



## Street Beautification

The Catalysts for Enterprise Development at the Confluence  
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### Abstract.

Streets are unique in nature in that they represent the largest portion of undeveloped public space in cities. They not only act as a means to get to and from destinations, but also promote and enable neighborhood interactions, in turn bringing a feeling of safety and trust to the area. This paper will explore why city streets are essential in creating a successful city. It will explain actions that cities can take to enhance their streets and sidewalks by examining “Street Beautification” guidelines of Chicago, IL and San Francisco, CA. This paper concludes with recommendations for the City of Binghamton. These are that the city incorporate six basic street elements: trees/plants/greenery, bus enclosures, banners, crosswalks and trashcans.” Specific attention will be paid to the west side of Binghamton because the Westside currently has the highest density of students within the city. Beautiful streets would connect students with their surroundings and thus promote student involvement.

*Keywords:* “City Streets, Street Beautification, Walkability”

*Binghamton Keywords:* “West Side Neighborhood Project, Design Your Own Park”

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Cities have a life of their own. Filled with the bustling of buses, men and women headed to and from work, taxi cabs, store owners and residents alike, cities are alive.

Each individual, each group, each neighborhood within the city provides a function and when put together comprise an organism.

If a city is an organism, then its streets are the veins. Streets serve a wide array of purposes within a city. They provide means of transportation for automobiles; are the home for the daring bicyclist and the everyday pedestrian while also being the gateway to local businesses and residencies. Furthermore, unlike other spaces within a city, everyone at some point in their day must use the city street.

Streets are unique in nature in that they represent the largest portion of undeveloped public space in cities. On average, streets comprise 25 to 30 percent of all urban land and thus play a vital role in determining whether a city is successful or will show promise of success. Suffice to say, streets present an incredible opportunity for local governments to address urban problems (Hawkes and Sheridan).

This paper will explore in detail why city streets are essential in creating a successful city and what makes them so. It will explain actions that cities can take to enhance the streets and sidewalks within their city. It will focus on movements in Chicago, IL and San Francisco, CA as examples of cities that created and implemented street “beautification” guidelines. Ultimately, this paper will conclude and recommend feasible ways in which the City of Binghamton can beautify and revitalize its own streets. Specific attention will be paid to the west side of Binghamton, which currently has the highest density of students within the city as a way to connect students with their surroundings and promote student involvement.

## II. Successful Cities

Why are some cities more successful than others? In order to even begin thinking about such a question, we need to define a successful city. There is no agreed upon definition of a successful city, so for our purposes a successful city is one that is able attract and retain professionals and businesses. It is a place in which people enjoy spending time, both as a visitor and as a resident. Furthermore, a good city is self-sustaining, providing all of the basic items and services to live. Thus, a successful city is one that not only satisfies the needs and the desires of its citizens today, but also is able to do so for its future generations.

Richard Florida, author of *Cities and the Creative Class*, argues that a successful city is one that homes and fosters the creative class. The creative class, according to Florida, is anyone who “engages in work whose function is to create meaningful new forms” (Florida, 36). The creative class includes engineers, professors, artists, writers, analysts, even professionals who work in knowledge-based industries like health care, legal/ financial services, etc... Essentially, the creative class is “required to think on their own.” Florida recognizes that “creative people are the driving force in regional economic growth,” and so, to figure out the next successful city, one needs to find out where and why creative people settle (Florida, 37).

After conducting many interviews, Florida discovered that the mix of both job availability and quality of place were the two determining factors influencing where creative people settled. As Florida writes, “People were not slavishly following jobs to places.” What they looked for were communities that would provide “abundant high-

quality experiences, openness to diversity of all kinds, and above all else, the opportunity to validate their identities as creative people” (Florida, 36). That is, the creative class was looking for a unique place, one with character and a variety of people and options. Ultimately, they were looking for an interesting city.

### **III. Why are city streets important?**

What makes an interesting city? Furthermore, what makes people perceive a city as interesting? A city can be as interesting as it can be, and can have every amenity under the sky, but if people don't view it as such, it might as well have nothing at all. This is where the public space of the city comes into play. As Jane Jacobs, author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, says, “Think of a city and what comes to mind? Its streets. If a city's streets look interesting, the city looks interesting; if they look dull, the city looks dull” (Jacobs, 29).

Streets and their sidewalks are a city's most vital organs. Their role is essential and unique- they promote and enable neighborhood interactions, in turn bringing a feeling of safety and trust to the area. You can't just replace the sidewalk with something else and achieve the same result. Jacobs says it best.

Sidewalks bring together people who do not know each other, and would otherwise not know each other. The sum of such casual, public contact at a local level is a feeling for the public density of people, a web of public respect and trust, and a resource in time of personal or neighborhood need. The absence of this trust is a disaster to a city street (Jacobs, 55).

Without those small, what seem to be meaningless interactions, the city street becomes an undesirable place to be. It turns into a place that no one cares about, and no one wants to care about (Kunstler).

What good comes from a street that no one cares about? Not much. In fact, the street may have an adverse effect on the neighborhood and the city as a whole. In other words, “A well-used street is apt to be a safe street. A deserted city street is apt to be unsafe” (Jacobs, 34). Although not always true, this statement holds some truth. When people say that a city or a part of it is unsafe/ dangerous they're generally referring to the fact that they do not feel safe being on the sidewalks (Jacobs, 30). Therefore, if a city wants safe streets, it must provide a street worth caring about; a good street.

### **IV. A 'Good' City Street**

According to Jacobs, there are six criterion that a street should meet in order for it to be considered “good.” For one, there must be a clear distinction between public and private space. Two, there must be eyes upon the street. That is, people must constantly be looking over the street and taking note of its users and events that occur. Preferably, these eyes should belong to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street, the people who are present daily (i.e. store owners, street vendors, the mail man, etc..).

Three, the adjacent buildings must be oriented towards the street- the street cannot afford to be abandoned. Four, the sidewalk must be continuously used. This not only adds to the number of effective eyes on the street but also induces the people in buildings alongside it to watch the sidewalks.

Five, and most important of all, the city street must be trusted. People should feel comfortable on the street, and care about it. Take for instance a citizen, who, walking by, notices wrongdoing on the street. Trust determines whether the individual will take responsibility or abdicate it. This trust takes a while to form as it is a product of time and many public sidewalk conversations (Jacobs, 55).

The sixth and last criteria is lighting. Bright lights attract people to the street, and offer reassurance to people who walk on them. They bring people who need to go out on the sidewalk, or would like to, but lacking good lighting would not do so. Additionally, lights increase visibility of the area, naturally bringing comfort to the individual. It is important to note that, "Unless eyes are there, and unless in the brains behind those eyes are the almost unconscious reassurance of general street support in upholding civilization, lights can do no good. Horrifying public crimes can, and do, occur in well- lit places" (Jacobs, 42). However, lights alone do not imply a good street. Lights need to work in conjunction with the other elements mentioned above.

## **V. Why should we live in walkable neighborhoods?**

Humans are intrinsically social beings. We thrive when we're apart of some group, a family or some sort of social network. That's the way our species evolved. A growing number of research supports the idea that individuals who have wide social networks and are active in their communities tend to live longer and be healthier both physically and mentally.

Kevin Leyden, recognizing the positive health benefits of a social and active lifestyle, sought to look at neighborhood designs and their ability to enable & encourage social interactions. His fundamental premise is that some neighborhood designs enable or encourage social ties and community connections, whereas others do not. He went on to argue that the neighborhood designs most likely to promote social capital are those that are mixed use and pedestrian oriented. Essentially, neighborhoods that have safe, walkable streets not only enhance an individual's health, but also strengthen the community (Leyden).

Leyden conducted a study in 2003, surveying numerous households in Galway, Ireland. The study measured the social capital of citizens living in a range of neighborhoods. Some were traditional, while others were mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented and modern, car-dependent suburbs.

Results of the study supported the initial premise. People who resided in neighborhoods that encouraged and enabled walking reported higher levels of social capital, that is higher levels of social connectivity. In fact,

No other predictor was consistently significant. Moreover, neighborhood walkability consistently held its own in comparison with the other predictors, often playing a more powerful role. Neighborhood walkability was the most important predictor of the Trust Index, the second most important predictor for

the Know Neighbors variable and the Social Index, and a close third for the Political Participation Index (Leyden).

Clearly, walkable cities are essential to the health of an individual and a community. The rest of this paper will explore the elements needed to create a walkable neighborhood and will reference best practices of other cities.

## **VI. The anatomy of the street**

Planning for a successful street-scape is broken into two sections. The first section involves the exploration and understanding of a street's properties, intricacies and challenges. The second section identifies all possible street elements which is necessary in deciding upon which ones to incorporate into the actual street design.

### ***A. Properties of the Street***

There are three zones of a street-scape: the sidewalk zone, the parking zone and the roadway zone, each distinct and important. The roadway zone, also known as the vehicular zone is where motor vehicles and bicycles move on a daily basis. Underground utilities such as gas, water and sewage are generally here. The parking zone allows shoppers to place their vehicles out of harms way and provides space for trucks and buses to go about their jobs. The sidewalk zone provides space for the pedestrian to move about freely and acts as a "front porch" to businesses and residences (Chicago, 2). The sidewalk zone is where the pedestrians spend most their time, and is, arguably, the most important zone.

A good sidewalk has a flow. There is a defined, pleasant space for pedestrians to walk about, without having to weave in and out of elements. This flow stems from the repetition of elements on the street. A street should not have just one tree, one bench, one trash can; it needs to have many. When various elements are repeated, an invisible string is formed, loosely connecting the elements. We call this an element line. On any given sidewalk, it is important to identify, work with and maintain the element line.

The element line is influenced by many factors- the biggest being sidewalk width. Width dictates the kind, the amount and the size of elements that can be placed on the street. A 12' sidewalk can and should accommodate different objects than a 9' sidewalk.

When an object is placed on the street, it actually consumes more space than its actual physical size. This is due to the shy zone effect, the idea that pedestrians instinctively maintain a distance (a shy zone) around all elements when walking. This limits the space on sidewalks and need to be accounted for. For instance, an 8' wide sidewalk may actually only have a net pedestrian zone of 5' when the shy zone is accounted for. This severely limits the amount that can be done with the sidewalk (Chicago, 10).

Other limitations to the element line are pre-existing street elements. These are things such as vaulted sidewalks, driveways, existing trees, overhanging signs, significant building entrances, fire hydrants and adjacent public space. Although these conditions disrupt the element line, they can be accommodated simply by shifting the

element line or shifting or eliminating individual elements. What to do all depends on the elements that make up the street-scape.

## ***B. Street Elements***

What are examples of street elements? Street elements are any object that can be placed on the street, either because they serve a functional purpose and/ or because they are aesthetically pleasing. Common elements are: banners, benches, bike racks, bollards, bus enclosures, community identifiers, crosswalks, light polls, kiosks, parking meters, planters, plants, public art, sidewalk medallions, signs, speed bumps, statues, trash cans, trees and tree grates. When, where, how to incorporate these elements is all dependent on the goal that the city is trying to meet with the street and the street properties- as described above.

## **VII. Best Practices:**

This section will give examples of the specific elements used to create good streets by examining Chicago and San Francisco along with local efforts in Binghamton.

### ***A. Other Regions in the United States***

#### **1) Chicago: Street-scape Guidelines (2003)**

This guide, created by the Chicago Department of Transportation in 2003, provides the necessary tools to plan a successful street-scape, offers useful information about the planning process, indicates the standard elements that compose one, explains some special circumstances and gives an array of street-scape examples.

Chicago identifies three phases needed to revitalize a street. They are the design phase, the construction phase and the maintenance phase. The design phase typically takes 8 to 12 months and encompasses an area approximately the size of six 300-foot blocks. This phase is where the design is created. It includes establishing and securing a budget, retaining the services of a design consultant, conducting a topographic survey of the project site and reviewing codes/ standards for the area. The construction phase includes, hiring a contractor, getting a construction contract, holding a pre-construction meeting, informing residents and store owners of the upcoming construction and actually completing it. The construction can take anywhere from 4 to 12 months and is performed in rolling phases. That is, construction takes place at different parts of the site to ensure minimal traffic problems. The last phase is the maintenance phase. In order for maintenance to be successful, it must be a joint effort between the community and the city. Thus, the community best be apart of the whole project, from start to finish.

Chicago recognizes lighting and tree cover as a street's most important elements, and thus devotes a large section of the guidelines to those elements. All other elements are considered secondary, and just add detail and texture to a street. They are addressed in the guideline but do not comprise significant section.

Lights are among the most important element as all three zones of a street need to be properly lit. On average, Chicago requires illumination levels of 2.5 foot-candles on streets, 5 foot-candles at intersections, and 1.5 foot-candles on the sidewalk. For vehicular lighting, Chicago uses the Chicago Gateway 2000 Pole and the Davit Arm pole, both with cut-off fixtures as to direct the light downward, and not outward/ upward and type IV lenses to reduce glare. For pedestrian lighting, the city uses the Single Acorn Pole because it is short, on average 16' high. Due to its wide base, and tendency to produce glare, it should only be placed on a wide sidewalk where there aren't many second story residential units. The last pole Chicago uses is the Historic Twin Arm pole. It has two fixtures, one to illuminate the street and the other to illuminate the sidewalk. It does, however, produce rather dull lighting and should only be used on narrow streets (Chicago, Ch4).

In addition to lighting, trees are an extremely visible element on any street. Trees define "spatial volume and rhythm" and provide "spring bloom, summer shade, fall foliage color, winter branching and an opportunity for holiday decoration." Chicago has numerous recommendations for the type and placement of trees as well as tree grates and planters. Without going into too much detail, Chicago offers two useful bits of information. Considering the harsh winter, Chicago recommends using cold resistant, salt tolerant trees, as to ensure tree well-being. Second, trees should only be implemented on wide sidewalks. Sidewalks less than 9' should look at alternative means for incorporating greenery on the sidewalk, perhaps resorting to hanging baskets or flower pots at street corners. For more detailed information consult pages 8-12 of the Chicago Streetscape Guidelines and the Guide to the Chicago Landscape Ordinance.

Chicago divides its streets into three categories: less than 9' wide, between 9'-12' wide and greater than 12' wide (Chicago, Ch3). As mentioned before, a 9' or less width sidewalk is difficult to work with because the amount of possible street elements is limited. Chicago recommends using Chicago Gateway 200 poles, as to effectively light both the street and the pole, double head parking meters and hanging baskets (on light poles for instance) or free-standing planters as a way to add greenery to the street. However, due to the costly nature of hanging baskets, it is only recommended in a commercial, downtown setting. Additionally, communities can work with private property owners to add landscaping that blends in and even enhances streetscape design.

Banners and identifier elements may also be incorporated as long as they don't significantly impede sidewalk space (Chicago, Ch5).

Sidewalks 9'-12' wide are easier to work with. For a 9'-10' sidewalk, Chicago recommends using Chicago gateway poles, double head parking meters and trees in 4 X 6 tree grates with a 1' wide concrete band on three sides for support. A 10' to 11' sidewalk has similar elements, with a light difference being that the Chicago Gateway Poles are to be interspersed with single acorn pedestrian poles. An 11'- 12' sidewalk allows for more options such as a 5 X 5 or 4 X 6 tree grate and decorative sidewalk pavement. Sidewalks of this interval also allow benches, trash receptacles and kiosks. Anything can be done with sidewalks 12' and greater (Chicago, Ch5).

For more information, consult the City of Chicago, Streetscape Guidelines, 2003.

## **2) San Francisco: Better Streets Plan (2010)**

The San Francisco Better Streets Plan, created in 2010, seeks to improve city streets by providing a blueprint onto how the city should go about doing so. The Plan is based on the fact that all streets should satisfy these 10 conditions: be memorable, be able to support diverse public life, vibrant, promote human use and comfort, promote healthy living, be safe, create convenient connections, be ecologically sustainable, be accessible, be attractive and inviting and be well-cared for.

Recognizing that pedestrians are the most vulnerable user of the street, the plan attempts to make streets user-friendly for them, without compromising the easy-use of other street users. Chapter four is designated to describing and recommending design features which enhance pedestrian safety and comfort on public spaces. It looks at Crosswalks and Pedestrian Signals, Curb Extensions (Bulb-Outs), Medians and Islands, Transit-Supportive Streetscape Design, Parking Lane Treatments, Traffic Circles, Pedestrian-Priority Designs.

Crosswalks and pedestrian signals should be present at every major intersection, if not at all. Crosswalks should be at least as wide as the sidewalk, but may be wider in locations with high pedestrian demand or narrow sidewalks and be no less than 10 feet in width. Pedestrian signal should use the international pedestrian symbol rather than WALK/DON'T WALK text.

Curb extensions (also called bulb-outs) extend the sidewalk into the parking lane to narrow the roadway and provide additional sidewalk space. They can be used at corners and or at mid-block locations. Curb extensions enhance pedestrian safety by increasing pedestrian visibility of the road, shortening crossing distances, slowing turning vehicles, and visually narrowing the roadway. Typically, curb extensions are appropriate on streets that have high pedestrian volume, high traffic volumes/ speeds, are wide, have long crossing times, streets with a history of pedestrian safety concerns, or where shortening crossing cycles would improve transit flow. Although sidewalk extensions are among the most effective tools to enhance pedestrian safety and quality, they are very expensive to construct.

To reduce costs, San Francisco recommends allowing utilities to remain under sidewalk extensions (e.g. sidewalks may be constructed over existing sewer or water lines), use trench drains (channels covered with metal grating) to eliminate the need to relocate catch basins or re-grade streets for drainage and allow fire hydrants to remain in place. Fire hydrant relocation ranges from \$50,000 to \$100,000 and often is a determining factor in deciding not construct a particular curb extension. Despite the fact that hydrants are to be between 24 and 27 inches from the curb line and extending the curb changes the curb line, bulb-outs would keep the area clear of illegally parked cars, in turn improving access to fire hydrants. Instead of moving hydrants, in-street reflectors, painted curbs, and other technologies may be used to make existing hydrants easy to locate.

If curb extensions are still too expensive, an alternative method of ensuring pedestrian comfort and safety are medians and pedestrian refuge islands. Pedestrian refuge islands are typically significantly cheaper to construct and are preferable to curb extensions when there (is/are): two-way left-turn lanes, excessively wide lanes or turn lanes, 4 lanes or more where it may be difficult to cross in one stage, a ceremonial purpose- the median would provide a design function or there is a pre-existing median.

Another important feature of a safe pedestrian street are transit stops. Good layout of a transit stop offers transit patrons visual cues on where to wait, clearly defines the transit stop and calls it out as a special place in the sidewalk environment, allows ease of access between the sidewalk, the transit stop, and the transit vehicle, and does not block the path of travel on the adjacent sidewalk. Furthermore, transit stops and their surrounding area deserve a higher than average level of street-scape amenities as to attract attention to public transportation and to attract public transportation users to the street. Such amenities area trees and planters, decorative sidewalks, benches: either formal (benches, seats with armrests) or informal (bollards, low seat walls, leaning bars) and trash cans. Bike racks, and wayfinding information (kiosks) should be located near transit stop areas, particularly in downtown, commercial, or tourist areas.

The last major method of ensuring pedestrian safety and comfort on city streets are the use of traffic circles. Traffic circles are not the same as roundabouts which are designed to handle much higher traffic volumes. The placement of traffic circles should be on streets where there is not an extremely high volumes of traffic but calming traffic is still desirable. Such a street is a residential street so as long as it is not apart of a transit route. Traffic circles should be large enough that vehicles entering the intersection must slow down and change course, but should not significantly alter the path of travel for pedestrians or bicyclists or require a change in curb geometry. The size of traffic calming circles is determined based on the width of the adjoining streets.

Like Chicago, San Francisco divides its streets into width categories of 6 foot sidewalk (Alleys), 7 to 8 foot sidewalks, 9 to 10 foot sidewalks and 11 to 12 foot sidewalks. Six foot sidewalks (typically found on alleys) do not have enough room for a furnishing zone with tree plantings. Alternatively, the frontage zone may have a building-adjacent planter, leaving 4 to 5 feet for through travel. Curb extensions may allow for additional plantings, trees, or site furnishings. Converting the alley to a shared public way is preferable, to allow more comfortable pedestrian space.

On 7 to 8 foot sidewalks, a 3 foot furnishing zone with street trees would leave 4 to 5 feet of through width. This width is sufficient on alleys and on some neighborhood residential streets with low pedestrian volumes; however, on most streets, a 6 foot through-way zone should be provided, meaning there is not enough space for a row of street trees. The designer should consider narrower design elements in the edge zone, such as street lights or bollards. Curb extensions may allow for additional plantings, trees, or site furnishings.

A 9 or 10 foot sidewalk allows a few options. One possible design is to use a 4 to 5 foot pedestrian zone, 3 to 4 foot furnishing zone with street trees and landscaping, and 2 foot edge zone. The presence of the edge zone allows for a planting strip. Where a 6 foot clear path is required, the sidewalk could be divided into a 6 foot through-way zone and a 3 to 4 foot furnishing zone, with street trees but no planting strip; or on downtown or commercial streets with congested sidewalks (such as on Stockton Street), there should be a 6 foot or greater through-way zone, with either or both a 2 foot frontage zone (for merchandise displays or outdoor seating) or edge zone (with narrow design elements such as street lights or bollards).

Eleven to twelve foot sidewalks may be divided in numerous ways, including: "On residential streets, an optional 2 foot frontage zone (with plantings), a 4 to 6 foot through-way zone, a 4 foot furnishing zone with optional planting strip, and 2 foot edge

zone; on commercial, downtown, or mixed-use streets, a 2 foot frontage zone (for displays or seating), a 6 foot through-way zone, and a 4 foot furnishing zone; or on downtown or commercial streets with congested sidewalks, an 8 foot or greater through-way zone, with a 2 foot frontage zone (for merchandise displays or outdoor seating) and/or edge zone (with narrow design elements such as street lights or bollards).”

Street types also play a huge role in street design. Street classifications are based on land use characteristics (residential, commercial industrial, mixed-use) and transportation roles (downtown, through-way, neighborhood). Special streets (parkways, park edge streets, boulevards and ceremonial civic streets), and small streets (alleys, shared public ways, and pedestrian-only streets) are noted and treated differently. These classifications are not intended to replace technical transportation classifications, but to help make decisions about street-scape design.

For more information consult San Francisco, Better Street Plan, 2010.

## ***B. Local Examples***

### **1) The Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development, City of Binghamton**

The Department of Planning is in the process of developing a Complete the Streets Policy, as one is not in place. For support and guidance, the city has applied for technical assistance through the Sustainable Communities Building Blocks program. The technical assistance provided by the Building Blocks program would bring momentum for the adoption of a Complete the Streets Policy by holding a workshop. This would in turn, increase communication between transportation practitioners, city officials and community stakeholders and educate all involved. The workshop would result in a draft copy of a Complete the Streets policy. The city submitted the request in February 2011 and is awaiting a response.

### **2) West Side Neighborhood Project**

The West Side Neighborhood Project (WSNP) seeks to revitalize the west side of Binghamton, making it a safe, vibrant, beautiful place to live. To ensure success, the initiative takes the interest of all community members, such as landlords, students, homeowners, and permanent residents, into account. The project has identified 6 areas that need improvement within the neighborhood. These are community, economic development, zoning and code, curb appeal, public safety and marketing. Community refers to the need of bringing all tenants together and the need to develop a unique sense of place.

Zoning and code refers to the need to establish legislation that aligns with student interests. Examples are: creating an overlay district that eases zoning restriction and allows students to live together legally in number exceeding R-1 limitations and promoting landlord accountability. Landlord accountability is essential in building a community that is safe for students and promotes healthy neighborhoods. The WSNP

supports the establishment of a rental registration program and a Certificate of Compliance program for landlords, both provided by the City of Binghamton.

Curb appeal refers to the goal improving the attractiveness and ultimately quality of life on the West Side of Binghamton. The creation of a safe and attractive environment would benefit all of residents: students, working professionals, families, and retirees alike. This would in turn promote neighborhood safety and in turn create a neighborhood worth advertising and marketing to the rest of the city.

This research is an extension of the WSNP, as it ties in nicely with the curb appeal initiative.

### **3) The Design Your Own Park Competition**

The project, which is a joint effort between the Binghamton Neighborhood Project, EvoS Program, the City of Binghamton and local residents at Binghamton University, is aimed at sparking community development as well as providing access to a clean, safe, walkable park. Neighbors come together, identify a neglected space, often a vacant lot and propose a park idea. Each group is then provided with a facilitator to help guide them through the process for turning the idea into reality. The City of Binghamton has listed a number of lots eligible for the competition. Beginning just one year ago, in 2010, one park has been completed in the first ward and two more are underway.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Binghamton has one hundred and fifty-nine lane miles of paved streets, approximately two hundred and fifty-four miles of sidewalk and an unknown amount of bike lanes (Letter to Sustainable Building Blocks Program, City of Binghamton). Clearly, the city can't possibly beautify and maintain all streets, however, there are specific areas that the city should upkeep and devote resources towards.

I am advocating that the city direct its attention to the Westside. The west side has a high population density and although, in coming years, there will be an influx of students living downtown, the Westside will still remain a hot spot for students. Binghamton University students occupy essentially every other house, but one would never know that walking down the street. Students have the potential to be the core of a lively community, which will, in turn, bring homeowners, cultural institutions, and businesses to the West Side.

Acknowledging the lack of funds, I've identified street elements that are not too costly to implement and maintain but also are necessary and missing on the Westside. Further, I've identified specific streets in dire need of attention and street corners that need certain street elements.

There are six elements that can be easily implemented that would significantly improve the quality of the area. These are: trees/ plants/ greenery, bus enclosures, banners, crosswalks and trash cans.

The most expensive suggestion are the trees/ plants, however, it arguably is the

most important. Trees would not only add color and spunk to the area, but also help manage storm runoff (no more water in our basements!) and reduce the heat-island effect experienced during summer months. The city should partner with local businesses and residents to reduce maintenance and even possibly implementation costs. The city can also fundraise and provide incentives for residents to plant trees on their own property. Trees are not the only way to green an area. Flowerpots are a nice substitute, whether they be standing outside stores or hanging on city poles. The flowerpots on the Riverside Bridge, crossing over the Susquehanna, provided by security mutual, is a great example.

Bus enclosures are, in my mind, the second most important element missing from the streets. Bus enclosure would shelter those riding the bus and also add character to the street. Three bus routes weave in and out of the west side, and these buses are regularly used. These are the 15 (city bus), the JC Westside (blue bus) and the Westside Main (blue bus). In fact, the buses are so popular, that during the weekday morning commute, the city sends two 15s and the Off Campus College Transportation (OCCT) sends a bus once every twenty minutes. Furthermore, there are specific corners that ALWAYS have students waiting.

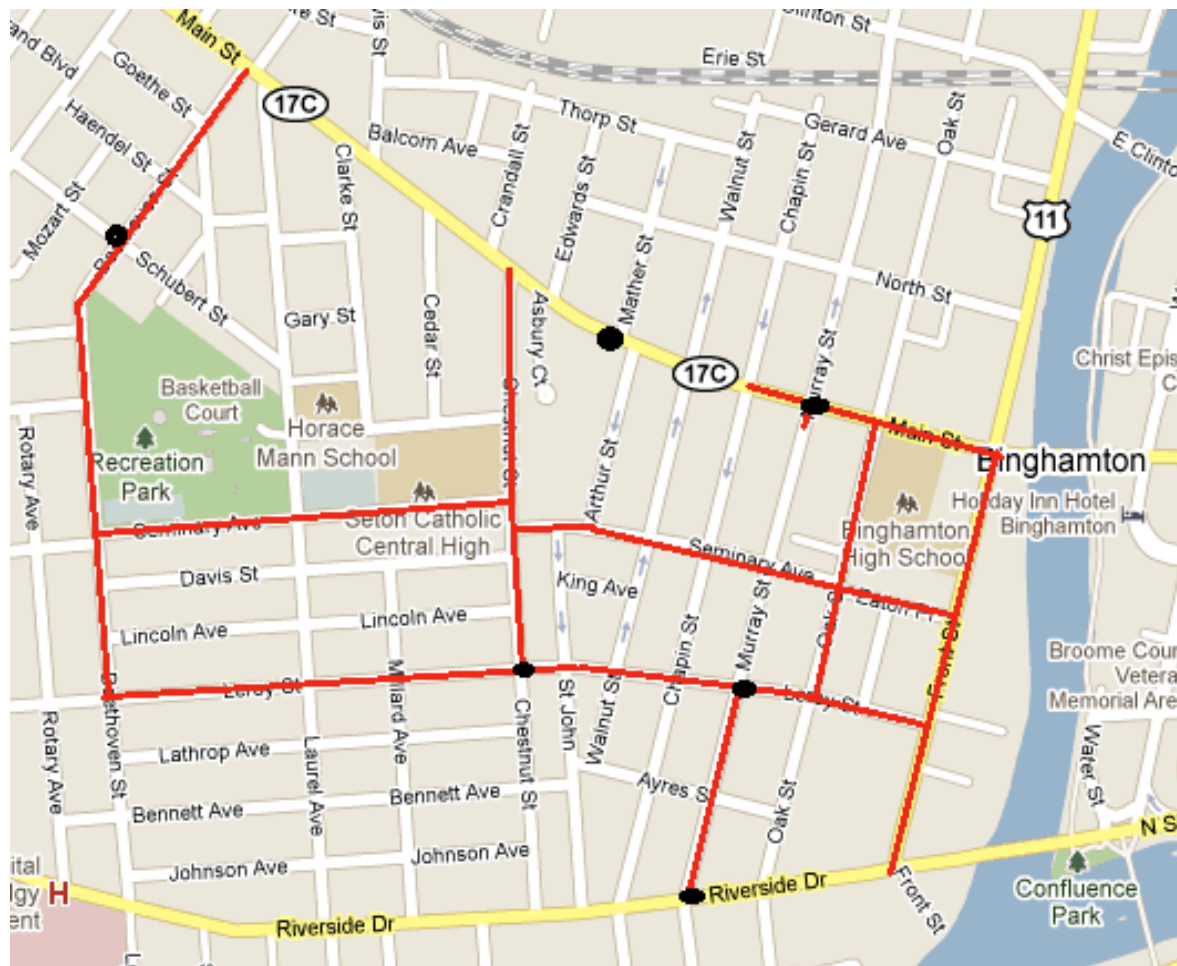
To save money, I recommend bus enclosures at only the popular stops. There are seven and are at the locations of: (1) Southside of Main Street at Schiller (at Dunkin' Donuts), (2) Main Street, 15 feet east of the Belmar, (3) Southside of Main Street at Murray (at the Hess), (4) Northside of Leroy at Murray Street (at Guiseppi's), (5) Northside of Leroy at Chestnut (at the Package Store), (6) Northside of Schubert Street at Beethoven and (7) Northside of Riverside and Murray.

Banners are yet another useful element on a streetscape as they serve to beautify and distinguish a specific neighborhood. They act as community identifiers bringing definition to the place. Their presence in the Westside would drastically improve the outlook of the street. As to not overwhelm the streetscape with I recommend placing banners on the major east-west and north-south corridors. These are Main, Seminary, Leroy, Scuhubert, Front, Chestnut and Beethoven.

Crosswalks add another dimension to the street as they break up the vehicular zone and extend the pedestrian zone, thus supporting pedestrians. Crosswalks can be colorful and/or nifty-designed bringing a fun element to the street. They should be present at all major bus stops mentioned above in addition to the intersections around Binghamton High School and Recreation Park.

The final recommendation is trashcans. These should be placed at all bus enclosures, at the Intersections surrounding Binghamton High School, Recreation Park and the mini-town on Leroy Street.

Below is a map of the Westside, as to provide a visual for all of the recommendations. Red denotes the streets worth focusing and the Black Dots denote the popular bus stops.



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