



APPENDIX F

CITY OF TROY 2000 DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Resolution R-50-2000
September 5, 2000

Introduction

The Troy Public Square was first laid out by Andrew Wallace in 1807, and was later chosen as the location of Miami County's first courthouse in 1815. It rapidly became the economic center for not only Troy, but also much of Miami County. The Public Square was often the focus of community activities, such as the National Centennial. A Liberty Pole was erected then, and was later replaced by a miniature Eiffel Tower during the Spanish-American War. In the Twentieth Century, many changes came to the Public Square, including an electric interurban railway, paved streets, and the automobile. The park in the center of the Public Square was rebuilt during the National Bicentennial, and many other improvements were made in the Central Business District during the last twenty-five years.

The Public Square and the surrounding Central Business District continue to this day as an important part of the community. For these reasons, the Troy City Council has initiated a multi-faceted Downtown Revitalization Project to continue to improve the vitality of the area into the Twenty-First Century.

Early Planning Efforts

With the increased pace of community growth all through America after The Great War in the early part of the Twentieth Century, there was a realization that city planning was needed to avoid some of the ills of crowded cities. A Comprehensive Plan was prepared in 1931 and an early form of Zoning Code was adopted in 1932. After the social upheavals of the Great Depression and World War II, the sudden growth of the "Baby-Boom" years and their attendant economic upswing created pressure for improved community planning efforts. In 1961, a more thorough Comprehensive Plan was prepared for Troy, which included reports on the local economy, housing, public facilities, schools, parks, streets, land development, land use, and zoning. Since most of the public and commercial infrastructure of the time was located in the Central Business District, the Comprehensive Plan included a first coordinated study of downtown parking, retail development, and new plans for the city and county government facilities needed by the expanding population.

The thinking in 1961 suggested that Troy's commercial growth would continue to occur in the downtown area, expanding somewhat beyond its previous size into nearby residential areas. This was in spite of the newly emerging trend for commercial development along the main arteries of Old US 25 (Market Street) and Main Street. The Public Square still had the highest automobile traffic volume, even though the New US 25 (now I-75) had been built just beyond the western city limits. As one of the first segments of the new limited-access highways, it didn't have as much traffic as in-town streets and was viewed locally as a by-pass. Troy's street network was still basically a radial plan, centered on the Public Square. Parking was considered adequate, but a need for additional parking was seen for the next twenty years (to about 1980). The intent was to create parking lots by tearing down some nearby residences, especially on either side of Market Street between Water Street and the Great Miami River. These new lots were intended to serve employees in the stores and the growing government center. The City Hall was to be replaced by a new city government complex east of the Courthouse and expanded County Government offices would be provided west of the Courthouse. Short Street was to be vacated in the vicinity, to form a pedestrian plaza.

During the next decade, much of the 1961 plans were realized, although in modified forms. A new Comprehensive Plan in the early 1970s pointed out improvements such as the Courthouse remodeling and construction of the County Safety Building (east of the Courthouse instead of west). The former Lollis Hotel was renovated as the Morris House, for senior citizen housing (Building # 43 on the Target Area Map). Troy had also built a central fire station on Race Street, freeing room in City Hall for expanded police offices, so the new City Government Center wasn't needed. Concern was mounting, however, for the future of the downtown. There were vacant buildings, and two department stores had moved out. All of the automobile dealers had relocated to the unincorporated areas at the edge of the city. A disastrous fire destroyed the Uhlman's Department Store at the northeast corner of the Public Square, and no building took its place. (The site is still an open green space, now known as Prouty Plaza.) There was no full service grocery store in the immediate area and small shops were losing customers to larger stores in the shopping centers at Sherwood and Troy Plaza. Even with a decline in the retail sector, parking had become a problem downtown, as predicted. The number of office workers had grown, few of them could walk to work, and only a few of the proposed new off-street parking lots had been built. Although the Downtown was still very active, there were warning signs of future economic decline.

The Last Quarter-Century

The rebuilding of the Public Square in the 1970s began with a series of improvements based on the historic character of the area. The immediate area of the Public Square was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and a local historic district designation was made for the entire Central Business District and some nearby residences. Property Tax Abatement was also authorized for the historic district. These actions helped encourage some new property owners to tackle major renovation projects. A notable example was the Dye Building, remodeled on its first floor as a bookstore, and later converted to Taggart's Restaurant (Building # 37 on the Target Area Map).

A special Downtown Action plan was prepared in 1972, which suggested rebuilding the Public Square as a pedestrian mall. The idea was for the Public Square to compete with the shopping centers by becoming one. Automobile traffic would be rerouted to one-way streets a block away in each direction. More parking would be provided in the former street areas. In addition to the mall, streetscape and entryway construction, the plan included important elements such as recruiting new business, organizing merchants, encouraging community participation, and developing innovative financing such as special assessments. Although this type of downtown revitalization was tried in some other communities and was later abandoned, we were fortunate that in Troy only parts of that plan were put into effect.

With the general public sentiment for historic preservation being encouraged by the approaching National Bicentennial, Troy accomplished Phase 1 of the mall plan, which included streetscape improvements in the Public Square and the four approaching blocks. These included brick pavers, improved lighting, extensive landscaping, and buried utility wires. The major focus was a new fountain in the middle of the Public Square, which was dedicated on July 4, 1976. One aspect of this street work that was very well received was the increase in parking spaces it produced in the Public Square, itself.

Following the successes of the 1970s, Troy continued to rebuild in the Downtown. Several buildings were extensively renovated, and there continued to be a mix of offices, retailers, and services. Decline also continued, however. Another building was lost to fire in 1979 (Gallencamp Shoes) and was replaced by a lawn space at the southwest corner of Main and Walnut. Penney's Department Store closed in the 1980s, the last grocer closed in the early 1990s, and later the last remaining small department store, Uhlman's moved out to the newest shopping center west of I-75. Shortly afterward, the downtown drugstore closed, and its shopping center branches were bought by a larger chain, that was later bought by and even larger chain.

Current Efforts

Fortunately, there were also very positive forces at work. The Troy Main Street, Inc. organization was formed in the early 1990s, and helped to promote the downtown. The City of Troy also continued to remodel and expand its facilities, including a new Police Station

at main and Mulberry Streets. This again freed space in the City Hall, which was remodeled twice in the 1990s. Miami County completely restored the exterior of the Courthouse, which was a major project, and was followed by the purchase of the former Hobart Brothers building at Main and Adams. The new Hobart Center became the new home for several departments that had been in the Safety Building. An added bonus for Downtown from this move was the off-street parking that was freed for others. The remaining County operations in the Courthouse/Safety Building complex are mostly related to the courts, so they still have a need for parking, particularly when the courts are in session. This was one of the recommendations included in the new Downtown Parking Study completed in 1996. During the next two years, a new Historic District Survey was conducted, including architects' evaluations and recommendations for each building in the district. That survey recommended improvements to the regulations and review process, as well as indicating the need for a coordinated streetscape project.

Goals and Objectives

Following up on those studies in the 1990's the City Council assigned extra importance to revitalization of Downtown Troy in the late 1990s. Major efforts include a thorough renovation of the City Hall, Phase 1 of the Downtown Streetscape, adoption of an entirely new Zoning Code, initiation of a Historic District Home Repair Revolving Loan Program, and support for a reorganization of Troy Main Street, Inc., and creation of this updated Downtown Development Plan. The principal goal of the revitalization efforts is to extend the life of the Historic Troy Architectural District and to increase the economic viability of the commercial enterprises in Downtown Troy. This will be accomplished through a mix of public and private actions. Public investment will include renovation of the streets, sidewalks, public utilities, and public buildings in the area. This work is already well under way. Other public actions include modernization of regulations that affect the reuse and repair of the private buildings. Public and private promotional activities will be continued, expanded, and strengthened. To encourage private investment in the oldest buildings in the community, financial assistance will be provided and property tax increments on the value of the improvements will be forgiven. The objective is to provide not only an improved physical environment, but also an improved economic climate, so the mix of quality services can continue to be found in Downtown Troy.

Elements of the Plan

The major elements of the 2000 Downtown Development Plan are Phases 2 and 3 of the Downtown Streetscape, continuance of the home repair loan program, creation of a revolving loan fund for commercial building renovation, and extension of the Streetscape project. Also included are commitments for continued financial support of the Troy Main Street program, and proposed reorganization to streamline the historic district review process. These elements are described in the following sections.

Downtown Streetscape Phase 1

The City Council authorized design of a new Downtown Streetscape in the late 1990s, and contracted with Poggemeyer Design Group to survey the area and provide suggested designs. After extensive review, the design was finalized and was taken to bid. Unfortunately, the design was quite ambitious and complex, so the bids came in significantly higher than the City Council had expected. The importance of the project was again considered, and the City Council decided to continue, but with a phased approach.

Phase 1 was designed to include only the Public Square, itself. For rebidding, it was further divided into a prime contract for the electrical utility work and a prime contract for the sidewalk and streetscape work. Repaving of the asphalt street surfaces was eliminated from this stage of the work. The bids came in at approximately \$1,200,000, and work began in late 1999. (See photographs in Exhibit I of the progress made to date.)

The cooperation of a great number of people has been received during Phase 1. The designers, contractors, and City of Troy staff have worked with the adjacent businesses and property owners to make the project work as well as possible. The business and property owners have been very understanding and have helped make the project a success. Public reaction to the work completed so far has been very positive. The final work is expected to be completed in time for the Christmas shopping season.

Downtown Streetscape Phase 2

With the positive experiences of Phase 1, City Council authorized the design of Phase 2, the streetscape work for the one-block sections leading into the Public Square. These will be very similar to phase 1, but are expected to include additional challenges because of numerous below grade building elements such as coal chutes, sidewalk elevators, and basements under sidewalks. The designers are proceeding very carefully with their construction plans.

The City Council has already allocated funding for Phase 2, similar to the actual construction contracts for Phase 1. Once the plans are completed and bids are received, the decision will be made to include or delete various parts of the work. The major item in question is whether to include the asphalt paving of the streets in the Phase 1 and Phase 2 area, or to delay that work to a third phase, which would likely be more advantageous for bidding purposes. That decision will not be made until late 2000 or early 2001. Nevertheless, the City Council has committed to Phase 2.

Downtown Streetscape Phase 3

A third area of the Downtown Streetscape is now being considered in conceptual terms. If the asphalt repaving is accomplished as a separate Phase 3, this next area of streetscape work will be designated as Phase 4, instead of Phase 3. The area will include the Market Street blocks between Water and the bridge, and between Franklin and Canal. Also included will be the Main Street block between Walnut and Mulberry, and an undecided distance along West Main, starting from

Cherry. The actual streetscape design will probably be simplified, compared to the design of Phase 1. Design work has not yet begun in these areas, although preliminary budgeting is now in progress, based on the actual experience gained during Phase 1. Preliminary discussions have also begun regarding further extensions of the streetscape design for additional blocks to the edges of the historic district.

Historic District Home Repair Program

A pilot program for home repair loans in the historic district was initiated in late 1999. The first two loans were made in 2000, and work is expected to be completed by December 2000. The program is designed to aid low/moderate income persons to make necessary repair to their homes, to bring them up to current codes and to allow them to stay in their homes rather than be forced to move. The program has already been reauthorized by the City Council for a second year, beginning in May 2001. With the high number of single family homes in the Downtown and the immediate vicinity, this program is expected to be a positive benefit that will counter the extra responsibility of living with the regulations of the historic district. The loans are designed with low interest and indefinite payoff dates, being deferred until the house is sold or transferred. This aspect of the Downtown Development Plan is intended to help preserve the older single-family homes in the area.

Downtown Commercial Building Repair Program

Like the older homes in the Downtown, the commercial buildings also represent district challenges to modern day usage. Although much of the first floor area of the buildings are in productive use, many of the second and third floors are vacant either because of lack of appropriate access or because of substandard facilities. In addition, although most storefronts are useable, many are not in keeping with the historic design of the building. Finally, many back and side walls of buildings are not in as good a condition as the front facades. It is often difficult for a struggling business owner to invest in the less visible parts of the building.

To help encourage upgrading to current codes, repair of facades, basic building structural components, and upper floors, the City Council has decided to create a loan program similar to the very successful ED RLF and the above described Home Repair Program. Funds would be made available on a matching basis, for qualified repairs to commercial buildings in the Downtown. As part of the program, architectural assistance would be provided for each project, to ensure that the historic nature of the building is that the repairs meet current codes and safety standards. Troy Main Street, Inc. will also provide assistance in selecting appropriate projects and developing proposals.

Support for Troy Main Street, Inc.

The City Council has supported the Troy Main Street program for the past ten years, but always intended to see it become self-supporting. During a major reorganization earlier this year, Troy Main Street requested additional funding and commitments to future years' assistance. In reviewing the organization's strategic

plan and goals, the City Council discussed the funding request. After initial disagreement with the long-term funding concept, the City Council agreed to continue support, but with annual reporting of the organization's accomplishments. The change was made when the Councilmembers compared their expectations of results from the Main Street program to their expectations for the long-standing Troy Development Council. TDC is responsible for economic development and job creation efforts, and has never been expected to be self-sufficient, although it does receive significant private support. Similarly, for Downtown, Troy Main Street is not merely a business association, but is expected to play an important role in community development and business retention and expansion. The City Council committed to long term financial support, in return for the commitment from Troy Main Street to assume a higher profile promotion and marketing role, and to annually report progress. The funding decision had an immediate encouraging effect on Downtown business owners. Membership in Troy Main Street has increased and new staff has been hired. Working committees are now being formed to carry out the different goals in the strategic plan.

Streamlining the Historic Review Process

The City Council adopted a new Zoning Code effective January 1, 2000. As part of the process of writing those regulations, they also suggested streamlining the historic review process to help address the concerns expressed by Downtown business and property owners. The former process included two appointed public boards, and the goal is to reduce this to one, and to provide additional preapplication guidance. Drafting of new regulations has been authorized by the city Council, and new guidelines will be prepared. Troy Main Street has already produced a basic guideline for building owners, to assist them in the process. That set of guidelines will be expanded and revised to fit the new regulations, along with the recommendation in the final report of the architects in the Historic District Survey. The new regulations and guidelines are both expected to be presented to the City Council for review and adoption well before the next summer construction season begins.

Standard Components of a Comprehensive Development Plan

In addition to the specific elements that have been individually prepared for this 2000 Downtown Development Plan, there are several elements that are classically part of any comprehensive development plan. These include a housing component, a public facilities plan, a land use plan, a traffic plan, a parking plan, and a signage plan. Most of these are contained in the other elements, or in the last Comprehensive Plan Update. For clarity, they are summarized as follows:

Housing - The existing single-family housing stock within the Central Business District is considered nonconforming within the context of the Zoning Code, but the buildings are designated for protection because of their historic significance. Because the best way to preserve them is to keep them in continuous use, they are actively encouraged to be repaired through the efforts of the

Historic District Home Repair Program. Additional housing units in the Central Business District are permitted by the Zoning Code, particularly on second or third floors. The intent is to encourage their creation through improved access. A mix of residential, retail, office, and service uses is viewed as the most effective way to preserve the vitality of the downtown, and is being supported. One of the Board of Trustee positions for Troy Main Street is held by a resident of Downtown.

Public Facilities - The major public facilities in the Central Business District include city and county office facilities, the non-profit Troy Rec (for children's day-care, after-school care, and recreational programs), several churches and other institutions including museums and the Family Abuse Shelter. These facilities are fully occupied and are continuously maintained. City Hall is currently undergoing a major renovation, and an additional small phase will complete modernization in some areas that had previously been remodeled within the past ten years. The Miami County Safety Building has recently lost several departments as tenants, allowing expansion of the remaining programs, mostly court-related. The other departments relocated several blocks west of the Courthouse, just outside the traditional Central Business District. The new location has an adequate supply of free, off-street parking. This change alone has helped relieve some of the immediate parking problems and much of the perception of a lack of local government support for parking concerns of Downtown merchants.

Land Use Plan - Troy's Comprehensive Land Use Plan was most recently updated in 1989. At that time, the plan for the Central Business District was to avoid expansion of the commercial areas, in favor of protecting the nearby historic residential neighborhoods. This plan is still in effect, and is actively followed. The new Zoning Code allows for rezonings or conversions of uses, but the basic zoning plan follows the existing separation from residential neighborhoods. The mix of uses is permitted, and is encouraged, however, within the Central Business District. The historic designation acts to discourage, but does not actually prohibit demolition or new construction. Preservation of existing buildings is preferred, so their smaller sizes effectively eliminate some otherwise permitted uses, such as today's much larger department or grocery stores.

Thoroughfare and Traffic Plan - The survey and design work in preparation of the Public Square Streetscape included a review of the traffic in the Downtown. The existing routes were reaffirmed, but the proposed timing of traffic signals is scheduled for adjustment after the streetscape is completed. The arterial routes through the Public Square will retain their highway designations (SR 41 and SR 55), and bypass routes are not planned. New arterial thoroughfares much farther out from the CBD are proposed, however. These are eventually expected to provide alternate routes for cross-town traffic, instead of concentrating all of it in the Public Square. One-way streets near the Public Square were again considered, but were eliminated from the final plan.

Parking Plan - The 1996 Downtown Parking Study included several suggested actions. Most have not been implemented, because of their impact on some segment of the populace or another. In particular, the fees for use of the municipal public parking lots have not been increased. Likewise, the cost at metered spaces has not been changed. With the retirement of the long-time parking control officer, the City Council considered whether to change the program, and chose to let it remain as it has been. The intent is to again review the remaining concerns after the effect of the Miami County office relocation and the streetscape improvements can be measured. Anecdotal evidence suggests the improvement is significant. As was true with the first downtown parking study in 1959, the major complaints are at specific, separate locations. The problems do not seem to be general throughout the Downtown. This could change, however, if efforts to utilize more second and third floor areas is successful. Increasing the number of downtown residents and office employees will create more demand for parking spaces. For this reason, one of the goals of building repair is to reorganize or pave rear off-street parking lots that are now underutilized or are unpaved. Construction of a public parking garage is still a popular topic of conversation, but its need and its cost have not been justified.

Signage Plan - As part of the new Zoning Code, new sign standards were adopted for businesses. In the Central Business District, they favor wall signs. Troy Main Street's design guidelines suggest compatible sign types, which business owners are encouraged to use. For public signs, such as "No Parking" and traffic signs, the Streetscape includes new, modern regulatory and directional signage. The traffic signals are being mounted on "mast-arms" that match the style and color of other streetscape furnishings. The existing fixtures will be removed and reused at other location in Troy.

Administration of the Downtown Development Plan

The major responsibility for day-to-day administration of this plan is with the Troy Planning and Development Department. Permits and application are processed through Planning, and administration of loan programs is through Development. Implementation of public works construction is supervised by the Troy Engineering Department. City government policy and budgeting decisions are made by the City Council. All of these actions are public, and subject to examination by any person. Downtown Business owners and operators also have the benefit of the liaison work of Troy Main Street, Inc. Because of the high profile of the Public Square Streetscape project, and the location of two newspaper offices and one TV office in the downtown, there is also continuing interest and news coverage by local reporters.