

Downtown Steering Committee

Walking Tour of Downtown Core Notes
July 28, 2026

ATTENDEES:

Committee Members Present: Zeke Reister, Mike Bedard, Kevin Rieke, Kirstie Miethe, Laurie Brennan, and Lindsay Boyd.

Committee Members Absent: Rob Eaton, Troy Campbell

Staff: Matthew “Selby”, Brantley Bain, John Shons, and Courtney Porter.

Public: none

SUMMARY:

Committee members noted a number of improvements since the previous walk-through, including sidewalk and ADA improvements, Front Street sealing, landscaping and flower displays, and other items identified during the 2025 tour. Appreciation was expressed for the work completed by City staff.

Much of the discussion focused on ongoing maintenance and long-term planning for downtown improvements. Topics included tree health and replacement, landscaping and flower maintenance, power washing, trash cans, lighting, benches, shade, bike parking, and maintenance of both public and privately owned areas. Members emphasized considering maintenance responsibilities and resources as part of future projects and improvements.

Members also discussed opportunities for longer-term improvements, including pedestrian plaza standards, pedestrian crossings, additional and covered bike parking, public restroom access, and potential parking garage alternatives. Overall, the discussion focused on maintaining recent improvements while identifying practical ways to enhance the appearance, functionality, accessibility, and visitor experience of the downtown area.

OBSERVATIONS NOTED BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- **Ongoing maintenance** was noted throughout the walk as an important consideration when planning improvements and amenities
 - Need to identify responsibility and expectations for long-term maintenance
 - Rotary Pollinator Garden near Little Red’s – maintenance expectations/agreement? Weeds, trash and dead plants noted
 - Concerns regarding trash, weeds and unmaintained landscaping on private and public-facing properties
- Appreciation voiced for Public Works Department repairs to sidewalk and construction of ADA ramp near Grange Building
- Noted that major items discussed during 2025 tour have been addressed
- New Visitor Center looks great
- Hazardous fence near Little Red’s

- Community Development/Code – options to enforce or require repair?
- **Benches/seating/shade**
 - Add bench in front of Welcome Center
 - Add bench by post box in front of bookstore
 - additional picnic tables, potentially with umbrellas that can withstand wind
 - Explore additional shade options that complement the Bavarian theme
- **Flowers/flower barrels**
 - Flowers noted as looking more professional/improved from previous years
 - City cleanup and flowers added to previously “abandoned” barrels under oak tree in front of Innsbrucker Building
 - Consider overall flower strategy/expectations for new pedestrian plaza
 - Discussed potential program for businesses to adopt or maintain flower pots
- **Landscaping/mulch**
 - Freshen bark/wood chips, including area under large oak tree
 - Beauty bark vs. wood chips discussed; wood chips readily available
- **Tree health and long-term planning**
 - Develop comprehensive strategy for downtown trees, including maintenance, health and replacement
 - Concern regarding health of willow, birch and other trees
 - Impact of salt use, particularly on birch trees
 - Impact of heated sidewalks
 - Tree replacement plan – appropriate replacement species?
 - Short-term plan for open/empty tree bays
 - Parks & Public Works Committee mentioned
- **Bike rack locations/additional bike parking**
 - More bike parking needed downtown
 - Across from Gustav’s at vacant lot
 - Near Welcome Center and Cured
 - In front of South
 - Covered bike storage/small pavilion at corner of 8th & Commercial Street
 - Could potentially include picnic table(s)
 - Consider relocating water trough closer to horses to better utilize corner
 - Potential space for Friends of the Library/free book nook
- **Trash cans/Big Belly**
 - Can be wrapped or have signs
 - Placement and locations discussed
 - Bear-safe options/current work discussed
 - Concerns regarding ice cream mess on trash cans
- **Power washing**
 - More frequent cleaning requested, particularly stairs and high-traffic areas near Whistlepunk/Das Sweet Shoppe
 - Staffing and timing limitations noted
- Front Street sealing noted as a positive improvement
- Light posts along Front Street in need of repair or replacement
- **Pedestrian crossings/intersections**

- 9th & Front Street crossing noted as chaotic; pedestrians frequently crossing outside designated crosswalks
- Consider ways to better direct/encourage pedestrians to use crosswalks
- Current intersection/crosswalk changes appear to be helping; Psomas plan may provide additional clarity
- Parking kiosk at Aasgard Lot – location/direction creates a line in driving area
- **Parking garage**
 - Revisit scope/options in light of project cost, City bonding capacity and potential private parking projects
 - Consider more affordable/phased alternatives, including repairing retaining wall and extending parking by one level
 - Discussed underground parking with a future highway-level upper lot
 - Include public restrooms in the structure
 - Plan/design for potential future expansion
- **Festhalle/public restroom access**
 - Explore options to make Festhalle restrooms available to the public during summer months when the building is otherwise closed in use
 - Potential options discussed included hired security or an ambassador program
 - Alleys – opportunity to make more inviting/interesting for visitors
- **Privately owned/unmaintained lots and landscaping**
 - Cascade Medical Center parking lot/area across from medical center – trash, dried weeds and overgrown landscaping noted
 - Vacant area between Louie's and City restrooms
 - Lot next to Yodelin
 - Consider incentive/recognition program to encourage property maintenance
- **SUP designs/standards – pedestrian plaza**
 - Current SUP areas noted as improved
 - Opportunity to develop clearer Design Review Board/Community Development standards for SUP design
 - Consider standards that provide consistency and equitable expectations for existing and future SUPs
- Bären Haus building – plans approved; work has not started
- Bollards – long-term plan?
- Add Christmas lights to new restrooms and covered pavilion/deck area

NOTED FOR FUTURE TOUR:

- Tour should be in April
- Have property line or boundary maps available

3. Adjourn

The tour end at approximately 12:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Courtney Porter, Executive Assistant