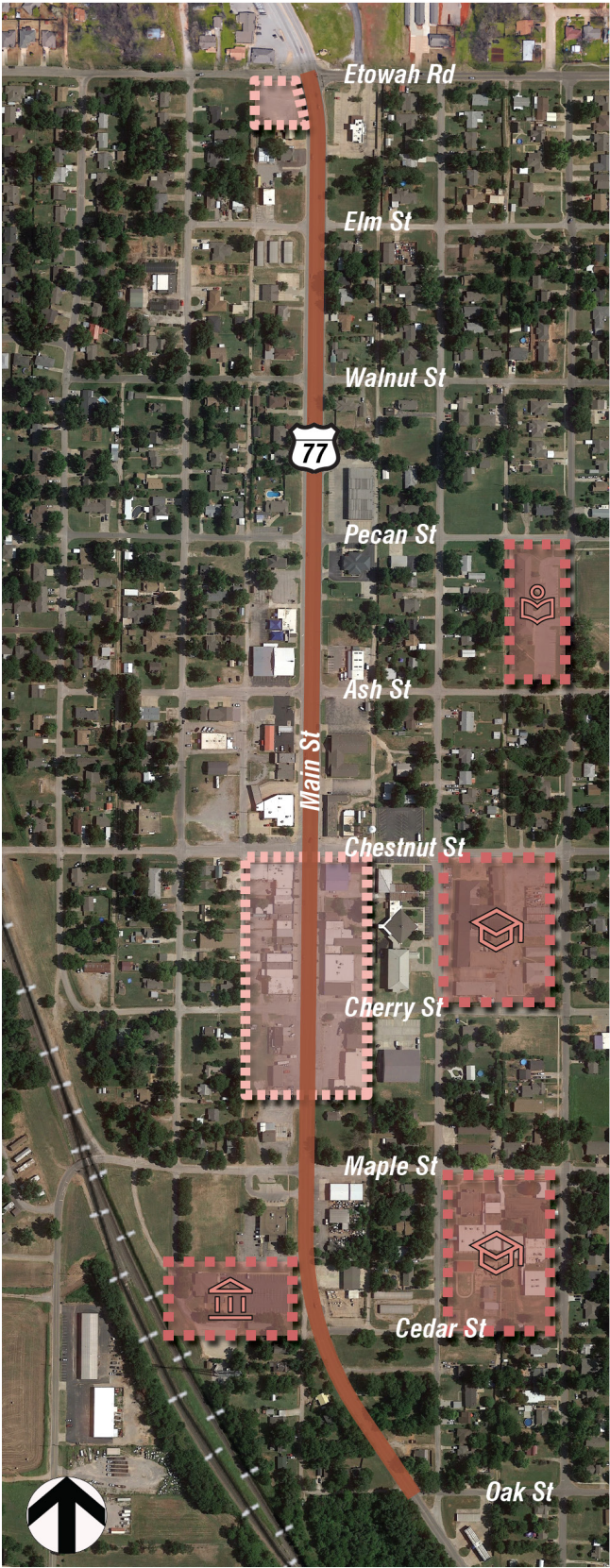
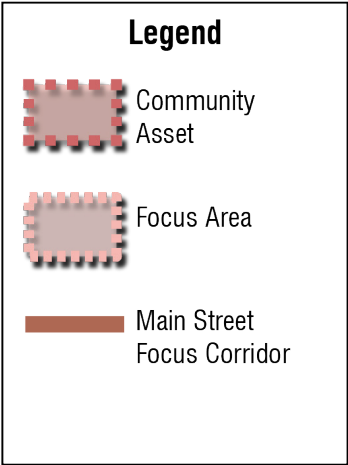


Context

One of the topics brought up both in survey responses and steering committee discussions was that of a need for more businesses downtown. Many survey respondents expressed their desire to see specific types of businesses downtown. These suggestions ranged from a desire for more sit-down restaurants, a coffee shop, and bar to a need for family- and children-oriented businesses like an arcade, museum, entertainment space, or event venue. People also suggested a need for a wider variety of shopping options and an interest in services like daycares and mental health services.

Location

The areas highlighted in light pink on the map to the right indicate areas that have the most potential to bring in new business to Noble’s Main Street. The following pages explore potential ways to support new businesses in those spaces.



Location 1: Etowah Road and Main Street

Currently, this site, owned by the city, is just an empty gravel lot with some string lights defining the edges. However, it sits in a prime location at the only intersection in Noble with a traffic light. Everyday, thousands of people see this empty lot. If the site were to be activated, its location will ensure that people will notice it and will therefore be more likely to stop.

The size of the lot, its proximity on the north to larger businesses like the hardware store, its location on a very busy part of Main Street street, and its relative proximity to the downtown core to the south all contribute to this being a key location for encouraging business growth. Specifically, the site could become home to a retail incubator endeavor supporting local startups. The site could also incorporate food truck parking and green space.

One of the barriers facing new small businesses and startups is the cost of renting or building and maintaining a brick-and-mortar storefront. This financial burden can keep future entrepreneurs from ever making their move. However, there are many examples of communities that have provided small, low-rent structures to entrepreneurs as a means of testing out their business models at little financial risk. Some of these precedences are explored below.

Precedents

The Shoppes in Guthrie, OK, provide one example of a pop-up shop incubator model. The little shops provide a diverse retail spot in the heart of Guthrie's Historic Downtown District. Multiple businesses have since moved from the pop-up shops into permanent downtown storefronts.



The Pop-Up Shops at Carlton Landing in Eufala, OK, are another example. The 10 shops and other pop-up tents are open during peak weekends throughout the year and can be found filling in the gaps along the boardwalk. The shops are maintained by the Carlton Landing Social Welfare Foundation, a non-profit organization.



Concept

These smaller businesses, as well as food trucks, tend to find more success when clustered together, rather than spreading out across a city, so providing one location to cluster these startups will be an added benefit on top of the low-rent facilities. This site is already wired for electricity and has at least one hookup location. Food trucks could periodically use the space, as well. By adding small structures and designating areas within the site as food truck parking versus customer parking, the space can be shaped into a shopping destination. While the site already has a few picnic tables, additional seating would encourage people to gather on the site.

Managing the Site

Such a space will need a champion who can dedicate time to managing site's affairs, whether that organization is the City, the Chamber of Commerce, or a separate organization. This will not necessarily be a full-time position, especially if the shops are only open on the weekends or for other limited hours. The shops may start out only open weekends to expanding to a Thursday-Sunday model. Programming to ensure patrons know days and times of specific vendors or businesses is helpful in building a following. This could be posted on-site as well as on social media.

Design

A conceptual plan for the lot on Etowah Road and Main Street is pictured on the next page. Below is a breakdown of the space.

- A. Northern Shops: these 15'x12' structures provide ample room for those with larger products or a greater variety.
- B. Parking Lot: the parking lot can remain gravel or can be paved with permeable pavement. Paving can also come as a later phase of the project. The conceptual plan provides for 13 parking spaces, with space for two of the spaces to be ADA compliant.
- C. Food Truck Parking: this space can accommodate 3 to 4 food trucks, depending on their space needs, or 2 to 3 food trucks and a restroom trailer.
- D. Picnic Area: a few picnic benches near the shade of some trees provides space for people to socialize and enjoy meals and snacks purchased from the food trucks or shops.
- E. Eastern Shops: these 10'x12' shops are slightly smaller than the Northern Shops, giving vendors the flexibility to choose the space best suited to their needs.
- F. Open Lawn: a small green space gives children space to run around while their parents socialize and shop.
- G. String Lights: this lightweight installation creates a clear border for the space.
- H. Sidewalk: this sidewalk will hopefully stretch all the way along Main Street to the downtown core, connecting the two commercial corridors.
- I. Sign Location: a sign with the name of the space and possibly the operating hours of the shops will fit here perfectly.



A few tables already sit in one corner of the site.



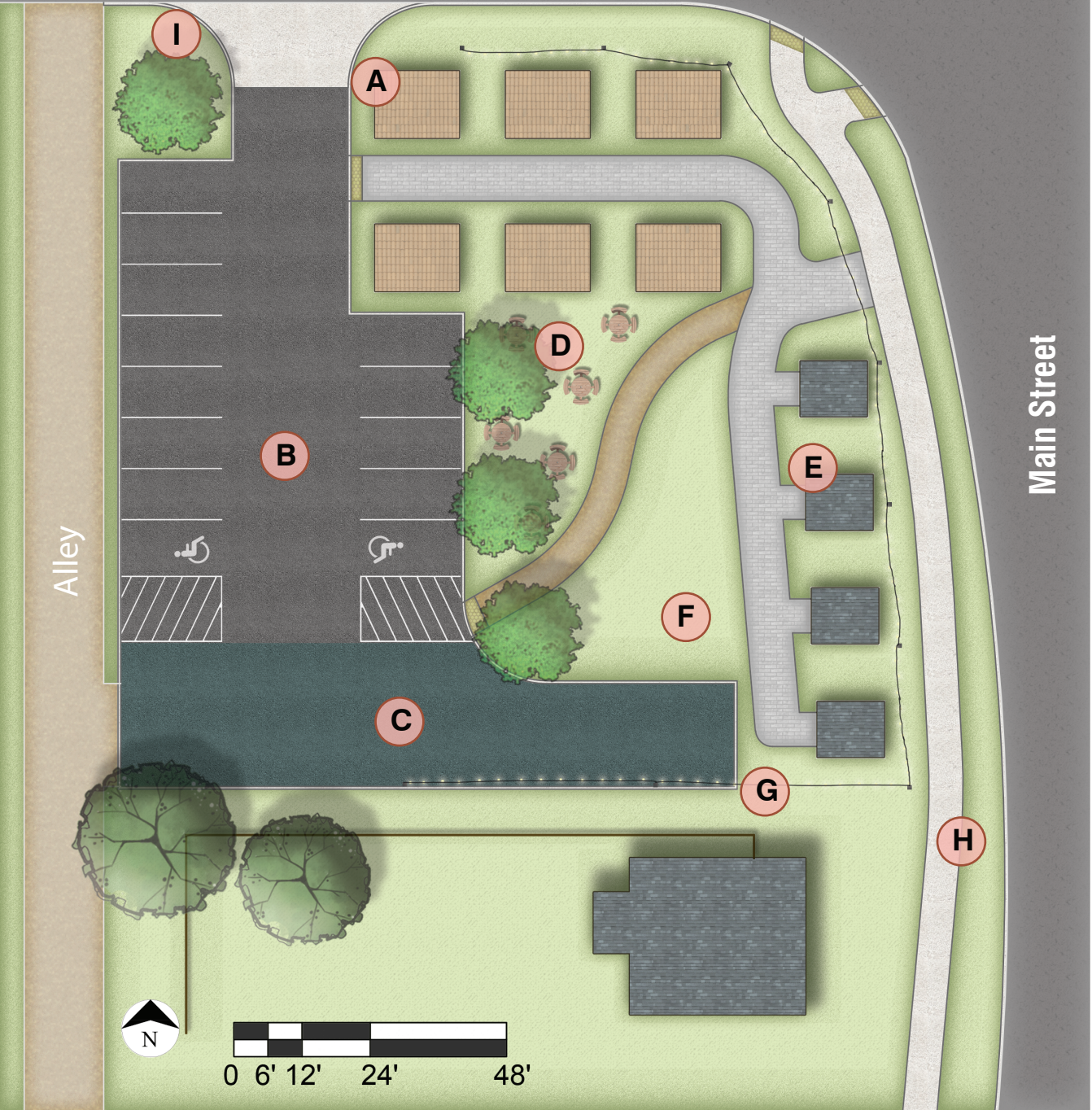
This food truck is already making good use of the hookup.



String lights currently mark the outer edges of the site.

Pop-Up Shop Lot Conceptual Design

Etowah Road





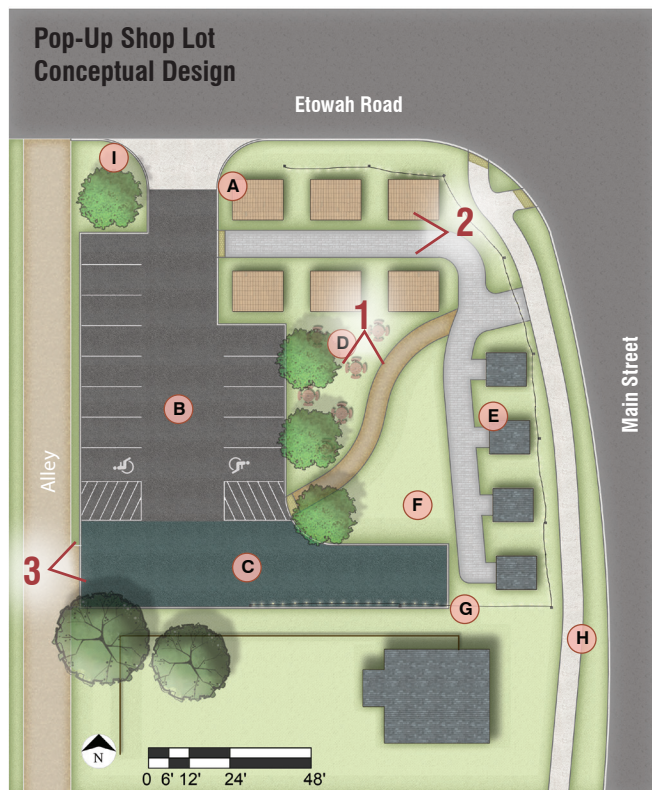
View of the picnic area and lawn, looking south.



View of the Northern Shops, looking west



Overview of the site from the southwest corner.



Location 2: Downtown Main Street

The downtown core already has a few anchor businesses keeping it lively. However, further action could be taken to strengthen the economic vitality of Downtown Noble. Some of these ideas are discussed below.

Creating a Supportive Environment

Starting a small business can be costly, especially with the initial investment in necessary equipment plus the cost of rent and utilities. Local governments can play a role in creating a supportive environment for startups by connecting entrepreneurs to grant and low-interest loan opportunities, providing small businesses a place to advertise, offering tax credits, and allowing for rezoning or permitting where needed.



Community Initiative

Sometimes the problem downtown is a vacant building an owner has no interest in working on for now. The examples of northeast Minneapolis and Waynoka, OK, show how community initiative can be one solution to such an issue. In both communities, a small group of neighbors joined together to raise funds to buy and rehabilitate rundown buildings in their respective downtown areas. Waynoka neighbors created the non-profit Waynoka Project, while neighbors in northeast Minneapolis created the Northeast Investment Cooperative. Once building renovations were complete, the groups either sold or rented the buildings to local businesses, spurring job creation and creating new economic opportunities.

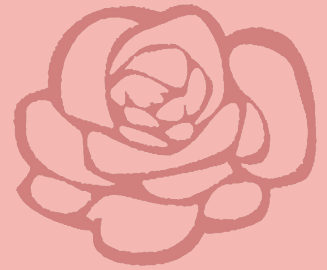


One of the buildings refurbished by Project Waynoka became the Waynoka public library

Find a Champion

Downtown businesses will fare best when someone is there to support, inform, and connect them to available opportunities. Having a champion, whether part of the city staff or as a separate position, helps business owners know who to look to when they need guidance. A champion needs to be well versed both in the community's specific needs and in the available resources, training, and networks that can benefit small businesses.





RESOURCES AND NEXT STEPS



Summary of Recommendations

	Pedestrian Safety	Placemaking	Beautification	Economic Development
Add artistic crosswalks at key intersections downtown	●	●	●	
Install Rapid Flashing Beacons at Main Street crosswalks	●			
Construct curb bumpouts at key intersections downtown	●		●	
Create a complete sidewalk system along the Main Street Corridor	●			●
Construct a pocket park downtown		●	●	●
Update City Hall Park to better support various events		●	●	
Replace street trees with a variety of trees in larger tree wells			●	
Add flower pots or other planters to the streetscape			●	
Install additional benches along Main Street			●	
Incorporate public art into the downtown corridor		●	●	●
Install pedestrian scale lighting downtown	●		●	●
Add banners to streetlights		●	●	
Develop a branded family of wayfinding signs to use in the Main Street corridor		●	●	●
Develop a pop-up shop park at Etowah Road and Main Street		●		●
Find a champion to support local small businesses				●
Continue building a relationship with ODOT to guide future decisions	●			

Funding and Resources Guide

Type of Project	Funding and Resources
Historic preservation, public spaces, and public art	T-Mobile T-Mobile's Hometown Grants fund projects that foster local connections, like technology upgrades, outdoor spaces, the arts, historic preservation, and community centers. Awards are up to \$50,000 and available for towns with populations less than 50,000. https://www.t-mobile.com/brand/hometown-grants
	Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) TSET Built Environment Grants fund a variety of project types, including planning, design, and policy development, and construction implementation. Projects aligning with TSET's mission to improve Oklahoman's health and quality of life by achieving targeted improvements in the health of Oklahomans. Planning and policy grants are eligible for up to \$150,000 with no match required. Construction projects can receive up to \$500,000 for up to two years with a match based on population size. https://oklahoma.gov/tset/funding-opportunities/tset-built-environment-grants.html
	Project for Public Spaces Project for Public Spaces Community Placemaking Grants are available for non-profits and local government agencies up to \$100,000 to transform public spaces or co-create new ones. https://www.pps.org/community-placemaking-grants
	National Trust for Historic Preservation The Hart Family Fund for Small Towns encourages preservation at the local level in small towns with populations under 10,000. Grants range from \$2,500-\$15,000 through a competitive application process. https://savingplaces.org/hart-family-fund
	Oklahoma City Community Foundation (OCCF) The OCCF Culture and Community Grant supports projects seeking to celebrate and preserve Oklahoma's cultural heritage. Grants can be up to \$40,000 and are available to projects within Canadian, Cleveland, Oklahoma, and Logan counties. https://occf.org/communitygrants/culture/
	Independent Retail Community Initiatives The Pop-Out Grant is available to independent shop owners in Oklahoma strengthening their communities, including through beautification efforts. Grants are up to \$1,500. https://www.irciok.org/popout
	Oklahoma Arts Council The Oklahoma Art in Public Places Act invests in public art in community spaces to support state capital improvements. The Program brings together governments, artists, and communities to create art representing Oklahoma values and history. https://www.arts.ok.gov/Our_Programs/Art_in_Public_Places.html

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Pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure	American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) The AARP Community Challenge program offers grants to fund projects focusing on making communities more livable for people of all ages. The Flagship Grant includes a category for projects creating vibrant public places and a category focused on increasing connectivity, walkability, and bikeability. The Capacity-Building Microgrants include opportunities for bike audits and walk audits. https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/
	Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) ODOT's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) provides funding through a competitive application process for local projects that support additional transportation options, strengthen local economies, improve quality of life, protect the natural environment, and enhance transportation infrastructure. An 80/20 match is required for populations over 5,001.
	US Department of Transportation (USDOT) DOT's Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Program provides two types of grants: Planning and Demonstration Grants and Implementation Grants. Funding is provided to projects seeking to prevent roadway deaths and injuries.





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