

DIPICt Lyons!

Downtown Improvement Plan Implementation Committee of Lyons

DIPICt-TR 4-2008: Landscaping Master Plan 6 October 2008 Technical Recommendation to Board of Trustees

BACKGROUND

The Downtown Improvement Plan aims to create a more desirable downtown for the residents and visitors of Lyons. The DIPICt Lyons group is charged with making technical recommendations concerning the implementation and execution of the DIP to the Board of Trustees. "Beautification" is a central idea of the DIP. The DIP recognizes that improving the appearance of the town in general will make it a more attractive place to stop, linger and visit our business establishments. One way to simply achieve this is to consistently and professionally place plants in planting areas, and then professionally maintain them. Our recent experience on High Street has highlighted the need for a Master Landscaping Plan for the Town, rather than an ad-hoc approach. Given that the Fall planting season is fast approaching, we bring this Technical Recommendation to the BOT with a sense of time urgency if we wish to see a more beautiful, blooming Downtown in Spring 2009.

Recommendation 1: Develop a Master Plan for Town Landscaping, including design and management guidelines, for all relevant public areas and easements. DIPICt requests that Town contract landscape design and management services through an RFP process. Several general principles should guide the design team:

- **Environmentally appropriate.** The planting areas described below should have planting plans that emphasize xeric materials given our dry climate.
- **Consistent with Traffic Codes.** Many of the areas should take into account pertinent sections of the Model Uniform Traffic Code (MUTCD) governing allowable heights of landscape materials adjacent to prescribed sight lines.
- **Low investment and maintenance costs.** Given fiscal constraints, efficiency is a prime consideration, including species that require less water and less town maintenance staff time
- **Beauty and seasonal variety.** Finally, another area of emphasis in plant selection should be seasonal variation: there are many xeric plants that during the winter retain their shape and possibly foliage and remain attractive even outside of the growing season. A multitude of decorative grasses meet these criteria and should be included in any Landscape Plan.

The plan should comprehensively review all planting areas in the town. However, there are several high visibility areas that should take priority. In addition, the management arrangements are as important as the technical designs and so should be included in the scope of work. Specific areas of the overall Master Plan which DIPICt would ask that the BOT require immediate attention include:

Recommendation 2: Develop a Master Planting Plan for town owned planters and planting areas in the US36 entry corridor immediately east of town.

In recent years, several planters have been built along US 36. In the recent past, they have been planted mostly by volunteers with sporadic upkeep. The town needs a consistent look with consistent maintenance and upkeep. A professional planting plan should suggest xeric plants that are beautiful, in keeping with the area's native plants, hardy and sustainable. In some areas, height of suggested material should be considered (i.e. in the "Welcome to Lyons" sign. Plantings in this area have in the past interfered with the legibility of the sign. If need be, modifications to the planting bed should be made.

Recommendation 3: Develop a Master Planting Plan for town owned planters and planting areas where Main Street/US 36 splits into one lane roadways.

This area, while slated for major reconstruction in coming years none the less serves as the entryway to our downtown. It has become subject to neglect and wear. A new Town marquis sign should be placed in lieu of the aging one currently in use. Areas which are now planted have become weedy and unkempt. This area should be a focus of this effort as it is one of the first identity markers as people enter our downtown.

Recommendation 4: Create a Master Planting Plan for the improvement area on High Street.

One of the recommendations for ‘softening’ the High Street improvement area is the removal of some of the boulders and replacing them with planting areas. These could be in-ground or placed on the paved surface depending upon location, probable success of the planter type for that location, etc...(all of which should be determined by a landscape architect). These planted areas would serve in the same capacity as the boulders, creating a physical and visual barrier between the pedestrian zone and the parking areas. The creation of selected planting areas using this strategy will make the area more inviting and still more pedestrian friendly.

It is also needed to create a planting plan for the completed areas on the west end of the street. One of these areas has been successfully planted by volunteers, and has made a tremendous visual impact on the area. But the area is incomplete and needs a more comprehensive landscape and planting plans. Similarly, the adjacent area on the north side of High Street (between 5th and US36) has incomplete pavements to access adjacent sidewalks, is in need of a general plan that should minimally include placement of municipal way-finding and directional signage, as well as eye-catching decorative elements.

Recommendation 5: Create a Landscape and Parking Plan for Town Hall

The Town Hall property marks the entry into Central Lyons from northbound traffic on Highway 7. A landscape plan that emphasizes a re-positioned and refurbished historic town hall marker sign should be developed, along with an organized parking plan for the gravel area west of Town Hall. The addition of this area to the areas at the west end of High Street, the Welcome to Lyons sign, and the road divider at the east end of Main Street will create ‘beautification nodes’ at every significant point of entry to our central town area. These areas will be seen by every vehicular entrant to our town, motorized or not, and should be used to make an attractive visual statement about our town. At which point the proposed branding campaign is completed, the town’s new brand should be prominently incorporated to each of these sites.

Recommendation 6: In order for any of the above suggestions to be sustainable in a long term sense, there needs to be a clear delineation as to who is responsible for the regular maintenance and upkeep of all planting areas. It has been pointed out that there are perhaps structural misalignments in the division of labor and responsibility between Public Works and Parks crews.

In addition to being consistently planted, landscaped areas in the whole town need to have a management plan that identifies who is responsible for upkeep. Observation of the division of work during the process of High Street implementation verifies the presence of the issue. The committee has become aware that the organization chart of the town’s human resources leaves question as to who is responsible for what. These roles must be clarified, even to the extent of re-organization of resources so as to allow a successful upkeep program. We suggest taking a sweeping view of all land maintenance areas and operations and coming up with a plan that comprehensively addresses ongoing maintenance issues and assigns clearly defined roles to appropriate staff resources.

Recommendation 7: Engagement of the private sector and community groups. As we have seen recently on High Street, our businesses and citizens care deeply about how town looks and are willing to get involved, including significant recent donations of time, money and plants. The Master Plan should lay out clear guidelines for these groups, including an Adopt a Planter/Adopt a Block program.

While the full Master Plan Development will clearly take some time, if a consultant can be contracted in the short term and make some quick guiding recommendations for some basic Fall plantings, Lyons in the Spring will be radiant.

DIPICt members hereby make these Technical Recommendations this Nineteenth day of September, 2008.

Attest:

Timothy Kyer, Chair

first draft