

WALKER·MACY

Landscape Architecture Urban Design Planning

MEMORANDUM

To: Kenny Asher, City of Milwaukee
From: Walker Macy and LMN Architects
Date: May 27, 2010
Project: Milwaukee South Downtown
RE: Initial Pattern Language Assessment

The following Memo summarizes our initial assessment of the Pattern Language for South Downtown, identifying the essential elements of each Pattern and aspects that present opportunities and challenges. As the June 2009 Pattern Language Document states

"A pattern language taken as a whole is intended to convey and evoke the overall feeling that a place will have. It does not provide an overly detailed and highly specified picture... the content of the pattern language will still be open to change. As members of the community become involved in using the patterns, there will inevitably be a learning curve, as people encounter better ideas, or find flaws in the existing patterns. These opportunities for learning and for further improvement will only help to make the South Downtown better and better, as time goes by."

We admire the intent of the Pattern Language and much of the language supports your community's admirable goal to create an enduring place in South Downtown for citizens and visitors. Based on our experience, there are several refinements to the Patterns that can support and strengthen this goal. In this memo, we have included suggested revisions and additional language for each Pattern that can serve to move the project towards successful implementation.

Pattern 1

Relationship of the South Downtown to its Surrounding Areas

This Pattern lays the foundation for locating a special public place in South Downtown. There are no recommended changes for the points listed in this Pattern, but the following additional point is proposed:

NEW 1.7 Connect SDT with Public Facilities and Amenities to the East and West

To the east, the high school currently has its back toward the south downtown. However, the surface parking lots that abut the school could be upgraded and possibly transformed into future supportive elements such as gardens or even development pads for housing related to the future light rail station.

To the west the soon-to-be-constructed waterfront park and the potential reconfiguration of the treatment plant to expand water-related open spaces should be connected to development in south downtown, along and across streets and, possibly, under the proposed new Kellogg Creek bridge at McLoughlin Boulevard.

Pattern 2

A Major Plaza Forms the Core and Focus of the South Downtown

The essence of this Pattern is viable and aimed at creating a beautiful public space at the south end of downtown. Most of the points support this goal well. The following points within this pattern are recommended for revision:

2.6 Plaza Diameter (revised)

The plaza in the Armature drawing appears to be potentially too large for the community's use. The open space in the plaza as diagrammed is larger than the useable space in Pioneer Courthouse Square. For a community this size the paved plaza can be smaller with the ability to expand for certain events. The approximate size of the plaza could be 15,000 – 20,000 square feet, which should be sufficient to accommodate many activities. This will keep the Plaza feeling intimate even when in use by individuals and there are no events. Larger events could use the new waterfront park, or even both spaces, if necessary. The sizing and location of the plaza will be part of our refinement work in this phase

2.8 Focal Point (revised)

At the southern end of the plaza there is a focal point noted which can be seen from a distance: something that forms a natural center, but not necessarily in the middle of the plaza. This can include a vertical element integrated into a building fronting the plaza.

2.9 Plaza Location/Containment (remove)

The Armature drawing shows buildings between the Plaza and the old railroad track rather than the plaza adjacent to the tracks. This Pattern should be removed to avoid confusion.

2.11 Main Street closure (revised)

We do not recommend that Main Street be completely closed to vehicular traffic at all times. In order for the South Downtown area to be viable for commercial and residential use, some vehicular circulation should be included. There may be a variety of ways to allow multi-modal circulation during many times and close the street in other times. Streets are the key public open space and theaters of vitality of a city. They are the places that everybody uses, where people stop and talk and the informal business of a city occur. We recommend the following revision to the text:

At the Plaza, Main Street is kept open, to allow for bicycles, deliveries, emergency vehicles and light traffic. The roadbed should seamlessly blend with the pedestrian areas using bollards or low curbing to define it. The lanes should be narrow and designed to reduce the speed of vehicles to less than 10 mph. Lanes will be closed entirely for certain events.

2.13 Terrace (revised)

The concept of outdoor dining in this area is excellent but we believe that it should be able to be accommodated in many locations and not be restricted to one specific location. The location specified may be too close to the noise of McLoughlin Boulevard to be an appropriate gathering place. The scale implied by the Armature drawing is very large for a dining terrace. The text could be refined to read:

At the south end of Main Street in a location within sight of the Riverfront Park and Kellogg Creek, there is a terrace, elevated and quiet, so that people can drink beer, have coffee or light meals, enjoy the river and watch the sunset.

2.14 Pedestrian Crossing (revised)

In our opinion, a pedestrian bridge, while a wonderful gesture, is extremely expensive and not warranted in South Downtown. Efforts should be focused on improving at-grade pedestrian crossings and slowing traffic on McLoughlin to truly link the waterfront to the City. The text could be refined to read:

Pedestrians will have several safe, visible at-grade crossing points over McLoughlin Blvd. Traffic will be calmed to allow smooth pedestrian flow between South Downtown and the River. There is also an underpass to the riverfront where Kellogg Creek flows under McLoughlin.

2.15 Parking Garage (revise this element; see 4.2)

Providing sufficient and convenient parking will be needed for South Downtown to be viable. A parking structure close to the core of the area (not restricted to the location in the Pattern Language) would be a preferable method of accommodating the need and preserving land for other uses.

A parking structure could be located somewhere in the South Downtown area. A future garage should have active ground floor uses and may include portions below-grade. One potential location, at the Cash Spot site, will be studied further to determine if efficient access to the garage can be ensured given its proximity to McLoughlin Boulevard and Main Street and if the site, constrained by Kellogg Creek setbacks, yields an efficient footprint for a structure.

2.21 Tower (revise and change title to ‘Vertical Element’)

Mandating a tower as a focal point of the plaza restricts options for the plaza and the building design. Locating a business in its base, while an interesting concept, would require that it have a minimum floor plate that would likely require enlarging this element. Providing a notable element in this location could take on many other forms that are appropriate as vertical elements.

2.21 Vertical Element

Establishing a visual marker in this district will help identify it to residents and visitors. A prominent vertical element in the South Downtown area will also mark this as the southern anchor to Main Street. This place-making element will be visible from several blocks to the north, as well as from McLoughlin Boulevard and can help attract people to the Plaza. It could take the form of an art piece located in the Plaza area, a prominent element of the new buildings fronting the Plaza, or even a protected significant tree in Dogwood Park.

Pattern 3

The Plaza Lies at the Head of Main Street

The essence of this Pattern expresses the importance of making Main Street a ‘Great Street’ and one accessible to all modes of travel. Most of the points support this goal well. Again, we do not believe that Main Street should be closed to vehicular traffic, but it should allow for temporary closure for special events. The following points within this pattern are recommended for revision:

3.7 Public Seating (revised)

Along Main Street, there is a variety of seating, including benches, moveable chairs, ledges, low walls, and steps so that people can freely linger and socialize and with many different choices.

3.9 Main Street Ends at Plaza (revised)

Main Street south of Washington is pedestrian-oriented in nature and an integral part of the plaza. It could become a curbless street with special paving and a narrower area for vehicular travel.

3.13 Kiss n’ Ride (revised)

At the future Downtown Milwaukie Transit Station, there is a place on S. 21st to drop off and pick up passengers from cars – a “kiss and ride.”

Pattern 4

From the Plaza there are Views of the Willamette River and the Western Setting Sun

This Pattern recognizes the special geographic position occupied by South Downtown and the opportunities this creates for public space that is rooted in the natural character of the place.

4.2 Parking Structure (revised; see 2.15)

Developing a parking structure at the southwest corner of Washington and Main may be challenging due to restricted circulation, the site’s triangular configuration, and setbacks from Kellogg Creek. If further study justifies a parking structure in the general area, the text should be revised to read:

A parking structure could be located somewhere in the South Downtown area. The structure could be part of a mixed-use development. The parking should be shared between weekday users and evening/weekends users, which is more efficient and sustainable.

4.3 Connection to River (revised)

The following is a minor clarification to the original text.

Via Washington Street there is a simple and safe at-grade pedestrian connection from the South Downtown to the Willamette riverfront and access to the water and the river’s edge, based on the design of Riverfront Park. Another connection is provided

between the plaza and the river under McLoughlin as part of the new Kellogg Creek bridge structure.

4.4 Buildings Wrap partially Around the Terrace (remove)

We believe that the terrace proposed for this location may not necessarily be the best location for a vital, public gathering space. However, the following pattern (4.5) can be revised to reflect the essential notion behind Pattern 4.4.

4.5 View From Buildings to the River (simplified and revised)

Some of the buildings fronting onto the plaza have a view across the plaza to the Willamette River, especially from upper stories of the buildings.

Pattern 5

The Transit Station exhibits Clear and Convenient Connections to the Plaza.

This pattern requires considerable revision, as more is known about the TriMet station and related issues.

5.1 The Station Form (revised)

The light rail station is largely comprised of platforms, with some covered portions and a building containing transit-related and visitor services and waiting space for riders during inclement weather.

5.2 The Station Design (revised)

The light rail station is located on the triangle of land east of the MAX line. Transit platforms are integrated with the station. The design of the station reflects traditional small town commuter rail stations and may include a viewing tower or other prominent building feature. The station is designed to reflect its importance symbolic role and serves as a dramatic and distinctive landmark for South Downtown. The station, platforms, steps, ramps, railings, and lights are all kept to a modest scale, with refined details.

5.3 The Station has Connections (revised)

Each end of the station's platforms connects to adjacent sidewalks on SE 21st and Lake Road and therefore connects indirectly to the Plaza. The Plaza and surrounding buildings are separated from the station area by the existing freight tracks and related safety fencing.

5.4 "Passage Through" (removed due to revised station location) replaced with:

5.4 Walking Experience

Many users of the station will be arriving on foot. Access to the platforms should be clear and as direct as possible given safety considerations in track crossings. Higher-quality pavement should be used for walks leading to the station from the Plaza area. Accessibility considerations are important but should not compromise the station's relationship to nearby streets with excessive ramps or railings. An elevator integrated into the station design can resolve universal access issues at the south end of the

station area. The pedestrian passage under the light rail bridge should be well-lit and spacious enough to encourage use at all times of the day.

5.5 Access (new) [*“Back Side Is Blocked”* Pattern is deleted]

Access to the station is from many directions, so that people who live and work in the vicinity can use it easily and reach the station on foot and by bicycle.

5.8 Dark Timbers (revised)

The station should be designed in a regionally-appropriate architectural form utilizing creativity and appropriate scale and character. Utilizing the dark timbers of the trestle bridge could be one form of inspiration for the station design but may not translate directly to architectural forms.

5.9 Face Northwest (remove)

The revised location for the station does not allow the station entrance to face northwest. However, the platforms of the new station have been established and will be oriented in a way so that waiting passengers will be facing northwest.

5.10-5.20 No recommended revisions

5.21 Light Rail Bridge Design (revised)

The new bridge carrying light rail is of a design that is compatible with its prominent visibility to the community and respects the natural area of Kellogg Creek below. As it crosses Lake Road, the bridge design should have sufficient clearance and allow light to penetrate underneath to encourage pedestrians to use the passage as they move from the station to the plaza.

5.23 Lake Road (revised)

Lake Road shall remain open to vehicular traffic, with a reduced width and improved sidewalks. It will be closed for special events on the plaza.

5.24 Kiss n Ride (see revised 3.13)

5.26 Connected Station and Plaza (remove)

While you may be able to see parts of the Station from the Plaza, due to the location of the freight tracks and conceptual locations for new buildings there won't be a direct visual or physical connection between the two.

Pattern 6

The Plaza is given its Shape and Character by a Narrow Frontage Ring of Two and Three Story Buildings Faced with Projecting Glass Canopies. The Ring Contains and Defines the Outdoor Room that is the Plaza.

This pattern is recommended to be revised to reflect the rainy, often overcast climate and solar orientation of the site.

6.1-6.3 Frontage Ring may be revised once schematic design alternatives are prepared with input from Development Advisors

6.4 Frontage Buildings are a mix of two and three stories (revised)

Broad, projecting canopies with glass coverings allow for protection from the rain during inclement and for daylight to reach the facades during good weather. In the Northwest, glass canopies can be a preferred solution than colonnades which can create deep shadows that add to the sense of chill and grayness. Colonnades also block the visibility of retail businesses with their columns and often diminish their viability. When the sun is out, people can choose to be out in the open or around the edges. Text suggested to be revised as follows, to only focus on building height:

The buildings in the frontage ring are mainly two stories high. Buildings of three or four stories should be stepped to lessen their visual impact on the plaza.

6.5 Small Increments of Development (revised)

The following Pattern will also be updated with input from Development Advisors.

This is achieved either by buildings on small, individually-owned parcels or in segments that define a small scale and fine grain of development. Development surrounding the Plaza is varied and quirky but holds together as a whole.

6.6 The Station has Two Entrances Accessible from both ends of the Plaza (revised)

Due to the intervening freight tracks there cannot be a direct physical connection between the Plaza and the station. The plaza will be accessed from the station via two points, from Lake Road and a bike/ped path in the current location of SE Adams Street.

6.7 Character of Buildings fronting the Plaza (revised)

The buildings fronting the plaza reflect the history, culture and geographic location of Milwaukie. Locally-sourced materials, such as wood and stone, support sustainability principles and their application and assembly demonstrates a value on craft. Cast concrete is finely-detailed and finished. Other materials such as Dryvit, split-face concrete block, or corrugated metal are not appropriate in this area.

6.10 Many Different Small Businesses Front the Plaza

These businesses include shops, services, galleries, restaurants, cafes, and coffeehouses. Active uses are encouraged on the ground level.

6.11 and 6.12 Colonnade (remove)

A continuous colonnade is not recommended for South Downtown. In the Northwest, glass canopies tend to be a preferred solution than colonnades which can create deep shadows that add to the sense of chill and grayness. There is little precedent for this design feature in Northwest buildings (East Burnside Street being a notable exception but this condition was forced due to street widening). Colonnades also block the visibility of retail businesses with their columns and often diminish their viability.

Pattern 7

There is a Second, Wider and Deeper Outer Ring of Land, Containing More Loosely Placed One, Two and Three Story Buildings and Open Land. In the Outer Ring, especially, there is a Tangled Network of Narrow Lanes, Residences, Businesses and Open Space.

This pattern may be the most challenging one to implement. Upon initial examination, the actual size of the study area does not provide sufficient room to allow for a viable second, wider ring of land. Due to the proximity to three busy rail lines, the recommendation to keep Lake Road open and the stated preference for orienting buildings primarily to the west and the plaza, we believe that this Pattern will be modified based on the program and available area for development. There are elements that can be retained in the primary frontage ring, however, including 7.1, 7.2, 7.5, 7.6, 7.9, 7.10, 7.15, 7.16, and 7.22.

Pattern 7 will be updated at the end of this Phase of the project, based on input from development advisors, design team, Steering Committee and staff.

Pattern 8

As an additional support for the Plaza, 25% of the Boundary Land surroundings the Plaza will be Restored to its Natural State, Preserved as an Ecological Area for Parkland, Fish and Wildlife

This Pattern addresses one of the significant amenities available to the SDT area and an aspect likely to attract residents, visitors and businesses. The points within this pattern may need further revision once a specific plan for Kellogg Creek's restoration is developed. The following minor refinements are recommended.

8.6 Restore Creek and its Ecological Associations

As Kellogg Lake is lowered and reverts back to a stream, the condition of the soils change and trees and understory vegetation require a careful management -- with some retention, some selective replacement, and some additions. Native vegetation provides habitat related to the meandering, flowing waterway that is subject to seasonal fluctuations.

8.8 Bridge (remove; see 5.33)

This Pattern is recommended for deletion. At this point, it is not anticipated that a separate pedestrian bridge will be needed across Kellogg Creek, beyond the path associated with the new light rail bridge. A bridge could also not be low because of fluctuating water levels.

Patterns 9 -12

No revisions are suggested at present, but numerous questions raised by the committee, as well as others, require further examination as to how these patterns would be accomplished, or modified while keeping the spirit behind them. Because they call for a radically different form and tenure of development than is typical in the U.S., there would likely need to be a special, public-private and/or non-profit mechanism devised for financing, management, maintenance, and on-going oversight. Atypical development scenarios may be challenging for lending institutions for either

construction loans or long-term financing. A separate memo will be prepared by the Development Advisors, summarizing their ideas and opinions on these matters.

Pattern 11

This Pattern specifically calls for a custom level of craftsmanship on new buildings that is attractive but could pose challenges to affordability. Perhaps a form of local guild of craft persons less motivated by profit could be engaged for construction in the area. Other issues to consider include the potential for uncoordinated utilities, mechanical systems, servicing and construction stages. Common wall development also assumes simultaneous development of parcels. The marshalling of numerous small projects to make sure they occur at the same time would be a complicated undertaking in which a non-profit or other organization would be best to undertake.

Pattern 13

Throughout The South Downtown, There Is A Web Of Connected Paths...

This Pattern complements the overall notion of a human-scaled South Downtown that caters to pedestrians, bikes and alternative transportation. The following revisions are suggested:

13.8 Gasoline Cars (remove)

Given the wide range of potential future fuel sources for the private automobile, including gas, hybrid electric, hydrogen, natural gas and electric, this pattern seems overly restrictive.

13.9 Small or Hidden Parking (revise; new title: Screen Surface Parking)

A new surface parking lot for only 6 cars is an inefficient use of land. On-street parking can likely accommodate the associated demand. The new Pattern should read:

Existing and proposed surface parking lots should be well-screened with landscape and walls to frame the edges of sidewalks and improve the visual experience of walking in South Downtown. Lots should be visually divided by plant material and other methods in order to lessen their perceived scale

13.13 Parking Structure (potentially revise, see 2.15 and 4.2)

There is a parking structure located in the South Downtown area.

13.14 Bike Lanes (remove)

13.16 Cars in Plaza (revise)

Portions of the plaza may accommodate limited vehicular circulation. The Plaza can be completely closed to vehicles on certain occasions. Gates to facilitate the closure can be designed as unobtrusive streetscape elements. If vehicles are allowed at times within portions of the plaza area, the surface of the Plaza should not be designed as a typical vehicular street so that drivers get the impression that they are travelling through a shared space and should adjust their speed accordingly. This may require special paving, curbless streets, special signage (or removal of signage altogether).

13.20 Small Buses (remove)

The provision of small bus service will be something that will require coordination with TriMet and further study of potential ridership.

**APPENDIX A
LIST OF PATTERNS PROPOSED FOR DELETION**

2.9 Plaza Location/Containment

4.4 Buildings Wrap partially Around the Terrace

5.5 Back Side Is Blocked

5.9 Face Northwest

5.26 Connected Station and Plaza

6.11 and 6.12 Colonnade

7.3, 7.4, 7.7, 7.8, 7.11 to 7.14, 7.17 to 7.21, are detailed patterns all specifically related to the Second, Wider and Deeper Outer Ring of Land

8.8 Bridge

13.14 Bike Lanes

13.20 Small Buses